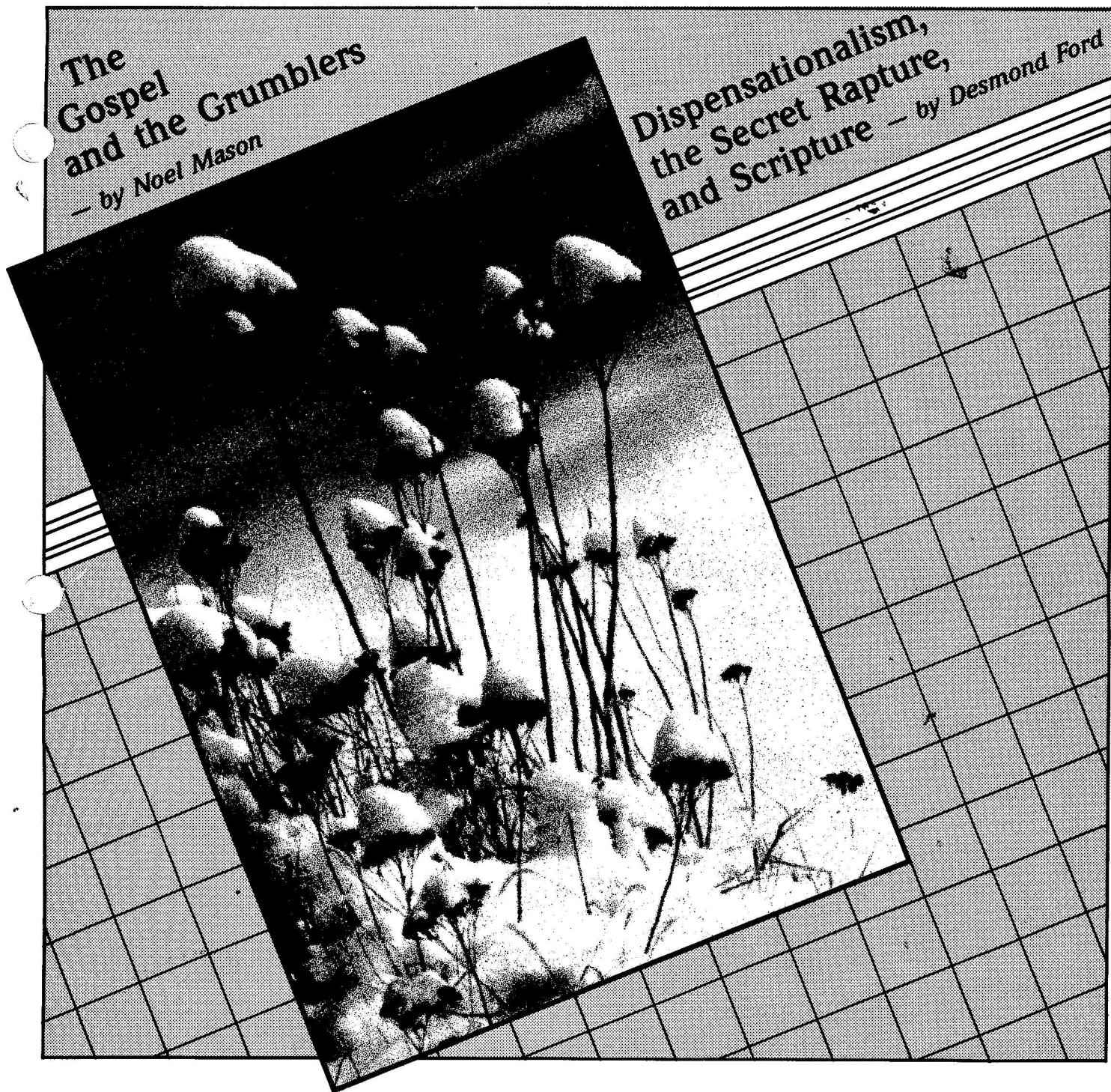


# Good News Unlimited

Solus Christus — Sola Scriptura — Sola Fide — Sola Gratia

The Gospel and the Grumblers  
— by Noel Mason

Dispensationalism, the Secret Rapture, and Scripture — by Desmond Ford



Editor:  
Noel Mason  
Associate  
Editor:  
Brad McIntyre

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**Canadian office:** P.O. Box 3068, Station D, Willowdale, M2R 3G5, Ontario, Canada.

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**South African office:** P.O. Box 11096, Universitas 9321, Republic of South Africa.

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## Editorial



On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 people stood shoulder-to-shoulder before the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington D.C. It was the largest civil rights rally in American history. Standing before this large crowd which included 60,000 whites, Martin Luther King, Jr. said:

*I have a dream* that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former shareowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. . . . *I have a dream* that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

It was this dream that inspired Martin Luther King to challenge the social injustices of his day. In one year alone he traveled 275,000 miles and made 350 speeches.

In the great cause of peace and justice nothing very significant can be achieved without a plan, a vision—a dream. No one has ever influenced the human race for good without some compelling dream. The dream is important.


But as equally important is the method of fulfilling the dream. It's one thing to have a dream, it's quite another to know how to actualize that dream. Here King, the Warrior for Peace, confessed his indebtedness to Jesus, Thoreau and Gandhi. Had not Jesus said "Love your enemies"? And both Thoreau and Gandhi used the principle of nonviolent resistance to counter the injustices of their day. "Love must be our regulating ideal," thundered King. Martin Luther King's dream of peace and social equality, with all peoples sitting down together "at the table of brotherhood" is part of the greater Christian dream. Writing to a community of both Jews and Gentiles, Paul said that the desire of Christ "was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God *through the cross*, by which he put to death their hostility" (Eph 2:15,16). God's desire is "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even, Christ" (Eph 1:10). It is important to understand that this great dream of unity and peace can only be achieved "through the cross." Paradoxically, it is in the violent death of Jesus that a Christian finds the power to be reconciled to both God and his neighbor. When the enemies of Jesus seized him and nailed him to the cross, they did an evil thing. But God "tricked" the enemies of Jesus. He transmuted that evil deed into the greatest act of good. The cursed cross became an inexhaustible blessing.

Political legislation can bring an outward conformity to a certain ideal, but only "the word of the cross" has power to create genuine peace and social justice. The strength to love one another can be found only in a daily experience of God's forgiving grace.

If God's great dream is to unite all things in Christ, it is important for us all to ask what we are doing to actualize that dream. Is our ministry a power for good, for unity? Does it break down barriers or build them? A religious community that glories in its own self-identity, its own distinctives, is not marching to the drum of Jesus. Such a community will be of little use in the fulfillment of the dream of Jesus. The distinctives of the Christian community are those that make for peace and social justice. Christians are to glory in the cross of Christ which has broken down all dividing walls of hostility. "I have a dream" said King, and so does every Christian. Wherever we live, whatever our gifts, let's work for the fulfillment of that dream.

—Noel Mason

# The GOSPEL and the GRUMBLERS



**I**n his book *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis tells an imaginative story of a Big Ghost who is invited to take a journey from hell to heaven. On arrival in heaven, the ghost is shocked to meet an old acquaintance, who murdered a man called "Jack." Let's eavesdrop for a moment.

'Well, I'm damned,' said the Ghost. 'I wouldn't have believed it. It's a fair knock-out. It isn't right, Len, you know. What about poor Jack, eh? You look pretty pleased with yourself, but what I say is, What about poor Jack?'

'He is here,' said the other. 'You will meet him soon, if you stay.'

'But you murdered him.'

'Of course I did. It is all right now.'

'All right, is it? All right for you, you mean. But what about the poor chap himself, laying cold and dead?'

