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THE PURPOSE OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL — PART II

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The previous article dealt with several background issues that are necessary to understand before the reader can fully appreciate the argument of Matthew's Gospel. The message and purposes of the book were among the items considered. This article presents the argument of Matthew's Gospel by showing how the book's component parts relate to its overarching message and purpose. In Matthew's first ten chapters, he incorporates selected historical events from the life of Christ that center around Christ's presentation of Himself as king to the nation of Israel. According to the Old Testament, the nation had the responsibility of enthroning the king of God's own choosing (Deut 17:15). Thus, Matthew records material indicating that Christ was the long awaited Old Testament heir that the nation should enthrone. Therefore, Matthew's Jewish audience should have no doubt that Christ was the Messiah predicted in the pages of the Old Testament.

In order to establish that Christ is the messianic fulfillment of what was promised to Israel, Matthew begins with a genealogy that shows Christ to be the fulfillment of the Abrahamic (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 17:1-8) and Davidic (2 Sam 7:11-16) Covenants (1:1-17).¹ Interestingly, the genealogy begins with Abraham and traces 14 generations forward to David (1:1-6a), and an additional 14 generations forward to the Babylonian Captivity (1:6b-11),² and an additional 14 generations forward to Christ (1:12-16).³ While Luke's genealogy traces Christ back to Adam, Matthew's genealogy traces Christ back

¹ Interestingly, Matthew mentions David's name before Abraham's (1:1). Matthew probably reverses the historical order because he is more interested in establishing Christ's rights as king. Christ's right to kingship has to do with his connection to the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:14-16).

² Matthew traces the genealogy through the captivity in order to show the covenant's eternal nature. Not even captivity could jeopardize the covenant.

³ Two reasons make it apparent that gaps exist in these genealogies. First, the repetition of the number 14 has to do more with employment of a literary convention for easy memorization rather than a mathematical statement. Second, when one compares this genealogy with the genealogy found in 2 Kings, Matthew leaves out many names. For example, Matthew 1:8 connects Joram and Uzziah. However, 2 Kings indicates that Jehoram (8:16), Ahaziah (8:25), and Joash (14:1) are found in the genealogy between these two names (8:16; 14:21). Similarly, Matthew 1:11 connects Josiah and Jeconiah. However, 2 Kings indicates that Jehoiakim (23:34) is found in the genealogy between these two names (21:24; 24:6).

to Abraham (1:17).⁴ Matthew begins with Abraham rather than Adam because of his purpose in showing Christ to be the heir to the nation's throne. Because Christ has the legal right to the Davidic Throne, He is the long awaited messiah. Interestingly, Matthew's genealogy also includes several Gentile women.⁵ Thus, God can use scandalous Gentile unions to further His kingdom program. This inclusion hints at a theme to be more fully developed later on in Matthew's Gospel that God's interim program subsequent to the nation's rejection of the kingdom encompasses the Gentiles.

Matthew includes the story of Christ's virgin birth to further prove Christ's identity as Messiah (1:18-25). Christ's virgin birth demonstrates His messianic identity in several ways. First, because He was supernaturally conceived, He did not inherit a sin nature (Ps 51:5). Second, His supernatural conception shows that He was an uncreated being. Third, His virgin birth exempts Him from the curse of Jehoiachin (Jer 22:24-30; 36:30). God prevented the descendants of Jehoiachin from being king by placing a curse upon them. In effect, this curse upon the royal line prevented Israel from having a king. However, this problem was resolved through the virgin birth because it allowed Christ to gain physical rights to the throne through Mary's lineage and legal rights to the throne as Joseph's legal but not actual firstborn son. Had Christ been the actual descendant of Joseph, He would have been prevented by the curse from occupying the throne since Joseph was a descendant of Jehoiachin (1:12). Fourth, Christ's virgin birth fulfilled Old Testament

⁴ The differences between the Matthean and Lukan genealogies are summarized on the following chart.

Matthew 1:1-17	Luke 3:23-28
Commences with Abraham	Commences with Adam
Descending from Abraham to Christ	Ascending from Christ to Adam
Father to son	Son to father
Women mentioned	No women mentioned
Traced through ruling Solomon and the kings of Judah	Traced through non ruling Nathan
Christ's legal line	Christ's blood line
Traced through Joseph's line	Traced through the virgin Mary's line
Christ is Joseph's legal son	Christ is Mary's physical son

Most of these differences were taken from Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 75.

⁵ These Gentile women include Tamar the Canaanite, Rahab the Canaanite, Ruth the Moabite, and Bathsheba the Hittite.

prophecy (Isa 7:14).⁶ Thus, Matthew includes the story of Christ's virgin birth to uniquely identify Christ thus showing Him to be the fulfillment of the messianic expectation.

Matthew also includes the sojourn of the Magi from Babylon to Bethlehem since this event provides even more information regarding Christ's messianic identity (2:1-12). The Magi were able to associate the star with the

⁶ Three issues are at stake in determining that Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in the virgin birth of Christ. The *first* is whether the Hebrew word *almah* means virgin. Some say that Isaiah could have easily used the word *betulah* or *na'a'rah* if he had intended to say virgin. However, these words are not technical words for virgin. *Na'a'rah* can refer to a virgin (1 Kgs 1:2) or a non-virgin (Ruth 2:6). While *betulah* can mean virgin (Gen 24:16; Judge 21:12), it does not always have this meaning. This is evidenced by the fact that these verses (Gen 24:16; Judg 21:12) have to incorporate the additional phrase "had never known a man" or "had not known a man" to clarify the word's meaning. Sometimes *betulah* can mean a widow (Joel 1:8). Thus, there is no technical word for virgin in Hebrew. However, *almah* can have the meaning virgin in all of its various uses (Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8; Ps 68:25; Song 1:3; 6:8; Prov 30:18-19; Isa 7:14). The Septuagint translators used the Greek word *parthenos*, which always means virgin, when translating Isaiah 7:14. Matthew 1:23 also uses *parthenos* when translating the verse. All things considered, *almah* means virgin in Isaiah 7:14. The *second* issue is how a distant prophecy regarding the virgin birth would be relevant to Ahaz. However, when Rezin and Pekah threatened Ahaz, they introduced two threats. First, they threatened the perpetuity of the Davidic Covenant. Second, they threatened Ahaz personally. Thus, the Lord gives two prophecies dealing with each of these threats. The promise involving the threat to the Davidic Covenant is mentioned in Isaiah 7:13-14 where God promises that any plan to destroy the Davidic covenant will be futile until the birth of the virgin born son. This part of the promise was fulfilled in the virgin birth of Christ. The reference to the house of David in verse 13 as well as the switch from the singular to the plural "you" in verses 13 and 14 make it clear that this part of the prophecy is not directed at Ahaz personally but rather to all the house of Israel. The promise involving the threat to Ahaz is mentioned in Isaiah 7:15-17 where God promises that Rezin and Pekah will be destroyed before Isaiah's son Shear Jashub is old enough to make moral distinctions. God's instruction to have Shear Jashub accompany Isaiah when he confronts Ahaz as well as the switch from the plural you (Isa 7:13-14) to the singular "you" (7:15-17) makes it clear that this part of the prophecy is not directed to all the house of Israel but rather to Ahaz personally. Thus, having a futuristic prophecy fulfilled in the life of Christ in no way damages relevance to Ahaz since this passage contains two prophecies. One prophecy deals with the distant future and the other deals with Ahaz's immediate situation. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1988), 32-37. The *third* issue is whether Immanuel (7:14) refers to Christ. This name means "God with us." This term could easily refer to Christ since Matthew routinely portrays Christ as dwelling among His people (18:20; 28:20). J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 183-84.

coming of Christ as well as to ascertain the time of Christ's coming because of their familiarity with various Old Testament prophecies (Numb 24:17; Dan 9:24-27).⁷ Thus, the sojourn of the Magi also shows how Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Such prophetic fulfillment adds credence to Christ's messianic identity. In fact, Christ's birthplace was also a specific fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Mic 5:2). Moreover, the Magi's reference to Christ as the "King of the Jews" also serves Matthew's purpose in identifying Christ as the Messiah.

The opposition of Herod to Christ's birth (2:13-23) also reveals Christ's messianic identity. The *proto evangelium* promised perpetual conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). The fact that Herod goes to such lengths to prevent the birth of Christ shows that this ancient conflict was intensifying. The intensity of the conflict shows that the ultimate seed of the woman was present in the person of Christ (Rev 12:4). Thus, the very presence of the conflict establishes Christ's messianic credentials. Moreover, Herod was persecuting Christ in order to protect his own throne. Such protection was needed because the ultimate king was present. Thus, Matthew uses Herod's ambition to protect his own throne from the ultimate king to reveal the royal identity of the Christ child.

Matthew also uses the royal family's return from Egypt (Hos 11:1) and Herod's slaughter of the Bethlehem infants (Jer 31:15) to show how Christ's life fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.⁸ A casual reading of Hosea 11:1 and

⁷ The Magi probably associated the star with the messiah because of the prophecies of Balaam (Num 24:17), who was a resident of Babylon (Numb 22:5; Deut 23:4). The Magi also knew the time of the messiah's birth because of Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan 9:24-27). Daniel gave this prophecy while in Babylon. The Magi were probably aware of Daniel's prophecies because Nebuchadnezzar had placed Daniel in charge of the religious leadership in Babylon (Dan 2:48).

Israel's History	Christ's Life	Point of Comparison/Contrast
Israel called from Egypt as a child (Hos 11:1)	Christ called from Egypt as a child (Matt 2:15)	Israel disobeyed and Christ obeyed (Hos 11:2-5)
Israel was "baptized" as a nation in the Red Sea (Exod 14; 1 Cor 10:1-2)	Christ baptized by John the Baptist (Matt 3)	Israel disobeyed within three days (Exod 15:22-26) and Christ obeyed (Matt 3:17)
Israel tempted in the wilderness for forty years (Exod—Numb)	Christ tempted in the wilderness for forty days (Matt 4)	Israel failed her temptation and Christ succeeded

Jeremiah 31:15 demonstrates that these verses are not direct messianic prophecies. Then in what sense were they fulfilled in Christ's life? One of the ways that Matthew identifies Christ as Messiah to his Jewish audience is to show how Christ's life is a successful recapitulation of Israel's past failures. In other words, because Christ succeeded in every area where Israel failed, the identity of Christ should have been clear to the nation. Thus, when Matthew indicates that Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15 were fulfilled in the life of Christ, he is actually saying that Christ succeeded in every area where Israel failed. It is in this sense that these prophecies are said to be fulfilled.

Finally, Matthew shows how the royal family's trip to Nazareth was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.⁹ The fact that Christ's life was constantly fulfilling Old Testament prophecy shows that He is the realization of the Jewish messianic expectation. An important point in Matthew 2 is the Gentile receptivity to spiritual truth (Magi)¹⁰ and the Jewish opposition to

Israel went to Mt. Sinai to receive the Law (Exod 19ff)	Christ "went up on a mountainside" and explained the Law (Matt 5-7)	Israel quickly broke the Law (Exod 32) and Christ fulfilled the Law (Matt 5:17)
Israel was called to worship God (Exod 4:22-23)	Christ was called to worship God (Matt 26:30)	Israel worshipped Baals (Hos 11:1-2) and Christ reserved worship for Yahweh (Matt 4:10)

Chart adapted from Charles H. Dyer, "Biblical Meaning of 'Fulfillment'," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, gen. eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 55.

⁹ Interestingly, the quotation found in verse 23 is not found anywhere in the Old Testament. Some note the similarity between Nazareth and the messianic title *netzer* (branch or shoot) found in Isaiah 11:1. Proponents of this position maintain that Matthew is not only drawing a phonetic connection between these two words but he is also noting the connection between the obscurity of Nazareth and the lowliness inherent in the title *netzer*. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 185. However, the word "prophets" in verse 23 is plural. Thus, Christ is drawing from a well-known Old Testament principle rather than from a single prophetic passage. This verse is simply summing up what the prophets had said rather than directly quoting any one of them. In this case, the prophets said, "that he should be called a Nazarene." In the first century, Nazarenes were despised people (John 1:45-46). Thus, Matthew is saying that the prophets predicted that the messiah would be a despised and rejected individual. This message is replete throughout the prophets. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology*, 151-52.

¹⁰ It is striking that those demonstrating spiritual sensitivity came from Babylon, which was known as the center of anti-God philosophy (Gen 11:1-9). Judaism saw Babylon as a place of evil since that is the place where the Jewish captivity took place. Matthew's point is that even the Babylonians were more spiritually sensitive than God's chosen people.

spiritual truth (Herod). This theme of Gentile receptivity and Jewish opposition hints at Israel's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer as well as Gentile inclusion in God's purposes during the kingdom's absence.

Matthew includes the ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12) since he was the first to offer the kingdom to Israel (3:2).¹¹ Thus, starting with John the Baptist, Matthew begins to trace the offer, rejection, and postponement of the kingdom motif. This theme is developed all the way through his book. The only way for his audience to understand why the kingdom has been postponed and why God is pursuing a Gentile oriented interim program in the present is to first help them understand the initial offering of the kingdom to the nation. While the Abrahamic covenant unconditionally promised the nation land, seed, and blessing, these blessings could not come to the nation until she repented. A generation could not enjoy these blessings until they obeyed. Thus, these blessings are unconditional promises with a conditional blessing. The responsibilities of the nation in order to enjoy these blessings are spelled out in the Mosaic Covenant. The nation's primary responsibility was to enthrone the king of God's own choosing (Deut 17:15). This is what John was calling the nation to do. Had the nation done this, the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant and the kingdom would have materialized (Deut 28:1-14). Like all the prophets that preceded him, John also announced imminent judgment if the nation refused to honor the terms of the Mosaic Covenant (28:15-68).

John's ministry also identifies Christ as the messiah since his activities on Christ's behalf were predicted in the pages of the Old Testament (Isa 40:3).¹²

¹¹ Because no explanatory statements are given to define the kingdom, the kingdom spoken of here must be the same one spelled out in the pages of the Old Testament. Many believe that the phrase "the kingdom of God is at hand" indicates that the kingdom was inaugurated in the ministries of John, Christ, and the disciples (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). According to this view, the announcement that "the kingdom is at hand" indicated that the kingdom was here rather than near. However, this approach alters the Old Testament meaning of the kingdom, which also contains a terrestrial element. It also ignores the Old Testament expectation that the kingdom could only arrive after the nation honored its responsibilities under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. It seems better to argue that John was announcing that the kingdom was in a condition of nearness contingent upon Israel's enthronement of her king (Deut 17:15). These verses (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7) make use of the third person singular perfect active indicative form of the verb *engizō*. Interestingly, James 5:8-9 also uses this same verb and parsing to convey the notion that the Second Coming is near rather than here.

¹² "Isaiah 40:3 refers to how 'highway construction workers' who were called on to clear the way in the desert for the return of the Lord as His people, the exiles, returned to Judah from the Babylonian Captivity in 537 B.C. In similar fashion, John the Baptist was in the desert preparing the way for the Lord and His kingdom by calling on people to return to Him." Louis Barbieri, "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2 vols., eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor,

John further identifies Christ as messiah to the nation when he describes Him as the one who will bring forth the nation's eschatological baptism in the Spirit and cleansing (Joel 2:28-29; Mal 3:2-5).¹³ These events will occur when He separates believing from unbelieving Jews at the end of the Tribulation just prior to the inauguration of the millennial kingdom (13:30; 25:31-46).¹⁴ While a remnant was identifying with John's message, the religious leaders were rejecting it. This phenomenon hints at the nation's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer and God's decision to raise up a new body in the interim phase during the kingdom's absence.

Matthew includes the events surrounding Christ's baptism since it provides even more confirmation to the nation of Christ's messianic identity (3:13-17). During these events, both John and the Father (Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1) had the opportunity of revealing Christ's true identity. The Spirit also revealed Christ's royal identity by coming upon Him in the same way that Old Testament kings were anointed. Christ's identification with the believing remnant through His baptism¹⁵ again hints at the elevation of this remnant during the interim phase after the nation has rejected the kingdom offer.

Matthew includes Christ's temptation since this event reveals His divine nature thus giving the nation further proof as to Christ's true identity (4:1-11). During the temptation, Christ was tempted to the maximum in the areas of lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and lust of the eye (1 John 2:17).¹⁶

1983), 2:25. This analogy is tightened upon understanding that both sections of Scripture are speaking of a spiritual as well as a physical preparation.

¹³ Since two nouns joined by a preposition depict these events, they should be construed as transpiring at the same time. The baptism by fire spoken of here is referred to as a cleansing work in Malachi 3:2-5. Christ's baptizing ministry as described here is unrelated to His baptizing ministry as depicted in 1 Corinthians 12:13. While the former concerns Israel in the future, the latter concerns the church in the present. John knew nothing of the church since it had not yet been disclosed. Similarly, Christ's baptizing work as described here is unrelated to the events of Acts 2 since the nation did not repent at that time but rather was condemned. Also, no baptism of fire occurred at that time. Rather, something that appeared to be (*hosei*) tongues of fire rested upon those at Pentecost (Acts 2:3). Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 186.

¹⁴ Thus, the phrase baptism in "the Holy Spirit and fire" (3:11) is explained in the following verse (3:12).

¹⁵ Christ's reference to His baptism as fulfilling all righteousness (3:15) probably refers to the fact that His baptism identified Him with the remnant that was following John. This event is referred to as fulfilling all righteousness since John is later said to have come "in the way of righteousness" (21:32). Elliot Johnson, class notes of this author in BE2021A Seminar in the Gospels and Acts, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2005.

¹⁶ Interestingly, Luke reverses the order of the last two temptations (Luke 4:1-13). While Luke seems to rework the material to harmonize with Eve's temptations

Yet, Christ successfully endured the temptation (Heb 4:15). Because no mere mortal could pass the same test (Gen 3:6), Christ obviously possessed a divine nature.¹⁷ Interestingly, Christ responds to each temptation with a quotation from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16, 13). Deuteronomy was the Law given to the second generation that was about to enter the land after the failure of the previous generation. Thus, the citations from Deuteronomy fit Matthew's method of identifying Christ by noting that He successfully recapitulated Israel's past failures. Christ quoted Deuteronomy to indicate that like the second generation He too would succeed where past Israel had failed.

Matthew's recording of the inauguration of Christ's ministry in Capernaum (4:12-25) gives him the opportunity of giving even more information revealing Christ's messianic identity. The imprisonment of John (4:12) shows the nation's mounting resistance to Christ and prepares the reader for Israel's rejection of the offer of the kingdom, which Matthew will later deal with (12:24). Christ's awaiting the imprisonment of John before starting his own ministry again reveals His royal identity. According to royal protocol, a king cannot initiate his sphere of influence until his forerunner is taken out of the way.

Christ's withdrawal to and ministry in a largely Gentile territory (4:13-16) was also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Isa 9:1-2). Matthew again uses this prophecy in a recapitulation sense. Just as Israel failed to reach the Gentiles, Christ will succeed in reaching the Gentiles. Christ will also do so when He raises up a Gentile remnant during the interim phase after Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer. Because Christ succeeds in every area where Israel failed, He is the unique messianic heir. Christ's offer of the kingdom (4:17, 23) is identical to John's offer of the kingdom (3:2). Matthew is interested in tracing the offer of the kingdom motif because the only way for his Jewish audience to understand why the kingdom has been postponed and why God is pursuing a Gentile oriented interim program in the present is to first understand the original offering of the kingdom to the nation. Christ's authority

(Gen 3:6), Matthew records the chronological order of the temptations. The repetition of the word "then" in verses 1, 4, and 10 (*tote*) and the inclusion of the word "again" in verse 8 (*palin*) demonstrates that Matthew records the proper chronology. Luke does not use any of these words and instead simply uses the word "and" (*kai*). Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 186.

¹⁷ Because Christ's human nature was linked to His divine nature, there is no way that He could have sinned even though He was tempted to sin. Thus, the theological position of the impeccability of Christ (it was impossible to sin) is superior to the theological view of Christ's peccability (it was possible for Christ to sin).

as king is also seen in His calling of the disciples to be co-proclaimers of the kingdom offer to the nation (4:18-22).¹⁸

Matthew concludes this section by noting Christ's threefold ministry of teaching, proclaiming, and healing (4:23-25). Matthew mentions this threefold impact not only because it helps further clarify Christ's identity but also because it prepares the reader for what follows. "Proclaiming" relates to the previously discussed offer of the kingdom motif (4:17, 23). "Teaching" identifies Christ as the unique messiah since He did not teach as a mere mortal but rather as one having authority (7:28-29). Christ's teaching ministry will be emphasized in the following chapters (5—7). "Healing" also identifies Christ by showing His authority over the physical realm. Christ's healing ministry will be featured in chapters 8—9. As Christ exercised this three-fold ministry a remnant of believers was beginning to form. This remnant is significant because they will be used of God during the interim period after the kingdom offer has been rejected by the nation.

The first of Christ's five discourses featured in Matthew's Gospel, called the Sermon on the Mount, is recorded in Matthew 5—7. Matthew records this sermon because it contributes to his argument in two ways. First, it proves Christ's messianic identity by not only showing that He had the right to interpret the Mosaic Law but also by displaying the authority of His teaching. Second, it contributes to the offer of the kingdom motif by showing the moral and spiritual quality of the kingdom that was being offered to the nation (3:2; 4:17, 23). Citizens of Christ's kingdom would manifest high moral caliber.¹⁹ Because Israel was far more interested in a physical and political kingdom that would overthrow Rome than they were in a spiritual and moral kingdom (John 6:15, 26), Christ's emphasis upon the moral characteristics of His kingdom sets the stage for Israel's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer.²⁰ Because

¹⁸ The calling of these disciples cannot be used as a justification text since they were already believers. (John 1:35-42). Thus, the calling recorded here is not to justification but rather to discipleship.

¹⁹ Because this sermon was preached to those who already were justified, the sermon has more to do with sanctification than justification. However, some who heard it may have been unbelievers. For them the sermon would have an evangelistic purpose by pointing out God's perfect standards (5:20, 48) and their imperfect state by comparison. The Mosaic Law and the regular sacrifices no doubt had the same impact upon any unbelievers within Old Testament Israel. For those who recognized their imperfections, all they had to do was ask for imputed righteousness and God would give it to them (7:7-11).

²⁰ Although this sermon pertains primarily to the moral and spiritual qualities of the kingdom that was being offered before Israel, it is still applicable to church age believers since they become sons or inheritors of the kingdom (13:38) in the present age even in the kingdom's absence. Some have noted that all of the great principles

Christ's kingdom emphasized inner righteousness and because Pharisaical interpretation of the Mosaic Law emphasized man-made tradition and outer righteousness, Christ was destined for an imminent "showdown" with the Pharisees.

Christ begins the Sermon of the Mount (5:1-2) by first enumerating the various beatitudes (5:3-12), which represent the moral and spiritual qualities of His kingdom's citizens.²¹ Second, Christ explains the positive spiritual influence that those who will inherit the kingdom will have on fallen culture (5:13-16). Third, Christ explains the relationship of the kingdom to the Mosaic Law (5:17-48). He begins by noting His intention of not abolishing the Law but rather fulfilling its minutest details (5:17-20). Such fulfillment refers to Christ's ability to fulfill the demands of the Law perfectly in His own character and conduct. This claim gives the nation even further clarification of Christ's messianic identity. Christ then develops six contrasts showing that inward righteousness rather than mere external conformity to Pharisaical interpretation and tradition is what satisfies the righteous demands of the Law (5:21-48).²² Christ develops these contrasts in the areas of hatred (5:21-26), lust (5:27-30), divorce (5:31-32),²³ oath taking (5:33-37),²⁴ retaliation (5:38-42),²⁵ and loving one's enemies (5:43-48).

articulated in the Sermon on the Mount are repackaged throughout the epistolary material where they are made directly applicable to church age believers.

²¹ Christ's articulation of the nine beatitudes follows a threefold pattern. First, Christ pronounces a blessing upon those possessing the virtue. Second, Christ describes the desired virtue. Third, Christ promises a blessing in the kingdom to those who possess the virtue. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 189-90.

²² These six contrasts are delineated through the repetition of the phrase "you have heard it said but I say unto you" (5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44). Because the Law regulated inward motivations of the heart (Exod 20:17; Deut 6:6), Christ was simply getting back to its original intention in the Sermon on the Mount. He was juxtaposing the Law's original intent with Pharisaical interpretation.

²³ Christ's words on divorce have to do with Pharisaical interpretations regarding Deuteronomy 24:1, which allowed a man to divorce his wife because of her commission of the "indecent thing." The Hillel school interpreted the "indecent thing" quite liberally even allowing a man to divorce his wife if she burned his food. The Shammai School interpreted "indecent thing" more strictly as pertaining to adultery. Christ's point was that if a man divorced His wife for an inappropriate reason, his actions forced her to remarry. This remarriage makes her along with the man that she married adulterers. Appropriate reasons for the initial divorce include death (Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:39), abandonment (1 Cor 7:15, 39), and adultery (Matt 5:32; 19:9).

²⁴ These verses are not a prohibition against all oath taking. Rather the point is that the believer's character should be so trustworthy that such oath taking is unnecessary.

Fourth, Christ contrasts the outer righteousness exhibited by the Pharisees with the private righteousness that the citizens of His kingdom are to manifest (6:1-18). After stating the general principle (6:1), Christ traces this contrast in the areas of giving (6:2-4), prayer (6:5-15),²⁶ and fasting (6:16-18). Fifth, Christ contrasts the financial perspective of the citizens of His kingdom with that of the Pharisees. While the Pharisees loved money and saw it as a sign of divine favor, citizens of Christ's kingdom are to place the kingdom's agenda first in their lives. When they do so God promises to meet their financial needs making anxiety over money unnecessary for citizens of Christ's kingdom (6:19-34).²⁷

Sixth, Christ commented that while the Pharisees judged one another for violations of man-made interpretations of the Law, they failed to recognize the Law's main message that only internal righteousness satisfies its demands (7:1-6). Seventh, Christ explains that the way to receive kingdom righteousness is not by laboring under the Pharisaical system of self-righteousness but rather by asking God for imputed righteousness (7:7-11). Eighth, members of Christ's kingdom also exhibit a high moral caliber by treating others as they themselves would want to be treated (7:12).²⁸

²⁵ Because an assault involves slapping someone on the left cheek, slapping them on the right cheek involves merely an insult. Thus, these verses are not saying that a believer cannot exercise self-defense when physically attacked. Rather, the context has to do with not retaliating when personally insulted. Three illustrations follow showing the believer how to follow this principle.

