BIBLEFRAMEWORK

for Worship and Obedience
in an Age of Global Deception

Part IV:
DICIPLINARY TRUTHS OF
GOD'S KINGDOM

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OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Parts II and III of the Framework course covered apologetics and history from the creation until the time of David, and they developed many of the basic doctrines of the Bible. Matters pertaining to the scientific controversy between creation and evolution ("buried" truths) and to the ethical controversy between revealed law and legislation ("disruptive" truths) produced by fallen man have been discussed. Now in Part IV we look at the impact of God's Kingdom on Israel's national life from Solomon to the end of the Old Testament.

Part III presented the disruption of paganized Noahic civilization by the presence of God's election program through Israel. We noted how offensive it seems to the fleshly mind to have God elect one nation and not all. One of the great "scandals" of the Bible is the conquest of Palestine through a ruthless and bloody holy war. To relieve itself of this intrusion by God into human history, unbelief has sought endless "reinterpretations" of the Old Testament that attempt to undo biblical authority over all men everywhere.

In Part IV we change perspective. Now we look not at the offense toward the outside pagan world but at the inner life of the elect nation Israel. Having been chosen by God as the instrument for bringing His Kingdom to the human race, Israel experienced a special history. Her history was controlled by the great covenants such as the Abrahamic unconditional covenant of election and the Sinaitic conditional covenant of kingdom rule. On the one hand, Israel's future destiny was secure in terms of her racial continuity, her national geographic location, and her mission to the world. On the other hand, Israel's passage through time toward that destiny was conditioned upon her loyalty to Yahweh: blessing for obedience; cursing for rebellion. Thousands of Israelites would be lost. At times her very historical existence seemed to hang by a thread.

Part IV builds upon the truths of Parts II and III. The foundation lies with the original Creator-creature distinction instead of the pagan Continuity of Being and the creature defection from God with its consequences. God's Kingdom program, therefore, irresistibly works toward the ultimate goal of separating good and evil, of judging and saving, and of glorifying God through it all. The so-called "problem of evil" will one day cease to exist, but when that day comes, grace will also cease to exist. The sanctification process of working out the separation of good and evil in our souls, we learned in Part III, involves real spiritual war with battles, casualties, and wounds.

Part IV presents the sanctifying forces God packed into Israel's covenants. As members of covenant relationships with God, Israelites experienced the truth that "whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). The texts of Kings and the other prophetic histories reveal the outworking of the blessing and cursing sections of the Sinaitic Covenant. Yahweh meant what He said. These texts also reveal the outworking of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. Israel will ultimate survive.

The life of Israel was prophetically foretold by their "national anthem" given by Moses centuries before through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

"Yahweh did lead him,
And there was no foreign god with him.
He made him ride on the high places of the earth,
And he did eat of the increase of the field;
And he made him to such honey out of the rock,
And oil out of the flinty rock;
Butter of the herd, and milk of the flock,
With fat of lambs,
And rams of the bread of Bashan, and goats,
With the finest of the wheat;
And of the blood of the grape thou drankest wine.
But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked;
Thou are waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek;
Then he forsook God who made him,
And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
They moved him to jealousy with strange gods. . . .
And Yahweh saw it, and abhorred them,
Because of the provocation of his sons and daughters. . . .
I will heap evils upon them:
I will spend mine arrows upon them;
They shall be wasted with hunger and devoured with burning heat and
bitter destruction. . . .
I said, I would scatter them afar,
I would make them the remembrance of them to cease from among men;
Were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy,
Lest their adversaries should judge amiss,
Lest they should say, Our hand is exalted,
And Yahweh has not done all this. . . .
Yahweh shall judge his people,
And repent himself for his servants;
When he seeth that their power is gone,
And there is none remaining, shut up or felt at large.
                                        (Deut. 32:12-16, 23-24a, 26-27, 36)

Thus Israel would be mightily blessed, would apostatize in idolatry, would be cursed, and would finally be regathered. These steps in her history form the contents of the following chapters. As with the other

parts, you will get the most out of this material by: (1) reading quickly through large sections of the Old Testament being studied; (2) use scrap paper to write down your observations on the grand themes being discussed as they appear in story after story; and (3) when you can in full conscience do it, start using what you learn about God's greatness in prayer and praise to Him.

"Disciplinary Truths of God's Kingdom" is dedicated to those who seek Him and want to know Him with both heart and mind. Because salvation demands final separation of good from evil, spiritual growth necessarily entails hard experiences under God's disciplinary nurture. We must learn to keep the end goal in mind so we can give thanks during our trials here and now.

CHAPTER 1: THE GOLDEN ERA OF SOLOMON: THE DISCIPLINE OF BLESSING

In Part III of this series we studied the rapid decline of human civilization after Noah's immediate family settled the continents, mapped the earth, distributed the animals, and erected architectural masterpieces. In only a few centuries, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life had worked their effect like leaven. The "Noahic Bible" was in serious danger of being wholly forgotten in every people group so God chose to start a new work with Abraham. The collective life of civilization had become perverted by sin so a new environment needed to be made.

Through Abraham's pilgrimage, the exodus, the giving of the law, the conquest and settlement, and the rise and reign of David, God brought a missionary nation into existence. We've already seen some of this nation's corporate life or "culture". The Israelites had laws, courts, civil government, national holidays, and a national temple for the real king, Yahweh. In this chapter we turn to a more careful treatment of the counter-culture produced by God acting through Israel. What were the fruits of God's special work in this nation, culturally speaking? How did Israel's culture differ from that of the surrounding pagan nations?

After looking at human culture with the Israelite model, we will examine what we have discovered about the sanctification process in our lives as believers. Many believers down through Church history have really struggled with how to relate personal faith to public culture. Even in evangelical and fundamental circles there are uneasy lines of debate on this topic. How much should a believer involve himself in the culture of this world? What is a believer to do with natural talents for cultural expression? How can a believer avoid spiritual and intellectual "schizophrenia"? (Read here <u>I Kings 2-10</u>; <u>Proverbs</u>; <u>Ecclesiastes</u>; and <u>Song of Songs</u>)

ISRAEL'S CULTURE UNDER SOLOMON

What is culture? The dictionary definition is "the concepts, habits, skills, arts, instruments, institutions, etc., of a given people in a given period." Traditionally culture is viewed as a religiously and ethically "neutral" description of social life since on a pagan basis religious and ethics emerge from, and are defined by, the culture. Occasionally, history shocks mankind with something like cannibalism or the Nazi phenomenon so that even committed unbelievers slip into moral

judgments upon culture. Generally, however, "every culture does what is right in its own eyes." And woe upon any Christian missionary who tries to "impose" his "alien" ethics on those living in a pagan culture!

The Bible gives us a godly counter-example of culture in the life of Israel, especially the blessing experienced under David's son, King Solomon. Examination of that culture in its golden era can yield some guidance for us today in dealing with cultural issues. Let's look at Israel's cultural fruit and then at its root.

Israel's Cultural Fruit in Solomon's Era   Lesson 72

The forty year era under Solomon reveals what culture looks like when the Holy Spirit actively blesses a nation. Numerous construction projects were finished throughout the land; vast holdings of silver and gold were built up in the national treasury; Israel's territorial holdings were at a maximum; nearly universal peace prevailed; and Israel had a world-wide testimony (I Kings 10:14-29; II Chron. 9:13-28).

One of the greatest achievements, however, is rarely recognized by Bible or history students: the rise of literary wisdom in Israel during this era. Great emphasis was placed upon the production of books like Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. In fact, the entire third section of the Hebrew Old Testament can be viewed as a repository of wisdom literature—a section of the Bible whose parts were avidly studied, collected, and/or composed during Solomon's time. Jewish scholar Robert Gordis, while differing from our view of authorship date, discusses the wisdom literature of the Bible:

> *"When the full scope of Hebrew Wisdom is taken into account, it becomes clear that the third section of the Bible, the <u>Kethubim</u> ["writings"] is not a miscellaneous collection, but, on the contrary, possesses an underlying unity, being the repository of Wisdom. . . .Both the composition and the rendition of the Psalms required a high degree of that technical skill which is Hokmah. . . .Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, obviously belong in a Wisdom collection. . . .Lamentations is a product of Hokmah in its technical sense. . . .The book of Daniel, the wise interpreter of dreams, obviously is in place among the Wisdom books. . . .[1]*

The Bible records Solomon as the fountainhead of much of the wisdom which was behind this wisdom literature (I Kings 4:29-34). Following his father, David, as messianic king, Solomon led the nation not only in civil affairs but also religious and cultural affairs. Through his powerful gift of wisdom Solomon exercised a mighty influence on Israelite culture. Let's look further into wisdom as the source of culture.

The Root of Israel's Cultural Fruit

What shall we say about this wisdom that lay at the root of the construction projects, the economic prosperity, and the great literary production of Israel during this golden era? What about biblical wisdom nourished Israel and King Solomon to be so creative?

Wisdom that is biblical is more than mere "rules of success"; it is deeply related to God as Creator. The classic biblical reference is Proverbs 8. This chapter amplifies the earlier statement of Proverbs that "the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom" (1:7). Biblical wisdom goes deeper than political skill and economic blessing (8:15-18). Biblical wisdom is the basis of all creation; it preceded the creation of the universe (8:22-31). Every detail of the heavens and earth is a product of wisdom. Wisdom is the expression of God's creativity.[2] Therefore all the practical, everyday rules of wisdom are derivatives of the prior wisdom of God. They are finite reflections of His genius. Man's creativity mimics (on a finite scale) God's creativity. Let's observe how God's wisdom played out in Solomon's golden era.

(1) Biblical wisdom gave unity to all the details of life. Behind each and every event, object, and person lies God's overarching creative genius. Solomon and his disciples, therefore, studied and enjoyed every aspect of the creation—not as separate "specialties" isolated from each other, but as diversities among unity. As Dr. Whybray notes:

> *"The interest of the men who surrounded David and Solomon were not confined to politics. These men constituted the cultural elite of the nation, and the educational system by which they had been trained prepared its pupils not merely for a professional career but for the enjoyment of life in all its aspects, making no distinction between the ethical, social, political, and cultural, but regarding them all as comprised within the single notion of the "good". . . .[3]*

The biblical wisdom literature reflects this wide scope of interest: Job deals with suffering, Ecclesiastes with early philosophic reflection on mortal life, Song of Songs with marital love and sex, Psalms and Chronicles with musical expressions of praise, Daniel with national strategy in light of God's strategy, and Proverbs with attitudes toward work and social life. The very structure of much of this literature, relying upon the use of metaphor, assumes an underlying unity between the truth illustrated and the illustration! From this deep sense of unified design of the Creator, biblical wise men were able to be "renaissance men" rather than as the "specialists" of our day.

(2) Biblical wisdom applied to all men—Israelite and pagan alike. If true wisdom comes from God as Creator, it follows that all men face God's design and purpose everywhere they look. Although mankind has fallen, even in their sin they can't escape God's ordinances for creation. For example, the divine institutions we studied in Part II—responsible labor, marriage, family, and civil authority—are manifestations of unavoidable wisdom. Unbelievers, in spite of their rebellion, in everyday practice continue to follow most of the wisdom principles of these social institutions.

Israel's cultural development under God's Kingdom program, therefore, utilized pieces of wisdom that came from surrounding pagan nations. Granting that the design of the Temple came from direct revelation to David (I Chron. 28:11-12), the actual construction of the Temple was accomplished through the Hamitic craftsmen from Tyre (I Kings 5; II Chron. 2). Solomon's merchant marine was largely managed by Gentile seamen (I Kings 9:26-28). The literary style of Proverbs has many affinities with Egyptian writings and mentions what seems to be gentile sources (Prov. 30:1ff; 31:1ff). The book of Job recalls the gentile roots of civilization just after Noah. All men, Israelite and pagan alike, share some wisdom by virtue of their being created in God's image.

(3) Biblical wisdom when followed gave blessing and when rejected gave cursing. Just as Sinaitic Covenant defined *kingdom* rule with blessing and cursing predicated upon obedience or disobedience to the divine King, so biblical wisdom defined *providential* rule with blessing and cursing. Sinful rebellion by all men against their Creator leads inevitably to rebellion against everything that reminds them of that Creator, such as His designs in creation, his everyday rule through nature in which man lives. Thus fallen man inevitably becomes foolish (Rom. 1:21-22; Eph. 4:17). By the time in history that Israel became an established nation in the land, most of the other nations had lost their initial storehouse of wisdom from Noah. Paganization of civilization spread foolishness and its reward of cursed cultures.

When God gave His laws at Mt. Sinai, therefore, this new revelation brought with it renewed wisdom. In Deuteronomy 4:6 Moses insisted that the Sinaitic law code was a repository of "wisdom. . .in the sight of all nations." The laws and statutes fit with how God created the universe. Wisdom, in other words, came to Israel right from the start. During Solomon's golden era the Israelites became more and more conscious of the implications of wisdom for everyday life. Real success in life depended upon following wisdom as Proverbs so clearly teaches.

(4) Biblical wisdom gave a framework for creativity. When God assigned Adam and all mankind through him the task of "subduing the earth", one of the earliest assignments was to "name the animals" (Gen. 2:19-20). Significantly, God left Adam to come up with whatever names he wanted. Those names were to remain as the proper names of the animals. God did not compel Adam to name animal "X" with a certain name; it was Adam's choice completely. Adam thus continued God's prior naming work which had stopped on the third day (note Gen. 1:5, 8,10). In like fashion, the wise men of Solomon's time extended the original Sinai law code that had "named" portions of life. They creatively added "names" to various activities of life, producing new literature, architectural constructions, musical works, and business ventures.

(5) Biblical wisdom spread throughout the world. I believe that the wisdom of Israel had a profound effect beyond Israel's borders. I think it will one day be shown that the strange, sudden emergence of Greek philosophy that largely shaped Western civilization was an effect of Israel's culture. This effect came to Greece through the famous merchantmen of the Mediterranean, the Phoenicians.

It is well known that King Solomon had very intimate contacts with the Phoenician civilization along the Palestine coastal areas near Tyre (I Kings 5:1-12; 9:11-27). After Solomon, King Ahab later married into Sidonian royalty (I Kings 16:31). Not unexpectedly, Israel's literary movement shows definite signs of intercourse with Phoenicia. Although he dated much of the OT wisdom literature later than bible-believing scholars, the famous Johns Hopkins archeologist, W. F. Albright, discovered an ideological and literary link between Israel and Phoenicia. His late dating of the OT wisdom books caused Albright to see the influence mainly from Phoenicia to Israel, but if his observations are read in the light of an earlier dating of these books, his remarks point to a reverse influence from Israel to Phoenicia. Writes Albright:

> *"In a forthcoming book. . .I shall deal with the origins of the new ways of thinking which seem suddenly to appear among the Greeks in the early sixth century, B.C. I trace them back to a general intellectual movement which probably first appeared in Phoenicia, from which it spread more or less contemporaneously to Israel on the one hand and to the Aegean shores on the other, . . .The roots of this movement can be traced in the earlier literature of Israel. . . .We have in Qeheleth [Ecclesiastes] some of the raw material on which the earliest Greek philosophers built their metaphysical structures. . . ."[4]*

The Rot in Israel's Cultural Fruit

The prophetic writers of Kings point out that even in the golden era of Solomon a cultural "rot" had already set in. Solomon allowed pagan religions to exist in Jerusalem, the cultic center of the nation, through his many wives whom he married often for solidifying international treaties. It was political practice then, as even among European royalty in recent centuries: marriages between national leaders tended to solidify international treaties and relationships. Such marriages were prohibited by the source document of Israel's wisdom—the Sinaitic Covenant (Deut. 17:17). Many of his wives came from cultures from which it was forbidden to take wives and with which it no covenants were to be made (Exod. 23:26-33; 34:12-16). It was understood that wives could be taken *if they were converted to faith in Yahweh* as in the case of Caleb in the book of <u>Joshua</u> and Boaz in the book of <u>Ruth</u>. Nowhere, however, do we read of Solomon's wives converting to faith in Yahweh.

An interesting observation occurs here: religious apostasy, international treaties, and religiously-mixed marriages are tied together. What is the connection? Worship of the Creator and of the creature are mutually exclusive: they represent two completely different presuppositions and ultimate values. International treaties and marital covenants, however, both require common values. Marriage as the second divine institution is the primary interpersonal covenant that creates a family. Out of the family come beliefs and values that in turn spread into society. In fact, precisely because marriage is so primary is why it was used to solidify international treaties. Solomon succumbed to a practice that established a compromised foundation for himself, his nation, and his nation's foreign relations.

How could such a wise man be so foolish? His struggle is revealed in the book of <u>Ecclesiastes</u>. Wisdom, precisely because it originates in God's mind, can never be wholly comprehended by man. "No man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end" (Eccl. 3:11). Even Solomon with the greatest wisdom possibly in the history of mankind could not put all understanding and knowledge under his view and comprehend it. He could not "capture" it and make it his servant. Wisdom remained for him as the wisest of men an illusive thing. He had to conclude that in the final analysis <u>what mattered was memory of our Creator, respect for His Authority, and obedience to his commandments whether understood or not</u>. Faith, in other words!

Instead of submitting his wisdom under God's wisdom given originally in the Sinaitic Covenant, Solomon tried to establish wisdom on his own using his God-given skills according to his own planning. He sought to establish security for Israel in the world according to his own

political analysis. He attempted to shape the Kingdom of God according to his independent ideas of what it should be like. His mighty gift of wisdom was used independently of the Giver. The high cost of this endeavor we shall study in the next chapter.

SANCTIFICATION AND CULTURE: LESSONS FROM SOLOMON

Lesson 74

Because of God's election in Abraham, the nation Israel experienced a special history much different from the surrounding pagan gentiles. That is why God takes so much space in the Old Testament to record selections from Israel's history (Rom. 15:4). In this chapter and those that follow we will seek to learn more about the truth of sanctification. Sanctification, you will recall, is the doctrine of how the saved become experientially holy in God's sight. Sanctification relates to the problem of evil in that it is the process of working out the ultimate separation of good and evil in our souls.

In Part III of this series we learned about five aspects of sanctification through the Conquest and Settlement period with its holy war. Let's review the following table:

Table Showing the Aspects of Sanctification

Aspect of Sanctification	Historical Illustration
Positional & Experiential Phases: position is what God does; experience is what He wants us to do.	Position = Abrahamic Covenant promises; Experience = Sinaitic Covenant commands
Aim: to develop loyalty to God	Defeat at Ai; Victory at Ajalon
Means: law & grace	Law = publicly revealed will of God -- protecting against licentiousness and irrationalism; declaration of holy war; Grace = God's repeated initiative toward sinners in hiding—protecting against legalism and rationalism; covenant renewal at Mt.Sinai & Moses' intercession.
Dimensions: long-term growth & existentially present decisions	Progressive occupation of the land; obedience/disobedience cycles.
Enemies: evil to be eliminated under God's sovereign power (world, flesh, devil)	Indirect, not direct, strategy against God's enemies; Kadesh-barnea & Ai versus Jericho & Ajalon

Later, we learned more details of these aspects by observing what God recorded in the Scripture concerning David. To the positional and experiential phases of sanctification, God added the Davidic Covenant and gave prophetic counsel, respectively. The aim of sanctification was powerfully shown in the difference between David's "higher loyalty" concerning his leadership position and his pagan royal contemporaries. He lived with both law and grace. Ever conscious that Yahweh, not himself as human king, was the true source of law, David also treasured God's grace. The enemies of Israel were considered by David as Yahweh's enemies, not his personal enemies.

It was with the dimensions of sanctification, however, that David's life most significantly advanced God's revelation. How David was restored to fellowship with the Lord through confession is a vital truth we must all know. Again, let's review with a table:

Table Showing Restoration to Fellowship Through Confession

Step in the Restoration Process	Illustration in David's life
Conviction of Sin: being made aware of the specific offense toward God, not just societal consequences.	Nathan's "indirect approach" & David's realization that the SINS were against the Lord ONLY (Ps. 51:4).
Confession of Sin: repentant turning from autonomy (excuses and blame shifting) to submission to the Cross as the sole point of contact with God (responsibility for the sin and cleansing by Cross).	David confesses his disobedience, not merely feeling sorry for the consequences, and his need for being cleansed "with hyssop" (Ps. 51:3,7); David aware of the profound depth of his depravity from birth (Ps. 51:5-12).
Restoration: eternal forgiveness of God through the Cross but with temporal consequences not necessarily removed.	David restored to witnessing to Yahweh's truth & grace while continuing to suffer the "fallout" of his sin (Ps. 51:13ff; other Psalms during the II Sam. 12-24 period.

What did the golden era of Solomon contribute to further understanding sanctification? The cultural fruit of biblical wisdom expands upon the aim of sanctification. Deuteronomy 6:5 states that the aim of sanctification is a thorough-going love for God that encompasses the entire person: heart, soul, and strength. Such loyalty, because it is exercised over all the details of life, is associated necessarily with man's culture. If Adam, for example, could not complete the mandate to subdue the earth without producing culture, then culture and loyalty to God are closely intertwined. What was true, beautiful, and pure in the Temple

building, the wisdom literature, the economic prosperity, and the education of Solomon's Israel publicly expressed the inner, private submission to the wisdom of Yahweh. The culture outwardly manifested a corporate sanctification. Here are some elements in the aim of sanctification that were shown.

Strong Sanctification Produces Biblical Culture

Church history has been filled with debates over how personal faith relates to public culture. Some have wholly underlined capitulated to whatever the surrounding culture established as the public "values". For example, liberal theologians, knowing that the gospel's supernatural claims are offensive to modern man, openly seek to change the gospel message into a "more meaningful" appeal. In the delicate issue of origins, as we learned in Part II of this series, liberal capitulationists have always sought to bury creation truths under the reigning evolutionary dogma.

Others have accommodated to the surrounding culture. They are believers, but somehow they feel embarrassed by biblical details. Although their faith prevents them from doing as the liberals who admittedly alter the entire message, the accommodationists try strategies of "reinterpretation" of the biblical text, hoping to retain "obedience" to the Bible while at the same time trying to embrace the main ideas of the culture.

Still others know something is wrong with the world system, but their solution is to attempt separation from all present culture. Groups such as the Amish select the culture of a previous era when Christian values predominated more than at present. This selected culture is then "frozen" as their "norm". Monasticism is another variation of the separatist approach. A common evangelical version is to disparage "secular" work and imply that the only worthwhile fruit in a believer's life is the fruit of evangelism and/or community life inside the Church. Usually this idea comes out of those who are themselves "full-time" Christian workers (as though the carpenter, plumber, and teacher aren't abiding in their respective "full-time" callings).

The lesson of Israel's golden era is that a "Bible-friendly" culture will arise in the present life if believers seeking to be loyal to the God of Creation and Redemption strongly dominate community life. Israel was called by God to establish a "counter-culture" among the nations. Israelites were not to capitulate to Canaan. They weren't to accommodate Mosaic law to the prevailing local laws of Palestine. And they weren't to hide their God-given abilities to farm, to ranch, to build, and to teach inside a monastery.

Christians at various times in Church history understood this lesson. In the Middle Ages they founded hospitals based upon the biblical principle that healing is a priestly calling. In the years following the Reformation they molded political order according to an understanding of depravity and the superiority of God's law over man's law. Much early science grew out of the belief in God's wisdom underlying all of creation. Christians of these eras saw that to love God with all their heart meant precisely that: to submit to His ways in everything they did, whether "secular" or "sacred". Rushdoony put the matter well:

> *"Unbelief does not give superior wisdom, nor does regeneration make men idiots in the affairs of the world, that we should turn the management of society over to unbelievers! Rather, no man is better able to manage himself and the affairs of the world than the instructed Christian, and it is the duty of the clergy to instruct believers in all things according to the infallible Word of God."[5]*

The aim of sanctification, then, as loyalty to God will, as it strengthens in the hearts of men, manifest itself in every generation with some varying degrees of cultural fruit that is "Bible-friendly". Depth leads to breadth in sanctification. A Christian biology teacher learns to love Jesus by honoring Him as the supernatural Creator of the biblical kinds. A Christian businessman realizes that loving Jesus means submitting to biblical economic principles. A Christian young person comes to see that loving Jesus means accepting the authority resident in the divine institutions of marriage, family, and civil government.

Biblical Culture Has A Unified View of Life

In studying Solomon's era, we noted that its foundation in biblical wisdom gave unity to all the details of life. The mature believer doesn't have to live a life divided into air-tight compartments or specialties. He or she can relax in the awareness that every detail of life is linked rationally to every other detail in a perfect plan in God's omniscience in spite of the fact that this rational unity can never be fully visible to the finite intellect. Such is the implication of loyalty to the omniscient Creator!

A practical result of this unified view of life is a genuine interest in every person that comes along. What have they experienced of God's design? Whether believer or unbeliever, every person at bottom is made in God's image, dwells in God's world, and shall one day answer to Him. What an opportunity for evangelism! Solomon must have had interesting conversations with world leaders who came to him.

Another practical result is that in the midst of all the details of life with their awesome diversity and complexity, we realize that our peace comes only by trust and obedience to the Lord. "Fear of Yahweh", says Proverbs, is the beginning or starting point of wisdom. Without that, life quickly degenerates into a pile of marbles. Since each area of life is shaped by His Wisdom, His eternal plan, there really can be no division of our lives into "religious" and "secular" compartments. The unified view of life of biblical culture expresses the notion of loving the Lord with all of our heart, mind, and soul.

Biblical Culture Points to Future Victory

If growing loyalty to God always produces something of biblical culture and a unified view of all life under God, then final, complete loyalty to God must produce a total biblical culture everywhere. When evil at last is separated from the good, man will fulfill the original mandate to subdue the earth under God. The purpose of man will be complete.

Here is the reason why biblical wisdom is portrayed as a woman so often in Proverbs 1-9. The woman fulfills the man in the dominion mandate of Genesis 1 and 2. The woman is always pictured in the Bible as the "decorator" of existence; her presence brings about the finished product. The Bible consistently portrays the woman as the adorner or the one adorned with finery. In Exodus 35:22, 25-26; 38:8, for example, it was the women who provided the Tabernacle with its finished beauty by contributing their jewelry and sewing skills. At the end of history, the New Jerusalem is said to be adorned like a bride (Rev. 21:2). Women are given specific NT instructions on how to adorn properly (I Tim. 2:9; Titus 2:3-5; I Pet. 3:3-5) because in unrighteousness they can adorn improperly and destroy what man has built (Prov. 14:1; Isa. 3:16-24). When the Bible pictures wisdom as "female", then, it implies that wisdom completes man's life by giving him the finery, the beauty of decoration, of his existence. That finery, that decoration, is biblical culture.

Such a final consummation is demanded by creation. Since His Wisdom underlies all of creation (Prov. 8:22-31) and Christ is the Wisdom of God (cf. John 1:1-5; I Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:1-3; 11:3), that Wisdom "must one day come to the surface" and be expressed by mankind through the Son of Man "that God might be all in all" (I Cor. 15:28)! Anything less would be to stop short of what is right and proper.

Biblical culture to the unbelieving pagan, therefore, is a frightening thing. By having done on a small scale what God created man to do, biblical culture "reminds" him of the foolishness of his rebellion. On his autonomous basis he can never fulfill his proper place in history. Rebelling against wisdom in principle, he can never be fulfilled. He has no part in the final consummation of human civilization under the Son of Man. Every little piece of godly creativity reveals something of the underlying Wisdom in creation. Like Cain hated the righteous behavior of Abel, he hates the righteous testimony of biblical culture to God's Wisdom.

Such hatred is why pagan school teachers and college professors target for special ridicule and attack the Puritans. To keep students from discovering the Puritan contributions to biblical culture in the West, they portray Puritanism with Arthur Miller's distorted presentation in his play, "The Crucible." Students are thus kept from reading quality Puritan authors like John Milton and John Bunyan or the writings of the Puritan leaders in Massachusetts at the time of "The Crucible".[6]

Biblical culture is a counter-culture that disrupts paganized civilization because it points to a different standard. As believers, therefore, grow in loyalty to God and express more and more of their "circumcised heart", a culture war must inevitably start. And it is a war whose ultimate outcome is absolutely certain: total victory. God shall separate the good from the evil and shall keep the one and toss out the other.

Biblical Culture Expresses Mature Adoration of God

When loyalty to God is strong enough to carry over into many different areas of life, it discovers His Wise Design behind one part of creation after another. Theologians refer to this testimony of underlying Wisdom as "general revelation" in contrast to the "special revelation" given in the Bible. General revelation is everywhere: it's found in the earth, in plants, in animals, in the stars, in all subjects Solomon studied and then some!

No believer who has a true loyalty to God can encounter such general revelation all around his or her environment and not spontaneously praise Him. Such adoration of God burst forth from the early scientists (many of whom were Puritans) just as it did from David in Psalm 19:1-6. Here is why in the Kingdom to come, all the earth will be filled with "the knowledge of Yahweh" (Isa. 11:9). His work in all creation will be recognized by the faithful (Isa. 41:19-20). There will be a grand consummation of adoration not only to God as Redeemer but also as Creator (Rev. 4:11).

Whenever a strong biblical culture is present and God's Wisdom is known, evangelism is mightily supported. Unbelief is surrounded; it is on the run. Biblical culture establishes biblical thought as the prevailing world view. In the Kingdom to come, the works of the Lord will "be known in all the earth" (Isa. 12:5).

The Present Limits of Biblical Culture

Solomon's golden era did not last. We noted above that Solomon with his great gift of wisdom still could not comprehend God's thoughts and make them his tools. He was deceived into thinking that his human wisdom was sufficient to operate independently of God's prior Wisdom. Instead of Lady Wisdom being his help mate, Solomon sought security for himself and his kingdom with pagan help mates from surrounding royal families. He ceased walking by faith and thus began a program of fleshly works. His heart was "turned" from the Lord, and the aim of sanctification was thwarted.