'But he isn't, I have told you, you will meet him soon. He sent you his love.'

'What I'd like to understand,' said the Ghost, 'is what you're here for as pleased as Punch, you, a bloody murderer, while I've been walking the streets down there and living in a place like a pigstye all these years.'

'That is a little hard to understand at first. But it is all over now. You will be pleased about it presently. Till then there is no need to bother about it.'

'No need to bother about it? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?'

'No. Not as you mean. I do not look at myself. I have given up myself. I had to, you know, after the murder. That was what it did for me. And that was how

everything began.'

'Personally,' said the Big Ghost with an emphasis which contradicted the ordinary meaning of the word, 'personally, I'd have thought you and I ought to be the other way round. That's my personal opinion.'

'Very likely we soon shall be,' said the other. 'If you'll stop thinking about it.'

'Look at me, now,' said the Ghost, slapping its chest (but the slap made no noise). 'I gone straight all my life. I don't say I was a religious man and I don't say I had no faults, far from it. But I done my best all my life, see? I done my best by everyone, that's the sort of chap I was. I never asked for anything that wasn't mine by rights. If I wanted a drink I paid for it and if I took my wages I done my job, see? That's the sort I was and I don't care who knows it.'

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by Noel Mason



'It would be much better not to go on about that now.'

'Who's going on? I'm not arguing. I'm just telling you the sort of chap I was, see? I'm asking for nothing but my rights. You may think you can put me down because you're dressed up like that (which you weren't when you worked under me) and I'm only a poor man. But I got to have my rights same as you, see?'

'Oh no. It's not so bad as that. I haven't got my rights, or I should not be here. You will not get yours either. You'll get something far better. Never fear.'

'That's just what I say. I haven't got my rights. I always done my best and I never done nothing wrong. And what I don't see is why I should be put below a bloody murderer like you.'

'Who knows whether you will be? Only be happy and come with me.'

'What do you keep on arguing for? I'm only telling you the sort of chap I am. I only want my rights. I'm not asking for anybody's bleeding charity.'

'Then do. At once. Ask for the Bleeding Charity. Everything is here for the asking and nothing can be bought.'

With the Big Ghost's insistence on his "own rights" rather than "bleeding charity" Lewis has captured something of the self-righteous attitude of every man.

### The Grumblers

The Big Ghost has many counterparts in the New Testament. Jesus was constantly harassed by devout religious people who grumbled about the way he befriended and pardoned the sins of sinners. "Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to *grumble*, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (Lk 15:1-2 NASB). This complaint runs throughout all Gospels. Indeed, it is the first criticism levelled at Jesus: "Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?" "Behold, a

glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" (Mt 11:19)

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## ***We shall never fully understand why Jesus' extraordinary behavior antagonized some of the scribes and Pharisees until we appreciate their view of sin.***

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### Three Kinds of Sinners

We shall never fully understand why Jesus' extraordinary behavior antagonized some of the scribes and Pharisees until we appreciate their view of sin. In Jesus' day it was thought by some that there were three kinds of sinners. There were Jews who transgressed the law but who could hope for divine forgiveness, especially if they performed the appropriate sacrificial rites. There were Gentiles who were sinners by definition because they stood outside the law (Gal 2:15). It was disputed whether they had an opportunity of salvation in "the age to come." Finally, the worst group of all, there were Jews who in effect had made themselves to be as Gentiles, by their choice of occupation. Dice players, usurers, herdsmen (shepherds, swineherds, etc.), prostitutes and tax-collectors (publicans) had little hope of the forgiving grace of God. The very presence of a tax-collector (who often collaborated with the hated Romans) or a swineherd rendered a home ritually unclean.

A swineherd was particularly offensive to an orthodox Jew. There were many reasons for the Jewish revulsion of the pig. The Law of Moses categorized the pig as unclean (Lev 11:7; Dt 14:8). The pig was a special sacrificial animal in the cultures surrounding Israel. It was the most sacrificed animal among the Greeks. Adonis was a swine-god. Swine flesh was sacred to the Babylonians and was

eaten at religious feasts. Among the Syrians it was sacred to Tammuz. Many Jews of Jesus' day believed that pigs were bearers of demons (Mk 5:1-14). Only renegade Jews touched the flesh of a pig (Is 65:4; 66:3,17). Antiochus IV (175-164 B.C.) forced many Jews to sacrifice a pig as an indication of their acceptance of his religion and as a rejection of their own. Thus, the pig became a symbol of apostasy. In one Jewish writing (the Tosephta) which may reflect the beliefs of some Jews even of Jesus' day, it is said that swineherds are not to be thrown into a pit, but neither are they to be helped out of one!

### Shocking Grace

Perhaps we are now ready to sympathize with the "grumblers." By what authority does this so-called prophet from "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Mt 4:15) assure the most degraded sinners (swindlers, swineherds and sluts) that they can so readily enjoy the forgiving grace of God? While Jesus did not condone their sinful ways, he nevertheless assured them in the most extraordinary manner that God's unconditional love was especially for them. Consider the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32). The younger son squanders his father's estate in a "distant country"—a country of Gentile sinners! And then he becomes a swineherd—the most degraded occupation known to Jews!

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## ***The God of Jesus' parable forgives sins gladly!***

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Could such a one find forgiveness with God? As we have seen, according to many orthodox Jews, the prodigal had placed himself beyond God's mercy. But here comes the shock—with deliberate intent, Jesus pictures the father meeting the disreputable prodigal "a long way off," embracing him, kissing him! (v. 20) The kiss, as in 2 Samuel 14:33 is a sign of forgiveness. The father then gives four orders. He commands his slaves to bring the best robe; to put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet; and to bring the fattened calf



(vv. 22,23). What does all this mean?

1 Maccabees 6:1-16 records the death of Antiochus IV. Before he dies he calls for Philip, one of his friends and puts him in charge of his whole kingdom. He gave him his crown, *his robe*, and his *signet ring*, so that he might guide the king's son, Antiochus (V.) and bring him up to be king. When Joseph was inaugurated as second-in-command, "Pharoah took off his *signet ring* from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in *garments* of fine linen, and put the gold necklace around his neck" (Gn 41:42). The contemporaries of Jesus would not have missed these details. They knew what Jesus was saying. According to Jesus, the prodigal, the swineherd, comes back as an *honored guest* (the robe) with the authority of a son (signet ring), and as a free man (sandals). He enjoys the height of hospitality (fatted calf)—no quick trip to a fast-food restaurant for a burger and a shake! The God of Jesus' parables forgives sins gladly! No wonder the scribes and Pharisees grumbled. "God's love," writes T. W. Manson, "cannot be portioned out in quantities nicely adjusted to the merits of individuals."<sup>2</sup>

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### ***The ministry of Jesus was a triumph of grace over sin.***

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#### **Triumph of Grace**

The ministry of Jesus was a triumph of grace over sin. As Paul later reflected "but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). In the times of Jesus, the law was reckoned to contain 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitions. Jesus had great respect for some of those but refused to make them the ground of a sinner's relationship to God.

The life and ministry of Jesus is a triumph of grace over legalistic endeavors to win God's approval or to retain his approval. Neither can be done on the basis of law. Anyone who disputes whether it is right to heal on the Sabbath or to pluck grain to satisfy hunger is a legalist despite

how much he talks about grace. The experience of God's grace delivers us from such hair-splitting legalism.