²⁶ In Matthew 6:9-15, Christ taught that those who would inherit the kingdom to pray a twofold prayer. First, he taught them to pray for the kingdom's manifestation on earth. This is what is meant by the terms "Hallowed be Thy Name" (Ezek 36:23), "thy kingdom come," and "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Second, He taught them to pray for certain provisions they would need in the kingdom's absence. These include daily bread, forgiveness for sins hindering practical righteousness, and divine assistance in the midst of temptation. While not altering the believer's positional status, forgiveness allows the believer to experience all that God has for him in his practical walk with God. This prayer is a concession that the kingdom had not yet been inaugurated in the ministry of Christ. Why pray for the kingdom's arrival if it was already present?

²⁷ The exhortation regarding not laying up treasure (6:19-20) does not mean that Christians should not have bank accounts. Rather, it is a question of emphasis. In other words, instead of emphasizing money, they should emphasize kingdom priorities. For similar examples exhorting emphasis rather than exclusion, see 1 Peter 3:3-4 and Romans 14:17. Stanley Toussaint, class notes of this author in BE2050A Seminar in Pauline Literature, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2004.

²⁸ The same expression "Law and the Prophets" is found in 5:17 and 7:12. This expression functions as an *inclusio*. Thus, everything in between these verses is an exposition of Old Testament revelation. In verse 12, Christ seems to be saying that

Ninth, Christ concludes the sermon by comparing His teaching on righteousness with that of the Pharisees (7:13-27). He does this by developing four sets of contrasts. Christ uses the contrasts of two roads (7:13-14), two trees (7:15-20),²⁹ two claims (7:21-23),³⁰ and two foundations (7:24-27) to show that His teaching on righteousness leads to kingdom blessing while the Pharisees' teaching on external and self-righteousness leads to destruction. The authority with which He taught amazed the masses. Instead of citing rabbinical authorities as was the didactic practice of the Pharisees, He said, "I say unto you" (7:28-29). His rejection of Pharisaical interpretation allowed Him to teach with authority thus revealing His true messianic identity to the nation. His rejection of Pharisaical interpretation also allowed Him to articulate how the moral character of the kingdom that He was offering to the nation differed from the kind of righteousness espoused by the Pharisees.

Matthew 4:23 pointed out Christ's threefold ministry of proclaiming the kingdom, teaching, and healing. Matthew emphasizes these three ministries since they all have the effect of revealing to the nation Christ's messianic identity. Matthew emphasized Christ's ministry of proclaiming the kingdom back in chapter four (4:17). Matthew emphasized Christ's ministry of teaching by recording the Sermon on the Mount (5—7). In the following three chapters, Matthew emphasizes Christ's ministry of healing.³¹ In this section, he shows that Christ has authority over every realm (8—10). Thus, the nation should embrace Him as their long awaited king.

Matthew seems to have eleven realms in mind.³² First, Matthew shows that Christ has authority over disease (8:1-17). Here, Christ heals leprosy (8:1-

treating others as you would want to be treated fulfills the Old Testament's requirements for daily conduct.

²⁹ It is too broad an application to use this verse to argue that all true Christians must manifest fruit. The immediate context deals only with the Pharisees.

³⁰ These verses indicate that a personal relationship with Christ rather than mere external righteousness is what is necessary to manifest true kingdom righteousness.

³¹ Christ's healing ministry is comprehensive. He heals publicly and privately. He heals by touch and by spoken word over great geographical distances. His miracles are tokens of the kingdom in the sense that they show how all human needs will be met in the kingdom age.

³² Some see these items arranged according to a pattern of three miracles followed by material involving discipleship. Thus, chapters 8–9 might be arranged as follows: three miracles involving healing (8:1-17), discipleship material (8:18-22), three miracles involving power (8:23–9:8), discipleship material (9:9-17), three miracles involving restoration (9:18-34), discipleship material (9:35–10:42). Mark Bailey and Thomas L. Constable, *New Testament Explorer* (Nashville: Word, 1999), 15.

4),³³ paralysis (8:5-13), fever, and other miscellaneous diseases (8:14-17).³⁴ Mathew includes the story of the healing of the centurion's servant to again show that it was the uncircumcised, occupying Gentile who demonstrated spiritual sensitivity while the nation was not similarly sensitive. This contrast hints at Israel's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer and the elevation of the Gentiles during the coming interim period.

Second, Matthew shows that Christ has the authority to call men to be His disciples (8:18-22). Here, Matthew uniquely identifies Christ as the messiah through His use of the designation "Son of Man" (Dan 7). Third, Matthew shows that Christ has authority over nature (8:23-27). Fourth, he shows that Christ has authority over the demonic realm (8:28-34). Fifth, he shows that Christ has authority to forgive sins (9:1-8). The claim to forgive sins is significant since the Jews understood that only God has this power. Sixth, Matthew shows that Christ has the authority to call men from their professions in order to be His disciples (9:9).

Seventh, Matthew shows that Christ has the authority to forgive the vilest sinners (9:10-13). Eighth, Matthew shows that Christ has the authority to usher in a superior dispensation (9:14-17). In essence, Christ told John's disciples to leave John and cling to Christ. John represented a previous dispensation but now Christ was going to usher in something superior (Acts 19:1-7). Ninth, Matthew shows that Christ has authority over hemorrhage and death (9:18-26). Tenth, Matthew shows that Christ has authority over both blindness and dumbness (9:27-34). In order to further identify Christ as the messiah to the nation, Matthew is careful to record the blind men's reference to Him as the Son of David.

Eleventh, Christ has the authority to delegate His authority to others (9:35–10:42). Christ's ambition to delegate authority to His disciples took root when Christ saw the great need within Israel as He was going about and pursuing His threefold ministry. There simply were not enough laborers to meet this vast need. Thus, He told his disciples to pray to the Lord to raise up more workers (9:35-38). The disciples then became the answer to their own prayer

³³ Christ's command not to reveal His identity (9:30; 16:20; 17:9) probably had to do with Christ's desire to prevent Israel from acting on their misunderstanding of the kingdom (John 6:15), which they saw in purely physical and non spiritual terms.

³⁴ Some see in these three miracles the entire outline of Matthew's Gospel. First, Christ ministered to the Jews and was rejected (8:1-4). This represents the offer of the kingdom that was rejected by the nation. Second, Christ ministered to a Gentile because of His great faith (8:5-13). This represents the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's interim program subsequent to the nation's rejection of the kingdom offer. Third, Christ ministered to Peter's mother in law (8:14-17). This represents the re-offer and acceptance of the kingdom offer by the nation during the Tribulation and millennium. Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King* (Portland: Multnomah, 1980), 125.

request. Christ delegated authority to them and they became “apostles” instead of merely “disciples” (10:1-4).

At this point Matthew records Christ's second major discourse. This discourse involves Christ's instructions to the disciples regarding their new ministerial task. They were to carry on Christ's ministry of healing and preaching the kingdom. However, they were to confine their work to Israel and not minister to the Gentiles (10:5-8). This limitation was put into effect because the kingdom was still being offered to the nation at this time (15:24).

Thus far Matthew has traced the offer of the kingdom in the preaching of John (3:2), Christ (4:17, 23; 9:35) and now the disciples (10:7). Matthew includes all this information because of his interest in tracing the offer, rejection, and postponement of the kingdom. As previously explained, the only way for Matthew's audience to understand why the kingdom has been postponed and why God is pursuing a Gentile oriented interim program in the present is to first help them understand how the kingdom was originally offered to the nation. Matthew concludes the mission discourse by recording more of Christ's instructions to the disciples. Here, Christ explains to the disciples that they will be provided for by those impacted by their kingdom message (10:9-15). Christ also instructs the disciples regarding the dangers of their work (10:16-25),³⁵ the proper perspective they are to have as they go about their work (10:26-39),³⁶ and the reward they will receive because of their work (10:40-42).

In an attempt to convince his Jewish audience of the true identity of Jesus, Matthew has presented incontrovertible evidence that Jesus is the long awaited messiah in his book's first ten chapters. Not only do the early events in Christ's life point to His identity (1—4:11), but so does the performance of his threefold ministry of preaching the kingdom (4:12-25), teaching (5—7), and healing (8—10). In order to lay the proper foundation for explaining the postponement of the kingdom in the present, Matthew has also carefully traced how the kingdom was first offered to Israel through the preaching of John (3:2), Jesus (4:17), and the disciples (10:7). Therefore, Matthew's Jewish audience should have no doubt that Christ was the long awaited Jewish Messiah who offered the kingdom to the nation. Although the kingdom had been rejected by Israel and postponed at the time of writing, these events should not cause His Jewish readers to second-guess Christ's true identity.

³⁵ Here, Christ explains to the disciples that they would receive the same mixed response that Christ Himself received when He preached the kingdom message. Also, 10:22-23 seems to be speaking eschatologically. Such futurism is evident from the similarities to Matthew 24:9-13, the inclusion of the word “end,” and the inclusion of the word “whenever.” Thus, this verse is not saying that Christ had to return within the life spans of the disciples. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 192-93.

³⁶ 10:32-33 is speaking of a reward rather than justification.

Matthew begins the next major phase of his argument in chapters 11–12 by tracing Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer. Because Israel was interested in the kingdom only in physical and political terms and not in the moral terms that Jesus expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, the nation was on the verge of rejecting the kingdom offer. A final split between Christ and the Pharisees was also imminent on account of His rejection of adherence to tradition and self-righteousness in order to enter the kingdom. The rejection of the offer will not become official until the nation rejects Christ at the triumphal entry (Matt 21) and hands Christ over to the Romans for crucifixion. However, by the end of Matthew 12, it becomes obvious that the nation has already made a permanent decision to reject the kingdom offer. Matthew includes this information as an explanation to His Jewish audience of how the kingdom could be absent although Christ was the Jewish king.

The nation's unbelief is foreshadowed by the unbelief exhibited by John the Baptist (11:1-15). If Christ's own forerunner was unsure of Christ's presentation of the kingdom, then what hope could there be for the nation's apostate religious leaders? While John had no doubts about Christ's messiahship (Matt 3:16; Luke 1:41; John 1:29, 31), his real question was where was the kingdom if he as the king's forerunner was in prison? John had the common Jewish understanding that the advent of the king would be concurrent with the manifestation of the kingdom. Christ comforts John by appealing to His miracles as evidence of His kingdom authority (Isa 35:5-6; 61:1), pointing to John as the greatest prophet,³⁷ pointing to John as a potential fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6³⁸ and 3:1, and calling upon John to continue trust Him even

³⁷ John was considered an Old Testament prophet. However, in what sense was he the greatest Old Testament prophet? John had the privilege of seeing Christ who was the object of his prophecies. The previous prophets did not have the privilege of physically seeing Christ although they did prophesy about Him. Also, Matthew 11:12 speaks of the kingdom being resisted and suffering violence. Some believe that the kingdom had to be present in order for it to be resisted so strenuously. However, in the parallel passage (Luke 16:16) the emphasis is on the proclamation of the kingdom. Thus, what is actually being rejected is the proclamation of the kingdom or the message of the kingdom rather than any present manifestation of the kingdom. This interpretation finds support in the verses following Matthew 11:12 where Christ equates the hardness of His generation to His message to children not pleased with the asceticism of John or the ministry of Christ (Matt 11:16-19). Stanley D. Toussaint, "Israel and the Church of a Traditional Dispensationalist," in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism*, gen. ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 233.

³⁸ Malachi 4:5-6 predicts that the nation must repent before Elijah could come. Had the nation repented, John would have been the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Because the nation did not repent, Malachi's prophecy will not be fulfilled until the future Tribulation (Rev 11:6) when the nation will turn back to the Lord.

though he did not fully understand Christ's kingdom agenda. Matthew includes John's doubts because they were the same concerns that his original readers had. In fact, John's concern is one of the major questions that Matthew is seeking to answer in His book.

Matthew continues the theme of Israel's rejection of the offer of the kingdom by noting the rejection of Christ in the various cities (11:16-30). He compares Israel's unbelief to that of children who are never pleased with anything (11:16-17). They were not pleased with John's asceticism nor were they pleased with Christ's ministry methods (11:18-19). Furthermore, while the Gentile cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom would have repented had they seen Christ's miracles, the Jewish cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum did not repent. If the Jewish cities that saw Christ's miracles did not repent, then what hope was there for the rest of the nation that was not an eyewitness to Christ's miracles? Matthew again includes this information to juxtapose Gentile receptivity to spiritual truth to that of Israel's hardness. This theme of Gentile receptivity and Jewish opposition hints at Israel's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer as well as Gentile inclusion in God's purposes during the kingdom's absence (11:20-24). This theme is expanded as Christ speaks of a remnant that would receive the truths of the kingdom in the place of wayward Israel (11:25-27). It is this remnant that Christ invites to Himself to receive rest from the Pharisaical system of self-righteousness (11:28-30).

The permanent break between Christ and the Pharisees occurs in Matthew 12. The conflict is provoked through Christ's unwillingness to adhere to Pharisaical Sabbath regulations (12:1-14). When the Pharisees complain about the disciples eating on the Sabbath, Christ refutes them by noting that while the disciples may have violated Pharisaical rules, they did not violate the original intent of the Sabbath. After all, David and the Levitical priests had engaged in similar activity on the Sabbath without being reprimanded by God. Moreover, God's primary interest is compassion rather than human regulations (Hos 6:6). Also, Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath had the authority to ascertain the commandment's original meaning. This latter point significantly assists Matthew's argument by showing that Christ is the true Jewish messiah (12:1-9).

After healing a man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees again complain. This time Christ refutes them by explaining the Sabbath's original intent was to help man (12:10-14). This chain of events allows Matthew the opportunity of showing how Christ was the fulfillment of the servant's ministry to the Gentiles (Isa 42:1-3). Once again, "fulfillment" should be understood in a recapitulation sense. While Israel failed in her mission to reach the Gentiles, Christ will succeed where Israel failed by raising up a Gentile remnant after the rejection and postponement of the kingdom (12:15-21). However, when Christ heals the demoniac (12:22), the nation's unbelief reaches a climax (12:23-24). The

people express doubt that Christ is the Son of David³⁹ and the Pharisees, unable to dismiss the miracle, attribute it to the work of Satan.

Now that the Pharisees have rejected the king and the kingdom offer (12:1-24), Christ offers a permanent indictment upon first century Israel (12:25-50). Christ begins by refuting the charge that He healed the demoniac by satanic power (12:25-37). Christ's main points in this refutation include the following: the impossibility of Satan's kingdom being divided against itself (12:25-26), the insinuation that Israel's magicians also cast out demons by Satan's power (12:27), Christ's miracles evidence the power of the kingdom of God rather than Satan (12:28-29),⁴⁰ the Pharisees' action placed them at odds with God's purposes (12:30), the Pharisees' charge caused them to blaspheme the Holy Spirit (12:31-32),⁴¹ and the Pharisees' charge emanated from their corrupt nature (12:33-37).

Christ then permanently condemned that generation of Jews who had rejected Him (12:38-50). He said that He would no longer perform any miracles on their behalf. In other words, the miracles that He had been performing to authenticate the kingdom offer would no longer be necessary since the kingdom offer would no longer be made to first century Israel. The only sign they would be given was the sign of His resurrection. While Christ's crucifixion officially ratified the Jewish nation's rejection of Christ, the resurrection would prove their decision wrong by authenticating Christ's messianic claims. Christ analogizes this sign to the sign of Jonah (12:38-40).⁴² Matthew is interested in the analogy to Jonah since he was a prophet who led a successful revival in a Gentile land (12:41). This analogy fits Matthew's theme of highlighting Gentile sensitivity against the backdrop of Jewish hardness in order to help His audience comprehend Gentile preeminence in God's interim program. Matthew

³⁹ The Greek of verse 23 conveys the idea that the people were expecting a negative answer to their question. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 162.

⁴⁰ Many argue that 12:28 teaches the presence of the kingdom. However, it seems better to see this verse as conveying a token of the kingdom. Because Israel had not yet met its obligation of enthroning her king (Deut 17:15), the kingdom could not have come (28:1-14). However, Christ's miracles demonstrated what the kingdom would have been like if Israel had met its obligations under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant.

⁴¹ The notion of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit involves a specific historical context. Christ was in Israel, offering the kingdom, performing miracles to authenticate the kingdom offer, and contending with the defiant Pharisees. Because of this specific historical context, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not reproducible today.

⁴² How could Christ have been buried three days and three nights if he was buried on Friday and rose on Sunday? It is important not to read a 21st century method of reckoning time back into the Bible. Rather, it is important to ask how the culture of the day reckoned time? To the Jew, part of a day counted as a whole day (*Shabbath* 9:3; *Esth* 4:16; 9:1; *Matt* 16:21; 17:23). Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 195-96.

also includes the allusion of the Gentile queen of the South seeking Solomon's wisdom as a contribution to this same theme (12:42).

While Israel had experienced a moral reformation through the kingdom preaching of John (3:2), Christ (4:17), and the disciples (10:7), the nation was now actually in a worse position since she had not enthroned her king. The fact that Israel had received light and rejected it placed her in a precarious position since greater light brings greater accountability (11:20-24). In the coming A.D. 70 judgment, the nation would be judged for rejecting her king (12:43-45). The Abrahamic covenant would not save that generation since Christ was not interested in those who had a mere physical relationship to the Abrahamic Covenant (3:7ff). Rather, Christ desired for the nation to repent by meeting her obligations under the Mosaic Covenant (12:46-50).

Thus far Matthew has demonstrated Christ's messianic identity (1-10). He has also traced how the kingdom was offered to (3:2; 4:17; 10:7) and rejected by Israel resulting in that generation's condemnation (11-12). Now Matthew is ready to move to the next stage of His argument where he will disclose the interim program that God will pursue in the kingdom's absence (13-20:28). This interim program includes the revelation of the kingdom mysteries (13), the revelation of the church (16:18; 18:17), and the preparation of the disciples not only to play foundational roles in the church (Eph 2:20) but also for Christ's impending death (16:21). Thus, this section involves a transition from public to private teaching, from public to private miracles, and from a formal offer of the kingdom to Israel to a focus upon the believing remnant. Matthew includes this information regarding the interim phase because it will help his Jewish audience to grasp why the kingdom is absent even though Jesus was the Jewish king and why Gentiles have been grafted in to God's present purposes.

The first aspect of the interim phase is the kingdom mysteries (13:1-52).⁴³ These kingdom mysteries represent the course of events to be experienced by the kingdom heirs or the "sons of the kingdom" (13:38) in between Israel's rejection of the kingdom and when Israel will receive the re-offer of the kingdom in the future.⁴⁴ Thus, the kingdom mysteries cover the time period in between Israel's formal rejection of the kingdom and the Second

⁴³ This discourse on the kingdom mysteries is the third major discourse in Matthew.

⁴⁴ Many dispensationalists refer to this time period as a "mystery form of the kingdom." By this term they mean the unseen spiritual presence of God in the sons of the kingdom upon the earth. Elliot Johnson, class notes of this author in BE2021A Seminar in the Gospels and Acts, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2005.

Advent (13:40-42, 49-50). The kingdom mysteries represent fresh, new truths concerning the kingdom that were undisclosed in the Old Testament.⁴⁵

Christ chose to reveal the kingdom mysteries in parabolic form. Jesus did not give the Sermon on the Mount (5—7) or the missions discourse (10) in parabolic form. Why did Christ reveal the kingdom mysteries in parabolic form? There are two reasons Christ chose to reveal these truths in the form of parables. First, Christ's parabolic teaching was a fulfillment of prophecy (13:34-35; Ps 78:2). Second, Christ desired to conceal truth from the nation since they had already rejected the offer of the kingdom. Such concealment was actually merciful since more truth would have brought them into even greater condemnation (11:20-24). On the other hand, Christ wanted to reveal truth to the select remnant to prepare them for their leadership roles in the soon to be birthed church (13:10-17).

When the eight parables of Matthew 13 are understood together, the disciples will have a complete picture of the “mystery age.”⁴⁶ First, the parable of the sower teaches that the gospel will be preached throughout the course of the mystery age with varying responses based upon how the heart has been prepared. Those who respond to the truth they have been given will be given additional revelation. The fact that the kingdom mysteries were being given to the disciples is an illustration of the Parable of the Sower. Because they were receptive to Christ's initial truth, the truths of the mystery kingdom were now being disclosed to them (13:1-9, 18-23).

Second, the parable of the wheat and the tares teaches that it will be difficult to distinguish between the saved and unsaved within professing Christendom throughout the mystery age. The separation between the saved and the unsaved will not be made until the Second Advent (13:24-30, 36-43). Third, the parable of the mustard seed teaches that Christendom will experience great numerical and geographic expansion from a small beginning (13:31-32).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Advocates of inaugurated eschatology use the content of Matthew 13 to teach that the kingdom spoken of in the Old Testament has already begun. However, this understanding fails to consider the definition of the word “mystery” (13:11, 17), which means a previously unknown truth now disclosed. Thus, what is revealed in Matthew 13 is unrelated to the Old Testament but rather refers to something entirely new.

⁴⁶ The term “mystery age” does not refer to an obscure age but rather to an age unknown in the Old Testament that is now revealed.

⁴⁷ Some believe that Christ's statement that the mustard seed is the smallest seed is a scientifically inaccurate statement. However, the context indicates that Christ was simply saying that the mustard seed is the smallest of the garden seeds rather than the smallest of all seeds. Interestingly, according to Mishnah *Tehoroth* 8:8 and *Niddah* 5:2 the mustard seed was commonly used by Jews to illustrate something small. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 196.

Fourth, the parable of the leaven teaches that Christendom will experience increasing internal corruption throughout the mystery age (13:33).⁴⁸

Fifth, the parable of the earthen treasure teaches that Christ came to purchase Israel. However, Israel will remain in unbelief throughout the course of the mystery age and will not be converted until the age's conclusion. (13:44).⁴⁹ Sixth, the parable of the pearl of great price refers to Christ's death that redeems members of the church throughout mystery age (13:45-46).⁵⁰ Seventh, the parable of the dragnet teaches the coexistence of the righteous and the wicked throughout the mystery age only to be separated by Christ at the age's conclusion (13:47-50). Eighth, the parable of the householder teaches that these kingdom mysteries must be considered alongside Old Testament kingdom truth if one is to understand the totality of God's kingdom agenda (13:51-52). In sum, Matthew records these kingdom mysteries because they will help his Jewish audience understand the nature of God's interim work featuring Gentile preeminence until the kingdom is established through Israel.

Matthew closes this unit by including two events illustrating why this interim age is necessary. Both events represent an increasing hardness of Israel against Christ. The first event involves the rejection of Christ by his own hometown (13:53-58). If those who knew Christ the best rejected him, then what hope could there be for the rest of the nation? The second event involves the beheading of John the Baptist (14:1-12). If the nation's leadership killed the king's forerunner, then they will certainly do the same thing to the king Himself. Because Israel's hardness rendered the nation unusable by God, an interim phase was necessary where God would pursue a new program involving the Gentiles.

Matthew now develops the next part of the interim program involving the training of the disciples. In this section, he records how Christ began to prepare the disciples not only for their foundational roles in the coming church

⁴⁸ Matthew uses leaven to describe false doctrine (16:6, 12). Leaven is also used to represent sin elsewhere in Scripture (Exod 12; Lev 2:11; 6:17; 10:12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5:9). This interpretation is also consistent with what the Bible predicts regarding the course of the mystery age (1 Tim 4; 2 Tim 3; Jude; 2 Pet 3; Rev 6-19). The sinister effect of the leaven is also evident from the word "hide." In a previous parable, the tares are hidden amongst the wheat. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 182.

⁴⁹ The man is Christ. The treasure is Israel. The treasure's hidden state shows Israel's apostasy. The uncovering of the treasure refers to the offer of the kingdom. The hiding of the treasure refers to Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer. The purchase of the field refers to Christ dying for Israel's sins. The implicit coming again of the man to obtain the treasure refers to Israel's conversion at the conclusion of the mystery age. Ibid., 183-84.

⁵⁰ The man in the parable is Christ rather than a believer. If it is concluded that he is a believer, then this parable teaches a works oriented salvation.

but also for His imminent death (14:13–20:28). Unlike His public teaching and miracles revolving around the offer of the kingdom to Israel that was developed in the first half of the book, His miracles and teaching in this section are private. They are now primarily for the benefit of training the disciples. Matthew records this training process to show his audience that Christ's death and the church's ministry in the mystery age is not something accidental or serendipitous. Rather, the messiah Himself prepared His disciples for this time period. Thus, Matthew's Jewish Christian audience can take comfort in the fact that the ministry they are currently seeing is their own messiah's handiwork even though it does not presently involve the establishment of the kingdom through Israel.

This section begins with His withdrawal (14:13) from ministering to the nation following the beheading of John the Baptist so that He can focus His attention on training the disciples. Because Christ had the disciples bring the bread to Him, the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand taught them the valuable lesson that God could supply all their needs and the needs of those they ministered to when they committed their resources to Him (14:13-21). Because Christ sent the disciples out on the boat while He went elsewhere to pray, the miracle of the calming of the storm was designed to teach the disciples certain truths. It taught the disciples that Christ could be trusted to help them in their time of need, that they should trust Him in the midst of adversity, and it also gave them further confirmation of Christ's true identity (14:22-33). Christ healed many at Gennesaret (14:34-36) so the disciples could learn by observation since they would be performing a similar healing ministry as recorded in the Book of Acts.

