

# JOURNAL of DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY

Journal of Dispensational Theology – Winter 2013

Editorial.....205

Peter's Denials:

Part II: An Examination of the Narratives.....207

*Max G. Mills*

Hermeneutical Keys to the Olivet Discourse:

Part 1: Lukan Eschatology (Luke 17).....229

*Ray M. Wenger*

The Day of the Lord:

The Prophecy of Joel.....251

*Quentin McCart*

Book Reviews

Aslan, Reza. *Zealot, the Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*.....286

Beasley, Michael John. *The Fallible Prophets of New Calvinism*...272

Beeke Joel R. and Mark Jones. *A Puritan Theology*.....290

Boyarin, Daniel. *The Jewish Gospels*.....288

MacDonald, James (ed). *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*....267

Murray, Iain H. *The Old Evangelicalism*.....296

Rokser, Dennis M. *Shall Never Perish Forever*.....294

Smith, Judah. *Jesus is \_\_\_\_*.....276

Ware, Bruce. *The Man Christ Jesus*.....285

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# ***Journal of Dispensational Theology***

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***Journal of Dispensational Theology* – Winter 2013**

**Contents**

<b>Editorial.....</b>	<b>205</b>
-----------------------	------------

**Peter's Denials:**

<b>Part II: An Examination of the Narratives.....</b>	<b>207</b>
<i>Max G. Mills</i>	

**Hermeneutical Keys to the Olivet Discourse:**

<b>Part 1: Lukan Eschatology (Luke 17).....</b>	<b>229</b>
<i>Ray M. Wenger</i>	

**The Day of the Lord:**

<b>The Prophecy of Joel.....</b>	<b>251</b>
<i>Quentin McCart</i>	

**Book Reviews**

<b>Aslan, Reza. <i>Zealot, the Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth</i>.....</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>Beasley, Michael John. <i>The Fallible Prophets of New Calvinism</i>.....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>Beeke Joel R. and Mark Jones. <i>A Puritan Theology</i>.....</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>Boyarin, Daniel. <i>The Jewish Gospels</i>.....</b>	<b>288</b>
<b>MacDonald, James (ed). <i>Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling</i>.....</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>Murray, Iain H. <i>The Old Evangelicalism</i>.....</b>	<b>296</b>
<b>Rokser, Dennis M. <i>Shall Never Perish Forever</i>.....</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>Smith, Judah. <i>Jesus is ____</i>. ....</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>Ware, Bruce. <i>The Man Christ Jesus</i>.....</b>	<b>285</b>



## EDITORIAL

Ontology is a philosophical term; it is derived from the participle ὄντος meaning “being” or “existence.” Ontology is the theory of reality, or the study of being. To know someone’s ontology is to know his/her view of what is real. For many who do not believe in a Creator (and thus the need to be accountable to this God as Lord and Savior), their ontology is materialism, which means they believe only the physical world is real (i.e. nothing exists that is not physical).

A materialistic ontology is so pervasive that it has even penetrated the beliefs of the church. The classic example of this pervasiveness is the loss of belief among God’s people in the existence of the souls of animals. The obvious question that usually arises with regard to the souls of animals is whether they go to heaven subsequent to death. The reason for that question is failure to understand what the soul does. For instance, it rarely occurs to people that thought is the effect of the soul. If a dog is conscious, it is only because the animal has a soul. Some people will say it is the brain that is conscious. However, if correct, it would mean that God has a brain, which certainly is not true (John 4:24). Brains are not conscious; they are dead matter; it is the soul that is conscious. If a dog is conscious, it is only because it has a soul. In other words, there is something more to the dog than just the body.

The existence of animal souls is a crucial argument for Christianity. Assuming your inquiry with regard to the prior statement, the answer is that Christians believe in an unseen, eternal, immaterial world. Truly, there is an eternal and invisible world occupied by spiritual beings, which would include God, and also angels and demons. The office or locale in which you work is populated by unseen souls that you cannot see; yet, this immateriality exists within each body. Christians should have no difficulty believing in a disembodied soul as a result of belief in an embodied soul. If one does not believe in the existence of animal souls, then the obvious conclusion would be why believe in human souls, angels, and demons, or an eternal and invisible God?

The truth is that there is a world beyond the one (as presently known) in which life occurs. For this reason, “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:18). Christians can know that our “light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Cor 4:17). Praise “the God of peace” who will persevere the “spirit and soul and body . . . without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23).

One may know the reality of the eternal because God has revealed such truth. Of course, if the revelation of such certainties is not authentic and reliable, then the authority is undermined. For this reason, readers of the current *Journal* will appreciate Professor Mills’ harmonization of the Gospel narratives regarding Peter’s denials. The “eternal weight of glory” will occupy one’s thoughts in reading the articles from Ray Wenger and Quentin McCart. In addition to commending positive works, Gary Gilley has also assembled a number of reviews demanding vigilance. The publisher hopes and prays this edition of the *Journal of Dispensational Theology* will edify you in the sense that it helps to fix your “eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,” and thus assist you to live with an eternal perspective in this fleeting life.

— Ron J. Bigalke, Ph.D.  
editor@tyndale.edu



**PETER'S DENIALS:**  
**Part II: An Examination of the Narratives**

**Max G. Mills**

The Gospel accounts of Peter's denials contain many difficulties, which have been frequently cited as contradictions. Harmonization of these narratives has been a matter of debate for many years. In denying the historical accuracy of the Gospels, James Barr said, "Harmonization through the production of multiple events is the most thoroughly laughable of all devices of interpretation."<sup>1</sup> The belief of this writer is that the inerrancy of the Bible must be based upon the statements of the Scriptures themselves. Inerrancy is not dependent upon any commentator's ability to reconcile precisely every event that is recorded. Human knowledge is finite and fallible;<sup>2</sup> it is only the Bible itself that is inerrant. Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, then the Scriptures in their autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they teach.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it is also true that it must be known what the text *means* in order to determine if what it says is *true*.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, important background considerations were provided in part one of this series to explain the meaning of several difficult statements within the narratives of Peter's denials. Such matters were taken into account in order to provide a better understanding of the text. The previous article was important since an understanding of the considerations therein will enable the reader to determine whether, or not, what the narratives say is true.

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\* Max G. Mills, M.Div., Ph.D., assistant professor online (counseling and family studies), Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia

<sup>1</sup> James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) 57.

<sup>2</sup> Paul D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in *Summit Papers*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Oakland, CA: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978) 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 27.



## DIFFICULTIES WITHIN THE FIRST DENIAL NARRATIVE

***The Location and Circumstances***

The first difficulty is that, according to Luke and the other synoptic accounts, the three denials of Peter occurred in the court of Caiaphas, while in the opinion of some commentators, John made all this (Peter's denials) occur in the house of Annas. Luke 22:54 records, "And they led Jesus away to the high priest." Matthew 26:57 identifies Caiaphas as the high priest. The problem becomes more difficult when compared to John's account: "the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound him, and led him to Annas first" (John 18:12b-13a). There is no doubt that Jesus was taken to Annas first, for John is very clear in his statement of this fact.<sup>5</sup> However, the question of whether Jesus remained there for his first interrogation, or whether He was sent immediately to Caiaphas to be first examined by him, must be determined.

Although the argument is correct that Annas was the most influential high priest of his time, and was influential long after he was compelled to retire, John 18:13 makes it all too clear that Caiaphas was high priest *that same year*. He was the one who held the office that John referenced. Breen explained:

St. John is very precise to determine the identity of the high priest; and then in the following verse he tells us that Jesus was brought before the high priest. By all the laws of human speech a writer is obliged to mean one and the same individual by such a sequence of statements. St. John has never told us that Annas was considered as the high priest; he has implicitly told us that he was not the high priest. He has told us with great clearness the name and character of the high priest. In all his Gospel there is but one high priest and that man is Caiaphas.<sup>6</sup>

Edersheim stated, "No account is given of what passed before Annas. Peter and evidently John, followed Him into the palace of the high

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<sup>5</sup> J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, ed. A. H. McNeile, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929) 2:591.

<sup>6</sup> A. E. Breen, *A Harmonized Exposition of the Four Gospels*, 4 vols. (Rochester: John P. Smith Printing Company, 1908) 4:394.

priest – that is, into the palace of Caiaphas, not of Annas.”<sup>7</sup> Findlay affirmed, “The captors of Jesus take Him to the father-in-law, only to find that he shifts on to the son-in-law the entire responsibility of the case.”<sup>8</sup> Freidrich Blass evaluated this text as follows: “After having distinctly told that Caiaphas was the high priest that year, and not Annas, we read that the other disciples went in with Jesus into the place of the high priest. Whose palace, therefore? Of course that of Caiaphas.”<sup>9</sup> The textual language of John 18:13 (“Caiaphas who was high priest that year,” NASB) and John 18:19 (“then the high priest questioned Jesus”) indicates that Caiaphas was the only high priest intended by John, which is in harmony with Luke and the other Gospels.

A second difficulty is presented in John 18:24, which comes after the account of Peter’s denial of Christ in the courtyard of Caiaphas, and the account of the examination of Christ by Caiaphas in the same place (John 18:15). The statement, “So Annas therefore sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest” (NASB, NIV), has led some commentators to the hypothesis that verse 19 describes an informal examination of Christ before Annas. However, this is not the correct understanding of the text.

The difficulty is dissolved when the aorist indicative ἀπέστειλεν, “he sent” (v. 24), is translated as a pluperfect referring to what *had been done* prior to verse 15. The correct translation would then be, “Now Annas had sent him” (AV, KJV). Regarding this use of the aorist, Burton said, “The aorist indicative is frequently used in narrative passages of a past event which precedes another past even mentioned or implied in the context.”<sup>10</sup> Burton further explained that this is not a variation from the normal use of the Greek aorist. From the point of view of Greek grammar, this is simply an historical aorist,<sup>11</sup> which use of the aorist is also supported by Robertson, Gildersleeve, Winer, and Goodwin.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus Christ the Messiah*, 2 vols., 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Longmans, Green, & Company, 1899) 2:548.

<sup>8</sup> George G. Findlay, “The First Trial of Jesus,” *The Expository Times* 6 (October 1894—September 1895): 335.

<sup>9</sup> Freidrich Blass, *Philology of the Gospels* (New York: Macmillan, 1898) 57.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Dewitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1897) 22.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 23, 241.

<sup>12</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934) 840; Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, *Syntax of Classical Greek from Homer to Demosthenes*, 2 vols. (New York: American Book Company, 1900) 1:109; G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed., trans. W. F. Moulton (Edinburgh: T.

Verse 24 is grammatically correct to translate as a belated remark. Breen explained:

The writer proceeds to group events together until he arrives at a point where the clearness of the account demands the statement of some detail which had been omitted in the chronological order. Then a sentence is inserted in the account whose verb is generally in the aorist, and in sense is equivalent to the pluperfect tense. Such statements carry the mind back, and certify it on some fact which is required for full understanding of the narrative.<sup>13</sup>

Not only is such an interpretation grammatically correct and reasonable in view of the text, but also it is characteristic of John's Gospel. Other examples are found in John 6:71; 11:2, 51; 18:2b, 10b, 14, and 18. Edersheim's concluded (most logically): "John 18:24 is an intercalated notice, referring to what had previously been recorded in vv. 15-23."<sup>14</sup> Edersheim's understanding is in complete agreement with Matthew 26:57-58 which informs the reader that Peter followed Jesus into the court of Caiaphas. Therefore, all four Gospels agree that both the primary examination of Christ and the denials of Peter occurred in the courtyard of Caiaphas, the high priest. The Gospel narratives of Peter's denials have thus far been shown to hold no incorrect records.

### ***The Specific Location***

To the reader, John seems to assign the first challenge to Peter and his first denial of Christ at the point of Peter's admittance to the courtyard. Matthew, Mark, and Luke place the first challenge to Peter after he was warming himself at the fire. Luke 22:55 explains, "After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them" (NASB). John, however, did not state that the doorkeeper asked her question at the gate of the courtyard. Nevertheless, some commentators understand that to be the meaning which John intended to convey.

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and T. Clark, 1881) 343; William Watson Goodwin, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (London: Macmillan, 1875; reissued, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965) 18.

<sup>13</sup> Breen, *Harmonized Exposition*, 397-98.

<sup>14</sup> Edersheim, *Life and Times*, 2:548.

Gardiner, who believed that Peter's repeated denials were designed to save him from ejection from the courtyard, stated, "His first denial secured him admission from the portress."<sup>15</sup> Gardiner's assertion cannot be the correct understanding of John's narrative, since John himself said in 18:16, "The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the door keeper, and brought Peter in." John was the individual who secured Peter's entrance.

There are several plausible explanations to this problem, none of which locate Peter at the point of entry to the courtyard. Lenski said that the synoptic Gospels (Mark 14:66) indicate that the doorkeeper left her entry post in charge of another maid. She then came to Peter, fixed her eyes upon him, and declared who he really was. Lenski stated, "This must have occurred sometime after she let Peter in at John's request."<sup>16</sup>

Hendriksen also gave a reasonable description of the scene from the composite picture presented by the Gospels.

It would seem at the very moment when Peter had entered the palace, the portress, viewing him from her nook in the vestibule, had her suspicions. The fact that she had admitted him at the request of John seemed to indicate that Peter too was a disciple of Jesus. The uneasiness that could be read on his face confirms her suspicions. So, about to be relieved by another gatekeeper, she walks toward Peter, who has already entered the open courtyard, and who, in the light of the fire by which he is warming himself, is clearly visible (Luke 22:56). She fixes her eyes on him. Then, stepping even closer, she says to him, 'You too were with Jesus the Nazarene.'<sup>17</sup>

Such a composite depiction can be made because none of the statements is actually contradictory. Leon Morris offered the helpful observation that John did not always narrate events in strict sequence,<sup>18</sup> which is also seen in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke with regard to the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. While Matthew listed the devil's temptation on the pinnacle of the temple as the third temptation, Luke placed it second in

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<sup>15</sup> W. D. Gardiner, "The Denial of St. Peter," *The Expository Times* 26 (October 1914—September 1915): 425.

<sup>16</sup> Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934) 415.

<sup>17</sup> William Hendriksen, *Mark* (New Testament Commentary) (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975) 617.

<sup>18</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), gen. ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 751.

the sequence. Of course, this has nothing to do with error for there is no emphasis placed on chronological order. With this precedent in mind, Breen's explanation of the location of the first denial seems like a reasonable view.

If we transpose the order of the first two denials recorded by John, a more probable solution results. By this adjusting the order, the first denial takes place at the fire in all the evangelists. . . . If we adopt this transposition, then, in all the writers, the second denial happens on the porch. It is called forth by the portress. This also adds to the probability for no other maid would be so apt to be in that place. . . . The place of the third denial is not mentioned by any of the writers. It seems quite probable that Peter, now alarmed by the repeated charges, did not go back to the fire.<sup>19</sup>

Since inerrancy does not demand chronological precision, it is possible to understand John's narrative as not indicating that one event followed so closely upon another. John's first two events could then be transposed, and this would provide a statement that the first denial occurred by a fire, which is also the reasonable location that both Lenski and Hendriksen defended in their explanation. However, it should be noted that a transposing of John's narrative is not necessary in order to harmonize the first denial.

While the substantial truth is the presence of the apostle at the fire, it is true that Luke and Mark picture Peter as *sitting* with the officers, while John said that he was *standing* with them. (Matthew did not mention the fire.) Breen reasonably stated, "It is evident that a man in such a condition would at one time be standing, and at another time be sitting."<sup>20</sup> Hendriksen also understood the element of time that must be considered. He reasoned, "This surely need not be a contradiction. Is it not reasonable to assume that, after sitting down a little while, he had rise. . . ? We may also safely assume that after the first denial he remained standing a while, looking for an avenue of escape. Then he started for the archway."<sup>21</sup>

Certainly, no contradiction exists with regard to Peter's sitting and then standing. To stand would be a reasonable response to the maid's questioning his identity. All difficulties of this nature can be understood when compared to any chronicle of history, as recognized by Feinberg.

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<sup>19</sup> Breen, *Harmonized Exposition*, 403.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 399.

<sup>21</sup> Hendriksen, *Mark*, 393-94.

Inerrancy does not demand historical or semantic precision. . . . Precision is an ambiguous term. Almost any historical or linguistic sentence is capable of greater precision. Any historiography, even if one writes a chronicle, is still only an approximation. If we record an event as having transpired in 1978, we could always have said it more precisely, in the month of May, May 15<sup>th</sup>, or May 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 p.m. and so on. The crucial point as I see it for inerrancy is this: Is the sentence as stated true? If so, then there is no problem.<sup>22</sup>

A similar difficulty is observed as Mark recorded Peter's location as "below" in the courtyard (14:66), and Matthew has "outside" in the courtyard (26:69). A solution to this matter can be achieved by understanding the construction of the houses in Palestine. A number of rooms were often built around three sides of a courtyard. The larger and more comfortable ancient houses had two stories arranged around a courtyard.<sup>23</sup> The palace of Caiaphas had halls big enough to serve for informal meetings of the Sanhedrin.<sup>24</sup>

Since the courtyard was open (without a roof), the term "outside" would be a reasonable choice for Matthew. Mark's use of "below" would then indicate that the interrogation of Jesus occurred in a room *above* the courtyard.<sup>25</sup> What are often thought to be contradictory accounts are merely views of the same location from two different perspectives.

### ***The Accusers Identified***

Commentators Harold Lindsell, Robert Govett, John Lawrence, Robert Thomas, Stanley Gundry, and H. L. Willmington correctly evaluated that Peter's unfaithfulness to the Lord involved more than three denials.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Feinberg, "Meaning of Inerrancy," 29.

<sup>23</sup> C. J. Davey, "Architecture," in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1980) 104.

<sup>24</sup> Hans Kroth, *A Short Guide to the Model of Ancient Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: The Holy Land Corporation, 1966) 4.

<sup>25</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* (Leiden: Brill, 1961) 468.

<sup>26</sup> Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 175; Robert Govett, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (London: Bermrose and Sons, 1891; reprint, Miami Springs, FL: Conley and Schoettle, 1984) 340-41; John W. Lawrence, *The Six Trials of Christ* (Memphis: The Open Door Bible Church, n.d.) 66-67; Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978) 299; H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1981) 330.

Smith added further clarification when he explained, “The easiest solution is to recognize that several interrogators may have been involved in eliciting each of the denials.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, Christ’s prophecy of Peter’s three denials should not be construed as predicting three distinct *utterances* of denial; rather, the prophecy should be regarded as foretelling three *episodes* of denial, or three separate instances in which Peter would deny him. Each episode, or instance, comprised several speeches or utterances to different interlocutors. Peter, therefore, denied Jesus on three occasions, but his speeches during these occasions were many and various.

Accordingly, a problem may be seen in this first interrogation only if one person asked Peter about his being a disciple. Luke and the other synoptic writers record the maid *asserting* that Peter is a disciple, while in John (according to the arrangement in his Gospel), she *asked* Peter if he was one of the disciples. Although each Gospel may refer to the same servant girl on this occasion, she could have made more than one statement. One solution to this difficulty is reached by understanding that the servant girl could have first *asked* the question, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” (John 18:17, NASB). Then after examining him more closely in the dim glow of the charcoal fire, she would more positively *assert*, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene” (Mark 14:67, NASB), and turning to those standing nearby, continued, “This man was with Him too” (Luke 22:56, NASB).<sup>28</sup>

Reiling and Swellengrebel offered a reasonable explanation for the assertion by the synoptic writers. They asserted that “*gazing at him*” (Luke 22:56) indicates further, more accurate observation. The aorist participle (ἀτενίσασα, “having looked intently” or “having gazed”) goes more clearly with the main verb (εἶπεν, “said”). Her prolonged observation of Peter was the grounds for an assertion rather than a question.<sup>29</sup>

Bratcher identified the same intensity of observation by the servant girl in Mark 14:67.<sup>30</sup> The prolonged scrutiny, which precedes her statement, explains her positive accusation. Lenski stated, “No doubt, all cocked their ears at her words and looked searchingly at Peter.”<sup>31</sup> Morris correctly described human nature by judging, “When one asked whether

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<sup>27</sup> Charles Smith, “How Many Cock-Crowings?,” *Grace Seminary Spire* (Summer 1979): 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel. *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Luke* (Leiden: Brill, 1971) 707.

<sup>30</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *Gospel of Mark*, 469.

<sup>31</sup> Lenski, *St. Mark’s and St. Luke’s Gospels*, 415.

Peter was a disciple it is almost certain that others would take the question up. . . . What certainly happened was that somebody started the question and it was taken up by others.”<sup>32</sup> Lenski and Morris’s statements correspond well when one understands John’s account in verse 25 with reference to the first accusation (this involves transposing John’s first and second denial accounts as mentioned earlier). The problem of the question *asked* by the maid in verse 17 is resolved (verse 17 could refer to denial number 2, which occurred at the gateway).

Luke 22:56 records the servant girl’s address to those standing with Peter around the fire, saying, “This man was with Him too.” A reaction to her statement would be normal at this time. The slaves and officers, referenced by John as “they” in verse 25 heard the charge instigated by the servant girl. A mere *question* then was in order at this point, for they were not as certain as she. John recorded the question expressed, as if a negative answer were expected, “You are not also one of His disciples are you?”