Biblical culture, therefore, is contingent on the human level. It grows when there is strong loyalty to God in a population. It dies when that loyalty wanes. Sadly, we shall watch the decline of the Old Testament golden age culture for the next three chapters following. It is much like Israel's conquest of the land. God offered all of Palestine to Israel yet because of unbelief this chosen nation was told at Bochim (Jud. 2:1-5, 20-23) that the conquest then underway would never be complete. The Kingdom of God was postponed. In similar fashion, what could have been a triumphant biblical culture under Solomon fell apart. It was dependent upon faith, and the Israelites failed. A lasting biblical culture, therefore, awaits the Messiah as David's Greater Son just as the conquest awaits Him. Only then will evil be cast aside and the good delivered.

Sanctification is not complete until it is perfected. Increasingly during the next chapters of Old Testament history you will notice the growing awareness that experiential sanctification falls far short of ultimate sanctification. A cry arises through the prophets for a future day when such ultimate sanctification is attained and a Bible-friendly culture guaranteed of survival.

END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

1. Robert Gordis, <u>Koheleth: The Man and His World</u> (3rd. ed., New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 18f.

2. To see why wisdom must play this role, see Part II of this series for details of the essence of God and man.

3. R. N. Whybray, <u>The Succession Narrative</u> (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 56.

4. W. F. Albright, <u>Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan</u> (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1968), p. 259.

5. Rousas J. Rushdoony, "The Heresy of the Faithful," in Gary North, <u>An Introduction to Christian Economics</u> (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), p. 388.

6. To see the real situation in Salem Massachusetts at the time portrayed in Miller's "The Crucible", read serious histories of the period. So emotional is the anti-Puritan hatred that the artist hired to do the cover for the video release of "The Crucible" couldn't get it right. On it is the claim that the "Puritans burned witches at the stake". In fact, they drowned them.

CHAPTER 2: THE KINGDOM DIVIDED: THE DISCIPLINE OF LOST BLESSING

Solomon's golden era did not last. A Bible-friendly culture depends upon divine wisdom applied to life, not human wisdom. The spiritual rot that started under Solomon spread causing Israel's culture to decay over the next few centuries until God passed world dominion to the Gentiles around 600 BC

This cycle of great prosperity followed by stagnation, decay, and chaos has been repeated in similar form among all nations throughout history. Secular historians from Gibbon to Marx to Toynbee have tried to explain it in purely humanistic terms—usually citing social pressures, economic forces, or loss of natural resources as "the" causes. Such explanations, grounded as they are on pagan presuppositions, fall short of giving a truly satisfying answer to the problem. The Bible goes far deeper than secular historiography for its explanation of social and cultural decay.

In Part III of this framework series we have studied the decay of the original Noahic civilization into what I have termed pagan civilization. We noted then the three corruptions. First, there was the corruption of the human imagination from the Creator-creature and Fall truths to the deceptions of the Continuity of Being and the "normalcy" of evil and suffering (the "lust of the eyes"). Second, there was the corruption of human devotion away from service toward God and to service toward man and nature (the "lust of the flesh"). Third, there was the corruption of human moral judgment (the "pride of life"). Deeply involved in this paganization of the Noahic civilization was the coercive and intrusive use of civil governmental power—Nimrod's one-world Babel project.

Now we are studying history fourteen or fifteen centuries later (approximately 930 BC). Only this time it is God's own elect nation that is being paganized. This chapter surveys the somber events that split Solomon's kingdom and set up the doom of its northern half. Out of this study will come some truths about sanctification that are likely to disturb us and even offend some of us: the threat of idolatry, carnality, and loss of God's blessings in our lives. Read here I Kings 11 to II Kings 17.

THE REVOLT OF THE ELEVEN TRIBES

Solomon's administration stood upon the shoulders of David and the covenant the Lord made with him. The Davidic Covenant promised eternal security for the dynasty as a whole, but it also conditioned the welfare of each succeeding king in the dynasty upon his obedience or disobedience to the Lord: a disobedient king in the Davidic Dynasty would be chastened "with the rod of men" (II Sam. 7:14). This conditionality was a feature of the prior Sinaitic Covenant under Moses (Lev. 26; Deut. 28) and was repeated to Solomon when he dedicated the Temple to Yahweh (I Kings 9:4-9). Solomon's disobedience in trying to establish wise policies of the nation on his own thus resulted in God's chastening by raising up a threat from neighboring nations (II Kings 11:14-25). This international threat combined with domestic problems would lead to an eventual traumatic rupture in this great kingdom.

The Davidic Dynasty Rejected

Lesson 77

The Davidic Dynasty had been raised up by God to fulfill the Messianic model of Kingdom leadership. In Part III we studied how David radically differed from pagan kings in his modus operandi. He was a man of faith rather than of works. Under God's guidance he approximated the ancient king-priest ideal of Melchizedek that God originally set forward for human civilization. He not only ruled his people as the civil ruler, but he led them to worship the Creator Yahweh.

Solomon departed from this ideal. Through his unanointed plan for Israel's international security, he involved himself in marital unions with unbelieving wives. The resulting shared values and common ground within these marriages could no longer be biblical. Solomon imported paganism into the heart of Jerusalem: he added to Yahweh's Temple other temples for the gods and goddesses of his unbelieving wives (I Kings 11:1-8). The "state religion" was now divided between belief and unbelief, an apostate ecumenicalism. Additionally, Solomon ignored the Mosaic instruction to the king not to have a large standing army or excessive wealth (Deut. 17:16-17).

Yahweh would now begin the "chastening with the rod of men" upon Solomon and the following Davidic seed. An Edomite refugee who had fled from David earlier, Hadad, belonged to Edomite royalty and was welcomed in Pharaoh's household. After David died, he returned to Edom on Israel's southeastern border, obviously closely allied with Egypt (I Kings 11:14-22). Another refugee from David's campaign was Rezon who in Solomon's day ruled Syria on Israel's northeastern border (I Kings 11:23-25).

A third, and more serious threat, was Jeroboam I who originally belonged to Solomon's administration. His daily life was spent in Solomon's bureaucracy. He saw first hand the disruptive effect the monarchy was having on the people through excessive taxation and conscripted labor (prophesied by Samuel in I Sam 8: 14-17). Through Ahijah the prophet, Yahweh announced the division of the Solomonic Kingdom and that Jeroboam would become king of ten out of the twelve Jewish tribes. Yahweh offered a conditional dynasty to Jeroboam as He had earlier to Saul. Jeroboam, like Hadad, eventually fled to Egypt (I Kings 11:26-40).

What Solomon had tried to solve--the problem of Israel's international security--with his own independent wisdom would rise up to plague the nation. Ironically, the very nation with which Solomon had made his first alliance, Egypt, would be the nation that harbored his enemies and which eventually would invade his land (cf. I Kings 3:1; 11:18-22, 40; 14:25-28)! All of his autonomous use of wisdom was for naught.

After Solomon died, his son Rehoboam ascended the throne as a grandson of King David. At his coronation in Shechem, Rehoboam begins his reign with a foolish act recorded in great detail in I Kings 12. Jeroboam has returned from exile in Egypt and has become the spokesman for the ten tribes for Rehoboam to reform the oppressive policies of his father (12:2-5). Solomon's programs had exacerbated an underlying schism in the nation. Remember that during the pre-monarchy period of the Judges the tribes were in great disunity—chiefly between the single tribe of Judah and the rest of the nation called "Israel". Thus Saul's army was said to consist of "Judah and Israel" (I Sam. 11:8; 15:4; 17:52). When David came to power after Saul's death, he first reigned over Judah and Benjamin; then later over the rest of the nation called "Israel" (II Sam. 2:1-5:3). The nation was not as unified as you might think; there was an uneasy limited cooperation between Judah and Benjamin in the south and the rest of the tribes to the north.

Instead of following the elders' counsel to heal this rift, Rehoboam, in a moment of incredible stupidity further alienated the northern tribes from his own tribe of Judah (12:6-8). Following the arrogant advice of his young political "buddies", Rehoboam insisted upon even harsher rule over the tribes (12:9-14). The reaction of the people was to reject the Davidic Dynasty (except for Judah and Benjamin) (12:15-24). Yet this event was not seen by the prophetic writers of Kings as an "accident" solely resulting from the will of men; the text carefully notes "the cause was from Yahweh that He might perform His saying. . . ."(12:15). The Lord restrains Rehoboam's military counter-response, insisting that "this thing is from me" (12:22-24). Here observe a practical illustration of *God's sovereignty working over and through man's will*!

Shall I Bow To My Creator?

- **YES!**
  - ancient monotheism
  - ancient Israel
  - Bible
  - Fundamentalism
- **CREATOR/creature**
  - God || man | nature
  - everlasting distinctions
- **PERSONAL SOVEREIGN**
  - ultimate responsibility

- **NO!**
  - ancient myths
  - eastern religions
  - western philosophy
  - modern theology
- **Continuity of Being**
  - nature > gods > man
  - transmutation / evolution
- **IMPERSONAL FATE / CHANCE**
  - ultimate victimization

Many excuses for this rift can be found. The northern tribes never truly had been united with Judah in their heart. They were separated from Judah geographically (note on biblical maps how Judah is isolated in the south and surrounded on three sides by pagan nations). They had been discriminated against during Solomon's administration in that the tribe Judah was not considered as an administrative district for supplying tribute to Jerusalem on a monthly rotating basis (I Kings 4:1-28). Secular historians, of course, would "explain" the rift in these economic, social, and geographical terms. Bible-based thought, however, rejects these "causes" as mere secondary considerations. The real cause was the Lord's chastening hand in accordance with the Sinaitic and Davidic Covenants, disciplining disobedience in His elect nation. If the nation had been obedient, the Lord would have restrained these divisive economic, social, and geographical factors. So much for historical "explanations"!

The Jerusalem Temple Rejected

After the northern tribes rebelled against the Davidic Dynasty, Jeroboam I rose from the status of mere spokesman of Israel to actual king of Israel. He found himself fulfilling the prophecy of the prophet Ahijah that he would be given the ten tribes to rule according to the Sinaitic Covenant (I Kings 11:31-39). The Lord clearly told him the reasons for this new chapter in Hebrew history: the Davidic Dynasty under Solomon had abandoned loyalty to Him and had violated His laws for the nation (11:33). Jeroboam was charged with the responsibility of leading the northern confederacy in obedience to the laws of the Covenant (11:38). The message was plain: *although there would be two kingdoms, there was to be only one Lord and one Covenant.*

Immediately, Jeroboam I and his administration faced what they thought was a serious political problem. The Sinaitic Covenant insisted that national worship of Yahweh be conducted at the central shrine (Deut. 12:5-14). Whether this shrine or cultus was a tabernacle or a temple, every adult male was required to appear before the Lord three times a year: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16). David as a messianic king-priest model had established the national cultus at Jerusalem, and Solomon had built the Temple there. Under the Word of God, therefore, every subject of Jeroboam I had to leave his northern kingdom three times a year to worship the Lord in the very heart of the competing southern kingdom!

Forgetting that it was the Lord in the first place that had called him to kingship, Jeroboam I feared that the unified national religion would

eventually undermine the political division and his reign (I Kings 12:26-27). Jeroboam I failed the faith test. Instead of trusting the Lord Who called him and obeying His laws regarding national worship, Jeroboam tried to secure his career as king by his own works. He repeated the same mistake Solomon made: security can only come by man's efforts.

Jeroboam's "solution" was a bold one that reveals how our fleshly mind works in rebellion against the Word of God. He attempted the impossible. Since the problem involved the state religion, he decided to bring the state religion under his authority. In effect, Jeroboam set himself over the Word of God. In place of the directives in Deuteronomy 12:5-14 and 16:16, Jeroboam substituted a new state religion of his own invention. Two shrines were established, one in the north at Dan and the other in the south at Bethel, the latter conveniently located only 12 miles north of Jerusalem so there could be no excuse for his subjects to cross the southern border into Judah three times a year (I Kings 12:29).

Just as David had established a worship center for the Hebrew nation while king, Jeroboam thought he, too, could do the same. Apparently drawing upon his experiences while in exile in Egypt, he conceived of the Lord in the (Egyptian?) zoomorphic imagery of Aaron at the foot of Sinai (cf. Exod. 32:2-4 and I Kings 12:28). In his deception, Jeroboam thought he was following the Hebrew traditions of Aaron and David regarding the establishment of state religion. He thought of state religion in purely human terms, ignoring the directives of Scripture—which as king he was supposed to meditate in day and night (Deut. 17:18-20).

Going further in his attempted "solution", Jeroboam deliberately rejected not only the one authorized Temple in Jerusalem but he also rejected the special priesthood of Levites that staffed the Temple. To staff his two illegitimate shrines, he created his own non-Levite priesthood (I Kings 12:31) and went so far as to lead this unauthorized priesthood in worship (12:32-33). He even invented his own religious calendar for the northern tribes! From beginning to end, Jeroboam's new state religion was an invented work of a faithless heart (I Kings 12:33).

The story of the prophet in I Kings 13 reveals the judgment of God upon the Dynasty of Jeroboam. Jeroboam's scheme to secure his dynasty by works produced instead the undoing of not only his dynasty but those that followed in the northern kingdom. The average length of reign in the south between these events and the exile was 17.7 years whereas in the north it was 11.7 years. [1] In the south one dynasty survived, the Davidic. In the north nine separate families ruled the throne, and the longest that any one family survived on the throne was five generations over a small ninety-year span (Dynasty of Jehu from 841B.C. to

752B.C.). Numerous assassinations and political conspiracies characterized the monarchical period in the north.

The revolt of the ten tribes <u>first</u> rejected the political authority of the House of David. Under Jeroboam the revolt <u>next</u> rejected the entire Temple worship of Yahweh as King over all the tribes. No longer was there to be two kingdoms with one faith; it had become two kingdoms with two faiths. The pagan principle, the presupposition of the fleshly mind, had now taken root in the official structure of the north. This is why the Holy Spirit moved the prophetic writers of Old Testament history to repeatedly refer to the "sins of Jeroboam" (I Kings 14:16; 15:30,34; 16:2,19,31; II Kings 3:3; 10:29,31; 13:2,6,11; 14:24; 15:9,18,24,28; 17:22).

The Lord Himself Rejected

A generation after Jeroboam, the revolt of the ten tribes extended its rejection of the reign of Yahweh a third step. This further step exposed to full view the apostasy of the northern kingdom and doomed its existence. A century and a half later, it would be conquered and disappear from history.

This third step was taken under the reign of King Ahab (874-853 BC). Continuing the unauthorized, man-made state religion of the north ("following the sins of Jeroboam"), Ahab copied Solomon's sin of marrying an unbelieving wife (I Kings 16:31). Not only was his wife, Queen Jezebel, an unbeliever, but she was the daughter of the pagan king-priest of Tyre and Sidon, a region thoroughly under the control of Canaanite religion! Whereas Solomon had married unbelievers and allowed an ecumenical mixture of biblical and pagan presuppositions to control the royal family, Ahab allowed Jezebel to make Baalism the supreme state religion over all others. Instead of a mixed apostasy like that of Solomon or a man-made counterfeit of biblical religion like that of Jeroboam, Ahab dropped all pretense of following the Word of God and capitulated completely to his queen's demands. *The Lord Himself was now officially rejected, and Baal enthroned as the god of Israel.*

Dr. Leah Bronner describes Jezebel's background:
> *"The meaning of 'Ethbaal' [her father's name] is apparently 'with him Baal'. The idea the name intended to convey was that the person enjoyed the favor and protection of Baal. According to Josephus, Ethbaal was King of the Tyrians and Sidonians. . . .Menander, the Ephesian, stated that Ethbaal was a priest of Astarte, who came to the throne by murder of the usurper Phelles. The zealotry of Jezebel is perhaps understandable, if we remember that she was educated in the home of a priest of Baal. Her fanaticism can be attributed to her early environment and training."[2]*

Forever remembered afterward as a virtual symbol of religious evil (cf. Rev. 2:20), Jezebel convinced her husband to make her father's religion the official religion of the ten tribes, thus making the break with the Word of God complete. Ahab constructed an official temple to Baal. The official analysis of his reign is given by the prophet authors of Kings: "Ahab did more to provoke Yahweh God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" and "there was none like Ahab who sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord "(16:32-33; 21:25). A major milestone in apostasy had been crossed: any true Bible-believing Israelite would now be considered disloyal to the state, a traitor worthy of death. This history demonstrates how once the authority of the Lord is compromised in one area, it spreads to all areas. Religious "neutrality" is a myth: either biblical or pagan presuppositions will eventually dominate everywhere.

Several consequences quickly followed. Israel, after all, was not a nation like any of the surrounding pagan nations such as that ruled by Jezebel's father. Israel was divinely elected by the Creator and Judge of the universe and ruled according to His Word revealed in the Sinaitic Covenant. His cursings now began upon Israel. Yahweh had warned of drought (cursing upon the economy) and military invasion (cursing upon freedom) (Lev. 26:17-19; Deut. 28:23-25).

The prophet Elijah announced the beginning of the <u>drought</u>-cursing upon Ahab's economy (I Kings 17:1) and the <u>military</u>-cursing upon Ahab's power (21:19). The drought would last years and return to afflict his son even more severely (II Kings 8:1). The horrible suffering of the population during this drought is recalled in the rabbinical Haggada:

> *"In the first year everything stored in the houses was eaten up. In the second, the people supported themselves with what they could scrape together in the fields. The flesh of the clean animals sufficed for the third year; in the forth the sufferers resorted to the unclean animals; in the fifth, to the reptiles and insects; and in the sixth the monstrous thing happened that women, crazed by hunger, consumed their own children as food. . . .In the seventh year, men sought to gnaw the flesh from their own bones."[3]*

Compare these details with the cursings listing that the Lord had given in the Sinaitic Covenant (Lev. 26:26, 29; 28:53-57)!

The military cursing also soon followed. Ahab's reign ended when a major Syrian army invaded the northern kingdom and, in spite of Ahab's attempts to hide, eventually killed him, fulfilling in exact detail the prophecy of Elijah (22:37-38; cf. 21:19).

Elijah and other godly Israelites constantly resisted Ahab's administration. Some of his trusted advisors who retained their loyalty to Yahweh thwarted his plans (I Kings 18:4, 13). Yahwehist prophets threaten his life (20:35-43). Elijah, in particular, seemed bent upon creating mass dissatisfaction with Ahab's reign (18:17). Two incidents, in particular, were selected by the Holy Spirit for inclusion in the book of Kings to show the Ahab-prophet conflict.

First, was the famous public confrontation between Elijah and the counterfeit prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel. This incident was one of several lesser incidents recorded in Kings to show how the Lord countered the false claims of Baal. Dr. Bronner provides the background:

> *"The Canaanites believed that Baal was the storm and fertility god, who bestowed upon man and land the blessings of fecundity. He sent forth lightning, fire, and rain. He gave corn, oil, and wine. He could revive the dead, heal the sick, and bestow the blessing of progeny. [Kings shows] through concrete examples and incidents that all the powers ascribed by Ugaritic mythology to Baal, are really attributes only of the God, the Lord of Israel."[4]*

If Baal supposedly gave rain, then Elijah and Elisha demonstrated that no rain would come except by a decree of Yahweh (I Kings 17:1; 18:41-46; II Kings 8:1-2). If Baal was reputed to give grain, then Elijah and Elisha proved that Yahweh alone could give grain; and boldly they did it in Phoenicia, the very "home ground" of Jezebel and of Baalism (I Kings 17:8-16; II Kings 4:1-7)! The irony was unmistakable. Not only was Baal unable to deliver in Israel; he couldn't deliver in his homeland.

The Mt. Carmel incident must be viewed with this background. Elijah boldly and publicly ridiculed the Baalist prophets in language of the street (I Kings 18:27). He then took precautions to avoid the criticism that he was merely a better magician by thoroughly soaking the sacrificial area. Praying in terms of the Abrahamic Covenant (18:36), Elijah receives God's public authentication. In a bloody end to the meeting, Elijah urges the onlookers to kill the Baalist false prophets as the Law demanded (Deut. 13:5; 18:20).

The second major incident that shows the Ahab-prophet conflict occurs in I Kings 21. False religion sooner or later betrays its hidden pagan agenda. Inevitably, given enough time and circumstances, paganism reverts openly to immorality, cruelty, and deviancy. Under the Sinaitic Covenant family property was protected (even from family members who would wish to sell it), and all Hebrews were treated equally under the law. After Baal replaced Yahweh, the Covenantal codes were ignored. Social injustice quickly followed. [6]

Ahab sought a piece of property nearby his palace from a neighbor named Naboth (I Kings 21). Following the procedure used today by civil governments when they desire private property for a state project, Ahab offered Naboth "just compensation" (21:2). When Naboth refused the offer, citing the Sinaitic Covenant codes, Ahab complained to his wife who immediately plotted a judicial murder to eliminate Naboth. This principle of state power is called <u>eminent domain</u>. Says Rushdoony:

> ***"Eminent domain is the claim to sovereignty by the state over all property within the state, and it is the assertion of the right to appropriate all or any part thereof to any public or state use deemed necessary by the state. . . The eminent domain of the state was not recognized in Israel, as the incident of Naboth's vineyard makes clear (I Kings 21), although it is prophesied as one f the consequences of apostasy from God the King (I Sam. 8:14). It is specifically forbidden in Ezekiel 46:18."[7]***
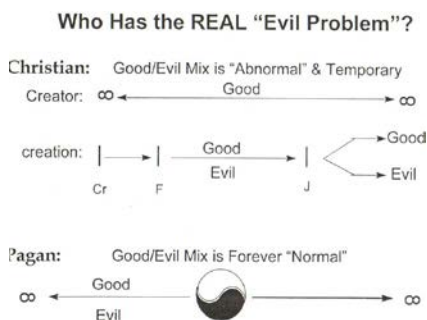
In the absence of any higher power (the Biblical God), civil government as Man Corporate becomes god (as we saw with Nimrod after the flood and with Egypt in the days of the Exodus). The state becomes invested with a pseudo-sovereignty over all land, a pseudo-holiness over legally defining right and wrong, and a pseudo-love over public welfare.

The Lord's answer was clear: exactly where Naboth had been executed, Ahab's body would eventually lie, his dynasty would be terminated, and Jezebel's body would be eaten by dogs (21:19, 22-23). Although such behavior was tolerated in surrounding pagan nations, in Yahweh's elect nation it would not be allowed to continue. The state religion of the north never escaped from pagan clutches after Ahab so, as we shall study in the next chapter, eventually it fell under Yahweh's final discipline. The military insecurity not only continued, but it got worse. Moabites broke away and began to make raids against Israel (II Kings 13:20). Famine reoccurred after Ahab died (II Kings 4:38; 6:25; 8:1). None of the problems Solomon, Jeroboam, Ahab, and the other kings tried to solve by human gimmicks were even partially solved. Things had gone from rejection of David's Dynasty to rejection of the Lord's Temple and finally to official reject of the Lord Himself—openly and publicly. The northern nation would disappear from history.

Who Has the REAL "Evil Problem"?

Reflections on the Revolt Crisis

Contrary to the steady diet of supposedly philosophically and religiously neutral "analyses" found in the media and classrooms, the Bible insists that history is controlled "from above" and not ultimately from human factors such as economics, sociological forces, and geographical environmental changes. The ultimate environment is the Creator-Savior-Judge of the Bible.

For those who lived in the elect nation of Israel, there was one and only authorized way of life: trust in the Lord to accomplish what He had promised and obedience to do what He asked man to do. Substituting for this walk by faith, the autonomously-conceived solutions to problems as Solomon, Jeroboam, and Ahab did, is rebellion against God. Within His Kingdom especially He would no tolerate this behavior. Blessing and cursing clearly and quickly followed obedience and disobedience, respectively. As Professor Alva McClain wrote years ago:

"This principle [of man's well-being conditioned by obedience or disobedience to God] holds good generally in all nations in every age. But its operation has often been obscured to human eyes by the time "lag" between the moral breach and the infliction of the sanction. While it is always true that the nation which has "sown the wind" shall also certainly "reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7), the harvest is generally and mercifully long delayed (II Pet. 3:9); and for this very reason men often fail to see the causal connection. Furthermore, in the general history of nations, the divine penalties are inflicted through secondary causes behind the veil of providential control (Jer. 51:28-30). For these reasons the skeptical have been able to question the existence of any divinely ordained moral government in human history; the Lord's own people at times have been greatly troubled and perplexed by the problem (Hab. 1:1-4).

"But in the case of the nation Israel in her Mediatorial Kingdom of history, the moral government of Jehovah was not only declared at Sinai but also was confirmed spectacularly in the recorded history of that kingdom by means of divine sanctions immediately imposed. And these sanctions were generally supernatural; either by the withdrawal of the promised supernatural protection from the ordinary hazards of human life in a fallen world, or by the positive infliction of supernatural punishment. . . .This close and immediate connection between the well-being of the chosen nation and their moral and spiritual attitude is most clearly summarized in Deuteronomy (cf. Chaps. 28-30)."[8]

In other words, God's elect nation is a public historical demonstration of how God reigns. The prophetic story of Israel's history, therefore, has been recorded "for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). If we seek Him and His Kingdom, we must know how our Savior-King will reign over us! To that topic we now turn.

SANCTIFICATION AND CHASTENING- I: LESSONS FROM THE KINGDOM DIVISION

In the last chapter we learned about the cultural fruit of sanctification: how a deeper relationship with the Lord leads to a broader expression of loyalty in the details of life. However, such cultural fruit and blessing is contingent in this life upon continued obedience to the Word of God. The Solomonic golden era marked the high point in Israel's history of cultural blessing. Solomon and those that came after him whom we have studied—Rehoboam, Jeroboam, and Ahab—lost that blessing and led the nation into divine chastening.

Yahweh reigned over Israel in such a manner that He constantly advanced toward His ultimate goal of separating good and evil, of glorifying Himself against the backdrop of the creation and fall. Separation of good from evil involves pain and suffering. His Hebrew subjects, therefore, felt that pain throughout the divine chastening they experienced after their disobedience. Although the human kings occasionally tried reforms based upon the Word of God, generally speaking their policies were rebellious. They were not loyal to King Yahweh with all their heart. Therefore, the Hebrews were chastened for several centuries until they were ultimately destroyed as a nation. Such suffering is one of the corollaries of being "elect"!

Let's look at how divine chastening starts and how we can avoid it. First, we review how David as the model of messianic leadership handled his problems. Then we will compare how the leaders involved in the ninth century B.C. revolt and its aftermath failed to follow David's example. Finally, we conclude with the first part of the doctrine of divine chastening.

Meeting Circumstances God's Way with Trusting Obedience

Carnality, immorality, and apostasy don't start spontaneously in the lives of believers; they flow out of conscious decisions we make in the midst of problems and circumstances of life. All believers are an object of God's grace and saving work. Old Testament believers were said to

have been "circumcised in their hearts" (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11-13). They had been illuminated to the truth of their elective position defined in the Abrahamic Covenant and to the Lord's requirements given in the Sinaitic Covenant (see Phases of Sanctification developed in Part III of this series and the Aspects of Sanctification Table in the previous chapter). They were beneficiaries of a special providential ministry of Yahweh in their economy, military defense, and public health. The issue for them, as well as for us, is how we manage the circumstances of life.

In our mortal lives we live with our fallen flesh in a fallen world where good and evil temporarily coexist. Our circumstances often involve us in patterns of suffering. In Part II I listed eleven patterns of suffering: six directly due to creature sin and five used by the Lord for special ministries in history.

DIRECT SUFFERING PATTERNS

1. Effect of Fall—physical and spiritual
    death, sickness, natural disturbances
2. Effect of Personal Sin—self-induced
    misery; fruit of foolishness
3. Shared Suffering within families and
    nations
4. Eternal Suffering in Lake of Fire
5. Fatherly Chastening of believers
6. Denial of Rewards for believers

INDIRECT SUFFERING PATTERNS

7. Evangelistic "wake-up" call

8. "Nudge" to advance spiritually

9. Evidence for furthering evangelism

10. Evidence for edifying believers
11. Evidence for unseen angelic
     conflict

Several of these patterns may be involved in any given circumstance. Nevertheless, all of them are planned in God's omniscience, holiness, and love; they are not "accidental", "meaningless", or "casual". As believers, we are to respond by focusing upon our Father who stands behind these circumstances.

David is our model. He faced many problematic circumstances in his career, but he always eventually managed them in trust and obedience to the Lord. He rejected the usual flesh-works type responses of his peers in the ancient Near-Eastern royalty. Remember how he faced the problem of displacing Saul from the throne of Israel: in spite of Saul's many attacks and opportunities to defeat Saul in classical political maneuvering, David waited for Yahweh to remove Saul. How did David manage to do that?

David knew God's promises to Abraham and to himself through Nathan. He clearly perceived the outline of God's plan. He also knew the historic record of God's behavior in carrying out that plan between 2000 BC and his lifetime (sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus, the giving of the law at Sinai, and the conquest of the land). He realized that only God

could conceive and carry out such a plan for history. He assumed the humble position of a <u>creature</u> under God. Therefore, he wasn't a sucker for the arrogant idea that he could maneuver some political "coup" against Saul, get the throne his way, and hope for God's blessing in the end.

Moreover, he also assumed the humble position of a <u>sinner redeemed</u> by God's grace. He realized he was no more righteous than Saul. He did not earn any political right to the throne; it was God's choice alone. If he ascended the throne as king, it would be solely by God's grace. Therefore, he wasn't deluded by visions of his own grandeur.