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### ***There is a risky element in grace.***

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#### **Risky Grace and Morality**

There is a risky element in grace. The father's lavish reception for his lost son could easily have been misinterpreted as a soft attitude toward sin. But grace took that risk. It is not calculating like a tit-for-tat morality. The finest statement of morality can be an excellent guide in life, but it has no power to transform a selfish heart into a loving one as grace does. It has no power to generate authentic love. Alan Watts made the point well when he wrote:

Nothing is really more inhuman than human relations based on morals. When a man gives bread in order to be charitable, lives with a woman in order to be faithful, eats with a Negro in order to be unprejudiced, and refuses to kill in order to be peaceful, he is as cold as a clam. He does not actually see the other person. Only a little less chilly is the benevolence springing from pity, which acts to remove suffering because it finds the sight of it disgusting.<sup>3</sup>

Feeling good about a relationship based solely on morals is phony, for no man or woman has ever lived according to his morals. It's cowardly, for such a relationship lacks personal risk and involvement. It's dull and boring for it lacks freshness and spontaneity. According to the Bible, a person's relationship with God must start and finish in the experience of God's grace. Salvation is from "faith to faith."

Jesus' conception of God's grace threatened the privileged position of the scribes and Pharisees. That is why they grumbled. But the grace of God, which acknowledges no difference between respectable and disrespectable sinners is

offensive to the "legalist" in us all. Like the Pharisees we often find it hard to accept, that in spite of our noblest efforts at being good, salvation is still by grace. But there are times in life when we see the truth of it more clearly. It's usually in "a far country," when suddenly we realize all our righteousnesses (not our unrighteous acts!) are as filthy rags. Our self-righteousness so often blunts our perception of God's grace. But when we're "down and out," when we see that we've "blown it," then we begin to see the wonder of God's grace as revealed in Jesus.

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### ***Our self-righteousness so often blunts our perception of God's grace.***

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I read a story once of a poor woman who lived in the slums of a great city. One day, for the first time in her poverty-stricken life, she was taken on a trip to the seashore. As she stood there and looked out over the vast ocean, tears gathered in her eyes and trickled down her face. Her friend asked her why she was crying. "Oh, it's wonderful," she said, "to see something that there is enough of!" The only thing a Christian knows for sure is that there is enough of God's grace for all. God's grace is oceanic. That may have been the thought in Faber's mind when he wrote the words of that old hymn:

There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
Like the wideness of the sea;  
There's a kindness in his justice,  
Which is more than liberty.

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1. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, pp. 32-34.
  2. T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 220
  3. A. Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, p. 132



Noel Mason



# Dispensationalism, the Secret Rapture, and Scripture

**W**hile returning from Oregon a few days ago, I listened to a radio sermon from an earnest dispensationalist Christian. He spoke of the soon-coming secret rapture of the saints seven years before the end of the world and proceeded to elaborate on the experience of 144,000 Jewish evangelists during that period who would have more success than the Christian church since Pentecost.

I groaned. Why is it that this human nature of ours not only uncritically receives but jealously hoards doctrinal traditions which have no basis in Scripture? My mind roved over many denominations (including the one I served for over thirty years), each of which cherishes one or more nonbiblical teachings rejected by a consensus of Bible scholars of various church back-

grounds. I do not know of any Christian church which is not rightly accused of heresy by others. Bible study without prejudice and presuppositions is not only rare but perhaps nonexistent. This writer and his readers no doubt have their due share. But we are heading in the right direction if we remain sensitive to this human frailty.

Take dispensationalism. There are numerous Christians in churches, giants of faith and love who cling to the secret rapture and its analogues. Yet for decades, leading teachers in the same churches have acknowledged dispensationalism contrary to Scripture. Dr. G. E. Ladd of Fuller Theological Seminary, wrote numerous works on biblical eschatology exposing the errors of popular fundamentalist views on the end of the world. He was well received by many readers, but sometimes risked his employment and church fellowship.

In his book, *The Blessed Hope*, Ladd lists some prominent churchmen who gave up the pretribulation teaching (the idea that the church will be raptured before the tribulation precipitated by Antichrist). Here are some of them: A. J. Gordon, Nathanael West, W. J. Erdman, Henry Frost, W. G. Moorehead, Charles R. Erdman, Philip Mauro, Oswald Smith, Rowland V. Bingham, Bishop Frank Houghton, Dr. Harold J. Ockenga and G. Campbell Morgan. Why did these men reject the teaching they once cherished?

## Basic Ideas: Secret Rapture

The study of church history shows that pretribulationism and modern dispensationalism as a whole were unknown to the Christian church for eighteen centuries. Such views arose within one wing of the Plymouth Brethren 150 years ago and were quickly popularized in Britain and America. These teachers made semantical distinctions which cannot be supported by a careful study of the text. For example, they taught that the revelation (apokalypsis) of Christ (also called his epiphany or manifestation, and parousia or coming) is not the blessed hope but a secret gathering of the saints which takes place seven years before that glorious event. Anyone with a Strong's or Young's concordance can take the various key words associated with the New Testament references to the Second Advent—*apokalypsis*, *parousia*, *epiphaneia*—and find that they all mean the same event, and that that event is the one upon which all Christian hope should be centered (see 1 Ti 6:14; 2 Ti 4:8; 1 Pe 4:13; 1 Pe 1:7; 1 Cor 1:7; Jas 5:7-8; 2 Pe 3:4; 1 Th 4:15-17).

## Daniel's Seventieth Week

The idea of a secret coming seven years before the end is derived from a severance of Daniel's seventieth week from the preceding sixty-nine. But what textual reasons can be offered for such an arbitrary procedure? The verb translated

by Desmond Ford



## Daniel—This is Your Life

*by Gillian Ford*

Time passed and Daniel died. More time went, some hundreds of years, and it was time for Jesus to die. And when he rose and went to heaven, the Bible tells us there was a resurrection, a raising back to life, of some of the wonderful saints of old. No doubt Daniel was among them.

I want you to imagine Daniel arriving in heaven, about to face his judgment. Maybe it could have happened like this.

Perhaps Daniel was standing outside the door of the Judgment Hall, feeling very nervous. His stomach was somewhere up around his eyebrows and sort of fluttering up and down. But then maybe the door opened and a beautiful heavenly being called him in, announcing in thunderous terms, "Come in, Daniel, beloved for the Master's sake — THIS IS YOUR LIFE!"

aniel wandered in onto the stage and looking around saw a massive crowd watching him from the gallery. How they cheered when he walked in.

He was shaking in his socks, but the beautiful angel (whose name turned out to be Bill Lonahue), whispered in his ears not to be afraid — it was going to be a breeze. When the cheering died down, Bill Lonahue took the microphone and began to tell the audience all about the man before them.

"This man," he said, "is one of the finest members of the human race. He is one of the greatest of the prophets and was given privileged information about the future in detail unprecedented in history and never to be repeated in the future. It's true that when our Lord Jesus came, he made the words of Daniel's book clearer and applied their message not just to the Jews, but to the whole world. Nevertheless, of all the books

in the Old Testament, our Lord mainly used Daniel's book to explain the meaning of his coming and to describe the end of the world.

"But," Bill Lonahue continued, "apart from the book published about Daniel, we should also look closely at the man himself. Threatened with death many times, this man remained faithful to God under the most trying of circumstances. I am very proud today to have the privilege of sharing with our audience one of the greatest of lives the world has ever seen. So Daniel, as an angel once said, 'You are a man greatly beloved.' Daniel — THIS IS YOUR LIFE!"

"Now Daniel," said Bill, "there's a sweet lady you haven't seen for many, many years since you were torn away from her arms at the time of the Babylonian captivity. With the chief princes of your country, you were taken prisoner and that was the last time she saw you at about the age of twelve. But she's never forgotten you, Daniel. And in honoring you, we also honor her — for it was her faithfulness to you in your early years that gave you a large part of your character and ability to withstand evil."

