

What is Apocalyptic Evangelism?

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Before returning to consider matters of definition, and an overview of course objectives, we want first to make plain to our participants the nature of our study and the approach that we feel the Lord has directed.

We want to state, firstly, that you will not be regarded so much as students as "participants" in our mutual engagement and interaction over the material. *You*, the participant, **will play a formative and influential role** in the content and direction of the course. **Your response and feedback is critical** towards the final product that will take its character from the many. We desire to approximate as much as possible that organic and corporate involvement that so uniquely characterizes the body of Christ, hearing the Lord in one another, the supply that every member supplies, **co-contributors towards that sacred last day's prophetic task to make the vision "plain upon tables"** that to read (with understanding) is to run (compare Hab 2:2,3; Dan 12:4,9).

Though the study is necessarily planned, guided, and sets reasonable task along the lines of its stated objectives, we are nevertheless committed to maintain a flexibility that is sensitive to the needs, enriched by the input, and open to the suggestions of the participants considered as a whole. Within certain limits, you will be informing and influencing the course throughout the stages of its development. We are inviting your prayer, support, and input towards the formation, and articulation of something that is taking shape under the influence of the body, and in relationship with one

another.

A potentially rich and instructive facet of the course will be the opportunity to create and review an accessible archive of email interaction between teachers and participants. We are in the process of setting up a 'server' that will enable participants to post their questions and remarks (i.e., those comments considered helpful for the instruction of the larger class). These will then be available for access and viewing by the entire class. Of course, private correspondence will continue to receive equal attention. As we become technically equipped and organized, we hope to give the class reasonable access, not only to the teacher's comments, but to the relevant input of other participants as well. We are further committed to remain accessible to all of our participants, so much as time permits, even after the allotted time of the course, making ourselves available for ongoing dialogue and relationship.

As to what will be most prominently emphasized and developed throughout the course, we will not make it our task to 'reinvent the wheel.' While we will freely reap from the labors of others, we intend to limit our primary focus to those areas where there seems the greatest deficit in the church's current understanding.¹ Where other writers have adequately treated a topic of importance, we will be content to serve as resource consultants, directing participants to those who have already well built that section of "the wall" (Neh 4:17).

I make the analogy to Nehemiah's work of restoration, because several years ago, I was standing just outside the old school building here on the Ben Israel property, when I pictured in my

¹We do not presume that these "deficits" will always represent what is 'most' wanting or 'most' vital, but we should expect that days of great apostasy may yet prove to be days of great restoration. Therefore, stewardship requires that we submit the things that pertain to our trust to the church's greater treasury. We are keenly conscious that we "reap that whereon we bestowed no labor: other men labored, and we are entered into their labors" (Jn 4:38). We make no claim to originality, and distrust novelty. While we are sure of what the Lord has given, and believe that our perspective is indeed crucial for the church's upward call, and last day's preparation, we feel intensely that our only access to the full counsel of God is through the larger body of Christ. We assume nothing more than a modest, though important contribution towards a fullness that is only received through the whole body of Christ. Through the measure that each joint supplies (Eph 4:11-13,16) there is the "filling up" of whatever may be "lacking" (1Thes 3:10) in the other's faith. It is part of the glory of the mystery of the body of Christ that the fullest inheritance of "all things" in Christ (Ro 8:32) assumes that the saints inherit this fullness in one another (1Cor 3:21-23). How critical then the danger and disaster of a schismatic spirit?

mind's eye the imagery from the post-exilic books of Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah that deal in type and prophecy with the restoration of the house of God. There, I seemed to hear the Lord's voice in these words: "Many shall come from the East, the West, the South, and North and build in the house of the Lord." We believe that the **Lord is preparing a body** (Ps 40:6-8; Heb. 10:5; Eph 4:13; Rev. 19:7), prepared again unto burial, as a final demonstration and testimony to men and angels of the obedience of faith, and that this demonstration is destined to have the same effect on Israel that Stephen's witness had on Saul (Acts 7:58 with 9:5). And as "the Word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness," **it is to such a body (the "man child" company of Rev. 12:5,13, the corporate "perfect man" of Eph 4:13) that the Word will again "come," and in coming will "send" many for a last great thrust.**² "The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of them that published it" (Ps 68:11). "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps 19:3-6; Ro 10:18). This speaks of the promise that before the end, "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all nations for a witness" (Mt 24:14).