Christ's defense of the disciples for their violations of the Pharisees' Sabbath regulations also taught them many important truths (15:1-20). Because of Christ's specific answer to Peter's question (15:15-16), it appears that Christ allowed this entire chain of events to take place for the disciple's benefit. First, it probably encouraged them to have the Lord so vigorously defend them so soon after John the Baptist's beheading. Second, it taught them that they were not bound by pharisaical regulations but rather the original intent of the commandments (Isa 29:13). Third, it taught them that the Pharisees were beyond repentance (15:14). Such hardness probably had to do with their rejection of the kingdom offer and their sin of the blasphemy against the Spirit (12:31-32). Fourth, it taught them the important anthropological truth that evil emanates from the human heart rather than a lack of adherence to man made rules. Matthew includes this material to help His Jewish readers understand why the early church had moved away from Pharisaical interpretations.

The healing of the Canaanite woman (15:21-28) helped expand the disciples' missionary vision. Such an expansion was needed since their previous ministry experience consisted of offering the kingdom exclusively to

the nation (10:5-6; 15:24). Christ's interaction with the disciples' remark (15:24) again shows that this event was orchestrated primarily for their benefit. Because Tyre and Sidon were located in the north of Israel and were areas controlled by Gentile powers in Old testament times, Christ may have used this miracle to show that ministry in the mystery age would extend beyond Israel's borders (Acts 1:8). God's desire to focus upon the Gentiles in this interim phase is also made clear in how Christ responded to the woman's petition. She received no response from Him when she appealed to Him on the basis of His messianic title. However, he granted her petition when she appealed to him as a believing Gentile outside of Judaism's blessings.⁵¹ Thus, once again Matthew emphasizes Gentile receptivity against the backdrop of Israel's hardness. Matthew includes this information to show his Jewish audience why Gentiles who approach God by faith are being blessed in the mystery age.

Because of Christ deliberately involved the disciples (15:32-36) in the feeding of the four thousand (15:29-39), this miracle was again designed primarily for their benefit. Not only did it reinforce the same lesson that they had learned from the feeding of the five thousand (14:13-21), but it also played a role in further expanding their missionary vision. This miracle took place in Gentile territory (Mark 7:31). This seems clear since the crowd glorified the "God of Israel" (15:31) and because the Gentile word for basket (*spyris*) is used (16:10, Mark 8:8, 20) rather than the Jewish word (*kophinos*) for basket (15:37). Thus, because this crowd was Gentile rather than Jewish, the disciples were not expecting this multitude to be fed.⁵² The disciples were locked into this way of thinking because their previous ministry consisted of offering the kingdom exclusively to the nation (10:5-6; 15:24). However, by mandating their involvement in the miracle, Christ was breaking them out of their old way of thinking. He was showing them that ministry in the mystery age would be aimed primarily toward Gentiles. Thus, Matthew includes this information to show his Jewish readers how the church became predominantly Gentile focused.

The demand of the Jewish religious leaders for a sign gave Christ the opportunity to teach other important truths to the disciples (16:1-12). First, it allowed him to reinforce the notion that first century Israel had been set aside. While craving another sign, the nation rejected the signs that they had already been given. Therefore, no further sign would be given to them because the offer of the kingdom had been withdrawn. The only other sign that the nation was yet to receive was the sign of Jonah or Christ's resurrection. However, this sign

⁵¹ The word for dogs in 15:26-27 is *kunariois*, which means puppies rather than unclean scavengers. In essence, the woman is asking Christ to give to her the blessings that Israel rejected. This question encapsulates a dominant theme of Matthew's Gospel. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 197.

⁵² Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 197.

was a sign of condemnation since it verified Christ's messianic claims thus demonstrating the nation's errant decision in rejecting their king. Second, it taught them to reject Pharisaical false doctrine. Third, it taught them to continue to trust God for their provision since He had been so faithful in meeting their past needs. Matthew includes this story since it again explains the absence of the Jewish kingdom despite the advent of the king due to Israel's hardness.

Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi gives Christ an opportunity to disclose a new, major development in the interim program, which is the revelation of the church (16:13-20). The church is a new work of God in the mystery age⁵³ consisting of all those trusting in the very messiah that Israel had rejected. The church is built upon the veracity of Peter's confession that Jesus is the messiah.⁵⁴ Because of his confession, Christ gave Peter a place of leadership within the new church.⁵⁵ Thus, Matthew has advanced his argument by giving

⁵³ The future tense ("I will build") of *oikodomeō* demonstrates that the church did not exist in the Old Testament era.

⁵⁴ There are three main interpretations of the identity of the foundation of the church in verse 18. *First*, the Roman Catholic position argues that the church's foundation is Peter and therefore Peter is the first pope. This view has in its favor the fact that only one word for "rock" supposedly existed in Aramaic. Thus, *petros* (Peter) and *petra* are equivalent. However, as explained earlier, it is doubtful that Matthew's Gospel was originally written in Aramaic. The Catholic position is also weakened when it is understood that the Greek text use two words for rock. *Petros*, a masculine noun, refers to a small rock. *Petra*, a feminine noun, refers to a large rock. Thus, in the Greek text, Christ is referring to another rock besides Peter. Moreover, if it had been Christ's intention to convey the idea that Peter is the foundation of the church, the ambiguity could have easily been cleared up if Christ had said "upon you." Furthermore, the demonstrative "this" cannot be referring to Peter since it is feminine. Also, why would Christ use "this" if He were speaking directly to Peter? *Second*, others contend that the foundation of the church is Christ. He is referred to as a large rock elsewhere in Scripture (Rom 9:33; 1 Cor 10:4; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4-8). However, the insertion of the phrase "upon me" would have removed the ambiguity. Also, the feminine demonstrative "this" could not refer to Christ. In addition, why would Christ use "this" if He were speaking of Himself? The third and best view is to see the veracity of Peter's confession as the foundation of the church. This view best accommodates the third person feminine demonstrative "this." Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 201-02; Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 197-98.

⁵⁵ Christ gave to Peter the power of binding and loosing (16:19). Contrary to Jerome's Latin Vulgate that translates these verbs as simple futures, the periphrastic future perfect nature of the verbs should cause them to be translated "shall have been bound" and "shall have been loosed." In other words, Peter's authority only comes from announcing what heaven has already determined. The "keys of the kingdom" probably refer to the ability to open citizenship to the kingdom to others. Peter did just this in the book of Acts. He was the first to open up kingdom citizenship to the Jews

more information on the interim program. Not only will this interim phase consist of the kingdom mysteries (Matt 13), but it will also consist of God's work through His church. Matthew records the revelation of the church to show His Jewish audience that God is presently at work through this new institution. Thus, Gentile involvement in this new work, Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer, and the current postponement of the kingdom do not detract from the validity of Christ's messianic identity. They are all part of the divine design.

Not only was Christ interested in preparing His disciples for the change in ministry focus during the mystery age but also he was interested in preparing them for His death that had to first precede this interim phase (16:21-28). In fact, the phrase "from that time on" is only used in one other place in Matthew's gospel (4:17). These two uses (4:17; 16:21) when taken together show the two reasons why Christ came into the world. He came to offer the kingdom to Israel and to die. Thus, Christ's death was just as much a predetermined event as was His offer of the kingdom.

Because Peter followed typical Jewish thinking in not perceiving that the cross must first precede the crown, he was rebuked by Christ and even told that his ideas were Satanic. Christ then explained that the mark of a true disciple is acknowledging the reality of the cross before the crown. Matthew includes this exchange since the Jews that he was writing to may have been entrenched in the old way of thinking. They may have thought that the mark of the true messiah is the establishment of the kingdom through Israel rather than His rejection by the nation and death. Thus, Matthew seeks to break them out of their myopia by explaining to them that Christ's rejection by the nation and subsequent death were all part of the predetermined plan of God.

Christ's announcement of His death no doubt caused the disciples to fear that the kingdom would not come (16:22). Thus, in order to reassure them of the certainty of the coming kingdom (16:27-28),⁵⁶ Christ gave them a foretaste of it through His transfiguration (17:1-13). The appearance of Moses and Elijah demonstrates that just as Moses' death and Elijah being taken to heaven in a whirlwind did not stop their appearance on Mount Transfiguration, then neither would Christ's death stop the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom. In the process of the transfiguration, the Father identified Christ as the Son of God and Christ identified John as the one who would have been the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6 had the nation accepted the offer of the kingdom. Matthew includes this information to show his audience that the identity of

(Acts 2) and Gentiles (Acts 10). Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 206-07; Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 198.

⁵⁶ Christ's promise that His disciples would not see death until He came in His kingdom (16:27-28) is not a prediction that Christ would return within the life spans of the apostles. Rather, it is a prediction that the disciples would experience a foretaste of the kingdom through Christ's transfiguration.

Christ and John had not changed even though Israel had rejected her king. Therefore, the believing Jews who Matthew addressed could be reassured that Christ was the true messiah even though Israel had rejected Him. The transfiguration also encouraged his Jewish audience by alerting them to the fact that God had every intention of restoring the kingdom to Israel after the elapsing of the mystery age.

Christ's rebuke of His disciples due to their inability to cast out demons taught them the necessity of depending upon God's power when dealing with the fallen angelic realm (17:14-21). Because the disciples would have to later contend with demons as recorded in the Books of Acts (5:1-11; 8:9-24; 16:16-18; 19:18-19), Christ's rebuke was an important lesson for them in preparation for their ministry in the mystery age. The disciples' sorrow over Christ's second prediction of death (17:22-23) shows that they really had not understood the Lord's previous discipleship message (16:21-28). Thus, they were in need of further teaching. Christ's payment of the two drachma tax even though He was not required to do so⁵⁷ gave Him the opportunity of teaching the disciples the lesson of doing what was not required so as to avoid giving an unnecessary offense (17:24-28). This lesson would no doubt be of great help to the disciples as they pursued their mystery age ministry.

In Christ's fourth major discourse (18:1-35), He taught His disciples even more truths that they would need during their ministry in the mystery age. Because each of the major sections of this discourse involve attitudes and behavior that characterize a humble disciple, the major theme of the discourse is humility. The lessons Christ conveyed to them include the necessity of childlike humility for entrance into and reward in the kingdom (18:1-4), the importance of not stumbling another disciple (18:5-14),⁵⁸ the importance of exercising church discipline (18:15-20),⁵⁹ and the necessity for the disciples to forgive others as the Lord had forgiven them (18:21-35).⁶⁰

The Pharisees' questioning of Christ concerning divorce and remarriage gave Christ an opportunity to teach His disciples to follow God's revelation in creation rather than Pharisaical interpretation when attempting to

⁵⁷ Christ was exempted from the temple tax since the temple belonged to him (Exod 30:13; Mal 3:1).

⁵⁸ The preceding context (18:3-4) shows that the disciples are in view rather than children.

⁵⁹ Matthew 18:17 is the second reference to the soon to be birthed church in Matthew's Gospel. For information regarding the meaning of binding and loosing, see discussion under 16:19.

⁶⁰ For information regarding the meaning of being forgiven if one forgives, see discussion under 6:12, 14-15.

resolve such matters (19:1-12).⁶¹ Other circumstances also allowed Christ to teach the disciples the important lessons of the necessity of child like faith in order to enter the kingdom,⁶² not hindering the entry of others into the kingdom (19:13-15),⁶³ and the importance of removing personal idolatry hindering a person's entrance into the kingdom (19:16-30).⁶⁴ Just as Christ's transfiguration encouraged His disciples by reminding them that the kingdom would ultimately be restored to Israel, Christ's promise to His disciples that they would co-rule with Him in the millennium reinforced this same hope (19:28). Not only did Christ's promise encourage the disciples, but Matthew's recording of it also provided the same source of encouragement to his Jewish Christian readers.

In the parable of the landowner (20:1-16), Christ taught His disciples that He has the right to dispense His grace as He sees fit. Thus, those called late will be rewarded equally along with those called early. This was an important lesson for the disciples to learn since they were going to be ministering in the church age when believing Jews (those called early) and believing Gentiles (those called late) would be on equal spiritual footing with one another in a new ecclesiastical, spiritual organism (Eph 2—3). His third prediction of His death also prepared them for this important event, which had to precede the mystery age (20:17-19).

The request of the mother of Zebedee's sons gave Christ the opportunity of using His own life as an example to teach the disciples that greatness is not defined by one's status but rather by one's service to others (20:20-28). Such humility is a characteristic that Christ expected His disciples to emulate throughout the mystery age (John 13; Phil 2). Interestingly, this event occurred late in Christ's ministry. Thus, after spending all this time with Christ, the nature of the question involving literal thrones indicated that the disciples still expected an earthly kingdom. Christ only challenges their assumption of what constitutes greatness rather than their assumption of an earthly kingdom. This lack of correction from Christ would give hope to Matthew's readers that an earthly kingdom through Israel would one day come. In sum, Matthew includes all of this information on Christ's training of the disciples for His death and their ministry in the mystery age (13:1—20:28) to show them that this age was not accidental but rather was prepared for by the

⁶¹ Christ's view on divorce and remarriage was already discussed under Matthew 5:31-32.

⁶² In Matthew's Gospel, children are frequently used in order to distinguish genuine faith from the nation's blindness (11:25; 18:24; 19:13-15; 21:15-16).

⁶³ The Pharisees through their man-made traditions were hindering the access of others into the kingdom (23:13).

⁶⁴ Because of the disciples' questions and involvement (19:10, 13, 25), it seems evident that Christ allowed these events for the purpose of teaching the disciples important lessons that would prepare them to fulfill their ministries in the mystery age.

Jewish messiah Himself. Thus, Matthew's Jewish audience need not reject this new ministry phase even though it does not directly involve the establishment of the kingdom through Israel.

The next major section involves Christ's presentation to and formal rejection by Israel (20:29—23:39). Matthew records this material to show that the irrevocable rejection of the kingdom offer that had already begun in the hearts of the Jewish leadership (Matt 12) has now been officially ratified. The nation rejects Christ despite His formal presentation to them in the triumphal entry. Matthew includes this information since it will help His Jewish readers understand why the kingdom is not present even though Christ is the Jewish king. Before Matthew records Christ's rejection of first century Israel (Matt 23), he first records selected events involving Israel's rejection of Christ (20:29—22:46). This section begins with the transitional event of Christ's healing of the blind men in Jericho (20:29-34). The crowd referred to Christ as "Jesus" while the blind men referred to Him as the "Son of David." Because the blind men used Christ's proper messianic title, Matthew includes this story to ironically show that while the blind men could correctly discern the identity of Christ, God's own elect nation Israel did not have the same discernment.⁶⁵

Israel's impending rejection of her king is brought out clearly in Matthew's portrayal of the triumphal entry (21:1-22). Despite the fact that this event fulfilled specific Old Testament prophecies (Dan 9:25-26; Zech 9:9),⁶⁶ the people were only interested in a physical kingdom rather than a kingdom that also encompassed the moral and spiritual characteristics outlined in the Sermon on the Mount (5—7). Thus, they acknowledged Christ as merely a prophet (21:1-11). The cleansing of the temple also establishes the guilt of the nation since Israel's leadership had degraded God's house into merely a venue for merchandising. Although the children could recognize Christ as the messiah, Israel's religious leadership could not (21:12-17). Christ's cursing of the fig tree also shows Israel's guilt. While the nation had physical life, it showed no visible sign of repentance (3:7ff). Here, Matthew stresses Christ's teaching on faith to juxtapose genuine faith against Israel's lack of faith (21:18-22).

⁶⁵ While the other Gospel writers focus on only one blind man (Mark 10:56-52; Luke 18:25-43), Matthew focuses upon two. This is not a contradiction since the other writers never say that there was only one blind man. The emphasis upon two men fits the Jewish nature of Matthew's book since the Old Testament teaches that a matter must be established by at least two witnesses (Deut 17:6). This rule would certainly apply to something as significant as establishing Christ's messianic identity. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 236.

⁶⁶ Interestingly, Matthew substitutes Isaiah 62:11 for "rejoice greatly, o daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph o daughter of Zion!" because the nation had to have Christ pointed out to them since they did not recognize Him. *Ibid.*, 238.

Matthew further emphasizes Israel's rejection of her king through a collection of questions and parables (21:23—22:46). Christ's question of the religious leaders regarding John's authority exposed their culpability in rejecting John. If the nation rejected the king's forerunner, the rejection of the king Himself was imminent (21:23-27). In Christ's parable of the two sons, the son who disobeyed after saying that he would obey represents the disobedience of the nation in contrast to the obedience of the righteous remnant (21:28-32). The parable of the tenants demonstrates the historical guilt of the nation in rejecting the prophets as well as their present guilt in rejecting their king. Such disobedience made the penalty of the covenant curses in the form of the coming A.D. 70 judgment inevitable (21:33-46).⁶⁷ In the parable of the wedding feast, Christ analogizes the non-attending invited guests to the nation. Such disobedience would invite the covenant curses of A.D. 70. Their sin is again juxtaposed against the backdrop of the believing remnant (22:1-14).

The hardness of the nation is again seen in three hostile questions from its religious leaders designed to trap Christ (22:15-40). The question involving taxation was designed either to get Christ to commit treason against Rome or to disenfranchise Him from the Jewish commoners (22:15-22). The question involving resurrection was designed to trap Him in an unsolvable theological dilemma (22:23-33). The question involving the most important commandment was designed to entangle Him in the complex array of Pharisaical traditions (22:34-40). Christ's reciprocal question to them also demonstrated the guilt of the nation by showing their inconsistency in rejecting His messianic authority (22:41-46). Christ's astute answers demonstrated to Israel's religious leaders His messianic identity (22:46). Thus, the nation was without excuse in rejecting Him.

Now that the nation had officially rejected their king (20:29—22:46), Christ issues His formal rejection of first century Israel's religious leaders

⁶⁷ Debate persists concerning from whom the kingdom is taken from and to whom it is given. While replacement theologians argue that verse 43 teaches that the kingdom will be taken away from Israel as a whole, this theology is not supported by the passage. The context indicates that Christ was only speaking to first century Israel (21:45). Furthermore, the nation who is to receive the kingdom cannot be the church since the church is not a nation (Rom 10:19). Many use 1 Peter 2:9 to support the idea that the church is a nation. However, this argument assumes that 1 Peter was written to the church at large rather than just the believing Jews in the Diaspora (see my 1 Peter argument). It seems best to conclude that the nation spoken of in 21:43 is a future generation of Jews. This view fits well with the remaining context of the book, which speaks of a future for national Israel (24:31). Furthermore, the word nation (*ethnos*) that is used in this verse is used of Israel elsewhere in Scripture (John 11:51; Acts 24:17). Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1959), 295-97.

(23:1-39). His rejection of them is based upon their guilt (23:1-12). He condemns them through eight woes (23:13-36) encompassing not only their errant doctrine (23:13-22) but also their deficient character (23:23-36). Because the Pharisees emphasized outer righteousness they rejected Christ's kingdom, which emphasized inner righteousness (5-7).⁶⁸ Christ concludes His denunciation with a lament over Jerusalem because of the inevitability of the coming A.D. 70 judgment (23:37-39).⁶⁹ Matthew records all this information regarding the nation's rejection of Christ (20:29-23:39) since it will help His Jewish readers understand why the kingdom is not present even though Christ is the Jewish king.

In order to explain to His Jewish Christian audience how Christ can be the Jewish king and yet at the same time the Jewish kingdom is absent and the Gentiles are prominent in the mystery age, Matthew has developed a well-organized argument. First, he has established Christ's messianic identity and traced Christ's offer of the kingdom to Israel (1-10). Second, he has shown the nation's rejection of this offer (11-12; 20:29-23:39). Third, he has explained God's inclusion of the Gentiles in the mystery age during the kingdom's absence and postponement (13:1-20:28). Now Matthew is ready to develop the final part of his argument. Although the kingdom has been postponed in the present, it will be re-offered to and accepted by the nation in the future. Although he has alluded to this restoration earlier (17:1-13; 19:28; 20:20-28), Matthew most clearly develops the idea of the kingdom's restoration to Israel in his fifth and final discourse section known as the Olivet Discourse (24-25). Matthew's Jewish audience would have been familiar with Old Testament Scripture predicting Israel's conversion as a result of the Great Tribulation (Jer 30:7; Dan 9:24-27). The Olivet Discourse is simply an amplification of these prophecies (24:15). Matthew includes this final phase of his argument in order to give his Jewish readers hope that present Gentile prominence in the mystery age does not mean that God has forsaken His covenant promises to His chosen nation.

Matthew's emphasis upon Israel's restoration in the Olivet Discourse grows out of the final verses of the previous chapter (23:37-39). There, Christ expressed His desire to gather (*episynagō*) Israel. However, she had rejected the kingdom offer. Christ promises that the time would come when the nation would acknowledge Him as the messiah by chanting a messianic Psalm (Ps 118:26; Matt 21:9) thus allowing Christ to return and re-gather (*episynagō*) His nation (24:31). Thus, the Olivet Discourse furnishes the circumstances through which Israel's restoration and final regathering will be achieved.

⁶⁸ These woes are the inverse of the Sermon on the Mount (5-7).

⁶⁹ While Christ previously referred to the temple as "my house" (21:13), he now refers to it as "your house" (23:38) thus emphasizing His complete rejection of first century Israel.

Christ's prediction of the temple's destruction resulting from the covenant curses to be poured out in A.D. 70 (24:1-2) provoked the disciples' eschatological curiosity. Mistaking the temple's destruction with the events of the end, the disciples wanted to know when these things would be and about the end of the age (24:3).⁷⁰ Christ answers the second question in this discourse.⁷¹ He proceeds to outline the events of the first half (24:4-14),⁷² middle (24:15-20),⁷³ and second half of the Tribulation (24:21-22). This period ends with the Second Advent (24:23-30) to be followed by the nation's regathering (24:31) and subsequent restoration of the Davidic Throne (25:31). Because the gospel of the kingdom (24:14) will be re-offered to the nation during the Tribulation, she will accept it resulting in her restoration.

Christ's discussion of Israel's restoration during the Tribulation leads Him to conclude the Olivet Discourse by using six illustrations (and/or parables) for the purpose of emphasizing the various attitudes that Israel should have in light of these approaching events (24:32—25:46). First, Christ uses the illustration of the fig tree to emphasize watchfulness for His return (24:32-35).⁷⁴ Second, Christ uses the illustration of the days of Noah to admonish them

⁷⁰ Some see three questions here but really there are two. The first question relates to the events of AD 70. The second question is a single interrogatory since "coming" and "end" are joined by a single article and conjunction.

⁷¹ While Matthew and Mark's Gospels focus on the disciples' second question, Luke's Gospel focuses on the first part of the question. Matthew includes the phrase "end of the age" while Luke does not.

⁷² Many view the birth pangs mentioned in these verses as occurring throughout the present age. However, because they align chronologically with the seal judgments of the future Tribulation, it is best to see them as occurring only in the future Tribulation period.

Prediction	Birth pangs (Matt 24)	Seal judgments (Rev 6)
False Christ	24:5	6:2
War	24:6	6:3-4
Famine	24:7	6:5-6
Death	24:6-7	6:7-8
Martyrs	24:9-13	6:9-11
Earthquakes	24:7	6:12-17
Evangelism	24:14	7:1-9

⁷³ The references to Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks (24:15), the Sabbath (24:20), and the elect (24:22) make it clear that this time period concerns Israel and not the church.

⁷⁴ The fig tree illustration has nothing to do with the birth of the state of Israel in 1948. The context of the illustration has to do with the events of the Tribulation.

to avoid being caught by surprise by His return (24:36-44).⁷⁵ Third, Christ uses the parable of the slave to emphasize the importance of doing the master's will in His absence (24:45-51). Fourth, Christ uses the parable of the ten virgins to emphasize preparedness for His return (25:1-13).⁷⁶ Fifth, Christ uses the parable of the talents to emphasize wise stewardship in His absence (25:14-30).

Thus, the generation that sees the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Tribulation will also see the Second Advent at the end of the Tribulation.

⁷⁵ Many see the rapture in verses 40-41. They use three arguments to support their position. First, they note the difference between verse 39 and verses 40-41 regarding the verb "to take." While *airō* is used in verse 39, it is *paralambanō* in verses 40-41. Rapture proponents argue that this change is made in verses 40-41 in order to harmonize the verb with the use of the same verb in the rapture passage in John 14:3. However, the change could be simply stylistic in order to give greater expression to the ideas presented. Furthermore, *paralambanō* is also used in the negative sense in Matthew's Gospel (4:5, 8) and elsewhere (John 19:16). Second, they note that because what is described in verses 40-41 represents normal life activity these verses cannot be referring to the Second Advent at the end of the Tribulation. Because normal life would not be taking place at the end of the Tribulation, it must be speaking of the rapture before the Tribulation. However, it is possible that verses 40-41 are a figure of speech depicting being caught up in the system of the antichrist during the Tribulation and are therefore not speaking of ordinary life. Third, they argue that the phrase "no one knows the day or the hour" (24:36) cannot be speaking of an event at the end of the Tribulation since people would know the time of that event. It will take place exactly seven years after the antichrist enters into the peace treaty with Israel (Dan 9:27). However, the phrase in verse 36 could be given from the perspective of an unbeliever. Elsewhere, unbelievers are said to be similarly unaware of the exact timing of Christ's return even after most of the events of the Tribulation have transpired (Rev 16:15). It seems better to understand those taken in verses 40-41 as those taken into judgment after the Second Advent. Those left behind will enter the kingdom. First, the immediate context involves being taken into judgment (24:39). Second, the parallel passage in Luke 17:37 indicates that those taken are not taken to heaven but rather are taken to where the vultures are gathered. Elsewhere this phrase is used of judgment at Christ's Second Advent (Rev 19:17-18). Third, separation between unbelievers unto judgment and believers unto bliss by Christ at His Second Advent is taught in other places in Matthew (13:40-41; 25:31-46). Fourth, the rapture is truth for the church age and the immediate context here involves Israel (24:15, 20, 22).

⁷⁶ The Jewish ritual of the wedding ceremony gives the proper background for understanding the parable. First, the parents arranged the marriage. Second, the betrothal period took place to test whether the marital parties would maintain their virginity. Third, the groom and his friends would travel to the bride's home. Fourth, the marriage ceremony would transpire at the bride's home. Fifth, the bridesmaids would travel to the bridegroom's home to await the return of the couple. Thus, the bridesmaids prepared in advance by bringing sufficient oil for their lamps to await this event. Sixth, the marriage festival would last seven days. Seventh, the marriage would be consummated.

