

THEOLOGICAL EPILOGUE

to

UNSEALING THE END OF DAYS

The Visions and Prophecy of Zechariah, Chapters 1-6

Primarily, this has been a theological treatise, mixed with contemporary realities that invariably validate the eschatology. Keeping with the theological deportment of the text, I hasten to add this “Theological Epilogue” to consolidate the substance of this work and to assure my readers the methodologies and hermeneutics used to unravel the mysterious communications expressed in symbols, types, shadows, as well as the numerological applications—along with these amazing pictures—were purposeful and deliberate. What you witnessed here is mainstream evangelical thought—let me explain. There essentially are four major schools of biblical interpretation concerning “last things.”

FOUR MAJOR SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETING ESCHATOLOGY

- **Allegorical** – here, most prophetic passages found in the Old Testament and in major portions of Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Revelation are taken in a “nonliteral” hermeneutic; instead, the “spiritual meaning” dominates the synthesis. This school of interpretation arose in Alexandria, Egypt and was systematized by Origen and those who followed in his train. Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries simply relegated this theological approach to the environs of eschatology, not the entire Word of God; consequently, John’s Revelation is no longer, in the main, a “futuristic document” – it has been “spiritualized” primarily for the immediate.
- The **preterist’s** interpretations, especially the Book of Revelation, closely adhere to the allegorical approach; however, it is truncated regarding nonliteral interpretation. Here we witness the early church’s symbolic struggles in the Revelation and, *ipso facto*, a “symbolic history” of the church in her early days is at variance with any prophetic revelation consigned to the future. Preterists blend their hermeneutic with sundry allegorical applications which are nonliteral in nature. Somehow their convolutions provide them a system (in their own eyes) void of contradiction and hyper-allegorization of the Revelation.
- **Historical** – instead of confining their symbolic interpretations to the early church, *à la* their preterist cohorts, this highly popular approach to the study of prophecy, especially the Revelation, sees eschatology as the unfolding of the Church’s march through history; here, as well, symbolism

plays a key role. However, though there is some predictive element within the historical application, each interpreter culminates the text to coincide within their time frame; consequently, one must meander through the maze and, quite frequently, dates and places are changed to fit the history of the moment. Well-meaning Brethren among the Seventh-Day Adventists are inclined to this notoriety--having set specific dates/times, only to have them altered as events did not properly cooperate.

- **Futuristic** – Theological dissatisfaction with the preceding three schools has led scores of Biblicists to embrace the “futuristic” methodology of biblical interpretation as it pertains to eschatology. Revelation, for example, is a futuristic prophetic text—especially as it deals from chapter 4 on through to chapter 22. It is virtually impossible, consequently, to avoid the brand: “premillennial” – for those who so affirm this approach hold to Christ’s literal second coming will precede His thousand-year reign on the earth (not exclusively the heavens). Postmillenarians (and there are countless variations to their theme) place Christ’s second advent at the end of the millennial reign. Virtually, all three of the aforementioned approaches—The Allegorical, Preterist, and Historical—confuse the believer’s “heavenly” position “in Christ” and, subsequently, disinherit the promises and covenantal accords relative to the physicality of Israel.

The “Age of Modern Prophetic Interest” commenced in earnest in the early 1800s. The Millerites (Seventh-Day Adventists), The Brethren (Plymouth Brethren), and myriads of dispensational writers and pundits scoured the pages of Daniel and the Revelation. Moody, Scofield, Dallas Seminary, and scores of evangelical “biblical literalists” embraced Scriptural truths obscured for centuries. The study of “last things” (i.e., eschatology) once was the exclusive purview of Catholic/Orthodox and Reform theologians—not any longer, the apocalyptic floodgates have broken and we’re all getting wet!

The Jesus Movement, Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*, Messianic Movements, and LaHay’s *Left Behind* Series left America and the world in an ever-spiraling march to Armageddon, and the Second Coming. It seems that “Apocalyptic Christianity” has answers and excitement for the “here and now.”

CONFUSION IN THE RANKS

Leaving the aberrant abstractions witnessed in Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses and other bizarre and twisted eschatologies, the sad fact of the matter is that within evangelical circles confusion has reigned over the countless scenarios concerning the “end of days.” The ebb and flow of doctrinal emphases have put myriads into a “whatever” mindset that has virtually neutralized the importance of

God's Word regarding prophecy. Multitudes have tuned out the confusion and even ridiculed such prophetic "prognostications" as irrelevant to daily Christian living. Indeed, how broad-minded to suggest: "I'm a 'pantribulationist' – it's all going to pan out in the end!"