Many will know that the Greek word for witness is "marturion" also translated martyr. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11). **It is the time of the greatest harvest, unequaled in the history of redemption** (compare Rev 7:14; Dan 11:32,33; 12:3).³ Remarking on an all too humanistic approach to revival, and the short-lived nature of such historic 'awakenings,' John Piper distinguishes these from this **last, greatest, and enduring 'revival,' as one that comes "in rivers of blood."** Therefore, the **church of the last days is necessarily a martyr church** as its witness is ultimately a 'martyr' witness. And this brings us to our definition of "apocalyptic evangelism,"

²Such "coming" of the Word routs the complacency of familiarity and brings the urgency of apostolic stewardship. This defines true apostolicity. The one that is sent is the one to whom the Word has "come." It also defines a critical difference in the phenomenon of hearing the Word. It is one thing to hear the "words" of God; it is something distinctive to "hear" the "Word" of God. It is this hearing that generates saving faith. This is the "quickened Word" that divides (and discerns) between soul and spirit (Heb 4:12), that accomplishes at once both death and resurrection in those who hear; "today, 'if' you will hear His voice" (4:7). To so hear is to live (Jn 5:24; 18:37).

³Note that the Greek in Rev 7:14 uses a double definite article showing that the "great tribulation" in view is specifically "the" great tribulation of the Olivet prophecy (Mt 24:21), literally, "the tribulation, the great one."

and as well to a consideration of the nature of "the gospel of the kingdom" implicit in Jesus' use of the term.⁴

Our Use of Terms

Until we can prepare a formal glossary of terms, we will occasionally pause throughout our study, to clarify, not only the conventional use of certain key terms, but also to explain any nuances that may attach to our own usage. As you know, terms have a way of evolving, and this is particularly true of the terminology of theology, so it will not be enough to give a formal definition if it fails to capture how it is used in a given context. A case example is our own use of the term "apocalyptic" as applied to a distinctive approach to evangelism. We might have used the term "crises evangelism" and come very near to our meaning. But much more is implicit in the term 'apocalyptic' than in the word 'crises,' so the pains taken to understand the term seem justified.

There is a very good reason why it is useful to know such terms even if the essential idea might have been communicated in more familiar words. Because **such terms have a history of their own, and are commonplace, functioning as a kind of shorthand in the literature of theology**, it is almost certain that **you will encounter these terms**, not only in your research, but also **in your ministries as you engage a modern culture as witnesses** "prepared to give an answer" (Prov 15:28; 1Pet 3:15).

Since we are called to give an answer (and certainly such "answer" implies much more than intellectual persuasion), and since the scripture also says "he that answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame unto him (Prov 18:13), **it behooves the servant of Christ to invest a reasonable and responsible measure of 'homework' in understanding the language as well as**

⁴You will note that the above statement obviously **implies the church's presence in the persecution of the last days**, which raises the familiar question of the time of the rapture, and suggests why that those who subscribe to a 'pretribulational' rapture must deny the term "church" to the saints of "the last time," i.e., the time of Antichrist. We will take up this question at an appropriate juncture in the course, and endeavor to show the arguments and presuppositions for both sides of this debate.

the presuppositions of those he or she wishes to influence. We will of course be required to restrict such definitions to just those terms that function significantly in our task to communicate and defend the perspective that is commended in this course. Other more general terms will be the responsibility of the individual, though, as always, any insight or finding considered helpful will be made available to the class via the web server described above.

Apocalyptic: In scholarly and academic usage, apocalyptic (strictly, the term means the unveiling of hidden things) is used in at least two ways. In its more technical sense, the term denotes a body of Jewish literature that flourished between the 2nd century B.C. and the 1st century A.D. The canonical books of Daniel and Revelation are considered typical of this genre (type) of literature. While there are indeed common stylistic traits that distinguish this literary grouping, there are also outstanding differences between canonical and non-canonical apocalypses. Be aware that modern critical scholars who may not share our conservative view of the Bible's unique inspiration do not always recognize these differences. A fuller exploration of the nature and distinctive traits of this literature is available in most Bible dictionaries, and the relative value of such further investigation you may judge from the following quotation (noting especially the last paragraph) from George Ladd's brief survey of "apocalyptic" in "The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary."

"There are distinct similarities, but also even more **important differences between canonical and non-canonical apocalypses.** The visions of Daniel provide the archetype, which the later apocalypses imitate, and the Revelation of John records visions given to the apostle in similar symbolic forms. Both Daniel and Revelation contain revelations conveyed through symbolism; but **they differ from non-canonical apocalypses in that they are genuine experiences** rather than imitative literary works, are not pseudonymous, and do not rewrite history under the guise of prophecy.