Sixth, Christ uses the parable of the sheep and the goats to emphasize the need of doing good to Christ's brethren in His absence (25:31-46).⁷⁷

The passion narrative (26–28) does not necessarily introduce any new elements to Matthew's argument. Rather, it allows Matthew to develop previously disclosed themes. Such themes include Christ's messianic identity, the nation's rejection of the kingdom offer, the advent of God's interim program due to the kingdom's postponement, and the kingdom's eventual restoration to Israel. The Jewish plot to kill Christ reinforces Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer. It also demonstrates Christ's messianic identity since He was able to predict His death at the very moment the Jews were plotting to kill Him (26:1-5).

Mary's anointing of Christ also identifies Him as the messiah. However, it also reinforces the theme involving God's interim program since a remnant was able to discern the identity of Christ while the rest of the nation could not. God will use this remnant to launch a new phase of ministry in the mystery age (26:6-13). Judas betrayal of Christ (26:14-16) also demonstrates Christ's messianic identity. This event not only showed His ability to accurately predict events to be fulfilled in the near future (26:20-25, 47-50)⁷⁸ but also it was also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (27:1-10).⁷⁹ The preparation

⁷⁷ At first glance this parable seems to be describing works salvation. However, it is better to see it as evidencing one's faith (Eph 2:8-10) by helping the Lord's brethren during the Tribulation. It is likely that these brethren are either those converted during the Tribulation or the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev 7, 14). Both groups will be hounded by the antichrist during this terrible time period (Rev 13:16-17) and in need of help from God's people in order to survive. Furthermore, this event should not be confused with the Great White Throne Judgment.

Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt 25:31-46)	Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15)
No resurrection	Resurrection
Believers and unbelievers present	Only unbelievers present
All surviving nations present	Only the resurrected unbelievers present
After tribulation (imprisonment, hunger, thirst)	After millennium
Destination is kingdom or Hades	Destination is Lake of Fire

J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1958), 425-26.

⁷⁸ Christ's ability to accurately forecast the outcome of short term events guarantees that the other long term prophecies that He has made (Matt 24) will come to pass with the same degree of accuracy.

⁷⁹ Why does Matthew quote a prophecy from Zechariah and attribute it to Jeremiah (27:9-10)? Actually Matthew quotes from both Zechariah 11:12-13 (thirty

of the upper room also establishes Christ's identity by showing His sovereignty as well as His ability to accurately make short-term predictions (26:17-19). The celebration of the Lord's table gives Christ another opportunity to make a prediction that will be fulfilled in the future kingdom. This prediction guarantees to the disciples as well as Matthew's Jewish audience that God will one day restore the kingdom to Israel despite messiah's imminent death (26:26-29).

Like Christ's predictions regarding Judas' betrayal, Christ's messianic identity is also seen in His ability to predict with mathematical precision Peter's threefold denial (26:30-35, 69-75). Christ's experiences in Gethsemane again contribute to His messianic identity by showing Him to be the unique sin bearer (26:36-46). Peter's attempt to thwart Christ's arrest also identifies Christ as the messiah. Because His death was already predicted in the pages of the Old Testament, Christ explained to Peter that there is nothing that he can do to halt Christ's death (26:47-56). Because Christ's religious trials (26:57-68)⁸⁰ were

pieces of silver) and Jeremiah 18:1-4; 32:6-9 (purchase of the field). Matthew is more focused on the purchase of the field than he is the thirty pieces of silver. Also, Jeremiah is a major prophet. Thus, he only mentions Jeremiah's name. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 209-10. A similar phenomenon occurs in the citation of Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 in Mark 1:2-3. Here, "fulfillment" should be understood as the recapitulation of an event in the life of Christ. In Zechariah 11, Israel rejected God's shepherd and instead opted to value him as a mere slave. Here, this same pattern repeats itself in the way the nation treated Christ. Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Matthew," 367 (accessd 13 March 2006) available from <http://www.soniclight.com>.

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Number	Jewish or Roman	Civil or religious	Judge	Location	Decision	Scripture
First	Jewish	Religious	Annas	Caiahphas' house	Permission given to kill Christ	John 18:12-14, 19-23
Second	Jewish	Religious	Caiaphas	Caiahphas' house	Death sentence imposed due to charge of blasphemy	Matt 26:57-58; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:24

not conducted according to the regulations specified in the biblical and extra biblical material,⁸¹ they reiterate the theme of the nation's corruption and rejection of the offer of the kingdom. However, the trial before Caiaphas contributes to the theme of Christ's messianic identity by giving Him the opportunity of identifying Himself as the Son of Man in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies (Dan 7:13).

Third	Jewish	Religious	Sanhedrin	Sanhedrin	Death sentence made legal	Matt 27:1-2; Mark 15:1a; Luke 22:66-71
Fourth	Roman	Civil	Pilate	Fortress of Antonia	Not guilty	Matt 27:11-14; Mark 15:1b-5; Luke 23:1-6; John 18:28-38a
Fifth	Roman	Civil	Herod	Herod's palace	Not guilty	Luke 23:7-12
Sixth	Roman	Civil	Pilate	Fortress of Antonia	Not guilty, Christ turned over to the Jews	Matt 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:38b-19:16

Adapted from Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 1715. For a helpful map showing the various locations of the trials, see *Nelson's Complete Book of Charts and Maps* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 324.

⁸¹ The religious trials were a mockery of justice. They violated the rules that the Jews followed for conducting a trial. Contrary to established rules, these trials occurred in private homes (*Sanhedrin* 11a; *Middoth* 5.4), at night (*Tosephta, Sanhedrin* 7.1; *Middoth* 5.4), and on the eve of a Sabbath and festival day, which was Passover (*Sanhedrin* 4.1; Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.163). Also, the sentence was pronounced on the same day as the trial (*Sanhedrin* 4.1; 5.5) and they failed to provide the necessary safeguards to be taken for the possibility of an acquittal in capital cases (*Sanhedrin* 4.1). Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, 209. Also, the witnesses at the trials were false witnesses and Christ was unfairly sentenced to death against the weight of the evidence.

Christ's trial before Pilate (27:11-26) also contributed to the theme of Christ's identity by giving Him the opportunity of identifying Himself as the king of the Jews. His silence before Pilate in fulfillment of the Old Testament (Isa 53:7) also showed Him to be the messiah. The nation's guilt in unjustly rejecting the offer of the kingdom is also seen in the way that Pilate washed his hands from the obvious sin of the Jewish leaders. Even Pilate's wife was convicted of Christ's innocence in a dream. Once again, Matthew shows the spiritual sensitivity of the Gentiles against the backdrop of the insensitivity of God's elect nation. Thus, God must raise up a new Gentile remnant in the interim phase since the nation has rejected the offer of the kingdom. The guilt of the nation as a whole in rejecting the kingdom offer is also seen not only in the way they demanded that Barabbas be released instead of Christ but also in the way the people publicly assumed culpability for Christ's death.

With the nation in a state of blindness and the Roman soldiers mistreating Christ (27:27-31), Simon of Cyrene was forced into service to help carry Christ's cross (27:32). Thus, someone from outside of Israel's borders assisted Christ's cause. Similarly, in the mystery age, God would soon turn to those outside of Israel's border for the purpose of assisting Christ's cause in the wake of the nation's rejection of her king. The events of the crucifixion (27:33-44) also reiterate many familiar themes such as the identification of Christ through the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Ps 69:21; 22:7, 18; Isa 53:9)⁸² and also through the very sign that hung from the cross identifying Him as the king of the Jews. The participation of the Jewish leadership in mocking and falsely accusing Christ also exemplifies the guilt of the nation in rejecting their king.

Christ's death (27:45-56) identified Him as the messiah in three ways. First, His death fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (Ps 22:1; 69:21).⁸³ Second,

⁸² Although Matthew does not quote these prophecies nor use his customary formula in showing their fulfillment, such an effort would have been an exercise in redundancy given the fact that his Jewish audience was already familiar with them.

⁸³ Christ's seven final statements from the cross can be summarized as follows.

Statement	Scripture	Old Testament source	Time	Meaning
Father forgive them for they know not what they do	Luke 23:34	Isaiah 53:12	First three hours	Prayer for enemies
Today you shall be with me in paradise	Luke 23:43	Isaiah 53:10-11	First three hours	Promise to a believing sinner

His death was accompanied by numerous supernatural manifestations such as the darkening of the sky, an earthquake, the tearing of the temple veil, and the opening of the graves. The tearing of the veil would signify to a Jewish reader that Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament system. The token resuscitations⁸⁴ are especially significant in identifying Christ. They affirm His authority over death, show that His death is the basis of the saints' future resurrection, and show that Christ's death is beneficial for those who died before the cross as well as after. Third, the Roman centurion identified Him as the Son of God. Ironically, a Gentile exercised spiritual sensitivity while God's elect nation remained in blindness. Thus, as a result of Israel's rejection of the offer of the kingdom, it was necessary for God to pursue a new direction of ministry in the mystery age involving primarily the Gentiles.

Christ's burial (27:57-61) also identified Christ as the messiah since it too fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Isa 53:9). The sealing of the tomb (27:62-66) contributes to the theme of the nation's rejection of their king since the religious leaders did everything within their power to prevent even the pretense of the sign of Jonah (12:38-40; 16:4) from being fulfilled. However, their efforts were to no avail since Christ did resurrect from the dead (28:1-

Woman, behold your son...Behold your mother	John 19:27	Exodus 20:12; Mark 7:10-13	First three hours	Provision for followers
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?	Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34	Psalms 22:1	Second three hours (12-3 PM)	Mental anguish
I Thirst	John 19:28	Psalms 69:21	Second three hours (12-3 PM)	Physical anguish
It is finished	John 19:30	Psalms 22:31	Second three hours (12-3 PM)	Past satisfaction
Father, into your hand I commend my spirit	Luke 23:46	Psalms 31:5	Second three hours (12-3 PM)	Future satisfaction

Adapted from a handout passed out by Roy B. Zuck in a Sunday school class at Redeemer Bible Church in Dallas, Texas. An unknown seminary student originally created this chart.

⁸⁴ Because these saints were raised in their natural bodies and presumably died again, "resuscitation" is a preferred description rather than "resurrection." The latter term always involves placement in an immortal body.

10).⁸⁵ Christ's resurrection condemned the Jewish nation since it validated His messianic claims thereby demonstrating Israel's errant decision in rejecting their king. The nation's unwillingness to even accept the sign of His resurrection is seen in the way the leaders bribed the guards in a futile attempt to explain away the sign of Jonah (28:11-15). Thus, Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer even continued into Christ's post resurrection life and ministry. Therefore, God turned to the believing remnant that would be the foundation for the new direction of ministry in the interim phase. The remnant's purpose would be the fulfillment of the Great Commission (28:16-20).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Christ's resurrection is validated by His numerous post resurrection appearances.

Number	Those Christ appeared to	Place	Time	Scripture
1	Mary Magdalene	Jerusalem	Sunday	John 20:14-18
2	Women	Jerusalem	Sunday	Matt 28:8-10
3	Peter	Jerusalem	Sunday	Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5
4	Two disciples on the Emmaus road	Emmaus	Sunday	Luke 24:13-31
5	Ten apostles	Jerusalem	Sunday	Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24
6	Eleven apostles	Jerusalem	A week later	John 20:24-29
7	Seven apostles by the Sea of Galilee	Galilee	?	John 21:1-23
8	Five hundred brethren	?	?	1 Cor 15:6
9	James (brother of Jesus)	?	?	1 Cor 15:7
10	Eleven disciples	Galilee	?	Matt 28:16-20
11	Eleven apostles on the day of the ascension	Jerusalem	40 days later	Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:3-12

Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 92; Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, 1672.

⁸⁶ The main imperatival verb is "make disciples." The attendant participles explain how this is to be accomplished. They include "baptizing" and "teaching." Baptizing involves evangelism and water baptism. This baptism is broader than the baptism of John. John's baptism was only to Israel, focused upon the coming messiah, and was incomplete (Acts 19:1-7). The baptism spoken of here is universal, focused upon what the messiah has already accomplished, and is complete. "Teaching" seems limited to what He had told them to teach rather than teaching everything that had transpired in His earthly ministry. The presence of "whatsoever" as well as the fact that

The global nature of these instructions had shifted radically from what Christ said earlier regarding limiting ministry only to Israel (10:5-6; 15:24). However, because the nation had rejected the offer of the kingdom, God would now accomplish His work of global evangelism and discipleship through this remnant that would soon become part of the newly created church. Although the church would primarily consist of Gentiles and not involve the establishment of the kingdom to Israel, Matthew's Jewish Christian audience can take comfort in the fact that this new phase of ministry was still part of the divine plan. Thus, Matthew has explained to the Jewish Christians at Syrian Antioch that Christ is indeed the Jewish messiah even though Israel rejected the offer of the kingdom resulting in the kingdom's postponement. Although He is pursuing an interim phase of ministry today primarily involving the Gentiles, God will still fulfill the Jewish expectation by restoring the kingdom to Israel in the future.

Christ did not instruct through commandments throughout Matthew's Gospel seems to favor this limited interpretation. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 319.

THE DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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It is no accident that the three most attacked books of the Bible are also the most significant (Gen; Dan; Rev). It is commonly known that if the foundation is faulty, the building will soon fall. This article will seek to refute the view that the Book of Daniel was written in the second century BC (as many liberals claim) and thus could not have been written by Daniel (ca. 622-536). This being the case, the issue of the date of Daniel will be addressed first. Miller concisely states the importance of this study: “One’s view concerning authorship and date is significant because it ultimately determines the interpretation of every aspect of this prophecy.”¹

THE DATE OF DANIEL

Position in the Canon

One of the arguments put forth which seems to indicate a late date (second century BC) for Daniel is its place in the canon. English versions of the Bible are based on the canonical order given in the Septuagint. As such, Daniel is grouped with the three major (writing) prophets. In the Hebrew canon, however, the book is positioned with the Writings (Ruth; 1—2 Chron; Ezra, Neh; Esth; Job; Ps; Prov; Eccl; Song; Lam).

Critics believe that since the Writings were collected *after* the prophetic canon was closed, Daniel could not have been written in the sixth century. The critics’ assumption is wrong. A number of the Psalms and Proverbs were composed between ca. 1020 and 950 BC. The events in the Book of Job likely happened in the days of Abraham (ca. 2000 BC). Therefore finding Daniel among the Writings does not require a late date. The Masoretes (ca. AD 750-950) may have moved Daniel from the Prophets to the Writings since much of the book is history and because Daniel was not a commissioned prophet to a certain people.²

Ben Sira’s Testimony

¹ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 22-23. Most of this article is based on this commentary.

² Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 423-24.

A second point espoused by liberals is the fact that Ben Sira³ does not mention Daniel. A passage in this apocryphal work (written about 195 BC) lists some notable OT figures but Daniel is not one of them. However, arguments from silence are generally considered weak. Too, the passage in question (44:1f) does not list Ezra or Mordecai either (among others). Some critics conclude that the author didn't know about Daniel (which is nearly impossible to believe), thus forcing a late date.

Other evidence indicates Daniel was actually well-known by the second century.⁴ First Maccabees (2:59f) and Baruch (1:15—3:3) both allude to Daniel and his book.⁵ Furthermore, many fragments of Daniel were found at Qumran, implying the book was of some importance by the third century. It appears Ben Sira's list was selective and not exhaustive.

Historical Considerations

Third, critics insist there are historical blunders in Daniel. They make that conclusion based on the assumption that a sixth century author could not have known such detail about the pre-Greek era. The critics simply reason that the historical parts are inaccurate, but that doesn't bother them because such errors do not affect the religious teachings of the book.

Since the book fits the historical setting of the sixth century better than it does the setting of the second century, the argument actually points to an early date. If the book were composed during the time of Antiochus IV (second century), one would expect more details from that time period. Too, is it not strange that Daniel does not mention such heroes as Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus?

Liberals are called on the carpet also because they seem to overlook the relationship between the man Daniel and the current administration, whether Babylonian or Persian. Nebuchadnezzar and Darius both appeared to have even respected Daniel. This was definitely not the case with Antiochus. He was killing as many godly Jews as he could lay his hands on. The second century Jews despised Antiochus IV. "Even if the stories were written earlier than the

³ This ancient document is known by several other titles, the best known being Ecclesiasticus (not to be confused with Ecclesiastes). Other titles are the Wisdom of Ben Sira, the Book of Sirach, and the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sira.

⁴ Miller noted that the author of Ben Sira may have been acquainted with Daniel after all. Hebrew fragments have been discovered which cover about two-thirds of Ben Sira, originally written in Hebrew (195 BC) but later translated into Greek (about 130 BC). These Hebrew fragments seem to depend on the Hebrew portions of Daniel. Miller, *Daniel*, 25-26.

⁵ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 1124.

second century BC and adapted by a Maccabean author, it seems logical to expect that he would have changed elements of the stories to fit his present situation.”⁶

Another source of debate is the use of the word “Chaldean” in the Book of Daniel. In some instances it is used to describe a race of people (Dan 5:30, “Belshazzar the Chaldean king”) yet in other verses it is used to describe a group of wisemen (2:10, “The Chaldeans answered the king . . .”). Critics charge that the sixth century is too early for that word to have developed into a term that refers to a certain group of men.

Herodotus may offer an explanation. In some of his writings he “refers to the Chaldeans in such a way as to imply that they were speedily put into all the politically strategic offices of Babylonia as soon as they had gained control of the capital. If this is the case, then ‘Chaldean’ may have early come into use as a term for the priests of Bel-Marduk.”⁷

Language

Fourth, it has been noted that the Book of Daniel has at least a few words from four different languages. Persian, Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic are all represented. Critics claim this mixture is proof of a late date. However, the weight of the linguistic evidence suggests an early date.

A few words are Persian in origin. This fact should not be surprising. During the last few years of his life, Daniel served in the Persian government. Approximately half of the twenty Persian loan words found concern government officials in some way.

In the entire Book of Daniel only three words are of Greek origin. Liberal scholars advocate the idea that since Alexander the Great did not spread the Greek language until the fourth century, Daniel could not have been written in the sixth century.

All three words are musical instruments (3:5, 7, 10, 15). The word “lyre” (NASB; “zither,” NIV) is a translation of the Greek *kitharis*, a term found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (eighth century BC).

The other two Greek words are *psaltērion* (“psaltery,” NASB; “harp,” NIV) and *symphōnia* (“bagpipe,” NASB; “pipes,” NIV). It is true that they are not known in any Greek literature until the sixth century. Other factors must be considered, however. (1) Simply because a word was not written in a certain language at a particular time does not mean the word did not exist. It is an argument from silence. (2) These are not “everyday conversation” words and thus it would be expected that they would rarely be encountered. (3) It is not

⁶ Miller, *Daniel*, 27.

⁷ Archer, *Old Testament Introduction*, 425.

wise to take a stand on the date of a biblical book based on only two or three words. (4) Greek merchants were trading with the Near East as early as the seventh century. (5) If Daniel had been composed in the second century, one would expect to see many words in Greek, the language of the day. For example, the terms for government officials are in Persian (as noted above) and not in Greek. Therefore, it is not terribly surprising to find Greek words in Daniel.

A distinctive feature of the Book of Daniel is that just over half of it is written in Aramaic. For a time, scholars promoted the belief that this Aramaic was Western Aramaic and thus reasoned that the book was compiled in Israel. Further research, however, has discredited this conclusion. Archer shows that Aramaic was known throughout the Near East.⁸ Finally, the Aramaic of Daniel more closely resembles that of fifth century documents (such as the Elephantine Papyri) than it does of later writings (such as the *Genesis Apocryphon*, first century).

Surprisingly, less than half of Daniel was written in Hebrew. Much that was said about Aramaic applies to the Hebrew language as well. Critics claim the Hebrew of Daniel is not as “smooth” as that of what would be expected for sixth century Judaism. It is likely the Hebrew was updated during the centuries of its existence (spellings, names of places, etc.) yet no term in it precludes Daniel as the human author.

Two other considerations are in order. First, “the Hebrew portion contains words, phrases, and grammar common throughout the Hebrew Bible.”⁹ Second, these words and phrases are very much like those found in Ezekiel, Haggai, Ezra, and Chronicles, and not so much like the Qumran documents.

Theology

Those who hold to a later date for the Book of Daniel also look to theology to support their claim. Second-century advocates have the notion that the areas of angelology, Christology, and the resurrection and judgment are too far developed to be a product of the sixth century.

Daniel is unique in that it provides the names of certain angels (Gabriel and Michael), yet otherwise it contributes nothing new to the study of angels. These messengers of God are encountered in several OT books, even as far back as Genesis.

It is wrong to state (or imply) that the doctrine of Christ (the Anointed One, the Messiah) was not begun until the Book of Daniel was written. Genesis

⁸ Archer, *Old Testament Introduction*, 436. Archer elaborated in great detail on this matter.

⁹ Miller, *Daniel*, 32.

3:15 has the first hint of a Messiah (“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel”). Furthermore, Isaiah (written 740-680) has numerous passages which speak of a Messiah (7:14; 9:6; 11:1).

Concerning resurrection and judgment, again passages older than Daniel mention these concepts. Job 19:25-27, Isaiah 26:19, Psalm 49:15, and Hosea 13:14 (among others) speak about a resurrection. Isaiah 26:19 in particular declares, “Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.”

Deuteronomy 10:17, 1 Samuel 2:10, and Judges 11:27 (all of which were composed before Daniel was) have something to say about God’s judgment. Genesis 18:25 calls God “the Judge of all the earth.” Many other passages could be rehearsed.

In summary, none of the doctrines presented in Daniel is without precedent. Arguments based on a book’s theology are weak at best. Except for eschatology, the Book of Daniel makes no significant contribution to theology.

Predictive Prophecy

The Bible student’s view of prophecy will influence his decision on the date of Daniel. Those who believe the Scriptures contain predictive prophecy usually choose an earlier date for the book. Those who don’t believe this assign Daniel to the Maccabean period.¹⁰ Actually this conclusion doesn’t make sense. Even if a person didn’t think Daniel was able to prophesy the Greek and Roman Empires has some explaining to do because there *is* predictive prophecy in the book.

Daniel 9:25-26 speak of a Messiah Who would not be born for hundreds of years – or more than 150 years according to the second-century daters. The critics’ explanation? Most verses in Daniel are not to be taken literally.

It is true that Antiochus is a part of the prophecy of Daniel (11:21-35), which is not surprising since that was a very significant time in Israel’s history. This fact raises a question of note: “What would be the point of revealing to someone in 6th-century Babylon a detailed account of the history of 2nd-century [Israel]?”¹¹

As with all predictive prophecies, these revelations serve a number of purposes: they demonstrate the Lord’s sovereignty, they bring hope to a people

¹⁰ The era named for Judas Maccabeus who led a revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his Syrian army 167-164 BC.

¹¹ D. R. G. Beattie, *First Steps in Biblical Criticism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 90-91, as quoted by Miller, *Daniel*, 33-34.

in distress by revealing a favorable future, they exhibit the power and inerrancy of the Bible, “the doctrine of the resurrection (12:2, 13) would have comforted the aged prophet as well as other believers who faced death,”¹² etc. That is why it is not so far-fetched to accept the idea that Daniel received a great deal of information while living in sixth-century Babylon.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Several manuscripts of Daniel were found at Qumran and 4QDan^c is of particular interest. Just about everyone agrees it dates to the second century BC. If that is true (and it is in all probability), then that piece of information actually supports the concept that Daniel was written in the sixth century, or at least some amount of time before the second century. Whence cometh this conclusion? A document originally composed in the second century would not have been accepted by the Qumran community in such a short amount of time. Harrison writes that “there would ... have been insufficient time for Maccabean compositions to be circulated, venerated, and accepted as canonical Scripture by a Maccabean sect.”¹³

Similar theories have been applied to Ecclesiastes and some of the Psalms. It was once believed that they were produced in the second century but the Qumran evidence showed otherwise. Again, support for a second century date for Daniel is very suspect.

The Septuagint

The Septuagint, abbreviated LXX, is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures put together in Alexandria, Egypt. *When* it was written is a matter of debate, yet the time period can be narrowed to some extent. It appeared no earlier than about 300 BC and no later than 100 BC. Other literature from that period suggests the LXX came out no later than 132 BC.¹⁴ Even if that date is off by 50 years, it still means Daniel was written much earlier.

It should be noted as well that four Persian words in Daniel were drastically mistranslated by the LXX authors. This indicates their meaning had been long forgotten. If the book was composed in the second century, how is it that the definition of those words had already been lost?

The Traditions of the Church, the Synagogue, and Other Ancient Documents

¹² Miller, *Daniel*, 34.

¹³ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1127.

¹⁴ For more details, see Miller, *Daniel*, 39-40.

For almost 2,400 years the synagogue and later the Church have taught that the Book of Daniel was written by the person so named and that it is accurate on every count (historically, spiritually, etc.). It has only been recently when these conclusions were challenged. “Such a universal consensus in the church and Jewish community would seem to be unlikely if it were not true.”¹⁵

A handful of Jewish apocryphal works appear to uphold this centuries-old understanding. In 1 Maccabees (2:59-60) Mattathias (on his deathbed) seeks to inspire his sons by recalling two events in Daniel: the three friends in the fiery furnace (Dan 3) and Daniel in the lions’ den (Dan 6).¹⁶ First Maccabees could have been written as late as 100 BC¹⁷ yet the fact that the scenes of Daniel were so well-known suggests the book was composed much earlier.¹⁸

Concerning other apocryphal books Harrison writes, “If the pseudepigraphic material designated 1 Enoch borrowed from Daniel (cf. 1 Enoch 14:18-22 with Dan 7:9-10), the section involved, which was probably written prior to 150 BC, would testify to the use of Daniel as authoritative Scripture at that time.”¹⁹

Daniel and Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel mentions Daniel three times (14:14, 20; 28:3). Whether or not this is “our” Daniel will be discussed below. For now it is assumed that it is. The question then becomes: when was the Book of Ezekiel written? Most scholars would say it was written after 593 BC (cf. Ezek 1:2). Thus, it is not farfetched to believe the Book of Daniel was composed in the sixth century.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF DANIEL

Within the Book of Daniel, the issues of date and authorship are so intertwined that if you are convinced of one, you have found the other.