Matthew explained Peter’s as “before them all” (26:70). The public answer would reasonably show that the attention of those around the fire was directed toward Peter. Peter’s first response in this collective episode of denial was directed to the servant girl, “Woman, I do not know Him” (Luke 22:57). His second was probably to the officers, “I am not” (John 18:25), and then, before exiting to the porch, he said to her, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about” (Mark 14:68). The final statement before leaving the fire is confirmed by Matthew.

In the first episode, Peter fulfilled one-third of Christ’s prophecy for he completely denied (ἀπαρνῆσθ) his Lord. With evasiveness, he denied the accusation of being with Jesus (cf. Matt 26:70; Mark 14:68). According to John 18:25, he denied being one of Jesus’ disciples. He denied the possibility of any relationship with Christ (Luke 22:57). The manifestation of unfaithfulness was public: “before them all” (and fulfilled Luke’s more detailed prophecy, “You will deny that you know Me,” 22:34). There is no doubt that Christ’s choice of terms indicating a full denial began to develop in the first conversation around the fire in Caiaphas’ courtyard.

### ***The Rooster Crowing***

The first cock crowing recorded by Mark 14:68 marks the time of night in which the events of the first denials occurred, which was approximately 12:30 a.m. Although the other Gospels mention only one crowing, evidence

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<sup>32</sup> Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 759.



has been shown in part one of this series, which favors retaining Mark's witness of the dual crowings. Calvin perceived as follows:

Mark says nothing that is inconsistent with the narratives of the other evangelists, but explains more fully what they pass by in silence. None of us will say that profane historians are inconsistent with each other, when some one of them relates what the others have not included; and therefore, though Mark's narrative is different, still it does not contradict the others.<sup>33</sup>

Since Christ's prediction regarding "a cock crowing" in the other Gospels is a reference to the second cock crowing of Mark 14:72, there is no contradiction on Mark's part by his mention of the first cock crowing in verse 68.

### ***The Time Interval***

According to Luke's statement, the second denial came "a little later" (Luke 22:58), and this would seem to conflict with John's arrangement, which indicates that the examination of Christ was interposed between the first and second denials. While the phrase, "a little while," could reasonably refer to the time covered by the examination, it is not necessary to hold strictly to that interpretation. A more reasonable approach is to assign this short period of time (Luke 22:58) to Peter's retreat from the fire to the porch. The examination of the Lord can then be placed between the second and third denials wherein Luke recorded the time lapse to be approximately an hour (22:59), which is a more logical amount of time for the examination.

## **DIFFICULTIES IN THE SECOND DENIAL**

### ***The Location and Circumstances***

The difficulty of John's placing the second denial by a fire is resolved in understanding that in a palace as large as that of Caiaphas' house there would reasonably be more than one fire. However, the different terms used by Matthew and Mark to describe Peter's location present a possible

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<sup>33</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 3 vols., trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 3:262.

difficulty which needs further explanation. Matthew recorded (in v. 71) that the second denial came when Peter departed to the (πυλῶνα) “gateway.” Mark 14:68 plots Peter’s position to be in the (προαύλιον) “porch.” The standard Greek lexicon gave the same basic definition for both words.<sup>34</sup> While discussing the second denial, Lange stated, “into the porch, or, according to Matthew, the entrance-hall. It is the same idea.”<sup>35</sup> The two terms describe the same location. Mark chose to describe that portion of the palace as the προαύλιον, whereas Matthew used πυλῶνα. In the same manner, Lenski used the terms “vestibule,” “forecourt,” and “entryway” and described that place as the long, covered passage leading from the courtyard, through the front side of the building into the street.<sup>36</sup> Jeremias referred to this as a “gatehouse.”<sup>37</sup> Bratcher and Nida used “porch” and “gateway,” yet their description is the same: “This is the gateway that leads from the courtyard out into the street.”<sup>38</sup> The choice of terms has not falsified the description of Peter’s new location; it is the passageway that leads from the courtyard to the street. The shift in position has not relieved Peter from confrontation. Just like previously, the challenge came from several persons.

### ***The Accusers***

Hendriksen set the scene of the second episode by stating, “So he gets no further than the entranceway or vestibule which via the gate leads to the outside. Several people are standing around.”<sup>39</sup> His statement is an accurate evaluation since Matthew 26:71 says that the servant girl spoke “to those who were there.” The best indication that there was more than one person interrogating Peter on this occasion is the choice of the verb tense which Mark recorded. The verb ἡρνεῖτο, “he was denying,” is the

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<sup>34</sup> William F. Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 702, 729.

<sup>35</sup> John Peter Lange, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*, 24 vols., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. and ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1884) 16:147.

<sup>36</sup> Lenski, *St. Mark’s and St. Luke’s Gospels*, 416.

<sup>37</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions During the New Testament Period*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962) 96.

<sup>38</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *Gospel of Mark*, 350.

<sup>39</sup> Hendriksen, *Mark*, 619.

imperfect tense, and this portrays the denial as being repeated (14:70). In the same verse, the use of πάλιν, “again,” is an intimation that Peter may have given repeated answers on the first occasion of denying also.

The transposing of the denials of John’s Gospel adds to the clearness of this confrontation since the “slavegirl who kept the door” is in her proper place.<sup>40</sup> Gleason Archer said that “door keeper” is probably masculine in John 18:17.<sup>41</sup> However, the article is feminine; therefore, the reference, is feminine. The interrogation occurring at this second denial would reasonably develop in the following sequence. Mark referred to “the (same) maid” and stated that she, “once again” spoke to the bystanders. The same maid who accused Peter at the fire followed him to the porch. (The fact that she “began again to say to the bystanders,” is evidence that she had spoken to the bystanders previously.)

Vincent Taylor said that Mark’s (and presumably Matthew’s) maid may have been the portress mentioned in John 18:16.<sup>42</sup> If Mark and Matthew’s maid should be identified with John’s portress, the “doorkeeper’s” question in John 18:17 prompted the “maid’s” accusation in Mark 14:69 and Matthew 26:71. In John, the doorkeeper’s address was directed to Peter himself and stated in the form of a question, expecting a negative answer. “You are not one of the disciples of this man, too, are you?” is the force of it. The question suggested a line of escape.<sup>43</sup> After receiving the negative reply, the doorkeeper/maid did not believe him. As Matthew reported, she then declared it to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth” (Matt 26:71, NASB). The result was an emphatic denial by Peter, “I do not know the man” (26:72, NASB). The denial was with an oath.

The attention of others would now sufficiently been directed to Peter.<sup>44</sup> Luke 22:58 now adds that someone else ἑτερος (masc.), “saw him.” ἑτερος does not indicate that he was a servant like the others who have accused Peter, but only that he was a different person.<sup>45</sup> He said, “You are one of them, too.” Peter’s short reply, “Man, I am not,” serves to express his

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<sup>40</sup> Breen, *Harmonized Exposition*, 403.

<sup>41</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 340.

<sup>42</sup> Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952) 550.

<sup>43</sup> Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 573.

<sup>44</sup> Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 262.

<sup>45</sup> Reiling and Swellengrebel, *Gospel of Luke*, 708.

annoyance.<sup>46</sup> Lenski offered a good summary of Peter's situation at the gateway.

Luke writes ἕτερος, masculine, "*another man*" saw him, but there is no contradiction when one keeps the situation in mind. Peter had been exposed, and the matter was talked about. In the entryway, especially on a night like this, more than one maid would be on duty. Peter runs into two maids and a man, all three of whom are certain that he is a disciple of Jesus.<sup>47</sup>

One must conclude that there are no discrepancies in the narratives of the second denial. The imperfect ἤρνεῖτο of Mark 14:70 would indicate that the action continued for some time. A full account is acquired by reviewing all the versions together. They all relate the truth. There is no conflict between the doctrine of inerrancy and the facts recorded in the second denial narratives.

Peter continued to make a complete denial of his Lord as he was confronted at the vestibule of Caiaphas's palace. He denied being a disciple in all four Gospels. For the second time, he is quoted as saying, "I do not know the man" (a specific fulfillment of Luke 22:34). The increasing intensity of the denials is indicated by Peter's denial being accompanied by an oath.

#### DIFFICULTIES WITH THE THIRD DENIAL

##### ***The Location and Circumstances***

None of the Gospels state specifically the location of the last episode of Peter's denial. One can assume it was still somewhere inside the palace of Caiaphas since Luke 22:62 states that after this occasion, "Peter *went outside* and wept" (emphasis added). As a consequence of the bystanders, one could reasonably assume that he had returned to the courtyard. Morris reasoned this to be the location when he described the inquiry of the relative of the high priest's servant, as recorded in John 18:26.

But the event in the garden had been done in an uncertain light, and the relative could not be absolutely sure that it was Peter he had seen. All the more would this have been the case in that he was now seeing

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 709.

<sup>47</sup> Lenski, *St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels*, 416.

Peter in a very dim light indeed. A charcoal fire glows red, but does not emit bright flames.<sup>48</sup>

Hendriksen viewed Peter (at this time) as one who was refused exit, and therefore, returned to the open courtyard.<sup>49</sup> Apparently, it was Peter's different manner of speaking that was recognized in this more congested area. The location of this denial is therefore not a matter of difficulty. Perhaps the only apparent conflict regarding Peter's final experience is that of the time of its occurring. All other matters seem to involve data that does not contradict.

### ***The Time***

The difficulty involved with the time is that Luke 22:59 distinguishes the last denial as "after about an hour." Matthew and Mark seem to be in conflict with their statements that the accusations began "a little later." Lattey attempted to limit Luke's time lapse by describing ὥρας, "an hour," as referring to the shortest period of time known to ancients,<sup>50</sup> which would be equivalent to "instantly." However, such an explanation is not the rendering given to ὥρας by the great majority of translators and commentators. The normal meaning would be a twelfth part of the day (12-hour day).

The reasonable conclusion is that the phrase "a little later," included in Matthew and Mark's narrative, must also be a reference to the "about an hour" which Luke described. There are no contradictions. Luke was only being more specific, which seems to be the only reasonable answer since all the accusations of the final episode came to Peter in a sudden and brief commotion. The flurry of accusation bought an equally short-lived advance of replies from Peter. As the sudden press of activities (similar to an outburst of trading on the stock exchange) ended, all four Gospels indicate that immediately a rooster crowed. Since they all record a specific ending, then one must reason that the episode had only one period of time when the brief argument began. There is nothing in the text that necessitates a conflict in time.

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<sup>48</sup> Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 760.

<sup>49</sup> Hendriksen, *Mark*, 620.

<sup>50</sup> Cuthbert Lattey, "A Note on Cockcrow," *Scripture* 6 (October 1953): 55.

### ***The Accusations***

The other three Gospels supplement Luke's account in identifying the questions. Their accounts readily harmonize. Gerhardsson stated, "In the third episode Peter is *accosted* [emphasis added] by several persons . . . they express their accusation and provide a basis for it."<sup>51</sup> The group who brought forth the outburst of charges was composed of "the bystanders," mentioned in Matthew 26:73 and Mark 14:70, "another man" reported by Luke 22:59, and "a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off," identified in John 18:26. The input from all four accounts is necessary to make the scene complete. Hendriksen explained, "Some people are talking to Peter; others are talking about him. Accusations are flying in from every side. This was enough to get anyone excited."<sup>52</sup>

### ***The Dialect***

The reason for the confident identification of Peter as a Galilean (Mark 14:70; Luke 22:59) was the manner of his speech (Matt 26:73). Robertson believed the brogue that Peter revealed was probably due to his Galilean accent of Aramaic.<sup>53</sup> Dalman said that Peter was recognized as a Galilean on the strength of a few words. For this reason, he was termed a companion of Jesus. Consequently, it must be inferred that Jesus was likewise recognizable by his language.<sup>54</sup> Dalman further explained that in the use of the Galilean dialect, "there was nothing in any way inviting disparagement towards Jesus or His disciples. It is true that only certain signs of more advanced development as compared with the Judean dialect may be detected in it."<sup>55</sup>

The information points to a more *positive* recognition of Peter's relationship to Christ. The identification was not just an opinion regarding several guttural sounds, but rather a solid fact based upon particular words spoken. Peter, no doubt, recognized that he was in a dangerous situation. The great positiveness of the charge came to a climax when

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<sup>51</sup> Birger Gerhardsson, "Confession and Denial before Men: Observations on Matthew 26:57—27:2," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 13 (October 1981): 53.

<sup>52</sup> Hendriksen, *Mark*, 620.

<sup>53</sup> Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 28.

<sup>54</sup> Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1981) 80.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 81.

John's Gospel mentions the eyewitness to Peter's presence in the garden with Jesus. The emphatic ἐγώ, "I with my own eyes," is an indication of the sureness of the man's charge,<sup>56</sup> and is a stronger proof. The many-sided attack of confidently spoken charges influenced Peter to attempt an equally emphatic response.

### **Peter's Response**

Matthew and Mark indicate that Peter's response of cursing and swearing was immediate and continuous (ᾤρξατο, impf.). Regarding the intensity of the response, Calvin said, "In this third denial, Peter's unfaithfulness to his Master reached its utmost height."<sup>57</sup> Peter's denial was intensified in the second episode by an oath. The apex is evident in the third encounter as Peter began to curse and swear. Merkel regarded Peter's cursing as directed against Christ.<sup>58</sup> Lane, however, correctly indicated that the statement was intentionally devoid of an object in the Greek text, which denotes that Peter cursed himself if he lied, and those present if they insisted upon asserting that he was a disciple.<sup>59</sup> Wuest explained,

The Jews had a practice of laying themselves under a curse (Acts 23:12). Paul, in Galatians 1:8, 9 calls the divine curse (same word) down upon those who preached a different Gospel than the true one. . . The word "swear" is the same word found in Hebrews 13:11 where God is said to swear, that is to put Himself under oath.<sup>60</sup>

The term "to swear" has the meaning of a solemn protestation of the truth of his assertion.<sup>61</sup> There is no idea of vulgarity or profanity on Peter's part.<sup>62</sup> Peter, having suddenly found himself in a dangerous situation, made an all-out effort to convince those with whom he argued. The flurry had

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<sup>56</sup> J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, ed. A. H. McNeile, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929) 2:603.

<sup>57</sup> Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 264.

<sup>58</sup> Helmut Merkel, "Peter's Curse," in *The Trial of Jesus*, ed. Ernst Bammel (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1970) 70.

<sup>59</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), gen. ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 542.

<sup>60</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, "Mark," in *Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973; reprint, 2002) 1:275.

<sup>61</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *Gospel of Mark*, 471.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

started quickly and before Peter was able to complete his remarks, he was aware of the rooster crowing.

### ***The Cock-Crowing***

Apparently, Peter had been able to make his quick reply to each attack, and was involved in answering the man mentioned in Luke 22:60, when the crowing of the rooster occurred. The argument ended, as quickly as it had begun.

Mark more precisely recorded the cock-crowing as the second to have occurred that night, most likely around 1:30 a.m. However, what is a time indicator for one reading the Scriptures was an aid to memory for Peter, recalling the words of Jesus predicting the very moment (for in this instance, the mood completely changed). Peter's remembrance of Jesus' words brought repentance as quickly as the interrogators had shouted their accusations. One may know more clearly what occurred because each event recorded in the Gospel narratives has its proper place in the conundrum. Lenski assembled the parts as follows:

All the synoptists report the repentance of Peter with exceeding brevity and all of them mention his weeping. Matthew and Luke with aorist ἔκλαυσεν, which states the fact that he wept audibly, but Mark with the imperfect and thus descriptive ἔκλαιεν, which describes Peter as shedding tears. To this verb Matthew and Luke add the verb, πικρῶς, "bitterly," referring to the bitter contrition from which the sobbing came.<sup>63</sup>

According to Luke 22:61, it was at this point that the Lord turned and looked at Peter. The logical explanation is that Jesus had come down from the room where He had been informally examined, and was passing through the courtyard.<sup>64</sup>

One must conclude that the four accounts of the third denial readily harmonize. Peter's blatant failure is the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy. Williamson described the completeness of the denial of the final occasion: "He [Peter] first pretends ignorance ('I do not know what you are talking about'), then disclaims membership in the Christian community (he denies

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<sup>63</sup> Lenski, *St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels*, 418.

<sup>64</sup> Bernard, *St. John*, 603-04.



that he is ‘one of them’), and finally denies any relationships to Jesus (‘I do not know this man of whom you speak’).<sup>65</sup>

There is no basis for ascribing error to any of the Gospel narratives. Luke’s more specific prophecy (“a cock shall not crow today until you have denied three times that you know me,” 22:34) has been fulfilled in each of the three episodes. The incidents include: (1) Luke 22:57; (2) Matthew 26:72; and, (3) Mark 14:71. The denials mentioned by each Gospel are excerpts from the three occasions when Peter denied Christ. Each narrative accurately records facts that harmonize with the other Gospel records. Christ’s prediction was exactly fulfilled.

### SUMMARY

The article herein has presented evidence that the Scripture record of Peter’s denials is without error. A portion of this evidence was provided by means of the previous article. The background considerations (within part one of this series) were defined and clarified in order to provide a better understanding of the narratives, and this knowledge enables the reader to determine whether or not what the narratives say is true.

The term ἀπαρνέεσθαι has been shown to indicate a “denial” expressed by an individual with regard to another person. The denial can be expressed in a wide variety of negative statements. The term, used by Christ in his prophecy of the denials, is a reference to total denial (i.e. the *complete* series of three total denials). The terms used in both the prediction of the denials and the narrative accounts of the fulfillment agree as to basic definition.

The deadline set for the denials has been proven to be prior to the second cock crowing. Mark’s record of the prophecy (which includes δις, “twice”) receives sufficient support to be retained as an accurate report and not an interpolation. The omission of this word in Matthew, Luke, and John is most likely the result of scribal assimilation. The language of the text identifies the meaning of the phrase, “before the cock crows,” by classical use, and by present day observation to mean the literal crowing of a rooster. The second crowing may be designated more accurately within the early hours of the morning, long before day.

The narratives of each of the three denials have been analyzed, and this has been accomplished with the understanding that the Gospels describe three different episodes when Peter denied Christ. On each

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<sup>65</sup> Lamar Williamson Jr., *Mark* (Interpretation) (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983) 267.

occasion, there are reiterated accusations and importunate denials. The grammar employed in Peter's responses (ἡρνεῖτο, the imperfect of ἀρνῆεσθαι) allows one to understand that each of the denials may have been lengthy and repetitious. In these extended conversations, some people spoke to Peter and others spoke concerning him.

Regarding the occasion of the first denial, the high priest (before whom the first interrogation of Christ occurred) is shown to be Caiaphas. The language of the text of John 18:13 ("Caiaphas, who was high priest that year") and John 18:19 ("Then the high priest questioned Jesus") indicates that Caiaphas was the high priest intended by John, and this is in harmony with the synoptic Gospels. Therefore, the courtyard of Caiaphas is the location of the first episode of Peter's denying Christ. John 18:24 is a belated explanation, indicating that this first examination occurred after Annas *had sent* Jesus to Caiaphas.

The specific location of Peter's first confrontation was at a fire in the courtyard, while he was with the officers and slaves. By transposing the first two denials recorded in John's Gospel, it is reasonable to understand that the absence of a description in John's account concerning the location of this denial does not indicate an immediate interrogation at the gate. John did *not* provide information in conflict with the other narratives.

Those who identified Peter are shown to be a servant girl and some of the bystanders near the fire. The bystanders are introduced by John's Gospel as "they," and by Matthew with the phrase "before them all." The details are in harmony in this conversation around the fire, as Peter fulfilled the first one-third of the prophecy. Having denied (1) being with Jesus, (2) being one of his disciples, and (3) knowing Him, Peter accomplished a *total* (to the fullest extent) denial of his Lord on this first occasion. After these denials, Peter departed to the porch. The rooster crowing (Mark 14:68) marks the time of night in which this first denial occurred, which was probably sometime after midnight.

Peter's second denial occurred on the "porch" of Caiaphas's palace. The same location is designated by the term "gateway." Both words are references to the covered passage leading from the courtyard to the street. Matthew and Mark's choices of terms do not falsify either narrative.

The use of πάλιν, "again," and ἡρνεῖτο, "he was denying," indicate Peter's repeated answers. Therefore, more than one person interrogated Peter at this new location. Mark recorded the same maid who accused Peter at the fire as speaking "once again" to the bystanders. Matthew reported another servant girl's involvement in the scene, which is most likely the servant girl who John identified as the door keeper. The presence

of a man in the group is included in Luke's Gospel. A complete account is acquired by reviewing all four narratives.

The events of the second confrontation also describe a complete denial. Peter denied being one of Jesus' disciples. He denied being with Jesus. He denied knowing Him (a fulfillment of Luke 22:34). Peter intensified the denial by the use of an oath. The Lord accurately predicted his actions. There is no conflict among the details of the Scripture record of this event.

The final denial is not described as to location. One must logically place the occurrence within the palace of Caiaphas, for Luke records that, after the third denial, Peter "went outside" and wept. With reference to time, Luke stated that the third episode occurred "after about an hour." Matthew and Mark used the phrase, "a little later," as an equivalent to Luke's more specific report. There are no contradictions.