Because David's heart submitted to God's authority and presupposed the biblical worldview, when it came to the details of life and specific commands of Yahweh, David readily obeyed. Now observe a crucial point: when David disobeyed in the Bathsheba scandal, he quickly confessed his sin within minutes of Nathan's rebuke. Immediately, he was wholly forgiven by the Lord and restored to fellowship (see Restoration to Fellowship Table in previous chapter). The Lord did not require penitence, fasting, agonizing, and other useless human works. Forgiveness is a transaction done in heaven with the Father based upon the character of the Father. It has nothing to do with human merit.

However, restoration does not necessarily remove the temporal consequences of sin. David faced Direct Suffering Pattern #2: the fruit of his foolishness. For the rest of his life he had to live with the results of polygamy, the horrible deaths of four of his sons, and the memories of his murder of a faithful fellow army officer. Yet through all those years, he trustfully obeyed the Lord. He managed those additional tragic circumstances the same way he had managed his ascent to a throne occupied by Saul: no fleshly works, no human gimmicks. He avoided trying to imitate pagan ways. He wrote many psalms. He kept all foreign powers at bay. The result was that David build up the nation and left it in a far stronger state than when he started.

Meeting Circumstances Man's Way With Autonomous Works

In contrast to David, the leaders involved with the ninth-century revolt and the divided kingdom met their circumstances in the energy of the flesh as the pagan kings surrounding Israel did. They forgot they were "lesser kings" under the Great King Who had a specific plan for Israel. They show little or no understanding of this plan and how they fit into it. Solomon is aware of the Abrahamic, Sinaitic, and Davidic Covenants (see his prayer to dedicate the Temple in I Kings 8), but Rehoboam,

Jeroboam, and Ahab acted as though they never heard any of the covenants!

Jeroboam shows some awareness of Hebrew history but thoroughly misunderstands the Aaron and David roles he tries to mimic. Neither he nor Ahab appear ready to be instructed from the Word of God as a king of Israel was supposed to each day (Deut. 17:19-20). They readily adapted pagan political maneuvering, falsify the very character of God, and enter a spiral downward in successively-repeated unbelief and disobedience. In no way did they follow the Davidic example of messianic leadership.

Whereas David had taken the humble position of a creature under God and a sinner redeemed by His grace, these later kings did neither. Forgetting the character of the Great King Himself who had created the nation for His purpose, Rehoboam tried to meet the ten tribes' dissension by a graceless intimidation ill-befitting the fallen creature that he was (I Kings 12:13-15). Facing the results of Solomon and Rehoboam's sin--the divided kingdom--Jeroboam failed to trust Yahweh as the mighty Creator of history to keep His promise of securing for him a kingdom and a dynasty like that of David (11:37-38). Instead, he tried to create a counterfeit religion with a made-up theology, worship center, priesthood, and calendar (12:25-33). The result was that the Word of God was systematically suppressed throughout Israel since both the Levitical custodians and teachers of the Law and the prophetic voices were silenced (13:1-34).

Then came Ahab. He had to cope with both the divided kingdom problem and the consequences of Jeroboam's sin. Ahab's unbelief manifested itself in trying to secure his kingdom by selling himself to the pagan king-priest of Tyre through marriage with his daughter (21:25). This imported apostasy totally suppressed the Law of the Great King and Savior of Israel, Yahweh. Prophets were made capital enemies of the state which led to a religious war between Ahab's queen and Yahweh's prophets (18:1-19:21).

This pattern of the kings of Israel meeting circumstances with their own independent, unbelieving works repeated in more thorough form the carnal pattern of the first king, Saul. From the very beginning of the monarchy God had warned the people that it would not be a solution to their social instability and chaos (see Part III of this series and I Sam. 8-12). The people openly confessed that they had sinned in asking for this institution (I Sam. 12:19). *The prophet Samuel warned that the monarchy would work only if the people dwelt in their hearts upon the great historical work of Yahweh on behalf of the nation (12:24), i.e., walked by faith, not by works.*

Saul, you will remember, failed and lost his opportunity to establish Israel's first dynasty. Facing an adverse circumstance involving invading Philistines with the Hebrews deserting from his army, Saul reacted in unbelief, pre-empting the prophet Samuel, and invading the office of priest (I Sam. 13:8-14). Later, he repeated this pattern in deciding which of Yahweh's commands for Holy War he would obey and which he would not (15:9ff). Like the kings after him, Saul did not dwell upon what the Lord had done for Israel and for him. He was not a man after the Lord's heart. He tried to meet circumstances with his own unbelieving works. Saul's carnal pattern is called by God "rebellion", "insubordination", "rejection of the Word of Yahweh", and equivalent to witchcraft and idolatry (15:23).

Rehoboam, Jeroboam, and Ahab (as well as most of the other kings of the north and south) all repeated the carnal pattern of Saul. All met the adverse circumstances of their reign as Saul had done: in unbelief and disobedience. It appears that David was an exception and lone example of messianic leadership. Apart from God's intervention, the monarchy was as much of a failure as the pre-monarchy tribal rule had been in Judges. Fallen man, whether ruler or ruled, cannot live up God's holiness in His Kingdom.

Not only was the monarchy unsuitable for fallen man, but it revealed how sin and carnality compounds itself. The sin of one king left consequences for the next king. The next king then sinned in meeting the consequences brought by the previous king and left even more consequences for the king yet to follow. Prophetic warnings to confess such as those Nathan had given to David were repeatedly ignored. Direct Suffering Patterns #2,3,5 were all active. The curses of Law grew in intensity (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). As the circumstances worsened, it became more difficult to believe that a godly solution was possible.

The Working of Divine Chastening

Let's formulate for our benefit the truths of God's chastening upon carnal behavior in His elect. Many centuries after the divided kingdom the Jews clearly perceived the link between divine chastening and God's election. In the non-canonical book of II Maccabees, written in the century before Jesus, the author states:

> *"Not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately, is a sign of great kindness. For in the case of the other nations the Lord waits patiently to punish them until that have reached the full measure of their sins; but he does not deal in this way with us, in order that he might not take vengeance on us afterward when our sins have reached their height. Therefore, he never withdraws his mercy from us. Though he*

> *disciplines us with calamities, he does not forsake his own people" (II Macc. 6:13-16).*

Divine discipline is a sign of God's election-love! It is the Father disciplining His children (Suffering Pattern #5; Heb. 12:5-8). The goal is never to destroy; it is to restore. His sovereign plan of separating good from evil inevitably must go on. God is God, and His Holiness cannot be compromised. Rebellion and unbelief, therefore, cannot stop or modify His plan. *His elect instruments must arrive in shape for eternal fellowship with Him by whatever pain it takes to get there.* It is this thought that occurs in the drama, <u>Fiddler On the Roof,</u> when the Jewish lead character mutters to God in the midst of his suffering, "can't you choose someone else once in a while?"

Why must there be such pain in divine chastening? Unbelief and disobedience damage our souls. When we fail to respond to circumstances by looking to the Lord and trusting Him to support, guide, and empower us to meet those circumstances, our flesh immediately stores up this sinful behavior pattern. Next time it becomes easier. It is like the sequence of unbelieving kings in Israel who kept increasing the sin of the nation by adding one scheme on top of another. We train our flesh in unrighteousness just as we train it for any other activity in life. Eventually, our flesh could become so well-trained in our specific sinful behavior that the behavior would become a life-dominating problem like it was before regeneration. We could then be labeled as a "thief", or "adulterer", or "covetous person." As the Lord's elect, we are not permitted to sink back into the world with such damage to our souls and spirits.

To correct this situation is a painful enterprise. It is not a simple matter to "stop sinning". The flesh can't stop sinning by itself. The motive to obey God's will cannot come from an independent spirit because the independent spirit would take pride in "what I did". In the Old Testament the motive to obey the Law was never the Law itself. Israel was called to remember the words and works of the Lord—the Exodus, the <u>giving</u> of the Law, the Conquest, and various prophesies to individuals—and focus on His character. Israel was called back to the election, justification, and faith of Abraham. The Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants were to form the content of their faith. Only by first trusting, could they eventually obey. It was not obey, then trust.

Therefore, to awaken us from compounded carnality God must first shock us into <u>looking once again at Him</u>. If we don't go back to Abrahamic faith in His promises, we can never be restored to fellowship and empowerment for obedience. And we can't be restored to faith in Him if we persist in idolatrous reconstructions of God that appear to

relieve us of ultimate responsibility to Him. Jeroboam and Ahab deliberately imported pagan idolatries based on the old Continuity of Being ideal (see Part II of this series). The Continuity of Being arises every time man attempts to think with the mind of flesh: when he attempts to be the final judge of what is true and false, the satanic temptation in the Garden to be as God knowing both good and evil. *It is the fallen soul's attempt to be the ultimate "classifier" of everything, including God Himself!* Everything, including God, is viewed as part of the same reality. The Bible, however, insists upon a two-level view of reality with the Creator/creature distinction:

FLESHLY CONTINUITY OF BEING	CREATOR-CREATURE
gods-angels-man-nature. . .1-level	God as Creator / all else. . .2-levels

In the biblical view, we are ultimately responsible to the Creator. In the pagan Continuity of Being there is no final absolute Person to whom we are responsible: everyone—the gods and men alike—are mere cosmic victims floating in the mysterious void.

There is more to this fleshly-pagan Continuity of Being idea than meets the eye. Observe that it accomplishes two goals of the sinful agenda: (1) man is established as the ultimate standard and determiner of reality (satisfies the craving for autonomy); and (2) man is freed from ultimate responsibility (satisfies the fear of guilt). Many versions of the Continuity of Being idea have appeared down through history besides the gods of Egypt, the golden bulls of Aaron and Jeroboam, and Jezebel's Baal. All these variations, however, were believed by the early church fathers to be representations of demons that had projected these shapes and forms into the minds of human craftsmen. The great Puritan minister of education (almost forgotten today in schools), John Milton restated this early Christian belief in Paradise Lost:

> *"By falsities and lyes the greatest part*
> *Of mankind they [fallen angels] corrupted to forsake*
> *God their Creator, and th' invisible*
> *Glory of him, that made them, to transform*
> *Oft to the Image of a Crute, adorn'd*
> *With gay Religions full of Pomp and Gold,*
> *And Devils to adore for Deities:*
> *Then were they known to men by various Names*
> *And various Idols through the Heathen World." I, 367-375.*

These versions, therefore, of the Continuity of Being actually are demonic strongholds established in the fleshly minds of mankind to confuse, cover over, and hide the truth of the Word of God about Himself. They have stubbornly remained beneath the surface of western

culture in spite of the influence of Christianity.[8] Thus each of us come to faith with residual strongholds of idolatry lurking in our minds.

If we fail to trust the Lord amidst the circumstances of life as Rehoboam, Jeroboam, and Ahab failed to do, we inevitably embark on a journey into carnality. Distrust rapidly turns into disobedience. We substitute our works for God's promised deliverance. Although we think we are in control and doing this by ourselves, actually we are being seduced by evil spirits at a very profound level. With each disobedience the demonically-energized "strongholds" in our mind become stronger and more dominant. As Samuel told Saul, rebellion is essentially witchcraft and idolatry because it is rooted in a fundamentally false view of God.

The Apostle Paul tells us that we must war against these strongholds of our minds with holy war (II Cor. 10:4-5). Elijah showed us how the Spirit of God wages the war. He met the idolatrous imagery (Baal as provider) by exposing its conflict with the Word of God (following the Deuteronomy 13:1-5 test) and its fraudulent failure to deliver on its promises (following the Deuteronomy 18:20-22 test). Divine chastening, Direct Suffering Pattern #5, has as its purpose the destruction of idolatrous strongholds built up by habitual sin. Only after their destruction can we see properly our Savior and Lord as He really is.

Divine chastening must precede restoration to fellowship because only if God is seen correctly can there be conviction of sin. Going back to the table that I used to show David's restoration to fellowship through confession of sin, we have a new component:

Table Showing Divine Chastening Preceding Restoration to Fellowship

Step in the Restoration Process	Illustration in Elijah's Ministry to Israel
Divine Chastening: destruction of mental "strongholds" of demonic idolatries to clear the vision of Who God really is.	Total failure of economic, security, and religious promises of the Baalist agenda; direct contrast with the Word of Yahweh.
Conviction of Sin: being made aware of the demeaning of God's character by distrust of His promises and the specific disobedience to His Will.	Public confrontation at Mt. Carmel with a dramatic fulfillment of the Word of God.
Confession of Sin: repentant turning from autonomy (excuses and blame shifting) to submission to the Cross as the sole point of contact with God (responsibility for the sin and cleansing by Cross).	Viewers of Elijah's challenge confess that Yahweh is their King and final authority, bowing to the ground in reverence and taking captive the false prophets of Jezebel.
Restoration: eternal forgiveness of God through the Cross but with temporal consequences not necessarily removed.	Israel's economic prosperity returns with the coming of the rain; Ahab & Jezebel are destroyed. Yet national problems remain.

In the New Testament, divine chastening can include severe suffering and illness (I Cor. 5:5; 11:30; I Tim. 1:20; Heb.12:5; Jas. 5:15). As soon as there is a "breakthrough" to a clear vision of the Lord, genuine conviction of sin can take place and the restoration process can occur. After restoration, the Direct Suffering Pattern #5 goes away. What suffering remains from the sinful choices is limited to Pattern #2 (and sometimes Pattern #3) which must be managed as David did by walking in faith. Often Pattern #2 blends with Patterns #8-11 and becomes a source of blessing to others observing it.

Losing God's blessing and suffering divine chastening is a feature of life for believers, but it is not an end in itself. Its purpose is always the same: to restore the fallen to fellowship once again. It is the firm hand of the loving Shepherd.

END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

1. These figures were computed using the dates in Edwin R. Thiele, <u>The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings</u> (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965 [1951]).

2. Leah Bronner, <u>The Stories of Elijah and Elisha</u> (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), p. 9.

3. Taken from Ginzberg, <u>Legends of the Jews</u>, IV as cited by Immanuel Velikovsky, <u>Ages In Chaos </u>(Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1952), p. 267.

4. Bronner, p. 54.

5. Note the biblical emphasis upon the primacy of man's relationship to God rather than man's social relationships to each other. The first controls the second (much to the consternation of modern American secularists).

6. Rousas J. Rushdoony, <u>The Institutes of Biblical Law</u> (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), p. 499f.

7. Alva J. McClain, <u>The Greatness of the Kingdom</u> (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 86f.

CHAPTER 3: KINGDOMS IN DECLINE: THE DISCIPLINE OF CURSING

The monarchy continued to show itself unable to lead the nation after the messianic model of David whether in the breakaway northern kingdom of Israel or in the remaining southern portion of Judah. In the north, dynasty after dynasty failed to lead the nation in repentance from idolatry and back to Yahweh. In the south things were not much better. Although the Davidic dynasty survived in Judah, at one point it was hanging by the mere thread of a male child less than six years old (II Kings 11:1-3). Both kingdoms continued to decline from the original condition under David.

Because these kingdoms were under the special election of God in history, their decline is a special case illustrating the sovereignty of God over historical processes. Processes such as political intrigue, climatically-induced economic adversities, and the rise of foreign powers are not left without interpretation by the biblical writers. At point after point the Hebrew nation is confronted with God's freshly spoken words through His prophets. We are not left to speculate why things happened as they did. The "facts" of history are explained in terms of the reign of the Great King Yahweh over not only His chosen nation but also over all the pagan nations surrounding it. History becomes "His story".

All the material in II Kings, II Chronicles, the minor prophets (e.g., Obadiah, Joel, Amos), and the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) refutes the unbelieving critics of Scripture. For the past two centuries these critics, operating from a pagan frame of reference, have tried to "educate" the world into seeing this period of biblical history as the model of "social reform". The prophetic cries against social evils, these critics claim, are early examples of the modern radical agenda of revolutionary socialism, world government, and environmentalism. These unbelievers insist upon using the biblical prophets as their forbearers, overlooking the obvious truth that the prophets believed unswervingly in the Creator-Savior-Lord of the Bible!

In this chapter, therefore, I will show exactly the opposite from what is commonly taught in high school and college classrooms. We shall discover that the biblical prophets were reactionaries, not revolutionaries. Moreover, they operated under the authority of God's transcendental ethical standards that applied to all men everywhere; they were not inventors of "progressive" and "new" standards in so-called human social evolution. In direct opposition to the usual secular propaganda, these prophets will be seen to originate vast amounts of

literary prophecy—literature that utterly contradicts the critics' own secular view of history! Out of this study will emerge further insights into divine chastening and our sanctification. Read here II Kings 17-25 along with some sections from the minor and major prophets.

COVENANTALLY-INTERPRETED CURSING

Adversity cannot be cursing unless there is One Who is responsible for administering the adversity for His Own purposes. Without the two-level Creator-creature worldview, there is no ultimate responsibility. All men would then be victims in the vast mystery of the cosmos along with the gods, goddesses, and animals. During the reigns of Jeroboam and Ahab we noticed the rise of prophets like Elijah to remind the Hebrew nation of their obligations to Yahweh. Elijah sought to correct the idolatrous deception of the Baal cult in order to bring about true repentance. From Elijah's day until the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 721 BC and the fall of Judah to the Neo-Babylonians in 586 BC, a steady line of prophets sought to continue his work. Each of the prophets stood under the authority of God's prior Covenants and interpreted national adversity in terms of them.

The Covenant Background of the Prophets

In Parts II and III of this series, I noted that God structures history according to verbally-revealed contracts between Himself and man. These covenants establish observable boundaries of behavior on both God and man. Subsequent history, therefore, reveals the character of the two: God is ever faithful, and we are ever sinful. The case is proved through event after event inerrantly recorded in the Bible as a legal testimonial record.

The prophets arose as God's spokesman to interpret the historical experience of the nation so that the Hebrews could understand what God was doing and what He expected them to do in response. What God was doing, of course, was administering His perfect plan which He earlier had outlined in the great covenants. Let's review:

1. Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant is revealed in Genesis 12:1-3; 15:7-21; 17:1-22 and other passages. God made three promises. First, He promised that Abraham would supernaturally father a family ("seed") that would become very numerous and which would survive throughout all history (Gen. 12:2; 13:15-16; 15:5,13-16,18; 17:1-8; 22:17). This family would include not only Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes, but also the prophesied Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15). Second, God promised that this family would possess eternal title to specific real estate from Egypt to the Mesopotamia (Gen. 13:14-14-17; 15:18-21; 17:8). This promise included not only land for the Hebrew

nation but also for the location of the future cosmic Temple of God, the everlasting Jerusalem. Finally, God promised exceeding blessing upon this family that would reach outward to all men (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). The covenant constituted God's sovereign election of the nation Israel as the spiritual counter-culture in paganized civilization.

2. Sinaitic Covenant. In contrast to the Abrahamic Covenant, the Sinaitic Covenant revealed not God's obligations to Israel, but Israel's obligations to God. Rather than God's swearing to Israel as was the case with the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 15:7-17, God required Israel to swear allegiance to Him to institute the Sinaic Covenant policies (Exod. 19:8; 24:1-11; Deut. 5:27-28). The outcome of these policies was contingent upon the response of the people: obedience would reap blessing; disobedience, cursing.

At first glance, there appears to be a conflict between the Abrahamic Covenant that guaranteed a redeemed destiny for Abraham's seed through the sovereignty of God and the Sinaitic Covenant that required a human response of repentance before blessing. How can God's sovereignty guarantee future bliss when such bliss is contingent upon human conformity to His holiness? *Specifically, how could the prophets speak of a future kingdom of God when there was no permanent repentance in Israel after all their efforts?*

We must review here the doctrine of election expounded in Part III in connection with the Abrahamic Covenant:

> *(1) Election rests upon creation, specifically, the Creator-creature distinction. Without the Creator-creature distinction there can be no final plan to cosmic history, only chance or impersonal fate. The Creator-creature distinction implies that human reasoning and choice are only finite replicas of God's omniscience and sovereignty. After discussing this very problem of Israel's destiny under God's election with all of the national unbelief, Paul concluded, "How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways" (Rom. 11:33b).*
> *(2) Election rests upon the fall. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah used the potter illustration to show that God, after the pots had become marred, left some pots alone in their marred state (passive) and others He freely chose to transform into new vessels (active) (Isa. 29:16; Jer. 18:2-10; cf. Rom. 9:21-24). The unrepentant Israelites were thus in danger of being revealed as those fallen creatures left in their sin if they did not repent sometime during their lifespan.*
> *(3) Election reveals new thoughts from God's mind. Election disrupts the normal chain of cause-effect that mankind gets used to seeing. Until the moment of the actual call, election rests solely within God's omniscience, hidden from human view (Heb. 11:3). Those to be included, therefore, in the Abrahamic Covenant are those whom God calls with His Word through the prophets. Until the prophets do their work in a given generation, the elect seed of Abraham in that generation do not exist.*

(4) Election is God's basic eternal promise. If the final state of the elect is promised, then every factor leading up to that state must be also promised. Implicit, therefore, in the Abrahamic Covenant promise to Abraham's supernaturally generated seed are the ministries of the prophets among them. Whatever requirements that the Sinaitic Covenant required due to God's holiness (repentance, circumcision of the heart, blood atonement) must have been included in the Abrahamic Covenant.

The prophets, therefore, from Samuel to Jeremiah had a "dual track" ministry. On one hand, they prosecuted Yahweh's case against the nation for its disloyalty to Him and announced the imposition of His Sinaitic Covenant cursings upon it. On the other hand, they also preached that the nation would certainly enter a future Kingdom of God promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. Different prophets had different ways of expressing this duality.

The Messages of the Prophets

Many prophets are mentioned in Samuel-Kings and in the major and minor prophetic books. Some ministered in the northern kingdom; others in the southern kingdom. Their messages were expressed in their own unique ways under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord. Both themes— Israel's suffering from the Sinaitic curses and Israel's future destiny in the Abrahamic promises—were included in many of their messages or oracles.

Whatever was coming to pass in their day or would come to pass upon the nation after their death would always be within Yahweh's covenantal framework. The Old Testament theologian, Walther Eichrodt contrasts Israel's situation with the situation of surrounding pagan nations:

"A clear divine will becomes discernible, which can be depended upon and to which appeal can be made. The covenant knows not only of a demand, but also of a promise: 'You shall be my people and I will be your God.' In this way it provides life with a goal and history with a meaning. Because of this the fear that constantly haunts the pagan world, the fear of arbitrariness and caprice within the Godhead, is excluded. With this God, men know exactly where they stand; an atmosphere of trust and security is created. . . . .[2] (Emphasis supplied)

In other words, severe though the discipline might be, the purposeful, loving heart of God lay back of it. The cursing would not be fruitless; it would bear fruit and fulfill the election promises. Let's look at some of the prophetic approaches to expressing the dual themes of cursing and promise.

(1) Yahweh ruled surrounding pagan nations as much as He ruled Israel and Judah. It was important to Hebrew faith to assure the nation that its fierce enemies who defeated it did so not because their gods were

stronger than Yahweh, but because Yahweh was as much in control over them as He was over his chosen nation. He alone was the Creator over all. A clear picture of this approach is given in Isaiah 36. The fearsome Assyrian military machine had already destroyed the northern kingdom in 721 BC and now threatened the southern kingdom under King Hezekiah. Their ambassador, while trying to intimidate Judah, made a crucial mistake: he impugned the glory of Yahweh by claiming that Yahweh could no more save Judah than the pagan gods had been able to save their nations from Assyrian invasion (Isa. 36:18-20).

Hezekiah understood clearly the issue. The Assyrians had triumphed over other nations because their gods were mere idols created by men. Now in the case of Judah, Yahweh must show Himself to be the sole "living" God, active over all history (Isa. 37:16-20). God's answer through Isaiah is that the Assyrian victories were not due to their power but due to God's plan from eternity past (37:26-27). The Assyrians were merely carrying out (unintentionally) the sovereign plan of God! Now that Assyria had defamed the Lord, they would be defeated in a supernatural way. The Angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ) in one night destroyed the heart of the Assyrian army, 185,000 solders, the equivalent of over seven and a half modern army divisions (37:36)! Soon afterward, the Assyrian tyrant Sennacherib was assassinated (37:37-38). Isaiah's message to the nation recalled the basis for this deliverance to be the national election under the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants (37:35).

Other prophets besides Isaiah also assured the nation of Yahweh's reign over the entire international scene. Nahum prophesied against Assyria; Habakkuk, against Babylon; and Zephaniah, against Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Ethopia. In doing so, these prophets were really recalling the original basis of non-Hebrew civilization prior to the call of Abraham. God ruled over all the sons of Noah then, and He continued to do so in the days of these prophets. In no way had God become too weak to keep His promises to Abraham.

2. <u>Israel and Judah had broken the Sinaitic Covenant and could therefore have no claim on Yahweh's protection</u>. The Sinaitic Covenant had stipulated the behavioral standards valid for both northern and southern kingdoms. The prophets brought Yahweh's case against the nation in terms of covenant-breaking. Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah are most clear in this approach. All three of these prophets used a message format called a "rib" (pronounced 'reev') procedure. The rib format was an ancient version of a special lawsuit used whenever a vassal king (lesser king) tried to break a treaty with a suzerain (greater king). Such a suzerainty-vassal treaty was used in ancient Near Eastern international relations and, as I showed in Part III of this series, looked very much like

the Sinaitic Covenant. Yahweh was the suzerain, and the twelve tribes were the vassal-kings. When, therefore, Judah and Israel broke the Sinaitic Covenant-Treaty by rebellious adherence to idols, God initiated the rib court procedures through His prophets.

The Sinaitic Covenant had a section much like the suzerainty-vassal treaties had a "invocation of witnesses to the treaty" section. Moses had been forewarned of future covenant-breaking in Deuteronomy 31:16-30 so he composed Israel's national anthem in chapter 32. In this song he develops a structure similar to the rib format that the prophets would later use. The prophets follow this structure in convicting Israel of its covenant-breaking. Here are the biblical parallels with the Ancient Near Eastern rib procedure (RP):

1. Court Procedure. RP calls upon witnesses to the treaty, introduces the case, and presents judicial evidence of the faithfulness of the suzerain and unfaithfulness of the vassal; compare with Deut. 32:1-14, Isa. 1:2-4, Hos. 4:1, and Mic. 6:1-4.

2. Indictment: RP specifies the points of the treaty that have been broken by the vassal; cf. Deut. 32:15-18, Isa. 1:5-23, Hos. 4:2, and Mic. 6:9-12.

3. Announcement of Judgment: RP invokes the curses given in the suzerainty-vassal treaty; cf. Deut. 32:19-26, Isa. 1:24-31, Hos. 4:3, and Mic. 9:13-15.

By pursuing His lawsuit against the nation God proved that Israel did not merit further relationship with Himself. Israel had freely broken the Sinaitic Covenant; God, therefore, was no longer obligated to care for the nation. The entire national existence since Sinai had been predicated upon continued loyalty to Yahweh. Now that this condition no longer existed, there remained no legal basis for the nation's security and blessing. Prophets like Habakkuk developed the theme that the true basis for security could not be obedience to the law but faith in God's work (Hab. 2:4). Paul later would utilize this discovery in his epistle to the Romans.

To empower the prophets' communication of His disgust and hurt over the nation's disloyalty, the Lord put them through many carefully-designed personal trials. Hosea was called into an adulterous marriage so he could personally experience something of the Lord's own grief over the nation. Jeremiah spoke also in the analogy of the marriage and the Sinaitic Covenant (Jer. 3:1-10).

To show just how far Yahweh went in judging his elect nation, let's observe what He did to the Davidic Dynasty. Although His covenant

with David guaranteed eternal survival of David's line, that line became very thin at times as we saw in the introduction to this chapter where I mentioned the case of Joash who was the Davidic offspring who had to be kept hidden in the Temple for his first six years of life (cf. II Kings 11:1-3). What we must now realize is that the survival entire monarchy itself was contingent upon the godliness of the nation under terms of the Sinaitic Covenant. Samuel had declared the contingency of the monarchy in Saul's day (I Sam. 12:25). Whereas the line of David was secure under God's sovereignty, the institution of monarchy in which it would serve was contingent. Thus there existed a tension between the Sinaitic and Davidic Covenants similar to that between the Sinaitic and Abrahamic Covenants.

As the nation declined toward its final days, the prophet Jeremiah past on a shocking announcement from the Lord: the Davidic monarchy would terminate with Jehoiakin (Coniah) the last king before the exile (Jer. 22:24-30; 36:30-31). In Part V of this series I will show the implications this announcement had on the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. This judgment of Yahweh upon the monarchy in addition to His other judgments underscored the prophetic emphasis upon the broken Sinaitic Covenant and the end of blessing upon Israel as an independent nation.

3. <u>Yahweh, solely because of His sovereign, elective grace will Himself bring about the righteousness necessary for the blessing of Israel</u>. A third prophetic approach to the dual themes of cursing and blessing looked to the future resolution of the tension between sovereign election and contingent holiness. Many of the details were unknown, but at least one thing was clear: in no way would God compromise His righteousness in the future after making Israel's lack of holiness and loyalty to Him such an issue in administering the Sinaitic Covenant.

Nevertheless, in Moses' original song that became the basis for the later prophetic rib format, a very unrib-like feature occurs toward the end. In Deuteronomy 32:26 the judgment announcement abruptly ends. Israel will be judged but not into oblivion. Notice in 32:27 the issue of God's election glory enters: *if the pagan nations were to eradicate Israel they would conclude that they had triumphed over not only Israel but Israel's God*. In the last of Moses' song, 32:28-43, an extensive text teaches us that God is committed to that which He has elected. In the future He will "vindicate His people. . .when He sees that their strength is gone" (32:36). At that point He exposes the false gods Israel had trusted in and shows Himself to be the only true God (32:37-39). At the very end of the song is an invitation to all nations of the earth to bow before the God of Israel that they, too, may enjoy the future judgment/salvation (32:43).