Some scholars don’t completely agree with that statement, such as Goldingay. He admits that the chapters “manifest a generally consistent viewpoint, though this need not suggest common authorship. . . .”²⁰ He later

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Some books of the Apocrypha are fictional but others provide some reliable historical information; 1 Maccabees is in the latter group.

¹⁷ Mattathias died in 166 BC.

¹⁸ Baruch (written as late as 60 BC) may also have references to Daniel.

¹⁹ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1107.

²⁰ John Goldingay, *Daniel* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 327.

writes, "Diversity of authorship might be one of the reasons for diversity of language. . . ." ²¹

Goldingay lists these as possible authors:²² a group of Jewish priests (because of the book's concern for the Jews and their Messiah), the group of intellectuals brought to Babylon from Jerusalem (1:4; 11:33-35), or a group related to the intellectuals.

Many liberal scholars believe the author was a descendant of the latter group, a second-century Jew who was a member of the Hasidim²³ and wrote using Daniel's name. Porphyry, a second century Neo-Platonist, was the first to challenge the traditional view which held that Daniel of the sixth century wrote the book named after him. Porphyry in his writings directly stated that the book was composed in the second century and thus could not be a product of Daniel.

Claims of the Book Itself

One of the most obvious and powerful arguments in favor of Daniel being the author is the fact that the book itself reports that it was composed by a Daniel. The following verses contain either "me, Daniel" or "I, Daniel:" 7:28; 8:1, 15; 9:2; 10:2; and 12:5. Other passages strongly suggest Daniel is the author (7:1-2; 4, 6, 28; 12:4). Indeed, it is ridiculous to utilize a fraudulent work to teach religious or moral values.²⁴

Some people are bothered by the fact that the first half of the book is written in the third person (e.g., ". . . Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den . . .", "6:16; cf. 7:1; 10:1) yet the second half is written in the first person (e.g., "As for me, Daniel . . .", 7:28). Such a shift in the style was rather common in antiquity. Certainly this cannot be used to support the idea that more than one author was involved because the name "Daniel" is solidly linked with "me" or "I."

Historical Accuracy

The historical accuracy of the book also confirms that it is more likely that the work was compiled in the sixth century and not in the second century. Two examples will be given.

One has to do with the very first verse. Daniel 1:1 declares, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 329-30.

²³ Hasidim means "pious ones" or "saints." This sect thrived during the second century BC. They believed the priests had become too Hellenized and thus they were determined to maintain the traditions of Judaism.

²⁴ Miller, *Daniel*, 37.

Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.” This appears to contradict Jeremiah 46:2 (“To Egypt, concerning the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt, which was by the Euphrates River at Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim . . .”).

Nebuchadnezzar invaded both Carchemish and Jerusalem in the same year—605 BC. Yet Jeremiah makes it clear that 605 was Jehoiakim’s fourth year whereas Daniel says it was Jehoiakim’s third year. The difference has to do with the methods Jeremiah and Daniel employed in counting the number of years a king had been reigning.

Jeremiah dated a king’s reign using the Judean system. That method considered the accession year the first year of the reign. Thus, since Jehoiakim was appointed king in 608 (by Pharaoh Necho), 605 would have been his fourth year. Daniel used the Babylonian system (of course) which did not count a king’s first year until the beginning of the next calendar year. Therefore, the beginning of Jehoiakim’s first year would not start until the next calendar year.²⁵

A second example concerns the identification of Babylon’s last king. Was it Nabonidus or Belshazzar (Dan 5)? For many years scholars were of the opinion that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon and that Belshazzar was a legendary figure. Not even Herodotus among the ancient historians mentions him.

However, more recent archaeological evidence shows that Belshazzar served as co-regent with his father Nabonidus during the last few years of the Babylonian Empire. An inscription found at Ur contains a prayer for a Belshar-usur, a prayer offered only to monarchs. “Still other cuneiform documents record how Belshazzar presented sheep and oxen at the Temples of Sippar as ‘an offering of the king.’”²⁶ Moreover, Belshazzar bestowed upon Daniel the third, not the second, most authoritative position in the empire (Dan 5:16).

The truth is Nabonidus was not in Babylon at the time of Cyrus’ invasion. He was in North Arabia where he was killed about the same time as the invasion. Thus, Belshazzar was the last king. Since this name had been forgotten by the time of Herodotus (ca. 450 BC), the author of Daniel had to have written much earlier than that. Certainly a second century author would have no knowledge of Belshazzar. Miller concludes,

If Daniel predicted that the messianic age would ensue at the end of Antiochus's reign, which is the view of those who hold the Maccabean date of writing, how could later Jewish believers who observed that this event failed to materialize accept the book as

²⁵ Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 284-85; for more details, see Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 291.

²⁶ Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 286.

divinely inspired? The Septuagint translators and Qumran scribes lived only decades after Daniel was supposedly written, and they considered Daniel canonical. Yet Antiochus had come and gone, and the messianic age had not arrived. The book's pronouncements were proven to be fallacious. These Jewish scholars were certainly acquainted with Deut 18:22: "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously." If Daniel had predicted the arrival of the messianic age immediately after Antiochus's death, the book would have been thoroughly discredited in the eyes of Jewish believers. It would never have found its way into the canon but would have suffered the same fate as the other pseudoprophetic books of that period.²⁷

Jesus and the New Testament

Matthew 24:15 (cf. Mark 13:14) is quite pertinent to this discussion: "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand). . . ." The "abomination of desolation"²⁸ is referenced three times in Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Exactly what this is will be beyond the scope of this article.²⁹

Regardless, in Jesus' view (which is always accurate) it was the prophet Daniel who wrote the book that bears his name. That alone should settle the issue. His hearers did not question the implications by Jesus that Daniel was an historical person who lived in the sixth century. Even those scholars who are not in favor of dispensationalism admit this conclusion. "Both in Matthew and in Daniel . . . an individual living in Babylon during the exile is represented as prophesying events hundreds of years ahead."³⁰

It has been suggested that Jesus merely acquiesced to the standard thinking of the day, and thus the statements of the previous paragraph are not certain. This is nonsense because (1) He boldly challenged the thinking of His day. In Matthew 15:6 Christ chided the Pharisees because they "invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition." (2) our Lord would have been deceiving the people and that is impossible. In John 14:6 He labels Himself as "the Truth."

Finally, Jesus alludes to Daniel 7:13-14 in Matthew 26:64, "hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (cf. Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69). "Again Jesus treated

²⁷ Miller, *Daniel*, 37.

²⁸ In 9:27, the KJV reads "for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." Other translations are: "abomination that causes desolation" (NIV); "on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate" (NASB). In 11:31 and 12:11 (and Matt 24:15), the NASB has "the abomination of desolation."

²⁹ See Charles H. Ray, "A Study of Daniel 9:24-27, Part IV," *The Conservative Theological Journal* 6 (August 2002): 203-15.

³⁰ Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 13-14, as quoted by Miller, *Daniel*, 35.

Daniel as an account of future events by indicating that the passage in Dan[iel] 7 refers to himself and his future second coming.”³¹

Furthermore, Josephus in his writings implies that Daniel is the author of the book bearing his name.³² The evidence which indicates that Christ was wrong about Daniel is virtually nonexistent.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

That there was little opposition to the traditional view of Daniel for thousands of years is not conclusive but it certainly provides some force. The weight of the evidence supports the traditional view. That the Book of Daniel was written in the sixth century BC by the man Daniel better fits the facts than does any other theory.

³¹ Miller, *Daniel*, 35.

³² Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.8.5.

THE UNFOLDING ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE: DEMONSTRATED IN TWO PROPHECIES ABOUT NATIONS IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

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For some time this author has been interested in the subject of the accuracy of the Bible, particularly in the face of recent developments both within and beyond the context of Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism and the assorted combinations of thereof. While more moderate theologians have little difficulty making claims that the Bible has numerous errors, an erosion has shown up in more conservative writings. As an example, the popular *Introducing Christian Doctrine* by Millard J. Erickson, while defending the doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy stated, “It appears that even Paul and Peter may on occasion have made incorrect statements.”¹ While holding great appreciation for Erickson’s valuable work, one should not readily concede to such a position. At the same time, questions should be carefully explored and answers carefully sought to provide more than superficial responses.

This author has been particularly interested in the way these matters have been addressed in the Older Testament of Scripture. One of the particular points of interest for me has been that of the prophecies of Ezekiel. Admittedly that is not one of the top ten books of Scripture quoted in the average testimony given in most congregations. Because the book of Ezekiel is not generally familiar to many professing Christians today, one will not understand the particular details that are desired for consideration in this article. Therefore, it will be advantageous to begin with a brief historical background.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ezekiel’s World Context²

Ezekiel lived at the conclusion of the Davidic dynasty—600 years before Christ. He would have been a boy during the reign of Josiah (640-609 BC). Josiah had attempted reforms both economically and spiritually in Judah, in part because of concerns with resisting the major super power of the time, Assyria. When Pharaoh Necho attempted to pass near Israel, on the highway by

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd ed., ed. L. Arnold Hustad (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 72.

² The author is indebted to a recorded lecture by Donald A. Carson given at the 1997 Reformation & Revival Conference for material that is summarized here.

the Mediterranean Sea, en route to assist the Assyrian military in their efforts to resist the emerging power of one of their conquered states to the East, the region of Babylon, Josiah was unwilling to permit Pharaoh Necho to pass through the territory. Rejecting the appeals from Pharaoh Necho, Josiah engaged him in battle at the expense of his own life. Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Necho in 609 BC.

Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, became the next ruler but he ruled for only three months until Pharaoh Necho, the head of the regional super power to the South, Egypt, made his return from Assyria and took him into captivity, to Egypt.

Pharaoh Necho made Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim the next king. He took the name Jehoiakim when he got on the throne. He laid heavy tax burdens on the people. He was religiously perverse and morally corrupt. In his fourth year (605 BC) the Egyptian ruler Pharaoh Necho was crushed on the Syrian border at the Battle of Carchemish by the new rising super power—Babylon.

Judah became subject to Babylon—a vassal state (2 Kgs 24:1). In 604 BC Nebuchadnezzar came into Jerusalem and took Daniel and others into exile. Three years later, in 601 BC, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar sent forces to besiege Jerusalem in December 598 BC. Jehoiakim was killed, perhaps before Nebuchadnezzar arrived. This initiated a long period of exile.

Jehoiakim's eighteen-year-old son, Jehoiachin, replaced him as king. He only ruled for three months before he had to choose whether to rebel or surrender. He surrendered to Babylonian forces on 16 March 597 BC. His mother, he and the leading people, including the young priest named Ezekiel, were transported off to Babylon—a distance of 700 miles—on foot! Jehoiachin was imprisoned or placed under house arrest in Babylon. He was regarded as the true king, particularly among the exiles. He died in captivity.

Zedekiah the uncle of Jehoiachin and the brother of Jehoiakim was made the puppet ruler of Judah. Ezekiel carefully avoided referring to him as king. The exiles anticipated getting home soon in freedom from the super power of Babylon. They fully anticipated that their king Jehoiachin would soon be returned to the throne.

In 588 BC Nebuchadnezzar returned to attack Jerusalem. In 587 or 586 (depending on what calendar is utilized) the city fell. In the process, Zedekiah tried to escape but was captured near Tibla. The last thing he saw was the execution of his sons, then his own eyes were blinded. He would spend the rest of his days in Babylonian captivity.

Chronology of Ezekiel's Life and Times

1:1 in the 30th year

1:2 in the 5 th year	592 BC
8:1 in the 6 th year	591
20:1 in the 7 th year	590
24:1 in the 9 th year	588
29:1 in the 10 th year	587
26:1 in the 11 th year	586
32:17 in the 12 th year	585
40:1 in the 25 th year	572

Thus the life and times of Ezekiel are neatly arranged. The history may be fitted in with the Biblical books of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles and Jeremiah as from the account in Josephus, etc.

The Prophet's Personal History

Ezekiel was of the priestly line of Israel. He would have been 30 in 593. He was called to ministry in Babylon where they had been exiles for five years. The final fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple did not occur until 586 BC. When many were claiming that God would spare Judah for the temple's sake, Ezekiel begins his ministry, not in Jerusalem but by the Chebar River in modern day Iraq. The Chebar River was an irrigational canal that brought water for the crops where Ezekiel and the Israelites were permitted to settle and build mud houses in settling as a Jewish community. Ezekiel was, apparently, an official administrator during the captivity who mediated in the troubled situation in Babylon when half of the population called for rebellion and the other half denounced it. As the people in Jerusalem experienced such a rebellion against the Babylonian government could prove devastating. He was in constant contact with Jerusalem and thoroughly aware of affairs there, presumably from the briefings he would have received as an administrator in Babylon. He was married for a time but we know nearly nothing about his marriage other than that his wife died. As a sign to the nation, he was not permitted to mourn her death (24:15-18).

The bulk of Ezekiel would have been written between 598-87 BC. Some say that the book must have been written from Jerusalem. But the people in exile are the most patriotic because they see things through "rose tinted glasses." His ministry in those years was anything but the routine that would have been his experience had he been a priest during settled times in Jerusalem.

STRUCTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

A major theme in the book of Ezekiel serves almost as a kind of refrain throughout the book is that through God's actions "they will know that I am the

Lord.” This phrase, sometimes referred to as the Recognition Formula, occurs seventy-two times in the book of Ezekiel (fifty-four in its pure form and eighteen in its expanded form).³ Drawing on the exodus narratives, Ezekiel portrays God’s acts of judgment and salvation will lead both the Israelites and the Pharaoh and the Egyptians to recognize and know that he is the Lord (Exod 6:6–8; 7:5, 17; 14:18).⁴ In Ezekiel, both God’s people as well as the foreign nations will know that He is the Lord.

Throughout Ezekiel’s oracles against the foreign nations (Ezek 25—32, 35; 38—39), God intends for these nations to know that He is the LORD through His divine acts, just as the Egyptians did at the time of the exodus. (cf. Ezek 25:7, 11, 17; 26:6; 35:15; 38:23; Exod 7:5; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 14:4, 18).

The exiled Hebrew people, deeply patriotic in their displacement, were eager to see their homeland freed from oppression and their homes restored. Creative efforts would have been expended as they sought ways to build coalitions to successfully resist the grip of the Babylonian rule. In response, God gave Ezekiel explicit revelations about the true spiritual condition in the city of Jerusalem and the territory of Israel in general. Not only were the people in their difficulties because of the LORD’s hand of judgment, but also their neighbors were powerless to assist the Hebrew people in a coalition against Nebuchadnezzar. In reality those nations were facing deep distress themselves.

While there would be great value in looking at the details pertaining to each of the nations, for the purposes of this paper consideration will be given to details of prophecies given to two of those nations. One addresses the demise of the ancient merchant city of Tyre while the other addresses the city of Noph or Memphis in Egypt. The position of this author is that the messages to the nations were not only relevant for the time of their writing, but also for the strengthening of the faith of all those willing to embrace the Bible as the Word of God.

THE PROPHECY AGAINST TYRE (EZEK 26—28)

The prophecy relating to Tyre has generated considerable debate for those who defend as well as those who attack the Bible. At stake is the flow of the predictions in Ezekiel 26 that flow with the other prophetic statements about surrounding nations. Those who attack the Bible point to Ezekiel 26 and deride the folly of Ezekiel because Nebuchadnezzar was not successful in destroying the people of Tyre. In actuality, Ezekiel 29:17-20, they contend, indicates that

³ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament), eds. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 39.

⁴ Ibid., 39.

God had to adjust the prophecy to fit with the reality of what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar in his effort to overthrow Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar and his army are portrayed as leaving with heads bald and shoulders bare from their frustrated efforts. So that Ezekiel would not lose face completely, it is argued, Nebuchadnezzar was given Egypt as a consolation prize. The prophecy of Ezekiel 26 is said to have failed. What responses have been advanced for these questions? Without affirming any one of the views explicitly, Daniel Block listed seven responses:

1. The contradiction has been denied. This older view has all but been abandoned because even if Tyre was subdued it was not destroyed, as had been predicted.
2. The city was conquered but when Nebuchadnezzar's troops finally entered they found the island fortress abandoned and its treasures transported safely overseas. This view has been abandoned for lack of evidence.
3. The oracle had been inserted at a relatively late date by a redactor aware of the futile siege and concerned to correct the error of the earlier prophecies. In Ezekiel's name he announced the plundering of the Egyptians as a substitute for the taking of spoils of Tyre.
4. The prophet had been mistaken in his original pronouncement, but he is to be commended for honestly intimating that a word from Yahweh had not been fulfilled.
5. By drawing attention to the fact that the divine word had not been fulfilled (unparalleled in prophetic literature), the prophet calls for the opposite to occur.
6. A new situation may call for the adaptation of an unfulfilled prophecy.
7. Though preserved literary forms or oracles may contain no hint of conditionality, the outcomes announced were often contingent. Prophetic pronouncements did not possess inherent power so that the mere utterance of the word set in motion the events that they predicted, thus leading to an inevitable and mechanical fulfillment. The efficaciousness of the word lay not in the word itself but in the power of the divine speaker to carry out what he had predicted. Nor should

one pity prophets for being captive to their utterances.⁵ A similar attitude is expressed in the work of Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*:

Any doubt about the ministry of the prophet would of course automatically leave doubt about the validity of the book, since the book never distances itself from the prophet, and would thereby seriously undermine its rhetorical effectiveness. On the other hand, the passage reveals that the failure of a prophecy is not regarded as such a great embarrassment as to require that removal of the prophecy. The prophecy against Egypt does not seem to have come to pass in every detail either, but the book was probably completed and its authority established by the time this became clear.⁶

Christopher Wright, from whom this author has learned much in person and through his writings, reacts to this setting in Ezekiel. First, he explained, Ezekiel was using rhetoric, hyperbole, and stereotyped phraseology in relation to the topics of divine judgment and military defeat. *Literalism generates false expectations which easily then become accusations of false prophecy*. Second, he contended that biblical prophecy always had a conditional element. Third, the destruction of Tyre did take place though not by Nebuchadnezzar but by Alexander the Great in 332 BC.⁷ Wright then unleashed the following:

It is ironic that the book of Ezekiel contains this little passage which serves as a warning that even in Ezekiel's own day it was clear that there need not always be a literal fulfillment of the predictions he had made with his artistic poetic rhetoric. The fact that a prediction did not quickly 'come true' in the literal terms in which it was given did not mean that the prophetic word that embodied it lost all authenticity and relevance. This could not be the only test of whether or not a prophet was truly sent by God. It is ironic, since Ezekiel has probably suffered posthumously more than any other prophet from the labours of those determined to take some of his later visions with utter literalism and to predict on the basis of them all kinds of scenarios for 'the end times' — some of which have manifestly failed to materialize as their proponents predicted (though not before they had made a great deal of money and popularity out of peddling them). The fault, now as among Ezekiel's exilic contemporaries, lies not with the prophet himself, but with those who misunderstand and abuse the prophetic word.⁸

⁵ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament), eds. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 147-48.

⁶ Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 98.

⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and a New Spirit* (The Bible Speaks Today), ed. J. A. Motyer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 249.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 249-50.

As an alternative to the above positions, this author offers the following from his mentor, Allan A. MacRae, through a letter in a book of his letters entitled *Biblical Christianity*:

One of the strongest evidences of the divine authorship of the Bible is the fulfillment of prophecy. Many human beings have tried to predict the future. Sometimes such a prediction has been expressed in such a way that one could claim that it had been fulfilled, no matter what actually happened. No great religion not based on the Bible has dared to rest its claim to be true on ability to predict the distant future, but the Bible contains many predictions. Some have been fulfilled in remarkable ways that no mere human could have anticipated. Even a few clear instances should be convincing proof of divine inspiration. Two of the most remarkable are the prediction about Tyre in Phoenicia and the one about Memphis in Egypt. Each of these predicts a situation that did not exist until a century or more after the prediction was made. Each of them is paralleled by a different prediction about a related city. In each case the prediction was not fulfilled until one or more centuries had passed, and was fulfilled in such a way that no human being could possibly have guessed what would happen.

The prediction about Tyre is very interesting. Tyre and Sidon were great commercial cities at the dawn of history and continued to be of great importance for many centuries. Both were located on the Mediterranean coast a few miles north of the land of Israel. There is a remarkable statement about Tyre in Ezekiel 26:12ff. It reads: "And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water....And I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon, thou shalt be built no more." What a strange prediction! Most ancient cities were captured and sacked at some time in the course of the centuries. A great many were later rebuilt. But how would it ever happen that people would throw the stones and the timber and even the dust into a body of water? The Bible contains no such prediction about Sidon or any other city. Yet that is exactly what happened.

Not long after Ezekiel wrote, the great monarch Nebuchadnezzar attacked Tyre. The great siege, which lasted twelve years, is vividly described in Ezekiel 26. Instead of rebuilding their city on its original site, the Tyrians decided to move to a safer location. There was an island near the city, about a half mile from shore. Perhaps there had been a small settlement or a group of warehouses on the island before the siege. Remembering the horrors of the siege, the people decided to rebuild their city out on the island, where it would be easier to resist an attack. There the new city flourished. Greek geographers referred to its former place on the mainland as "old Tyre." The ruins stood in disarray at the old site. Who would ever bother to take the stones and the timber and even the dust and cast them into the water?

Two hundred years passed. The Babylonian empire had become part of the great Persian Empire, which had vainly tried to conquer distant Greece. Then the great Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great, attacked the Persian Empire, and seized one section after another. The great independent merchant city of Tyre sided with the Persians and its ships threatened the ships that supplied Alexander's armies. He could hardly go forward and leave this strong hostile force in his rear. So he decided to conquer the powerful island city. The Encyclopedia Britannica tells how "Alexander demolished old Tyre and with the debris built a mole 200 ft. in breadth across the straits." His men cast the stones and the timber and even the dust into the sea and eventually made it possible for Alexander's powerful army to march out to the city and capture it. Only by the direct inspiration of the One who knows all history before it

happens could Ezekiel have predicted this unique event, two hundred years before it occurred.

The fulfillment of this remarkable prophecy, along with the equally remarkable one about the great cities of Egypt, gives unanswerable proof that the Bible contains truths that no human being could possibly have guessed, if the Creator of the universe had not revealed them to him.

This view is rejected by scholars who believe that Alexander's people were mistaken when they thought they were throwing into the water the remains of an ancient city. Alleging that no city existed that could be called "old Tyre" the city of Tyre had always been an island city. Further, they claim that this is proved by the fact that at many places in the annals of the ancient Assyrian kings the name of Tyre is followed by the words: "in the midst of the waters."

MacRae, having read the annals of the Assyrian king in the original cuneiform writing as a student in Germany, has demonstrated that the same annals refer to Sidon, the other great ancient maritime city, as "in the midst of many waters." MacRae wrote: "Sidon is on the mainland, not on an island. The fact that it is also many times accompanied by this phrase proves that the phrase does not indicate that it is situated on an island, but that it is a great maritime center, with its ships going to and fro through the waters, carrying goods from and to cities in all directions."⁹

THE PROPHECY AGAINST MEMPHIS (EZEK 30:13)

Interestingly, the prophecy against Egypt in Ezekiel 29—32 has many features that are connected with dates, except for chapter 30:1-19. In that section is a most interesting prophecy. In none of the authors consulted was any comment given on this particular prophecy. Again, a citation from a letter of MacRae is provided.

While the prophecy about Tyre was fulfilled two hundred years after it was given, nearly a thousand years passed before the one about Memphis was fulfilled, and this occurred in a way that no one could possibly have foreseen.

In Ezek. 29 and 30 the prophet told of God's future judgments against Egypt. In these chapters he spoke particularly about the two leading cities of Egypt-- Memphis and Thebes. Thebes, in southern Egypt, was its capital during many centuries. Memphis, several hundred miles north of Thebes, was equally prominent.

There are many verses in these two chapters of Ezekiel that predict disasters for each of these great cities. (In seven places the Hebrew Bible and the KJV refer to Memphis as "Noph"; in five places they refer to Thebes as "No".) Several of these verses speak of future judgments against these cities in terms of general destruction, such as most ancient cities experience in the course of the centuries. Thus we read that God will cut off the multitude of Thebes (No) in Jer. 46:25 and Ezek. 30:15; and that

⁹ Allan A. MacRae, *Biblical Christianity* (Singapore: Christian Life, 1994), 195-97.

Thebes will be rent asunder and Memphis will have distresses daily (Ezek. 30:16). But there is one prediction about Memphis (Noph) that has no counterpart in the predictions about Thebes – “Thus saith the Lord GOD: I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease from Memphis” (Ezek. 30:13).

A thousand years after the book of Ezekiel was written Thebes and Memphis still contained hundreds of idols and images of all sorts. Each of them had been the capital city of many Pharaohs. Even today the site of ancient Thebes is one of the greatest outdoor museums in the world. When I stood in front of one of the dozens of huge statues that line a long “procession street” in Thebes, my head barely reached its knees. There are still idols to be seen in the many temples that have survived. The city was “rent asunder” on more than one occasion, but hundreds of statues and dozens of idols are still in place. (It is now customary to call the place Luxor, and to speak of its greatest temple as “the temple of Karnak.”)

Ezekiel did not say that the images and idols of Thebes would disappear. That part of the prediction applied only to Memphis.

Today a visitor to the place in northern Egypt once occupied by Memphis sees little more than a trace of the thousands of images and idols that were there for so many centuries. Out of all of them, nothing remained when I visited Egypt in 1929 but one small sphinx and a gigantic figure of the Pharaoh named Rameses II, broken into three parts and lying on its back.

What made the enormous difference in the fate of the two great capitals of ancient Egypt? More than a thousand years after Ezekiel made his prophecy, Mohammed began a movement in Arabia that developed into a great military force and conquered most of the nations in that part of the world. There is much in Mohammedanism that we as Christians abhor, but there is one feature with which we heartily agree -- its hatred of idolatry. In A.D. 640 the Mohammedans conquered Egypt and desired to build a new capital where idolatry would never have existed. So they built a new city called Fostat, a few miles north of Memphis. The great palaces and temples of Memphis, with their many images and idols, were a great source for building material, which could easily be floated down the river on barges. Three centuries later another Mohammedan group, the Fatimite Caliphs made a new conquest of Egypt and decided to replace Fostat by building a different city, a few miles further north. Eventually this new city, Cairo, would become the largest city in Africa, and again it was easy to float excellent stone materials down river, at first from the ruins of Fostat and then from what still remained of ancient Memphis. Eventually nothing remained of this great city of the Pharaohs except the few fragments already mentioned.

