

The Day of Redemption

End of the Age

The disciples asked Jesus what the sign would be for "the end of the age" (Mt 24:3). He had previously explained that "the harvest is the end of the age" (13:39). He answered it would be "when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet" (24:15). Jesus cited Daniel as a prophet which shows that God had predicted the future long ago. In fact, because it was "through Daniel" (:15) it means that Gabriel had proclaimed the message to him and Daniel had recorded it. He related "on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate" (Da 9:27). Peter stated "we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention" (2Pe 1:19). He said prophecy came by "men moved by the Holy Spirit" (:21). Daniel received revelations about the distant future, for example when serving Darius he prophesied, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away" (Da 7:14). He also studied and "observed in the books [Jer 25:11-12; 29:10] the number of years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem" (Da 9:2). He explained that his approach was to give "my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications" (:3). Another time he was told by God's messenger that "from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words" (10:12). During the encounter Daniel looked up (:5) and "alone saw the vision" (:7). He reported "I retained no strength but I heard the sound of the words" (:8-9). In a previous prophecy he was told "a prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" (9:26) which would be the Roman general Titus at Jerusalem in 70 AD. In this case he was told "you are to know and discern" (:25) and that "even to the end there will be war" (:26). "The word of God is . . . able to discern" (Heb 4:12). However, one time he replied "I heard but could not understand" (Da 12:8). Then he was told, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time" (:9).

In one prophecy Daniel was told "those who have insight will understand" (Da 12:10). Peter emphasized to "pay attention" (2Pe 1:19) to the prophetic word. Jesus asked his disciples, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes" (Mt 13:51). Daniel comprehended as when "a message was revealed to Daniel . . . and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision" (Da 10:1). Daniel paid attention. Jesus was sad to recount that, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes" (Lk 19:42). Passover and Pentecost happened in one day. He continued saying "the days shall come upon you . . . because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (:44). His advice is "be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" (Mt 24:44). The wise thought about it and "took oil in flasks along with their lamps" (25:4) and because they were ready "went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut" (25:10).

Everlasting

Jesus told Nicodemus, "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:15). Jesus told them, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (10:28). He offers it since he "alone has immortality" (1Ti 6:16). "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). Why was the offer made in this way? Was life so miserable that any possibility of escape appealed to people? Consequently, Jesus "through death . . . [did] release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb 2:14-15). "The wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23). Jesus paid the price of redemption but you have to accept the gift to have eternal life. He told them, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (Jn 8:24). He said that the ones who reject the offer "will go away to everlasting punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Mt 25:46). "Those who do not obey the gospel . . . shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2Th 1:9). Spiritual death is separation from God. Jesus told them, "It is better for you to enter into life maimed . . . [than] to go to hell into the fire that shall never be quenched" (Mk 9:43). In verse 48 Jesus equates their condition to "the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me, for their worm does not die" (Isa 66:24). The "worm" refers to man's eternal spirit. Does that imply that when God creates a person it is on a permanent basis such that those who accept salvation go on to heaven and those who reject it spend eternity separated from God? In Jesus' parable both Lazarus and the rich man died. The latter "being in torments in Hades . . . saw Abraham afar off" (Lk 16:23) and was told "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed" (:26). He was warned, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (:31).

Jesus stated, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). However, the spirit transcends the flesh. Jesus "being put to death in the flesh" (1Pe 3:18) "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself" (Heb 9:14). "With the heart a person believes" (Ro 10:10) which is the "inner man" (Eph 3:16). Man is composed of "spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23). "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground" (Ge 2:7) which is the body. The brain is a physical organ and we make decisions with our intellect. But you "believe in your heart" (Ro 10:9) which is from another capacity. That source is from when God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Ge 2:7). Job said the "Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4). You could limit God's creation if you only considered Solomon saying "they all have the same breath" (Ecc 3:19) or Isaiah stating, "Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils" (Isa 2:22). But a distinction is made by Solomon saying, "Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?" (Ecc 3:22). He says "man goes to his eternal home" (12:5) and "the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (:7). Zechariah states that it is the Lord who "forms the spirit of man within him" (Zec 12:1). He is the "Father of spirits" (Heb 12:9). Moses referred to the Lord as "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num 27:16). Jesus "became a life-giving spirit" (1Co 15:45) and "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20:22). Therefore be careful of an "unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (Heb 3:12).

Location of Heaven

In a section of a book by a Bible teacher of a critique of another teacher's article he argues against theological presuppositions which do not allow the text to speak for itself. There must be solid exegesis, especially with the subjects of the Rapture and Second Coming. There are groups, for instance, which are based on when the Rapture will occur in relation to the Tribulation and when the Second Coming occurs relative to the Millennium. They all utilize the scriptures so as to support their own interpretation just as religions each have their own explanation of existence. The teacher used hermeneutics and I noticed all the colloquialisms used which reflect his thinking. They represent the depth of the analysis as well as how drawing conclusions can get muddled if proper exegesis takes second place to presumption. For example, he said a meaning had to be established by describing it provided it was acceptable, intended, and the usual message. It is to be taken as if spoken in a meaningful sense so it is a probable interpretation of what it means. Other phrases used involve the meaning in the original language being the key evidence to a correctly applied understanding. The context demands settling on and proving the acceptable position. There should be general agreement, examples would demonstrate it, and there would be lexical confirmation. Other phrases used are that a sense of the phrase under consideration has to do with the idea and notions about it as seen in the light of what it connotes and what is conveyed. Other wording warns of improper exegesis which goes against scriptural parallels, arguments are inconclusive or run counter to standards, purported pronouncements are unreliable, precipitous claims are made, or invalid logical leaps are taken and results are inconclusive. All these aspects and cautions reveal what pitfalls are possible and how these subjects are especially sensitive.