Somehow, then, the covenant breaking of Israel will be resolved by the Lord in the future.

Also found in Moses' writings is an indication that the failure of Israel to conquer the Promised Land will be resolved. In Part III of this series, I showed that the Lord ceased to bless Israel in holy war to secure all the areas promised to the twelve tribes. At Bochim (Jud. 2:3,20-23) the Lord announced He would no longer give victory to Israel over the pagan inhabitants of the land. From the Abrahamic Covenant, however, the land was definitely promised to Israel. How was this tension to be resolved?

Through Moses Yahweh made an elaboration upon the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant. In Deuteronomy 29:1 He makes another covenant which is said to be distinct from the Sinaitic Covenant. Biblical scholars generally refer to this extra covenant as the "Palestinian Covenant" although this term is objectionable [3]. Notice that before elaborating the terms of this land covenant, Moses rehearses Israel's future history just like he later does in his song of chapter 32 (cf. 29:2-28). Then Moses refers to a time <u>after</u> the cursings of the Sinaitic Covenant have occurred (30:1). In this future time, Israel will repent and return to submission to Yahweh. When this submission occurs, Israel will be regathered into the "land which your fathers possessed" (30:5). In this final state, Israel will receive the economic, military, and spiritual blessings promised under the Sinaitic Covenant (30:8-10).

The prophets repeatedly reminded the nation of these truths which had been originally revealed to Moses. Isaiah spoke of a future time when Israel would be again settled "in their land" and "in the land of Yahweh" (Isa. 14:1-2). Ezekiel wrote that after a future judgment Israel would serve Yahweh "in the land" (Ezk. 20:40). Amos saw a time in Israel's future when its ancient cities would be rebuilt and the people would be planted by the Lord "on their land" (Amos 9:15). Clearly these prophets were not inventing a new message as Bible critics try to say to their students. Far from any new message, the prophets' visions and teaching had to pass the truth test of Deuteronomy 13:1-5 which required theological continuity with Moses. From this foundation in the Torah, they were led by the Holy Spirit to expand upon Moses and deal with their contemporary scene so each prophet is slightly different in style and emphasis.

The prophets foresaw that Israel's historic failure to be loyal to Yahweh proved that *only God could supply the necessary righteousness*; man had nothing within him to establish it. An excellent example of how clearly these Old Testament prophets saw the necessity of faith in Yahweh to supply the righteousness is Habakkuk. He writes toward the

end of the nation's decline that the proud or autonomous man is unrighteous but the one who "lives by faith" is righteous (Hab. 2:4). To Habakkuk the whole issue could be summed up in a simple choice: do you want to be your own final authority or do you yield to Yahweh as your final authority and wait on Him to supply your need? In Part VI of this series we will study how Paul develops the New Testament of justification by faith from this discovery in the declining hours of the nation (he even cites Hab. 2:4) and from the earlier foundation in Abraham.

Tightly bound to this realization of the necessity of faith to be counted as righteous enough to enter Yahweh's kingdom, was the perception that not all Hebrews would so believe. Beginning with the prophet Elijah we read more and more about the "faithful remnant". Yahweh Himself claimed in Elijah's day that there were seven thousand believers in the northern kingdom (I Kings 19:18). Isaiah foresaw the "remnant of Israel" who would "return" (Isa. 10:20-23) and whom the Lord would surely deliver (46:3-4).

The highlight, however, in this prophetic revelation is the amazing announcement of Jeremiah: that Yahweh would establish a New Covenant with the nation in the future. Jeremiah pointed out that the Sinaitic Covenant had failed because of Israel's sinful nature, made up as Israel was of fallen mankind (Jer. 11:1-8). The needed spiritual circumcision demanded in the older covenant (Deut. 10:16) had not occurred. The announcement was made:

> *"Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt; which covenant they brake. . . .But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those day, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. . . .They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." (Jer. 31:31-34).*

Notice that this announcement foresees a time when, not just a remnant, but the entire nation of Israel would obey the law of God and that God would permanently uphold the nation in her elected calling. Obviously, it must be that after the historical judgments, eventually the unbelievers are removed from Israel so that the faith remnant is identical to the nation.

Commenting on Jeremiah's announcement of the New Covenant, Alva McClain writes:

> *"The moral problem posed by the failure of the Mosaic Covenant will under the New Covenant be met by God's own sovereign grace and power. . . .By these means the benefits of the Mosaic Covenant will be attained, and at the same time its moral requirements will be secured; not as a legal condition of blessing but as its divinely caused result. . . .The New Covenant, therefore, is in the gracious spirit of the earlier Abrahamic Covenant, rather than in the legalistic spirit of the Mosaic Covenant which it supplants. It is true that under the latter there was promised divine forgiveness in the case of Israel's failure. But here it is deeply significant that when the sin has been confessed. . . , it is not on the basis of any surviving rights in the broken Covenant of Sinai but simply because Jehovah remembers His earlier 'covenant with Jacob, . . .with Issac, and. . .with Abraham' (Lev. 26:42)."[4]*

Table Comparing the Biblical Covenants

Covenant	Parties	Sign(s)	Legal Terms	Founding Sacrifice
New World (Noahic)	God; and Noahic human race & animals saved on Ark.	Rainbow.	Eternal survival of human race; no more global flood.	Noah's sacrifice.
Abrahamic	God; and Abrahamic progeny.	Divine oath; circumcision.	Defined real estate; chosen seed; and worldwide blessing.	God's sacrifice.
Sinaitic (Mosaic)	God; and tribes of Israel.	Sabbath.	Hundreds of laws to express loyalty.	Moses and elders' sacrifice.
Davidic	God; and progeny of David.	Surviving royal line.	Father-son relationship; chastening but not rejection; Jerusalem centered reign.	?
New	God; and future nation of Israel.	Jesus' blood.	National regeneration; post-dispersion regathering; worldwide dominancy.	God's sacrifice (Jesus).

Let's compare this New Covenant with the previous four covenants that we've studied in detail in the following table. The parties to the New Covenant were Yahweh and the nation of Israel (Jer. 31:27). The sign and the sacrifice of the New Covenant would be revealed later in history with the Lord Jesus Christ at the last supper—the sign being His blood (I Cor. 11:25) and the sacrifice being His death (Luke 22:20). The legal terms included: national regeneration (31:33-34; cf. Deut. 30:6), regathering back to the historic land (31:23-24; cf. Deut. 30:3-5), and worldwide dominance (31:36-37; cf. Deut. 30:7). God's elective purpose expressed in the Abrahamic Covenant would be fulfilled, then, with all the righteous requirements of the Sinaitic Covenant simultaneously met.

This third approach of the Old Testament prophets to Israel, then, created a forward-looking hope toward Yahweh's future work to deliver the nation from its sin. History, interpreted covenantally by the prophets, showed clearly the unchanging faithfulness of God and the widespread disobedience of man—both the people and their leadership. The chosen

nation was being horribly chastened by the "rod of man" under the sovereign control of Yahweh with no appeal left for survival on the basis of the Sinaitic Covenant. Yahweh had divorced his queen-nation, yet He would somehow remarry her in the future.

The Unresolved Mystery Left by the Prophets

The "dual track" ministry of the prophets had emphasized the tension between Israel's sin and God's election. The prophets announced that a solution was forthcoming to resolve this tension. What they did not do, however, was spell out just how the holy, righteous Yahweh would reconcile the rebellious, sinful nation to unbroken, eternal fellowship with Himself.

These prophets could not separate out the disciplinary, suffering theme and the glorious finale theme, especially as they pertained to the identity of the persons involved and to the sequence and timing of their occurrence. The Apostle Peter said of them: "[they] made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and glories to follow" (I Pet. 1:10b-11). These themes defied logical consistency as it was known in Old Testament times. The basic apparent contradiction in the Old Testament Word of God was, according to the Apostle Paul, how God could retain His holiness at the same time He permanently entered into an eternal relationship with the sinful nation—how he could "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith" (Rom. 3:26).

The Old Testament believers, therefore, had to walk by faith with an unresolved paradox. They are a model for us who must also walk by faith with other unresolved paradoxes such as how God could have created a universe in which creatures would surely chose evil (the so-called "evil problem"). We must be very careful here. These Old Testament saints were not like modern existential theologians who tell us that faith is deliberately submitting to the irrational. On the contrary, these saints, as people made in God's image, had minds and consciences that were finite replicas of God's omniscience and holiness. They demanded a reason and a moral resolution to the prophetic announcements as Peter said. They emphatically did not "deliberately submit to the irrational".

What they did was accept the Creator-creature distinction and conclude that "His understanding is inscrutable" (Isa. 40:28) and sufficient to include rational concepts of every part of the universe (40:26). Far from an irrational faith, *the Old Testament saints' faith rested in the rationality of their God instead of their own rationality*. Somehow, they reasoned, He would do a "new thing" (43:19) and "would

not remember their sins" (43:25). Faced with this unresolved mystery, these saints of old give us a wonderful example of how to live under the authority of an incomprehensible God.

Living as we do on this side of the Cross, we have the added revelation that they did not have. We see that, eventually, God resolved what looked to them as an irresolvable paradox through the substitutionary death of His own Son. In the words of John Frame:

> *"Justice, as defined by the prophets, cannot be merciful, or so it seems. But God does solve the problem, in a way that none of us would likely have expected, in a way that amazes us and provokes from us shouts of praise. . . .Here is the lesson for us: if God could vindicate his justice and mercy in a situation where such vindication seemed impossible, if he could vindicate them in a way that sent far beyond our expectations and understanding, can we not trust him to vindicate himself again?"[5]*

Resolution of the Old Testament mystery in New Testament times ought to encourage our faith to trust the Lord whether or not we can logically resolve each detail with the rest of known truth. Indeed, the New Testament says to us that the "peace of God. . .surpasses all comprehension" (Phil. 4:7).

This period of Old Testament history during the decline of Israel and Judah reveals much of how God disciplines His people. Through the prophets, He adds to His Word as He explains His historic working with the Hebrew nation and the pagan nations around about. Always He respects His previously-revealed contracts and provides evidence of His trustworthiness to us. At the same time He reveals more and more of His grand plan to provide salvation by grace for sinners to receive by faith alone. Following this Old Testament history our hearts are turned more and more to Him and less and less upon ourselves.

Lesson 88

SANCTIFICATION AND CHASTENING-II: LESSONS FROM KINGDOMS IN DECLINE.

In the previous chapter we saw that chastening is necessary when hearts have become cluttered with idolatrous reconstructions of God's true nature. Believers ought to follow the model of David—quick to respond to God's rebuke. Nevertheless, genuine believers can follow the model of Saul and the later kings by staying out of fellowship long enough to allow false ideas of God to become embedded in the mind. These false images of God prevent restoration to fellowship. They constitute strongholds in the mind nurtured by the powers of darkness. Only after their destruction can we experience true conviction of sin and genuinely confess our sin.

The period of the declining kingdoms featured the problem of entrenched carnality and idolatrous strongholds in the hearts of the people and their leaders. The prophetic history in Kings and the prophetic books thus reveals how God sanctifies through chastening. Following the "dual track" emphasis of the Old Testament prophets, we learn that the nation could not obey the Lord thoroughly and consistently enough to ever enjoy the uninterrupted blessings of His Kingdom. Under the Sinaitic Covenant arrangement, blessing was forever contingent and uncertain. This period of history exposed the underlying truth glimpsed earlier at Mt. Sinai when the people broke the covenant even as it was being received! From that event we learned in Part III of this series of the necessity for a "circumcised heart" and a gracious intercessor for the nation.

In this chapter, we learn more about this truth. We observe from the prophets' dual track emphasis that God, in order to secure His election purpose for the seed of Abraham, will do a future dramatic work. Somehow, He will bring about the holiness of personal loyalty to Him in the hearts of the nation Israel in such way that the blessings of the Kingdom will be forever secure. Somehow, He will eternally separate the good from the evil so that Abraham's miraculously born seed will inhabit and reign in that future Kingdom according to His election promises.

Let's examine the doctrine of sanctification again and see how these truths advance our understanding of it beyond that of Part III. I will develop these contributions under the five aspects of sanctification covered in connection with the conquest and settlement.

Phases of Sanctification

Earlier we studied two of the three phases of sanctification: positional (what God promises to do) and experiential (what He expects us to do). *Positional sanctification* is revealed in the Abrahamic Covenant. His three great promises—a land, a seed, and a worldwide blessing—were certain elective purposes. They implied a proper relationship with Him through election, justification, and faith. This covenant of promise provided Israel's meaning and purpose in history.

The second phase of sanctification was revealed centrally in the Sinaitic Covenant in the hundreds of commands covering every area of life. This contract defined the Hebrews' obligations to Yahweh. This *experiential sanctification* was made the central issue throughout the kingdom period of Israel's history. The verdict is clear: apart from a special work of God, man cannot become consistently obedient to Him.

The prophets (under the ministry of the Holy Spirit) introduced truths of the third phase of sanctification: final or *ultimate sanctification*. In ultimate sanctification the conditions required in experiential sanctification become existent and permanent so that positional sanctification becomes actual. The New Covenant becomes operational. Israel will inherit the Kingdom, will rule in the land, and be home to the Temple and Presence of God Himself on this planet.

Aim of Sanctification

Always God has required of man loyalty to Him, even before the fall. Man was created to reign over creation for God (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:15; Psa.8). Being a responsible creature made in God's image, man could not acquire obedience by instinct: he had to learn it by experience. This principle is clear from the biblical statement that even Christ, the sinless God-man, had to learn in his humanity obedience to His Father (Heb. 5:8). Learning obedience by historical experience, them does not inherently involve sin.

After the fall, of course, sin does become an inseparable "drag" on sanctification, but from the beginning it was not so. We diagrammed this before and after picture in Part III as follows:

BEFORE THE FALL   AFTER THE FALL

Aim of Loyalty ⟩   Aim of Loyalty ⟩

Impediments of Sin
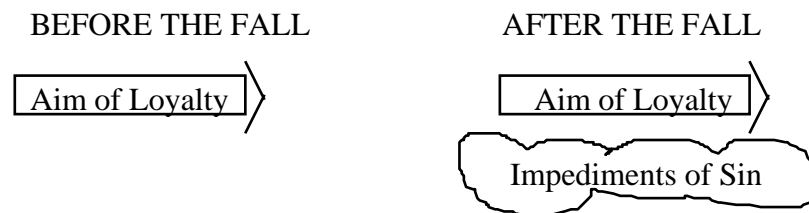
Sanctification, therefore, is not merely doing away with evil in our experience; it also includes gaining loyalty or positive experiential obedience. Even if we were not in Adam as fallen beings we would still have to go through sanctification.

When the OT prophets revealed the New Covenant in the kingdom period, *they opened up powerful energy sources for developing a loyalty to God*. The fact that God would not only save the nation from Egypt but also *save the nation from itself* showed clearly God's fantastic love. The fact that after the Sinaitic Covenant had been conclusively shown to be broken, God would pursue His people for a final restoration revealed His incomprehensible grace. What this revelation supplied to the embattled saints was the source of hope and motivation. The old covenant at Sinai motivated by fear of failure; the New Covenant to come <u>motivated by gratitude for His deliverance</u>. Behind believers in their daily struggles after this prophetic revelation was neither God with a big stick nor mere human vacillating love; undergirding their struggle was the Infinite Personal Creator Who chose them for victory.

Means of Sanctification

Two instruments of sanctification were discussed previously: law (in the sense of revelation) and grace. No one can believe apart from the Word of God or revealed law. Thus the OT prophets again and again critiqued the nation on the basis of Moses' words. They did not resort to economic analyses, political commentaries or programs, and psychological success techniques. Under the guidance of the Spirit they went straight for the basic issue: man's relationship to God. In so doing what they did, they teach us that our sanctification must proceed under the authority of Scripture. All of life must be reinterpreted in the light of the text of the Bible, not by the latest version of "psycho-babble". They teach us the SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE (II Tim. 3:16-17)!

This historical period also revealed the NECESSITY OF GRACE. Nothing could be clearer than the insufficiency and continuous failure of the flesh. Again and again the OT prophets went back behind the Sinaitic Covenant to the Abrahamic Covenant to find their confidence in God. No remedy existed for the broken covenant other than Yahweh's gracious promises "somehow" to fix the situation.

Dimensions of Sanctification

Life has two dimensions: the existentially present moment and the long-term progress due to the sum of many past moments. At any given moment we either choose to trust God for His promised help and obey His will for us or to rely solely upon our capacities and ignore His will. We either are in fellowship with Him or out of fellowship. We walk by the spirit or by the flesh. In the David model, he shows us the way to be restored quickly to fellowship with God.

Prolonged walking in the flesh, however, does damage to the soul. Spiritual growth stops. As carnality compounds, retrogression begins. Solomon retrogressed from a godly wise king to a fleshly foolish one. God will not tolerate such retrogression to continue in His people as we learned in this kingdoms-in-decline period of OT history. His chastening intensifies as we observed from Elijah to Jeremiah. He ejected his beloved nation from His Kingdom! He even ejected David's seed through Jehoiakim from the throne! They remained his people and his royal family, but they went through horrible suffering outside of the land and His Kingdom.

It is a sad fact of Scripture that believers can lose their lives, their rewards, and a place to reign in the Messianic Kingdom to come by prolonged sin and refusal to acknowledge their sin after the model of David. The last generations of the northern and southern kingdoms illustrate this truth. God can not, and will not, compromise His holiness in His Kingdom. Those who reign with His Son cannot do so using principles antagonistic to His character. The New Testament repeats this same truth in numerous places: Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10); Paul's judgment against a hardened believer (I Cor. 5:1-7) and his warning against those making a mockery of communion (I Cor. 11:28-32); James' warnings about illness and death (James 5:9-20); and the Lord's warning to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3). Note Suffering Pattern #6. These passages have been variously interpreted as defining so-called "mortal sins", loss of salvation, and exposures of merely "professing" unbelievers. They teach none of these doctrines. The passages refer to the same truth we have observed during the decline of the OT kingdoms: the Great King will never compromise His holiness in His Kingdom whether believer or unbeliever is involved.

Enemies of Sanctification

Finally, we learned in Part II about the enemies of sanctification, those impediments to spiritual growth: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Back in the conquest and settlement we saw that these operated under the sovereignty of God and were ultimately for our good, although they intend our harm. Back there we came to realize that the winning approach against these enemies was the indirect strategy of loyalty to God rather than the direct strategy of frontally attacking them. The diagram was:

DIRECT STRATEGY   INDIRECT STRATEGY

$\longrightarrow$ world, flesh, devil $\longrightarrow$ loyalty to God
                                                   world, flesh, devil
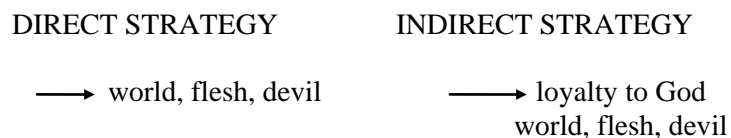
To this previous revelation, we now add insights from the prophets. They reminded Israel that the enemy nations surrounding them were God's tools of chastening. In the dramatic instance of Hezekiah and the Assyrians we saw the enemies defeated, not by Hebrew armies, but directly by Yahweh just as it had happened earlier at Jericho. The key wasn't in Hebrew military strategy but in Hebrew repentance, confession, and restoration to fellowship with Yahweh.

These enemies of sanctification under the sovereignty of God actually help our sanctification! The NT book of Hebrews says that all angels— godly and fallen alike—are "ministers" of God to us. All the enemies

force us to get right with God or suffer (Patterns #5 and #6). Moreover, they minister through us to others (Patterns #7-11).

The OT period of the kingdoms' decline is an important one for those seeking to understand how God sanctifies His people. Through it we learn the tough side of God's discipline. Hopefully, we shall gain greater respect for our God!

END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 3

1. See previous discussion in Part III under the Call of Abraham and the Giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai.

2. Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. J. A. Baker, I, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 38. Here is an excellent model for parents regarding discipline of children. Discipline can be harsh at times, but it must be predictable to have beneficial effects!

3. The term "Palestinian" is a Roman one given to the land by Hadrian after the Jewish revolt under Bar Chochba (A.D. 132-135) as part of his policy to "de-judaize" the land. The biblical term is "eretz Israel"—the land of Israel.

4. Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 158.

5. John M. Frame, Apologetics to the Glory of God (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1994), p.184.

CHAPTER 4: KINGDOM ENDED: THE DISCIPLINE OF EXILE

Throughout the eighth and seventh centuries, B.C., the prophets' indictments revealed that Israel's days as a nation were numbered. The cursings announced by God in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 were coming to pass. Israel lost her position as an independent nation exhibiting the Kingdom of God to mankind. In 721 BC the northern kingdom fell to Assyria (II Kings 17) and in 586 BC the southern kingdom fell to Babylon (II Kings 25). The nation would be submerged in the sea of Gentile political power. Never again would Israel see a son of Solomon reign on her throne. As Israel declined, conversely, the paganized Noahic civilization begun in the pre-Abrahamic times of Babel began to reassert itself with more powerful forms. All of this historical chaos is interpreted by the prophetic authors of Kings as <u>not due to mere political, military, or economic factors</u>; it was due to the nation's <u>collective disloyalty to Yahweh</u>.

This chapter will mention the highlights of Israel's sixth century exilic experience and the truths learned therefrom. Included once again will be the doctrine of sanctification, this time with emphasis upon our "separation from the world system". Also included will be the doctrine of revelation with emphasis upon apocalyptic literature, especially that target of all biblical critics, the book of Daniel. (Read here some portions of Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Esther.)

ISRAEL & JUDAH INTO CAPTIVITY

In the spring of 605 BC at a place hundreds of miles north of Israel called Carchemish, the Babylonian crown prince and general of the army, Nebuchadnezzer, had soundly defeated the Egyptian armies. The balance of power had decisively shifted from Egypt into the hands of Babylon. Soon afterwards, Nebuchadnezzer secured Western Asia by taking political hostages from the various states, including some of the nobility of Judah (cf. Dan. 1:1-6). Thus the exilic experience began in 605 BC for some of the Hebrews. The discussion which follows traces both the loss of the Kingdom of God, the ascent of the paganized world system into an imperial Kingdom of Man, and some further consequences.

Loss of the Kingdom of God

How can one be sure that the Kingdom of God ended as the exile began? If the Kingdom had begun with great supernatural events in the

Exodus, surely there ought to be definite historical signs pointing to its end. Alva McClain argues that three such signs did occur prior to the fall of Jerusalem and that by these signs one can know that the start of the exile marked the loss of the preliminary form of the Kingdom of God in history. These three signs were: (1) the transfer of political supremacy completely into the hands of pagan nations; (2) the end of the Davidic Dynasty through Solomon; and (3) the departure of the Shekinah Glory from Israel's Temple [1].

1. <u>Transfer of Political Supremacy</u>. Shortly after his final victory at Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne of Babylon. For the next two years he purged pockets of resistance in Western Asia (II Kings 24:1-7). Eventually by 603 BC, his second official year as king, Nebuchadnezzar had become the undisputed lord and master of the ancient world.

Precisely at that historical moment King Nebuchadnezzar had his famous dream (Dan. 2) which by God's help Daniel interpreted to be a panorama of history from that day (603 BC) until the final re-establishment of the Kingdom of God in all its completeness. The dream's central theme was the transfer of political supremacy from Israel to four successive Gentile (pagan) kingdoms:

> *"Thou, O King, are king of kings, unto whom the God of Heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all. . . ."Dan. 2:37-38 (emphasis supplied) (cf. Jer. 27:4-7).*

Centuries earlier such power could never have been given to a Gentile nation because of God's promises to Israel:

> *"if thou shalt harken diligently unto the voice of Jehovah thy God. . . ., that Jehovah thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth. . . .Thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath. . . ."Deut. 28:1, 13 (Cf. Ps. 89:27).*

McClain observes concerning the previous centuries leading up to the exile:

> *"During that long period the power and authority of the Theocracy was never in question. No nation, regardless of its size or strength, could stand successfully against Israel as long as that people followed the will of its divine King. . . .Israel went down in defeat only when she turned aside from the divinely written charter of her kingdom."[2]*

The exile, then, represented the beginning of a new political configuration in the world community of nations, a world order that continues to the present hour. Here was the first sign that the preliminary form of the Kingdom of God was finished. God no longer ruled His Kingdom as a nation free of foreign political domination.

2. <u>End of the Solomonic Dynasty</u>. A second sign that had occurred before the fall of Jerusalem also pointed to the termination of the visible Kingdom of God. In 601 BC Nebuchadnezzar had suffered severe military losses while battling with Pharoah Neco on the Egyptian frontier. Seizing upon the momentary Babylonian weakness, several of the subjugated vassal nations in Western Asia revolted, including Judah under King Jehoiakim (II Kings 24:1).

King Jehoiakim had been repeatedly told by the prophets not to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar because God had already given the authority of political supremacy to Babylon (Dan. 2 had occurred two years previously in 603 BC). Thus it happened that Jehoiakim's successor and son, King Jehoiakin, reaped the cursing from his father's rebellious folly (II Kings 24:6-16). In 598 BC Nebuchadnezzar sent the Babylonian army into Palestine to resubjugate Judah. The king, the queen mother, the high officials, and the leading citizens (probably including Ezekiel, cf. Ezk. 1:1-2), together with enormous booty, were taken to Babylon.

Such a disaster had been foretold by Jeremiah as we noted in the previous chapter (Jer. 22:24-30). The prophet had predicted that the Solomonic Dynasty would come to an end regardless of the promises of the Davidic Covenant. The Davidic Covenant had promised a continual <u>Davidic </u>Dynasty, not a <u>Solomonic</u> Dynasty (note carefully the language in II Sam. 7:12-13,16). McClain points out the fine detail of God's Word (convenienty omitted in most university "Bible" courses taught by unbelieving faculty):

> *"In Jehoiakin the failure of the family of Solomon became complete, and no man of his 'seed' shall ever again sit on the throne of David. As a matter of historical fact, Jehoiakin was not 'childless'. After being carried away into Babylon, he had a son through whom the family line finally culminated in Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary (Matt. 1:12-16). But our Lord Jesus Christ was not of the 'seed' of Joseph; he was the seed of Mary, who was descended from David through Nathan (Luke 3:31), not through Solomon. Hence, it is correct to day that Jehoiakin was to be written 'childless,' that is, in the genealogical register of the royal family line."*

Thus Jesus Christ had the genes of David through Mary but did not carry the genes of Solomon or of Jehoiakin, the disqualified main branch of the royal line.

The Solomonic Dynasty, then, ended prior to the fall of Jerusalem. Never again would Israel enjoy a Solomonic son on her throne. The cut-off royal line would stand as a historical monument to the failure of the nation's human leadership just as the cut-off of the victorious conquest in the time of the <u>Judges</u> reminds us of the failure of the nation's people.

3. <u>Departure of the Shekinah Glory</u>. A third sign of the end of the Kingdom of God in its early political form concerned the visible evidence of God's presence in the nation, the Shekinah Glory. When the Kingdom had been born at the Exodus and at Mt. Sinai, God's glory had been present as a pillar of smoke and fire (Exod. 19:18; 24:15-16). After the Tabernacle had been completed, "the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle" (Exod. 40:34). When Solomon had completed the Temple and his dedicatory prayer, "the fire came down from heaven. . .and the glory of Jehovah filled the house" (II Chron. 7:1). The Shekinah Glory, therefore, had been a crucial emblem of God's presence in His Kingdom.

In the year 591 BC, however, the prophet Ezekiel witnessed in a vision the departure of the Shekinah Glory from Jerusalem; Ezekiel was the last person in the OT that saw the Glory. Ezekiel saw in succession the idolatrous abominations inside the Temple at Jerusalem (8:5-18), the movement of the Glory to the threshold of the Temple (9:3), the shining out of the Glory into the courtyard area (10:4), and finally the departure of the Glory from the city entirely (11:23). As the great nineteenth century Bible teacher, Samuel J. Andrews, said:

> *"This departure of Jehovah from His Temple and land. . .marked a change in His theocratic relation to His people—a change that continues even to this day. They did not cease to be His covenant people (Lev. 26:44). His purpose in them was still unfulfilled. His promises respecting the Messiah and His kingdom were not withdrawn, and He continued to accept their worship. But He Himself was no more reigning in Jerusalem; the Visible Glory no more dwelt between the cherubim; the Ark was not in the Most Holy Place; the holy fire no longer burned on the brazen altar; there was no response by the Urim and Thummim. The people might return, as they did from Babylon, the temple be rebuilt, the worship again set up; yet there was a change. They came back from their first exile and dispersion, but no more to be an independent nation. To their original standing as the theocratic people under His immediate rule, they were not restored. . . .[4]*

Three signs of the end of the Kingdom of God, therefore, had occurred before Jerusalem fell in 586 BC: the transfer of political supremacy in 603 BC; the end of the Solomonic Dynasty in 598 BC; and the departure of the Shekinah Glory in 591 BC. The Kingdom of God had been temporarily lost from visible history.

The Ascent of the Imperial Kingdom of Man

Simultaneous with the loss of the Kingdom of God were the revival and rise of the Kingdom of Man. Just as the global flood in Noah's day and subsequent drop in human longevity drew a curtain over the antediluvian past, so now the exile of Israel another curtain fell over the supernatural prophetic past history of Israel. Our attention shifts back from Israel to the paganized Noahic civilization that had further developed since God had called Abraham out of it (see Parts II and III of this series). Let's recall this earlier paganizing process of humanity, how Israel related to it, and what happened at the exile.