A gentle sweet voice came from the offstage microphone, "Is that my little Danny boy?"

"Mother," cried Daniel. His face shone with anticipation, as from a door on the right of the stage came a beautiful looking woman. Daniel ran to meet her and they hugged and cried. Then they sat down on a seat in the center of the stage, so that his mother was able to watch Daniel's triumphal hour with him.

Another voice came from offstage. "I tried to tell him he'd be in trouble if he didn't eat the king's food, but he wouldn't listen."



Daniel's face lit up. "It's Ashpenaz, King Neb's servant. What a good friend he was to me in Babylon." So onto the stage came Ashpenaz.

"Now, Ashpenaz," said Bill Lonahue, "what was it that Daniel ate that made him ten times more intelligent than the others at Neb's court?"

"Well," said Ashpenaz in a high-pitched voice, "He didn't want any rich and spicy foods, which were mainly meats offered to idols. 'Just lentils and vegetables will do,' he said. I thought they'd put him to death for refusing the king's food but it actually turned out for good. He was a wonderful advertisement for a simple diet."

From the offstage microphone came a growl and a strange voice said, "He made me a vegetarian too. Those princes in Babylon were the last meat I ate."

Daniel smiled and pulled a quizzical face. He couldn't work out who it could be.

Said Bill Lonahue, "Daniel, your life even made an impression on animals. That was the voice of one of the lions in the den."

"One of my darling pussycats," said Daniel. The lion bounded onto the stage — no chains, no bars, no snarls. Rushing up to Daniel, he put his paws on his shoulders and licked him on the nose. Pat, pat, went Daniel with a tear in his eye.

"It appears," said Bill Lonahue, "that C. S. Lewis was correct when he surmised that animals will be able to talk in heaven. You can see that this lion was very impressed by Daniel and his courage in the lion's den. Like the other lions, he was furious with the false princes who were thrown in the next day. But they were the last meat he ate. For he heard the lion-keepers talking about Daniel and how he refused to eat the king's food. And he decided he wanted to be like Daniel."



*Daniel meets his mother*

"That's right," said the lion in his throaty voice, his paw around Daniel's shoulder. "I heard Daniel there at the top of the pit, so upset when we ate the men who put him there. That day I learned what it meant to love your enemies. From then on, I ate no more meat and they had to put me out in a field where I ate grass. I was no more use to them in the jail, but I ended up being set on the palace steps as a tourist attraction."

"I've heard you are a fulfillment of prophecy," said Bill Lonahue.

"That's right," said the lion, "It foretells, in the book of Isaiah, that there would be lions like myself in heaven that would eat straw and lie in the same field as a lamb."

Then over the offstage microphone came a song sung by a trio — it was that well-known hymn, "Worthy, worthy, worthy is the lamb."

"Oh," said Daniel, smiling at Bill. "That must be the three worthies."

And on they came — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They told the whole story of the fiery furnace and showed the audience the clothes they'd worn that day and the bonds that had tied them. All could see there were no burn marks. "It was Daniel's faithfulness that inspired us to do it," they said. "He told us God was faithful and he would deliver us. And he was right."

The next voice that came over the microphone, rang with a majestic, kingly tone. "I once was a cow, but look at me now."

"Ha, ha!" said Daniel, "that must be Neb." And in walked the once-proud King Neb. But as Daniel began to bow down in front of him, Neb. drew him up. "We only bow to Jesus here," said Neb.

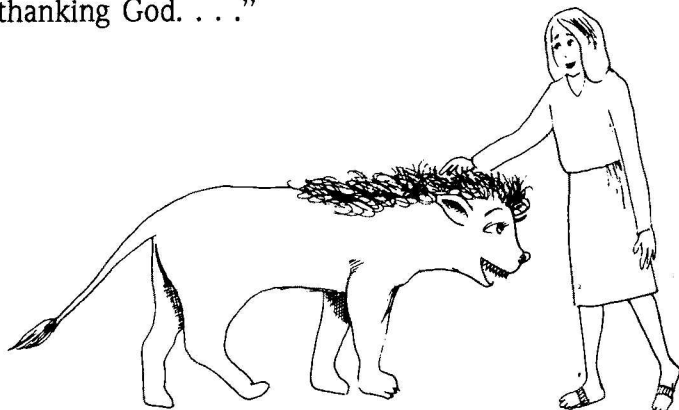
"What did you think of Daniel, King Neb?" asked Bill.

"Not much at first. I thought he was a bit of an upstart refusing to eat my food. But the boy grew on me. He was so clever and wise — could even tell me my dreams when I couldn't remember them. But you know, it was one of the greatest wonders of the world that I got up here to heaven — and it was largely because of Daniel's example. You see, we captured all these Jews and thought we'd teach them a thing or two. But the greatest lessons in my life, I learned from Daniel and his God. We were pagans. We had many gods who were a pretty useless bunch. I was a very proud and cruel man. Daniel showed me a different God, one who was full of love and kindness.

"Of course, I didn't want to know for years, but God fixed me. One day I went a bit mad, you know. I became like an animal and they had to put me in a field — it lasted seven years. Then I seemed to come

to myself. I rolled on my back with misery and as I looked up in the sky, I suddenly accepted Daniel's God as Master for the first time. Life was different after that. Thanks a lot Daniel for all you did."

"Don't thank me," said Daniel. "You should be thanking God. . . ."



***Daniel meets one of his darling pussy cats***

He was interrupted by the offstage microphone again. It was a beautiful voice, with ringing tones unheard on earth. "Daniel, greatly beloved, I have come to make you understand."

Bill Lonahue turned to the audience. "Folks, we are very proud to have with us tonight, for a one-time appearance, the angel Gabriel. He has canceled literally hundreds of engagements to be here with us tonight. This angel from the right hand of God, took several messages to Daniel in answer to his prayers and we welcome him to our program tonight."

On came Gabriel looking absolutely gorgeous in shining white.

"Gabriel," said Lonahue, "we are very honored to have you here tonight. We know there are many calls on your time day and night."

"No problem," said Gabriel, looking very relaxed, "it's a rare privilege to be able to honor a human being. Most of them are not a patch on Daniel, though we love them all. But here you have a man truly beloved in heaven. You could say he was our man for the times. It wasn't that he got to heaven because he was better than most, however. But because he had these wonderful qualities — wisdom, faithfulness, obedience, humility, trustworthiness, he was so much more useful to us on earth."

"What was his secret?" asked Lonahue.

"First his mother," said Gabriel. (Here Daniel's mom blushed furiously). She was the one who taught him while he was very small to trust God and obey his commandments. She also taught him to pray and read the Scriptures. Very important you know — few mothers realize how vital it is. But all you have to do

is read his prayers to know his secret. He wasn't asking for things for himself or for his own sake. He just wanted what was God's will and best for his people. And his attitude was right. He really meant what he said and did. You'll notice that one time we came in answer to his prayers at the time he was reading the book of Jeremiah and really praying to understand it."

Lonahue continued, "For the sakes of our listeners who may not know what Gabriel is referring to, apparently Daniel was reading the book of Jeremiah where God had said that because of their wickedness, the Jews would be in captivity for seventy years under the Babylonians."

"Yes," said Daniel. "I got quite a fright when I had those dreams indicating that although the seventy years were nearly up, my people were still going to be subjected to more years of captivity and persecution under a series of other wicked kings. It was a bit of a blow. And when they mentioned that wicked little horn, far worse than any other enemy we'd had, why I actually passed out."