The importance of these apocalyptic writings is that they reveal to us first century Jewish ideas about God, evil, and history, and disclose Jewish hopes for the

future and the coming of god's kingdom. They show us what such terms as the Kingdom of God, Messiah, the Son of Man, etc., meant to first century Jews to whom our Lord addressed the Gospel of the Kingdom."

While scholars strain to distinguish the prophetic tradition from the apocalyptic perspective, **our interest is the unity of inspired revelation under God's sovereignty**, regardless of the literary medium. There are clear traces of "apocalyptic" in the prophetic tradition (i.e., the pre and post-exilic prophets), as certainly as apocalyptic has its roots in early Hebrew prophetism, particularly as it issues out of the prophetic concept of the Day of the Lord. Apocalyptic is essentially the outworking and further development of the Day of Yahweh, the hub of Old Testament eschatology.⁵ One might say that **'apocalyptic' as a distinct perspective and orientation is little else than the unpacking of this central point of transition towards which all Biblical hope tends, and from which millennial glory issues.** Apart from their distinctive literary form, there is nothing in the canonical apocalypses that is not implicit in the great eschatological themes of Hebrew prophecy that converge in the Day of the Lord. The apocalyptic concept of the two ages ("this present evil age" vis-à-vis "the age to come") so prominent in New Testament eschatology, is one clear example, as is also the incipient dualism and angelology (doctrine of angelic intermediaries) evident in the proto-evangelism (original gospel) of Gen 3:15.⁶ So, if we would understand the nature and roots of 'apocalyptic' as constituting the framework and perspective so completely underlying New Testament revelation ("the mystery hidden in other ages"), we must look first to the history of revelation that gave rise to the idea (or better, prepared the way for the 'revelation') of

⁵Eschatology is from the Greek eschatos, "furthest," and logos, "word" or "teaching," and it therefore means "teaching concerning the end of things."

⁶The "seed gospel" of Gen 3:15 introduces the mysterious dualism of "the two seeds." This proves, through progressive revelation, to signify the activity of two opposing spirits that distinguish the godly line of faith from the ungodly "seed," or offspring of the serpent, i.e., the angel, Satan. The seed of the woman (ultimately perfected in the Messiah as the one to whom the Father gives the Spirit "without measure;" Jn 3:34) is also the Holy Spirit indwelling the remnant of faith. Both seeds culminate in an incarnation, in Messiah as the "mystery of godliness" (1Tim 3:16), and in Satan as the "mystery of iniquity" (2Thes 2:7). This dualism of spiritual enmity reaches an apocalyptic climax in the conflict of the two princes of Dn 9:25-27 ("Messiah the prince" vis-à-vis "the prince that shall come" i.e., Antichrist). These two princes head up the twofold division of humanity, and represent the rivalry of the two kingdoms and the conflict of the ages.

the Day of Yahweh. In so doing, we find that it is **to the covenant itself that we must look to find the background of all Biblical eschatology**, the Day of the Lord, and the apocalyptic eschatology of the New Testament.⁷

In our next unit, we will return to the covenant and the promise as the context that gave rise to the concept of the Day of the Lord, because it is the centrality of the **Day of the Lord as the pivotal point** of departure that establishes not only the framework of 1st century Christian eschatology, but is **a principal key** towards understanding the background and context of the original apostolic proclamation. As we return to examine the **Day of the Lord** in relation to its influence on the Jewish hope, we will recognize **its central place as forming the background and framework for the "the mystery of the gospel."** It is the revelation of this **mystery that forms the content of the original apostolic proclamation, and that also constitutes the basis for Jewish resistance towards the messianic mystery as the stone of stumbling.**⁸

The **urgency of 1st century evangelism arises out of this climate of an imminent apocalyptic conclusion of the age** ("flee from the wrath to come" Mt 3: 7; Ro 1:18). **It is the background and context of this urgency that this study aims to recapture.** We aim (with your own very valued input) to trace some of the factors that seem to converge and contribute to the dynamic of post-Pentecostal evangelism. We want also to examine why we have not seen such power since the passing of the 1st century.

⁷It should be pointed out that Judaism considers first century Christianity as an apocalyptic sect, born out of the same apocalyptic "soil" as the Qumran sectarians (the community of the Dead Sea scrolls) of the same period. It is well known that apocalyptic enthusiasm fueled the Jewish zealots' consecutive militaristic revolts against Rome from 70 - 135 A.D. ending each time in disaster and eschatological disappointment. Later Judaism has tended to avoid apocalypticism as a notorious breeding ground for fanaticism, sectarianism, and tragic disillusionment.