1. <u>Paganization of the Noahic New World Order</u>. As I stated in Part II, the Bible carefully points out the tragic flaw of sin in the original founding family of civilization. Noah became drunk from the very thing he produced in subduing the earth. Although his sons were brilliant pioneers of global exploration, mapping, navigation, architecture, and other technologies—literally nation builders—the cultural glory of their new world order lacked spiritual life. On a scale exceeding the greatest Greek tragedy, the Noahic cosmos contained the seeds of its own self destruction.

The Bible overlooks all of the grand achievements except one—the Babel fiasco (Gen. 11:1-9). The depravity of man quickly manifested itself in seeking the highest goal of the knowledge of good and evil, of establishing the supreme standard of judgment, of interpreting reality in proud independence of the Creator of all. The triune lusts of the eyes, of the flesh, and of the pride of life rapidly corrupted the nations. Over against God's Word which insists upon a two-level view of reality, man asserted a one-level of reality wherein God, man, and nature all share a common Continuity of Being. Creation was thus denied. In close association with denial of creation came the denial of the fall and the "normalcy" of evil, death, and chaos. An endless cycle replaced progressive history, and mankind was doomed to live in a meaningless tomb.

Nevertheless, from the time of Babel until the sixth century the paganized Noahic cosmos, now the Kingdom of Man, had been severely restrained by God's curse at Babel. Linguistic confusion constantly had touched off nationalistic movements, racial discrimination, and impediments to world trade and communication. For about two thousand years people groups continued to spread into all areas of the earth. The climate gradually transitioned from the Ice Age aftermath of the flood (see Part III) to one closely resembling the present climate of today. Spiritually, however, the global paganism was challenged by the existence of Israel.

2. Israel's Historical Witness to God. Throughout the centuries following Abraham's election and separation from paganism, God built a powerful counter-culture. There was constant contact with surrounding nations as the major trade routes flowed through the land of Israel. The Jewish sojourn in Egypt between Jacob's time and the Exodus gave Egyptian Gentiles full knowledge of the chosen people, even to the point of having one of them, Joseph, elevated to a level next to Pharaoh himself (Gen. 41:37-45). Moses, too, circulated inside the Egyptian royal circles (Exod. 2:5-10). The final confrontation at the Exodus, as I pointed out in Part III of this series, left a devastating effect on this most powerful Gentile nation.

    After Mt. Sinai all nations having commerce with Israel would encounter the God-given Law that towered above all pagan law codes (Deut. 4:6-8 cf. Rom. 3:19). Economic freedom, private property, and fair court systems must have deeply impressed foreign observers. Most of all, the powerful belief in a written contract with the sovereign, omnipotent Creator of all men and nature must have sharply contrasted with pagan fears and capricious gods and goddesses. The phenomenon of ordinary citizens "indicting" their rulers for violation of God's Word must have appeared as a bewildering behavior. The Solomonic golden era has given the world some of the cultural fruit of divine wisdom. Centuries of analysis by prophets of every aspect of the nation's historical experience, always interpreting prosperity and poverty in terms of God's blessing and cursing had generated the world's first historiography. Thus in spite of the nation's decline and fall, God's elect purpose for it as a channel for blessing all nations was already well underway (Gen. 12:3).

     Now the exile would give the last bit of preparation for the coming global Messiah: a finished canon of Scripture with a prophetic panorama of human history. The exile, then, would not only be the means of disciplining Israel but would complete Israel's role of preparing the world for Christ by dispersing her citizens throughout the Gentile world, spreading biblical truth and the Scriptures among men everywhere. Josephus notes that by his day in the first century (A.D.) it could be said that Jews lived in every part of the earth since very early times [5].

    Great Church fathers long recognized this function of the exile. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) wrote: "That same nation. . .was afterwards dispersed through the nations in order to testify to the scriptures in which eternal salvation in Christ had been declared" [6]. The brilliant French mathematician, Blaise Pascal (whom secular historians treat with great embarrassment because of his biblical beliefs) (1623-1662 A.D.) commented:

> *"As His Gospel was to be believed by all the world, it was not only necessary that there should be prophecies to make it believed, but that these prophecies should exist throughout the whole world, in order to make it embraced by the whole world."[7]*

Thus Israel's pre-exilic role, though apparently frustrated by her idolatry, would be completed by the exile-caused dispersion of Jews into all the world with the Old Testament.

3. Imperial Paganism. Against this background of the continuing struggle of the Kingdom of Man to emerge full-blown in history and Israel's role as a suppressing biblical counter-culture, one can profitably study what happened in the sixth century. With the loss of the Kingdom of God and the dispersion of Israel, the Kingdom of Man now revived in a new potent form.

Three things need to be noted about this new form. First, the transfer of political supremacy in Daniel 2 to four specific, successive Gentile kingdoms meant that imperialism unrestricted by Israel's existence would be the modus vivendi in international relations. Although the previous Babel curse was still in effect, forbidding one world government based upon one world culture and language, now one nation was given dominion to impose its own culture upon weaker nations. Rather than a pure world government created by mutually consenting nations (a vision shared by "one worlders" since Dante and Kant), there would be one nation and one culture which would attempt to dominate the globe at any given time. Due to this dominance of Gentile nations, Jesus called the era from the exile onward "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

The resulting imperialism seems to be linked in Daniel 2 with economics and military power. Each successive kingdom is represented by a metal of less value but of greater strength than its predecessor— gold, silver, bronze, iron, and an iron-ceramic mixture. Since these metals in ingot form were used in international trade in the ancient world, their decreasing value would suggest a declining value in world currency. Similarly, their increasing strength suggests an increasing military power (cf. Dan. 2:44). In fact, the last three metals—bronze, iron, and an iron-ceramic mixture—depict the history of military armor.

Subsequent fulfillment of parts of the Daniel 2 prophecy clearly identifies the four kingdoms as the Neo-Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. The currencies of these empires were eroded by continual deficit financing and resultant inflation [8]. Moreover, each successive empire covered a greater area and diversity of nations so that it had to deploy a stronger military force to keep the unity sought by apostate man. The link between increasing military strength and deficit

financing, of course, is clear: as more and more brute force was required, there were fewer and fewer resources available to support the effort.

Also to be noted about this new Kingdom of Man form, besides its policy of imperialism, is its willful defiance of God's revelation. Unlike previous Kingdom attempts, such as the Egyptian or Assyrian empires, all four kingdoms of Daniel 2 have available to them a biblical option of worshipping the God of all men. It was no longer a case of "swallowing national pride: and humbling themselves before the God of a foreign nation, Israel: Israel no longer existed as a competing power! The dispersed Jews were citizens inside these kingdoms; they were not true foreigners. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome all could have existed as secular governments, utilizing the wisdom of OT law gained from their own Jewish citizens without feeling that they had surrendered any sovereignty to a foreign power.

In spite of the testimony of Daniel, the Babylonian ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, deified himself and his national cult probably by reinterpreting the image of his dream in pagan political terms (Dan. 3-4). Similarly, in total disregard for the biblical information available from Persian Jewry, the Medo-Persians persisted in elevating mere human legislation to the status of divine, immutable decrees (Esther 3-8; Dan. 6). The Greeks, despite the Jewry in the Levant, set up a situation that led to the reign of the most God-defying, Satanic leader of the ancient world, Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 8). Finally, the Romans continued with their emperor-worship even though biblical truth was available from Jewish families and the early Christians throughout the empire.

As an example of just how accessible biblical truth was to the leaders of the Roman empire, John Wurts recounts how the king of Britain, Caradoc, was captured and incarcerated in Rome in A.D. 52. His daughter, Gladys, was adopted by the Emperor Claudius and became Claudia, who later married a man by the name of Rufus Pudens. Caradoc, his father, Claudia and Rufus were converted and baptized by the Apostle Paul, becoming the first royal converts to Christianity. Claudia and Rufus Pudens are mentioned in II Timothy 4:21 and Rufus in Romans 16:13 [9]. Another evidence is Roman law: it was very cognizant of Jewish Roman citizens, many of whom were prominent in the Empire as Josephus notes in Antiquities, XIV, vii,x. Thus Rome as well as the previous kingdoms all had sufficient biblical information readily available from their citizens and rejected it [9].

In each case, however, God brought about the kingdom's destruction by progressive internal weakening together with occasional direct judgments upon individual rebels (e.g., Dan. 4:22-27; 5:18-30; Acts 12:20-23). Thus, the new form of the Kingdom of Man after the exile

clearly attests to the truth that all such attempts at autonomy in the face of available revelation are doomed to failure because the entire creation is God's, not man's.

A third thing to be noted about the post-exilic Kingdom of Man is its function in training believers to have a supracultural loyalty to God, a supreme hope based upon His (as yet) unfulfilled promises. If faith is pictured by Abraham and <u>love</u> of God by the Sinaitic covenant stipulations, then <u>hope</u> is seen during and after the exile. Man no longer has an option between two present kingdoms as mankind did between Moses and Ezekiel; he must choose between the present Kingdom of Man and the <u>future</u> Kingdom of God. He is a citizen of the present kingdom but a citizen with a "prior loyalty" to the coming kingdom. The priority of loyalty—so confused in the period of Israel's decline covered in previous chapters—is now made clear.

The new version of the Kingdom of Man after the fall of Israel, therefore, differed from its previous versions in that it had a global imperialism unchecked by Israel's presence, a clear testimony of God's revelation available in its midst, and a training function for believers to develop hope. The sixth century B.C. saw this great revival of the Kingdom of Man simultaneously with the loss of the Kingdom of God from visible history.

Repercussions of the Exile

Two primary repercussions manifested themselves as a result of the rise of the Kingdom of Man and the decline of the Kingdom of God. God provided a new kind of revelatory literature for believers, the apocalyptic genre, while at the same time there was an explosive rise of philosophical and religious movements on a global scale.

1. <u>The Rise of Apocalyptic Literature</u>. To equip the Jews of the exile and later believers, God developed the new literary genre: the apocalyptic. Knowing that He would have to "leave" Israel in the world without His vital Presence and without an unbroken line of prophets, God summarized ahead of time all future history in the OT apocalyptic books—Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah and a few portions of the other books. In the New Testament the book of Revelation is entirely apocalyptic.

Several features characterize apocalyptic literature. The reader of Daniel 2, 7, 8, 10-12, Ezekiel 37:1-14; 40-48, and Zechariah 1:7-6:8 is first struck by the obviously strange symbolism. This literature reports a dream vision by the author along with a divinely-given interpretation through an angel. The vision content centers not upon the person situation of the individual author but upon the key historical events in human history leading to the consummation. The angelic interpretation

usually emphasizes basic concepts rather than fine details, tempting readers to push further into the unknown and try to interpret the interpretation.

The purpose of apocalyptic literature is different from the prophetic literature written during the decline of Israel. That older prophetic literature focused upon convincing the nation of its violation of the Sinaitic contract. Apocalyptic literature, by contrast, focuses upon assuring believers that the Kingdom of Man in spite of all appearances will not ultimately triumph, that present sufferings will not go on forever, and that final judgment upon the world system will surely come. God will use as tools in this final judgment the same ones He did in the Exodus: geophysical catastrophic events. These catastrophes are not merely symbols; they are rooted in the Exodus judgment upon Egypt and in the global flood of Noah's day. All unfilled prophecy will be fulfilled because God is sovereign. Unlike the older prophetic literature, social ethics become a minor point in apocalyptic literature.

2. The Emergence of Philosophy and Religion. Another repercussion of the exile was the explosion of new religions throughout the world along with the rise of philosophy in Greece. The older, more mystical pagan religions that were perversions of the Noahic Bible arose quickly during and after the Babel period (see Part III of this series) and had remained fairly stable throughout the centuries from the call of Abraham to the exile. Suddenly in the sixth century, however, everything changed. As Robert Brow says:

> *"In the sixth century B.C. there was a tidal wave of revolt against the priestcraft of the ancient world. This wave shattered the power of the old religions, though their cults continued to exist as backwaters for centuries. Seven world religions appeared within fifty years of each other and all continue to this day."[10]*

Note the seven that Brow mentions and especially watch their dates, keeping in mind that the exile period officially lasted for the seventy years between 586 B.C. and 516 B.C. In the Middle East Zoroaster (600-583 B.C.) founded the religion of Persia. In India Mahavira (Vardhamana) (599-527 B.C.) started Jainism, Gautama the Buddha (560-480 B.C.) introduced Buddhism, and Hindu reformers began Vedanta Monism with the Upanishads. In China Lao-Tzu (604-517 B.C.) founded Taoism and Confucius (551-479 B.C.) pioneered Confucianism. Finally, within Jewry there arose Judaism as a distinct development from the OT religion under the Theocracy and living prophets. Besides these seven religions there arose in Greece the idea which we call "philosophy".

Although differing in details these seven religions and philosophy all had one thing in common: <u>they emphasized Man as Savior</u>. They were potent new versions of paganism which arose to sustain the Kingdom of Man. Some were "pessimistic" and "irrationalist" such as Buddhism which stressed the illusory character of the human ego and the limitations of human thought. For Buddhism man saves himself by losing individual desire. Taoism and Vedanta Monism developed the basic pagan idea of the Continuity of Being into a full fledged pantheism in which God *is* the creation. Others were "optimistic" and "rationalist" such as those which stressed ethics and doing good (Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Confucianism, and Judaism). In these man saves himself by his good works. Whether optimistic or pessimistic, however, all of the religions that developed in the exilic period promoted man to a more active role than the older pagan religions. They mirrored the transfer of political supremacy to the Gentiles and rise of an imperialist spirit of the age.

Secular historians and classroom teachers generally ignore this "coincidence" of seven world religions suddenly developing when Israel goes into exile. For most of them, of course, there is no biblical God Whose contractual agreements with Israel coincide with His rule of the human race. Such coincidences as this one are viewed as mere statistical accidents of history. For a biblically literate mind, however, there appears to be some sort of linkage between the exile event and the nearly simultaneous origin of these religions.

After the exile the OT Scriptures were spread far and wide throughout the world by the Jews of the Diaspora. Biblical ideas, like the idea that history has meaning and purpose which can at least partially be understood by man and like the idea that there exist ethical standards for all men, must have had a profound effect wherever they went. As Brow notes, the first of the seven religions began in Persia with Zoroaster. Can anyone believe that Zoroaster never was influenced in any way by biblical ideas spread throughout the Neo-Babylonian and later Persian empires by Daniel (Dan. 2:46-48; 3:29; 4:1-37)? Remembering that Jews were high up in Persian administrative circles for several centuries (Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther) and that Persia extended into India, one might conceive of the possibility that some parts of OT thinking filtered eastward in the Far East. By elevating man to a more active role, these religions were pagan imitations of the Sinaitic Covenant that had given man a place in the Kingdom of God.

More clearly than these seven pagan religious creations, Greek philosophy showed the intellectual repercussion of the rise of the Kingdom of Man. Prof. Henri Frankfort wrote of this Greek innovation:

> *"[The early Greek philosophers] proceeded with preposterous boldness on an entirely unproven assumption. They held that the universe is an intelligible whole. In other words, they presumed that a single order underlies the chaos of our perceptions and, furthermore, that we are able to comprehend that order. . . .[They attempted] to reach a vantage point where the phenomena would reveal their hidden coherence. It was the unshakeable conviction of the Ionians, Pythagoreans, and early Eleatics that such a vantage point existed; and they searched for the road leading to it, not in the manner of scientists but in that of conquistadors."[11]*

What more likely source of this idea that "a single order underlies" all of reality than the OT revelation of the plan of God to Israel? As I pointed out in the first chapter, Solomon spread Hebrew wisdom throughout the world through his commercial trade. I cited Prof. Albright's remark about the linkage between Israel, the Phoenicians, and the rest of the eastern Mediterranean.

Thus, from the exile period came the temporary removal of the Kingdom of God from history, the rise of the Kingdom of Man, and historical repercussions for Israel and the world.

DOCTRINAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXILE

The brief synopsis of Israel's sixth century exilic experience provides one with an enlargement of two major doctrinal areas—the doctrine of sanctification as it pertains to separation from pagan culture and the doctrines of revelation and inspiration as they pertain to apocalyptic literature. Just as the exile itself returns our focus to the whole world outside of Israel, so, too, do these doctrines impact human race culture outside of Israel.

The Sanctification Issue of Separation

From the previous chapters one can see that the entire period from Solomon to the exile greatly adds to our knowledge of sanctification, of how God reigns in His Kingdom. Not surprisingly, the exile continued this expansion process. Like the fall of the Kingdom covered in Chapter Three above, the exile gave increased insight into the workings of the enemies of sanctification. In the case of the exile we obtain the principle of separation from the enemy known as the "world" in two areas: general culture and legal relationship.

Separation From Worldly Culture

Paul admonishes believers in Romans 12:2: "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your

mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Such advice began centuries before Paul at the exile when the general social life-style of the culture surrounding believers became officially pagan. Although believers have lived "in" such a society ever since, they have been instructed not to be "of" it (cf. John 17:14-15). How, then, can we be "in" a pagan society and not "of" it?

The dispersed Jews of the exile furnish a good example for believers submerged in the sea of a pagan culture. Many of these Jews kept teaching and learning the Word of God. They refused to work seven days a week. They were frugal and kept high moral standards. According to Psalm 137 while the Jews were in Babylon they refused to sing biblical music when there was danger that the music would be misinterpreted and used only for mere psychological stimulation (137:2-4). They saw their position in a society officially pagan as a precarious one in which there was constant danger of "serving other gods" (note I Sam. 26:19; II Kings 5:15-18). By equating "serving other gods" with living outside of Israel, they evidently meant that the spiritual shape of pagan culture flowed from their religious conceptions. *The "world view" of the society sets the ethical standards and values for the whole population.* It did in Moses' day with God's law, and it did in Nebuchadnezzar's day with his decrees.

Separation, therefore, involves every societal influence upon our behavior whether local peer pressure, commonly-assumed agendas, educational goals, and popularist causes. In a pagan society rebellion against the authority of God is officially incorporated in every area from the top down. While we may be "in" the world, we should not thoughtlessly and blindly respond to its stimuli. We ought not be "victims" whose character and behavior are determined by the world. We have redeemed minds, free to think God's thoughts after Him as we ponder His Word. Then, as these truths take hold in our hearts, we will express them publicly into the culture around us. This means, for example, that we will think and act differently not only in everyday common relationships but in the more "aesthetic" elements of culture— art, music, science, and philosophy. Christians cannot afford to naively adopt pagan psychological theories in their counseling or atheistic educational schemes in their teaching. Everywhere in life there will be conflict between any manifestation of loyalty to God and the pagan environment.

As I noted in the first chapter, three bad versions of separation have occurred throughout Church history: wholesale capitulation to pagan public values and agendas, accommodation to the social environment with endless "reinterpretations" of the Bible, and physical separation from the culture as in monasticisms and isolated religious communities. Good versions of separation will show a real separation (not capitulation

or accommodation) of the mind and heart and core agendas (not physical separation). Biblical culture will automatically be expressed by groups of well-sanctified believers. "Depth leads to breadth" we found out from the Solomonic era.

The proper balance between Christianity and culture has never been stated as well as it was by J. Gresham Machen. Wrote Machen:

> *"Instead of destroying the arts and sciences or being indifferent to them, let us cultivate them with all the enthusiasm of the veriest humanist, but at the same time consecrate them to the service of our God. . . .Let us go forth joyfully, enthusiastically to make the world subject to God."[12]*

Speaking of why such a wise balance is needed just for the first step of evangelism, Machen said:

> *"We may preach with all the fervour of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas, which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion."[13]*

Wisely separating from worldly culture while citizens of a pagan society requires great alertness (starting from self-examination of our hearts), hard work, and a dedication. It requires a peculiar resource: a vision of God's sovereign control over, in back of, underneath, and behind every pagan power that pushes on us. Our hearts must have both an inner compass to stay undeflected by the world and an energizing motive to stand against the relentless pressure to give in. We need assurance that God is still for us even though the great public miracles of the Kingdom era no longer occur.

No matter how knowledgeable, how skillful, or how motivated a believer might be as he or she lives in the world system, separation can lead to a violent confrontation. For further insight into this special case, we now look at separation when it leads to a break with the legally-established authorities.

Separation from Legal Relationship

When political supremacy was handed to the Gentiles in 603 B.C., it meant that believers would have to live after this point under the authority of pagan law rather than under the civil components of the Sinaitic Covenant. "Serving other gods" thus included submitting to political authorities dedicated to imposing a pagan worldview upon the society. No Gentile king could be required to study the Word of God daily (cf. Deut. 17:18-20); no pagan society would terminate by law all outstanding debts every seventh year (cf. Deut. 15:1-15); and Gentile

taxation would not be limited to just tithes (cf. Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12). Because the prophetic line operative inside Israel would cease and because no Gentile nation had a contract with God (besides the original Noahic Covenant), no prophet of God would be sent to indict Gentile pagan rulers for their breach of the Sinaitic Covenant.

Although the state under the Kingdom of Man legally imposes pagan legislation, the believer is still required to give his allegiance to the fourth divine institution by obeying the state (D.I. No. 4—see Part II of this series). The New Testament in addressing the church that lives in the pagan world is very clear (cf. Mark 12:17; Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; I Pet. 2:13-17). Even though a believer is a citizen of the yet future Kingdom of God and is, therefore, an "alien" in the matter of ultimate loyalty (Eph. 2:19; Phil 3:20; Heb. 11:16), the believer is not to defy pagan civil law except under certain conditions. *Civil disobedience is a very serious matter, and to be in the will of God requires careful heart-searching regarding one's hidden motives besides self-control and courage.*

Daniel and his companions are a model of biblical civil disobedience in motive, circumstances, and procedures. When the pagan Babylonian state appeared to compel the Hebrew political hostages to participate in idolatrous religion by eating food connected to that religion (Dan. 1:8) or by bowing before a state-sponsored idol (Dan. 3:7), or when the Medo-Persian authorities prohibited prayer to God (Dan. 6:7), Daniel and his companions disobeyed the authorities in the name of God. They chose civil disobedience only when the state transgressed the central religious sphere of worship of God. Civil disobedience in the name of God is authorized only when there is outright prohibition against worship of God.

Even in the rare case where civil disobedience is legitimate, the believer is to exercise respect toward the civil authorities (Dan. 1:8; 3:9; 6:21); attempt to persuade the authorities to go along with the biblical position on a pragmatic basis (Dan. 1:12-13); and, if civil disobedience must be followed, submit to the required punishment (Dan. 3:17-18; 6:16).[14] This relatively conservative procedure in dealing with an apostate state appears reasonable if we remember the larger picture of why the exile happened in the plan of God, why believers have to live outside of a literal, political Kingdom of God.

Ever since the exile, God has been dealing with the world in a special dispensation of grace in order to permit all mankind to confront His Word revealed through Israel and decide whether to submit or continue rebelling. If Christians were allowed to defy the state and rebel over every point of paganism over against the Word of God, then unbelieving society would not have freedom to submit to or reject the Word; they

would be "pressured" into obeying it. Submission would be merely a form of fleshy peer pressure; it wouldn't come from the individual heart.

Of course nothing precludes believers from trying peacefully to convince a pagan culture that things ought to be run more wisely. In the final analysis pagan social principles are self-destructive (Rom. 1:18-32) even when they appear to be ethical (Rom. 2:1-16). Where, therefore, legal participation in the political life of the pagan state is open to believing citizens, there is no prohibition against seeking legislation patterned after the wisdom principles in the Sinaitic Covenant and <u>Proverbs</u>. This activity of enriching one's culture with biblical principles is fully encouraged by God (cf. Jer. 29:7) and is part of being "salt" and "light" in an otherwise rotting and dark social order.[15]

The Dynamic behind Successful Separation

Separation from worldly or pagan culture requires a "long-range" faith. Technically, such "long-range" faith is termed "hope" in the Bible. For believers to endure centuries of suffering under the reign of the Kingdom of Man, a fully-developed faith based upon the complete plan of God for the ages is necessary. All pagan lordship must be truthfully seen as a temporary season of history that shall end in the triumph of Daniel's fifth kingdom, the stone that smashes all pagan power (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45).

This long-range dimension to faith was different than the earlier faith of Israel during the conquest and into the monarchy period. Then the Hebrews trusted God for relatively short-range blessings under the blessings provision of the Sinaitic Covenant; now they had to hope in God's prophesies of the distant future (Dan. 9:24-27). They had to see God's sovereign will behind the historic rise and fall of the Gentile nations in which they lived. They also had to see God's grace that postponed judgment and removal of evil in order that pagan peoples could have an opportunity to repent.

Only by seeing the end of history can believers live properly under the present, seemingly "normal", Kingdom of Man. We can see this principle by observing the power of false long-range faiths such as Communism. The surprising endurance and tenacity against overwhelming odds was seen again and again in early Communist organizers in Russia and China as well as during the Vietnam War. A post-war study done by the Rand Corporation for the U.S. government interviewed Communist Vietnamese prisoners-of-war who endured systematic American B-52 bombings.
> *"The analyst found particularly remarkable. . .the degree to which the men do not simply 'mouth' what they have been told, but seem to have*

fully absorbed and assimilated it. . . .Thus, what may have begun as indoctrination has become sincere conviction. . .and may, therefore, be virtually impossible to dislodge. The men polled here. . .are unlikely to change their views. . . .They can perhaps be killed, but they probably cannot be dissuaded either by words or by hardships."[16]

Communism has fallen only because the object of the long-range faith was false.

Christianity has not fallen because its Object of hope remains true. A powerful example of the tenacity of biblical hope in living separated lives is that of the Puritans. The very hatred of Puritans even today centuries afterward testifies to the fear these believers produced in pagan hearts. Said an English commentator:

"[The Puritans were] the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. . . .Those. . .who formed, out of the most unpromising of materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen, who trampled down King, Church, and Aristocracy, who. . .made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, were no vulgar fanatics. . . .People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. . . .They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities, insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain, not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier."[17]

Revelation and Inspiration in Apocalyptic Literature

If successful separation depends upon long-range faith (hope), then long-range faith requires a special Word from God (faith always comes from God's Word-Rom 10:17). As we saw in Part III (Mt. Sinai event), the Word of God must be understood in terms of revelation, inspiration, and canonicity. The special Word of God given through Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the Apostle John furthers our appreciation of these truths.

Apocalyptic Revelation

Earlier we learned that biblical special revelation has unique characteristics shared with no other human knowledge. All biblical revelation is <u>verbal:</u> it has intellectual content that passes from God's mind to man's mind rather than being merely uninterpreted raw experience from which the human mind has created meaning. Biblical revelation as a message from God's mind to our mind is, therefore,

personal: there can be no neutral response to it; we either submit to it or rebel against it. Additionally, it is public history, not merely private vision: it occurs in objective reality regardless whether man subjectively discovers or understands it.

With the rise of the apocalyptic form, the prophetic characteristic comes to the fore, the characteristic of coming from beyond man's mental limitations in space and time. For fourteen centuries a line of prophets in the Hebrew nation received and communicated prophetic revelation about previously unknown thoughts in God's omniscience. Apocalyptic revelation comes from so deep within God's mind that it pushes the limits of our minds to understand. It speaks of things never yet experienced that are only vaguely like past human history. Topics like a fiery cosmic cataclysm, political and religious intrigue on a global scale, resurrection of human bodies, and unprecedented angelic intervention cosmic history strain our ability to comprehend.

Lesson 98

Apocalyptic Inspiration

We previously learned that although much revelation has been lost in history, under the providence of God part of it has been preserved in written form, the Bible. Of course, because the Bible is the only special revelation left in existence, it has become the target of all God-haters. And no part of the Bible has been more viciously attacked than the book of Daniel. Let's look at the fight over Daniel to learn more about the truth of inerrant inspiration.

According to liberal higher critics who inhabit most university and seminary faculty positions, Daniel is a pious forgery written around 200 B.C.; its impressive "prophecies" were all written, they claim, after the fact. Its apocalyptic prophecies that applied to the Persian and Greek periods are so stunningly clear that to unbelief they could only have arisen in human minds which already knew those historical details. The following brief defense of Daniel uses material found in readily-available, conservative works on Daniel and Old Testament introduction.[18]

Higher critical attacks upon the trustworthiness of Daniel have generally focused in history and linguistics. Critics have a prior theory of the OT canon development that helps them "explain" Daniel as a late addition. The three parts of the OT canon—law, prophets, and writings— are seen by critics as three chronological stages in the writing, editing, and collecting of OT books. Why, they ask, is a prophetic book like Daniel in the "writings" section of the canon instead of in the "prophets" section? Quickly answering their own question, the critics claim that Daniel was written too late to attain canonical status along with Ezekiel and Zechariah which were canonized n the third century B.C. according to this theory.

Obviously, this critical attack depends entirely upon the chronological development theory of the OT canon. Such a theory, however, has never been proved. There are other, much more plausible, explanations of the OT canon's tripartite division. One explanation is that the three parts of the canon are not chronological stages at all but a topical classification. The law gives legal instructional material; the prophets give prophetic commentary on past and future history from the covenant perspective; and the writings give wisdom principles for life. Daniel, then, is included within the writings rather than within the prophets, not because it was composed too late for entry, but because *it has primarily to do with wisdom principles for living within the totalitarian Kingdom of Man*.

Besides the historical argument, higher critics of Daniel often employ linguistic arguments. Instead of dealing piecemeal with each and every such argument, we can save much time by unmasking the chain of logic used in all of them. Each critical linguistic argument begins with a selected linguistic parameter such as vocabulary, syntax, proper names, or orthography, which varies to a large degree in a known way over time. Moreover, this parameter, which can be called P, must be one which concerns the actual composition of a book, not its subsequent transmission as each new manuscript is copied from an older one. Thus any given orthographic train will not work; the trait finally chosen must be known to remain unaffected by subsequent transmission.