The interrogators at this time converged upon Peter and began their positive identifications simultaneously, which is evident because each Gospel records that a rooster crowed immediately as Peter's denial was made. Among the flurry of confidently spoken charges are: (1) the detection of Peter's speech variation; and, (2) the identification by an eyewitness. The third confrontation is a sudden and brief argument. Those involved are identified as "another man," "the bystanders," and "a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off." The sharpened accusations of the last episode brought an equally intensified response from Peter. Cursing and swearing accompanied his denial. Peter's blatant failure resulted in the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy. Peter's denial covers the same broad scope as the first two.

The crowing of a rooster for the second time delineates the end of the ordeal. The sound brought Peter's memory back to the Lord's prediction of the events that occurred. The Gospels provide a composite account of Peter's grief. One must conclude that the four accounts of these events in the third denial readily harmonize. The conclusion of this article is as follows: (1) every confrontation which Peter experienced involved statements by several persons; (2) each Gospel recorded three denials by narrating portions of each episode; (3) each Gospel writer selected details to report in a more specific way; and, (4) there is no valid basis for the claim that the difficulties of the narratives contain error.





## HERMENEUTICAL KEYS TO THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

### Part 1: Lukan Eschatology (Luke 17)

**Ray M. Wenger**

One of the areas of debate regarding the Olivet Discourse (as found in Matthew 24) is whether there is mention of the rapture. The pericope particularly in focus is Matthew 24:36-41 where Jesus referenced the days of Noah and the judgment of the Flood, making a comparison with Jesus' return when one shall be taken, and the other left. Luke's account of the Olivet Discourse (Luke 21) does not mention this pericope. Luke did describe a different occasion when Jesus used the analogy of the days of Noah and Lot to teach his disciples about the coming of the kingdom (Luke 17:20—18:8), which for convenience will be called "Jesus' Discourse on the Coming Kingdom." Analysis of that material provides a hermeneutical basis for clarifying the discussion of Matthew 24.

#### DISCOURSE OVERVIEW

#### ***Contextual Emphasis upon the Spiritual Nature of the Kingdom of God***

The broad context of Jesus' Discourse on the Coming Kingdom emphasizes the inner spiritual condition of those who participate in the kingdom of God. The rich man experienced God's blessings on earth, but after death, God consigned him to the place of torment, while the Lord sent the despised and neglected Lazarus to the place of blessing (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus taught the importance of not causing someone to fall into sin, and of forgiving even those who repeatedly wrong believers (17:1-4). The disciples recognized that this would require great faith, and they requested that the Lord increase their faith. Jesus gave the illustration of faith as a mustard seed, and emphasized that being a truly profitable servant of God is to go beyond mere dutiful obedience (17:5-10). Only one of the ten healed lepers returned to give thanks, indicating invisible spiritual character that was far superior to that of his nine companions (17:11-19).

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\* Ray M. Wenger, Th.M., itinerant Bible teacher, Pinnacle, North Carolina

After speaking of the coming of the Kingdom of God (17:20—18:8), Jesus contrasted true followers and hypocrites. Two men outwardly did the same thing: they went to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee appeared outwardly pious, but was praying “to himself” by extolling his own supposed virtues, while the despised tax collector bowed in true repentance, and received justification (18:9-14). For those who thought adults were more important than children, Jesus emphasized that only those who receive the kingdom of God like a little child will actually enter into it (18:15-17). The rich young ruler had kept many commandments, but his heart was unwilling to forsake his wealth in order to enter the kingdom (18:18-25). Jesus taught that those who forsake the things of this life for the sake of the kingdom of God would be amply rewarded (18:26-30). Formerly blind Bartimaeus did not immediately go home to pursue his own agenda, but followed Jesus in the way (18:35-53). Zacchaeus, the despised tax collector, received salvation even though people complained that Jesus had gone to eat with a sinner (19:1-10).

Between these two sections (16:19—17:19 and 18:9—19:10), which emphasize the spiritual character of the participants in the kingdom of God, Jesus described the visible coming of the kingdom wherein only the inwardly righteous will participate (17:20—18:8), thus corresponding to Jesus’ declaration to Nicodemus that unless a man is born from above, he will not see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

### ***Structure of the Passage***

Jesus’ Discourse on the Coming Kingdom, in combination with its broader context, contains an elaborate chiasmic structure which focuses the attention upon one short enigmatic statement: “Remember Lot’s wife.” The inner spiritual condition is the sole criterion for inclusion in the coming kingdom. Lot’s wife is the tragic illustration: even though she had outwardly obeyed in leaving the city, her heart was still in Sodom, and she was destroyed the same day that Sodom perished.

Regarding the discourse itself (17:20—18:8), a second aspect of structure involves the audience of the discourse. The first two verses describe Jesus interaction with the Pharisees (17:20-21), which is brief and somewhat enigmatic, typical of his communication with those who are not true seekers. Jesus’ disciples spoke the remainder of the material (17:22—18:8), giving much more detail to those who can profit from it spiritually. Again, Jesus clearly differentiated between proper action (coming with a legitimate theological question), and a proper heart attitude that is able to receive the things of the kingdom.

- A. Keeping the commandments does not procure merit in the kingdom (17:7-10)
- B. Only one leper returned in humility to give thanks (17:11-19)
- C. The Pharisees ask about the coming of the kingdom (17:20-21)
- D. The saints desire the delayed kingdom (17:22-25)
  - E. Some taken, others left at the coming of the kingdom, illustrated by Noah and Lot (17:26-30)
  - F. No time to make changes on that day (17:31-33)
    - 1. Do not be attached to anything on earth (17:31)
    - 2. Focus: remember Lot's wife (17:32)
    - 1'. Lose your life in order to save it (17:33)
  - E'. Some taken others left at the coming of the kingdom (17:34-37)
- D'. Saints pray for justice at the coming of the kingdom (18:1-8)
- C'. Pharisee goes to pray (18:9-14)
- B'. Humility like a child is required for entry (18:15-17)
- A'. Rich young ruler who had kept commands cannot enter because of heart problem (18:18-30)

The content of Jesus' Discourse on the Coming Kingdom is organized in an A, B, C, B' pattern. The repetition of the second and fourth sections forms an *inclusio* that focuses the attention upon the central question being discussed: the coming of the kingdom of God.

- A. Overview: the nature of the kingdom of God (17:20-21)
- B. How to live during delay before the kingdom comes (17:22-25)
- C. Focus: the coming of the kingdom of God (17:26-37)
- B'. How to live during delay before the kingdom comes (18:1-8)

#### OVERVIEW: THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD (17:20-21)

#### ***Significance of the Leper Pericope***

The account of the healing of the lepers (17:11-19) forms a rich theological background leading to Jesus' emphasis upon the heart attitude of those who participate in the coming kingdom (17:20-21). Ten lepers cried for healing. Jesus commanded them to go present themselves to the priest to verify that they were healed. As they obeyed by faith and went, all ten were cleansed externally. Only one (a despised Samaritan) experienced the



internal cleansing, a transformation impossible to observe and a true receiving of the kingdom; its evidence appeared as he returned to give thanks, but by then the kingdom of God was within him. He alone returned to give thanks and glory to God. Externally they looked identical, but the one man was vastly different on the inside.

### ***Futuristic Orientation***

The paragraph describing Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees is futuristic in its orientation (vv. 20-21). In particular, both occurrences of (ἔρχεται) are looking toward the future.<sup>1</sup> The Pharisees had asked when the kingdom of God would come (πότε ἔρχεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ); this is obviously futuristic in intent. Jesus used the same form in his reply (Οὐκ ἔρχεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παρατηρήσεως); the natural sense is futuristic, and is confirmed by the next part of Jesus' answer that used an explicit future tense (οὐδὲ ἔροῦσιν, Ἴδοὺ ὧδε ἡ, Ἐκεῖ).<sup>2</sup> The Pharisees were not asking about the present; rather, their questions concerned the future. Jesus answered the question they asked.

In the final clause, Jesus gave the reason why in the future people will not say "here, or there"—it is because "the kingdom of God is within you" (γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν). Recent scholarship has proposed the meaning "in your midst" to deal with the difficulty of Jesus saying "within you" to the hard-hearted Pharisees. Therefore, the proposal is that the kingdom of God was present in their midst because Jesus was there working signs. However, there are significant reasons why the traditional translation is best.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For similar uses of the present tense of this verb in a future sense, see Matthew 17:11 and John 14:3.

<sup>2</sup> Darrell L. Bock (*Luke*, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996] 2:1417) argued that the paragraph orientation is present instead of future. However, he failed to address the explicit future tense in the center of the paragraph.

<sup>3</sup> The reason why "within you" is better than "in your midst" is as follows: 1) the lexical meaning of (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν) is "inside you" in contrast to something outside; 2) of the counter examples proposed, none of them occur in the Greek New Testament, and the examples exhibited are not conclusive; 3) the Septuagint does use (ἐντὸς), but repeatedly its meaning is "within" rather than "in the midst" (Ps 39:3; 103:1; 109:22; Song 3:10); 4) the only other use of (ἐντὸς) in the New Testament is Matthew 23:26 where Jesus used the inside of the cup to describe the inner condition of the Pharisees; 5) when Luke wrote of things or persons being "in the midst," he always used (ἐν μέσῳ) instead of (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν) (Luke 2:46; 10:3; 21:21; 22:27; 24:36; Acts 1:15; 2:22), and Paul used the exact wording one would

Indeed, the very difficulty, which the proposal attempts to solve, is misplaced. The “within you” is not referring to the Pharisees, but to a future time when the kingdom comes. “For the kingdom of God is within you” is the reason for which in the future “they will not say, ‘Behold here, or there!’” Therefore, it is a condition that occurs in the future, not something that is happening in the lives of Jesus’ contemporaries. As often occurs in prophecy, Jesus assumed the vantage point of the future prophetic event, and thus used the present tense “is” instead of “will be” because this is the condition of those who are part of the future and suddenly appearing kingdom, not that these particular Pharisees already had it within themselves. The usage of “you” is generic, similar to such repeated usage in Deuteronomy 30:1-9, which is clearly referring to people of a future time, not to the audience of Moses in the wilderness.

### ***Absence of Signs Preceding the Coming of the Kingdom***

The Jews expected great heavenly signs to attest the arrival of the kingdom of God; this would be the normal expectation from reading the prophecies of the Old Testament. Jesus’ answer was shocking and emphatic: there is no way one can tell when it will appear; it is impossible to predict by specific observations as to when it will come (Οὐκ ἔρχεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παρατηρήσεως). The coming cannot be predicted by

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expect in Luke 17:21, if “in your midst” were the correct meaning (ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν) (1 Thess 2:7); 6) the syntax of Luke 17:21 is in opposition to the meaning “in your midst” (see detailed arguments by Godet and Hawthorne); 7) the claim that the kingdom of God is something believers enter, not something they receive is firmly contradicted in the near context (Luke 18:17), where the receiving is clearly done before the entering; 8) most importantly, although the meaning “in your midst” is chosen and interpreted to mean that the kingdom had actually arrived in the person of Jesus who was in their midst doing miracles, this very idea is contradicted by Jesus’ statement: the kingdom of God does not come by observation, that is, the dramatic sign miracles of Jesus would have made it very observable that the kingdom had arrived. For arguments for “in your midst,” see Bock, *Luke*, 2:1415-17. For “within you,” see Frédéric Louis Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, 2 vols., trans. Edward William Shalders and M. D. Cusin (New York: I. K. Funk & Co., 1881) 2:193-196; also especially, consider Gerald F. Hawthorne, “The Essential Nature of the Kingdom of God,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 25 (November 1962): 34-50.

observation of supernatural signs, or by extrapolation from current politics (even if based upon prophetic scriptures), or configuration of the stars.<sup>4</sup>

The total unpredictability makes it clear that Jesus was not referring to his glorious return to the earth at the end of the tribulation because this return is preceded by many dramatic and identifiable signs as predicted in the book of Revelation and in the Olivet Discourse. Significantly, Luke 17 mentions none of the signs in heaven, plagues, and earthquakes elaborated in the Olivet Discourse. Consequently, the coming is sudden, since no observable signs precede it. The unpredictability corresponds to the emphasis upon ordinary human activities during the days of Noah and Lot, as described later in the chapter.

When the kingdom of God arrives, it will be a global, not local entity. No one will say, "See here or there" (v. 21). The statement in Luke 17:21 can be interpreted two ways: 1) there is no interval between the arrival of the kingdom of God and a deadline for personal preparation; or, 2) there is no possibility of missing it by failing to be at the right place at the right time. The second option means there is no local beginning that spreads abroad, and that the kingdom is not localized at a particular place where people need to go to participate.<sup>5</sup> The second interpretation corresponds to Jesus' warning the disciples not to follow local claims because the coming will be instantaneous and worldwide (vv. 23-24).

### ***Correcting False Notions Regarding the Nature of the Kingdom of God***

Jesus was correcting the false notions of the Pharisees regarding the nature of the kingdom (vv. 20-21). The kingdom is not merely temporal, but eternal. The fundamental idea is not "when." The kingdom is not primarily observable by external observations. The kingdom is not primarily geographical. When it comes they will not say "here" or "there." The reason they do not say this is given by the next clause which is connected to the preceding by the word "for." All of this is because the kingdom of God is "within you." Jesus' statement is a key for understanding the nature of the kingdom of God; it cannot mean "in your midst" through the ministry of Jesus living among them, because his ministry was filled with dramatic observable signs. Jesus insisted upon the exact opposite: it does not come by observation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34* (Dallas: Word, 1998) 854.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Hawthorne, "Essential Nature of the Kingdom of God," 36-37.

Primarily, the kingdom of God refers to the *dominion* of God, and secondarily to the territory over which He rules, as explained by Hawthorne.

Thus the basic idea contained in this expression is given full significance in Luke 17:21 only if the meaning “within your hearts” is attributed to ἐν τῷ ὕμῳ. Because the Pharisees’ question revealed the wrong idea of the nature of the Kingdom of God, and because it stressed too strongly its space-time qualities, our Lord did not reply to their “When?”, but sought to correct their understanding of the Kingdom’s *essential nature*. In its essential nature it is neither temporal or spatial but spiritual. It is the rule of God over the heart of one who has willingly submitted his will to the supreme will of God.<sup>7</sup>

The Pharisees assumed they would be part of the kingdom when it came, but the kingdom will only be for those who have spiritually received it (21b). The fundamental basis for participation in the kingdom is not the correct understanding of observable signs, but a transformed character that willingly submits to the will of God.

#### HOW TO LIVE DURING THE DELAY BEFORE THE KINGDOM COMES (17:22-25)

##### ***Introduction to the Section***

The remainder of the discourse (17:22—18:8) was given only to the disciples. The Pharisees resisted the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God, but were like Esau who wanted material benefits but disdained the spiritual. Jesus was not denying the material arrival of the kingdom, but He gave more information to the disciples, who were in a spiritual condition to profit from such details.<sup>8</sup>

There is an interesting chiastic key delimiting the section upon how to live during the delay; it is based upon “day(s)” and “Son of Man.”

One of the days (22a)  
Of the Son of Man (22b)  
Son of Man (24c)  
In his day (24d)

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 46-47.

<sup>8</sup> Godet, *Gospel of St. Luke*, 2:194.

Clearly, verses 22-24 precede the days of the Son of Man; verse 25 gives the reason for this period of Jesus' absence: because He will be rejected by the contemporary Jewish generation.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, verses 22-25 describe the time period from the national rejection of Jesus until the days immediately before his return.

***Delay: Waiting for the Coming (vv. 22-24)***

The phrase "one of the days of the Son of Man" forms a connection between Jesus' days on earth and the period of time when He returns.<sup>10</sup> In the future, the disciples will desire one of the days of the Son of Man but will be unable to see it. The desire is an expression of inner character aligned with the purposes of Jesus—wishing for even one day of the Son of Man. The yearning is speaking of the time when He is absent. The apostles and their successors are long gone. The world is engulfed in materialism, pantheism, and pleasure-seeking. The saints will have an increasing longing for the silent and hidden Lord, and for even a single day (μία τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) of manifestation of grace and power like when Jesus was on earth. However, the task will be to walk in faith, not sight (οὐκ ὄψεσθε). No wonder the faith of the vast majority will nearly be extinguished (cf. 18:8).<sup>11</sup>

Under such circumstances, it is easy to be distracted by false hopes. Jesus gave clear direction on how to respond to false expectations (vv. 23-24). He predicted that during the days when He is not visibly present, people will falsely announce the visible appearance of the kingdom, and say "Look there" or "Look here," but He instructed his followers not to follow them (23). He protected his followers from deception by informing them that his genuine appearance will be instantaneously known worldwide—something that no human could duplicate. The Lord's appearing will be like lightning that flashes across the sky (v. 24). Therefore, any human announcement of the kingdom's arrival must be false, and should not even be considered.

The chiastic structure (here, there; there, here) connects verse 21 with verse 23. The coming kingdom will be both spiritual (v. 21) and

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<sup>9</sup> The statement makes the meaning of "generation" here clearly the contemporaries of Jesus. By comparison, the careful structure of Luke 21:32 makes it clear that "generation" in that context is the generation living at the time of the end.

<sup>10</sup> Nolland, *Luke*, 858.

<sup>11</sup> Godet, *Gospel of St. Luke*, 2:195-96.

sudden (v. 24), without any observable signs to pinpoint the date of arrival (v. 20). When it does come, there will not be any uncertainty (v. 24). However, first the rejected Messiah will go where the evil generation of his day cannot come (v. 25), and this waiting stage will end with his sudden return (vv. 26ff).

### THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD (17:26-37)

#### **Structural Keys**

Luke 17:26-37 is bounded by an *inclusio* based on some being taken and others left. A dramatic warning is inserted in the center of the *inclusio*. An undergirding theme is that even for people who are outwardly involved in the same activities, there is a sudden division evidently based upon their inner character.

Day of judgment: godly taken to safety, but the others  
left for judgment (vv. 26-30)

Solemn warning: prepare spiritually in order to always  
be ready (vv. 31-33)

Day of judgment: one taken from mill and bed, the others  
left for judgment (vv. 34-37)

#### ***Day of Judgment: Godly Taken to Safety, but the Others Left for Judgment (vv. 26-30)***

In the days that precede the day of the coming kingdom, there will be two classes of people: those who are unprepared, and those who are prepared. The situation will be analogous to the days of Noah and Lot. In Noah's day, they were eating, drinking, marrying, and being given in marriage. In Lot's day, the people were also busy—they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, and planting. Those who were unprepared were busy with normal activities appropriate for ordinary human existence.<sup>12</sup> The inclusion of marriage regarding the antediluvians, and the striking omission of marriage in the description of the Sodomites corresponds to their

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<sup>12</sup> For a contrary view, see Bock who asserted, "The verbs may seem neutral, but anyone familiar with the flood story would know that they connote moral corruption" (*Luke*, 2:1432). The verbs in themselves do not denote moral corruption, but merely speak of ordinary activity; it is the specific descriptions in the Genesis account which give the detail showing moral corruption.

disregard of marriage in preference for sexual perversion, and emphasizes that Jesus was not addressing their evil behavior, but that they were busy doing things that were appropriate for life on this earth. The use of imperfect verbs (vv. 27-28) describing their activities during the days of both Noah and Lot emphasizes that this was repetitive, characteristic behavior.

Of course, from the Genesis accounts, one knows that the antediluvians were known for their violence and the Sodomites were known for their sexual perversion. Both groups ignored the oral tradition of God's messages for how to live, in addition to specific messages from God in their own time. In Noah's day, the people saw him building a huge boat, and heard his preaching of righteousness (cf. 2 Pet 2:5), but disregarded it. Lot's companions saw their supernatural deliverance by the 318 servants of Abram, heard Lot speaking in the gate, encountered the angels who blinded them physically, and were so blind spiritually and so foolish that they tried to reach the door to approach the angels who had blinded them. They ignored Lot's messages of warning before he left Sodom. However, Jesus mentioned none of these things because his purpose was to emphasize that even if external behavior is legitimate, the inner character can still be unprepared for that great day.

Noah and Lot correspond to the people who are prepared for the coming day. Believers find societal corruption distressing; they long for one of the days of the Son of Man (v. 22). The wickedness surrounding Lot was daily vexing to his soul (2 Pet 2:7). Undoubtedly, Noah was much distressed by the ungodliness of his day and was very concerned for his family (cf. Ezek 14:14, 16, 18, 20). Lot and Noah's concerns were a great contrast to the complacency of their society.

While believers sigh with growing ardour for the return of their Lord, carnal security more or less complete takes possession of the race. It is an epoch like those which have preceded all the great catastrophes of history. The business of earthly life is carried through with regularity; but religious feeling gradually disappears from the heart of men who have become secularized.<sup>13</sup>

The passage emphasizes "days" that culminate in a special "day" of deliverance and judgment; this is true for the analogy of both Noah and Lot, and also for the days of the Son of Man which precede the "day" when the Son of Man is revealed (v. 30). The days of Noah (v. 26) and the days of

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<sup>13</sup> Godet, *Gospel of St. Luke*, 2:197.