No mere human being could have guessed the great difference in the fate of the two great Egyptian capital cities. God enabled His prophet to reveal facts that no human being could have guessed.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Early in Ezekiel’s ministry he was commissioned by the LORD and received the following words: *Be not rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations,*

¹⁰ Ibid., 198-200.

and mourning, and woe. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then I did eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness (Ezek 2:8—3:3). Ezekiel was under obligation to take the message God had given him and saturate himself with its contents. His prophetic ministry was challenged repeatedly by the patriotic Hebrews who were eager for religion but not covenant loyalty to the LORD. They wanted to craft a religion that was pluralistic, inclusive and ultimately determined by their criteria. By contrast, Ezekiel was under obligation to proclaim the message from God and did so through a series of unique and creative avenues. No listener or observer in his day and no reader of his prophecy in our own should be able to bypass the sense of his captivating obligation to the message God had given to him. He understood that he would give account for his ministry.

As in the example of Ezekiel of old, we dare not ignore our obligation to faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of God for the people of our day. In the New Testament, writers like James warn those who teach that they will face a more strict accounting for their instruction (Jas 3:1). Peter also reminded elders that a time is coming when the Chief Shepherd will appear and they will face a time of accounting with the possibility of rewards (1 Pet 5:2-3).

On the landscape of Biblical interpretation, the church stands at a distinctive point in time. On one hand, the church faces the temptation to state more than the Bible states in an effort to help it. On the other hand, the church faces the derision of those who seek to undermine what has been written at every turn. By contrast, the church must make every effort to be diligent in study, accurate in translation, and faithful in interpretation of it.

Again, if the reader will permit another quotation from MacRae: “Whenever I hear of an alleged error in the Word of God, I say: ‘Wait a minute. Let’s get all the relevant facts. When all the facts are looked at, the Bible always proves to be right.’” Of course there are many occasions when we can not get access to all the facts. In such a case it is wise to give the Bible the benefit of the doubt.”¹¹

The Bible is the Word of God; it is an eternal revelation from God. As such there are things that believers of a century ago or millennium ago understood more clearly than we do today. At the same time there are things that the church understands more clearly today than readers in previous centuries understood. The church ought always to remember and affirm what Isaiah wrote: *The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever* (Isa 40:8).

¹¹ Ibid., 197.

**PETER’S USAGE OF *ARCHĒ* IN ACTS 11:15:
A THEOLOGICAL SHIBBOLETH FOR
THE DISPENSATIONAL UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH**

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Shibboleth (a borrowed Hebrew word, now a component of the English vocabulary) is “a word or pronunciation that distinguishes people of one group or class from those of another.”¹ It was borrowed from the Bible story where 42,000 rebellious soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim were identified and executed. The Ephraimites were identified by their mispronunciation of the word shibboleth (Judg 12:6).² One may wonder if their tribal mispronunciation was a result of decades of cultural compromise with the Canaanites that lived among them.³

Today there is the need to distinguish between all those who profess to be Christian. The clear biblical “pronunciation” of the Gospel must be the shibboleth which makes that distinction (i.e. “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” 1 Cor 15:3-4). Though certainly not a matter for determining physical execution, profession of the Gospel is a matter relating to everlasting life and everlasting death, and must therefore be a determining factor in identifying who should be called “brethren” in *the* faith.

There is also a need today to distinguish between those who are biblically qualified as pastors in Christ’s church. The Scripture is clear that the holding fast to sound doctrine is one necessary qualification for pastors (i.e. elders, bishops; Tit 1:9). Though sound doctrine is somewhat related to the Gospel, which brought new life to the believer, it is primarily concerned with those clear teachings of Scripture that will promote spiritual health and growth in each child of God. One example of sound doctrine is the biblical teaching that the church is the body of Christ, significantly distinct from God’s covenantal people Israel, in origin through Spirit baptism, and in its identification through water baptism.

¹ “Shibboleth,” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004) (Dictionary.com, accessed 7 June 2007) available from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/shibboleth>.

² Scripture quotations are from the *New King James Version*.

³ The Book of Judges consistently depicts the tribe of Ephraim negatively, which is a typical example of the book’s theme (i.e. everyone doing what is right in their own eyes; cf. 1:29, 8:1f, 17:1f, 19:1f, 21:25).

Therefore, what one, who claims the role of “pastor,” believes and teaches concerning the church may reveal whether they are truly qualified for the position they publicly hold. A major component of this sound doctrine concerning the church is that the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit in forming the body of Christ, the church, began at Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. A theological shibboleth, therefore, in helping one discover what their “pastor” believes concerning the origin of the church is to ask, “What does the word “beginning” mean in Acts 11:15?” The context of this passage is clear in demonstrating that the apostle Peter recognized that the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit had its “beginning” at Pentecost, which leaves no doubt as to the moment in which the dispensation of the church also began.

SURVEY OF THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS

There are a variety of theological positions as to when the church began. Each one endeavors to gather Scriptural support for its conclusion. It is beyond the scope of this article to uncover and document thoroughly the evidence for the theological motivations behind each stance. It would be profitable to see how much of their “mispronunciation” of the biblical data concerning the theological shibboleth of Acts 11:15 (i.e. the “beginning” of the church) is based on their theological enculturation by Roman Catholic, Reformed indoctrination, or perhaps on their overreaction to such indoctrination.

The premillennial, amillennial, and postmillennial covenant positions on the origin of the church seem definitely to be influenced by the traditional Roman Catholic or Reformed ecclesiology. The Landmarkian, Progressive Dispensational and Ultradispensational positions for the origin of the church seem to have resulted from an overreaction to Roman Catholic or Reformed ecclesiology. Ultimately, any position that claims to be scriptural must proffer its hermeneutic principles upon which it relied in coming to its conclusion. The traditional dispensational position claims to rely primarily upon normal grammatical and contextual rules of interpretation; it is these rules that lead to the only reasonable understanding of the word “beginning” in Acts 11:15 (i.e. the beginning of the body of Christ, the church).

All evangelical Covenant Theology groups within Christianity usually affirm an Old Testament origin of the church. They follow in the theological tradition of reformation theologian, John Calvin who taught that the church began in Genesis. In his commentary on Genesis, Calvin wrote, “We may readily conclude that Seth was an upright and faithful servant of God. And after he begat a son, like himself, and had a rightly constituted family, the face of the Church began distinctly to appear, and that worship of God was set up which

might continue to posterity.”⁴ Even the great Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, adopted this view, not realizing how inconsistent it was to Baptist ecclesiology. In a sermon delivered on 27 December 1863 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, he said, “Where shall I say that the Church began? Why, very speedily after there was a seed of the serpent, there was also a seed of the woman. Surely the line of demarcation began hard by the gates of Eden; there we see Abel worshipping God in faith, and Cain who was of the wicked one and slew his brother.”⁵

More modern covenant theologians continued this view. Louis Berkhof, in his *Systematic Theology*, said, “In the patriarchal period the families of believers constituted the religious congregations; the Church was best represented in the pious households, where the fathers served as priests.”⁶ Francis Nigel Lee, Professor-Emeritus of Queensland Presbyterian Theological College in Australia, who is modern proponent of theological postmillennialism, also affirms a post-fall, Genesis, beginning for the church, the body of Christ.⁷ Moreover, premillennial covenant theologian, R. Todd Magnum, who is currently an associate professor of theology at Biblical Theological Seminary (Hatfield, PA), also affirms an Old Testament church identity, at least in the nation of Israel, if not before. He believes “that the nation of Israel was a prototype (or prototypical form) of the people of God, the ‘called out ones,’ the church. The NT employs the word *ekklesia*, in a deliberate hearkening back to the LXX translation of *qahal* (“assembly”) of the OT.”⁸

Landmark Theology, which is still held by a significant segment of Baptists, promotes a pre-Pentecost beginning for the church. Landmark Baptists were originally a part of the Southern Baptist denomination, and under the leadership of James Robinson Graves, they held the main influence in that denomination for the last half of the nineteenth century. The early twentieth century found most Landmark Baptists leaving and forming their own associations, which most now align under the umbrella association called the American Baptist Association, which began in 1924.⁹ In regards to the beginning of the church, Jack Green, current president and a professor of Landmark Baptist Theological Seminary (Fort Worth, TX), said, “We believe

⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* (Albany: Ages Software, Version 1.0, 1998), 144.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, “Alpha and Omega,” in *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection* (Albany: Ages Software, Version 1.0, 1998), 899.

⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1981), 570.

⁷ Francis Nigel Lee, email correspondence to the author, 21 May 2007.

⁸ R. Todd Magnum, email correspondence to the author, 19 May 2007.

⁹ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 447-61, 751-53.

Jesus started His Church with the converts of John The Baptist about 3 years before the day of Pentecost. A careful reading of Acts 2 (Day of Pentecost) does not reveal any church beginning on the day of Pentecost.”¹⁰

Ultradispensationalism is a modern designation for an anti-sacramental ecclesiology that rejects the practice of water baptism and sometimes also the celebration of communion. The elimination of these ordinances is supported by their interpretation that the inception of the church, the body of Christ, happened after the conversion and calling of the apostle Paul, and is to be disassociated from the Jewish “gospel” which was functioning under the leadership of the twelve Apostles. As previously mentioned, their theological presuppositions seemed to be formed from a reaction to traditional Roman Catholic and Reformed interpretations of baptismal and communion passages in the Gospels and Acts which appear to support a sacramental salvation.

Ultradispensationalist Phillip J. Long, associate professor of biblical studies at Grace Bible College (Grand Rapids, MI), prefers to call his position concerning the beginning of the church, “Mid-Acts” Dispensationalism.¹¹ He confirmed the possible anti-sacramental incentive for supporting the Mid-Acts view when he said, “I think a motivation in the early days of mid-acts dispensationalism was to avoid anything that looked like a ‘work’ done to obtain salvation. Since many of our early people came out of Baptist circles or Reformed (padeo-baptist) churches, there was an interest in being ‘free from the law’ in every way possible.”¹²

Not all Ultradispensationalists start the church at the same point. Some begin it with Paul’s conversion and revelatory experience in Arabia in Acts 9. Others connect the church’s beginning with the marked Jewish rejection of Paul’s ministry in Acts 13:46 (“behold we turn to the Gentiles”) or in Acts 28:28 (“the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles”). An Acts 28 Dispensationalism was made popular by nineteenth century scholar and theologian E. W. Bullinger, and is professed by most of the adherents of Ultradispensationalism, who reject both baptism and the Lord’s Supper as being for the church of today.¹³

Progressive Dispensationalism is a recent movement seeking common theological ground with Covenant Theology through dialog and what they have

¹⁰ Jack Green, email correspondence to the author, 20 May 2007.

¹¹ Phillip J. Long, email correspondence to the author, 1 June 2007.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Though there are not as many Acts 28 dispensationalists today as those who hold a mid-Acts view, their position in rejecting both water baptism and communion is similar to the ecclesiology of Evangelical Friends, or Quakers.

coined as “complementary hermeneutics.”¹⁴ This has provided for some blurring of the distinction between God’s program for His people Israel as a nation, and the administration of God’s will during this dispensation of the church. Craig Blaising, one of its main proponents, speaking for himself and not representative of all progressives, said, “I do believe that the Church began at Pentecost and that that is what ‘beginning’ in Acts 11:15 is referring to.”¹⁵ Blaising pronounced this theological shibboleth correctly.

The point of this article is to uphold the traditional dispensational view of the church’s beginning, which is by far the most popular view among baptistic evangelical groups. Premillennial dispensational theologian, Charles Ryrie, in his *Basic Theology*, stated definitively: “Pentecost marks the beginning of the church as a functioning body by the outpouring of the Spirit on that day.”¹⁶ Well-known Baptist theologian, Millard J. Erickson, who is also premillennial, affirms this same view as can be deduced from his *Christian Theology*: “We conclude that the church originated in Pentecost.”¹⁷ Erickson did not reference the definitive use of the word “beginning” by Peter in Acts 11:15. However, Ryrie did connect Acts 11:15-16 with the beginning of the Holy Spirit’s baptizing work.

As already pointed out, no Old Testament prediction of the baptism exists, and our Lord said it would happen for the first time when the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). Later Peter called this “the beginning” (11:15-16). Also the purpose of the baptism, to join believers to the body of Christ, and the distinctiveness of the body to this dispensation, support the conclusion that this is a ministry operative only in this dispensation.¹⁸

Later in his section on ecclesiology, Ryrie made the connection between the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church.

Before His ascension the Lord promised that the disciples would be baptized with the Holy Spirit soon (Acts 1:5). Though the word “baptism” does not appear in the account of Pentecost in chapter 2, it is quite clear from 11:15-16 that the baptism occurred for

¹⁴ Ron J. Bigalke Jr., “Preface,” in *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Analysis of the Movement and Defense of Traditional Dispensationalism*, gen. ed. idem (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), xi-xv.

¹⁵ Craig Blaising, email correspondence to the author, 20 May 2007.

¹⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 466.

¹⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1058. Erickson holds a posttribulational view for the rapture of the church and believes that Old Testament saints were incorporated into the church at Pentecost. Erickson therefore does not seem to discern millennial distinctions for Israel and the church in the future.

¹⁸ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 418.

the first time on that day. Since, according to Paul (1 Cor. 12:13), Spirit baptism places people in the body of Christ, and since the body of Christ is the church (Eph. 1:22-23), the church, the body, began when those first individuals were baptized at Pentecost.¹⁹

It is this reasoning that allows the meaning of “beginning” in Acts 11:15 to be used as a theological shibboleth for the purpose of recognizing those who are holding fast to sound doctrine in regards to the Scripture’s teaching on Spirit baptism, water baptism, and the start of the body of Christ, which is His church.

SURVEY OF THE USE OF *ARCHE* IN ACTS 11:15

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us *at the beginning*. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ (Acts 11:15-16, emphasis added)

It has been surprising to see how few popular Bible commentaries link the word “beginning” in Acts 11:15 directly to the beginning of the church, the body of Christ. The commentaries on the Book of Acts that are available to most believers, even most pastors, are few in number. Furthermore, what is found in those few commentaries, in regards to the meaning of “beginning” (Gk. *archē*) in Acts 11:15, is at best a reference merely to the day of Pentecost. Some also make mention of a manifestation of the Holy Spirit other than His baptizing of believers into the body of Christ. Finding one or two commentaries that provides the interpretation defining “beginning” with the start of the church required a diligent search.

John Calvin, Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, Frank Gaebelin, Alexander MacLaren, David Brown, Marvin L. Vincent, and John Darby made no specific comment on this verse in their commentaries on Acts. Of course, some of these are even dispensational Bible scholars (e.g. Darby and Gaebelin) who missed a primary opportunity to reference a clear New Testament declaration of the “beginning” of the church dispensation. For many believers their only commentary on the Scriptures, besides their pastor, is the notes found in their study Bible. *The Believer’s Study Bible* and *The New Pilgrim Study Bible* both skip over Acts 11:15. *The New Scofield Reference Bible* and *The Life Application Bible* also had no direct comment on this verse, but did at least cross reference it to Acts 2:1-4 (i.e. Pentecost).

R. C. H. Lenski, Matthew Henry, John S. C. and Jacob Abbott, William Neil, I. Howard Marshall, F. F. Bruce, A. T. Robertson, Lawrence O. Richards, John MacArthur Jr., Warren Wiersbe, the *Disciple’s Study Bible*, *The Nelson Study Bible*, and the *Ryrie Study Bible*, all do make comment on Acts 15:11, and most even reference Peter’s phrase “at the beginning.” The majority of

¹⁹ Ibid., 466.

these listed briefly point to Pentecost as the interpretation for Peter's words. Some develop their analyses further by discussing the similarities of the Holy Spirit's ministry at Pentecost and in the home of Cornelius, which is in truth, the same comparison that Peter was making. However, *none* of the commentators previously listed relate "at the beginning" to the commencement of the church in their elucidations of this reference. Furthermore, a number of these are dispensationalists by conviction (e.g. Bruce, Robertson, MacArthur, Ryrie, Wiersbe), who would certainly agree with the dispensational meaning of "at the beginning" in this verse (i.e. the beginning of the church). However, they all missed the occasion to illuminate their readership to this proof text. B. W. Johnson, in his *People's New Testament* (a commentary from the end of the nineteenth century, which is now out-of-print but readily available online, or in certain Bible software),²⁰ did not miss the plain interpretation of "at the beginning" in Acts 11:15.

As on us at the beginning. Note that Peter compares the outpouring on the Gentiles with that of the day of Pentecost. He calls both instances "baptisms of the Holy Spirit." Miraculous signs accompanied each instance. Have we a right to speak of a baptism of the Holy Spirit without such signs? The gift of the Holy Spirit with its fruit (Ga 5:22-23) is promised to every obedient believer, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit seems to have been extraordinary and special. Note also that Peter calls the Day of Pentecost *the Beginning*. The Beginning of what? Of the preaching of the New Covenant, of the Great Commission, of the conditions of the gospel under the reign of the exalted King and Savior, of the church of Christ on earth.²¹

In his commentary on Acts, Kenneth O. Gangel also did not overlook the natural understanding of "at the beginning" in Acts 11:15. He wrote, "Beginning in verse 15 can only mean the beginning of the church at Pentecost, especially in view of the context in which Peter explained how the Holy Spirit came on the household of Cornelius."²² In his commentary on Acts, as part of the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Stanley D. Toussaint also clearly indicated the simple meaning of "at the beginning."

11:15-16. In recounting what happened next, Peter made an important identification of the day of Pentecost with the Lord's prediction of Spirit baptism (1:4-5). Luke did not state specifically in chapter 2 that Pentecost was that fulfillment, but Peter here pointedly said so by the phrase at the beginning (cf. 10:47, "just as we have,"

²⁰ Restoration Movement Texts, <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/bjohnson/hg1/PNT00A.HTM>; or, *Sword Searcher* 4.8, <http://www.swordsearcher.com>.

²¹ B. W. Johnson, *The People's New Testament* (St Louis: Sword Searcher Software, Version 4.8, 1995-2006).

²² Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts* (Holman New Testament Commentary) (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 177.

and 11:17, “the same gift as He gave us”). The Church Age, then, began on the day of Pentecost.²³

The three mentioned were the only commentaries found during the survey made for this article that recognized this theological shibboleth. It is no wonder that many remain confused concerning the nature and beginning of the church, and the associated meanings of Spirit baptism and water baptism. Hearing more voices “pronounce” correctly this theological shibboleth found in Acts 11:15 would go far to dispel this misunderstanding among a multitude of believers today.

A number of the theologians from the differing ecclesiological perspectives surveyed were also personally asked for their interpretation of “at the beginning” in Acts 11:15. The results were as follows:

1. Postmillennial Covenant Theologian, Francis Nigel Lee – “‘As on us at the beginning’ = in Acts 2:1ff when Peter etc. received the Holy Ghost.”²⁴
2. Premillennial Covenant Theologian, R. Todd Magnum – “I’d take Acts 11:15 to refer to the beginning of their experience of the Holy Spirit in the new way, the beginning of the Spirit’s being poured out after Jesus’ Ascension (at Pentecost).”²⁵
3. Landmarkian Theologian, Jack Green – “I understand the beginning of Acts 11:15 to refer to the same kind of event which took place on the Day of Pentecost when our Lord baptized His church with power, which was also to authenticate the already existing the assembly gathered together as His church.”²⁶
4. Ultra-dispensationalist (or Mid-Acts Dispensationalist) Theologian, Phillip Long – “I have not given it too much thought, glancing at the GNT, I notice that the verbal root is used once, referring to the beginning of Peter’s speech and once to refer to the beginning of their ministry in Jerusalem. Obviously he is referring to Pentecost, but the use of *arxh* does not mean that it has to refer to the beginning of the BOC, although I suppose it could.”²⁷

²³ Stanley D. Toussiant, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2 vols., eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor, 1983), 2:349-432.

²⁴ Lee, email correspondence.

²⁵ Magnum, email correspondence.

²⁶ Green, email correspondence.

²⁷ Long, email correspondence.

5. Progressive Dispensationalist Theologian, Craig Blaising – “I do believe that the church began at Pentecost and that that is what “beginning” in Acts 11:15 is referring to.”²⁸

Only the progressive dispensationalist affirmed the obvious meaning of *archē* in Acts 11:15. Phillip Long seemed open to this interpretation, though it would mean jettisoning his Mid-Acts dispensational stance. All the others provided a limited understanding for *archē* by constraining the meaning of baptism by the Holy Spirit to the Spirit’s empowerment or to the reception of the Spirit—corporately or individually—in some new manner. Empowerment and personal reception of the Holy Spirit were obviously a part of the activity of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. However, empowerment and personal reception of the Holy Spirit were also a component of various individual experiences (i.e. pre-Pentecost during Old Testament times). The “beginning,” which here is relating to Pentecost, must be associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:4-5 with 11:16), and that baptism must be more than just empowerment or personal reception of the Holy Spirit.

Archē is found over fifty times in the New Testament, and is primarily (almost forty times) translated by the word “beginning(s).” The apostle Paul used *archē* mainly to denote heavenly authorities who were created by God at the dawn of creation. In the Pauline epistles, *archē* is translated as “principality(ies)” six times (three times each in Ephesians and Colossians). Though *archē* is used only in Acts 11:15 in reference to the beginning of the church dispensation, it is widely used elsewhere in the New Testament in this same sense of beginning (i.e. the beginning of some divine administration by God).

Archē is used over fifteen times to refer to the beginning of God’s creation, which of course was also the start of the first dispensation of God’s gracious, saving activity among mankind.²⁹ At least seven times it is used to characterize the start of the dispensation of Christ’s earthly ministry.³⁰ Luke 1:2 could possibly be added to this list of seven references, though this author leans towards Luke’s use of *archē* in that text as referring to the incarnation; it seems a better correspondence with the very first chapters where Luke began the eyewitness accounting of his Gospel evidence, beginning with Christ’s nativity narrative. This word study is sufficient proof that Peter’s usage of *archē* in Acts

²⁸ Blaising, email correspondence.

²⁹ Matthew 19:4, 8; 24:21; Mark 10:6; 13:19; John 1:1-2; 8:44; 2 Thessalonians 2:13(?); Hebrews 1:10; 2 Peter 3:4; 1 John 1:1(?); 2:13-14; 3:8; Revelation 1:8; 3:14(?); 21:6; 22:13.

³⁰ Mark 1:1, John 6:64; 8:25; 15:27; 16:4; Hebrews 2:3 (“at the first”); 2 John 1:5.

11:15 could easily be understood as a “beginning” of a time period of divine activity fundamentally different from what previously God had done (i.e. a new dispensation).

There are two other references where *archē* indicates a “beginning” of divine activity, though not indicating a new dispensation. They are John 2:11 (“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him”) and Philippians 4:15 (“Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only”). Both of these texts represent specific divine initiative (i.e. the beginning of miraculous signs by Jesus, and the beginning of the evangelizing of souls in Europe, but they do not herald the beginning of any new dispensation). It may be that Acts 11:15 could be understood similarly or it could simply refer to a divine activity that had a beginning at Pentecost but not the demarcation of a new dispensation.

SURVEY OF THE USE OF *BAPTIZŌ* IN ACTS 11:16

Archē in Acts 11:15 must definitely be associated with *baptizō* in Acts 11:16, for Peter was clearly making that connection in this apology to fellow Jewish Christians (i.e. recognizing that the same salvation is now being experienced by Gentiles as had been experienced by thousands of Jews at Pentecost). That salvation included some common features of salvation found in older dispensations before Pentecost (e.g. remission of sins, reception of the divine life within, and miraculous influence of God's Spirit). However, Peter identified that the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit was also spreading to Gentiles who would trust in Christ Jesus because of those features and beyond those features (by a specific sign of Pentecost namely tongues-speaking).³¹

Peter knew this to be a new work of the Holy Spirit and that is why he called Pentecost “the beginning” of it. It is likely that Peter did not understand fully yet the spiritual unity in the body of Christ, which baptism by the Spirit creates, but he must have believed that the Holy Spirit of God was joining each new believer to one new flock, as led by one Shepherd. Peter had heard the words of Christ predicting the making of one flock (*poimnē*) of sheep from two different folds (*aulē*, John 10:16), and Peter knew that he was to help shepherd Christ's sheep (John 21:15-17), which now was including Gentiles. His

³¹ Though not an objective of this article, it would be interesting to survey dispensationalists to discover who believes Gentiles were already being baptized into the body of Christ before the salvation of those in Cornelius' home. This author believes that Gentiles were indeed being saved and joined to Christ before Acts 10 (e.g. the eunuch from Ethiopia; nevertheless, God was preparing Peter for this special confirmation of the Jew-Gentile body of Christ for the sake of outward unity)

experience of being led to Cornelius would have confirmed that to him. It would take further revelation, primarily through Paul, to confirm the spiritual unity of the one body and the ramifications of it. Nevertheless, before that revelation had come, Peter did know that the invisible work of Spirit baptism was to be confirmed by the outward ordinance of baptism with water in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:47-48).

A thorough study of *baptizō* and its cognates reveals a number of various associations. The noun *baptistēs* is found fourteen times, as used exclusively to identify John, the forerunner of Messiah Jesus. He is forever known as John the Baptist, not in a modern denominational sense, but in connection with his ministry of baptizing in water any from the Jewish nation who wanted to show their willingness to repent and wait for the coming Messianic kingdom. The verb *baptizō* and the noun *baptisma* are found to relate to this baptism of John a total of forty-five times. However, these are all passages associated with a baptism that must be contrasted with the baptism that is by or in (*en*) the Spirit and with baptism in the name of the Lord.