⁸While it is certainly well known that Christians see in Jesus the eschatological "stone of stumbling," it is important to realize that this "scandal" is particularly because of the paradox that the "mystery of the gospel" creates in the context of the Jewish hope and its expectation of a unified event, the Day of the Lord, as bringing in the messianic redemption through a final conflict.

The Background and Context of the Apocalyptic Gospel

It is plain that the **original apostolic evangel prospered in a heightened consciousness and expectation of an imminent apocalyptic⁹ conclusion of the age.** We know that the **earliest Christians were not alone in this hope.** Historians point out that within first century Israel there were a number of apocalyptic sects expecting the imminent Day of the Lord, just as also the scripture states that many were in expectation of the kingdom of God (Lk 2:25, 38; 3:15), a point in time consistently associated with the Day of the Lord. However, with the resurrection of Jesus, a critical shift has occurred in this fundamental eschatological perspective. The revelation of the gospel introduces a radical modification in the Jewish scheme of the two ages by the paradox of the kingdom announced as present and yet future in its consummation. The "powers of the age to come" have broken into the present evil age by the Spirit of power and revelation in the words and works of Jesus and the disciples. But the principal offense presented in the gospel is due to the hidden and unknown advent of a crucified Messiah rising in the midst of a history that leaves Israel's outward condition unaltered. This is precisely what Jews found so inconceivable in the first century, and remains a primary obstacle in Jewish objections to the gospel today.

The scandal of the apostolic proclamation lay particularly in the fact that the imminent "great Day of God" concluding this present evil age and inaugurating Israel's millennial glory is to be recognized as the Day of Jesus' return (Acts 3:20, 21), that the crucified prophet from Nazareth¹⁰ is proclaimed, not only as Israel's Messiah and King, but as the risen Lord of glory. These are staggering claims, and particularly in the context of first century Judaism, such claims were calculated to arouse fiercest opposition.¹¹

⁹Apocalyptic, because it is inherently pessimistic of human nature, and therefore of progressive 'improvement,' assumes that salvation and judgment is predicated on sovereign initiative, and supernatural intervention.

¹⁰The Sanhedrin on the charge of blasphemy sentenced Jesus to death as a messianic pretender that arrogated to himself the titles of deity ("Son of God").

¹¹**In regards to the "offense" of the gospel, remember that while it was commonplace that Jews looked for the resurrection at the "last day" (Jn 11:24), nothing had prepared Israel for the concept that Messiah should die (especially by crucifixion) and be raised in the midst of history, leaving Israel's outward condition unchanged, and far short of the millennial promises literally interpreted (Acts 1:6).**

To know the background and presuppositions of first century Jewish eschatology and belief is to appreciate the futility of attempting to account for the existence of the early church on natural grounds. Rather, the evidence of history amounts to the greatest possible proof of the supernatural origin of the early Jewish church. It is impossible to conceive that such claims as Luke records in Peter's Pentecostal sermon would have been approved on Jewish soil in the numbers that history demonstrates apart from the miracle of Pentecost. Truly the sign of Jesus' resurrection and messianic vindication is the manifest evidence of the Spirit. It is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit that is the continuous witness to the resurrection of Jesus and truth of the church's prophetic testimony. The twofold witness of Jesus is then as now the sign of the Spirit, and the evidence of prophecy, even as the scripture says; "the testimony of Jesus IS the Spirit of prophecy" (Rev 19:10b).

The Apocalyptic Proclamation in Relation to the Imminent

Desolations of Jerusalem

Perspectives concerning Jerusalem and the temple reflected, not only in the Prophets, but also in the Dead Sea Scrolls, confirm that Jesus and **the early church would not have been alone in their expectation of an imminent judgment threatening Jerusalem and the temple.** It is well known that **the community of Qumran (the sect that produced the scrolls) had already retreated to the desert in this expectation. And why not? It was the uniform perspective of the prophets. The eschatological desolations of Jerusalem was a persistent theme of the prophets, particularly** vivid in the apocalyptic prophecy of **Daniel**, a book of profound influence in first century apocalypticism. **The Qumran sectaries took as primary the literal interpretation of the scripture** (though also recognizing a richness of spiritual type, figure, and foreshadow). **Such literal interpretation convinced them** then, as we remain expectant now (on much the same biblical basis), **of an eschatological assembly in the wilderness** (more on this later).