Lot (v. 28) were days of complacency, and this complacent busyness will also be the norm in the days of the Son of Man (v. 26).

In the historical analogy, “the day Noah entered the ark” (v. 27) and “the day Lot left Sodom” (v. 29) both indicate a sudden change. The shift involves two elements: 1) the righteous were moved to a place of safety; and, 2) those remaining were destroyed. The day Noah and Lot entered a place of safety, then those who were left were overwhelmed by catastrophic judgment. Once the rain (in Noah’s case) or the fire (in Lot’s case) began to fall, all the normal activities ceased. The supreme focus would have been to attempt to escape from judgment.

The activities Luke had mentioned earlier are normal, ordinary, and fitting for a time of complacency (not distressed as in the day when judgment actually fell). Prior to that day, people were not frantically building rafts so as to be prepared for rising waters or studying elaborate designs for fireproof shelters. When judgment fell, there was no time for such preparations; judgment was inescapable. The analogy of the days of Noah and Lot is particularly appropriate for what one may know regarding the tribulation and the days that precede it. Prior to the beginning of that seventieth seven, people will be complacently pursuing the ordinary activities of life, glibly disregarding God’s messages. When the catastrophic judgments of the tribulation begin, ordinary complacent activities will be impossible, as repeated occurrences of God’s judgments descend upon them, and overwhelm them (cf. Amos 5:18-20).

The final verse in this section emphasizes that the day that the Son of Man is revealed will correspond to the day of Noah and the day of Lot (κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ἔσται ἡ ἡμέρα ὃ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποκαλύπτεται, v. 30). By implication, those who are prepared will be moved to a place of safety before the judgment falls. The moment of such removal will be described in the final verses of the chapter (vv. 34-37), after the focused warning of verses 31-33.

The final word of verse 30 (ἀποκαλύπτεται) presupposes that during the days of delay, the Son of Man is present but veiled from the view of the world. Suddenly the veil will be lifted and his sovereignty publicly displayed.<sup>14</sup> The mass of humanity who are content to live as if God did not exist will suddenly encounter judgment, which corresponds precisely to the historical analogy. The antediluvians and Sodomites assumed they could pursue the lifestyles of their own choice, with no need to behold their sovereign Creator. Suddenly, they were confronted with inescapable judgment.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



***Solemn Warning: Prepare Spiritually in Order  
to Always Be Ready (vv. 31-33)***

The next verses (vv. 31-33) are the focal point between the *inclusio* paragraphs of some taken, others left (vv. 26-30; vv. 34-37), emphasizing the importance of this warning. The warning itself is also bounded by an *inclusio* (attitude of forsaking everything to gain true life).

No attachment for anything in this life (v. 31)

Focus: remember Lot's wife (v. 32)

Lose life to preserve it (v. 33)

As noted at the beginning of this article, verse 32 is the focal point of an elaborate multilevel chiasm that spans several chapters in Luke. The structure emphasizes the supreme importance of Lot's wife as an example of warning.

The wording "on that day" (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ) and a future verb (ἔσται) point to the future coming of the Son of Man which will be like lightning shining across the sky (cf. v. 24), and any attempts to prepare at that moment will be utterly futile (v. 31). It is absolutely imperative not to be attached to anything on earth, and to gladly abandon everything in order to go with Christ.<sup>15</sup> In this picture, they will not be escaping to any earthly place; it is a picture of how the sudden coming will leave no time for anyone to make any preparations. Only those whose hearts are already in heaven will go with Him. Jesus' warning notably omitted the need for haste and the pessimistic prediction regarding pregnant or nursing mothers—aspects significant for escape at AD 70 (Luke 21:20-24) or at the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15-19), but irrelevant at the rapture.

A heart tied to the things of earth will experience destruction just as certain as did Lot's wife (v. 32). While living in Sodom, she evidently felt a great attachment there, and even though she left with her husband at the prompting of the angels, she apparently could hardly bear the thought of leaving. God even warned her not to think of the past—a final call to renounce the things of earth. However, her affection for what should be in the past was evidently so great that she disregarded the prohibition, and the evil of her heart was unveiled as a warning to everyone in the centuries since. Lot's wife was attached to things of earth (she physically departed,

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<sup>15</sup> Nolland noted, "As did Noah and Lot, individuals will need to cooperate [*sic*] in their own immediate removal if they are not to be engulfed in the judgment to fall" (*Luke*, 861).

but spiritually had never left). The insertion of the warning at this point clarifies the emphasis of these verses: deal with your heart *before* the crisis of that day. The key to detachment from the things of earth in the future is to be detached in the present, so that one gladly abandons everything on earth at the moment when Jesus appears. Jesus emphasized the necessary priority: live a pattern of losing your life for his sake, in order to ultimately attain the life that really matters (v. 33; cf. 9:24).

Luke 17:31-33 is a paragraph of solemn warning, which continues the emphasis upon the inner condition of the heart. Noah's family was doing the same things as those who perished: eating, drinking, and marrying. Lot would have been doing some, if not all of the activities attributed to the people of Sodom. The fundamental issue is that the ungodly do not have a transformed heart, as graphically illustrated by Lot's wife. She had left Sodom with her husband, but her heart was in Sodom. She was destroyed, obviously judged for her wickedness, even though her inner wickedness would not have been obvious to her neighbors in Sodom. Therefore, individuals may appear to be alike, but will be separated according to their inner condition: the righteous taken to safety, and the wicked left to be destroyed. Only those with godly character will enter the kingdom of God.

***Day of Judgment: One Taken from Mill and Bed,  
Others Left (vv. 34-37)***

Luke 17:34-37 returns to the theme of some taken, others left. Jesus began with terminology emphasizing the importance of what He said (λέγω ὑμῖν, 34a), and intensified the drama by speaking from the vantage point of that prophetic moment: "this night two will be in one bed" (ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ ἔσονται δύο ἐπὶ κλίνης μιᾶς, 34a). As is often the case in prophetic pronouncements, Jesus spoke from the vantage point of the future moment of time, increasing the dramatic intensity of the statement.<sup>16</sup> Of the two in a bed, one is taken, the other left (34b). Of two women grinding grain at the same place (ἔσονται δύο ἀλθήουσαι ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό), one will be taken, and the other left (35).<sup>17</sup> Ordinary activities will be suddenly interrupted by a very intimate selective removal of some, and leaving others remaining. The

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<sup>16</sup> English versions usually translate "that night" because of the context and probably because "this night" would be awkward in English, but the dramatic intensity of prophetic vantage point is obscured.

<sup>17</sup> Verse 36 has very weak manuscript support and is therefore not discussed here.

actions are not like the catastrophic judgments of the tribulation, where huge masses of people from all walks of life are abruptly overwhelmed by destruction. Even the most intimate relationships are suddenly broken to form a new grouping of humanity into two groups: those taken and those left. Suddenly they are parted forever to opposite fates.

The basis for selection is their inner spiritual condition. The division is not made because of overt wicked actions at that moment. The tasks mentioned are normal and necessary for human life on this earth. Externally, people are doing the same legitimate things of ordinary life. Those left behind will likely be shocked to notice that their companion in activity has suddenly disappeared. The mention of both nighttime and daytime situations (in a bed, or grinding grain) occurring in that moment correspond with Jesus' coming instantaneously worldwide, and corresponds to the sign of his coming which He had earlier described to his disciples (v. 24).

The most natural reading from the contextual examples of Noah and Lot is that being taken is a picture of salvation, and being left is a picture of abandonment to destruction.<sup>18</sup> The sequence of events is also parallel: the righteous are positioned in a place of safety *before* the judgment falls. The specific terminology also fits the pattern of what is known regarding the rapture. One shall be taken (παραλημφθήσεται). The same word (παραλημφθήσεται) is used repeatedly with the sense of "receiving," "taking along," or "taking to oneself." Jesus used this same word specifically in the context of the rapture: "I will come again and receive you to Myself" (John 14:3); it is used of Joseph taking the young Child and his mother to Egypt and back to Israel (Matt 2:13-14, 20-21). Luke uses the same word in the sense of "taking along"—taking along disciples (9:10, 28), and taking them aside (18:31); and, of an evil spirit taking along other evil spirits (11:26). The final case does not demonstrate, as some have claimed, that the word can have an evil connotation.<sup>19</sup> The usage in many contexts demonstrates that the word simply means to "receive" or "take along," and in itself has no specific connotation for good

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<sup>18</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 2:1437; Nolland, *Luke*, 862.

<sup>19</sup> For such an argument regarding Matthew 24:40-41, Larry D. Pettegrew asserted, "Here, as in Matt 4:5, 8 where the devil 'takes' Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple and the exceedingly high mountain to be tempted, 'taken' has a bad implication (cf. John 19:16)" ("Interpretive Flaws in the Olivet Discourse," *Master's Seminary Journal* 13 (Fall 2002): 187. Similarly, for the assertions that the word can be used as a "bad word," see Russell L. Penney, "Why the Church is Not Referenced in the Olivet Discourse," *Conservative Theological Journal* 1 (April 1997): 56.

or evil. “Taking” can be done by either the wicked or the righteous, for either positive or negative purposes.

The point is that those taken are not just removed and discarded, but taken in the sense of “received.” When Christ comes for the church, He takes them to Himself, and they are forever with the Lord. He does not leave them on earth while He brings global judgments on the wicked, and then later gather them to Himself. Revelation makes it clear that the Lord’s bride is with Him as He descends to judge the wicked at Armageddon (Rev 19). When one is taken, the other is “left” (ἀφεθήσεται). The Greek word is repeatedly used for the idea of separation from the one doing the action: the fishermen left everything to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11); a man should not divorce his wife (1 Cor 7:11); Jesus forgives sins (Matt 9:2); and, the hireling leaves the sheep (John 10:12). Luke’s other usage (your house is left desolate, 13:35) corresponds to those “left” in 17:34-37. Those left behind do not continue on earth to participate in the kingdom, but are left to be overwhelmed by judgment, which again corresponds to the analogy of Noah and of Lot who were taken to safety, while those left behind were destroyed.

Those who were listening responded with a question, “Where, Lord?” (37a). Scholars have debated whether they were asking about the ones taken, or the ones left. Nolland opted for the former, suggesting Jesus’ answer is a rather gruesome image of the delivered ones being gathered to the Son of Man.<sup>20</sup> However, a much better approach is to simply recognize that Jesus’ answer to the question clearly implies the disciples were asking where judgment will occur. Buzzards fit only with judgment. The sinister image of vultures gathering shows that judgment will occur where death reigns.<sup>21</sup> The body of humanity left behind is completely secular, devoid of the life of God; it is a carcass calling for God’s judgment.<sup>22</sup> Luke 17:37 provides a graphic day-of-the-Lord warning to those who are unprepared. The righteous long for the day the Son of Man returns (17:22), but that will be a day of horrible judgment for the wicked.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Nolland, *Luke*, 863.

<sup>21</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 2:1438.

<sup>22</sup> Godet, *Gospel of St. Luke*, 2:200.

<sup>23</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 2:1441.

### HOW TO LIVE DURING THE DELAY BEFORE THE KINGDOM COMES (18:1-8)

The teaching of Jesus regarding the coming of the kingdom of God continues into chapter 18. His instruction is made especially clear by his poignant question at the end of his explanation of the parable: "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (18:8). Luke 18:1-8 continues with the themes found in the preceding section: deliverance of the righteous, judgment of the wicked, and the visible arrival of Jesus the King. However, while the preceding section describes the time in which those things actually occur, this section emphasizes the period of weary delay before justice and vindication come. Therefore, this pericope returns to the theme of how believers should cope with the delay before the Son of Man comes (17:22-25). There is an *inclusio* based upon this theme of delay, which frames the central issue of the passage: the coming of the kingdom.

How to live during the delay before the kingdom comes (17:22-25)

Focus: the coming of the kingdom (17:26-37)

How to live during the delay before the kingdom comes (18:1-8)

The purpose of the parable is clearly stated: to teach people to always pray and not be discouraged (8:1). In a certain city was a judge whose character was totally unworthy of the office he held. He did not fear God, and cared nothing about the concerns and needs of others (v. 2). The description undermines any confidence that anyone could expect justice through him.<sup>24</sup> A widow in that city came (ἦρχετο) to him for help (v. 3). The use of the imperfect tense suggests that she came repeatedly.<sup>25</sup> In that society, a widow who was mistreated had very few options, and her only hope was to enlist the help of someone else. However, the very person who should have helped her refused to fulfill his duty, and even prided himself in his own insolent character (v. 4). However, she did not surrender, and he finally decided to help her so that he could put a stop to her continual coming (v. 5).

Jesus applied this parable to the experience of the believer in this world. The purpose of the parable is to encourage saints to always pray and not be discouraged when God does not answer immediately. In the centuries since Jesus was rejected by his own nation (cf. 17:25), the world has descended ever more into godlessness and a total preoccupation with

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<sup>24</sup> Nolland, *Luke*, 871.

<sup>25</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 2:1448.

secular concerns. Righteous people are scarce, and are often trampled underfoot by those who pursue the temporal. Frequently even the justice systems of society support evil and crush the righteous. The saints of the present age are like the helpless widow; their only hope is the Judge of the universe, but He is not making immediate moves to vindicate them and set things right. Under such conditions, it is easy to become discouraged and cease to pray because of all the wickedness that prospers without punishment, and the injustices personally experienced. The only hope is the same as for the persistent widow: incessant prayer.<sup>26</sup>

Prayer can preserve faith by counteracting the natural tendency to surrender. The clear lesson is for saints to persevere in prayer that Jesus at his coming will bring ultimate justice.<sup>27</sup> The point of the parable is not persistence in prayer generally, but persistence in praying that Jesus will resolve the injustices of this present world.<sup>28</sup> If there is hope for a helpless widow who had no leverage in society and was dealing with a selfish judge, much more can saints persist in prayer to a good God whose ultimate purpose is to banish wickedness and establish a kingdom of righteousness. Jesus will certainly bring justice when He returns, but in the meantime, justice is delayed.<sup>29</sup>

#### HERMENEUTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

Luke 17 provides significant material to clarify one's understanding of the Olivet Discourse. *One aspect* of this clarity is that the "some taken, others left" pericope (17:26-37) is isolated from other prophetic events which Jesus mentioned in other contexts. Nothing in the passage refers to the Romans attacking Jerusalem in AD 70. There is no mention of the endtime abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15-22; cf. 2 Thess 2:3-4). There is nothing concerning specific global catastrophes, such as earthquakes or plagues or signs in the stars. Nothing is said with regard to a generation

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<sup>26</sup> Godet, *Gospel of St. Luke*, 2:201.

<sup>27</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 2:1445.

<sup>28</sup> Nolland, *Luke*, 871.

<sup>29</sup> The connection of this parable with the period of delay when saints are longing for one of the days of the Son of Man (v. 22) indicates that the focus is upon the present interim period as believers await the visible appearance of the kingdom of God. However, especially since Jesus stated that the purpose of the parable was "that at all times they ought to pray" (8:1), the parable will likely also encourage the persecuted saints during the tribulation as they await Jesus' return in glory to execute vengeance on those who persecute his people (cf. Rev 6:9-11).

which shall not pass until all things are fulfilled.<sup>30</sup> Instead, there is a dual emphasis regarding the days that immediately precede the day of the Son of Man: 1) spiritual complacency; and, 2) the fact that there will be no specific signs. Both of these points absolutely preclude an event at the end of the tribulation.

According to the book of Revelation, the people of the tribulation period will not be complacent. They will be either ardent worshippers of the beast and the devil, or they will be saints who do not love their lives to the death, preferring martyrdom rather than compromising their allegiance to Christ. Furthermore, the events described in the book of Revelation will constitute a dramatic sequence of many observable events that must necessarily precede Christ's coming in glory, and must therefore be a countdown to his coming. The remarkable succession of events is especially true of the 1,260 days of supernatural provision for the nation of Israel (Rev 12:6) which must begin on the day of hasty flight (without any time for preparation) (Matt 24:15-18), and will be concluded when Jesus appears in glory and vanquishes the Antichrist.

A *second aspect* of this clarity is the emphasis of this pericope upon global context and a denial of local significance. There is no mention of Jerusalem or Judea or of the abomination of desolation. There is specific denial that at that future time the kingdom will be localized to "here" or "there" (cf. 17:21). Instead, the coming of the Son of Man is compared to lightning flashing across the sky, and to the global judgment of Noah's Flood. The simultaneous day and night activities of those taken and others left fit a global context. Similarly, the poignant question of Luke 18:8b suggests an event that suddenly affects the entire earth.

*Third*, not only does the broad context of Luke's account (chs. 16—19) highlight the spiritual character of those who participate in the kingdom of God, but this inner character is emphasized by Luke's discourse upon the coming of the kingdom in chapter 17. People will be busy with the ordinary legitimate activities of human life, as in the days of Noah and Lot. Suddenly Jesus will return, and people will be separated according to their inner spiritual condition. The inner condition is highlighted by the experience of Lot's wife: even though she left Sodom with her husband, her heart was still in Sodom, and she perished the same day Sodom was destroyed. The separation according to inner condition is implied

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<sup>30</sup> Luke did use the term "this generation" (17:25), but the term clearly refers to Jesus' contemporaries, and occurs before the time when the believers will long for one of the days of the Son of Man (17:22). In contrast to all accounts of the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 21), Jesus did not connect the usage of "this generation" with any signs or with the time of the end.

regarding those taken or left; those in bed or grinding are participating in the same ordinary activities of life. According to the spiritual condition of each person, some will be taken to safety, and others left for judgment. *Fourth*, the emphasis on ordinary activities corresponds to the days preceding the rapture, not to the days of the tribulation, which will be filled with desperate attempts to merely survive.

These aspects clarify the meaning of the “some taken, others left” pericope: a sudden global event interrupting the ordinary activities of life, where righteous individuals are selected for salvation, while the rest are left to be overwhelmed by judgment. Therefore, it cannot be the glorious advent at the end of the tribulation, but must be describing the rapture *before* the tribulation. All these details correspond to the rapture of the church (1 Thess 4), and to the judgment which will descend upon those who are left (1 Thess 5).

Since only the rapture is in focus, Luke 17 thus provides the hermeneutical key for understanding the “one taken, the other left” pericope of the Olivet Discourse as described in Matthew 24–25. Those taken are the righteous, and those left are the wicked who will be destroyed. The meaning of the pericope as clearly defined in Luke cannot be arbitrarily reversed when it appears in the Olivet Discourse, which is contrary to the following quote.

Both accounts show that the end-time, like the day of the flood, will come upon people who are unprepared for the disaster, but in Matthew the flood sweeps away the judged (i.e., Noah stays on earth and the judged are removed), whereas in Luke, the saved are removed and the judged are left as corpses for the birds.<sup>31</sup>

Although the impetus for such reversal in Matthew 24 is the near context of judgment scenes, proper interpretation must account for the clear depiction of the rapture presented in Luke 17. A fundamental principle of hermeneutics must be followed: the meaning of a clear passage cannot be set aside when that material appears in a more difficult context. Rather than reversing the meaning of the rapture pericope when it appears in Matthew 24, careful exegesis must investigate the structure of Matthew 24 to see how the meaning defined in Luke 17 fits Matthew’s presentation of the Olivet Discourse.

An illustration from geology may be helpful. When an expert geologist finds a huge boulder in the midst of a level plain, he does not deny that the boulder exists, or attempt to convince his peers that it is not

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<sup>31</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 2:1432.



really a boulder even though it looks like a boulder, feels like a boulder, and has the chemical and physical properties of a boulder. Instead, he investigates further the broad context of what he has discovered, in order to explain how and why it arrived there. In similar fashion, one must further investigate Matthew's presentation to discover why the rapture pericope occurs where it does.

Therefore, since Matthew's presentation of the Olivet Discourse contains an abbreviated version of the rapture pericope of Luke 17, the Olivet Discourse does indeed reference the rapture. The content and thematic connectors within a major section (Matt 24:36—25:30) correspond to this understanding. The "one taken, the other left" pericope (Matt 24:36-42) addresses the rapture, which is followed by the householder being burglarized (24:43-44), the brutal slave judged (24:45-51), and the ten virgins (25:1-13)—all of which emphasize that the persons involved do not know the timing of the sudden event, which is a great contrast to the obvious and abundant timing indicators during the tribulation (seals, trumpets, vials, 42 months, two sections of 1,260 days each) that will be a clear countdown to the advent. The parable of the talents continues the theme of sudden judgment (25:14-30). In the entire section, the emphasis is upon ordinary activities of life, not days of excruciating distress as during the tribulation.

The "one taken, others left" pericope of Luke 17 is describing the rapture, not an event at the end of the tribulation. The clear definition of meaning enlightens one's understanding of the corresponding material in Matthew's presentation of the Olivet Discourse, which therefore does contain material describing the rapture.