You have to piece together all the clues. At the last of his ministry Jesus revealed everything necessary to the extent that "His disciples said, 'Lo, now You are speaking plainly, and are not using a figure of speech'" (Jn 16:29). He had said, "From now on you shall not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Mt 23:39). He spoke of the Second Coming. He said, "Again a little while, and you will see Me" (Jn 16:16) but some of the disciples said, "We do not know what He is talking about" (:18). Consequently at the Olivet Discourse they asked, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Mt 24:3). "Jews ask for signs" (1Co 1:22), and again, the Second Advent was the subject. Previously Jesus had comforted his disciples saying, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places . . . [and] I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:2). The location is heaven. He continues saying that he will then "come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (:3). But Thomas questioned, "We do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?" (:5). Of course later on "He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Ac 1:9). Then two men in white said, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you in heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (:11). Again, heaven is the location.

Your Inheritance

God's plan of redemption began when he "put enmity . . . between your seed and her seed" (Ge 3:15). Moses said, "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance" (Dt 32:9). Israel was the product of Eve's seed because "she was the mother of all the living" (Ge 3:20). Moses said that Israel was "Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness" (Dt 9:26). "We [also] have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:11). "Since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions . . . those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal promise" (Heb 9:15).

God has "qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints" (Col 1:12) which is an "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5). We are "to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven" (1Pe 1:4). "The reward of the inheritance . . . is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Col 3:24). We have been "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1Pe 1:3). We are therefore to "hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (Heb 3:6). "We have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (:14).

Paul said that the Lord "will award to me on that day [a crown] . . . but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2Ti 4:8). But they had a "need of endurance" (Heb 10:36) in order that they "may receive what was promised" (:36). "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord . . . [and] strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (Ja 5:7-8). For if the vision "tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay" (Hab 2:3). In a very little while, He who is coming, will come, and will not delay" (Heb 10:37). "Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Nu 23:19). "The Lord is not slow about His promise" (2Pe 3:9).

Overcome

Christ says that, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev 3:21). It is not just a one-way street. "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1Pe 2:21). It is "a hope sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever" (Heb 6:19-20). Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). Paul explained "I run in such a way, as not without aim" (1Co 9:26) so that he would "win" (:24) and not "be disqualified" (:27). Jude said to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). "Violent men take it [the kingdom of heaven] by force" (Mt 11:12). "Prepare your minds for action" (1Pe 1:13) and "be self-controlled and alert" (5:8). "Have [your faith] as your own conviction before God" (Ro 14:22). "The testing of your faith produces endurance" (Jas 1:3). Trials occur "so that your faith . . . may be proved genuine" (1Pe 1:6-7). "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (1Co 13:5). Then "set your hope fully on the grace to be given you" (1Pe 1:13). "Abide in Him, so that when He appears, you may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" (1Jn 2:28). Jesus said, "He who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit" (Jn 15:5). He

advised let "my words remain in you" (Jn 15:7) and for them to "remain in me, and I will remain in you" (:4). He also said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love" (:10). "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith" (1Jn 5:4).

Walk in White

As a solution Jesus advised to "remember what you have received and heard" (Rev 3:3). What they had received was "the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (Ja 1:21). To "wake up" (Rev 3:2,3) is imperative. "It is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed" (Ro 13:11). Furthermore, what you remember you are also to "keep" (Rev 3:3). This is done by laying aside "the old self" (Eph 4:22), "every encumbrance" (Heb 12:1), and "all that remains of wickedness" (Ja 1:21). "Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality" (Col 3:5). "Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph 4:24) "who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col 3:10). As a result "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1Jn 1:7).

Jesus said, "You have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments" (Rev 3:4). There were only some with a right relationship. God had chosen Israel as a brand from the fire (Zec 3:2). Joshua, the high priest, was "clothed with filthy garments" (:3) and the Lord said, "Remove the filthy garments from him" (:4). Then he explained, "I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes" (:4). In Revelation he explains "they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev 3:4). Furthermore, "he who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments" (:5). "It was given to [the Bride of Christ] to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev 19:8). "When [the priests] enter at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments" (Eze 44:17) for "they shall not gird themselves with anything which makes them sweat" (:18). Sweat symbolizes human effort and Paul acknowledged that he "be found in Him, not having righteousness of my own . . . but that which is through faith in Christ" (Php 3:9). "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). They are "clothed in white garments" (Rev 3:5). "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14).