"So you see," said Gabriel, "even though I was terribly busy at the time, holding back the forces of evil from completely wiping out the Jews, I had a message from headquarters that I was to race on down to Daniel and cheer him up. He was absolutely overwhelmed by that naughty little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes and all the other antichrists of all the ages. I had a hard job trying to convince him that the Son of Man was coming and he had more power than any of them."

"You'll notice, folks," said Lonahue, "that Antiochus Epiphanes is not with us tonight. He's down in that other place. So, Gabriel, how did you cheer up Daniel?"

"I tried to give him the inside story on how God's providence was working behind the scenes. You see, Daniel could only see what was happening on the earth in the human realm. I told him what was going on in the spirit realm. It was a bit like taking him to national army headquarters in a country at war. There he'd be shown the plans of attack and given details on various battles. But this was a lot bigger than any country on earth. I was describing the battle between good and evil in heaven. You see, when evil fights good on the earth, heavenly angels wage a similar battle with demonic powers."

Gabriel continued. "You people here on earth can't see it, but it's very real. It's spiritual warfare. So I told Daniel what I'd been doing recently. I'd been contending with the Prince of Persia and soon would have to fight the Prince of Greece — these were spirit-powers that had some control over those leaders on

earth. We thought that if Daniel could see that we were with him and his people, that they were not alone, but we too were waging warfare and the outcome was victory in the end — he'd feel better about things. You see we knew exactly what was happening to him in the present and we also knew what was coming. However bad things got, even as bad as the little horn, the Son of Man was coming and in the end good would win."

"Now, I believe Daniel was special in another way," continued Lonahue. "Wasn't he given the greatest in the Old Testament?"

"Sure," said Gabriel. "We gave him a wonderful timetable about the approximate time the Savior would come and showed that he would be put to death violently. It was an amazing prediction and only Daniel was given as clear a picture. Of course, from Daniel's view he couldn't see it would be Jesus that would come and die. But to Christians looking back, the whole story is there in seed."

"Although I didn't understand it all," said Daniel, "it was still was a wonderful comfort to me. I was so sick at heart hearing all the bad news about those evil beasts and the little horn. I thought I couldn't bear it. But just imagine, God sent me a messenger and gave me hope and good news that a Savior would come and the story would turn out all right in the end."

"And now," said Lonahue, "our most important guest tonight has arrived and will be with us shortly. This is someone Daniel has dreamed about, but has never actually met in person. None of us deserve his presence and yet he has promised that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he would be present. Here he is, the promised Son of man, Jesus Christ."

A sense of awe and expectancy gripped the crowd as Jesus entered the room. Daniel ran over to him and fell on his face as one dead. It was the greatest moment of his life to meet the Promised One. The Son of man

came over and sat with Daniel and his mother and he asked Daniel, "Do you know who I am?"

Daniel said, "You are the Son of Man, but you're also God."

Bill Lonahue couldn't help interrupting here with excitement. "Folks, Daniel has hit the answer right on the button. Millions of people have got it wrong or only half right.

"There are some folks who seem to think Jesus was only an angel, but that's not true. There are folks who believe he was only a man, yes, a good man, better than any other who lived, but just a man. And it's true he was a man, but that's not all.

"There are others who believe he was born a man, but by a life of obedience, he became a god. But I say they are wrong. He was born God.

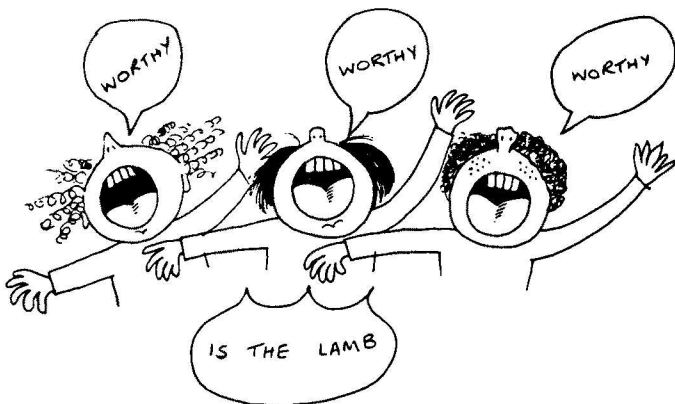
"There are some who say he was God, but forget he was also a man. Yes, folks, I want you to know that the truth is that this person, the Messiah (the one sent from God), the Son of Man, whom we know as Jesus — is both God and man. He is the God-man, one person with two natures.

"You see, only the person who made us could save us. God can't die so he took on another nature—the nature of a man—and clothed his "godness" from sight, yet didn't stop being God. He had to be both to be able to die a death that could pay for our sins.

"But," continued Bill, "I don't want to take up all the conversation. Our time is nearly up, although eternity is about to begin for Daniel. You can see that tonight, Daniel's life has stood the test. He has been judged and passes his exam. Just one final question, Jesus. Is it because Daniel was such a wonderful man that he got to heaven? Was it on account of the fact that no sin was recorded against Daniel in the book of his name, that he made it here?"

"Oh, no," said Jesus. "Not at all. No human being, not even the few as good as Daniel, will make it to heaven by their good lives. The truth is that they don't make heaven, I take them there. And you'll remember that Daniel knew this, for in his prayer in Daniel 9 he confessed the sins of himself and his people. He said these telling words, "We do not present our prayers before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy."

"Thank you, Jesus" said Bill Lonahue. "On that final note we have to leave. Remember folks as you think on this glorious night — no one, not even Daniel, gets to heaven on the basis of their own righteousness, but only because of God's mercy and because of the death of Jesus for our sins. So Jesus, it's really **your** life. Goodnight, folks."



**Worthy, Worthy, Worthy  
...is the Lamb**



"determined" in Daniel 9:24 is a singular passive construction and guarantees, therefore, that the seventy weeks are regarded as a unit—a singular subject. The New Testament alludes to Daniel 9:27 repeatedly and applies it to specific events of the first century (i.e., destruction of Jerusalem, etc.) to events preceding the Second Advent (see Mk 13:14; 14:24; Mt 24:15; 26:28, etc.) To say, as dispensationalists do, that Daniel 9:27 applies to Antichrist's making a covenant with the Jews ignores the fact that elsewhere in Daniel the word covenant always means God's covenant. Dispensationalists also ignore the fact that the New Testament uses these words of Daniel in connection with the ratifying of the new covenant instituted by Jesus during passion week. Furthermore, the Hebrew term for "make" (Dan 9:27) means to establish something already existing—i.e., the ratification of a covenant already well known. The dispensationalist view has Antichrist both making and breaking a covenant in the same week, and insists on this despite the fact that the antecedent for the maker of the covenant is the Messiah of the preceding verses. The Messiah confirms the covenant by making the typical sacrifices to cease by the antitype of his death. The only reference in the passage to the opposing prince is one stressing his people rather than himself.

None of the foregoing comments could be seen as denying a local application of Daniel 9:24-27 to the great crisis of Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C. Just as all the "Day of the Lord" prophecies had their initial applications to the time of the prophet or soon after, so do those of Daniel. But to fail to recognize in Daniel 9:24 a portrayal of the blessings of the messianic kingdom accomplished by Messiah's sacrifice is to ignore the New Testament's application of the passage and the messianic fulfillment demanded by the themes of Daniel 9:1-23 which call for the eschatological establishment of God's covenant. Daniel 9:24-27 affirms that Jerusalem would be destroyed as a result of its

rejection of the Messiah, and our Lord himself enlarged this prophecy by his application of it to the catastrophe of A.D. 70 (see Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 21). But dispensationalists lift the blessings of 9:24 out of their context, deny that they received a fulfillment at the cross and project them to the end. Dispensationalists would be on safer ground if they realized that the Second Advent consummates what the First Advent fulfilled. Instead they allow the Second Advent to overshadow the cross.