## THE DAY OF THE LORD: The Prophecy of Joel

Quentin McCart

The purpose of this article is to provide an exegetical commentary of the book of Joel with emphasis upon the prophet's predictions outlining the events to occur at the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord (יִום יְהוָה) is major doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Many of the Old Testament prophets addressed it, and the New Testament apostles taught the doctrine (cf. 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10). One such Old Testament prophet, Joel, used a devastating locust plague in his own time to warn his people with regard to a coming greater judgment upon the land: the day of the Lord. The article herein will examine the prophet's message and the details it provides the reader concerning that end times event.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT (1:1-20)

Little is known regarding the prophet Joel.<sup>2</sup> No consensus exists as to when he lived and prophesied.<sup>3</sup> What is known is that he prophesied during the

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\* *Quentin McCart, M.Div., history teacher, John Tyler High School, Tyler, Texas; and, Th.M. student, Tyndale Theological Seminary, Hurst, Texas*

<sup>1</sup> David Olander, *The Greatness of the Rapture: The Pre-Day of the Lord Rapture* (Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2009) 89.

<sup>2</sup> יוֹאֵל (Yo'el) means "Yahweh is God." There are other Joels presented in the Old Testament, none of which can be identified directly with this Joel, the son of Pethuel. See, for example, the genealogy of Simeon (1 Chron 4:35) and that of Reuben (1 Chron 5:8).

<sup>3</sup> The dates for the book of Joel range from 835 BC to 285 BC. Although the date of Joel does not significantly change the message of the book, the evidence favors an earlier date. The main argument supporting the later date is the mention in Joel 3:6 of a slave trade with the Greeks. Gleason L. Archer Jr. noted: "It should be noted that in this context the Greeks are mentioned as a very distant people, and the enormity of the guilt of the Phoenician slave traders is brought out by the fact that they had no scruples about selling Israelite captives even to regions so remote as those inhabited by the Greeks" (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. [reprint, Chicago: Moody, 1964] 287). The general conservative position, in addition to Jewish tradition, supports an earlier (8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century BC) writing of

time of a devastating locust plague in the land of Judah, and that he used the calamity to call the people to repentance, in addition to warning them regarding a coming greater judgment (i.e. the day of the Lord).

Joel followed the modern education practice of using “teachable moments.”<sup>4</sup> The land of Judah had been overwhelmed by a horde of locusts, which had utterly devastated the agricultural economy.<sup>5</sup> The Lord

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the book (see Archer, *Old Testament Introduction*, 285; Shimon Bakon, “The Day of the Lord,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 38 [July-September 2010]: 150; Christopher Cone, *The Promises of God: A Synthetic Bible Survey* [Ft. Worth, TX: Exegetica, 2005] 107; and, J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book: A Basic and Broadly Interpretive Course of Bible Study from Genesis to Revelation*, 6 vols. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966] 4:107-08). For a more complete argument for the later and earlier writing, see Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “Joel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 2 vols. (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1985) 2:1409-10. Joel referenced the “Day of the Lord” in 5:18 of his book, thus scholars debate whether it was an understood term in Amos’ day (cf. Yair Hoffmann, “The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in Prophetic Literature,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 [1981]: 40. The evidence appears to be positive. Why would the Israelites have desired something of which they were unaware? If the prophetic books of Obadiah and Joel are dated prior to Amos in the chronology of the prophets, it would help understand how they understood the term and why they might have desired it.

<sup>4</sup> Beth Lewis, “Teachable Moment” [article online] (About.com, accessed 19 January 2012) available from [http://k6educators.about.com/od/education\\_glossary/g/gteach\\_moment.htm](http://k6educators.about.com/od/education_glossary/g/gteach_moment.htm). “A teachable moment is an unplanned opportunity that arises in the classroom where a teacher has an ideal chance to offer insight to his or her students. A teachable moment is not something that you can plan for; rather, it is a fleeting opportunity that must be sensed and seized by the teacher.” The analogy works if one accepts that the “classroom” was the entire land of Judah. Additionally, Joel’s message appears to be much better planned than an *ad hoc* lesson with regard to some distraction that resulted in the distraction of an entire classroom of children.

<sup>5</sup> Specifically, four different words are used for locust: (1) גָּזְזִים - a locust collective, “always as devouring and devastating;” (2) אֲרָבִים - the common species of locust, which is the same word used for the locust plague in Egypt, and the same kind permitted to be eaten in the Mosaic Law and the same locusts promised in the cursing passage of Deuteronomy 28; (3) יִלְכָּ - “a kind of locust, always collective, as devouring;” and (4) חֲסִילִי - “a kind of locust, always as destructive” (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005] 160, 340, 410, 916). “Likely, the terms are synonymous, used for variety’s sake and to emphasize the successive ‘waves’ of locusts in the invasion” (Chisholm, “Joel,” 2:1414).

promised just such a plague—in the blessing and cursing passages of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28—if the nation fell into disobedience.<sup>6</sup> Whenever Joel prophesied, it appears that it was during a time of national apostasy, hence, the reason for the plague. Joel took advantage of the judgment both to call his people to repentance and to call them to remember this judgment as a warning not to depart from God again.

The Bible contains many exhortations to remember the good things that the Lord has accomplished for his people. The first month of Israel's year included the celebration of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12—13), which recalled God's deliverance of his nation from their bondage in Egypt.<sup>7</sup> When the people of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the Lord stopped the waters so that the people could pass (Josh 4). God told the people to erect a twelve stone memorial to commemorate that event.<sup>8</sup> Psalm 103 is a call to bless the Lord for all of the things He has done.<sup>9</sup> In the New Testament, Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, which proclaims the Lord's death, a memorial to the cross of Christ (Luke 22:19; cf. 1 Cor 11:24-25).

In Joel 1:3, the prophet called the people to remember the Lord's judgment. "Relate this to your sons and your sons to their sons, and their sons to the next generation." "The extent to which Joel emphasizes the point is 'cumulative beyond example.'"<sup>10</sup> The devastating locust plague had completely ravaged the land; it had halted the sweet wine (1:5), it had put to waste the fig tree (1:7), it had destroyed the grain, and "made feeble"<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy 28:38, 42 – "You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. . . . Locusts shall consume all your trees, and the produce of your land."

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 12:14 – "So this day shall be to you a memorial [זִכְרוֹן, "memorial, remembrance"]; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance." Exodus 13:3 – "Remember [זָכַר, "remember, recall to mind"] this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten."

<sup>8</sup> Joshua 4:7 – "Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial [זִכְרוֹן] to the children of Israel forever."

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 103:2 – Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not [וְאַל-תִּשְׁכַּחַי, "and not you forget"] all His benefits.

<sup>10</sup> Irvin A. Busenitz, *Joel & Obadiah* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2003) 63.

<sup>11</sup> The verb אָגַל is pulal perfect. "The verb occurs primarily in the Pulal conjugation, describing a state of exhaustion or extremity. It is used to express the

the fresh oil (1:10). The destruction was so complete that even the offerings in the Temple had ceased (1:9). The locusts had invaded the land like a ravenous lion (1:6) and had destroyed the land in the same way a wildfire utterly devastates an area (1:19-20).<sup>12</sup> While other passages speak of remembering the good things the Lord had done, Joel exhorted<sup>13</sup> the elders to also remember the consequences of disobedience.

Although God continually calls man to remember, people have a strong tendency either to forget or to remember the wrong thing.<sup>14</sup> In the case of the locust plague during the time of Joel, the prophet called the people to remember for a specific purpose. The plague resulted in utter agricultural devastation, but God's future judgment would be much worse! Joel used the plague essentially to say to the people: "You had better remember this, because when you forget, God will bring an even more devastating plague upon you, it will be the day of the LORD." "Alas for that day! The day of the LORD is near and as destruction from Shaddai it comes!" (1:15).<sup>15</sup>

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state into which the objects of God's punishment and discipline come. . . ." (R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. [Chicago: Moody Press, 1980] 1:50).

<sup>12</sup> Abraham Cohen, *The Soncino Books of the Bible: The Twelve Prophets*, rev. by A. J. Rosenberg (London: Soncino Press, 1994) 64.

<sup>13</sup> The verb translated "command" in 1:3 is *סִפְּרִי* (piel imp., "Relate!"). The directive is one that requires "successive movements" (Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990] 409). In other words, the call to tell the successive generations is not an exhortation to mention it once, but to continually remind the future generations of Israel that when God brings judgment, He brings judgment!

<sup>14</sup> The Exodus generation provides the quintessential example of this truth. Immediately after the parting of the Red Sea, when faced with a shortage of food, the people of Israel complained: "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exod 16:3). Such thinking was tremendously unreasonable in light of the way in which the Lord orchestrated Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Although they quickly forgot the Lord's deliverance, they seemed to misremember their days in Egypt as a time of abundance, which means they also forgot groaning under the toil inflicted by the Egyptians (2:23).

<sup>15</sup> Verse 15 is unambiguous that Joel did not associate the current calamity of his day with the Day of the Lord, but used the terminology as a means of comparison (cf. 1:2, "Has this ever happened. . ."). The plague is *זֵאָה*, or what is currently occurring now! The Day of the Lord judgment is not this, but it is *קָרִיב* (near). "Near" is not here. Moreover, the locusts had come, albeit, the Day of the Lord is coming (*בֹּאֵה*, impf. or not yet, or future).

If one accepts the earlier date for the writing of the book of Joel, verse 15 is the first direct mention of the day of the Lord in Scripture.<sup>16</sup> What is noteworthy concerning it possibly being the earliest mention of day of the Lord is that 1:15 also uses one of God's oldest titles (שֶׁדַּי) in relation to the covenant title of God: יְהוָה.<sup>17</sup> One can reasonably conclude from this connection, that the ancient God Most High had his day in mind from the earliest times. Joel used the calamity of his day to compare it with the coming day of the God of Israel, the God of the universe.

#### THE DAY OF THE LORD: THE COMING JUDGMENT UPON ISRAEL (2:1-27)

In the opening section of his book, Joel used the destructive locust plague of his day to call his people to repentance and to warn of a future worse disaster, the coming day of the Lord. In chapter 2, Joel described how the future judgment of God will negatively affect the people of Israel and how they should respond to it. "Later in the book and elsewhere among the prophets, the Day of the Lord often designates blessing, prosperity and exoneration for God's people and judgment and destruction toward the Gentiles. But here Joel directs the warning toward his own people."<sup>18</sup> The rest of the book is eschatological and outlines how the day of the Lord will develop.

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<sup>16</sup> Olander listed twenty-one mentions of the day of the Lord in the Old and New Testaments (*Greatness of the Rapture*, 93-96). Based upon earlier dating of the two texts, the first mention is either in Joel 1:15 or in Obadiah 1:15. The difference in the Obadiah passage is that the prophet related the day to "all nations," whereas Joel began his discussion of the day of the Lord as judgment upon Israel, before expanding it later to include the other nations.

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 6:2-3 – And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the 'Lord' [יְהוָה] I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 'as God Almighty' [בְּאֵל שַׁדַּי] but by my name 'Lord' [יְהוָה], I was not known to them" (NKJV). *Shaddai* (שַׁדַּי) "as a divine title is used forty-eight times in the OT. Most often it appears in Job (thirty-one times), on the lips of almost every person in this drama" (Harris et al., *Theological Wordbook*, 2:907). One theory of this word is that it is related etymologically to the Akkadian word for mountain. "Thus El Shaddai would translate into English something like, 'God/El of the mountain,' i.e. God's abode" (ibid). "I will lift my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth" (Ps 121:1-2). "It is not to the hills (natural phenomenon) that these men of faith looked for confidence but to the Lord of the hills, the Lord of the mountain" (ibid).

<sup>18</sup> Busenitz, *Joel & Obadiah*, 100.



First, there will be judgment upon Israel. Chapter 2 begins with a warning cry.<sup>19</sup> The day of the Lord begins with an invasion of the land, not consisting of grasshoppers, but of men.<sup>20</sup> The invading force was a consuming force that set the prosperous land<sup>21</sup> before them ablaze and resulted in it becoming a desolate waste.<sup>22</sup> The people of Israel would writhe as this force entered the land.<sup>23</sup> The invading force is characterized by its amazing discipline.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the overwhelming force that would bring devastation to the land of Israel, celestial occurrences will accompany their assault. “The land quivers for them, the heavens shake, sun and moon are darkened, the stars remove their brightness” (2:10).<sup>25</sup>

Similar to the locust plague of Joel’s day, an invading force will arise and overwhelm the land of Israel, during the coming and near day of the Lord.<sup>26</sup> The day will cause fear and pain for the people of Israel and

<sup>19</sup> The Hebrew reads, *וְהִרְעוּ בְהֵר קִרְשֵׁי יִרְמְיוּ כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ כִּי־בָא יוֹסִיָּהוּהָ כִּי קָרוֹב: חֲקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּצִוּוֹן* (“Blow a horn!” “Give a shout!” “Let them quake!”). The commands involve warning regarding the impending doom that the Day of the Lord will bring.

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, *Twelve Prophets*, 64. There are some who make the case that Joel is simply recapitulating the invasion of the locusts; however, the locust invasion is what was currently occurring in Joel’s day (i.e. the Day of the Lord imagery is something future). Joel only compared the current events with the future events, with the future events being much worse. The coming invasion “has never happened before;” it was not the locust invasion that Joel referenced.

<sup>21</sup> Joel compared the land before the invading force to the Garden of Eden.

<sup>22</sup> *מִדְבַּר שְׁמִמָּה* (“wilderness of waste”)

<sup>23</sup> The Hebrew *וַתִּתְּלוּ* may be translated, “writhe in pain, especially of childbirth, metaphorically” (Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 296-97).

<sup>24</sup> Cohen, *Twelve Prophets*, 66. Joel 2:7 in Hebrew reads, *וְלֹא יַעֲבִטוּן אֶחְדָּתָם אֶת־דֶּרֶכָּהּ אֶת־דֶּרֶכַּת־אֶחָד אֲחָיו* (“They do not lend their paths one to the other, but keep to their own way”). Joel 2:8 reads, *וְאִישׁ אֶחָיו לֹא יִדְחֲקִין נֶגֶד בְּמַסְלָתוֹ יִלְכּוּן וּבַעֲדַר הַשְּׁלַח יַפְּלוּ לֹא יִבְצְעוּ:* (“They do not crowd each other. Each man walks in his own path, and when they shoot through the defensive walls, they do not break ranks”). The analogy of comparing the future invading force to the locust plague of Joel’s day also brings to mind Proverbs 30:27 (“The locusts have no king, Yet they all advance in ranks”).

<sup>25</sup> Other passages that relate celestial occurrences to the Day of the Lord include: Isaiah 13:9-10; Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12. The cosmic happenings do not appear to be directly related to the invading force (i.e. they are not causing them) and it also appears that when the sun, moon, and stars begin to function oddly that this is a precursor to doom upon the Gentile invaders.

<sup>26</sup> Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2009) 229-30. Fruchtenbaum made the case that this invading army is a “demonic invasion” and that Joel changed from the locusts to the demons since 1:15 and related this completely to the sixth trumpet judgment of Revelation 9:13-21. The judgment of

their one recourse will be to look to the Lord, which is exactly the purpose for God allowing the devastation. “The LORD says [to Israel]: And now return to Me with all your heart, in fasting and weeping and wailing. And rend your heart and not your garment and return to the LORD your God for He is gracious and compassionate and slow to anger and He has much lovingkindness and He relents of doing the bad things” (2:12-13).<sup>27</sup> The return to the Lord should not be outward and superficial; rather, it should be a return of the heart to the Lord, characterized by fasting and weeping and wailing<sup>28</sup> (i.e. a true return to the Lord). “Repentance is the desired outcome of the Lord’s judgments.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, although this command referenced what Israel’s response should be during the future day of the Lord, such a command is one for every generation to heed.

Joel ended his call of repentance with a very pragmatic reason for such behavior: “Who knows? Perhaps God will turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing offering and drink offering for the LORD your God” (2:14). When man returns (שׁוּב) God turns and has pity toward His people (יְשׁוּב וְיַחֲמֶם). Such is always the case with God.<sup>30</sup> Such will be the case for Israel.

In response to the people’s repentance (as recorded in Joel 2:15-17), “the LORD will be jealous toward His land and will have compassion on His people” (2:18).<sup>31</sup> One should note that God is both compassionate toward his people *and* jealous toward his land. The province is the land of Palestine promised to Abraham and his biological descendants in Genesis 15:18. Israel has never fully possessed this land. Moreover, God reaffirmed his promise to Abraham (in Gen 17:8) promising the land to be his and his

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Revelation 9, however, appears to be upon the entire world, while Joel appeared to reference an invasion upon Israel as he made many references to the “land.” The perspective of this article is that the army of the Lord referenced in 2:11 is not the same army that invades Israel (2:1-10). The Lord is standing before his forces waiting for Israel to repent that He may unleash them upon the invading forces.

<sup>27</sup> The Lord commanded the people to שׁוּבוּ (qal imp. of שׁוּב).

<sup>28</sup> The word for heart is לֵב (“inner man, mind, will, heart”) (Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 523). Therefore, קָרָעוּ לִבְכֶּכֶם is an act of “heartfelt and grievous affliction” (Harris et al., *Theological Wordbook*, 1:466-67).

<sup>29</sup> Chisholm, “Joel,” 2:1417.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Jeremiah 26:3 and Jonah 3:8-10.

<sup>31</sup> “Jealous” is in the piel stem (יִקְנָא יְהוָה לְאֶרֶצוֹ). “This verb expresses a very strong emotion whereby some quality or possession of the object is desired by the subject” (Harris et al., *Theological Wordbook*, 2:802). The destruction is against the land, and God is jealous toward his land. Passages, such as Joel 2:18-20, should be warnings to nations that think peace can be produced in Palestine by dividing the land. God deeded the land to Israel in Genesis, and has never taken it from them.

descendants' "everlasting possession." Those who advocate replacement theology ignore the many passages of the Old Testament related both to the people and to the *land* of Israel.<sup>32</sup>

As a result of the Lord's compassion and jealousy, He will restore agricultural abundance to the land (2:19), and He will remove the invading force (v. 20). Not only will the people rejoice (v. 23), but so, too, will the land (v. 20). The beasts of the field will again enjoy the bounty of the land (v. 21) and there will be restoration subsequent to the utter devastation caused by the locusts of Joel's day and the invading army of the day of the Lord (2:25). The people "will have plenty to eat and be satisfied<sup>33</sup> and . . . will praise the name of the LORD . . . for the extraordinary way He has dealt with . . . His people" who "will not be shamed<sup>34</sup> again" (2:26). When the Lord finally restores Israel, they will be as Adam prior to the fall, without shame. Additionally, the Lord God promised that they would be unshameable.

#### THE DAY OF THE LORD: NATIONAL DELIVERANCE (3:1-5)

The prophet Joel related a current event—the devastation of a locust plague—to attract the people's attention to a future, much greater judgment from God. In chapter 2, he outlined the judgment as it related to the land and the people of Israel, including what the Lord desired the people's response to be (i.e. the national repentance) and a promised physical restoration. Chapter 3 delineates the national salvation—the spiritual restoration—of Israel. Chronologically, the day of the Lord unfolds as follows: a devastating invasion of the land, which is accompanied with earthquakes and cosmic events. Subsequently, the Lord

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<sup>32</sup> A survey of just the book of Genesis reveals many references to the land given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12:1-3, 7; 13:15-17; 15:7-21; 17:8; 26:3-4; 28:13; 35:11-12; 50:24). Additionally, this land is never referenced as a "temporary" possession, but an "everlasting" one (Gen 17:8).

<sup>33</sup> The Hebrew verb שָׂבַע can be translated, "be sated, satisfied" (Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 959). Abraham, Isaac, and David all died satisfied with life (Gen 25:8; 35:29; 1 Chron 29:28). The seven years of plenty prior to the drought in Egypt are described as שָׂבַע (Gen 41:29). Job was satisfied with bitterness (Job 9:18). The Lord is blessed for satisfying (Ps 103:5).

<sup>34</sup> The Hebrew verb בֹּשָׁם can be rendered, "be ashamed" (Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 357-58). The imagery may be recounted to Adam and Eve's pre-fall existence in the Garden (cf. Gen 2:25, "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame").

will exhort the nation of Israel to repent. The people will respond in faith. God will respond by promising to destroy the invading force and to outpour abundant material blessings, which will be fully realized in the millennial kingdom. Subsequently, the Lord God will outpour spiritual blessings upon the people, which will also be accompanied by astrological phenomena. Joel 3:1-5 records the spiritual aspect of the Lord's blessing upon Israel.

And it will come to pass after this I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh<sup>35</sup> and they will prophesy, your sons and your daughters, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And, moreover in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon the servants and upon the maidservants. And I will give wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and dreadful day of the LORD.<sup>36</sup> And it will be that all who call on the name of the LORD will be delivered for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem it will come to pass those will escape which the LORD has said, and survivors which the LORD calls.

Since its earliest days, the entire history of Israel has been moving toward this moment of national deliverance. During Israel's time in the wilderness, a complaint arose against Eldad and Medad for prophesying. Moses' response was: "Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numb 11:29). God through the prophet Ezekiel promised just such an occurrence as mentioned in Joel: "I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give

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<sup>35</sup> "All flesh" "refers more specifically to all inhabitants of Judah" (Chisholm, "Joel," 2:1420).