Prominent in this apocalyptic view was the concept of the pre-messianic woes, called in later times "the footsteps of the Messiah." This theme has survived in some orthodox circles of late and modern Judaism. It is what we know in terms of Jeremiah's prophecy as the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 30:7), and in Jesus' Olivet prophecy (based primarily on the book of Daniel) as "the great tribulation" (Dan 12:1; Mt 24:21). Whatever variations of detail, this **essential apocalyptic perspective (of a climatic Day of the Lord preceded by a brief period of unparalleled judgment and persecution) was standard among Jews subscribing to the inerrancy of scripture and its literal interpretation. This essential apocalyptic perspective is NOT what put the early disciples "outside the camp."** Again, we reiterate, though the offense of the gospel lay particularly in the "offense of the cross;" this phrase is essentially shorthand for the larger paradox of "the mystery" that stands in radical contrast to popular Jewish expectation (but more on this later).

Traditionally, professing '**Christendom**' **has scorned the Jewish hope as carnal, reprehensible, and ill begotten. This is patent falsehood, a travesty of irresponsibility both historically and theologically. The Jews, who held to the apocalyptic view outlined above, acquired this view quite naturally and appropriately from Moses and the prophets.** We will see that not only was it biblically consistent that the Jews should hold this essential perspective, but apart from the revelation of the gospel, "hid in other ages," and reserved for the "last days" (Heb 1:2), little else could have been understood by scripture revering Jews. For reasons that we will examine, scripture shows that **God deliberately and purposely hid the revelation of Messiah in a mystery, sealed up in prophecy** (Isa 8: 14-17; Dan 9: 24; 12: 9), but only **dimly understood** (Eph 3:5 "as it is now revealed") till the "appointed" time (Dan 11:35; 12:9-10; Mk 4:11; Ro 16:25; 1Cor 2:7,8; 1Pet 1:10-12). It is **the "messianic secret"** ("tell no man till the Son of Man is risen" Mk 9:9), **a divinely guarded mystery, foretold of old** (Ro 16:25; Acts 26:22), **but hidden of God until the appointed moment of revelation and proclamation.**¹²

¹²The sectaries at Qumran show a very similar understanding of "mystery" as representing a hidden plan concealed in the prophetic scriptures to be revealed in the last days to the 'maskilim' (the wise), the elect of the final crises.

This brings us now to the urgency and challenge of witnesses of the last generation. And **how do we justify our confidence of a chronological proximity to events that were believed 'imminent' (or more accurately, 'impending') in the first century by an eschatological assembly who could speak of themselves as those "upon whom the ends of the age are come?"** (1Cor 10:11). **Can we?** Must we say that the church stands again at another critical cross roads, and on the threshold of another world cataclysm? Who will deny that these are times of awful transition? **But is this "the last time?"** (1Pet 1:5; 1Jn 2:18).

Where are we now? What is our task?

There is a sense in which **all true evangelism is necessarily "apocalyptic" in character. That is, it assumes the necessity of divine intervention,** both personally and historically. Humanity is in crises from the first. All creation is in travail. Judgment is constantly threatening and potentially "at hand."

I am reminded of Art's adaptation of Arnold Toynbee's turn of phrase concerning the corrupting influence of power. "Crises reveals, and ultimate crises reveals ultimately." **Apocalyptic evangelism assumes the presence of crises, and the certain approach of ultimate crises.** Indeed, **with the tightening world tensions surrounding the city of destiny,** and the issues that it is sure to raise and press, **such apocalyptic expectation is no longer theoretical.** Once more the church may say, not only existentially, but also chronologically; "The ends of the age are come upon us!"

Once more the church stands at the same critical juncture and transitional threshold **as the Lord's forerunner.** It was particularly the **imminent prospect of the final crises, "Jacob's trouble," that gave the wilderness prophet's warning its full urgency.** And however scholars may debate Jesus' personal understanding, **first century Israel could attach only one possible meaning to Jesus' proclamation "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel:** (Mk 1:15) **The hour has struck, and the eschatological remnant is**

distinguished by repentance and moral flight from an imminent wrath that is depicted in the imagery of a desert fire devouring all in its path.