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***The popular emphasis upon modern Israel as figuring largely in the end-time prophecies of the Bible is without foundation.***

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**Israel and Prophecy**

Dispensationalists teach that a future Roman prince will covenant with the Jews to restore their national temple service with its sacrifices. But there is not a verse in the New Testament which teaches such a thing. Dispensationalists cannot find one sentence from our Lord or his apostles which clearly teach that the Jews will become God's chosen nation again in the land of Palestine. (Keep in mind that there are more Jews in New York than in Israel, and that the Jews now in Palestine are mainly Zionists—nationalists, not believers in Holy Writ.) The idea of a literal battle of Armageddon in Palestine is also a feature of this prophetic schema.

The popular emphasis upon modern Israel as figuring largely in the end-time prophecies of the Bible is without foundation. The book of Deuteronomy (chs. 28,29) with its repeated "if" makes it plain that the promises of God to Israel were *conditional*. The New Testament tells us that Christ pronounced the severing of Israel from the divine covenant (Mt 21:43; 2 Th 2:16). The new covenant brings Gentiles into the

family of God and names them as Israelites (see Rom 2:28,29; Gal 3:29; Php 3:3). The whole book of Revelation assumes that Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, are now the Israel of God. The seven-fold candlestick of the earthly sanctuary is used as the symbol of the seven Christian churches in Asia (see Rev 1-3). The 144,000 are those who have been washed in the blood of Christ (see Rev 7:1-14). They, as "the elect," have survived the great tribulation, (compare Rev 7:14 and Mt 24:21-22). Nowhere does Scripture claim that Christians will have immunity from the trials of the last days. They are "kept" amid the storms, not mollicoddled by being lifted out of the great tribulation. When in history have the saints ever been kept free from suffering in times of war and persecution? We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom (Acts 14:22).

**Second Advent: Two Stages?**

According to dispensationalists, Christ's coming before the millennium will take place in two stages. But where does the New Testament teach such a thing? In the parables of the wheat and tares, the good fish and the bad (Mt 13), we see both Christians and non-Christians on earth until the judgment which takes place at the visible appearing of our Lord. Matthew 24:3 and 28:18-20 clearly assert that the presence of Christ would be with the disciples as they carry out the great commission even until "the close of the age."

**Unconditional Election?**

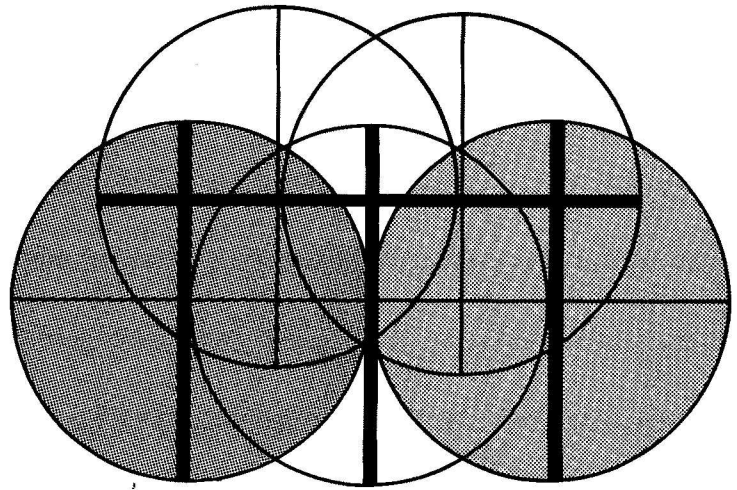
Accompanying dispensationalism's unscriptural teachings on eschatology are similar errors implying that once Christians have claimed faith in Christ, they, like Israel have unconditional election. This is contrary to many passages of Scripture (see Lk 8:11-15; 11:28; 1 Ti 4:1,16; 1 Cor 15:1,2; Lk 12:42-46; Heb 2:14; 3:6-19; 4:1,14; 6:4-9,11; 10: 23,26-31, 38; 2 Pe 1:5-11; Jn 15:1-14, etc.) As the faithless Jews were broken off the covenant tree so it will be with faithless Christians (Rom 11:17-21).

None of what I am asserting should be understood as teaching that any trembling, erring soul can be lost while he or she looks trustingly to Christ. Eternal life is sure for all who trust, but trusting is like breathing—it must be maintained. The evidence of true faith is obedience. While perfection is never available to believers, loyalty is. A careful reading of the second half of the Pauline epistles, which are loaded with ethical exhortations is surely enough to convince anyone of the error of easy-believism. Note also the letter of James and Revelation (12:17; 14:12).

### Dispensations

Prominent in the system of interpretation we are discussing is the idea that God has dealt with men differently in different dispensations—namely, the eras of innocence, conscience, civil government, promise, law, grace, the kingdom. But such a paradigm is forced upon Scripture. The writers of the New Testament make *one* distinction—the way the grace of God was made known before the coming of Christ and the way it was manifested after (see 2 Cor 3).

True, Scripture does urge us to rightly divide the word of truth. But dispensationalism is repeating the error of ancient Judaism which led them to crucify Christ. The medieval church committed the same error and crucified Christ afresh. What do we mean by that? The Jews looked for a political Messiah to deliver them from the yoke of Rome and to give them a literal kingdom. They literalized the Old Testament promises of redemption. While the Old Testament abounds in predictions of the glories of the messianic kingdom, those predictions stress the reign of righteousness more than the reign of things. The promises, despite their symbolic trappings, are nonetheless spiritual. But spirituality was the one thing Israel lacked at the first advent of Christ (see, for example, Jn 6:60-66). Wherever religion puts the form above the spirit, the trappings above the essence, the visible above faith and the evident above hope—there we have carnality—not the



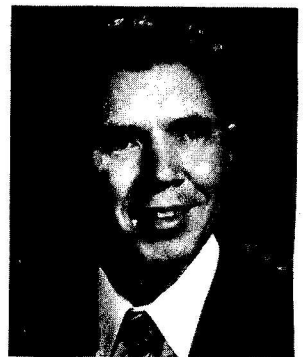
religion of Scripture. The lusting after a tangible Jewish kingdom here and now with a visible temple, partakes of the same spiritual disorder that ruined ancient Israel and crucified the Son of God, who offered no deliverance from the Romans but from sin. In the Middle Ages the popular church pursued the same error by applying the privileges of literal Israel to itself and claiming an earthly kingdom with a visible king, a literal sacrifice (the Mass), literal holy water, literal incense, literal priests, etc. The Old Testament prophecies were again applied literally, and the New Testament's spiritual application of such passages were ignored (see Acts 3:18,24; 13:27,29,33; Jn 7:37-39; 2 Cor 6:14-18; 1 Pe 2:4-10; Jn 6:58; Lk 22:29 and the whole book of Revelation which applies the literal things of old Israel to the Christian church).

### The Spiritual Nature of the Gospel

The basic error of modern Western religion is the failure to give priority to the spiritual nature of the gospel of Christ. Positive thinking, possibility thinking, the health and wealth gospel, the name it and claim it heresy and the varied forms of Dispensationalism, have bypassed the cross and Pentecost which established a spiritual kingdom and spiritual blessings perceived now only by faith. During "the sufferings of this

present time" when "the whole creation groans together in travail," believers have but "the first-fruits of the Spirit" and live by faith in the invisible Lord Christ. God's Israel, likewise, is discernible only to the eye of faith, and in the great crucible of the coming tribulation, she shall survive knowing that "hope that is seen is not hope," and that faith is "the evidence of things unseen."