<sup>36</sup> The cosmic sign is an indication to the people that deliverance is "at hand" (Matt 24:29). Peter used this passage in his Acts 2 sermon; consequently, there is much belief that this prophecy was already fulfilled with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. There are several problems with that view: 1) on the day of Pentecost, there was not an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon "all flesh"; 2) the context of Acts 2:1-4 clearly demonstrates that the filling of the Holy Spirit producing the sign gift of tongues only happened to the twelve disciples who were in the house (i.e. the Galileans) (Acts 2:7); 3) Peter's sermon occurred when the kingdom was still being offered to the nation (Chisholm, "Joel," 2:1421) so that had they repented then Joel's prophecy would have been completely fulfilled; and, 4) The cosmological occurrences predicted by Joel in no way occurred on the day of Pentecost; rather, it was only the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the twelve disciples.

you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezek 36:26b-27). The fulfillment will be when the New Covenant is fully instituted, as promised in Jeremiah 31. Finally, this corresponds to what Paul said in his Romans 9—11 treatise concerning God’s plan for Israel. “And so all Israel will be delivered” (Rom 11:26).

#### THE DAY OF THE LORD: JUDGMENT UPON THE NATIONS (4:1-17)

Israel will be delivered. All the consequences for her continual rebellion will have been expended. The day of the Lord, however, is not finished (at this point). In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised to bless those who blessed Abraham and his descendants, and to curse the one who cursed them (Gen 12:3). Since the birth of Israel, there have been many nations that have cursed it.<sup>37</sup> The day of the Lord will be the time when God fully repays those who have acted against his people.

In his work *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, Fruchtenbaum fully outlined the sequence of events that will lead to this judgment upon the Gentile nations.<sup>38</sup> The judgment that Joel prophesied will occur at the end of the Armageddon campaign in the Valley of Jehoshaphat<sup>39</sup> after the return of Christ. At this judgment, the victorious Messiah will outline his case against the Gentile nations. They divided his land (4:2), they scattered his people around the world and even sold them into slavery (4:2-3, 6-8), and they took his silver and gold (4:5).<sup>40</sup> Their recompense would correspond to their crime.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For a brief examination of such examples, see Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History, & Philosophy* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1983) 73-76.

<sup>38</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 309-57.

<sup>39</sup> The valley (עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט) is located on “the eastern walls of Jerusalem, which overlook a section of the Kidron Valley” (ibid. 351).

<sup>40</sup> In verse 4, Joel made reference to three specific nations: Tyre, Sidon, and “all the territories of Philistia.” Later, he made reference to two more nations: Edom and Egypt (v. 19). The mention of these earlier enemies of Israel—and not Babylon or Assyria—has been used to support the earlier writing of the book (Archer, *Old Testament Introduction*, 286). Sidon is an ancient Phoenician city in the northern land of Canaan that is named with Tyre (Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 850-51), and a modern day city of Lebanon. Sidon was actually an Hamitic descendant of Canaan (Gen 10:15). In the book of Judges, it is remarked that Asher failed to drive Sidon from the land (Judg 1:31), which led to the people

In Joel 4:9-10, the Lord addressed the nations that take action against Israel: “Consecrate a war! Rouse the mighty! Let all the men of war go up! Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning knives into spears. Let the weak say, ‘I am mighty.’”<sup>42</sup> “The nations are mockingly encouraged to go ahead and turn their farming equipment into weapons of war. As for those who are weak, let them persuade themselves and pretend that they are strong.”<sup>43</sup> The nations are gathering against Israel, but the Lord is sovereignly orchestrating all these events to bring them to their place of judgment.

According to Fruchtenbaum, the Armageddon campaign will both begin and end at the Valley of Jehoshaphat.<sup>44</sup> The Lord will return at Bozrah and battle the nations to Jerusalem,<sup>45</sup> where they will gather for

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eventually serving their gods (10:6). The people of Sidon are often mentioned as one that the Lord will judge (Isa 23; Jer 25; 47; Ezek 28:20-24). Tyre was likewise an ancient Phoenician city, and is mentioned throughout Scripture (Josh 19:29; 2 Sam 5:11; 24:7; Neh 13:16; Ps 45:12), thus, similarly, it is often a place associated with God’s judgment (Isa 23; Jer 47:4; Ezek 26—27; in Ezek 28, the ruler of Tyre is directly connected to Satan). Tyre, too, is a modern city of Lebanon. Philistia or the Philistines are also mentioned throughout Scripture (Gen 26; Exod 13; Judg 3; in the latter account, five lords of the Philistines are mentioned and are said to be left in the land to test the Israelites, v. 4)—the Israelites failed that test (Judg 10; 13). The Philistines are one of the most oft mentioned enemies of Israel). Jeremiah 25:20 identifies the territories of Philistia with the cities of Asheklon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod). The ancient Philistines were also Hamites (Gen 10:14) who originated in Caphtor “which is generally thought to be modern day Crete” (James C. Moyer, “Philistines,” in *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5 vols., gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976] 4:767). Although associated with modern day Palestine, the Arab (Shemitic) Palestinians are unlikely to be related directly to these ancient Hamites.

<sup>41</sup> Joel 4:8 promises that the Tyrians and Sidonians would be sold into slavery; this is said to have been fulfilled in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Chisholm, “Joel,” 2:1422), which would mean that Joel (in addressing these nations) stated: “Look, there will be judgment relatively soon and at the end when Messiah returns.”

<sup>42</sup> “Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning knives into spears” is an interesting precursor to what will happen once the Lord establishes his millennial kingdom when the nations will do the opposite: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks” (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3).

<sup>43</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 312.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 354.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 339-51.

their judgment.<sup>46</sup> The Valley of Jehoshaphat is described in Joel 4:14 as the “valley of decision.” The basic meaning of the Hebrew (הַחֲרִיץ) is “to cut or sharpen” or “to decide.” “The word is used metaphorically of a strict decision in the sense that something which is cut or incised cannot be altered.”<sup>47</sup> The judgment of the nations at the Valley of Jehoshaphat will be conclusive. Jesus later identified the decision as the sheep and goat judgment (cf. Matt 25:31-46). The primary criterion for surviving this judgment is how the judged Gentiles treated Israel during the tribulation.<sup>48</sup> More cosmic disturbances will accompany this judgment as the “LORD roars from Zion” (Joel 4:16); however, the Lord will protect his people from being disturbed by them.<sup>49</sup> “And you will know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, the mountain of My holiness; and it will come to pass Jerusalem is holy and strangers will not pass through it again” (4:17).

#### THE DAY OF THE LORD: THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM (4:18-21)

Joel used a modern day agricultural and economic disaster both to call his people to repentance and to remind them that they were God’s people. Moreover, he indicated that the Lord would ultimately deliver them from agricultural calamities and from their oppressors by heralding an everlasting peace, which will occur at the day of the Lord. The concluding section of Joel’s prophecy gives a preview of the millennial bliss, and a final warning to the surrounding nations against oppressing God’s people and his land.

Joel 4:18 discusses the complete agricultural restoration of the land. Most outstanding in this passage is the mention of the spring, which will originate in the house of the Lord and water the valley of Shittim.<sup>50</sup> The river that flows from the throne room of God prefigures the River of Life

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<sup>46</sup> “The repetition [הַחֲרִיץ הַחֲרִיץ] is for emphasis” (Cohen, *Twelve Prophets*, 77).

<sup>47</sup> Harris et al., *Theological Wordbook*, 1:326.

<sup>48</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 648.

<sup>49</sup> More than just a tiny earthquake, this shaking will cause the Mount of Olives to split in two (Zech 14:4).

<sup>50</sup> The Hebrew reads נַחַל הַשִּׁטִּים (Valley of Shittim, Valley of Acacias). “The point of the reference is that acacias grow on dry soil; in the future, even such a valley will be watered by the perennial stream issuing from the temple” (Cohen, *Twelve Prophets*, 78).

that will flow subsequent to the millennium in the new heavens and the new earth (Rev 22:1).<sup>51</sup>

“In contrast with the God-given abundance of Judah, the lands of her enemies (represented by Egypt and Edom) will be infertile.”<sup>52</sup> Judah and Jerusalem, though, will remain forever.<sup>53</sup> Despite the many attempts by the nations to rebel against God, there will be perpetual peace. The last verse is one final warning to the Gentile nations: “And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, For the LORD dwells in Zion” (NASB).<sup>54</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Joel used the devastating locust plagues of his day to compare it with the future judgment referenced as the day of the Lord. The prophet provided many details that help students of Scripture understand how that end times event will be fulfilled. Not only does it provide the modern reader with important information concerning events of the tribulation, but also it will bring comfort to believers living in that devastating era as they will have a clear outline of what is occurring.

There is also much application that can be gained from the book of Joel for God’s people today. For instance, God judges his people when they defy Him, He relents of the judgment when they repent, his promises are assured, and He will ultimately fulfill them. Not surprisingly the people

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<sup>51</sup> In many of the Old Testament prophecies (cf. Isa 65), there appears to be almost no distinction between the new creation and the millennial reign, as the one is the precursor to the other.

<sup>52</sup> Chisholm, “Joel,” 2:1423. Egypt and Edom are both often mentioned enemies of Israel. Although severely judged and left a waste, Egypt does have representation in the millennial kingdom (Zech 14:18-20). Edom, conversely, appears to be utterly destroyed (Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 493-96).

<sup>53</sup> The Hebrew לְדֹר וָדֹר can be rendered, “to generation and generation.”

<sup>54</sup> There is a textual problem with this verse (וְאֶפְשָׁרְךָ לֹא יִנְקִיטִי שֶׁכֵּן בְּצִיּוֹן). One note suggests the whole verse was added later. Instead of וְאֶפְשָׁרְךָ לֹא יִנְקִיטִי (“and I will acquit”), the Septuagint reads, καὶ ἐκδικήσω (“and I will avenge”) with the note supporting that rendition, which in Hebrew is וְנִקְמְתִי. Next, לֹא יִנְקִיטִי (“No I acquit”) is in the Septuagint as καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀθωώσω (“which never I have avenged”). Suggestions are that the word meant is וְלֹא אֶנְקָה (“and no I groan”) (?). The New American Standard translation follows the Septuagint: “And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged,” which fits well with the context regarding “their bloodguilt, which I have not pardoned, I will pardon” (NIV). Cohen, therefore, suggested the best rendering is: “Even though I hold them guiltless of other transgressions, I can never forgive them for having killed My children. Therefore I will punish them when My Presence is again in Zion” (*Twelve Prophets*, 79).



who need to heed the warning of Joel the most are the people who regard God's word with the most disrespect: the Gentile nations. The Bible is filled with examples of what occurs when God brings judgment: the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the devastating locust plague of Joel's day, and many more. In response, humanity ignores its own history and then asks, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet 3:4), as though the God of the Bible will no longer act in history. Fallen humanity do this as they conspire against his people and his land, seeking ways to divide it for peace, with the real intent of erasing Israel's existence altogether.<sup>55</sup> The Lord is compassionate and gracious, but He will not always abide the nations' attacks against his people and his land. He will bring his judgment when his presence is again in Zion, and then there will be peace in Jerusalem.

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<sup>55</sup> There are plenty of examples of these actions throughout history, and current events certainly do not dictate God's timing for his eschatological plan; however, during the writing of this article, the Palestinian Arabs illegally applied to the United Nations for statehood to undermine Israel's right to exist.





## BOOK REVIEWS

***Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*** edited by James Macdonald. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013. 445 pp., cloth, \$29.99.

First hearing about *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* did not create excitement. The list of contributing authors was lengthy and most were unknown to this reviewer. More importantly, some of the contributing authors are associated with groups that are of concern to many in the area of the sufficiency of Scripture. Even so, every effort was made to approach the book objectively. There are godly men who are loved and respected, yet who have joined the Biblical Counsel Coalition (BCC) and are included in the long list of authors. Though there are some concerns with the BCC, this reviewer trusts the discernment of friends who support the BCC and have contributed to this work.

The BCC has created a sound doctrinal statement and an excellent confessional statement that all members must sign. While it is true in today's world that people sign statements with little or no regard for the meaning of the statements, one must practice biblical love towards these brothers and sisters in Christ (bears, believes, hopes, endures all things; 1 Cor 13:7) until there is sound reason to doubt. In the end, one can be pleased with the book, except for the cost. The book would likely get into more hands if it were more affordable, perhaps \$20 instead of \$30.

The goal of the book is "to promote authentic spiritual growth among God's people in ways that are grace-based and gospel-centered, relationally and theologically robust, grounded in the local church, and relevant to everyday life and ministry" (pp. 11-12). The goal was accomplished throughout the book. The grace of God and the true gospel of Jesus Christ are highlighted in each chapter. True biblical counseling has Christ as its center, and the goal is to make others more like Him in the areas of life where they originally were not. The contributing authors understand this and clarified it well in their respective chapters. The editors emphasized this goal when stating, "It's all about *Him*. As important as it is to develop collegial relationships that provide robust resources, if our focus is on us, then our focus is off base. Our prayer is that *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* will equip you to equip others also *so that* we bring Him glory through our individual and corporate growth in Christlikeness" (p. 19, emphasis in original). The other elements of

relational and theological robustness, staying grounded in the local church, and staying relevant to everyday life and ministry, were all kept in focus by each of the authors.

The book is divided into two major sections: theology and methodology. In the first part, "A Practical Theology of Biblical Counseling," the book follows the standard nine points of systematic theology: theology proper, Christology, pneumatology, Trinitarian theology, bibliology, anthropology, hamartiology, soteriology, and eschatology. The emphasis was accomplished by design, that is, to help demonstrate the practical aspect of theology in the life of the believer.

Nothing disturbing could be identified in the theological section, but some may struggle with certain points. For example, near the end of chapter 6 (which addresses the sufficiency of Scripture) is the following statement: "Some biblical counselors even recommend that some of their counselees seek a physician's help for a possible prescription for a psychotropic medication not because it will necessarily address the cause of the problem, but because it may alleviate certain distressing symptoms" (p. 104). If not read carefully or understood in context, this statement could be distorted to claim the authors are recommending the use of psychotropic medicines as a cure, which is neither the intent nor the focus of the paragraph, chapter, or book. In context, the statement is seen to be more like the use of a tourniquet for a bleeding artery, until the surgeon can repair the artery. The point is not to promote psychotropic medicines or their use, but to use them temporarily to alleviate certain symptoms so that the counselor and counselee are better able to address the source of the problem for the cure; it is a temporary action to allow clarity of thought and reasoning for the purpose of addressing the problem without some of the symptoms that hinder the cognitive process. Perhaps it is evident to most readers that this is a highly controversial topic and will elicit a wide range of responses; but, when considered in the context of the chapter, and even the book, most readers should have few problems with these areas.

The strongest point of the book for this reviewer was in the second part, "A Practical Methodology of Biblical Counseling," which is where the implementation of the intended goal is achieved, and one may discern more practically how the theology is to be lived. As with part one, one may be well pleased. The methodologies presented held true to their theological foundations. Readers with a definite understanding of the theological foundations of biblical counseling may benefit from starting in part two, and taking a look at specific areas of interest of their own ministry at the time of reading the book.

Five chapters could be identified as the most effective in the entire book. The first is chapter 19, “The Goal and Focus of Spiritual Formation,” written by Robert Cheong and Heath Lambert. The chapter begins by identifying what a true and biblical understanding of spiritual formation is. For those who are knowledgeable about current movements within the church, this is a fervent topic. While the writers do not provide warning regarding the modern spiritual formation movement, their treatment of what true, biblical spiritual formation is provides an inherent correction to the errors of the movement. The use of the phrase, “spiritual formation,” will likely put some on the defensive but reading the chapter will set the defenses to rest. The authors clarified that most people take the phrase spiritual formation to be synonymous with spiritual disciplines such as journaling, fasting, Bible reading, prayer, etc. (p. 286).

The overarching point in chapter 19 is stated clearly, “A conversation about such disciplines is important. Such a discussion, however, can sometimes lose sight of the fact that those disciplines are not goals in and of themselves. Instead, they are a means to something much greater – namely, Jesus Christ. The goal of the disciplines – of spiritual formation – is Christ Himself” (ibid). This point is reiterated throughout the chapter. The means given for individuals to be formed spiritually into Christlikeness is through abiding in Christ, and there are three essential elements to doing that: prayer, Bible reading, and obedience to Christ (i.e. the primary means presented whereby one grows close to Christ in personal relationship). In addition to the plentiful content on spiritual formation, this chapter clearly shows the book’s goal of being “grace-based and gospel-centered, relationally and theologically robust, grounded in the local church, and relevant to everyday life and ministry” (pp. 11-12).

Chapter 22 is entitled, “The Central Elements of the Biblical Counseling Process,” and was written by Randy Patten and Mark Dutton. The writers gave specific instructions for the reader as they begin the chapter. The author’s emphasis highlights the practical aspect of the book and also the writers’ desire to see people grow in their effectiveness for the cause of Christ through ministry in the local church. The goal in the assignments is to help the reader identify areas of growth needed in his or her own life, and learn how to work on these areas to become better counselors (which is a major element of the biblical counseling process). Paul Tripp stated this goal in his *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*: “people in need of change helping others in need of change.”

Chapter 25 is entitled, "The Power of Forgiveness," and was written by James MacDonald and Garrett Higbee. The chapter presents the most reliable point in the book, mainly because of the endemic abandonment for biblical forgiveness that infects the world. However, it is not just the need for forgiveness in the world that makes this chapter so resolute, it is the treatment which MacDonald and Higbee gave to this topic. The authors addressed the gospel message in relation to forgiveness and how this fits within the biblical counseling context. They joined their discussion to previous chapters addressing repentance and confession of sin. They addressed apologies and saying "I'm sorry." They discussed what forgiveness is not, in addition to various hindrances to forgiveness. They related grieving the Holy Spirit with a failure to forgive, and the motive to forgive in order that one not grieve the Holy Spirit. One could say that most Christians are in need of reading this chapter, and definitely all who come to biblical counseling.

The fourth resolute point is offered in chapter 27 ("The Biblical Understanding and Treatment of Emotions"), written by Jeff Forrey. The chapter rates well in strengths because of its subject and its treatment of the subject. Trying to find a good, theologically accurate treatment of human emotions is like trying to find a needle in the galaxy. In this reviewer's opinion, Forrey did an excellent job. He interacted with psychological views and was resolute with the sufficiency of Scripture. He provided material for the reader to adapt and use in personal ministry, and provided a case study that clearly demonstrates to the reader how to use and apply the materials he gave.

Hendrickson provided a fifth resolute point in chapter 28, "The Complex Mind/Body Connection." The chapter is another that is steadfast due to subject matter, but again the treatment of the subject is excellently done. One of the greatest mysteries to humanity is how the material and immaterial parts of human beings are woven together and how they affect each other. Hendrickson addressed the issue well. In the current day, the impassioned topic here is the chemical imbalance theory and how it has overtaken society, and perhaps the world. Hendrickson addressed this topic and effectively explained its relation to a biblical worldview.

With so much praise for the book, one might think there are no weaknesses. Perhaps the greatest weakness is that this is a summary book of each of the areas it addresses. The church needs a good, biblically reliable treatment of human emotions. While Forrey did a great work in this volume, more is needed. The same can be said about many other chapters, such as Hendrickson's chapter on the mind/body connection. The church is in great need of clarity on this subject. Overall, the summary

nature is the greatest weakness in the book, but it was not intended to address these issues in detail, so one cannot really fault the editors and writers for this. For everyone who engages in counseling and seeks to do so from a biblical perspective, this work is a must read.

— Richard Nix  
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)



***The Fallible Prophets of New Calvinism*** by Michael John Beasley. Pfafftown, NC: The Armoury Ministries, 2013. 198 pp., kindle edition, \$0.99.

More than two decades have transpired since Wayne Grudem wrote his innovative book, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, which attempted to give theological legitimacy to common practices found especially in Pentecostal and charismatic circles. The practices had to do with the so-called “sign gifts” of miracles, healings, tongues, and prophecy. Grudem’s burden focused almost entirely upon prophecy and words of knowledge. Pentecostals and charismatics have long claimed extrabiblical words, visions, and prophecies that came via direct communication from the Holy Spirit. However, it was common knowledge that many, if not most, of those supposed revelations were inaccurate in whole or in part. The Old Testament had condemned fallible prophets to death (Deut 13; 18) so obviously this was a serious issue to God. If this seriousness was continued in the New Testament era what was to be done with those who claimed prophecies from God but were in error? In 1 Corinthians 14, even during a time in which all agree direct prophecy from God was being given to some (especially the apostles), Paul called upon the church to evaluate these prophets and expose them if they were prophesying falsely. The death penalty was not enforced from the old covenant, but rebuke and even church discipline would be in order for those who continued such practices.

Charismatic theologians, such as Grudem and others, who are desirous of being faithful to Scripture had the difficult task of trying to harmonize the practices of modern day prophecies that were fluent in their church tradition, or expose them as unbiblical. Most charismatics have admitted that their supposed revelations were often inaccurate. At best, they were a mixture of “a word from the Lord” and the imagination of the prophet. How could such practices harmonize with Scripture? Grudem labored to demonstrate, both in his *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* and in his popular *Systematic Theology*, that New Testament prophecy differs from Old Testament prophecy. He believes that the New Testament prophets, but not the apostles, were fallible and often partially inaccurate in almost all revelations from God. Grudem attempted to prove his thesis from the Scriptures themselves, principally through the example of Agabus in Acts and the epistle of 1 Corinthians, especially chapter 14.