The same verb and noun just mentioned are used fifteen times concerning Spirit baptism,³² including the text of consideration (Acts 11:15-16) and twenty-five times in relation to the water baptism³³ that gives testimony to Spirit baptism. One can easily distinguish which passages are concerned with the ordinance in water and which relate to the Spirit's work. By looking for the occasional accompanying phrase, "in the name of," one will identify the occurrences of water baptism since it is a public profession similar to one's "name" being a public identification. When baptism in or by the Spirit is given in any context (e.g. Acts 11:15), or when baptism is said to be "into Christ" (Gal 3:27), into one body (1 Cor 12:13), or into His death (Rom 6:3), these are unseen unions, caused by the Spirit of Christ for all who trust in Christ.

There are those, who like to argue whether there are two Spirit baptisms, (e.g. Landmarkian, ultradispensationalist, and Pentecostal theologians). They attempt to identify two separate meanings for baptism "in the Spirit" (*en pneumatē*) as it is found in various verses in the New Testament. Charles Ryrie discussed this tendency.

The New Testament uses the phrase "to baptize with, in, or by the Spirit" only seven times (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor. 12:13). Actually these seven occurrences can be placed in three categories: the predictions in

³² Matthew 3:11, 14; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; Hebrews 6:2 (*baptismōn*, plural noun for Spirit and water baptism).

³³ Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-16, 36, 38; 9:8; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 1:13-17; 1 Peter 3:21 ("in the name of" not mentioned here, but "answer of a good conscience" points to a personal response not to the activity of the Spirit); Hebrews 6:2 (see previous note).

the Gospels, the pointing ahead and pointing back to Pentecost in the two Acts references; and the doctrinal explanation in 1 Corinthians. In the Gospels it appears more natural to understand Christ as the Baptizer and the Spirit as the sphere into which people are baptized. In Acts and Corinthians it seems to be more natural to understand the Spirit as the Agent of baptism and the body of Christ as the sphere into which people are baptized. However, those distinctions are not hard and fast. Both Christ and the Spirit are Agents, and both the Spirit and the body are spheres.³⁴

Ryrie was correct in his conclusion. The progress of revelation on the subject of Spirit baptism from the Gospel ministry of Christ to the further illumination by the Apostle Paul in his epistles gives no warrant for not understanding Christ and His Spirit as being both agent and sphere in the activity of Spirit Baptism. Those baptized into the body of Christ are not joined to His physical body, which is in heaven, but are immersed and formed into a spiritual body (Christ's body on earth, into the very presence of the Spirit of Christ (i.e. the Holy Spirit).

Charles F. Baker, a major theologian of the Mid-Acts dispensational position, has made another false interpretation of Spirit baptism. He understood baptism "by" the Spirit into the body of Christ as the only baptism for this church dispensation. Therefore, in his view, water baptism was only for the Jewish church as was their experience of baptism "in" the Spirit's power at Pentecost. He believed Paul's meaning of "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:6 makes this certain.

Paul finally declared that there was only ONE baptism (Eph. 4:5). Those who do not understand that this one baptism excludes all others are often inconsistent in their theological reasoning. They will turn the Roman Catholic to I Timothy 2:5 and correctly insist that there is only *one* mediator, and since this is Christ, this excludes all others. However, when Paul says ONE baptism they often conclude that there can yet be another. There can be no doubt as to which baptism is meant in Ephesians 4:5. I Corinthians 12:13 says that we are put into the Body of Christ by the baptism of the Spirit. Romans 12:5 says that to be in the Body of Christ is to be "in Christ." Romans 8:1 says that if we are "in Christ" there is no more condemnation; in other words, we are saved. Ephesians 1:13 says that upon believing we were sealed in Christ with or by the Holy Spirit of promise.

If the baptism of Ephesians 4:5 is not the Spirit baptizing believers into Christ, then no one could be saved. Since there can be only ONE baptism, and since there is a baptism by the Spirit, as the operation of God unto salvation, this is the ONLY baptism operational today, *all other are excluded*.³⁵

What Baker failed to realize is that this same context in Ephesians also says that there is only "one Lord." If Paul was speaking here of Jesus, then it is curious why he also identified the Holy Spirit as Lord in 2 Corinthians 3:17. Are there

³⁴ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 420.

³⁵ Charles F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 532.

two Lords? One quickly discerns that “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5 is certainly speaking about baptism by the Spirit into the body of Christ, as Baker rightly identified, but this “one baptism” does not exclude the physical testimony associated with it (i.e. water baptism). The ordinance of water baptism must be “one” with that of Spirit baptism, not “one” in time usually, but “one” in relationship, as the shadow is to the substance. To not have the one, which is seen, is to cause doubt about the existence of the other which is unseen.

Christ gave instruction to his disciples that included water baptism, and this was to continue, as would His presence with them, until the end of the age (Matt 28:19-20). These instructions were to be in effect as soon as they received His Spirit’s baptism, which He promised would not be many days after His departure (Acts 1:5). Therefore, both Spirit baptism into the body of Christ and water baptism into the name of Christ began at Pentecost and both must continue until the end of the age (cf. Matt 13:39-40, 49). These baptisms are essential identifying marks of the dispensation of the church.

CONCLUSION

When the Apostle Peter spoke of what he had observed at Cornelius’ house as being the same as what had occurred “at the beginning,” he was speaking about the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit that began at Pentecost among the Jews and was now confirmed as continuing even to include the believers among the Gentiles. Peter immediately had required Cornelius and the other Gentile believers present to be baptized with water. This would outwardly demonstrate the testimony of their Spirit baptism into union with Christ. Union with Christ was clarified through further revelation given especially—but not exclusively through Paul—that believers from both Jew and Gentile have, since Pentecost, been placed into one spiritual body of which Christ is the head.

A believer’s acceptance of this teaching will make him sound in faith. A pastor, to be truly qualified, must hold fast to this sound teaching. If the “beginning” of the church is moved to any other time theologically, either before or after Pentecost, there will be an unhealthy, unsound, and even disobedient response to the Scripture’s teaching concerning the sound doctrine of Christian baptism.

The covenant theologian, who sees the church beginning in the Old Testament, has therefore found it easier to link water baptism with the Jewish covenantal sign of circumcision and demanded it for infants. A Landmarkian theologian, because he believes the church started with John the Baptist, has confused John’s baptism with Christian baptism, thus linking the later to membership of a local church rather than membership to the spiritual body of Christ. And the ultradispensationalist theologian rejects the ordinance of water

baptism altogether, because he rejects the beginning of the church at Pentecost, where both baptism in the Spirit and baptism in water were occurring for the church that Christ was and continues to form locally and spiritually. All these are spiritually unhealthy mispronunciations of the theological *shibboleth* found in Acts 11:15, where “beginning” means “beginning of the body of Christ, His church.” May the Lord help the church identify those leaders who are sound in this doctrine, in addition to affirming its own spiritual health as the body of Christ.

Book Reviews

1-3 John by John MacArthur. Chicago: Moody Press, 2007. viii + 286 pp., cloth, \$26.99.

This commentary does a good job of expositing these epistles from a conservative point of view (all three written by the apostle John, early to mid 90s, etc.). Each book has its own introduction. The introduction to 1 John is especially helpful. The primary text is the NASB, with numerous cross-references. MacArthur frequently quotes other authors, not just commentators (James White, John Piper, Francis Schaeffer, and others).

John, particularly in 1 John, was writing against Gnosticism (p. 8). At one point in his ministry MacArthur denied the eternal Sonship of Christ. He has now obviously changed his mind. “The Bible is clear. There is only one God, yet He exists, and always had existed, as a Trinity of persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (cf. John 1:1-2). To deny or misunderstand the Trinity is to deny or misunderstand the very nature of God Himself” (p. 163).

The author does hold to limited atonement. He believes the expression “the whole world” is a generic term that does not include every single individual. A corollary here is that there is no such thing as potential atonement (pp. 48-50). By that MacArthur means Christ could not have died for all (potentially), only for the elect.

According to the author, 2 and 3 John concern hospitality, its uses and abuses. “The chosen lady” is an individual and not a church just as Gaius (the recipient of 3 John) is an individual. MacArthur is of the opinion this interpretation best fits the context. Second John might have been occasioned because this Christian woman “may have inadvertently or unwisely shown [the false teachers] hospitality” (p. 211). These two letters are well summarized on page 239: “Third John is the most personal of the three Johannine epistles. Like 2 John, it addresses the issue of believers’ duty to show love and hospitality within the bounds of faithfulness to the truth. Second John revealed the negative side: false teachers are not to be granted hospitality in the name of showing love. Third John expresses the positive counterpart to that principle: all who embrace the truth are to be loved and cared for.” This commentary closes with three helpful indices: Greek Words, Scripture, Subjects. It may turn out to be one of MacArthur’s best.

Charles Ray, *Tyndale Seminary*

The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority, by Lee Martin McDonald. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007. xli + 546 pp., paperback, \$29.95.

McDonald is Professor of New Testament Studies and President of Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia. This third edition has a number of good qualities. It is rare to find a book which covers both the Old and the New Testament canons. *The Biblical Canon* is divided into three major parts: Scripture and Canon, Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Canon, and New Testament Canon.

The first part has more of a general scope to it. It covers such things as the process of canonization, scribes of the ancient world, and the notion and use of canon. The second part has such issues as origins of the Hebrew Bible, early Jewish Scriptures, rabbinic tradition, and the Scriptures of Jesus. The last part deals with oral tradition, the Church fathers, heretics and their influence upon canonization, the art and science of Biblical transmission, and collections and citations of Scripture.

The book has the somewhat rare qualities of being very thorough but also very well written. Many pertinent facts are presented in a very readable way. Another good aspect of the work is the five appendices. Subjects covered include primary sources for both testaments, and lists and catalogues of OT collections and of NT collections. Appendix D ("New Testament Citations of and Allusions to Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal Writings") goes overboard, seeing allusions which simply aren't there. Appendix E discusses "Brevard Childs' Canonical Approach." The book is completed with a bibliography and three indices.

The main drawback to this book is its conclusions. Although the information is presented well (as noted above), the interpretation of that information is rather liberal. McDonald is firm on his declaration that the OT canon was not established until well after Christ (despite his discussion of Luke 24:44). Concerning the NT, he believes some of the books were not composed until the second century (p. 257). Those who can tolerate these suggestions will otherwise find a wealth of helpful information in *The Biblical Canon*.

Charles Ray

A Commentary on Micah by Bruce Waltke. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. xvii + 490 pp., cloth, \$32.00.

This may be the most technical conservative commentary on the Book of Micah. Waltke goes into great detail in explaining this so-called Minor Prophet. He sees the book as unfolding by three cycles: 1:2—2:13, 3:1—5:15, and 6:1—

7:20. The author is very explicit on his conservative views in both the Preface and the Introduction. He holds to a grammatico-historical hermeneutic and accepts the concept of predictive prophecy (a concept denied as impossible by most liberal scholars). The Introduction supplies much helpful information on the historical background, and refutes critics who maintain that some verses were not written by Micah.

The analysis of each passage comes in three parts: Waltke's own translation, exegesis, and exposition. In his translation, and in fact throughout the book, the only way Waltke identifies God is with the expression "I AM," a trait this reviewer found difficult to get used to. The exegesis portion has a large amount of Hebrew and other technical information. The interaction with the LXX and the Dead Sea Scrolls is also rather prominent.

The exposition sections were disappointing. They were not divided into verses, at times they were too technical (material that should have been in the exegesis section), and did not seem to come to any conclusion. All this is not to say the commentary is unworthy. All who are considering a study on Micah should obtain a copy of this well-researched work.

Charles Ray

The End of Days: Essential Selections from Apocalyptic Texts—Annotated & Explained, annotated by Robert G. Clouse. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2007. 224 pp., paperback, \$16.99.

Robert G. Clouse, a well-known and respected millennial historian, has provided annotations and explanations of biblical texts and Christian literature from the time of the early church to contemporary writings. The contemporary, historical, and religious contexts of these texts and literature are interpreted with extensive and perceptive understanding. Articulating the notion that "the future and what it might have in store seems to be a source of endless fascination" (p. ix), the reader is introduced to the beliefs and morals of those who have longed for the fulfillment of the promises in the Book of Revelation. The first chapter introduces Old and New Testament texts concerning the seventy weeks, increase in apostasy, rapture, tribulation, Armageddon, millennium, and the last judgment (pp. 3-26). The second chapter addressed premillennialism and the early church fathers (pp. 27-42). The visionary writings of Augustine are examined in the third chapter (pp. 43-56). The fourth chapter includes accounts of radical millennial movements of the medieval and reformation eras (pp. 57-74). The subsequent chapters address: the revival of premillennialism in the seventeenth century (pp. 75-92); and, the development of eighteenth century postmillennialism (pp. 93-100), nineteenth century dispensationalism (pp. 101-24), and eschatology in the twentieth century (pp.

125-56). The popularity of Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* and the mega-selling *Left Behind* novels of LaHaye and Jenkins are given final attention (pp. 157-74). A glossary assists the novice, and the balanced suggestions for further reading are worth consulting. This intriguing anthology will be beneficial for introducing prophetic texts and writings, in addition to assisting diligent students of history and the Bible.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., *Eternal Ministries*

The First Book of Samuel by David T. Tsumura. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. xxii + 698 pp., cloth, \$50.00.

This is the newest volume in the New International Commentary on the Old Testament series. Tsumura is professor of Old Testament at Japan Bible Seminary (Tokyo). The translation is his own and was an attempt to be as literal as possible. It took a full decade to finalize! As such, this work is one of the most thorough on First Samuel. The Introduction is nearly 100 pages. It sports a detailed outline and sizeable bibliography. Hundreds of footnotes and four indices round out the matter. Tsumura states (p. 11) that Samuel is not necessarily the author but that the book bears his name because he is the primary character, the anointer of Saul and David.

The author generally does a good job of explaining the difficult passages, providing different views. He addresses issues such as the seemingly different accounts of Saul's anointing (chaps. 9, 10, and 12), the correct number for 13:1 (he simply translates it as "a certain year of age . . . two years he ruled . . ."; p. 330), the number of chariots in 13:5, God's "regret" in 15:11 is anthropopathic (p. 396), and has an entire Excursus on "An Evil Spirit from the Lord" (pp. 427-28). It is worth the money to obtain this commentary.

Charles Ray

Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews, by Herbert W. Bateman IV. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. 480 pp., paperback, \$29.99.

" . . . [T]his volume explores the original and contemporary meaning of these difficult passages . . ." (backcover). For the sake of consistency, these "difficult passages" were designated as follows: 2:1-4; 3:7—4:13; 5:11—6:12; 10:19-39; and, 12:14-29. The chapters were originally presented as papers at the Evangelical Theological Society national meeting (Nov 2004). The introduction (more than sixty pages!) does a fine job of delineating and addressing the issues involved.

The four contributors basically come from two camps—Arminian and Reformed. Grant Osborne, professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, defends the Classical Arminian view. Buist Fanning of Dallas Seminary presents the Classical Reformed view. Gareth Lee Cockerill, professor at Wesley Biblical Seminary, offers the Wesleyan Arminian view. The Moderate Reformed view is given by Randall Gleason, professor at International School of Theology—Asia.

Osborne analyzes each passage on its own. He believes this letter was addressed to a house church which had low spiritual commitment (p. 111). According to Osborne, Hebrews 6:9-12 teaches that the recipients will not eventually fall into apostasy. The bottom line for him is that a backslider can be restored but the one who repudiates Christ is lost forever. “Hebrews is describing a very real danger of apostasy that true believers can commit, and if they do so it is an unpardonable sin from which there is no possibility of repentance, but only of eternal judgment” (p. 128).

Fanning does not examine the passages one-by-one but uses a synthetic approach to find some common elements. He sees five of them. (1) the description of those who fall away, (2) the nature of this fall, (3) the consequences for such a fall, (4) the desired positive response, and (5) encouragement to the readers about God’s faithfulness.

These elements are brought together by two passages. The first is Hebrews 3:6, “but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.” The other is Hebrews 3:14, “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”

In his own words this is how Fanning ties it all together. “Careful attention to the wording shows that these lines [from the warning passages] do not cite what *will* be true if they hold on, but what *is already* true of them, if in fact they endure. Their endurance through temptation will be the evidence of their vital connection to Christ. The writer asserts that their continuance in faith will demonstrate that they *are* members of God’s household, not that it will make it so in the future. Holding on to their confidence will reveal the reality they already *have* come to share in Christ, not what they will share. By continuing in faith, they demonstrate the work Christ has already begun and will certainly accomplish in them . . . ” (p. 207; italics his).

Fanning expresses similar thoughts in his conclusion. “The warnings in Hebrews about falling away and the exhortations to endure are intended to urge the readers to maintain faith in Christ’s high priestly work, not to provoke fear that they may lose their standing with God, nor primarily to test the genuineness of their faith. Nevertheless, those who repudiate Christ thereby give evidence that they have never partaken in the benefits of Christ’s cleansing sacrifice, and the writer wants his readers to see the consequences of this in

starkest terms, be motivated to endure by God's grace, and so show themselves to be true 'partakers of Christ'" (pp. 218-19).

This reviewer was somewhat confused as to Cockerill's position. On page 257 he writes, "These passages are difficult, not just because they teach that it is possible to fall away from Christ, but also because they appear to teach a falling away from which there is no return." A few sentences later he states, "... Wesleyans and other Christians . . . affirm that those who fall from saving faith may be restored." Likewise, in his conclusion Cockerill declares, "This study argues that Hebrews envisions the possibility of an apostasy from which those once in faith cannot or will not return because they have severed themselves from the culmination of God's plan of salvation in the Son of God" (p. 289) and "... these warnings were not given to generate worry about whether one had apostatized. They were written to raise concern lest one might fall. The conduct of both the wilderness generation and Esau suggests that apostates do not seek repentance" (p. 291). He studies the passages one at a time with a view to the overall sequence and theme of the book (pastoral). The warnings were necessary because the recipients were afraid to take a stand for Christ.

Gleason discusses the passages verse-by-verse, and writes, "... my own study of the warning passages in light of their Old Testament background differs significantly from other Reformed interpretations. I believe that the severe warnings in Hebrews were addressed to genuine Jewish believers facing persecution by their countrymen prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The immediate threat of God's judgment upon the Jewish nation was real. As the author warned his audience of this imminent danger, he reassured them of the finality and completeness of their purification and cleansing (Heb 10:10, 14) by appealing to the new covenant promises of Jeremiah (8:12; 10:17). If they continued steadfast in their faith, they would avoid the divine judgment predicted by Jesus that would soon fall upon their Jewish persecutors (Matt 23:37-24:28; Mark 13:1-32; Luke 21:5-36). But if they drifted from their confidence in Christ and sought, instead, cleansing through the obsolete forms of the old covenant, they would fail to experience the blessings of the new covenant and instead receive the discipline as sons, a judgment far worse than they could have imagined (p. 337).

He goes on to note that "eternal" is a word found often in Hebrews yet it does not appear in the warning passages. The conclusion is that the consequences are temporal (pp. 360-61). He also wanted to strike a balance between warning and assurance. "... the purpose of Hebrews was to strengthen, encourage, and exhort the members of a persecuted Christian community to hold firmly to their confession of Jesus Christ rather than seek security in the old rituals of Judaism" (p. 367). He writes in his conclusion that his chapter is to serve "... as a means to achieve a greater balance between

warning and assurance by interpreting the warnings in light of the author's primary Old Testament example—the Exodus generation" (p. 377). This useful book ends with a conclusion by George Guthrie, and many helpful indices. It is recommended for those studying Hebrews.

Charles Ray

The Gospel and Personal Evangelism, by Mark Dever. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007. 124 pp., paperback, \$9.99.

Dever is the pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. His book comes recommended by such men as John MacArthur, Robert Coleman, and J. I. Packer. It is a straight-forward work giving the "hows" and the "whys" of evangelism.

The seven chapters have the following titles (Italics in original): *Why Don't We Evangelize?*, *What Is the Gospel?*, *Who Should Evangelize?*, *How Should We Evangelize?*, *What Isn't Evangelism?*, *What Should We Do After We Evangelize?*, and *Why Should We Evangelize?* Although it is not a large book, it seems to cover all the bases. There is a special word of encouragement to pastors at the end of the book.

Perhaps the best chapter in the book is number 5 (*What Isn't Evangelism?*). Dever speaks on several matters which are mistaken for evangelism. The first one is more of an excuse, "It is wrong to impose our beliefs on others." The next one is personal testimony. Giving one's personal testimony is no substitute for witnessing. A third one will cut some Christians to the quick: Social Action and Public Involvement. It is good to be involved in the public square but our emphasis needs to be on evangelism.

Apologetics is a fourth false substitute. It is certainly good and right to know how to defend the faith but be careful not to let it take the place of personal evangelism. The final one is entitled, "The Results of Evangelism." Concerning this matter Dever writes, ". . . if you combine this misunderstanding with a misunderstanding of the gospel itself, and of what the Bible teaches about conversion, then it is very possible to end up thinking not only that evangelism is seeing others converted, but thinking that it is within our power to do it!" (pp. 78-79). In other words, it is not our job to save somebody (nor can we). That is the Holy Spirit's work. The only way to fail at evangelism is to not do it. This reviewer recommends this book as a helpful way to learn the essentials of witnessing.

Charles Ray

Isaiah 1-39, by Gary V. Smith. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007. 696 pp., cloth, \$29.99.

This well-written commentary is the latest contribution to the New American Commentary series. Smith is Professor of Christian Studies at Union University (Jackson, TN). The work has many star qualities but perhaps the brightest is its introduction of seventy pages. It begins by talking about the meaning and relevance of Isaiah! Its pages then move on to the usual topics: historical background, the prophet Isaiah, and the theology of Isaiah. It is one of the best conservative introductions on Isaiah, rivaled only by Oswalt's (viz. New International Commentary on the Old Testament).

Most of the body of the introduction, however, is taken up with literary issues. The author does a good job of comparing and contrasting the Masoretic Text with the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Greek texts, and the Aramaic Targum. Throughout the entire commentary Smith takes a conservative approach (the book was written by one author in the eighth century). Concerning the composition of Isaiah he writes, "The focus of this commentary will not be on issues of composition or the historical process of editing or redacting the book of Isaiah. Such hypothetical reconstructions are based on many dubious assumptions; therefore, primary attention will be directed toward expounding the final form of the Hebrew text" (p. 55).

For most of the passages the author sets aside an appropriate category such genre, structure, theological implications, and historical setting. Smith is careful not to press Isaiah 7:14 too far. He states, with most other commentators, that *alma* means "young woman," which implies virginity but that is not always the case. Every effort is just a guess because "the text refuses to identify her." He concludes that the child's "name is the significant part of this sign, not the unknown young woman becoming pregnant" (p. 213).

Surprisingly little is said about the possibility that Isaiah 14 (esp. v. 12) speaks of Satan's fall, even relegating it to a footnote (p. 314, n. 94). Smith declares that the "morning star" refers to Venus, because stars are representative of gods. The view that Isaiah talks about the fall of Lucifer is "unfounded." Those looking for a thorough but not overwhelming commentary on Isaiah will be satisfied by this one.

Charles Ray

Jonah, by Reed Lessing. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007. xlii + 451 pp., cloth, \$42.99.

Lessing is associate professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis). This commentary is the latest one in the Concordia Commentary

series. The series “fully affirms the divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture. . . .” Most of the translations are the author’s own.

This work is one of the largest ones ever done on Jonah—almost 500 pages. It contains seven helpful excurses (Yahweh, the Creator God; Mission on the Old Testament; The Sign of Jonah; The Trinitarian Basis of Old Testament Solidarity; Sheol; Death and Resurrection Motifs in Luther’s Baptismal Theology; When Yahweh Changes a Prior Verdict).

The following are some of the statements the commentary says about itself. Although it is an Old Testament book, the emphasis is Christological (p. ix). It notes that “Law and Gospel are the overarching doctrines of the Bible itself. . . .” That is, Law and Gospel are related but distinct. From the Editor’s Preface we read: “These commentaries seek to be, in the best sense of the terms, confessional, ecumenical, and catholic” (p. x). This reviewer believes this may be what they mean by ecumenical: “To that end, the series has enlisted confessional Lutheran authors from other church bodies around the world who share the evangelical mission of promoting theological concord” (pp. x-xi).

Lessing desires to give a “detailed analysis of every phrase . . .” (p. xiv). By and large he succeeds in doing so. He also presents much information on the literary aspects of Jonah (such as satire and irony) both in the fifty-eight page Introduction and in the body of the commentary. Jonah is compared to Noah and to Elijah, and there is a section on the History of Interpretation. The author classifies Jonah as narrative history (p. 4).

For the most part the author is conservative in his understanding of the book and uses a literal hermeneutic. Jonah is thoroughly accurate in all matters. The story of the great fish is an historical event. It takes place in the eighth century BC but its time of writing is not as certain except for the fact that it is pre-exilic.

The commentary’s glaring weakness is its soteriology. It is of the opinion that “the Word, Baptism, and the Supper are the means through which Christ imparts salvation today . . .” (p. xi). Each chapter has its own introduction. That is followed by extensive technical material and then by the commentary proper. Each one is often several pages. A summary concludes each section. If one can overlook some theological differences, this commentary will prove to be most useful.

Charles Ray

The Promise of Baptism, by James Brownson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. xiii + 223 pp., paperback, \$16.00.

Brownson is Professor of NT at Western Theological Seminary (Holland, MI). His book answers thirty questions in thirty concise chapters, a format that

makes the material easier to digest. Terms are defined as they arise. The author deviates little from the traditional Reformed viewpoints and beliefs.

It “explains the scriptural basis, the theological underpinnings, and the practical implications” of baptism (back cover). Brownson does not shy away from the difficult questions and situations, many “what if’s.” For instance, what about a person who was “baptized” as an infant but never believes in the Christian faith? Or who does later come to Christ and wants to know if he needs to be “re-baptized”? A number of other such questions are addressed. Each chapter ends with a summary, discussion questions, and a brief bibliography (sometimes ancient sources are listed).

Although Brownson discusses various situation questions (which he calls “dilemmas,” p. xi), they would not be dilemmas (in most cases) if he did not embrace the presupposition that baptism is efficacious in some way. Since it is not efficacious, the vast majority of the cases resolve themselves.