Notwithstanding both the clever and the inane attempts to circumvent the inevitable concluding hours of earth's demise, any thoughtful person, Christian or otherwise, simply cannot exclude the FACT that the world is careening out of control and losing its equilibrium—politically, economically, and socially. If there is a God—then why doesn't He do or say something about what's happening to our planet? If we're supposed to react in some way to God's plan in all this—then, why doesn't He communicate to us its mystery and tell us how we fit into His schematic?

YES, there is a plan; there is a ***“more sure word of prophecy – which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts—for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”*** (II Peter 1:19 & 21).

WHY THE CONFUSION?

Miles J. Stanford, champion of the deeper Life found “in Christ,” – bemoaned the perilous descent of today's evangelical churches who once espoused a healthy embrace for dispensationalism (a “theological system” keen on prophetic studies). He resolutely insisted that:

“It is absolutely essential for the believer to learn the scriptural difference between:

- His relationship to earth and heaven,
- The flesh and the Spirit,
- Judaism and Christianity”¹

Friend, Stanford's “absolutely essential” is the secret which unlocks – or “unseals” the enigmatic and seemingly confusing prophetic Scriptures.

This author has no allusions to the contrary to assume that there is not a massive end-times' struggle to keep Israel, the World Powers and the Church in complete confusion and ignorance relative to Stanford's concerns. God's Plan and Purpose for the Ages is fast upon us—we cannot sit idly by without a fresh burst of insight from Holy Writ that will clarify, encourage, and inspire His people in

these last days—keeping in mind the profundity and depth of Stanford’s threefold concern.

“*The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy*” (Revelation 19:10) – and that testimony of Jesus must be given, for its “essence” is prophetic in nature—it is spoken through human agency, not angelic hosts! John’s eating of the “little book” and the subsequent, corporal nature of the TWO WITNESSES (Revelation 10 and 11) demands that the dispensation of prophetic utterance, through the joint testimony of Israel and the Church (a theological phenomenon NOT in the arsenal of dispensationalism—but NOT in conflict with the aforementioned concerns of Miles Stanford), is the vehicle of final deposition during the trial which is to try the whole earth where the “Divine Tribune” (i.e., the Lamb of God) will predicate His judgments based upon the witness and evidence compiled from the “Two Olive Trees” and the “Two Lampstands” – Babylon the Great will receive her verdict, sentence, and judgment via the testimony secured through the Holy City, New Jerusalem!

UNSEALING THE END OF DAYS

John Walvoord, in his voluminous *Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, highlighted one of the salient methodologies realized within the “futuristic camp”

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“Under the futuristic view **due recognition is given to the symbolic and the need for interpreting the symbols.** Often this is done, however, in the very context of the revelation or can be determined by reference to other prophetic books in the Bible. Though **some symbolic revelations are still not completely understood,** a surprising number of passages yield to a factual conclusion regarding future events. Objections to the futuristic view usually are theological in nature as some resist the theological position taken by Premillenarians. Often the accusation is made that the book (in this case, Revelation) would not bring sufficient comfort to those who read it throughout the history of the church if it was entirely futuristic. However, this point of view overlooks the fact that all prophecy to some extent is futuristic and constitutes a revelation of that which faith embraces.” (my emphasis)

Walvoord’s summation is straightforward:

“Inasmuch as the futuristic view offers the only solid basis for a consistent verifiable form of interpretation, this is the point of view adopted in this work.”²

In keeping with Walvoord's emphasis of interpreting "apocalyptic-style" (Note: The word "apocalyptic" is a transliteration of the Greek word *apokalypsis*, meaning "to uncover or disclose.") writings as futuristic, literal, and conveyed in rich symbolism (e.g., found in books like Zechariah, Daniel, Revelation, etc.), listen to his statements concerning Zechariah's visions and prophecy:

"The Book of Zechariah as a whole constituted **one of the most compact apocalyptic prophetic books of the Old Testament**. The Book of Zechariah included not only the eight prophetic dreams which were visions which occurred in one night (Zech. 1:7-6:8) but also apocalyptic descriptions which constituted eschatological revelations."³

Walvoord knew full-well that what was/is contained within this briefest of scripts encapsulated a panorama of prophetic truth unsurpassed within the annals of prophetic literature.

As I probed the pages of this prophet—I too became amazed at the insights, and profound relevance declared by Zechariah over 2,500 years ago. When I contemplate the absurdities of Nostradamus, the freakish attempts to devise the future by Cabalism, and the convoluted deciphering systems of Bible decoders—alas, these deviant "prophetical heresies" – when held up to the majestic disclosures of Zechariah, Daniel and John—these diviners, magicians and soothsayers are stymied and turned into blithering fools compared to the brilliant Light of His Word!