While *The Fallible Prophets of New Calvinism* is at least the fifth important work refuting Grudem's theory, his views have nevertheless been embraced in a wide range of evangelical, non-charismatic camps. Of recent note is a new generation of those who affirm Reformed theology but also accept the charismatic gifts, including prophecy. Often called New Calvinists, or Neo-Calvinists, these individuals have combined a seriousness concerning Scripture and theology with a Pentecostal understanding of sign gifts. These continuationists (prophecy and sign gifts continue throughout the church age) believe they now have the best of both worlds—a solid foundation in the Word of God and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. However, not only have the New Calvinists misrepresented those affirming cessationism (that prophecy and other sign gifts have ceased) but also they have seemingly misunderstood what the Scriptures teach concerning the purpose and duration of the sign gifts. Michael Beasley's goal was to provide careful biblical analysis of the Neo-Calvinists' views and prove that they lack scriptural support.

Since Grudem is the Neo-Calvinist theologian leading the charge in attempting to develop and defend the position of fallible prophecy, Beasley primarily interacted with his writings. There are already four valuable critiques of Grudem's position: (1) Robert Thomas, "Prophecy Rediscovered? A Review of 'The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today,'" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (January-March 1992): 82-96; (2) Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996); F. David Farnell, "Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets? A Critique of Wayne Grudem's Hypothesis," *Master's Seminary Journal* 2 (Fall 1991): 157-80; and, (4) R. Bruce Compton, "The Continuation of New Testament Prophecy and a Closed Canon: A Critique of Wayne Grudem's Two Levels of New Testament Prophecy" (Paper presented at Faith Baptist Bible College Leadership Summit, Ankeny, IA, 27-29 July 2011). Beasley attempted to supplement rather than duplicate these works.

After dealing with the biblical understanding of the prophetic gift in chapter one, Beasley critiqued Grudem's three primary arguments for the continuationist's position. First, in the second chapter the author carefully examined Grudem's definition of prophecy as derived from the lexicons. Beasley documented Grudem's selective lexical examination and determined that Grudem ignored the clear biblical definition and chose instead to use pagan meanings for the word prophet (pp. 49-56). Beasley, then, offered very helpful examples of how such methods would affect our understanding of other words, such as *theos* (God) and *dikaios* (righteousness) (pp. 52-56).

Beasley then turned to Grudem's most compelling argument: the supposed fallible prophecy by the New Testament prophet Agabus. Beasley challenged Grudem's understanding of Agabus in the entirety of chapter three. There are three convincing arguments against Grudem's views that Agabus gave a partially false prophecy to Paul.

1. Contrary to Grudem, the Apostle Paul was in fact delivered to his captors despite the will of the Jewish mob.
2. Contrary to Grudem, the Apostle Paul was delivered to his captors by legal compulsion.
3. Apparently unknown by Grudem, the Apostle Paul was willingly delivered by the Jews in spite of Roman jurisprudence (p. 92).

Since others have addressed the first two possibilities, Beasley chose to advance the third. His carefully presented argument leads to the conclusion that Grudem reasoned from both ignorance of New Testament times, as well as from silence. Grudem simply cannot prove his case against Agabus, and since Agabus is the only New Testament prophet (that is known) who may have given anything resembling a fallible prophecy, Grudem's position loses much of its persuasiveness if his theory regarding Agabus is wrong or even improvable.

Grudem's final evidence for fallible prophecy is based in the gift of prophecy as found in the church at Corinth. Grudem believes, based upon 1 Corinthians 14, that New Testament prophecy is fallible/nonauthoritative and extremely common (pp. 129-30). If the church at Corinth was exhorted to evaluate the prophecies of its members, then apparently those prophecies cannot be wholly of God and without flaw, so Grudem reasons. Beasley believes Grudem is missing the corrective context of the epistle to the Corinthians, in addition to the inseparable link between Old Testament and New Testament prophecy. Since in the New Testament there is no apparent, distinct statement regarding a difference between Old and New Testament prophecy, there exists no warrant to view the prophetic gift at Corinth any differently from how one would view prophecy under the Old Covenant. With that in mind, Beasley made a case for Paul calling for testing of the prophets themselves, not the prophecies at Corinth. If the revelations being given in that church were not completely true, it was a sign that the prophets themselves were false—just as in the Old Testament (pp. 147-60). Peter, nevertheless, was unambiguous that no prophecy

comes from the will of man but from God (2 Pet 1:21). Scripture clearly designates two classes of prophets: true and false. A third class has been invented by the charismatic/continuationist community, and circulated widely by many New Calvinists—fallible prophecy which contains elements of both truth and error. Such a category is nothing less than human contrivance (p. 164).

Beasley ended his book with a persuasive conclusion. In particular, he quoted John Piper's defense of fallible prophecy (pp. 175-76), then allowed Piper to discredit the entire system (pp. 177-78). Piper, who encourages his church to seek the sign gifts, received a prophecy regarding his family from a woman in his church. Not wishing to discourage prophecies, he prayed concerning the prophecy. The prophecy claimed his wife would give birth to a girl and die in the process. Several months later, she bore a boy and was completely healthy. Obviously, the "prophecy" was false in every detail except that Piper's wife was pregnant, which again invites the question, of what value is fallible prophecy? How could anyone determine which parts were of God and which of the mistaken imagination of the so-called prophet? Not only does fallible prophecy have no real value, it is dangerous and can lead the gullible to take very unfortunate actions. Additionally, there simply is not a good case in Scripture to prove the claim that New Testament prophecy differs from that in the Old Testament. Beasley has done the church a wonderful service by producing this volume. Hopefully, many will read and absorb its contents. Presently it is available only as an e-book from Amazon.

— Gary E. Gilley  
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

***Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_. Find a New Way to Be Human*** by Judah Smith. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013. 202 pp., paper, \$16.99.

Judah Smith and his wife Chelsea are lead pastors of the City Church in Seattle, Washington, and are becoming popular within the evangelical community. *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* has been on *The New York Times* Best Seller list and is endorsed by an interesting (some who are bizarre and controversial) number of Christian leaders: Steven Furtick (lead pastor, Elevation Church), Brian Houston (pastor from Hillsong Church in New York City), Tommy Barnett (senior pastor, Phoenix First and founder of the Los Angeles Dream Center), Matthew Barnett (co-founder of the Dream Center), Ed Young (senior pastor, Fellowship Church), golfer Bubba Watson, and the stylist for Justin Bieber. (Bieber calls Smith his pastor.) Smith was a featured speaker at Lou Giglio's 2013 Passion Conference, along with Beth Moore and John Piper, where he spoke to 60,000 young people under the age of 25. The book *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* is part of a large campaign of billboards, bus signs, Facebook apps, bumper magnets, and social outreach events in the Seattle area. The idea behind the project was to get people thinking about who Jesus is.

Smith's book resembles other young, popular "postmodern" Christian authors (his style is reminiscent of Rob Bell) who are extensive with hype, diminutive with content, and too happy with contradictions and frustrations to really understand. Smith admitted that he did not think in a linear fashion, and this is evident when one tries to comprehend his message. In an effort to do so, this reviewer will divide *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* into several categories: correct teachings, contradictions and errant teaching, unbalanced statements, and miscellaneous silliness.

*Correct Teachings.* Smith occasionally articulated correct biblical teachings, such as one's inability to rely upon good deeds for salvation (pp. 15, 94), the wrongness of judgmentalism (p. 19), Jesus' love for humanity despite human sinfulness (p. 26), spiritual birth being by grace through faith (p. 43), the impotence of rules to save one (p. 56), Christ having dealt with sins upon the cross (pp. 68-72), the three components of sin being guilt, power, and effect (pp. 68-69), Jesus as the focus of life (pp. 96, 110, 112), God regarding Christians as righteous (pp. 101, 195), the mercy of God toward humanity (pp. 174-75), the good news of Jesus' resurrection (p. 181), and fearfulness being an indictment against God (p. 185).

In emphasizing these cardinal truths, among others, one can rejoice. Smith proclaimed rightly many of the fundamentals of the faith. Someone reading *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* will not be led astray by works righteousness, but instead will recognize that salvation is only possible because of the grace of God received by faith alone. The truth that Jesus is to be the focus of life is also strongly emphasized. There are some commendable points in the book, but, sadly, all is not well.

*Contradictions and Errant Teaching.* Smith's work is filled with statements that contradict much of its solid teachings, as well as numerous exaggerated comments and harmful theology. Below is a sampling accompanied by brief rebuttals:

- Jesus is not your accuser . . . He is not your judge. He's your friend and rescuer (p. 12).

*Rebuttal:* Throughout the book, Smith spoke to both believers and unbelievers, and this must be kept in mind. Such statements pointed toward unbelievers are clearly untrue for Romans 5:10 reveals that prior to salvation one is the enemy of God. Jesus is the rescuer but only if one trusts Him as Savior. For those who reject Him, Christ is in fact their judge. Even Smith would have to admit that Jesus was not the friend of the Pharisees but rather their accuser. Jesus' friendship for believers is true but it must be recalled that Jesus said, "You are my friend if you do what I command" (John 15:14).

- Jesus wasn't out to prove how good He was or how bad they were. He just wanted to offer them hope (p. 22).

*Rebuttal:* The statement is absolutely untrue. Jesus needed to demonstrate the perfect sinless life as He came to reveal the Father (John 1:18; cf. Mark 10:18). As for the people, hope could be found in Christ only as they recognized their hopelessness because of their wickedness. The sick need a physician (Mark 2:5, 17), and Jesus exposed their sin-sickness. He in fact showed them how bad they were so that they would see a need for a Savior.

- You don't have to be good to be Jesus' friend. You just have to be honest (p. 22).

*Rebuttal:* While it is true that one's good deeds cannot win the favor of God, which comes as his gift to the redeemed, there is no justification in Scripture to say that one becomes Jesus' friend by being honest. In such a case, honesty is just another vacuous good deed.

- To see oneself as a "filthy sinner who deserves to go to hell" is an "extreme [which] come[s] from focusing on rules rather than on a relationship with Jesus" (p. 25).

*Rebuttal:* Without saving faith in Christ, one is a sinner who deserves hell (cf. Eph 2:1-3) and the Law of God was given to demonstrate this truth; it is only the mercy of God that makes one righteous.

- We are to be friends of sinners but not to rebuke or evangelism them (p. 28).

*Rebuttal:* Friendship with the lost is an honorable thing, but Smith goes too far. Being a friend will do no one any eternal good *per se*; neither was it Jesus' mission (John 1:36) or the commission to the church (Matt 28:19-20). Believers are called to make disciples.

- Jesus showed unconditional acceptance (p. 31).

*Rebuttal:* Hardly! Only those who meet the condition of trusting Christ become his children (John 1:11-12).

- People would fall in love with Jesus if they would only act more like Him (p. 31).

*Rebuttal:* When Jesus acted like Jesus, the world despised Him and crucified Him. Such a statement reveals Smith's misunderstanding of the depravity of mankind, as well as its attraction to Christ. By nature, people reject Christ.

- People are closer to God than they realize (p. 31).

*Rebuttal:* On the contrary, people are alienated from God and without hope (Eph 2:12). Romans 3:11-12 reveals, “none seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless.”

- Jesus is not mad at us or even disappointed in us (p. 61).

*Rebuttal:* Jesus was clearly disappointed with his disciples at times, even as He loved them (Mark 8:14-21). Paul was clearly disappointed with those who abandoned the work of God (cf. 2 Tim 1:15; 4:10). Jesus pronounced scathing “woes” upon the Pharisees. He was, in fact, profoundly disappointed with them (Matt 23:13-36).

- After writing that Jesus is the focus of life (p. 96), Smith then claimed one is not Christ’s first priority and He is not in a hurry to fix humanity (p. 101).

*Rebuttal:* The glory of God is his first priority, and the Lord earnestly desires to mold his church into the image of Christ for his glory (Rom 8:28-30). While the Lord is never anxious, He is, indeed, constantly leading his own to maturity (Col 1:28).

- People can be accepted and belong to Jesus long before they believe (pp. 126, 135).

*Rebuttal:* People do not belong to Jesus prior to belief. Prior to faith, one is an enemy of God (Rom 5:10), alienated from God, hostile to Him, and engaged in evil deeds (Col 1:21-22). Jude warned regarding those who do not know Christ, and yet attempt to be part of the local church (Jude 12-13).

- Homosexuals are examples of those who belong to Jesus prior to belief (p. 126).

*Rebuttal:* Romans 1:26-29 reveals unmistakably that those living in homosexual sin have been “let go” by God to live in their sin. They in no sense should experience belonging to Him prior to salvation; rather, they will not inherit the kingdom of God (1



Cor 6:9). By God's grace and power, however, homosexuals, like other sinners, can be justified and then belong to the Lord (6:11).

- All 66 books of the Bible point to God's love for humanity (p. 151).

*Rebuttal:* Perhaps God's love could be read into every book, but a number of books (e.g. Obadiah, Amos, Joel) were written either to warn, or announce, God's judgment for sin.

- Although never completely denying God's wrath and judgment, Smith dismissed as quickly as possible because it simply does not relate to his "feel good" message. For example, he wrote, "Well they say, sometimes he comes in his wrath, and he comes with judgment, and he comes *–Hold on*. You mean to tell me that you don't think God is for you? He's so far for you that he died for you. What other proof do you need?" (p. 157).

*Rebuttal:* Smith interpreted Romans 8:31-32 without regard for context and thus misapplied it. Although it is true for Christians that God works all things together for the good of them and His love will never be taken from them that does not mean that God's wrath is not being outpoured even now upon unbelievers (Rom 1:18) nor that He has, and will, come in judgment upon the unrepentant (Rev 14:9-20).

- Smith, while admitting bad things happen to good people (p. 159), seems to misunderstand both how God uses suffering (p. 158) and implies, through the misuse of Jeremiah 29:11, that God plans only good things for people (p. 158).

*Rebuttal:* For the believer, the Lord works all things together for good (Rom 8:28), but no such promise is given the unbeliever (cf. Ps 73:18-20). Even for the believer, God's sovereign plan leading towards good often includes pain, suffering, and hardship (Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 5:10). Jeremiah 29:11 is not a promise to all people at all times that God plans only good for them. In the context, it is a promise to Israel about a definite time in the future. Other Scriptures speak regarding God's plans

to bring suffering at times, but people seldom quote these passages (e.g. Jer 39:16).

- While correct that God is far greater than Satan and that ultimate victory is ours, Smith greatly minimizes the power of Satan when he wrote, “We are opposed by a little bitty devil. . . . The devil is nothing but a dog on a leash. He is a toothless lion. He is a magician hiding behind a curtain, trying to manipulate us through smoke and mirrors” (pp. 187-88).

*Rebuttal:* Scripture presents a far more potent foe who is seeking to devour and destroy individuals (1 Pet 5:8; Eph 6:10-18). Satan is not omnipotent but the church must always be attentive to his schemes and temptations (2 Cor 2:11).

*Unbalanced Statements.* The next category of concerns is difficult to describe. Smith is a rather uncritical enthusiast; consequently, he wants his readers to be happy, to feel good about themselves, and to be an optimist like himself. To promote his message, Smith is willing to distort Scripture through exaggeration, lack of balance, one-sided arguments, and pure fabrication. The result is a combination of half-truths and erroneous views of Jesus and the Christian life, which are presented in an unrealistic manner.

- God is so proud of us that He is constantly posting photos of us in heaven (p. 46). Of course, nothing like this is found in the Bible.
- “Grace is a person and his name is Jesus” (p. 51). No, Jesus is a person who is characterized by grace, as well as many other attributes including justice and wrath.
- Although Scripture abounds in commands to teach, exhort, instruct, and admonish one another (2 Tim 4:22-5; Rom 15:14), Smith said that the longer he is a pastor “the less prone I am to tell people what to do and the quicker I am to just hug them and pray with them” (p. 59). Hugs are often appropriate and may make people feel better but it is the Word of God that equips for every good thing (2 Tim 3:16-17).

- Smith assured his readers that they would be “blown away” if they knew what Jesus thought of them. “Jesus is crazy about you. He is obsessed with you. He is proud of you” (p. 78). Smith’s words are an entirely self-centered view of how the Lord regards his people. God’s love is real and unfathomable, but He is not a doting grandfather who just cannot receive enough of his own.
- The author mocked Christians struggling with sin and misrepresented the purpose of the Law. To such people he apparently recommended “a little sin might do you good” (p. 95). While emphasizing love and grace, Smith demonstrated little of either toward those battling sin. He is overly tolerant toward those who live in blatant sexual sin, but has no tolerance for those who are judgmental or legalistic. Smith’s approach is consistent with the prevalent views of society which will tolerate anything but intolerance.
- Smith completely misunderstands the book of Ecclesiastes when he said that the “high point of the book is that everything is meaningless” (p. 107). On the contrary, the climax is that the meaninglessness of life should motivate one to consider God (12:13-14).
- Readers are assured by Smith that “Jesus was the happiest guy around. He told jokes. He poked fun at people. He laughed” (p. 123). Of course, none of this is found in Scripture; this is pure fabrication. Scripture states that Jesus was “a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3), but never that He laughed, poked fun, or told jokes. Perhaps the Lord did, but if so, no one, including Smith, knows it. When one begins adding characteristics to Jesus not supported by revelation, it is bordering on blasphemy.
- Speaking of blasphemy, on three occasions Smith used the popular blasphemous slang phrase, “Oh, my God” (pp. 128, 145, 187). Such terms may relate to his audience but it profanes the name of God.

- The author's view of inspiration is feeble. When addressing John's comment that he was the disciple Jesus loved, Smith claimed John flaunted that he was Jesus' favorite. As awful a statement that is, Smith added, "Was he Jesus' favorite? We don't know. It doesn't really matter, because he believed he was" (p. 148, cf. p. 150). The Holy Spirit did not record John's opinion, but rather that which is true.
- Smith believes if John thought he was Jesus' favorite it does not matter because the truth is "we are all God's favorites." In addition to being a line directly from the heretical novel *The Shack*, there is no biblical support for such a statement. Smith's words correspond well with the world's current philosophy in which everyone is a winner and all are equal. However, one knows that the Lord chose some to belong to Him (Eph 1:4) and He selected only twelve to be his apostles (etc.). How all this works in the mind of God is a mystery, but to assert that the Lord regards all as his favorites is both meaningless and beyond Smith's knowledge.
- In addition, like some sort of starry-eyed teenager, one learns that God "is head-over-heels in love with you . . . and your biggest fan" (p. 156). While attempting to elevate the love of God such language denigrates it.
- Zombies are all the rage these days, so of course Jesus is described as the ultimate zombie (p. 179). However, zombies are supposedly the living dead. There is nothing dead about Jesus. He died but He has been resurrected and is fully alive. The zombie metaphor again belittles the person of Christ.

*Miscellaneous Silliness.* Smith is popular today because he is entertaining. He gave the foremost Bible characters accents when he preaches; of course, these are accents that they did not have (p. 5). His imagination is somewhat absurd. He envisioned Zacchaeus, for example, as a gangster of the hip-hop variety. They had the red carpet ready and cameras everywhere when he made an appearance with a lady on each arm, wearing sunglasses, and greeting people with "Hey y'all" (pp. 5-7). When Jesus ate with sinners they enjoyed being with Him because He was just "chilling" with them (p. 29). In heaven, Jesus is "lounging around with His

feet kicked up and a cold drink in His hand” (p. 193). While entertaining, these depictions are neither accurate nor respectful of true people, and especially of Christ. The Lord is not an eternal teenager who is lounging and chilling. Such depictions of Him are inappropriate at best.

The message of *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* could be summarized toward the end of the book. “[Jesus] is telling me that he is proud of me, that he is pleased with me, that I am amazing” (p. 195). There is much talk in the book about how amazing Jesus is, but when all is concerned it is this self-centered, “feel good” message that has made *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* a *New York Times* best seller. While one can appreciate the accurate teaching within the book, it is distorted by the profound inaccuracies that have been documented in this review. Truth mixed with so much error is truly a dangerous thing.

— Gary E. Gilley  
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

***The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ*** by Bruce Ware. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 156 pp., paper, \$15.99.