Some aspects of the Reformed faith are puzzling. Brownson writes, “. . . faith in Christ [is] the sole means of our salvation” (p. xii). Later he states, “To be baptized is, quite simply, to become a Christian” (p. 3). Can these two statements be harmonized? Similarly, “. . . baptism is the rite that marks the beginning of membership in the church” (p. 16). It *seems* that those of the Reformed persuasion (like Lordship salvation proponents) confuse salvation and discipleship. Baptism is a feature of discipleship, and does nothing to make one “more saved” (my words).

On pages 9 and 10 Brownson speaks about how baptism unites one to the Church and to each other. Furthermore, he believes the Church was present in the Old Testament but does not explain how Old Testament persons can know about, much less be baptized into, Christ.

The book concludes with a longer annotated bibliography and Scripture index. Those looking for a good presentation of the Reformed view on baptism will be well-informed by this volume.

Charles Ray

Understanding Four Views on Baptism, edited by Paul Engle and John Armstrong. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. 222 pp., paperback, \$14.99.

The four views discussed in this book are as follows: (1) Baptism of the professing regenerate by immersion (Baptist), (2) Believer’s baptism on the occasion of regeneration by immersion (Christian Churches/Churches of Christ), (3) Infant baptism by sprinkling as a regenerative act (Lutheran), and (4) Infant baptism of children of the covenant (Reformed).

The first view is defended by Thomas Nettles, professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The second viewpoint is

explained by John Castelein who is professor of contemporary Christian theology at Lincoln Christian College. Robert Kolb, mission professor of systematic theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, speaks for the third view. The fourth view is explained by Richard Pratt, professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando).

After each view is clarified, the other three contributors have a chance to respond. The work seeks to answer questions that have dogged Christianity since the time of Christ. What is the significance of water baptism? Who should be baptized? Is infant baptism Scriptural? What is the proper mode of baptism? Should baptism be required for church membership? This review will follow the order in which each viewpoint appeared in the book and not in the order above.

Nettles begins by going over the definition of *baptizo* from various sources, each one giving “immersion” (or some synonym) as the meaning. He then discusses the major events in the New Testament which concern baptism. Commenting on Colossians 2:11-13 (a much talked about passage) he writes that “circumcision and baptism have a positive relationship but not a direct analogy” (p. 38). In his conclusion, Nettles states that the “first-order symbolism of baptism is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ” (p. 39).

The next major section covers the topic from a Reformed viewpoint. Pratt, who represents this tradition, understands baptism to have two basic aspects: sacramental and covenantal (p. 59). As a sacrament, baptism [sprinkling?] is “a mysterious encounter with God” (ibid.), a “means of grace” (p. 60), and more than just a symbol (pp. 60-61; Tit 3:5; Rom 6:3-7; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21).

Among other things, baptism “increases our understanding of the preached Word” (p. 63). This section of Pratt’s work (pp. 62-63) makes one reference to the Bible yet several to various confessions of the faith. The relationship between baptism and the covenant (of grace) is explained as follows: “. . . the sacrament [baptism] is viewed in the context of the unity of the covenant of grace” (p. 65).

“. . . the mode of baptism in Reformed theology is largely a matter of indifference” (p. 66). Pratt also writes: “saving faith is required of those who receive baptism” (p. 67). If that is the case, then why baptize infants?

Kolb, expounding on the Lutheran view, flat out declares baptism is required for salvation (1 Pet 3:21; Acts 2:38; 10:48). Baptism is described as a “new birth” (pp. 104, 107). “Just as day-old infants are members of the family and receive the love of their parents, so those who cannot consciously respond to God’s promise nonetheless are brought out of darkness into light by that promise in baptismal form” (p. 104). “Since it is not water that actually makes the life-giving difference in baptism, but the Word of God which is placed in

the setting of the water, the mode of baptism is a neutral matter for Lutherans” (p. 105).

The next major section deals with the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ’s comprehension of baptism. Since they are not a denomination per se, only a majority opinion can be given (in this case by Castelein). They hold that baptism does create some sort of covenant between God and the person baptized. Baptism “cleanses and forgives penitent believers of all their sins” (p. 130) and “instills his Holy Spirit in them” (p. 131).

They deny baptismal regeneration or at least they state that baptism alone cannot save. They further believe (1) infants should not be baptized, and (2) immersion is the only acceptable mode.

The last few sections alone are very helpful. Appendix 1 lists all instances of the words for baptism in the New Testament. Appendix 2 contains several creeds, confessions, and catechisms. Appendix 3 has numerous quotations on baptism. The reader also discovers a bibliography, reflection questions, and two indices (Scripture and Subject). Those who have any interest in this topic should seriously consider this useful book.

Charles Ray

Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospel, by Craig A. Evans. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006. 290 pp., cloth, \$19.00.

The author of *Fabricating Jesus* is Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament and director of the graduate program at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. In addition to this book, he has written extensively on the Jewish background of the New Testament, as well as the historical Jesus. Evans has also appeared as an expert commentator on such network programs as *Dateline*, and in various documentaries on the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, and the BBC. His book, *Fabricating Jesus*, offers eleven chapters that discuss, question, challenge, and offer alternatives to many of the modern views that have cropped up concerning the person of Jesus.

Evans begins by analyzing the issue from the perspective of the skeptics, both Old School and New School; then examining modern critical methods, before getting into the details of the issues. In the first chapter, for instance, Evans identifies two leading proponents of Old School skepticism, Robert Funk and James Robinson, skeptics who he claims minimize Jesus to a theological Christ rather than a well-rounded historical personality. After a brief biographical overview and introduction to their views, Evans then identifies two New School skeptics, Robert Price and Bart Ehrman, overviewing their lives and positions as well. He claims that these two misunderstand Jesus by questioning the historical data about Him and

challenging the accuracy of the textual evidence. Evans responds to these skeptics with an examination of the key message of the Gospels in the resurrection of Christ, and an argument for the reliability of the texts that witness to Christ.

In the second chapter, Evans discusses the interests of Christ and His own self-understanding, particularly with regard to His identity as Israel's Messiah. From the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other ancient texts, Evans argues that Jesus clearly understood Himself to be Israel's Messiah. Evans challenges the skepticism of many modern scholars by clearly establishing up front the criteria for determining the authenticity of the records we have. He discusses, for instance, such criteria as historical coherence, multiple witness attestation to Jesus, and material that would have embarrassed the early church if it were not true, along with the Palestinian background of Jesus and several other criteria all of which he applies to establish the claims of the New Testament Jesus.

Chapters three through six discuss and evaluate various questionable texts, such as, *The Gospel of Thomas*, *the Gospel of Peter*, *The Secret Gospel of Mark*, and a few others. He includes discussion of the case against Jesus as cynic and various relevant maxims. Evans's method is to offer a fair description of the texts, followed by his analysis of the texts and his response to the modern views.

In the remaining chapters, he deals with the miracles of Jesus, references to and uses of Josephus as a historical source, references which he questions as unreliable, and various claims—exaggerated claims, bogus claims, and otherwise.

Evans concludes with a chapter that he describes as fabricating the aims and claims of Jesus. In this chapter, he discusses first Jesus' relationship with the Jewish faith and the Jewish law, showing that basically Jesus was a Jew who accepted and lived by the faith and laws of Judaism. In this respect, there was nothing special or unique about Jesus, but also nothing fictional or fabricated. Furthermore, Evans discusses the claims of Jesus as they are recorded in the Gospels, arguing that even where the evidence is somewhat ambiguous, it is still most likely that Jesus made the claims as recorded and that His followers accepted these claims. Evans further discusses Jesus' aims developed during His ministry, Jesus' death and resurrection, and the subsequent record of all this in the Scriptures, stating his case directly and factually as the conclusion of his overall examination of the texts and scholarly positions.

Evans concludes the book with a couple of appendices, one on *the Gospel of Judas*, one containing a glossary of important terms, and one consisting of a couple of pages of recommended reading. Extensive notes and four indices complete this well-written work.

Students, scholars, pastors, and laymen who have had questions about the historical Jesus, the Biblical Jesus, and even the Jesus of the skeptics, as well as the questionable “Gospels” apart from the New Testament, will find Evans’s book both challenging and satisfying. It is must reading for all who take seriously the study of the Gospels and the Life of Christ.

Kenneth R. Cooper, *Biblical Faith Ministries*

Daniel: A Reader’s Guide, by William H. Shea. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005. 287 pp., paperback, \$16.99.

Shea has served as professor of Old Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. His doctoral degrees are in both medicine and Near Eastern studies. Shea is a prolific writer, who has written two books on Daniel in the Bible Amplifier series and wrote *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* for the seven volume Daniel and Revelation Committee Series. This work is a historicist commentary on the Book of Daniel, and highly recommended to those who desire an authoritative and scholarly communication of Adventist eschatology (i.e. historicism).

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.

Rabbinic Literature: An Essential Guide, by Jacob Neusner. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. 164 pp., paperback, \$16.00.

Neuser’s work is an essential guide for understanding Rabbinic literature. The first chapter concisely explains Rabbinic literature and answers why it is important. The second chapter introduces readers to the concept of the Oral Torah by surveying the tractate *Abot*, *The Fathers* and the later *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. Chapter three explains the Halakhah (legal) literature by elucidating the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Jerusalem Talmud (Yerushalmi), and the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli). He also addressed the verse-by-verse commentaries to Exodus (*Mekhilta Attributed to Rabbi Ishmael*), Leviticus (*Sifra*), and the *Sifré* to Numbers and Deuteronomy. Chapter four explained theological works (Aggadah), such as the *Genesis Rabbah*, *Leviticus Rabbah*, *Pesiqta deRab Kahana* (the Rabbinic reading of the lectionary cycle of the festivals), *Lamentations Rabbah*, *Song of Songs Rabbah*, *Ruth Rabbah*, and *Esther Rabbah I*. Chapter five is an astounding contribution for understanding Rabbinic literature and the Hebrew Scriptures by forming a coherent theology of Aggadah and Halakhah. Chapter six explains Rabbinic literature and the Christian Scriptures through diachronic comparison. This work is highly

recommended for understanding the complex and unique worldview of Judaism, and the significance of Rabbinic literature for biblical study.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.

The World of Catholic Renewal 1540—1770, 2nd ed., by R. Po-chia Hsia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xii + 268 pp., \$75.00/\$27.99.

The revised second edition of Hsia's 1998 work provides "an updated synthesis [in breadth and scope] of the vast scholarship on the history of Catholicism from the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century to the suppression of the Society of Jesus in the eighteenth century" (backcover). The term, "Catholic Renewal," is not a rejection of the concepts of "Catholic Reform" or "Counter-Reformation" but intends to communicate the development, impact, and scope of the centuries of Catholic renewal as forming "the first period of global history" (p. 7). One value of this work is the documentation of the distribution and publishing phenomenon (approximately 11,000 titles written by Jesuits) of the disciplines of "commentaries and studies on the bible, books on dogmatic, moral, catechistic, homiletic, and ascetic theology, on polemics and liturgy." Hsia identified themes as diverse as "the imitation of Christ" to "books on mental and vocal prayers, on Christian perfection, Last ends, virtues, sins, and sacraments" (p. 180). The book concludes with a remarkable bibliographical essay for further research and reference. Hsia has completed a notable and practical work of scholarship for understanding Counter-Reformation thought.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.

In the Beginning, There were Stories: Thoughts about the Oral Tradition of the Bible, by William J. Bausch. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2004. 210 pp., paperback, \$16.95.

The author of *In the Beginning, There were Stories* is a retired Catholic priest who continues to work at a local parish in the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey, continues to give lectures, and to conduct retreats. Although the subtitle is "Thoughts about the Oral Tradition of the Bible," Bausch focuses more on the oral story as a form of hermeneutic and as a means of preaching the Bible rather than reflection on how the written text may have resulted from an oral tradition. To be fair, in the first chapter, he does offer a brief, but sketchy overview of the oral tradition. But, even then, he does this only to lay the foundation for his thesis that revelation came in the form of story, and that the story form of revelation has a different set of interpretive rules than does the literary text—

rules which preachers and teachers need to learn if they are going to proclaim correctly the message of the Bible. Bausch treats story as the only hermeneutic, and, as a result, his book contains a number of weaknesses that make the book fairly useless for most evangelicals.

The book falls into three parts. Part one develops the idea of revelation as story and contains several weaknesses. The first is Bausch's limited view of revelation. He claims, "... revelation came to us first by way of a story, a told story, an oral story. Story is the first revelation, and the oral stories have been around for a long, long time" (p. 16). For Bausch, however, oral story is not only the first revelation; it is, for all practical purposes, the *only* revelation. He discounts all other forms of revelation by subordinating them to oral story or by incorporating them into oral story.

Furthermore, in the same passage describing the first revelation, Bausch reveals a second weakness of his book. He throws out propositional revelation, along with literal interpretation of Scripture. In another place, he argues that revelation is "not a set of teachings or doctrines" (p. 11). It is rather a story, a story about a Person, who is God. Revelation is God speaking to man, a point well taken and one with which this reviewer would agree. Bausch further notes that God speaks to man in the form of stories, a point certainly true to some extent. As such, however, Bausch decries all literary approaches to understanding the Bible, because "the Bible is an anthology, a collection of stories," (p. 26) which were originally transmitted orally. Because of his stress on the oral transmission of stories, Bausch cannot keep his anti-literary bias out of the discussion for long. It creeps into his own discourse on the second page of the introduction where he describes the written print as a "slow and disastrous tyranny" that has come to overshadow the oral story. He bases this thesis on the idea that oral story resists freezing truth into fixed categories of time and space and defies objectivity, as if objectivity were wrong. Yet, the very stories he is dealing with come to us in a fixed written form and as such must be so treated. Literary tools, Bausch notwithstanding, are valuable in helping understand the stories as they are.

Part two develops the idea of the Bible as story. A third weakness lies here in Bausch's treatment of the character of the oral stories, or rather their nature. He considers them as legend, myth, or fiction. As a result, he considers many of the details of Bible stories as fictitious embellishments to amplify the participation of God in the stories. Ironically, even though he considers the stories as God's story, Bausch denies the reality of the miraculous element in those that recount miracles. For example, Moses did not part the waters of the Red Sea with his rod and the walls of Jericho did not fall down for Joshua and the children of Israel. Instead, the descriptions of these events were added to the stories as embellishments or even exaggerations to make the leadership of

Moses and Joshua more dramatic or to magnify the presence and activities of God among His people.

Part three sums up the character of story and relates it to Biblical history. Here, in addition to the previously noted weaknesses, Bausch denies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and considers the rearranged chronologies of some of the Biblical books as devices used by the Biblical authors/storytellers to make their stories work better. It is true that some of the events in the Bible are recorded out of chronological order, as Bausch notes, but it is more likely that God had His own purpose for the telling of His story and such “rearrangement” of the chronology resulted from His inspiration rather than the story teller’s ingenuity. Thus, even when Bausch appears to be right, he weakens the value of his argument by focusing on human construction rather than divine purpose in the text.

Bausch does have one or two good points. For one thing, his analysis of story can be used to assist Bible students in understanding Biblical narratives, which are extended stories as such. Furthermore, his note that history is His-Story is an important observation. Unfortunately, he taints it by denying the miraculous and relegating some of its elements to myth and legend.

Bausch includes a brief bibliography for the reader, but it, too, does not contribute much to the “Thoughts about the Oral Tradition of the Bible.” Instead, it focuses more on stories and storytelling. This is consistent with Bausch’s thesis that storytelling is a key element of our faith. For Bausch, the Oral Tradition merely comes in to justify a hermeneutic of story rather than an explanation of the development of the Biblical canon. If the reader were really seeking thoughts about the Oral Tradition of the Bible, he will have to look elsewhere for any depth, such as, a good book on the canon, or one on the Oral Tradition itself. If, on the other hand, the reader is interested in acquiring stories to illustrate his sermons or Bible messages, he will find a treasure chest of some pretty good stories sprinkled throughout Bausch’s book. Actually, herein lies the one real strength of the book: the stories it contains. Bausch is loaded with good stories, ironically, even a number of references to literary stories, all of them quite useful for sermon illustrations. If, however, storytelling is a key element of our faith, as Bausch claims, and a vital form for proclaiming that faith, the reader would profit more from a book such as, David L. Larsen’s *Telling the Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching*.

Kenneth R. Cooper

Perspectives on Spirit Baptism: Five Views, edited by Chad Owen Brand. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2004. 338 pp., paperback, \$19.99.

The five views represented in this volume and their respective proponents are: (1) the Sacramental view (Ralph Del Colle); (2) the Wesleyan view (H. Ray Dunning); (3) the Charismatic view (Larry Hart); (4) the Pentecostal view (Stanley M. Horton); and, the Reformed view (Walter C. Kaiser Jr.). The format is similar to the counterpoint series, that is, an introductory chapter by the editor explaining the issues biblically and historically, which is followed by each of the contributors defending their view, and the others responding briefly. The emphasis of the introduction, however, is not Spirit baptism primarily but upon the Holy Spirit and miracles in the early church. The endnotes are lengthy (pp. 291-326) to assist in further research.

The Reformed view is articulated first. Kaiser defended Spirit baptism as simultaneous with conversion. He also answered whether tongues is the initial physical sign of Spirit baptism. "Consequently, there is a work of the Holy Spirit that comes after salvation. It is the "filling" of the Holy Spirit" (p. 33). *The Pentecostal view* is defended as "an observable and intensely personal experience, not just a doctrine" (p. 48). Following a brief survey of the twentieth century "Pentecostal Revival" (pp. 49-56), Horton defended Spirit baptism as a distinct experience subsequent to conversion (tongues, of course, is the initial physical sign of the experience). The chapter was concluded with various accounts of Pentecostal results. *The Charismatic view* is "strictly speaking" that "Spirit baptism is a metaphor, not a doctrine" (p. 108; i.e. "there is no one 'Charismatic position' on Spirit baptism," p. 109). Hart's defense may be the most complex. He concluded that "all believers have experienced Spirit baptism" (in the Pauline [1 Cor 12:13] sense of the metaphor) but all may not have experienced "the empowering dimension of Spirit baptism" (in the Lukan [Acts 2:4] sense of being "filled with the Spirit") (p. 118). *The Wesleyan view* was presented fourthly. Dunning explained the development of Wesley's belief. Dunning's defense was wholly wanting for understanding the Paraclete texts and the language concerning the bestowal of the Spirit. The Wesleyan conclusion was to regard Spirit baptism legitimately as applicable to conversion, "subsequent infillings, and the transformation . . . referred to as entire sanctification or Christian perfection" (p. 226). *The Sacramental view* is that of Roman Catholicism. This chapter is helpful for comprehending the 1967 "Charismatic renewal," or "Catholic Pentecostalism." Del Colle's chapter is weakest in terms of biblical (textual) argumentation. In his response, Kaiser referred to Spirit baptism of Catholic Charismatics as something unable to be "doctrinally defined; instead, it is more the result of pastoral acceptance of a spirit of renewal that exists in the Catholic Church (p. 289). The textual arguments in this particular volume are not the strongest to articulate an authoritative declaration of Spirit baptism. Nevertheless, it is a meaningful read.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.

A Testimony of Jesus Christ, 2 volumes, by Tony Garland. Camano Island, WA: SpiritAndTruth.org. 2004. approx. 1150 pp., cloth, \$50.00.

This commentary set on the Book of Revelation is one of the finest on the market today. Although it originally came out in 2004, it has been updated as recently as 2006. Garland holds degrees from Louisiana Baptist University and Tyndale Seminary. He administers the website SpiritAndTruth.org. There is an online course which corresponds to the set.

The work opens with a 145-page Introduction containing a huge amount of significant information. It covers topics such as Audience and Purpose, Theme, Genre, Authorship, Date, Systems of Interpretation, and Acceptance into the Canon, among others. For Revelation in particular this information is especially helpful.

Garland then launches into a verse-by-verse and phrase-by-phrase examination of the Apocalypse. The books are somewhat technical but one does not have to be a master of Greek in order to benefit from them. The average Christian will be able to glean much from the two volumes.

Some specifics will follow. The author comes to the conclusion that the “angel of the church” (Rev 1:20, etc.) is a human leader or messenger of the churches in that region. The “overcomers” (2:7, etc.) are not special Christians but true Christians among all those claiming to be in the church (p. 2:345). Revelation 4:1 cannot be unquestionably a reference to the Rapture but it very likely is a type of it (p. 1:285-86). The two witnesses may be Moses and Elijah yet other suggestions are described.

This set is very useful because of its various features. As just noted, different viewpoints are explained and evaluated. It is liberally sprinkled with charts and black-and-white pictures. In addition to the information presented in the introduction, the second volume concludes with nineteen appendices (the Beast, the Book of Life, Armageddon, Marriage of the Lamb, the Nicolaitans, etc.). Best of all, Garland writes from a premillennial, pretribulational point of view. *A Testimony of Jesus Christ* should be found on the bookshelf of every believer.

Charles Ray

Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov, 2 volumes, edited by Shalom M. Paul, Robert A. Kraft, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Weston W. Fields. Leiden: Brill, 2003. xxxvi + 850 pp., cloth, \$201.00.

This Festschrift honors the scholarly contribution of Emanuel Tov to the study of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Fifty-six contributors have honored Tov as friend and scholar. The massive nature of this work demanded a separate index volume. The genre of Festschriften in the present era has not necessarily been significant; therefore, this volume is to be honored for its magnificence.

The work begins with a five page biography of Emanuel Tov, chronicling his birth to Jewish parents who “were deported to concentration camps during the German occupation of the Netherlands,” survival of the war “in hiding with a Christian family,” and to his immigration to Israel (p. xiii). There is such a wealth of information in this volume that it is nearly impossible to represent adequately the exhaustive contents. Consequently, it is sufficient to state what a travesty it would be for anyone seeking to understand Qumran, the Septuagint, and the Hebrew Bible to be without this massive work. The investment for this collection will provide much more gratitude than disappointment.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.

Wealth, Poverty & Human Destiny, edited by Doug Bandow and David L. Schindler. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2003. ix + 538 pp., cloth, \$29.95.

The hasty expansion of the liberal market order throughout the world has resulted in complex and modern questions for religion generally. To answer the relationship between economics and ethics is certainly apropos. The editors have attempted to address the questions concerning the market economy, particularly in relationship to concern regarding poverty, and its fundamental compatibility within a Judeo-Christian ethic. The contributors to this volume include leading economists, social critics, and theologians. The essays are divided into two very distinct views. Bandow’s contributors argue generally that the market economy is most beneficial to help the poor; these contributors also believe that free market economics is fundamentally compatible with Christian belief and teaching. Schindler’s contributors are not as optimistic concerning the free market, but “regard it as depending on a philosophical liberalism that is not neutral but fundamentally opposed to Christian theology and social thought” (p. viii). The editors provided concluding responses on “The Conundrum of Capitalism and Christianity” and “[Spiritual] Homelessness’ and Market Liberalism.” Two appendices, Wendell Berry’s “The Total Economy” and “Capitalism, Civil Society, Religion, and the Poor: A Bibliographical Essay” by Max L. Stackhouse and Lawrence M. Stratton, are included. Bandow’s contributors argue conclusively that the market economy is a superior means to benefit the poor. Schindler’s contributors argued contrarily

that the market economy exacerbates spiritual poverty and homelessness (such arguments are anthropological, that is, recognition of the proper human destiny and an economic culture of gift). *Wealth, Poverty, & Human Destiny* is an insightful and original assessment of the relationship between economics and religion. This is a volume not to be ignored.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.

God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris & the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism, by Barry Hankins. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1996. 220 pp., cloth, \$32.50.

Ernest Sandeen previously demonstrated that fundamentalism emerged in the North, with the exception of the "Texas Cyclone," J. Frank Norris, in the South. A controversial leader in the history of fundamentalism, there may not be a more colorful and outrageous figure as Norris. Mutually despised by most Southern Baptists, he was eventually excluded from all associations; he was excluded from the Tarrant County Baptist Association in 1922 and the Texas Baptist Convention in 1924. Throughout his "ministry," he was indicted and tried for arson (1912), perjury (1912), and murder (1927). With the assistance of other fundamentalists, Norris formed the Premillennial Baptist Missionary Fellowship in Fort Worth. In 1950, the name was changed to the World Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist Bible Fellowship movement divided from Norris with headquarters in Springfield, Missouri. The recounting of Norris' life by Hankins was done with dignity but the author never neglected the opportunity for a lively story. Both engaging and insightful, this work chronicles the life of Norris and various challenges to the cause of Christ within the context of his time. This work is a fine biography that satisfies a tremendous, scholarly need in understanding the character of fundamentalism.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.

CORRECTIONS

The sigma (ς) did not print properly on pages 26-27 of the August 2007 journal. Please accept our apologies.

The Greek of the last line of page 26 should have read: “(e.g., ὁ υἱὸς οὗτος or οὗτος ὁ υἱός).”

The chart on page 27 should have appeared as below:

Greek Demonstrative Pronouns		
Pronoun	Tense	Location
οὗτος	singular	near
οὗτοι	plural	near
ἐκεῖνος	singular	far
ἐκεῖναι	plural	far

The last line of the first paragraph on page 27 should have read: “If this is the scenario, as the preterists contend, then Jesus would have used οὗτος and οὗτοι in order to indicate relatively near events.”

The second paragraph on page 27 should have read: “In four verses, Jesus used the relatively distant demonstrative pronouns: ἐκεῖναις ταῖς ἡμέραις (24:19); αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκείναι (24:22); τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων (24:29); and, τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης (24:36). When speaking of His coming, Jesus used the relatively distant demonstrative pronouns. When Jesus spoke of the events that will occur prior to His coming, He used the relatively near demonstrative pronouns since this would fit His perspective at the time of His coming: ταῦτα (24:8) and οὕτως (24:33). In other words, Jesus was speaking of His future coming, and then used the near demonstratives to describe the eschatological events that will precede His future coming.”

Footnote 12 on page 27 should have read: “Perhaps a fifth reference could be added in 24:38 (ταῖς ἡμέραις [ἐκεῖναις]) due to the likelihood that the pronoun was omitted accidentally. Both the UBS and Nestle-Aland include ἐκεῖναις in brackets. Metzger rated its inclusion with a “C” grade. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994), 52.”