WALVOORD'S OVERSIGHTS

"Some symbolic revelations are still not completely understood."⁴ Undoubtedly cognizant of the rapid development of further illumination of the revealed truth, Walvoord's caveat is a demonstration of theological humility and keen awareness of the unfolding prophetical drama at the close of this age. I find a most interesting demonstration of this awareness in the following statement from his introduction to Revelation in his *Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*:

"Some of the symbols in the Book of Revelation are the widespread use of numbers which while taken literally also may have a symbolic meaning. These numbers include 3; 3 ½; 4; 5; 6; 7; 10; 12; 24; 42; 666; 1,000; 1,260; 12,000; 144,000; 100 million; and 200 million . . . One of the most significant references is to the forty-two months, or 1,260 days, which is the duration of the Great Tribulation (13:5). This refers to the last half of the seven-year

period predicted in Daniel 9:27. Many interpreters find the entire seven years of verse 27 as the main subject of Revelation 6 through 18. The emphasis, however, seems to be on the last three-and-a-half years which is the predicted time of unprecedented trouble of which Christ Himself spoke (Matt. 24:21-22).”⁵

Furthermore (before I give a brief synopsis of these “oversights”), Walvoord lists in copious detail sundry symbolic characters taken from the Revelation on page 522 of his text—conspicuously omitted from this fine list is the nexus of prophetic symbolism found in Revelation 11 aside from referencing Jerusalem (i.e., the New Jerusalem) juxtaposed to Sodom and Egypt.”⁶

This by no means is a criticism of his classic work; however, the omission of the number “2” as in Two Witnesses found in Revelation 11 and of the “Two Olive Trees” and the “Two Lampstands” is of major import in the eschatological understanding; and, a concept that Walvoord’s dispensationalism should heartily welcome.

Likewise, the symbolism omitted in reference to Revelation 11 is of paramount importance to God’s Plan and Purpose for Israel, the Church and the Nations. Judging from Walvoord’s emphasis upon the latter half of the 70th Week of Daniel seen in his aforementioned statement concerning the 1,260 days (“the emphasis, however, seems to be on the last three-and-a-half years which is the predicted time of unprecedented trouble of which Christ Himself spoke”⁷) clearly delineates his understanding of the Two Witnesses as simply literal (bearing no symbolic significance). Notwithstanding Walvoord’s omission of “2” in Revelation 11 he is aware of numerical symbolism which is both literal and symbolic:

“Evidence points to the fact that these numbers are always used in a literal sense even though they **may also have a symbolic sense**; that is, if it declares that there are 7 stars, there are 7 stars, not 6 or 8, and so with other uses of the numbers.”⁸

Again, I reiterate that the confusion amongst futurists over the 1,260 days wherein “*my two witnesses . . . will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth*” and the treading of “*the holy city underfoot for forty-two months*” (Revelation 11:3b and 2b) is not over the same quantity of time (i.e., 42 months = 1,260 prophetic days)—but overlapping the two time frames into the same time frame (i.e., the final 3 ½ years of the 70th Week of Daniel).

Overlapping or making both time periods the latter half of the 70th Week of Daniel circumvents the incompatibility of being “tread upon” and simultaneously

the statements made of these two witnesses: ***“If anyone wants to harm them (e.g., “tread upon them”), fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner”*** (Revelation 11:5). Confusion is eliminated when, however, the recognition of the “holy city” is allied with the Two Witnesses—i.e., their destiny is one in the same!

Their irresistible, anointed and unquenchable testimony is so prevailing during the rise of Antichrist (i.e., the “beginning of sorrows” or the first half of the 70th Week of Daniel) that ***“if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner”*** (Revelation 11:5b). Furthermore, it is abundantly clear:

“When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them” (Revelation 11:7).

You may conjecture the meaning of the “three-and-one-half days” that their bodies lie in the street of the “Great City” is a literal 3 ½ days; however, in keeping with the context of the apocalyptic material and symbolism of Revelation 11, it seems highly unlikely—i.e., the 3 ½ days constitute the open persecution of the “saints” during the reign of the Beast (for the Beast clearly commences the falsification of the resurrection of Christ—the “Abomination of Desolation”—at the commencement of the “Great Tribulation” or the last half of the 70th Week of Daniel, and it is his leadership of ***“the Gentiles”*** which causes the ***“holy city”*** to be tread ***“underfoot for forty-two months”*** (the precise time of the Beast’s reign)).

An understanding of the Two Witnesses is mandatory in light of the conflict of a prevailing testimony and the treading down of the Holy City for forty-two months. Otherwise, one simply understands the “holy city” to be literal Jerusalem and the 3 ½ days of the “open persecution” and/or death of their “corpses” to be resurrected just prior to or at the Second Advent (again, the problem of multiple resurrections of the righteous comes in view if this be the case—especially if the Two Prophets are not cooperate beings).