Bruce Ware, professor of Christian theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has written a doctrinally sound yet thoroughly readable treatise on the humanity of Jesus Christ. While Jesus' divine and human natures cannot actually be separated, nor does Ware attempt to do so, nevertheless he did attempt to demonstrate how Jesus' humanity functioned within the person of Christ and why it was/is necessary for the Lord to possess both divine and human natures in one person. As might be imagined, this is no easy task and few theologians could have achieved what Ware has accomplished (and he did so exceptionally well). Ware stated his thesis as such: "I want to present here some of the evidence from Old and New Testaments that the human life of Jesus is real and to show how important it is that He lived our life in order to die our death and be forever 'the man Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 2:5) who intercedes for us and reigns over us" (p. 12). Ware did not attempt to provide a complete Christology. He focused upon the human side of the person of Jesus Christ, and recommended *Jesus as God* by Murray J. Harris for an excellent treatment of the deity of Christ (p. 13). In the eight chapters, Ware addressed numerous facets of Christ's humanity, never avoiding the difficult issues. For example, he superbly explained the so-called *kenosis* of Christ as detailed in Philippians 2:5-8 (pp. 16-26), how it was that Jesus—being God—could learn and grow in maturity (pp. 60-69), how He could be truly impeccable and yet endure genuine temptations (pp. 79-86), why Jesus had to be male (pp. 91-109), the purpose of the resurrection, and why Jesus' humanity is vital in relation to his present reign and future return (pp. 129-46). In addition, *The Man Jesus Christ* contains an excellent defense of penal substitution and why it is central to the gospel—and how another theory of the atonement, *Christus Victor*, while true, depends fully upon penal substitution (pp. 113-26). At the end of each chapter the author provides an application for the truths presented within, and study questions for use in small group Bible studies. The book includes both scriptural and topical indexes. *The Man Christ Jesus* addresses a complicated, yet vital, theological issue with skill. Ware is doctrinally sound and provides excellent biblical exegesis for his position, yet his book is readable by the serious Bible student. *The Man Christ Jesus* is highly recommended.

— Gary E. Gilley  
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

***Zealot, the Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*** by Reza Aslan. New York: Random House, 2013. xxxiv + 216 pp., cloth, \$27.00.

For some inexplicable reason, *Zealot* has become a best selling sensation, yet there is absolutely nothing new or profound revealed in the book. *Zealot* is merely revitalized, liberal theology that has been in existence since German rationalism and higher criticism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. *Zealot* is the same poor scholarship and skepticism that infiltrated the major American denominations toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and resulted in the doctrinal deconstruction of much of Protestant Christianity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, such denominations no longer having a unique reason to exist and are in profound decline; nevertheless, with the appearance of the emergent church in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, some of its doctrine and emphasis have become trendy again.

The thesis that motivated the writing of *Zealot* is that there is a massive divide between the Jesus of the Gospels (the Christ) and the historic Jesus (Jesus of Nazareth). The Jesus of the New Testament is an invention of the early church (pp. xxx, 30, 33, 35-37, 86-89, 104, 124, 133-35, 144, 148-53, 156, 170-71, 176, 182, 184). The only way, therefore, to discover the real Jesus is to remove the layers of myths, legends, and fabrications and unleash the Jesus of history. The search has traditionally been termed “quests for the historic Jesus,” of which there have been three major ones to date.

One must understand that so-called “historic quests for Jesus” dismiss almost completely any Gospel witness as tainted and focuses instead upon extra-biblical records. However, the problem is: by the liberal scholar’s own admission, including Aslan, these records do not exist (see pp. xxvi-xxvii). Aslan relies heavily upon the mythological “Q source” (pp. 29, 111, 136, 153, 175, 190, 214) but if asked to show his readers a copy, he would have to embarrassingly mumble that there is none. Having then dismissed the biblical accounts as rubbish, and depending upon non-existent documents and unreliable sources such as Josephus, Aslan claimed to provide for his readers a more accurate portrait of the Jesus who existed in the first century. A couple of quotes would be helpful.

As has been repeatedly noted, the gospels are not about a man known as Jesus of Nazareth who lived two thousand years ago; they are about a messiah whom the gospel writers viewed as an eternal being sitting at the right hand of God. The first-century Jews who wrote about Jesus had already made up their minds about who he was. They were constructing a theological argument about the nature and

function of Jesus as Christ, not composing a historical biography about a human being (pp. 133-134).

The only means the modern reader has at his or her disposal to try to retrieve some semblance of historical accuracy in the passion narratives is to slowly strip away the theological overlay imposed by the evangelists on Jesus's final days and return to the most primitive version of the story that can be excavated from the gospels. And the only way to do that is to start at the end of the story, with Jesus nailed to a cross (p. 154).

Aslan believes the Bible contains many errors (pp. xix, 47, 81, 83, 85, 94, 148, 157, 166-71, 203), but apparently the Gnostic Gospels (p. xxvii), Josephus (p. 82), and legends (pp. 197, 209-10) are more reliable.

The author stated that Jesus made no claim to being divine and that He was actually little more than a disciple of John the Baptist (pp. 87-89, 97-98, 111, 127) and a performer of tricks (pp. 102-04). Everything from Jesus' divinity to his resurrection was invented by the early church (pp. 175-77) and primarily by Paul. For instance, Paul reinterpreted Jesus and created Christianity as it is known today (pp. 184-96, 212-16, 265). Aslan claimed, "Paul's lack of concern with the historical Jesus is not due, as some have argued, to his emphasis on Christological rather than historical concerns. It is due to the simple fact that Paul had no idea who the living Jesus was, nor did he care" (p. 187). According to Aslan, the brother of Jesus (i.e. James) was the true leader of the first century church, and was in opposition to Paul. While alive, James' influence prevented the Apostle Paul, and kept his theology under control (pp. 203-12). However, primarily due to Paul's epistles, Christianity was hijacked and mutilated into the Pauline version, and the historic Jesus was lost to future generations (p. 212).

As stated in the introduction of this review, *Zealot* presents nothing new or shocking; it is the standard rhetoric of liberal theologians for the past 300 years. The only reasons for conservative Christians to read such a book are to have a clear presentation of liberal theology and to be aware of what many—perhaps some in their own churches—are reading. Most would not need to read all 300 plus pages. Everything the author said in those pages can be found in the "Author's Note" and "Introduction" which amounts to 14 pages. All subsequent material is merely embellishing those introductory sections.

— Gary E. Gilley  
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)



***The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*** by Daniel Boyarin. New York: The New Press, 2012. 160 pp., cloth, \$21.95.

Daniel Boyarin is the Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture and Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley, and one of the world's leading Talmud scholars. In *The Jewish Gospels*, Boyarin challenged how most modern Jewish theologians have interpreted the New Testament Gospels and Jesus Himself. He examined the Old Testament prophecies, New Testament narratives, and Jewish extra-biblical literature, such as First Enoch and Fourth Ezra, and achieved some startling conclusions, especially considering they come from a highly respected Jewish rabbinical scholar. Boyarin concluded as follows:

- The idea of a Trinity or at least a second member of the Godhead has been present among Jewish believers long before the coming of Jesus (pp. xvii, 5, 44, 56, 72, 102, 128, 132, 142, 158-60).
- The primary distinction between Judaism and Christianity did not occur until the Council of Nicaea (pp. 1, 13-15). Some Old Testament Jews believed that the Messiah, who would restore Israel's glory, was a man, others that He was divine and others that He was both human and divine (pp. 5-7, 77, 102, 128, 132, 142).
- The title "Son of Man," which Jesus often used for Himself, is drawn from Daniel 7:13-14 and is a reference to a second divine figure who was the Messiah (pp. 26, 30-34, 35-36, 40, 46-47, 53, 56, 141). Jesus definitely saw Himself as the Messiah (pp. 56-70, 101), as well as deity (p. 138). Boyarin's assertion is in opposition to liberal Christian scholarship that claims his followers invented all this (pp. 157-160).
- Isaiah 53 has been interpreted historically as referring to a suffering Messiah who died vicariously in order to atone for man's sins; it was not interpreted until modern times as the suffering servant Israel (pp. 132, 152-56).

The arguments are astonishing considering the source. Conversely, Boyarin did not go so far as to trust Jesus as Messiah (p. 160), did not believe that Jesus ever rejected Kosher laws (pp. 109-28, esp. p. 121), and embraced liberal views regarding dates for Old Testament books, source criticism, and authorship (pp. 31, 42, 105). *The Jewish Gospels* is readable,

challenging, and helpful in understanding both Scripture and one's witness to Jewish people.

— Gary E. Gilley  
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

***A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*** by Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. 1054 pp., cloth, \$60.00.

The authors of this work have offered a truly stunning portrayal of the theological beliefs of the Puritan movement. The term “stunning” is carefully chosen; this text, at times, is stunningly insightful and useful, revealing the amazing thoughts of some great men of God, while, at other times, it makes some equally stunning omissions, and asserts a few very poor conclusions. The very breadth of the book is panoramic, and one marvels at the vast tides of reading Puritan literature necessary to even attempt such a work; yet, the very extent of the book seems to have caused the authors to make choices that occasionally misrepresent the full scope of Puritan thinking. The beginning of this review will state the most glaring pair of weaknesses, and then move to the book’s many great strengths. Both of the weaknesses begin with the presuppositional starting point of Beeke and Jones, that is, their belief in “Reformed Orthodoxy.”

The weakest portions of this work are the places that address paedobaptism and also the bizarre attacks upon premillennialism (these are areas where both Beeke and Jones have very strong commitments, and it seems that these commitments were intentionally read reversely into history to depict a somewhat false representation of the Puritans. Certainly, the Puritans mostly believed in paedobaptism and rejected a literal 1000 year reign of Christ, yet this was far from an unanimous belief among them. There were many who thought of themselves as “Puritans” who believed in adult believer’s baptism, as well as some who even believed in a form of premillennialism. The way that Beeke and Jones decided to handle these inconveniences was to ignore the Puritans who believed in adult immersion baptism (like those who participated in the 1644 London Baptist Confession of Faith in addition to the 1689 London Baptist Confession) and demonstrate how those who were premillennial (i.e. Thomas Goodwin) were just inconsistent with their contemporaries.

The first of these issues (those concerning baptism) was the far more egregious error made in this book, as even under Oliver Cromwell men who taught and believed in adult immersion baptism were fully considered as Puritan ministers. Responding to this very charge, Beeke and Jones wrote, “Nonetheless, the vast majority of Puritans were part of the larger theological movement called Reformed orthodoxy” (p. 2). They cited a professor of church history from Westminster Theological Seminary (Carl Trueman) as agreeing with this statement. Perhaps such a conclusion would have been more believable if one of the Puritans actually stated

something similar. After all, they very clearly spoke against this notion of limiting their movement to those who believed in infant baptism by their inclusion of “Baptist” pastors as fellow ministers during the Puritan rule of England. The argument seems an obvious ploy to reject these men based only upon the theological presuppositions of Beeke and Jones. While it is true that they had to remove some material from this vast study or it would have gone even beyond the ponderous size this book already has, they have a group of men regarded as Puritans under Cromwell, and still did not really deal with them other than to have a chapter defending paedobaptism (pp. 725-41). The presentation of the material indicates a clear desire by the authors to omit those of an inconvenient theology rather than a full scholarly presentation of the Puritans.

The second of the weaknesses is far less formidable, as the numbers of adherents among the Puritans do appear to be rather small; but, there was clearly a premillennial theology among some Puritans. Indeed, one of them (Thomas Goodwin) wrote a lengthy defense of a 1000 year reign of Christ. Furthermore, it is true that his view is flawed in many ways, like believing that six of the seven trumpets in Revelation have already been sounded, and the seventh would sound to usher in the millennial reign at a date announced by Goodwin (between 1690 and 1700). However, this sort of error is natural as many of the things of the end times are sealed by God himself until the end (Dan 12:4, 9-10). Beeke and Jones also made a list of those who believed in a literal millennial reign, (pp. 777-79) yet mere pages later the author’s wrote how this belief is “a decisive break not only from some of his [Goodwin’s] Reformed orthodox contemporaries, but also from the Reformation tradition” (p. 806). If there are enough authors, how is this teaching a break in the Reformation tradition? Moreover, why is this tradition so set when there are lists of premillennialists in the tradition? The emphasis in this section of the text can only be based upon the presuppositional views of the authors at work, contrary to the evidence they themselves cite.

Even though these are weaknesses, the book remains a tremendous help, as these weak defenses of paedobaptism and amillennialism are obvious. They are really a sign and warning that one can and should read the Puritans and to avoid the presuppositions that may cause one to avoid those of the “Reformed orthodoxy.” Many dispensationalists hold themselves as “Reformed” in the sense of soteriology by accepting the doctrine of election, yet avoid reading these men because the church has been taught that the Puritans would all uniformly agree with modern thinkers who claim that the dispensational reading of Scripture could not achieve the reformed truth that individuals believe. However, as this work

was read, there was a constant noting of how the Puritans were far more dispensational in their theology than would be believed. They referred to specific historical covenants and how they could delineate specific periods of history. A good *example of this dispensational perspective can be found in the chapter entitled, "The Learned Doctor William Ames and the Marrow of Theology."* Beeke and Jones state in this chapter that Ames explained, "how God administers the covenant of grace" by dividing history into periods of covenantal administration, explaining how this made God's plan in the ages more clear (p. 50). How is this not a form of dispensationalism, albeit with the addition of a non-biblical covenant (the "covenant of grace")? Moreover, there are statements throughout the book, such as, "The evidence clearly shows that Reformed theologians in Britain during the seventeenth century did not agree on how to relate the Sinaitic covenant to the covenant of grace" (p. 290). Aside from affirming the non-biblical covenant of grace, this statement indicates the Puritans' thinking about historically relating covenants and their functioning together in a study of the outworking of God's overall plan for humanity (this is exactly what dispensationalism as a system does so well). Moreover, it is also worth noting that many of the Puritans (like Richard Sibbes) did affirm a future for physical Israel, as did John Calvin. Issues such as these could certainly be explored by scholars more fully than this book has done, as it is somewhat beyond the scope of every chapter.

A final strength to mention is the coverage of areas of theology that one today would not often venture to address. The Puritans considered portions of God's plan that would rarely occur to today's church. One of particular interest, and one that has already resulted in several studies, and also a research project in the hopes of future publication, is the idea that Adam was not originally fitted for heaven, but it is only Christ that gave humanity access to that great reward. The idea is expressed throughout the Puritan writings, like in the Westminster Confession (7.2), but most fully in the work of Thomas Goodwin. Goodwin taught that Adam was fitted only for what God promised him in the first covenant (pp. 225-26). Adam did not have the promise of eternal preservation as the church does—nor the filling of the Holy Spirit—as they were not due to humanity from creation (p. 226). Neither was Adam due the reward of heaven, all these came only at the substitutionary death of Christ, which fits believers with his image and brings these things with it (pp. 227-29). The attention here is one of the most intriguing portions of the book, and something that can and has already begun to provoke thought.

Yet another great strength of the book is something that pastors will certainly appreciate, the two chapters addressing Puritan preaching

(pp. 681-710). The chapters detail how these great preachers of history viewed the work, and the thinking behind the construction of their sermons. The chapters addressing preaching is the most practically applicable portion of this book, and one that will surely structure preaching after it is read and studied, particularly in the construction of applications for congregations. The Puritans believed that all preaching must be experimental and practical. Experimental preaching means showing the importance of the teachings of Scripture by presenting what sorts of experiences one ought to have as well as proclaiming how things ought to progress. The messages must be practical to the lives of the hearers (p. 700) and are to be stated plainly (pp. 693-96). The methods they took are also good examples for preachers today, particularly those involving explaining doctrines as part of a sermon (pp. 690-93). The chapter is most excellent, and also very useful as a guide to the direct application of Scripture's commands with regard to the pastor's life.

Overall, even with the weaknesses earlier mentioned, this book is a great resource for the library of a modern pastor. The church has access to many contemporary systematic theologies, but there have been none before of the Puritan era. The present work does a remarkable job in fulfilling that role, and its many great strengths should be considered, despite the obvious presuppositions of the authors.

— Cliff Allcorn  
Rim of the World Community Church (Running Springs, CA)

***Shall Never Perish Forever: Is Salvation Forever or Can It Be Lost?*** by Dennis M. Rokser. Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2012. 335 pp., paper, \$19.95.

Dennis Rokser, pastor-teacher of Duluth Bible Church, has written a valuable essay regarding eternal security and the believer's assurance of salvation. Everyone knows people who are unsure of their salvation or who believe they are saved but also believe they can lose it either through egregious sin or by falling away from their faith. However, equally as often, many are unsure of the biblical response that is required to assure these people of their salvation and its eternal significance. Pastor Rokser has performed a valuable service by documenting a thorough, understandable, and decidedly biblical case for proving both eternal security and the believer's assurance of salvation. The author made it clear that he was not presenting an attack upon any particular theological system but was rather making a biblical case for his arguments (in that, he has succeeded).

The profound love that Pastor Rokser has for people is demonstrated throughout the book. He lovingly calls for those who are lost to place their faith in Christ Jesus alone. His compassion for the flock is also quite in evident as he sought to assure them that God's promise to grant eternal life to all who believe in the person and work of Christ Jesus cannot be abrogated based upon anything one does or does not accomplish.

The great strength of this book is in the thorough biblical presentation of these doctrinal issues that are based upon a sound exegesis of the Scriptures via the employment of a literal hermeneutic. The book is not about opinions concerning the subject nor is it about any individual theological system; it is all about what God has revealed in Scripture regarding the doctrine of assurance. Rokser demonstrates that any misunderstanding of these issues is due to faulty, less than literal interpretive methods. Only when one knows the Word of God and the power of God is he/she adequately equipped to understand the doctrines of eternal security and assurance of salvation. Rokser proved that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all involved in implementing and maintaining these doctrines.

The title of the book is based upon John 10:28-30 where a literal reading of the text in verse 28 may be rendered, "and not never shall they perish to the age." Pastor Rokser rendered the text as follows: "I give to them eternal life, and they *shall never perish forever*" (p. xiv). He began the book by defining eternal security. He explained why denying this doctrine is damaging to biblical Christianity.

Rokser presented God's plan for humanity, as Paul presented it in Romans 8:30; those who believe are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified; it is important to note that sanctification is not a link in this chain. Pastor Rokser biblically proved the distinction between justification and sanctification. One area of Scripture he used for this purpose is 2 Timothy 2:11-13. In verse 11, believers, who are said to die with Christ, shall also live with Him. Verse 13 proves that even though one may be unfaithful, the Lord Jesus is not and His promises will be fulfilled because it is part of his nature to be faithful. Verse 12 refers to rewards that may be lost if one falls away. Rokser has a helpful chart explaining the three tenses of salvation (p. 209). In the first tense of salvation, believers are saved from the penalty of sin and granted eternal life at a moment in time. In the third tense of salvation, believers are glorified and saved from the very presence of sin (also, at a moment in time). The second tense of salvation, sanctification, during which believers are saved from the power of sin, is a lifelong post salvation process that occurs as one walks by faith, or not, in dependence, or not, upon the Holy Spirit. The statement here is very important doctrinal truth that vast numbers of Christians misunderstand and even deny.

Pastor Rokser's presentation of biblical truth, which supports the doctrine of the believer's assurance, is persuasive and based convincingly upon the Word of God. Nevertheless, it is true (and an admittedly unpleasant truth) that believers can be disobedient and sinful, and still be eternally secure believers. God deals with such behaviors through the exercise of temporal discipline and through the loss of eternal rewards in the life to come. Rokser thoroughly explained these issues.

One of the strengths of this work is in the section titled, "Probing the Perplexing Passages." Rokser exegeted thirty-nine passages of Scripture that many people use to either deny eternal security or the assurance of salvation or both. Among the topics discussed is the production of spiritual fruit, the unpardonable sin, falling away from the faith, and sinful believers (among many other topics). The book is an easily read and understood primer concerning the doctrines of eternal security and the believer's assurance of eternal life. However, do not be misled by the fact that it is an easy read; it is powerful presentation of biblical exegesis based upon literal hermeneutics. Rokser's work will equip every Christian to explain and defend these essential biblical truths to any person who doubts them, and thus this book is highly recommended.

— Dennis Waltemeyer  
Tyndale Theological Seminary (Hurst, TX)



***The Old Evangelicalism: Old Truth for a New Awakening*** by Iain H. Murray. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2005. 226 pp., paper, \$16.47.

Iain Murray is one of the finest conservative church historians and theologians writing today. He warns early of the danger of romanticizing some period in church history (p. 3). However, without question he foresees a time, from the Puritans to Spurgeon, in which truth and holiness play a far more dominate role in the church. For Murray, “old evangelicalism” is early Reformed Christianity, with the Puritans at the zenith. As such, this book is filled with many excellent quotes and insights from this particular era and theological emphasis.

Murray is clear regarding his Reformed views, defending limited atonement (pp. 106-07, 132), regeneration before faith (pp. 18, 45, 56-57, 62), election (p. 126) and the necessity of the Law for sanctification (pp. 52-54, 91). However, he provided balance to these views by limiting the extreme ideas often found in some forms of Calvinism. For example, Murray made clear that God does love the unbeliever (pp. 110-23, 156), and an entire chapter is devoted to what can be learned from John Wesley (pp. 135-65) who preached the same gospel as does the Calvinist (p. 156). Murray also clarified the Reformed understanding of assurance of salvation, faith/repentance, and fruit of the Spirit (pp. 181-94). Murray challenged those who add a third evidence of salvation, such as an emotional, feeling element. He provided a very helpful illustration of how looking to feelings as the basis for salvation caused great pain and insecurity for John Wesley (pp. 187-89). *The Old Evangelicalism* is a resolute work and a profitable read, even if one disagrees with some of the author’s positions.

— Gary E. Gilley  
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)





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