Good News Unlimited, like Paul, would like to be "all things to all men." But again, like the apostle, it is not always possible. Truth brings a sword. May we, therefore, plead that there are two mistakes the Lord's people should studiously avoid—tolerance of any doctrine that threatens the gospel and intolerance in matters of small importance. It may be that like Christ we shall be accused of dividing the people, but if the charge is similar, in principle, to that leveled against our Lord, we shall wear it as a crown.



DESMOND FORD



Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Is 7:14, NASB)

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Is 7:14, RSV)

Christians believe Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, apart from human sexual intercourse. This belief is called the Virgin Birth. It is not my purpose in this study to question the integrity of the virginal conception of our Lord. Rather, I want us to explore the meaning of Isaiah 7:14 in its original setting and then seek to understand how this text was used by Christians to witness to the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ.

Matthew uses Isaiah 7:14 as a proof text to support the Virgin Birth (Mt 1:23). Most of us do not even know the historical setting of the passage in Isaiah. Like Matthew, we see this verse primarily as a reference to Christ. Without denying this, let's reconstruct the setting of Isaiah 7:14.

The setting is Judah (the southern portion of the divided kingdom of Israel). The time is roughly 735 B.C. King Ahaz is on the throne and he's in big trouble. Judah is being attacked by Ephraim (the northern kingdom) and Syria (II Kgs 16:1-9), Edom is stirring in the south (II Kgs 16:6), and the ever-present Philistines assert themselves in the west (II Chr 28:18). Judah is surrounded by enemies. Ahaz panics and is about to ask Assyria for help when Isaiah confronts him, saying, "Keep calm, have no fear, do not let your heart sink. . . ." (Is 7:4). Ahaz is to trust in Yahweh, the God of Israel, and not rely on outside help. If he does not do this, he will fall (7:9).

Isaiah invites Ahaz to ask for a sign of God's saving presence, but he refuses: "I will not put the Lord to the test" (Is 7:12). Though this

answer sounds very pious, it's a facade. *Sometimes unbelief will wrongly ask for a sign; sometimes it refuses a legitimate sign.* Ahaz knows that if he consents to a sign from the Lord, he is obliged to follow God all the way. This he will not do, so he rejects Isaiah's offer.

In frustration, Isaiah says God will give Ahaz a sign anyway! "The Lord himself will give you a sign. It is this: the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel" (Jerusalem Bible). Before this baby has grown significantly, Ephraim and Syria will be demolished (Is 7:16-17). In other words, this child will be a sign of God's saving presence, reminding Ahaz that Yahweh is Judah's protector and will keep his people from annihilation.

This theme is again echoed in Isaiah 8:1-4. Here Isaiah's son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, is similar to Immanuel in that he signals the impending destruction of Judah's invaders.

What are some conclusions we can reach from this brief historical survey? First, a close reading of Isaiah 7:14 in Hebrew reveals that the word "virgin" is not there. The Hebrew word sometimes translated "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 literally means "young woman" or "maiden" and does not stress virginity. The *original meaning* of Isaiah 7:14 probably did not include a virginal conception at all. However, later Christian interpreters, under the guidance of the Spirit, used this verse to support their belief in the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah no doubt is referring to a woman *during his time*. This woman is pregnant and will soon give birth to a son who is to be a sign of God's presence. Lastly, Isaiah 7:14 did not create the idea of the Virgin Birth. More likely it was used by Matthew to illustrate it. Luke also stresses the Virgin

Birth but without reference to Isaiah 7:14 (Lk 1:27, 34-5).

But who then is Immanuel? We don't know. Some interpreters feel Immanuel refers to Hezekiah, Ahaz' son, who succeeded Ahaz and who displayed a sensitive, religious spirit. In this case, Immanuel represents a soon-coming Davidic prince who will perpetuate the Davidic line and thus insure Judah's continued existence. Others, who feel "the maiden" is Isaiah's wife, view Immanuel as Isaiah's son. No one can be certain who the "historical" Immanuel was. But Christians are certain who the "spiritual" Immanuel is!

Matthew sees in Immanuel a type of Christ. Just as the Immanuel of Isaiah's day (whoever he was) signaled the saving presence of God, so Jesus will "save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). It's not that Isaiah 7:14 "predicts" the Virgin Birth. Rather, Matthew sees a *correspondence in function* between the historical Immanuel and Jesus Christ. Matthew reminds us that the original meaning of a particular text does not necessarily exhaust that text's meaning for later generations. One must leave room for inspired reinterpretation. For Christians, this inspired reinterpretation is the NT itself.

As Matthew reads Isaiah 7:14 he sees Christ. Operating under inspired hindsight, Matthew sees Jesus as "God with us." In Jesus Christ, God has visited his people to deliver them. Jesus is the "sign" that the saving powers of the kingdom of God are at work throughout the world, bringing healing, liberation, peace and justice. This is what we celebrated just a few weeks ago when we sang, "O Come, O Come Immanuel." Immanuel has come!



## Books in Review

### The Conquest of Fear

reviewed by Desmond Ford

*The Conquest of Fear*, M. F. Graham, M.D., published by Nightsounds, 1984, 124 pages.

Here is an up-to-date relevant book if ever there was one. Dr. Graham tells us his theme in the title of his volume, yet the subtheme has to do with defense against America's greatest killer—coronary heart disease.

In autobiographical style, Dr. Graham tells of his own encounter with CHD and fear, and his chosen methods of counter attack. As with other experts in the field, he sees poor diet, lack of exercise and excessive tension as "the big three" which threaten the life and well-being of modern man. But he goes further. He calls upon the strengths of the Christian faith as the best antidote to stress, as well as the primary motivators for a Christian's stewardship of health.

In such facts as the following every reader will find challenge:

1. An apparently healthy male runs a one-in-five chance of developing overt CHD before he reaches sixty-five.

2. Forty percent of initial coronary attacks bring death within the first four to six weeks, and about half of these fatalities take place within the first hour. Of the rest who make a fair recovery, more than one-fifth will be dead within five years.

3. One-fourth of the adult population of the USA may have heart disease.

4. CHD is often well-advanced in one's twenties. Seventy-seven percent of U.S. soldiers in Korea, when autopsied, showed evidence of the disease. No wonder Graham speaks of this threat as "a hangman who spends years and years building a scaffold and tying a noose only to spring the trapdoor in one split second" (p. 26).

This reviewer was grateful for the fact that Dr. Graham in his warnings did not point to foods rich in cholesterol as the sole culprit. He points out that the carbohydrate content of the diet may be equally important.

Graham echoes many researchers who contend that refined and simple carbohydrates such as table sugar, jams and jellies, pastries, etc., may be even more to blame for heart disease than excessive saturated fats. Readers should remember that *unrefined* carbohydrates are the only food staple where excess brings little danger.