However, having said all of this—it is hermeneutically myopic to surmise that the angel who enjoins John to measure the ***“temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there”*** (Revelation 11:1b) exclusively refers to a literal Tribulation Temple, and does not incorporate ***“those who worship there.”*** The ***“those who worship there”*** are the same ***“holy city”*** persecuted by the “Court of the Gentiles” who, under the Mark of the Beast delight in the ultimate persecution ***“of these two prophets”*** who ***“tormented those who dwell on the earth”*** (Revelation 11:10b).

The mistake made by dispensational futurists in ascribing the entire 70th Week to Israel's responsibility, while the Church is in the heavens, is what is at stake here—our presentations throughout this text run counter to this school of Premillenarian thought (i.e., Pretribulationism).

THE HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE 1,260 DAYS

Finally, the applications which tend to meander all over history's map when speaking about the 1,260 days, can, for example, be seen in the configurations of the Seventh Day Adventists:

“It is a historical fact that the Papacy ruled most of the known world from A.D. 538 until the French Revolutionists took away their power by dethroning their pope in 1798. This time slot of 1260 years is the key which will not only unlock the prophecy of the Papacy in history, but it will also show without any doubt who these other two beasts are in Revelation 11:7; 17:3, 7-14 and Revelation 13:11-17 . . . The evolution of the Roman Church as a religious dictatorship started with Emperor Constantine who gave the pope the city of Rome after he moved the capital of his Roman Empire to what was to become Constantinople. After this, Clovis I, the French emperor who became a Roman Catholic in A.D. 496, helped *set up* the papal theocracy in A.D. 508. In A.D. 538 when papal armies won the final battle with the anti-papal Ostrogoths, the Papacy through its fanatical popes began to persecute those who would not bow to her authority. France was the first in line. It was in A.D. 538 that the Papacy began to call themselves the ‘Corrector of Heretics.’”⁹

Naturally, the precision of the 1,260 days, converted into literal years by this above-mentioned historical approach, perfectly fits the time frame, if one slightly modifies the actual time frame surrounding the imprisonment of the Papacy (such “modifications” are the natural consequence of such “historical” literalism. No wonder then, that the **Old and New Testaments** (not Enoch and Elijah) are the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11!¹⁰

The “systematized error” of these historical schematics is fundamentally compounded (in this case among the Seventh-Day Adventists) by the abridgment of Israel's Davidic Kingdom on earth (i.e., the earth enjoys her Sabbath for 1,000 years while the “saints” are in heaven) and the Christian's incorporation of “the commandments of Moses” with the “faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12) demands a “singular witness” (i.e., those Christians who keep the commandments of Moses

AND hold to the faith of Jesus—literal Israel is not involved in the eschatological equation; they are disinherited).

This is the confusion to which Miles Stanford speaks—the confusion that this text addresses and assiduously avoids while incorporating those symbols which strengthen the futuristic understanding of eschatology.

WORDS OF CAUTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

The historical approach, with all good intentions, attempts to give prophecy contemporaneity and thus, meaning in the life of the believer. The sad result of their applications, however, simply confuse the prophetic landscape and, as a result, muddle the Scriptural waters and provide little witness to a world crying out for answers to the cataclysmic events pressing in upon the earth. Notwithstanding the cacophony of confusing inconsistencies in the previously mentioned eschatological systems—the believer can rest assured, and those scattered among the nations looking for credible answers to the world’s struggles can take hope . . .

“The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The very nature of His Word demands an awareness that we’re not dealing with a stagnant document, but an instrument of unique vitality that is spiritually dynamic. Simply put: There is much more that will be “unsealed” to His people, for *“our redemption draws nigh”* (Luke 21:28).

Now, you may aspire yourself, if American (or for that matter, a member of Western influence and society), a rabid patriot or ardent sympathizer, even an ideologue of democracy. I’m not here to “burst your bubble” nor deflate your embrace of this great nation; however, it is time for we who affirm this Book to be God’s Message to the masses of this planet, especially at the close of this Age, to “tell it like it is” under the anointing and guidance of His Holy Spirit—I have sought to do this and to do this without compromise *“speaking by the Spirit”* (I Corinthians 12:3) concerning “Unsealing the End of Days.”

May God bless you in your search for His Truth—*“endure sound doctrine”* (II Timothy 4:3) – be *“valiant for the truth”* (Jeremiah 9:3) and, above all, brace yourself for the Reality that is in Messiah, the Branch, as you press on to know Him Who is our Light and our Life!

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