If some parameter, P, for example, varies sharply from century to century and which is determined by compositional activities, not transmissional activities, is found, then P can be established for each century from the sixth through second centuries. In such a case, comparison of P as it occurs in Daniel with P as it occurs in literature of the sixth through second centuries should yield approximate dates for Daniel. For example, if certain proper nouns for musical instruments which are mentioned in Daniel are clearly used only in the second century or more recent literature, then Daniel is probably a late composition.

The problem with every critical linguistic argument advanced so far is that an adequate P cannot be defined. Items such as syntax vary not only with time but with style of literature. Particular proper nouns and special terms are now turning up in new archeological materials from many different centuries, disqualifying them from being P (because they do not vary enough from century to century). In the musical instrument hypothesis above, for example, as one P is suggested, more manuscript discoveries indicate its use in both the sixth and second centuries. Thus almost every archeological discovery has disqualified a hypothetical P. The negative critical arguments used in some classrooms, therefore, are manifestly not sufficient to undermine the traditional sixth century compositional date for the book of Daniel.

On the other side of the issue, believers in a sixth-century Daniel are not without extra-biblical evidence for their claim. Recently, manuscripts of the book of Daniel which were found at Qumran were dated back to at least 120 B.C. Since none of the Qumran caves evidence gives a hint that Daniel was not canonical, one has clear proof that Daniel was canonical by at least 120 B.C. The question critics have to answer is why a book supposedly written about 165 B.C. so suddenly received canonical status when the phenomenon of quick canonization is unknown in the rest of the OT. The only explanation that fits the facts is that Daniel had to have been written far earlier than 165 B.C. for it to be recognized as canonical by 120 B.C. If it indeed was written prior to 165 B.C., then it contains clear-cut, specific prophecy of Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 8), and thus the heart of higher critical anti-supernaturalism is destroyed.

Another evidence for the early authorship of Daniel is the fact that it is quoted by Mattathias (died 167 B.C.), who encouraged his sons to resist the tyrannical ruler Antiochus Epiphanes with exhortation drawn from the book (I Macc. 2:59-60). This citation by Mattathias shows Daniel was fully accepted in his day as authoritative as the canonized prophetic OT books he cited in the same context (I Macc. 2:51-58).

All the available evidence, therefore, supports the sixth century, traditional date of Daniel. Objections to this date are rooted in unbelief and a hatred for the supernatural intervention of God. Apocalyptic inspiration is a fact of history and evidence that God provides enough revelation for his people to endure protracted trials of living in imperial pagan culture. The basis exists for the motivational tool of "long-range" faith or hope as the means of successfully separating from the world-system. As John the Apostle put it, we know that the world-system is passing away. Why should we be intimidated by it and capitulate or accommodate to it? We've been let in on some of the deepest thoughts God has on the ultimate goal of history!

END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

1. Discussed in great detail in Alva J. McClain, <u>The Greatness of the Kingdom </u>(Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), pp. 120-129.

2. <u>Ibid</u>., p.135.

3. <u>Ibid</u>., p.126.

4. Samuel H. Andrews, <u>God's Revelation of Himself to Man</u>, quoted in McClain, p.124.

5. <u>Antiquities of the Jews</u>, XIV.vii.2.

6. <u>City of God</u>, VII. 32, trans. Marcus Dods in <u>Great Books of the Western World</u>, XVIII (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 262.

7. <u>Pensees</u>, 571, trans. W.F. Trotter in <u>Great Books of the Western World</u>, XXXIII (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 303.

8. John S. Wurts, <u>Magna Charta </u>(Philadelphia: Brookfield Publishing Co., 1945 [1964]), pp. 156,160.

9. See discussion in Michael Green, <u>Evangelism in the Early Church</u> (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1970), pp. 22-28.

10. Roger Brow, <u>Religion: Origin and Ideas</u> (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1966), p. 27.

11. Henri Frankfort et al., <u>Before Philosophy</u> (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964 [original title, <u>Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man</u>, 1946]), pp. 251,254.

12. J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity and Culture," <u>The Banner of Trtuh Magazine</u>, No.69, June 1969.

13. <u>Ibid</u>.

14. See discussion by Charles C. Ryrie, "The Christian and Civil Disobedience," <u>Bibliotheca Sacra</u>, CXXVII (Apr-June, 1970), 153-62.

15. Christians can use the Sinaitic Covenant as an idea source for legislation today on the basis of Deuteronomy 4:8.

16. Konrad Kellen, <u>Conversations With Enemy Soldiers in Late 1968/Early 1969</u> (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1970), p.102.

17. Thomas B. Macauley, <u>Critical and Historical Essays</u>. Everyman's Library: No.225 (London: Dent, 1907), pp. 185-187.

18. See any good conservative OT introduction. Detailed conservative technical responses to specific criticisms are found in D.J. Wiseman, <u>et. al.</u>, <u>Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel</u> (London: The Tyndale Press, 1965). The critic must also explain Jesus' belief in a real sixth-century Daniel authorship (Matt. 24:15) in the light of Daniel 9:25-27. Also, they are left trying to explain how the four kingdoms mentioned in Daniel 2 and 7 are "really" a retro-view of the three kingdoms existing between the sixth and second centuries (Neo-Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Grecian).

See Page 113 for Review Exercise Questions

CHAPTER 5: PARTIAL RESTORATION: THE DISCIPLINE OF HOPE

Because of Israel's election in God's sovereign plan for history, the rise of the potent new form of the Kingdom of Man could not ultimately destroy Israel. The beaten, exiled nation made a comeback during the sixth and fifth centuries under Persian rule that was unique. As John Bright observed about the exile and restoration:

> *"Israel was left for the moment an agglomeration of uprooted and beaten individuals, by no external mark any longer a people. The marvel is that her history did not end altogether. Nevertheless, Israel both survived the calamity and, forming a new community out of the wreckage of the old, resumed her life as a people."[1]*

The restoration was only partial, but it provided ample proof that God would keep His promises for the ultimate, final restoration.

Associated with these developments were the end of OT revelation and the completion of the OT canon of Scripture. An era began in which God would be "silent." The finished OT canon would now become the sole, unchanging source of revelation for all men everywhere until Jesus came. The OT text would remain preserved in spite of being copied and recopied over the centuries to come. In addition, two doctrinal truths which emerge from Israel's restoration are the doctrine of canonicity and the doctrine of prayer. (Read here Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.)

DETAILS OF THE RESTORATION

Thousands of Jews returned to the land in the last part of the sixth century, BC, primarily from Babylon, to re-establish the nation Israel. Led by Ezra and Nehemiah, the returning Jews finally rebuilt both Jerusalem and the Temple (known in history as the "Second Temple"). These Jews, however, were not all of those in dispersion. Many remained in the Gentile nations (see Esther). The restoration era, then, dealt with only a remnant of Israel, not the entire nation as in the pre-exilic eras. Three details merit close observation by students of this restoration era: the decree mentioned in Daniel 9, the role of the last OT prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi), and the closing and transmission of the OT canonical texts.

The Decree Given To Daniel

Prominent in Israel's restoration in the promised land was the prophecy given in Daniel 9:24-27. Daniel was given this prophecy by God in response to his dilemma on the eve of Israel's return.

1. Daniel's Dilemma. In the year 538 B.C., the first year of Persian rule after Babylon had been conquered, Daniel had been studying Jeremiah's writing for insight into the flow of history (Dan. 9:1). As he had studied, Daniel had become increasingly concerned with an apparent discrepancy between the promise of an imminent end of the dispersion when Babylon was defeated (e.g., Jer. 29:10) and the promise of the continuing reign of the Gentiles through all four phases or kingdoms (Dan. 2:7). Daniel had wondered how God could restore Israel in the near future (Jeremiah's seventy years would be up in 535 B.C.), if He also had promised that the Gentiles would dominate the world power structure through four different kingdoms? Obviously, passage of time was required for four kingdoms to rule.

Daniel had noticed especially in Jeremiah's prophecies (Jer. 29:10-14) that there was a blanket promise of ultimate return of Jews from not only Babylon but from all nations of the world (29:14) with the "condition" that such a general restoration be preceded by a spiritual revival (29:12-13). Concentrating, then, upon this ultimate return and final restoration of Israel, Daniel then petitioned God for pardon in the hope that God would be persuaded to grant not only a restoration from Babylon in the seventieth year but also a restoration from the other nations where Jews had migrated (Dan. 9:3-19).

2. God's Answer. In the middle of his petition Daniel was interrupted by Gabriel, an angel of very high rank (Dan. 9:20-23). Gabriel brought Daniel a divine explanation which clarified the true nature of Israel's return that was to begin shortly from Babylon. The resolution of the dilemma centered upon the distinction between the immediate return from Babylon at the end of the seventy years (Jer. 29:10) and the ultimate return from all the nations at the end of the seventy "sevens" (Jer. 29:14; Dan. 9:24). These seventy "sevens" are interpreted by most fundamental scholars as being seventy "weeks" (sevens) of years, constituting a 490 year time span. [2]

Israel, therefore, would receive God's promised relief from the Babylonian Captivity exactly in accordance with Jeremiah's prophecies; but because the nation still was not in the proper spiritual state (Dan. 9:13,24), Israel would have to wait another long period under Gentile dominion before the final restoration could be effected. The Kingdom of Man would have to pass through its four prophesied stages before Israel could enjoy her elected end.

3. <u>Implications of God's Decree</u>. Thus Daniel was given a decree that history would not go on endlessly. God had decreed an end at the appropriate time—490+ years hence. From this divine decree one should observe certain implications. First, prophecy is always "open" to amplification and genuine response to human responsibility in history. Jeremiah prophesied of a return in complex terms, terms so complex that upon actual outworking the "single" return was revealed to be two separate, distinct returns. Then, too, the 490 years was actually to have a hiatus between the 483rd year and the last seven, thus the total time span would exceed 490 years. Students of prophecy, then, would do well to interpret prophecies in the light of the most complex terms in the context rather than in light of the simplest terms. [3]

A second implication is that apparent "contradictions" in the Bible appear because the omniscient Creator does not reveal the "whole picture" to the limited knowledge of the creature. In Chapter 3 above I mentioned the apparent contradiction left in the OT between the demands of God's holiness upon the sinful nation and the election promise that the nation would ultimately enjoy unbroken, eternal fellowship with Himself. We know, of course, how Jesus Christ through His atonement resolved these apparently conflicting demands. In this Chapter with God's answer to Daniel the same sort of resolution occurs. An apparent contradiction appears in two different strands of prophecy only to be resolved by later acts of God. We need to recall these examples when so-called contradictions appear to us whether in the Scripture itself or between Scripture and historical experience. Our faith rests in the perfect rationality of God, not in the incomplete rationality of man.

Finally, a third implication follows from the second: God runs history with a coherent, non-contradictory master plan. The God of the Bible is not a gambler who operates by chance and statistics. His sovereign prophecies, as noted in the previous chapter, constitute a valid and sure base for the believer's hope. Israel's return was controlled by God as to its size, its time, and its character; it was not due to mere human efforts of Jewish leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah or to some mysterious economic (after Marx) or political (after Hegel) force of history.

The Last of the OT Prophets

Besides the Decree given to Daniel, another feature of the post-exilic partial restoration was the role of the last of the OT prophets. Three prophets—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—finished the doctrinal framework of the OT by providing prophetic balance to Daniel's apocalyptic prophesies. They stressed the familiar prophetic theme of

obedience and human responsibility (D.I. No. 1). They would permit no fatalistic illusion to cloud Israel's understanding of God's sovereignty.

Haggai insisted that the economic reversals in the restoration community were due to disobedience (Hag. 1:5-11; 2:15-19). Zechariah argued that this group was still under the obligation to obey God's Law for His vassal nation in spite of Israel's subordination to Gentile political supremacy (Zech. 1:4-6, 12; 7:4-14; 8:9-17). Malachi scored all levels of the community, priests and family units alike, for their violation of God's Law (Mal. 1:6-2:10; 2:11-17).

Israel was still to maintain a distinctive testimony to the world by her social righteousness—including rebuilding the Temple, re-establishing the priesthood, and imposing the law over every area of life. The partial restoration from Babylon, the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 29:10-11, did not erase Israel's continuing need to respond daily and comprehensively to God's Word. In fact, all these obligations were an absolute necessity if God were to finish Israel's ministry to the world (Gen. 12:3). Israel had to exist as an obedient nation because, due to her election, she awaited the most climactic moment of history when God would crush here enemies (Hag. 2:21-22), return to Jerusalem (Zech. 14), and visit the Temple (Mal. 3:1-6; cf. 4:5-6). Besides Ezra and Nehemiah, then, these last three OT prophets were the ones who prepared the remnant of Israel for her next era in history: the Messianic era. To appreciate Yahweh's Messiah the regathered remnant would have be spiritually mature and balanced.

The Closing and Transmission of the OT Canon

The previous chapter showed that Israel's last bit of Messianic preparation for the world was her gift of a body of Scripture. This contribution, I noted, has long been recognized by men like Augustine and Pascal.[4] With the close of the careers of Ezra and Nehemiah— together with those of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—God's revelation to man ceased for a time. All that remained of that revelation was what had been written down in the books that were to be collected into the OT canon. The closing of the OT canon with its subsequent transmission is the third feature of the restoration period worthy of careful attention.

1. <u>The Closing of the Canon</u>. When God ceased speaking to humanity through Israel in the fifth century, B.C., there began a four-century period of divine "silence" with a total absence of verbal revelation and confirming miracle. Several evidences support this statement. Not one of the many books written during this period of the silence of God ever was considered as inspired Scripture worthy of being included in the OT canon.

Other evidences show that the people themselves knew there was a silence. In 164 B.C., for example, when Judas Maccabeus wanted to cleanse Antiochus' abominations from the Temple, he and the priests tried to decide what to do:

> *"They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, lest it bring reproach upon them, for the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell them what to do." (I Maccabees 4:44-46)*

In addition to a lack of biblical writing and prophetic activity, there were no great sign miracles after the restoration. Such an absence of miracles can be explained easily by referring to the purpose of miracles in the Bible. According to Deuteronomy 18:22 miracles were to authenticate the prophet. As Sir Robert Anderson has written: It is nowhere suggested [in Scripture] that [miracles] were given to accredit the teaching; their evidential purpose was solely and altogether to accredit the Teacher."[5] Thus if there were no prophets, if the teachers had ceased, then obviously the purpose of miracles had ceased. The absence, therefore, of public miracles in the four centuries between the end of the OT and the advent of Jesus Christ further attests to the overall purpose of God.

In the fifth century when this miracle-barren silence had just begun, there was a movement in Israel to collect and codify Scripture. Tradition says that Ezra had something to do with the gathering together the individual books of the Bible into one canon.[6] Regardless, of who actually did the work, however, it is known that by the first century BC a developed idea of an OT canon and a reasonable standard list of books included therein definitely existed. The OT canon had closed and had become a stable collection.

The Transmission of the Canon Text

Once the OT canon existed in a collect form, the matter of transmission arose. How could such a textual work be passed over the centuries down to this very time with any degree of accuracy? Although not everything about textual transmission is understood, enough information is available to conclude that the OT text was handed down with extreme accuracy. Prof. Yamauchi writes:

> *"Prior to the discovery of the Qumran manuscripts our oldest extant Old Testament texts were those known as the Masoretic text dating from the tenth century, AD . . . The traditional text of the Old Testament preserved in our medieval manuscripts is called the Masoretic Text (MT) after the editorial work of the Jewish scribes known as Masoretes. They labored from the fifth to the ninth century, introducing vowels into the*

> *consonantal text and adding notes in the margins. We were not sure how accurate the work of the Masoretes and their predecessors was. Thanks to Qumran we know that the MT goes back to a Proto-Masoretic edition antedating the Christian era, and we are assured that this recension was copied with remarkable accuracy.[7]*

In other words, the recent findings in the Qumran caves near the Dead Sea of early manuscripts of OT books (dating as far back as two centuries before Christ) show clearly that the OT text did not change significantly between Christ's time and 1000 AD

Exactly how there came to be a fairly standard OT text in Christ's time is not well understood. [8] Apparently Ezra began a movement to "update" the OT text into the language of the people (Neh. 8:1, 2, 8). Scribes after him copied his text-type, portions which show up at Qumran and which may form the forerunner of the Greek translation in Egypt of the OT known as the Septuagint (LXX). While this copying was going on in Palestine and in Egypt among the restoration remnant of Jews, other Jews still in Babylon also faithfully copied the OT text. Eventually, the Babylonian text-type came West to Palestine and was selected as the "standard" text for many book of Scripture. Examples of differences in textual readings of Isaiah 53:1-5 between the Masoretic text-descendent from the Babylonian text and the Palestinian text represented at Qumran and in the LXX are shown in Table Five.

Verse of Isa. 53:1-5	Hebrew Masoretic Text (ca. 980 AD)	Hebrew Qumran Isaiah Scroll A (ca. 125 BC)	Greek Septuagint (LXX) (ca. 200 BC)
1	*on* whom	*to* whom	*to* whom
2	*form** *comeliness* see *him** desire *him**	form* comeliness** see *him** desire *him**	*form comeliness* see *him beauty*
3	man of *sorrows known* by grief *he was despised*	man of *sorrows knows* grief *we despised him*	man *in calamity knows* grief *he was despised*
4	*he has borne**	*he has borne**	*he has borne*
5	by his wound	by his wound*s*	by his wound

Table 5.—Differences in textual readings for Isaiah 53:1-5 between the modern Masoretic text and the Palestinian text of Qumran and the LXX. Asterisk (*) refers to spelling differences; double asterisk (**) means synonym used.

The believer can be assured, therefore, that the OT canon text has been transmitted accurately by means not well understood but obviously under the sovereignty of God. This idea will be further expanded in the following section on the doctrine of canonicity. Israel's blessing for the families of man has survived centuries of transmission down to the

present moment. Thus the OT closing and preservation, as well as the divine decree given to Daniel regarding Israel's future history until the Messiah would come and the ministry of the last OT prophets to speak God's Word to man, comprises the restoration era.

DOCTRINAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE RESTORATION

When God restored the remnant of Jews in the fifth century according to his promise, He gave much information to encourage the development of the "long-range" faith I spoke of in the previous chapter. There we learned about the need for such long-range faith for believers to survive centuries of suffering under the reign of the imperial Kingdom of Man. They had to be forcefully reminded that the apparent invincible and "normal" character of the pagan world rule was a profound illusion. Even the returning remnant would need this vision to keep separated from the ideas of the surrounding pagan powers.

 Crucial to this long-range faith was the preservation of its source— the OT Scripture. Additionally, clarification of the role of prayer in an age of God's "silence" was needed. Both these areas of concern will now be addressed.

The Doctrine of Canonicity: Preservation

Elsewhere it has been taught that canonicity concerns the matter of the existing body of books of Scripture left from the time of historic revelation.[9] Included in the doctrine of canonicity is the matter of the origin of the canon concept itself through the giving of a covenant or contract. For a covenant/contract to remain in legal force generation after generation there has to be a legal standard of reference testifying to the terms of the covenant. Yahweh's covenants with Israel presuppose the existence of a legal canon or standard of reference. Also included in the doctrine of canonicity is the proper source of the canon: did Israel make the Bible or did the Bible make Israel? Chronologically, of course, Israel made the Bible; but, logically, the Bible was the standard which ruled, molded, and judged Israel. Finally, the doctrine of canonicity includes the problem of the boundaries of the canon, i.e., which books ought to have been included and which ought not to have been included. Only those that were written under the direction of prophets with proper theological consistency (Deut. 13:1-5) and empirical validity (Deut. 18:20-22) qualified for entrance into the OT canon.

 To those three points in the doctrine of canonicity a fourth point now can be added: the preservation of the canon down through history. After

clarifying the issue at stake, the present discussion will lead to the proper resolution of the issue with an understanding of God's providential preservation of the Bible.

The Issue: The necessity of a canon for proper functioning of a covenant, the role of a canon in ruling spiritual matters of the believing community, and the proper boundaries of a canon are important factors in canonicity. One can and should insist upon inerrantly inspired Scripture in the autographs, or original writings. The problem which must be faced, however, is this: what good is the canon if it has not been accurately preserved throughout history so that the Word of God is available today? What good is an inerrant autograph if there are no texts today which precisely reflect it? Quasi-biblical cults that rely on post-biblical texts like Islam and Mormonism try to contrast the supposedly "unbroken" line between their original texts and today's texts. It is important, therefore, for us to examine preservation of the biblical writings.

During the eras of active revelation in history, Scripture was sometimes destroyed, but since there were living prophets in those eras, that same Scripture could be replaced (e.g., Jer. 36). Moreover, the continuing line of prophets could constantly update archaic terms and passages (e.g., notices in Jud. 18:30b; I Sam. 9:9; II Sam. 18:18b). Preservation of the canon, then, during times of active revelation is not the issue. What is the issue is the preservation of the canon during times of silence when revelation has ceased.

One must note, too, that the issue is not the relatively low percent of variability in data such as that displayed in Table Five. The issue concerns not statistics but whether one can speak at all of the Word of God when he has only modern-day manuscripts in his hand. Has the OT canon been preserved since the fifth century, BC, so that the OT text in modern translations is the Word of God? Has the NT text been similarly preserved since the end of the first century AD?

Resolution of the Issue. The resolution of the issue follows a definite line of reasoning. Textual variation of the OT was greater between the fifth century, B.C. and the time of Christ than between Christ's time and the present. Christ and the apostolic writers of the NT fully accepted the OT text of their day, with all its textual variation, as the Word of God. Since Christ and the NT writers accepted an OT text with greater variation than the OT text of today, the OT text of today also can be accepted by modern believers as the Word of God, in spite of minor textual variations.[10]

The great textual fluidity of NT times is attested by the numerous variations in the LXX OT text, NT quotes from the OT that appear to be from yet another Greek translation of the OT, and the various different Hebrew text-types found at Qumran. As Prof. Cross states:

> *"The pre-Christian Hebrew text exhibits <u>recensional</u> variation which differs <u>toto caelo</u> from the variation exhibited after the promulgation of the official Hebrew (consonantal) text. . . . The text established about 100 AD appears to be the culmination of rabbinic recensional activity which began perhaps a century or more earlier, to judge from the Qumran texts. [11]*

In other words, believers who lived during NT times faced far more variations in the OT text than believers living today. If any excuse could be found that the Word of God was not available, those people of the NT era would have been more justified in claiming it than modern people who have the statically-preserved Masoretic Text which became "standard" abound AD 100.

It was this pre-AD 100 environment that Christ and the NT writers insisted that not only they but all the people had the OT Word of God available. Numrous evidences of their claim can be given. In Matthew 22:32 Jesus builds the doctrine of the resurrection on a fine textual point which He insisted the general public ought to have read (v. 31). The Pharisees did not object that the textual variation was so great that Jesus' point could not be valid! In Luke 16:29 Jesus' story about Abraham and Lazarus implied that the general public had the Word of God available in its OT versions of Moses' writings. Certainly Jesus was aware of the textual variations between the LXX and the Hebrew versions when He told this story. The apostle James made precisely the same claim in Acts 15:21 when he stated that Jews throughout the world, with all the different textual variations then in use, had the Word of God.

The most powerful evidence that the Word of God was available to all believers, in spite of textual variation, however, can be found in Hebrews 7:14. Here the author of Hebrews argued that the existing text of Moses' writings said nothing abou the tribe of Judah's being connected with the priesthood. This author's statement would have been nonsense if neither he nor his readers could have been sure that their own manuscripts accurately conveyed what Moses had written. <u>The whole point of Hebrews 7:14 presupposes that nothing had dropped out of the OT text throughout the four-century period of silence between Malachi and Jesus</u>.

The proper resolution of the issue, therefore, is that God somehow preserved the OT canonical text during four centuries of prophetic silence such that the existing manuscripts in NT times could, for all intents and

purposes, be considered as the Word of God. This fact being so, modern believers can be confident that today's manuscripts, too, are the Word of God in spite of obvious textual variations here and there.

The truth of the preservation of the canonical texts implies something about human language. *Human language can have textual and semanitc range without nullifying its meaning.* In fact, translation of the OT from Hebrew to Greek and the subsequent identification of the Greek text as the Word of God by Jesus and the Apostles imply that *translation in principle does not nullify meaning either.* After all, it was God who fractured human language at Babel centuries earlier knowing full well that He would need to disseminate His Word to all men everywhere. For the gospel to have meaning across multiple languages, human language after Babel must carry a sufficient "translationability." Thus the objection of Islam that the Word of Allah cannot be translated from the Arabic original and still technically remain the Word of Allah is built upon a theory of language foreign to the Bible.

The Doctrine of Prayer

In addition to the doctrine of canonicity, the doctrine of prayer is another doctrinal consequence of the restoration period. During the exile and restoration believers lived under the intensified dominion of the Kingdom of Man which closely parallels the modern environment of prayer in which God is "silent" and is not doing major sign miracles. Prayer, in both cases, would be in the atmosphere of this silence. Although it occurred before the end of revelation, the prayer in Daniel 9, being given in the midst of an alien culture where God was not ruling as He had done in Israel, forms a valuable model for the doctrine of prayer. Four principles of prayer follow.

1. Prayer Should Avoid Fatalism. Prayer is killed by the heresy of fatalism. Fatalism insists that "what will be, will be," regardless of the means necessary to execute that which "will be." In the area of prayer fatalism argues that prayer effort is unnecessary because God is going to do His will anyway.

In the Bible, however, one reads many passages such as "ye have not, because ye ask not (Jas. 4:2b), a statement which clearly implies that prayer can be a means of effecting God's sovereign will. Biblical believers were not fatalists. For example, David continued to petition God for the life of his infant son, even though God had made it clear that the child would die (II Sam. 12: 14, 16). God might be persuaded in prayer to change His mind, David believed (II Sam. 12:22). Daniel also, in spite of the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7, continued in this prayer to beseech God to grant Israel her final, ultimate return in 535 BC (Dan. 9:15-19). As a result God supplied Israel with revelation concerning His

decree of the 490 years so that Jewish believers of the restoration would have hope. Although Daniel's exact petition was not answered, God gave Israel something which she would not have otherwise enjoyed had no one prayed.

Man was created to be the lord of history within the creation, and part of the means of his subduing the earth under his feet is prayer. Denial of the necessity of means to accomplish foreordained ends is a denial of creation itself. All forms of fatalism, therefore, must be rejected as detrimental to prayer.

2. <u>Prayer Should Be Built Upon God's Immutability</u>. Prayer depends upon the fact that God faithfully keeps His Word (see God's immutable nature mentioned in Mal. 3:1-6; Heb. 6:17; Jas. 1:17). Daniel knew that the God of Israel would keep His covenantal obligations (Dan. 9:4); thus, he could—and did—pray upon this basis.

If God is immutable, then it follows that the best prayer will have well-designed, thought-out petitions centering upon the Word of God. To insure that one's petitions are biblically sound and therefore that sufficient reasons exist for God to answer them on the basis of His covenant promises, one may have to write out his petitions first before he prays. Daniel's prayer, for example, is filled with vocabulary borrowed from Deuteronomy and Jeremiah, books on God's covenantal promises which Daniel certainly studied often. Moreover, the structure of his prayer shows that it was composed before it was actually prayed before God. By thus fitting prayer petitions into God's known will declared in Scripture, one truly prays "in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18) to this covenant-keeping God.

3. <u>Prayer Should Be Thoroughly Grace Oriented</u>. In Part III we discovered in connection with the call of Abraham, that faith is orientation to grace. Prayer, being an activity of faith, must therefore be oriented to God's grace. Simply put, the petitioner must be assured that God accepts him.

When Daniel prayed, he was very conscious of his own sin and God's holiness (Dan. 9:5-14). Confession is an integral part of prayer (Psa. 66:18). It must be consciously clear to the petitioner that he has no merit with God in prayer apart from the continuing grace extended to him through Jesus Christ. In the present moment, in spite of past divine promises, the only actual acceptance a petitioner has with God is what God is currently extending to him in Christ, <u>i.e.</u>, the grace being given to him. The opposite of being oriented to God's grace is arrogance, the belief that God owes him something because of my own merit.

Proper grace orientation balances the first principle above in which fatalism is rejected. Grace orientation prevents one from drifting to the opposite extreme from fatalism, that of thinking that everything depends upon what he does or does not do. Accomplishments can only come to pass through the grace extended to the believer by God.

4. <u>Prayer Should Have For Its Ultimate Objective the Glory of God</u>. Since all of history has as its objective the glory of God (Rev. 4:11; 5:9), prayer, too, ought to have the exposure of God's true nature to all creation as its ultimate objective. The great prayers of the Bible all possess this characteristic. Daniel's prayer set forth its petition primarily for the sake of God Himself (Dan. 9:17-19), not primarily for the sake of Israel.

This fourth prayer principle makes possible the attitude shown by Jesus in Gethsemane when He said "not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Higher purposes than merely the immediate situation are involved in prayer.

SUMMARY

The restoration era was the last period of history recorded in the OT. Part of Israel remained in dispersion, and part participated in restoration. Under Gentile political supremacy, God's elect nation did not manifest any longer the clear marks of the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, her election was still manifest because she had survived seventy years of defeat to be regathered (partially) in the promised land. God's revelation to Israel ceased, but she gave to the world the complete canon of God's Word. Israel's enjoyment of full-orbed fellowship with God was not then granted, but here glorious future was as certain as ever.

As the world was prepared for the advent of Jesus Christ, God insured that man everywhere had His Word so that His promises could be verified in history. The silence of heaven, far from being a rejection of mankind, was to focus man's attention upon His Word. Does the Word occupy your mind daily? Do you think in terms of it in all your affairs (cf. Deut. 6:7)? Of, in rebellion, do you insist that God break His silence for your sake even though you pay no attention to His Word?