Another plus is the author's insight into the fact that exercise is not merely a physiological conditioner, but of great psychological benefit in counterbalancing life's inevitable stresses. Says Graham:

The heightened pulse rate and blood pressure, the increased muscle tension, the increased levels of hormones and fats and sugars in the blood, all are preparatory to enabling the organism either to fight or flee from the threat—a protective mechanism. In a society where fight or flight is often verboten, taboo, social suicide, such bodily reactions are bottled up inside over lengthy periods, with the result that blood lipids remain elevated, as do blood pressures and pulse rates, all factors that predispose one to a heart attack. (p. 45)

The natural and acceptable outlet for fight or flight is physical exercise, as vigorous as time and conditions permit. In the aftermath of muscular action pulse rates and blood pressures fall, blood lipid levels come down, and tension melts away. Why? Because, physiologically speaking, leisure-time physical activity is the precise equivalent of fight or flight. Thus may one

on a tennis court or a track release the pentup storehouses of tension and come away just as though he had done physical combat with or had run from the stress of the day. He "unstretches" himself. He relaxes. He releases. He gives outlet to the physiologic and mental processes stored up within him and comes away a different man. In the aftermath of vigorous physical pursuit, resting pulse rates are slower, blood pressures lower, muscles pleasantly "unlaxed," the mind unwound. The potentially noxious, though physiologic, materials that have responded to the call of muscle and sinew—the lipids, the sugars, the catechols, the other hormones—have been utilized. Their tension-producing effect has been soundly punctured. (p. 47)

However, because we are spiritual beings whose tendency to ecstasy or gloom, optimism or pessimism is chiefly triggered by our worldview, Dr. Graham emphasizes the indispensability of Christian faith. Typical of the writer's gifted style is the following as he points to the positiveness of true religion.

True faith in a risen Christ wears a splendorous robe of all the colors of the rainbow! It is springtime is Easter. It dazzles the mind's eye, as a field of mixed daffodils, bluebonnets, and winecups atop a thousand green-capped hills. It is music born of a heavenly chorus, too splendorous for the human ear fully to appreciate. It swells within the heart and bursts in a tumult of glorious counterpoint and melody. (p. 66)

In the merciful providence of God, Dr. Graham through a new lifestyle drastically changed the medical prognosis for himself, and all who read his book and heed it may do the same. (The book is available from Nightsounds, Box 29, Wheaton, IL 60189.)

## Questions and Answers

### **Q. Are Christians still under the schoolmaster of the law?**

**A.** The inquiry has reference to Galatians 3:24,25 which reads: "So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian." Thus, it is abundantly clear that Christians are NOT under the law.

But certain questions remain. What does it mean to be "under the law" and what is meant by law? Because of creeds, catechisms, and Christian customs, Christians usually think of the Decalogue when they hear the word "law," but is this what Paul was thinking of? If one does what one should always do in matters of this kind—read the entire context—some relevant facts will stand out. For example:

1. Paul is speaking primarily about the transition from the Jewish age to the Christian (see 4:1-7, 21-31). He affirms that Judaism was a preparatory system and that only Christianity is the mature enduring faith.

2. The law about which Paul speaks is said to have been "added because of transgressions" till Christ should come (see 3:19). Transgressions of what? The whole letter emphasizes that "the flesh with its passions and desires" (5:24) finds its subduing only in the gospel and such transgressions as listed in 5:19,20—immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like cease only when one has received Christ's indwelling Spirit. So the law that was added must have been a temporary system originating in the need to underline to man his transgression and suggest its cure. People under this system received circumcision according to 6:13, and would not eat with non-Jews—(see 2:12ff). They cherished "the book of the law" (3:10)—and by the term "law" understood the record

of Judaism's institution and the history of their ancestors. Thus, in 4:21 we read: "Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons. . . ."

3. The Decalogue is not named once in this letter, but circumcision comes to the fore a dozen times. Of course the Decalogue is part of the revelation from Sinai referred to in 3:17 and 4:25, but there is no Christian who believes that the dispensation launched at Sinai was bereft of any enduring moral obligations. The commandments to love God supremely and one's neighbor as oneself were part of the Sinaitic legislation and reechoed by Christ and Paul. Well over ninety percent of the counsel given at Sinai had to do with other matters, those purely Jewish and ceremonial. See particularly Exodus 24:9 and the following six chapters, as well as the entire book of Leviticus.

4. The concluding warnings found in 5:16 to the end of the book call for rigorous morality produced as the fruit of the Spirit—a morality in harmony with both tables of the Decalogue (e.g., idolatry named in the first table is now to be no more for the believer, or the strife and impurity condemned in the second table).

It cannot be said too strongly or repeated too often that the term "law" in both Testaments is much broader in its meaning than just the Ten Commandments. The only place in all of Scripture where it is beyond controversy that the term means only the Decalogue is Exodus 24:12, and here we have a specialized rather than a normal use.

Are Christians then under the schoolmaster of the law? Paul would reply: "Of course not. You do not have to be first part of the immature system of Judaism in order to become a Christian. You do not have to participate in any

of those shadows which typified the remedy for sin—circumcision, sacrifices, etc." But if we asked Paul whether the principles of the Decalogue as interpreted by the New Testament and written on the heart by the Spirit are of significance, he would surely answer "circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God is everything" (1 Cor 7:19, see also Mt 19:17-19).

The Christian religion is one of the spirit rather than of legal requirements, but it does not, therefore, lend itself to illegal behavior. A husband and wife who need a set of rules to preserve their marriage have a very shaky relationship. But a marriage that does not assume without question the binding nature of moral obligation has a relationship more shaky still.

—Desmond Ford

### **Q. Do you think that an earthly temple will be built in Palestine in fulfillment of some of Ezekiel's prophecies? (Eze 40-48)**

**A.** Some Christians do, but I think this view is challenged by the entire N.T. For example, the book of Hebrews clearly teaches that the death of Christ has nullified all sacrifices forever (Heb 10:18). It also teaches that the Christian church composed of both Jew and Gentile has inherited the kingdom of God (Mt 21:43; 1 Pe 2:9,10). The Jewish nation forfeited that privilege when it rejected Jesus as Messiah. Furthermore, the writer of Revelation creatively adapted the prophecies of Ezekiel and applies them to the church (Rev 21:9-22:5). One can't help but note that he has removed all traces of Judaism. In John's description of the earth renewed he specifically says that there was no temple there (Rev 21:22). The Christian view of the future must be based on John's new visions (Rev 1:1-3,10;4:1-2;5:1;6:1;8:2;10:1, etc.).

—Noel Mason

## Letters

### Bringing Light and New Hope

Sirs:

Thank you for the books, magazines, and tapes that we recently ordered and have received. What a blessing, that the gospel message in this age of distress and darkness is encircling the world and bringing light and new hope into the lives of people who would otherwise be "without hope and without God in this world."

We were particularly happy to receive your *Good News For Adventists*. Thank you for the labour you have put into this project! Enclosed with this letter is a check to cover the payment of 13 copies of the *Good News For Adventists*.

May the Lord continually bless your ministry and give each one of you renewed strength to carry on in 1986!

E.P. Denmark

### Encouraging Letter

Sirs:

Thank you so much for your nice encouraging letter. God is very good to me. I am slowly improving. The eyes are not too good but I am so thankful I can see at all.

God bless you and yours and all the staff through this year. May many souls be won to the family of God in Christ Jesus. Bless his holy name.

M.W. Long Beach, California

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~~1986~~

## New Name

GNU is now incorporated in NSW and QLD with the official corporate name of GOOD NEWS CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES LTD. It was not possible to retain the title GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED. However the magazine will still carry that name.

## Pastoral Ministry

We are happy to report that Pastor Ron Allen and Pastor Neville McKenzie have both commenced ministries for Good News Christian Ministries Ltd. Ron in South Queensland where he is developing Christian fellowships in Southport, Brisbane, and Neville in Sydney and the Central Coast area. Next issue of GNU will carry full details of meeting times and places.

## Donations

We gratefully acknowledge receipt of these anonymous gifts.

\$10.00  
\$100.00  
\$60.00  
\$200.00  
\$500.00  
\$77.45  
\$100.00  
\$200.00  
\$20.00

## Office Address

The street address of Good News Christian Ministries is different from last years. It is now, 1/1681 Pacific Highway Wahroonga, 2076. The Postal address remains the same. Phone No. is (02) 48 6686.

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