This then is the context of John and Jesus' mission. This is the apocalyptic framework in which Jesus' initial sending of the twelve is set. Observe the context in which Jesus describes the first apostolic sending, but in words that depict a final mission that will be in progress in the day of His return. Seeing that Jesus would have known that this preliminary mission would be interrupted short of the promised return, it is evident that **Jesus depicts the temporary mission of the twelve in representative anticipation of the final mission**, not only of the mission that began in Jerusalem (this preliminary mission did not begin in Jerusalem), but equally of the mission that will be in progress in the tribulation period of "Jacob's trouble," at a time when two thirds of the Jewish population will be decimated by ravaging enemies (Zech 13:8). **Observe the context and parallels to an anticipated last great thrust amidst a world that is reeling under a final persecution.**

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans *enter ye not*: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and here abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into a house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the Day of Judgment, than for that city. Behold, I send you forth as sheep

in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: *for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come* (Matt 10:5-23 KJV).

Although there is reference to a Gentile population within the land, there is nothing here of a world wide witness to the nations as in the Olivet prophecy (Mt 24:15). But the same imminence of the kingdom is in view in both places with the anticipated time of upheaval and persecution. There is remarkable contrast and similarities in the two scenarios suggesting that this is speaking of a final mission that will be in progress in Israel during the tribulation period.

This is the same ominous horizon that Paul had in view when he uses the following language:

"I suppose therefore that this is good for *the present distress?* But this I say, brethren, *the time is short:* it remains, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world [*is already passing away*] (Cor 26-31).

In Paul's perspective, as true of all the early church, the time is short; the world cataclysm is

at hand. The prophets and the "Jewish" apocalypses of Daniel and Revelation speak with one voice concerning a final world crises centered on the "controversy of Jerusalem." (See paper: "The Significance of Jerusalem"). In all the prophets, the Day of the Lord and the preliminary birth pangs ("Jacob's trouble;" "Zion's travail") are inextricably tied to an unequalled time of international distress that begins in Jerusalem.

And from Paul's perspective, though the coming of Messiah is not immediately "at hand" (imminent, or presently upon; 2Thes 2:3); it is, however, impending. And like the prophets and the apocalypticist, Paul is clear that apart from impending events connected with Jerusalem (the temple in "Judea") there can be no return of Messiah.

Let us be clear: apart from Jerusalem's final desolations there can be no Day of the Lord and return of Jesus! This is of greatest significance, because it underscores where we are today. We have come full circle, and like Paul and the early church, we labor under the shadow of an imminent destruction of Jerusalem, "a cup of trembling," that is soon to plunge all nations into the final crises. Once more Jerusalem is at the crossroads of history, and this defines our role, stewardship, and task. "They that understand among the people shall instruct many" (Dn 11:33).

The church must, as a remnant certainly will, awaken to the time and to the stewardship of a last days martyr testimony that calls nations to account concerning the witness of prophecy. It will be a 'consummate apologetic' impossible to ignore. In the face of an increasingly dramatic unfolding of miraculously foretold trends and events, exposing the willfulness of unbelief, and leaving the nations without excuse.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2Thess 2:11-12).

Curiously and paradoxically, in the face of the most pronounced and prolific fulfillment of

prophecy in history, Daniel is constrained to say: "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan 12:10). But who are these "wise?" And what is it that they understand?" These are the questions that we intend to take up in the days just ahead.

In our next study, we will begin to direct our focus towards the discovery and identification of the precise content and substance of that end time testimony that a remnant will sound to the nations. We will explore ways to make immediate application and use of these great themes in pressing upon Jewish attention the deepening crises that threatens the nations concerning Jerusalem, and direct their consideration of the prophets, the miracle of the Bible, and the awesome wisdom of the gospel. This will more often than not have a delayed effect, but will prove a powerful witness as the Spirit brings to remembrance those things towards which the prophetic testimony has persistently pointed in Jesus' name.

On a personal note, I ask the participants patience with our approach. There is much to establish and learn, and in order to bring us to the best appropriation and application of the themes that will contribute to a ready witness and defense of the our perspective, (and really of the nature of the gospel itself), it is necessary to lay some ground work in some things that may, for the moment, seem abstract and theoretical. But we believe that if you can persevere, there will be much that you can appropriate and apply in your own witness. Do what is reasonably convenient; soak up what you can, and trust the Lord with the rest. None of us fit well into Saul's armor, so we are searching together for those "smooth stones" of David that are not only choice in our preparation, but also fit perfectly with our own distinctive personality in God. Surely, in all that we will explore together, enough will be clear and helpful to beneficially contribute to our study's larger objectives. So do not to feel overly responsible for what may pertain more particularly to another's interest and use. Remember that John, Jan, and myself are committed, so much as time permits, to define, clarify, explain, and otherwise assist in anything that we can.

Till the next edition, brethren, pray for us!

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