APPENDIX: THE MILLENNIAL ISSUE

During the period of decline prior to the fall of the kingdom and in the exile afterward, God gave much revelation about Israel's long-range hope for the future. The revealed hope concerned the final triumph of the Kingdom of God in the world with Israel's fulfilling her role as the priestly nation in the international community (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 2:1-4). A three-sided controversy dealing with varied interpretations of the hope has arisen, however, in the years since God's revelation. The controversy itself, simplified descriptions of each position, and resolution of the conflict are presented below.

THE THREE-SIDED CONTROVERSY

Origins of the Controversy

As Hebrew thinkers meditated upon this hope in the days of the silence of God, a division of opinion arose concerning the nature of the final triumphant Kingdom of God. The question was whether the Kingdom would follow the great judgment and resurrection that would end history and, therefore, be essentially identical with the eternal state or whether the Kingdom would precede the great judgment and resurrection and be part of history. Figure 1 pictures the dilemma.

```
              Triumphant        Judgment &      Triumphant
PRESENT------------?-------------- X X X X -------------?-----------ETERNITY
           Kingdom of God        Resurrection    Kingdom of God
```
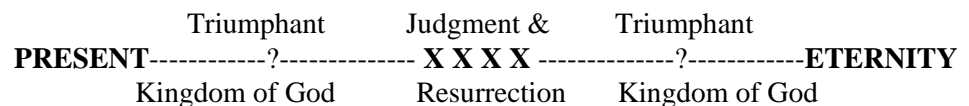
Figure 1.—The Pre-NT Controversy of Kingdom and Judgment

Later, when the Church became established in the Christian era, the controversy of the Kingdom continued and became more complex. To the previous Jewish question regarding the nature and sequence of the Kingdom was added the Christian question of the relationship of the Church to the Kingdom. Men debated whether the Church was a "spiritualized" version of the long-promised triumphant Kingdom, or if the Church was only a forerunner of the yet-to-come Kingdom.

The Three Viewpoints

Since those who believed that the triumphant Kingdom of God would occur in history rather than in eternity often spoke of its duration as a thousand years, the word millennium was coined from the Latin word for thousand, mille. It is in terms of the millennium, therefore, that the entire controversy is usually described. Each of the three schools of thought which have developed over the centuries is labeled by how it places the triumphant Kingdom of God, the millennium, in relationship to the return of Christ. Premillennialism is the view which places the millennium in history and the return of Christ prior (Latin pre) to the millennium. Premillennialism, then, considers the Church distinct from the future Kingdom.

Postmillennialism places the return of Christ after (Latin <u>post</u>) the millennium which the Church is gradually to bring about in history. The millennium in this view is not necessarily a literal thousand year period; it becomes an indeterminate historical period of increasing righteousness and peace. The Church clearly would merge into the future Kingdom.

Amillennnialism (Greek a = no) drops completely the idea of an earthly triumph of the Kingdom of God in mortal history and asserts that Old Testament prophecies of such a triumph are fulfilled spiritually by the Church and/or by the eternal state. The Church is conceived as a spiritual version of the Kingdom. Figure 2 portrays the contrast in the three positions.

PREMILLENNIAL VIEW:
```
          Christ's       Triumphant                    Judgment
Present-----------O---------------------------------------XXXX-----------Eternity
          Return          Kingdom of God              Resurrection
```
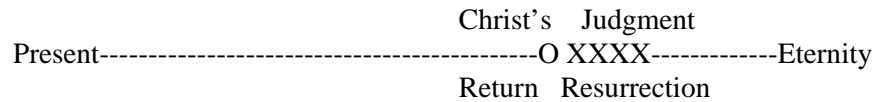
AMILLENNIAL VIEW:
```
                                            Christ's   Judgment
Present--------------------------------------------O XXXX-------------Eternity
                                             Return   Resurrection
```

POSTMILLENNIAL VIEW:
```
                Triumphant                       Christ's  Judgment
Present-------------------------------------------------O XXXX-------------Eternity
                Kingdom of God                    Return   Resurrection
```
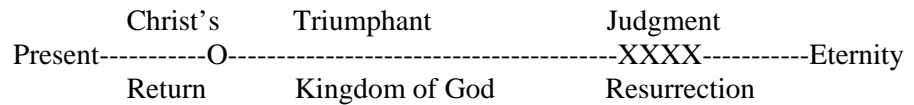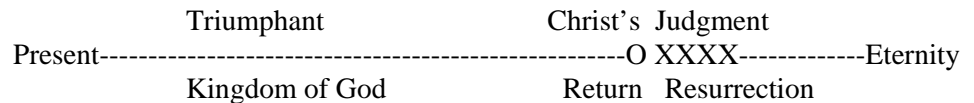
<u>Figure 2</u>. The Post-NT Controversy of Christ's Return, Kingdom, and Judgment.

Summary of the Controversy

In preparation for the discussion which follows each of the three views, premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism, will now be briefly compared using three distinct checkpoints. The checkpoints are as follows: First, is Christ's future return identical with the final judgment and resurrection; that is, will it terminate history and usher in eternity, or is His return prior to and separate from the final judgment that will come later? Secondly, will the Kingdom of God finally triumph over worldly culture in history, or must the final triumph of the Kingdom await eternity? Thirdly, will evil be greatly reduced in history before Christ's return, or will Christ's return be necessary to effect a great reduction in evil?

By using these checkpoints one may quickly compare the three schools of thought. Table 1 summarized the three-sided controversy. The premillennial school stands against the other two schools at the first checkpoint. Only premillennialism distinguishes the return of Christ from the final judgment that

ends history. Both postmillennialism and amillennialism insist that such a separation is invalid; Christ's return, these schools assert, is identical to the final great judgment.

Checkpoint	Premillennialism	Postmillennialism	Amillennialism
Christ's return to end history	NO	YES	YES
Kingdom to triumph over world culture	YES	YES	NO
Evil not to be reduced greatly before Christ's return	YES	NO	YES

Table 1. Comparison of the three millennial viewpoints from the three checkpoints discussed in the text.

Again studying each of the three viewpoints, this time using the second checkpoint, one can see that amillennialism now stands alone. Only amillennialism insists that the historical triumph of the Kingdom of God must await eternity. Both premillennialism and postmillennialism claim to the contrary that the Kingdom must and will triumph in mortal history before eternity begins.

Finally, viewing the three schools at the third checkpoint, one finds that postmillennialism stands apart from the other two schools regarding the issue of evil. Postmillennialism alone foresees a great reduction in evil prior to Christ's return. In an opposite vein both premillennialism and amillennialism see no such great reduction in evil before Christ comes back.

With the three viewpoints on the millennium briefly described and compared, the discussion can now move to a consideration of each viewpoint in more detail. Each section which follows will treat first the history of the viewpoint and then its primary features. For the sake of clarity the order of the viewpoints will be changed to premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism.

PREMILLENNIALISM

Origin and History of Premillennialism

Premillennialism arose in Jewish circles prior to the time of Christ. The history of premillennialism includes both this pre-Christian development and the later Christian refinement.

1. Jewish History. In the pre-Christian era great ferment occurred in Jewish eschatological thought over the nature of the triumphant Kingdom of God. Evidences of a new development during this period are the pseudoepigraphical works of I Enoch (written around 100 BC) and II Enoch (written during Christ's time) which record the rise of the idea of a temporary, historical Kingdom prior to the end of history and separate from the eternal state. The great authority on pseudoepigraphical literature, R. H. Charles, says concerning I Enoch:

"According to the universal expectation of the past the resurrection and the final judgment were to form the prelude to an everlasting Messianic Kingdom on earth, but from this time forth these great events are relegated to its close, and the Messianic Kingdom is for the first time in literature conceived as of temporary duration."[1]

In II Enoch the duration of this temporary Messianic Kingdom was placed at one thousand years. It declared that the close of the thousand-year period history would end and eternity begin.[2] Other Jewish ideas of the long duration of the temporary Messianic Kingdom ranged from forty years to seven thousand years.[3]

Whether the final Kingdom was conceived as the last stage of history or as the eternal state, however, Jewish thought has always insisted that it would be material, earthly, and centered upon Jerusalem. In the ancient Jewish benedictions for daily prayer a portion reads:

"Proclaim by Thy loud trumpet our deliverance, and raise up a banner to gather our dispersed, and gather us together from the four ends of the earth. Blessed by Thou, O Lord, Who gatherest the outcasts of Thy people, Israel."[4]

Even in modern times the Jewish Passover closes each year with the phrase: "Coming year in Jerusalem!" It was, indeed, this earthly character that led to the idea of the Messianic Kingdom's being in history, rather than in eternity.

2. Christian History. Premillennialists have always pointed to Revelation 19:11-20:15 as the key passage for their position. They point out that the Apostles were premillennialists and that the early Church followed apostolic teaching in this regard. Authorities on Church history agree that in the first several centuries of Christianity premillennialism was the majority view. Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165), the foremost apologist of the second century, was clearly premillennial. He wrote:

"But I and whoever are on all points right-minded Christians know that there will be resurrection of the dead and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and the other declare. . . .
And, further, a certain man with us, named John, one of the Apostles of Christ, predicted by a revelation that was made to him that those who believed in our Christ would spend a thousand years in Jerusalem, and thereafter the general, or to speak briefly, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place."[5]

Premillennialism, or chiliasm as it is sometimes called, gradually declined by the fourth century due to several factors. Politically, the Church had become powerful, It was declared the state religion of the Roman Empire (395). A future far-off Kingdom was no longer as attractive when a present Kingdom seemed possible. Philosophically, Neo-Platonism exercised influence through Origen (ca. 185-254) and Augustine (354-430). A key Platonic idea that affected the millennial discussion was that all matter is evil and anything good is immaterial. Therefore, reasoned the Neo-Platonist, a material kingdom would

be evil, and Christ could not rule something evil: His Kingdom had to be "good." The Bible now began to be interpreted allegorically, particularly when it referred to earthly and material blessings in the Messianic Kingdom. Finally, the Church was becoming more desirous of disassociating itself from Jewish culture. Hebrew Christians, for example, were required to give up all their Jewishness in order to belong to the Church. Premillennialism was too solidly identified with Israel for the Church leaders of the fourth-century era to leave it unchallenged. [6]

Although mainline Roman Catholic thought continued to oppose premillennial eschatological thinking, one can trace a narrow line of premillennial groups from the fourth century into the late Middle Ages. The Waldensians, the Lollards, the Wycliffites, and the Bohemian Protestants represent a few of the circles which thought in premillennial terms. [7] Unfortunately, there were also radical groups who seized upon the millennial vision as a justification for radical social upheavals. Although they are closer to postmillennial thoughts of ushering in the "golden age," in the popular mind they became associated with premillennialism. Thus Thomas Munster and his followers brought premillennialism into great disrepute by their unbiblical exaggerations of the millennium and by their works-centered schemes to bring in the millennium through radical human revolution. From them came later visions of a great historical climax through human works such as Communism and Nazism which, ironically, as anti-Christian movements find their foundation for historical progress in Christianity. [8]

During the later Reformation period the Protestant leaders continued the Roman Catholic amillennial doctrine. Some of the factors present in the fourth century were still at work in the fifteen century to suppress premillennialism. In the Augsburg Confession, Article XVII for example, premillennialism was condemned as "Jewish":

> *"They condemn other also, who now scatter Jewish opinions, that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world, the wicked being every suppressed."[9]*

In the Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter XI, one reads these significant words: "We condemn the Jewish dreams, that before the day of judgment there shall be a golden age in the earth. . . ."[10] Clearly, a certain kind of anti-Semitism seem to have been involved with this denial of premillennialism.[11]

In more modern times men of the stature of John Milton, John Wesley, Increase Mather, Cotton Mather, Franz Delitzsch, Dean Alford, and Phillip Schaff have been premillennial scholars. By 1878 when the American fundamentalists held their first interdenominational conference at the Church of the Holy Trinity in New York City, premillennialism had begun a comeback. Many teachers from the Reformed Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Anglican denominations insisted at this Conference that premillennialism was the logical outcome of the literal, Protestant interpretation of Scripture. One of the speakers was Nathaniel West of Cincinnati, Ohio. He explained why the Reformers dealt very little with eschatology.

> *"West brought to light a central claim of both Orthodoxy and Fundamentalism ever since his day. And that claim was that the emphasis of the Reformers was in the area of salvation, justification by faith, and in other great doctrines of grace. Doing such valiant service, they could not give the proper time and study to the vast area of eschatology."[12]*

Thus the newly resurgent premillennialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was seen as a further extension of the Protestant Reformation. It finished "reforming" the faith from the medieval Roman Catholicism.

Features of Premillennialism

Let's look at the central features of premillennialism by using the three checkpoints mentioned in Table 1 above.

1. Christ's Return Does Not End History. Against both amillennialism and postmillennialism, premillennialism insists that Revelation 19:11-20:15 speaks of one chronologically continuous period of future history in which first Christ returns (19:11-21), then dead believers are resurrected to reign with Christ in His Messianic Kingdom for 1000 years (20:1-6), and afterward a brief revolt by Satan is put down prior to the beginning of eternity (20:7-15). With this interpretation of Revelation 20, even scholars of such non-evangelical background as R. H. Charles and Oscar Cullman are in substantial agreement. [13]

Other passages in the NT which describe Christ's return without specific mention of the millennium are prophetically abbreviated, premillenarians affirm. I Corinthians 15:20-28 mentions several stages in history. Between verse 23 and verse 24 there is adequate room for the millennium. Ephesians 2:7 speaks of ages (plural) yet to come. Matthew 24:4-25:46 reveals details about Christ's return; yet it does not mention anything about resurrection, again leaving an open picture in which the millennium is possible.

2. The Kingdom of God Will Triumph Over World Culture. In agreement with postmillennialism, but against amillennialism, premillennialism insists that the OT prophecies of a golden age in history amidst sin and death (e.g., Isa. 2:1-5; 65:18-25) must be fulfilled this side of eternity.[14] Christ must subdue world culture, not just individuals, or His victory is incomplete. Before eternity begins there must be a manifestation of the glory of God in history over every area in order to fulfill the mandate given to humanity in Adam (Gen. 1:26-28). [15]

Even premillenarians themselves are prone to forget that the future millennium is not going to be built out of a vacuum. Technological advances, cultural arts, and social institutions built up over previous human history will be carried over into the millennium as starting assets. Christ will suppress and bind Satan, but prophecies nowhere indicate that He will build man's culture for him. The millennium will be a time when human cultural advance will drastically accelerate beginning with what has been accomplished up to that point. In

music, for example, Bach will not be forgotten, but new composers will be able to compose thrilling and spiritually satisfying music as never before. As Alva McClain says of premillennialism:

> *"It says that life, here and now, in spite of the tragedy of sin, is nevertheless something worthwhile; and therefore all the efforts to make it better are also worthwhile. All the true values of human life will be preserved and carried over into the coming kingdom; nothing worthwhile will be lost."[16]*

3. Evil Will Not Be Reduced Greatly Before Christ's Return. In agreement with amillennialism, but against postmillennialism, premillennialism holds to the position that evil is so deeply rooted in history that it will require the cataclysmic return of Christ to reduce it to levels low enough for human culture to progress in any really spiritual sense. As amillennialist Berkouwer notes, passages like the following have always given postmillennialists trouble: Romans 8:18-26; I Corinthians 7:31; II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 3:2; II Thessalonians 2:3-9; II Timothy 3:1-5; Hebrews 1:10-11; I Peter 4:12-19; II Peter 3:3-5; I John 5:19; Jude 1:18.

If evil is to be gradually suppressed, as postmillennialists insist, it is hard to find any place in history where this process has already begun. Boettner, a postmillennialist spokesman, admits: "On postmillennial ground it hardly seem that even in the most advanced nations on earth we have anything that is worthy of being called more than the early dawn of the Millennium."[17] In fact, in those areas of the world where Christianity in the past had a great influence such as North Africa and New England once it was rejected, it has never come back again. Progress, then, according to premillennialism, may occur in local areas for limited time, but the full development of human culture the way God intended awaits Christ's return.

AMILLENNIALISM

Origin and History of Amillennialism

Amillennialism arose, like premillennialism, from pre-Christian developments. In the case of amillennialism, however, the developments did not have to do with the time of the triumphant Kingdom of God as much as they had to do with the nature of the Kingdom.

1. Jewish History. In trying to understand the prophecies of a future golden age, the early amillennialists believed that these prophecies had to be interpreted spiritually by a system of allegorical hermeneutics (rules of interpretation of literature). The rise of allegorical hermeneutics, therefore, provided the basis for amillennialism.

The first prominent allegorical interpreter of Scripture was the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (20 BC - AD 54). Bernard Ramm says of Philo:

"Philo did not think that the literal meaning was useless, but it represented the immature level of understanding. The literal sense was the body of Scripture, and the allegorical sense its soul. Accordingly, the literal was for the immature, and the allegorical for the mature. . . Some of this method is sound. . .for there are allegorical and figurative elements in Scripture. But most of it led to the fantastic and absurd. For example, Abraham's trek to Palestine is really the story of a Stoic philosopher who leaves Chaldea (sensual understanding) and stops in Haran, which means "holes," which signifies the emptiness of knowing things by holes, that is the senses. When he becomes Abraham he becomes a truly enlightened philosopher. To marry Sarah is to marry abstract wisdom."[18]

2. Christian History. The allegorical system of hermeneutics begun by Philo was adopted by increasing numbers of Church authorities during the first four centuries after Christ. Men like Origen (who lived in Philo's city of Alexandria) and Augustine (who was heavily influenced by Neo-Platonism at this point) popularized the allegorical treatment of the Old Testament in Christian circles. The great student of hermeneutics, F. W. Farrar, spoke of Origen: "Allegory helped him get rid of chiliasm."[19] Amillennial scholar Oswald Allis says of Augustine: "He taught that the millennium is to be interpreted spiritually as fulfilled in the Christian Church."[20] Unfortunately, with this transfer of Old Testament prophecies from a relationship to Israel to a relationship with the Church, a subtle form of anti-Semitism became implicit in Christian theology. Jewish historian H. H. Ben-Sasson observes of this shift: "Christianity claimed ownership of what it regarded as its Holy Land by virtue of the Jewish past, of which it claimed to be heir. . . .The Christian message based itself on the premise that, with the destruction of Jerusalem and rejection of the Jewish people by the Lord, the entire covenant, including the promise of the land of Israel, became vested in Christendom."[21]

Amillennialism was carried on by the Reformers from Augustine so that today it is the majority view among Protestant Churches as an inheritance from Romanism. Sadly, the associated persecution of Jews under Romanism during the Middle Ages continued under the Protestants. In his latter days, Martin Luther became very anti-Semitic advocating arson attacks against synagogues and Jewish homes, assaults against rabbis, and confiscation of Jewish silver and gold. Nazism, tragically, built upon this earlier German anti-Semitism.[22]

Nevertheless, outstanding biblical scholars like Abraham Kuyper, Louis Berkhof, Oswald Allis, Albertus Pieters, William Hendriksen, and G. C. Berkouwer have been amillennialists. Amillennialism has become an adopted part of the official creeds of the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Unofficially, it dominates most Baptist and Church of Christ circles.

Features of Amillennialism

Let's look at the central features of amillennialism in the same way we did those of premillennialism--by using the three checkpoints mentioned in Table 1 above. That amillennialism relies upon the allegorical method of interpretation is commonly agreed; that it does so unbiblically is hotly debated. Amillennialists insist that when one deals with prophetic portions of the Bible the allegorical method is proper. They point to passages like Galatians 3:25-26; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 11:8; and the book of Hebrews as a whole to confirm the validity of the allegorical approach. Furthermore, amillennialists argue, the allegorical method is the only possible method that can be used with prophecies concerning long-vanished nations like Assyria, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Philistia. Such nations no longer literally exist.

The exact features of amillennialism are hard to define because most amillennial writings are primarily antichiliastic. Expositions of the position in positive terms other than Augustine's City of God are hard to find. Even in Berkouwer's eschatological text, The Return of Christ, there is a complete lack of discussion of the OT covenants and how amillennialism deals with them. Thus Dr. Charles Feinberg, a premillennialist, sataes the matter fairly when he writes: "This is the amillennial method: to raise as many questions as possible, but at the same time to build no system of one's own."[23] In the discussion below, therefore, all the various types of amillennialism may not be represented, but the main amillennial outline will be apparent from considerations of the three checkpoints defined above.

1. Christ's Return Ends History. Amillennialism agrees with postmillennialism and differs from premillennialism in holding that Christ's return does not usher in the last era of history but ends history completely. Amillennialists do not believe there is any gap big enough for an entire millennium in passages like Matthew 24:4-25:46 and I Corinthians 15:20-28. For support they cite particularly II Peter 3:7-13 where the coming of Christ is immediately juxtaposed with the creation of the new heavens and new earth. II Thessalonians 1:7-10 also teaches that Christ's return ends history with the great judgment, amillennialists believe.

The key premillennial proof-text, Revelation 19:11-20:15, is handled by amillennialists in a variety of ways. Those who take the passage as a straight chronological sequence interpret Revelation 19:11-21 not as the second advent of Christ, but as His spiritual victory through the Church. Jay Adams, for example, notes:

> *"That this [passage] does not describe a physical coming such as the second advent is apparent from at least two facts: first, Christ is nowhere else said to return upon a horse. He did not ascend this way, and he is to return as he ascended. . . .The horse was the emblem of war. That is its emblematic purpose here. Secondly, the conflict described here is spiritual, a battle waged and won by the Word of God. . . .Once before, a judgment-coming employed sword-of-mouth destruction was contemplated (Rev. 2:12). That passage cannot be confused with the second coming, either."[24]*

Thus Revelation 19:11-21 depicts the spiritual victory Christ wins through His Church by His Word; Revelation 20:7-15 then portrays the actual second advent of Christ, according to this view.

Other amillennialists do not treat the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Revelation chronologically. Scholars such as Louis Berkhof, William Hendriksen, and Oswald Allis take the nineteenth chapter as referring to the second advent and then consider the twentieth chapter as a "recapitulation." The thousand years, they believe, are symbolical of the saints reigning in heaven with Christ.

2. The Kingdom of God Will Not Triumph Over World Culture. Regarding the second checkpoint amillennialism stands alone against both premillennialism and postmillennialism. Prophecies of a golden age are to be applied to the Church or to the eternal state. That such a spiritual interpretation is biblically correct can be proven, amillennialists say, by comparing Hebrews 12:22 with Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5. They claim that the author of Hebrews apparently sees the times of Isaiah 2 as fulfilled by the Church. Isaiah 65:17-25 speaks of "a new heavens and a new earth" which must be the future eternal state described in II Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1, amillennialists affirm.

Such spiritualization of the golden-age prophecies is precisely what Jesus did, claim these scholars, in Matthew 13. In Matthew 13:11 Jesus said that the disciples were to be taught "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven", i.e., new truths about the real nature of the kingdom prophecies. The Lord took the disciples aside, in this view, to correct their erroneous belief that the coming kingdom would be material and physical. The real nature of the promised kingdom is spiritual, and the promises are being fulfilled by the Church and Christ's reign at the Father's right hand, they assert. The spiritual fulfillment of the OT promises by the Church is confirmed, amillennialists believe, by NT passages which refer to believers as the spiritual seed of Abraham (Rom. 4:11-12; Gal. 3:6-9, 29). [25]

3. Evil Will Not Be Reduced Greatly Before Christ's Return. Since amillennialism agrees with premillennialism against postmillennism concerning victory over evil during the Church Age, the major arguments given above will not be repeated here. Jay Adams, an amillennialist professor of counseling, expresses his disagreement with postmillennial ideas of a pre-advent golden age on earth: "The sin and consequent problems among Christians prove that such a society would be far from golden."[26]

Amillennialism has one additional problem at this point that premillennialism does not and that concerns the "binding of Satan" in Revelation 20:1-2. If Revelation 20 refers to the Church age and not to a future millennium, then in what sense is Satan bound today? Amillennialists reply that this binding is the same kind of binding that is mentioned in Matthew 12:29 and that is implied in II Thessalonians 2:7, i.e., the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit.

POSTMILLENNIALISM

Origin and History of Postmillennialism

The idea of a triumphant Kingdom of God in history continuous with the present occurs in early Old Testament Jewish history and in later Church history in radically different forms.

1. <u>Jewish History</u>. As I demonstrated in Part III of this series, the Sinaitic Covenant promised conquest and dominion to Israel but on the "condition" of their comprehensive obedience to Yahweh. Sadly, we found during the Conquest and Settlement period that Israel did not obey the Heavenly King and so never could conquer the land to establish the Kingdom. The book of <u>Judges</u> revealed God's sentence of doom regarding such a kingdom for Israel. In the following monarchial period of Jewish history, as we saw in the previous chapters of this Part IV, not only did the people fail to be faithful but their leaders and kings did also. The Exile and Partial Restoration testify that the Kingdom was yet future to those historical periods. As we will see in Part V the possibility of transition into the Kingdom would be contingent upon Israel's response to the Messiah. Even after the Messiah's rejection and death, Israel was offered yet another opportunity to enter the Kingdom in early <u>Acts</u> (see Part VI).

2. <u>Christian History</u>. In Christian circles, the idea of the Kingdom coming into history prior to Jesus' return was mingled with amillennial beliefs as a sort of "optimistic amillennialism." Postmillennialists along with amillennialists claim Augustine as one of their founding fathers. The reason for this dual claim is that Augustine equated the Church with the Kingdom and fully expected it to flourish until Christ's return occurred several centuries after Augustine's day.

The first real postmillennial statement, however, in the modern sense of the word, was made in the twelfth century by Joachim of Floris, a Roman Catholic.[27] Prominent Reformed scholars who were postmillennialsts are Coccejus (1603-69), Witsius (1636-1708), and Jonathan Edwards (1636-1716), Recent postmillennialists in America during the past 150 years include William Dabney, A. A. Hodge, Charles Hodge, William Shedd, Augustus Strong, B. B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, Loraine Boettner, and R. J. Rushdoony—most of whom have been or are conservative Presbyterians.

One of the foremost proponents of posmillennialism during the last 40 years has been R. J. Rushdoony. He and other like-minded conservative Presbyterians insist that premillennialism as well as pessimistic amillennialism "block" the progress of the Church in influencing society. Writing in the early 1970s of the optimistic vision of present-day postmillennialists:

> ***"Post-millennialism once turned this country around. First, it established it, with the Puritans. Then with the new Puritans, Bellamy and Hopkins [two Puritan leaders very responsible for the War of Independence] and their followers it turned [the country] around again, and we gained our freedom. . . .***

William Johnson said of Bellemy and Hopkins, "Merely a handful and merely religious." And yet, in about three decades, they had conquered the churches and the government positions in the Colonies. Three decades will take us to the end of this century, and to a different society. Why? Because we are the ones with no blocked future. . . ."[28]

However, just as premillennialism had its radicals and amillennialism its anti-Semitism, postmillennialism has also had its unwelcome camp-followers. During the nineteenth century social reform movements such as freeing the slaves and welfare for the urban impoverished led to what became known as the "Social Gospel." While much of the impetus for these reforms came from evangelical Christians, soon unbelieving and liberal elements took them over. Having capitulated to pagan unbelief, higher criticism of the Bible, and the overthrow of Christian orthodoxy, the new Social Gospel leaders still realized that it was the evangelical orthodox people who donated the money and the time which they desperately needed.

They saw that a postmillennial viewpoint had to be kept alive. The threat to the Social Gospel, they realized, was the growing premillennialism in the churches at the beginning of the twentieth century. A leading scholar for the liberal Social Gospel was Walter Rauschenbusch who blamed premillennialism as an obstruction to social reform. University of Chicago professor Shirley Jackson Case wrote "[Postmillennialists] do not look for early relief through the sudden coming of Christ. On the contrary, they expect a gradual and increasing success of Christianity in the present world until ideal conditions are finally realized. Then will follow the millennium. . . ."[29] Alarmed at the effect the premillennial Scofield Bible was having in America after World War I, Chester McCown complained,"the nerve of active Christian endeavor is in danger of being slowly paralyzed."[30]

Features of Postmillennialism

Again, let's view the three checkpoints given in Table 1 just as we did for premillennialism and amillennialism. As indicated in that Table, postmillennialism agrees with amillennialism concerning Christ's return as the end of history, and it agrees with premillennialism regarding the triumph of the Kingdom of God over world culture. Since these two items have already been discussed above under amillennialism and premillennialism, respectively, they will not be discussed here. Only the last checkpoint, therefore, will be studied in this section on postmillennialism, the checkpoint at which postmillennialism stands alone against both premillennialism and amillennialism.

Evil Will Gradually Decline Before Christ's Return. Postmillennialists are best known for their insistence that evil will be conquered before Christ returns based upon the grace available from His first advent. Boettner states the postmillennial position:

"[that] the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and

*that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of
righteousness and peace."[31]*

To postmillennialists the great commission of Matthew 28:18-19 *is not a
command to merely preach the gospel, but to conquer world culture for Christ.*
Boettner cites another postmillennialist: "To reduce this great commission to
the premillennarian program of preaching the gospel as a witness to a world that
is to grow worse and worse until it plunges into its doom in destruction, is to
emasculate the gospel of Christ and wither it into pitiful impotency."[32]
Bahnsen defines the essence of this viewpoint:
"This confident attitude in the power of Christ's Kingdom, the power of its
gospel, the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer, and the
progress of the great commission sets postmillennialism apart from the essential
pessimism of amillennialism and premillennialism."[33]

Accordingly, postmillennialists look for Christianity to become the
controlling and transforming influence, not only in the moral and spiritual life of
some individuals, but also in the entire social, economic, and cultural life of the
nations. Any other view, say these scholars, bury the Christian in paralyzing
pessimism. Rushdoony remarks:

> *"Consider the difference it would make to the United States if instead of
> forty million or so premillennials, we had forty million postmillennials.
> Instead of having forty million people who expect that the world is going
> to end very soon and that they are going to be raptured out of tribulation,
> consider the difference it would make if these forty million instead felt
> that they had a duty under God to conquer in Christ's name."[33]*

How, then, do postmillennialists view passages like Matthew 7:14 and 22:14
which seem to indicate that only a few, certainly not entire societies, will be
saved? What do they do with the apparent pessimism in Jesus' Mt. Olivet
Discourse (Matt 24-25; Mark 13, and Luke 17,21)? With the climax of apostasy
in the book of Revelation? Their answer is to relegate these pessimistic
passages to the period of Jesus' ministry and the judgments upon Israel after the
Resurrection. Boettner says that these passages "are meant to be understood in a
temporal sense, as describing the conditions which Jesus and the disciples saw
existing in Palestine in their day."[34]

In recent years, to explain the theme of pessimism in the New Testament,
postmillennialists have revived and developed a "preterist" scheme of
interpretation. The preterist interpretation places the pessimist and judgmental
passages in the apostolic era instead of in the future. This approach was
developed originally by Roman Catholic apologists such as the Spanish Jesuit
Alcasar in the early 1600s to neutralize Protestant claims that the Roman church
was the Babylonian whore of Revelation and would come to future damnation.
Later unbelieving German higher critics of the Bible used the preterist approach
to deny predictive prophecy. As Tenney notes:

> *"Alcasar's suggestion was followed by some Protestant expositors, but the
> rise of the modern preterist school came with the prevalence of the
> technique of historical criticism. Since preterism did not necessitate any
> element of predictive prophecy or even any conception of inspiration, it*

> *could treat the Revelation simply as a purely natural historical document, embodying the eschatological concepts of its own time."[35]*

One of the most circulated postmillennial preterist commentaries on the book of Revelation today is by David Chilton. Chilton writes:

> *"The Book of Revelation is not about the Second Coming of Christ. It is about the destruction of Israel and Christ's victory over His enemies in the establishment of the New Covenant Temple. . . .God sent the Edomites and Roman armies to destroy utterly the last remaining symbol of the Old Covenant: the Temple and the Holy City. This fact alone is sufficient to establish the writing of the Revelation as taking place before A.D. 70. . . .It foretells events that St. John expected his readers to see very soon. . . .[The 'last days'] is a Biblical expression for the period between Christ's Advent and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: the 'last days' of Israel."[36]*

Postmillennialism, therefore, insists that the pessimistic NT passages are not teaching that evil will persist until the end of this age; the passages apply to the past end times for the nation Israel. This age is the age of the Kingdom of God and will feature increasing righteousness until Christ ends history.

RESOLVING THE CONTROVERSY

In resolving the three-sided controversy over the millennium, one must discard all false issues and isolate the true issue. Claiming, for example, that premillennialism must be wrong because Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are premillennial is as useless as claiming that amillennialism must be wrong because liberal theologians are amillennial or that postmillennialism must be wrong because "social gospellers" are postmillennial. Such claims are false issues because they are ad hominem arguments. To resolve the millennial controversy properly, one must define the true issue and then he must "spell out" the criteria involved in choosing one viewpoint over the other.

The True Issue: Hermeneutics

All parties to the controversy—premillennialists, amillennialists, and postmillennialists—agree that the basic issue involves the hermeneutics one uses to interpret the prophetic passages. How literally or how figuratively should one interpret such passages? (Remember the discussion above on Philo and Origen who showed the effect of hermeneutics upon how the Kingdom of God was thought about.) Ought one to interpret Isaiah 2:1-5, for example, after the manner of Hebrews 12:22, or does the Isaiah passage have a future literal fulfillment? Floyd Hamilton, an amillennial writer, says, "Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures."[37]

The debate is not over whether literal interpretation yields premillennialism or whether spiritualized interpretation produces amillennialism. The debate is over which method of interpretation ought to be used in dealing with prophetic passages. Ramm accurately states the case:

> *"The issue among evangelical interpreters is not over the general validity of grammatical or literal exegesis. . . .Nor is the issue one of the figurative or non-figurative language of the prophets. . . .We may further state that the issue is not between a completely literal or a completely spiritual system of interpretation. Amillennial writers admit that many prophecies have been literally fulfilled, and literalists admit a spiritual element to Old Testament passages when they find a moral application in a passage. . . .Nobody is a strict literalist or a complete spiritualist. . . .The real issue in prophetic interpretation among evangelicals is this: <u>can prophetic literature be interpreted by the general method of grammatical exegesis, or is some special principle necessary</u>?"[38]*

Granted that the true issue is one of hermeneutics, and in particular, one of the hermeneutics of prophetic literature, one needs to employ certain criteria that come out of Scripture to decide the issue between literal and figurative interpretation of prophecy.

Four Criteria to Aid One's Choice

At least four criteria may be isolated which can help the interpreter decide the issue. The more literal an interpreter's emphasis, the more sympathetic he will be toward premillennialism; the more figurative, the more sympathetic he will be toward amillennialism and postmillennialism.

1. <u>Implications of a Creationist View of Nature</u>. One criterion deals with the limitations upon what can take place in history. When a prophecy such as that in Isaiah 65:25 speaks of the wolf and the lamb's feeding together in the future Kingdom of God, the interpreter must decide whether this is a literal possibility in the zoological world. Can two creatures, a carnivore and a herbivores one in today's world, actually coexist in the same ecological zone peacefully? Or is this imagery merely figurative of some sort of peaceful condition an eternal future Kingdom beyond mortal history?

To decide the question, the interpreter must rely upon the creationist view of nature given in the "Noahic Bible", Genesis 1-11 of present mortal history. This "buried foundation" (Part II of this series) establishes the world view within which later Scripture was written. Scripture cannot be interpreted within the modern paganized world view. Given, then, the creationist world view, the next question is whether such a biological change would appear as a literal possibility? Were there ever changes in the zoological world of such a magnitude previously? He finds that there were. Not only were great morphological changes introduced into the zoological world by the curse (Gen. 3:14; Rom. 8:20-21), but the very same change between herbivores and carnivores in the opposite direction occurred after the flood (Gen. 9:1-7 cf. Gen. 1:29-30). In the case of Isaiah 11:6-9 and 65:25, then, there is a proven, observed precedent for the prophecy to be fulfilled literally in mortal history *if*

one operates inside of a creationist worldview. That the potential among carnivorous animals for reversion back to a vegetarian diet truly exists even today can be seen in Figure 3.

Another interpretative problem is resolved in the same manner by going back to the creationist worldview. Kingdom prophecies make reference to heightened human health and longevity. Sickness and death, except for discipline against overt sin, will be unknown (Isa. 33:24; 65:20; Jer. 30:17; Ezek. 34:16). Genetic and birth-defects will be gone (Isa. 29:18; 35:5-6; Zeph. 3:19). The Kingdom will enjoy highly productive agriculture, apparently without the adverse weather conditions of today (Ezk. 36:29-35; Amos 9:13-14). Is such a geophysical environment with its linkage to human health a possibility within a creationist worldview? Of course. The very idea of Garden-of-Eden conditions (Ezk. 36:35) recalls the literal Garden of Eden that remained until the flood in Noah's day. Human longevity between the fall and the flood averaged over 900 years. An interpreter cannot forget these parts of biblical history when he interprets geophysical "ideal conditions" in Kingdom prophecies.

In short, the implications of a creationist view of nature inside present mortal history fully allow for a literal interpretation of the so-called "ideal" Kingdom environment. One doesn't have to leave history for a new universe in eternity to experience such conditions. One, therefore, doesn't have to leave a literal interpretation for a figurative one, either.

Figure 3. Sketch from photograph of "Little Tyke," a lioness cub born in captivity and rejected by her mother, sitting next to a lamb. Little Tyke was raised by Georges H. Westbeau on his ranch in Auburn, Washington, on a carefully worked-out diet of cooked cereals, raw eggs, and milk. At four years, she weighed 352 pounds and ate field grasses. See Westbeau's book, Little Tyke (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1956) for original photograph. Here one observes the cosmic possibility of Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25

2. <u>The Implications of a Creationist View of Man</u>. A second criterion that aids the interpreter's decision over literal vs. figurative approaches to prophetic

passages are the implications coming from a creationist view of man. The "Noahic Bible" provides detailed information about man's purpose, his language, his corporate structure, and his historical responsibility. Each of these details enters into prophetic interpretation.

According to Genesis <u>man's purpose is to subdue the earth for God</u> (Gen. 1:26-28). Will mankind in mortal history ever subdue nature for God? Will the human race every reach its theological purpose before eternity begins? Both premillennialist and postmillennialist concur that there must be a triumph of the Kingdom of God before eternity begins. The Genesis mandate was given to man for mortal history when he was created "lower than the angels" (Psa. 8:5), not for eternity when he is to rule over angels (I Cor. 6:3). Moreover, since Christ is true humanity, He, too, will "fail" unless He carries out Genesis 1:26-28 before eternity. Of course, the NT points to just this victory of Christ "subduing all things" before eternity begins (I Cor. 15:22-28; Heb. 2:5-10). On this basis the amillennial approach of denying such triumph inside mortal history renders man's theological purpose forever incomplete.

The difference between the premillennialist and the postmillennialist is one of degree. How far will mankind subdue the earth? The postmillennialist argues that the golden era which the Church is supposed to bring into existence will "not be essentially different from our own as far as the basic facts of life are concerned."[39] The postmillennialist, therefore, would see mankind's subduing some of its social problems and some technological difficulties, but mankind would not subdue all nature under its feet in the sense that the geophysical environment itself, human longevity, and zoological transformation would be included. The premillennialist, on the other hand, foresees a far greater degree of submission. He sees mankind (through Christ) as subduing the animal realm so effectively, for example, that a child will be able to lead a young lion (Isa. 11:6). To bring about this degree of subjugation, Christ executes a complex strategy involving hard-to-imagine removal of evil spirits from historical influence as well as the commingling of resurrected, immortal saints with millennial humans yet in unresurrected, mortal bodies. The precedent, of course, for such commingling of divine and human beings is already established prior to the flood (Gen. 6:1-4) and after Christ's resurrection (e.g., John 20-21).

The creationist view of man points to <u>the major tool used to subdue: language</u>. From the first creative act God established the basis for human language as derivative of God's language. God created instantaneously by His spoken word (Cf. Gen. 1; Psa. 33:9) and constructs the temporal flow of history with unforeseen (by man) "surprises" by His language (Heb. 11:3). Immediately after creation God instructs Adam in his proper vocabulary and then turns the "naming" over to him (see Part II of this series). God's language is thus the "metalanguage" that stands behind human language and gives it meaning. Because human language is designed to name created things and to be the means through which man communicates with God, figurative meanings are not necessarily opposed to literal meanings. The figurative meaning doesn't exist because "it's the best language can do" when faced with a mystery it can't describe literally. Instead of being an admission of incapacity, in the creationist view figurative language is the tool through which we conceive similarities in God's design throughout creation. Dr. John Pilkey writes:

> *"The cornerstone of poetic vision. . .is the power to. . .reason synthetically. Poetry. . .subordinates differences to similarities. Ezekiel's passage (28:11-13) tacitly fuses the King of Tyre with the prelapsarian Satan . . . . Tacit identifications of this kind are the bedrock of poetry. . .but they are as objectively real as anything we know. They seem dreamlike or unreal to us because of. . .our instinct to plod from one reality to another without perceiving the ideal symbolic connections. The poetic mind realizes that the king of Tyre and Satan were entirely distinct persons but that Ezekiel reveals a compelling ideal identity between them."[40]*

When, for example, Jesus speaks of John the Baptist as "fulfilling" the prophecy of Elijah (Mal. 4:5; cf. Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17), postmillennialist Boettner insists that this disproves premillennialism's insistence that prophecy must be fulfilled literally. As one espousing a figurative hermeneutic for prophetic interpretation, Boettner sees only the similarity intended between the literal Elijah and the literal Baptist. The figurative similarity, in his view, doesn't supplement *but actually replaces* the literal distinction between two different historical people. John explicitly denied he was Elijah (John 1:21). The "fulfillment" statement by Jesus in context refers to the hypothetical situation of Israel accepting John the Baptist and the Messiah so that the Kingdom could have come at the first advent. Functionally, the Baptist acted in history just as Elijah had. This identity between the two reveals

> *"the existence of a harmonious spiritual world, in which the distinction of soul between a John the Baptist and an Elijah takes second place to an identity of. . .divine vocation common to both men. The special world of Christian typology, for example, is nothing but a sample of a harmonious spiritual universe reinforced by symbolic identities from top to bottom."[41].*

Since, however, Christ was rejected by Israel at His first advent, the restoration of all things by Elijah remains in the future. The prophecy of Elijah could not have been literally fulfilled during the first advent. Figurative meanings in prophecy, therefore, do not necessarily replace or exclude literal meanings; they exist in Word of God to reveal the rational connections in God's design for history. A prophetic text can carry both meanings and *require both for complete fulfillment*.

Mankind's corporate structure is another feature than follows from a creationist view of man. All men genetically come from one literal Adam. The Bible looks, therefore, at history in a genealogical fashion rather than in a strictly chronological or geographical way. The Assyrians sprang from Asshur (Gen. 10:22) so that regardless of international labels that might later identify the group, it is the sons of Asshur who exist at the time Micah 5:5-6 is fulfilled that are meant in the prophecy. In God's view the genealogical relationships are never lost. One modern evidence is the Hebrew tribe of Levi. Over 34 centuries ago God promised that the Levitical priesthood under Aaron would be "everlasting." Interestingly, today there is only one Hebrews tribe which has still retained is distinctive identity before men—the tribe of Levi. Jewish people with the names Levi, Levine (derivative from "Levi"), Cohen (derivative of Hebrew word "cohen" meaning priest), and Kohane (alternative spelling to

Cohen) preserve their tribal identity. If one tribe can retain its identity before men for many centuries, then it is not inherently impossible for other tribes of men to remain identifiable to God for many centuries. Thus if history is viewed in a genealogical light, there is no reason why prophecies concerning supposedly "extinct" nations cannot be literally fulfilled, amillennial objections to the contrary notwithstanding.

Finally, another aspect of the creationist view of man concerns his <u>historical responsibility to His Creator</u>. Because God is omniscient with a perfect rational plan incomprehensible to man, it follows that man's reason is only a finite replica of God's reason. He can see only a simple rationality that connects the present with a future prophesied state. <u>Prophecy, therefore, by its very nature must be a very abbreviated view of the future</u>. In Genesis 3:15, for example, a "simple" prophecy is made that somehow the child of the woman will triumph over the serpent. According to Genesis 4:1 Eve adopted the "simple" interpretation that she was the woman and her son, Cain, was the child, the promised one "from the Lord." Many thousands of years passed, however, before the Child was born of a woman. The fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy was far more complicated than Even could have imagined.

Prophecy becomes complicated with time because history involves men's response to God's grace. There is always "room" in prophecy for the interplay of true moral choice among men: man is never "programmed" by some created "cause-effect"/"stimulus-response". Unless this fact is recognized, one would be tempted to conclude that prophecy has often contained logical contradictions. Noah preached, for example, for men to repent; had they done so, however, their action would have made the plans for the Ark too small. Jesus preached the Kingdom only to Jews (Matt. 10:5); but if the Jews had believed, their reception of Christ would probably have kept Him from dying on the Cross, a necessity for the sin problem. Nevertheless, such biblical prophecy has always finally come to pass in a non-contradictory way, though in a manner unvisualized by men at the time the prophecy was announced. Historical responsibility under God's sovereignty introduces "surprise effects" that "stretch out" the original prophetic vision's horizon.

Just as OT men could not successfully untangle the web of prophecies about Christ's two advents, one in humiliation and the other in victory (I Pet. 1:10-11), so also men in this age cannot untangle all the prophecies about Christ's second advent. There is no assurance in Scripture that His second advent will be "simple"; it may well involve various stages and be spread out as previous apparently "simple" prophecy became spread out. (Remember Daniel's difficulty with God's decree for Jerusalem's restoration in Chapter 5 above.)

When one faces, therefore, passages like Revelation 19:11-20:15 which seem to depict Christ's return in a complex form and passages like Mathew 24-25 and II Peter 3 which seem to depict the return in simple form, *it is wiser to let the more complicated passages control the interpretation of the simpler passages*. The more complex passages simply contain more information and are closer to the final fulfillment. The premillennialist's insistence, then, that Christ's return does not end history, but that yet another era of history must pass before the end of history in the final judgment, is on sure ground. Amillennial

schemes, and, to a lesser degree, postmillennial schemes, tend to be too simplistic, too reductionist, to correspond with the true nature of history and prophecy.

The creationist view of nature and of man, therefore, must not be neglected in our rush to understand prophetic passages of Scripture. Very specific truths come out of that view that profoundly shapes our hermeneutics for these texts. Now I will introduce the remaining two criteria for deciding upon the literalness of prophecy.

3. <u>The Implications of God's Historical Covenants with Man</u>. We have emphasized in Part III of this series that God verbally and publicly speaks to man in history. Israel, we noted, is the only nation in history that claimed to have a written contract with its God. Although such contracts or covenants rest upon the creationist foundation of language, they are so important to the interpretation of prophecy that I have set them into a separate category. Whether we speak of the Noahic, Abrahamic, Sinaitic, Palestinian, Davidic, or New Covenant, a covenant requires unambiguous legal terminology. How else are the parties' performances to be judged? Contracts and treaties need verifiability. The meaning of contractual terminology, therefore, cannot be "re-interpreted" later when things don't appear to be turning out the way the contract originally stated.

The fulfillment of a historical covenant might be subject to "surprise effects" and time-stretching as Daniel discovered, but the covenant terminology is never radically reworked. The three promises to Abraham—the land, seed, and world-wide blessing—have to be fulfilled as they are stated in Genesis, or the contract fails. The land has to be the defined geography of biblical Israel, even if that is "stretched out" by centuries and continued into a new earth. The seed has to be genetically derived from Abraham, even if it comes into existence miraculously and/or by adoption into his family. The world-wide blessing has to encompass all nations, even if it requires awful judgments and involves "re-labeled" people groups.

The Sinaitic and Palestinian Covenants of Deuteronomy have to be fulfilled. The final regathering of the Hebrew tribes into their land envisioned in Deuteronomy 30:1-9 has to occur. The Davidic Covenant has to be fulfilled with a genetic descendent of David ruling over restored Israel. It may be that only believing Hebrews are permanently restored. It may be that the Son of David also rules over all the nations besides Israel. It may be the Kingdom of God is universal over all the earth. Nevertheless, the final fulfillment will be easily recognized as fitting the Deuteronomic text without figuratively transferring its meaning to the abstract principles involved. Premillennialism protects the integrity of these covenants whereas the amillennial and postmillennial views tend to dismiss their *continuing* importance.

4. <u>The Implications of Christ's Rejection</u>. The fourth and final criterion also rests upon the creationist view of nature and man. And like the implications of the historical covenants, these implications, too, belong in a separate category. *The rejection of Christ by God's covenant nation created a very complex situation.* No longer was history a straightforward movement into

the promised Kingdom of God on earth through Israel. The New Testament introduced new revelation of God's relationship to mankind after the rejection of His Son. Is this new truth the "final story"? Or is it part of a larger "stretching out" process in which we have a massive "surprise effect" due to man's response to God's revelation? In other words, is the NT the last revelation before God's final acts that end mortal history, or is it to be followed by yet further revelation that will eclipse it with more "surprise effects"?

How do NT authors interpret OT prophecy now that Christ has been rejected? Many, many OT prophecies spoke of the Coming Messianic King. NT authors readily mentioned literally fulfilled prophecies beginning in Matthew 1 with Jesus as the literal seed of David. His virgin birth fulfills Isaiah 7:14. His birthplace is in literal Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-6) and Joseph takes Jesus to literal Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15). Scores more literally fulfilled prophecies are mentioned by the NT authors [42].

Of deep significance, too, is the fulfillment of the OT calendar of Israel. In the spring of the year key national holidays were Passover (celebration involving the slaying of a lamb), First Fruits (celebration of the first of the crop), and Pentecost (celebration of the availability of wheat). Exactly on the literal days of Passover, First Fruits, and Pentecost, respectively, Christ (God's Lamb) died, rose (first fruit of the resurrection), and the Holy Spirit came (making power available to the believers). Since the fall season of the calendar year included the holidays of the Day of the Atonement (national confession) and Feast of Tabernacles (celebrating the final joy of Israel in Yahweh's provision), ought not one to expect a future literal national confession on the Day of Atonement and a future literal fulfillment of the beginning of the millennium on exactly the day of the year indicated by the calendar as Feast of Tabernacles? In other words, premillennialists would argue that since the first part of the calendar (spring) has been literally fulfilled at the First Advent of Christ, the second half of the year (fall) ought also to be fulfilled literally with the nation Israel whose calendar it is at the Second Advent of Christ.

The separation of Christ's career into two parts with an intervening age in between "stretches out" the "simple" prophecies of his coming. When Daniel's initial interpretation of Jeremiah's 70-year prophecy was stretched out to 70 "sevens", an intervening age of Israel's partial restoration while still under Gentile control came into view. This intervening age was not seen in the pre-exilic period of the OT. It was a "surprise effect" under God's sovereignty. While eternally part of God's perfectly rational plan for history, it didn't exist within the creation until the decree of Persian authorities to build Jerusalem. In analogous fashion, the rejection of Christ "creates" a new age previously unforeseen by men of prophecy.

While it introduces new problems of understanding, it resolves old problems of apparent conflict in OT prophecy. OT prophets were unable to figure out an apparent conflict between the "sufferings" of the Messiah and His "glories". Even angels did not understand these things (I Pet. 1:10-12; cf. I Cor. 2:8). Ancient Jewish rabbis thought that the solution was that there would be two messiahs: the suffering Son of Joseph and the reigning Son of David.[43] The separation of the One Messiah's career on earth into two parts resolved

another apparent biblical "contradiction" showing once again that in God's omniscience perfect rationality exists.

The NT reveals truths about this "new" age between the advents. Whereas amillennialists and postmillennialists see this new age as the final fulfillment of whatever prophecies are to be fulfilled inside mortal history, premillennialists insist that this new age does <u>not</u> fulfill crucial OT prophecies. NT revelation cannot transfer kingdom prophecies that depended upon the triumphant reign of Messiah in Israel, to an age prior to that reign. That would reverse the OT order of events. Instead, the NT reveals truths about this new interadvent age. In Matthew 13:10ff, for example, Jesus began to speak of "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." He reveals new truths about the OT Kingdom of God made necessary by his imminent rejection and crucifixion. Nowhere does He change the idea of the "kingdom" from the literal physical and political kingdom to one of an invisible, spiritual one. In Acts 1:6 when the disciples asked Him about the kingdom, Jesus did not correct their understanding of the character of the kingdom but stated instead that the *time of its inauguration* was unknown.

The NT, therefore, built as it is upon the rejection of the Messiah, is necessarily focused upon a new age prior to the Kingdom that, according to OT prophecy, awaits the triumphant reigning of the Messiah in Jerusalem. This intervening age occurs because of a "stretching out" of OT prophecy, not a change in its direction.

CONCLUSION

The three-sided controversy over the final triumph of the Kingdom of God has been described from the standpoint of each of the three views—premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism. The issue is compacted to a problem in hermeneutics. How literally or how figuratively should one take prophecy? The matter can be decided by going back to at least four criteria that rest upon creation and God's pattern of historic revelation. These criteria show that the physical, literal kingdom is rooted in a creationist view of nature and man. Its character continues unchanged through the NT era, preserving the integrity of the OT covenants and surviving the astounding rejection of the Messiah by the chosen nation. At no point is one compelled to abandon a literal hermeneutic for interpreting OT prophecy.

END NOTES FOR APPENDIX

1. R.H. Charles, <u>Eschatology</u> (2nd ed., New York: Schocken Books, 1963 [1913]), p. 251
2. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 315-16. The idea apparently came from reasoning that a thousand years of history would occur for each day of creation, history concluding with a seventh thousand year "sabbatical rest" period.
3. Alfred Edersheim, <u>The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah</u>, II (American ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1962), 435.
4. <u>Ibid.</u>, I, 78.
5. Quoted in Charles Ryrie, <u>The Basis for the Premillennial Faith</u> (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953), pp. 17-33.
6. See discussion in Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, <u>Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History, and Philosophy</u> (Washington, D.C.: Canon Press, 1974), pp. 46-47.
7. Summaries are given in Ryrie's work and in J.Dwight Pentecost, <u>Things To Come</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: Dunham Pub. Co., 1958), pp. 373-380.
8. Norman Cohn, <u>The Pursuit of the Millennnium</u> (2nd ed., New York: Harper Torchback Books, 1961 [1957]).
9. Cited in G. C. Berkouwer, <u>The Return of Christ</u> (Trans. James Van Oosterom, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), p.294, n4.
10. Ibid.
11. Note Berkouwer's very careful discussion as an amillennialist trying to avoid any appearnce of anti-Semitism, pp. 323-28.
12. George W. Dollar, <u>A History of Fundamentalism In America</u> (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), p. 38.
13. Charles, pp. 407-8; Oscar Cullman, <u>The Christology of the NT</u>, p. 226, quoted in Berkouwer, p. 299.
14. See discussion by postmillennialist Lorrain Boettner, <u>The Millennium</u> (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1957), pp. 119-123. Even amillennialist Berkouwer acknowledges that there is in this point of premillennialism an "element of truth." p. 294f.
15. See premillennial Presbyterian J. Barton Payne, <u>The Theology of the Older Testament</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), p. 481 and Charles C. Ryrie, <u>Dispensationalism Today</u> (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 17.
16. Alva J. McClain, <u>The Greatness of the Kingdom</u> (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 531.
17. Boettner, p. 60.
18. Bernard Ramm, <u>Protestant Biblical Interpretation</u> (rev. ed., Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1956), pp. 27-28.

19. F. W. Farrar, <u>History of Interpretation</u> (NY: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1886), p. 196.
20. Oswald Allis, Prophecy and the Church (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1945), p. 3.
21. H. H. Ben-Sasson, <u>A History of the Jewish People</u> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 349-50.
22. Note comments by William L. Shirer, <u>The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany</u> (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1960), pp. 134-35.
23. Charles L. Feinberg, <u>Premillennialism or Amillennialism?</u> (end ed., Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1954), p. 331.
24. Jay Adams, <u>The Time Is At Hand</u> (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1970), pp. 81, 82, 82n43.
25. Some amillennialists, following Allis, believe that at least the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled completely in OT times, citing I Kings 4:21 and Neh. 9:7-8.
26. Adams, p122.
27. See history described in Pentecost, pp. 384-87, an Boettner, pp. 10-12.
28. R. J. Rushdoony, "A Blocked or Open Future?" (taped sermon published by Chalcedon, P.O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251).
29. Shirley J. Case, <u>The Millennial Hope</u> (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1918), p. 204.
30. Chester C. McCown, <u>The Promise of His Coming</u> (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921), p.200.
31. Boettner, p. 14
32. Ibid., p. 28.
33. Rushdoony.
34. Boettner, p. 36
35. Merrill C. Tenny, <u>Interpreting Revelation</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), 136.
36. David Chilton, <u>The Days of Vengeance</u> (Fort Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), p.43; and from another book by Chilton, <u>Paradise Restored: An Eschatology of Dominion</u> (Tyler, TX: Reconstruction Press, 1985), p. 159f, 225
37. Floyd Hamilton, <u>The Basis of Millennial Faith</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1942), p. 38.
38. Ramm, p. 224f.
39. Boettner, p.19.
40. John Pilkey, <u>Origin of the Nations</u> (San Diego: Master Book Publishers, 1984), p.233f.
41. <u>Ibid.</u>, p.234
42. See a recent treatment by Hebrew Christian theologian, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, <u>Messianic Christology</u> (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998)

REVIEW EXERCISE for the BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK Course

1. What are my presuppositions or "inner maps" of reality?

What is my most basic view of all reality?   It is a <u>Creation</u> (Personal Creator of Universe so that there are 2 absolutely different levels of reality) or it is a <u>Continuity of Being</u> (one reality in which gods, angels, men, animals, etc. exist in relative degrees of complexity)?   What is my ultimate authority —social convention, family-peer-church approval, personal mystical experiences, great literature of mankind, or those parts of the Creator's mind He has shared in Scripture with us?

3. Who am I?   A <u>responsible finite analogue of the Creator</u> with genuine choice to determine my history or <u>a life-form wholly determined</u> by my genetics, upbringing, and environment?

4.   How should I primarily relate to other people?   As <u>a fellow-member of</u> God-designed structures (human race out of Adam & Noah, marriage, family, civil government, church) or as a <u>fellow ethnic</u> or as an <u>independent being?</u>

5. How do I respond to "evil" and "suffering"?   As <u>a participant in its historic origin</u> and receiver of The Promise of its Final End or as a <u>hopeless observer and victim?</u>

6. What do I view as the final evaluation of my life as a human being? Having my life <u>completely evaluated before my Creator and Judge</u> or having my life <u>evaluated by its effects on fellow human beings or by my feelings at death?</u>

7. How do I view salvation? As <u>the only escape from evil</u> or as a pleasureable <u>optional "add on"</u> to life's experiences? As a <u>replacement of my best works</u> or as <u>a means of helping me do better works?</u>   As <u>part of a universe-wide program</u> or as <u>a private psychological experience?</u>   As something <u>initiated by God</u> or as <u>a result of my searching?</u> As <u>assuaging God's wrath</u> or as <u>God's arbitrary forgiveness?</u>