

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

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## *THE ORDER OF THINGS TO COME*

It was the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples that after He had departed from the earth the Spirit of truth would reveal to them "things to come." The epistles and messages inspired after His ascension set forth many things, which must come to pass. Some of the events set forth are difficult to interpret. They are set forth in language that is highly figurative and revealed by means of symbols; therefore, it is not always easy to determine just what the symbol represents. Other events are set forth in language of such character that any misunderstanding has to be deliberate. One such event is the second coming of Jesus Christ. The language used to tell of this event is such that it cannot mean else but His personal return to the earth. It does not mean the death of a Christian, the destruction of Jerusalem, or the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, as some have taught and many have ignorantly believed.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is an event of such magnitude that many can see nothing else taking place in the future save this one great incident. Such reasoning is purely emotional and not logical to say the least. It ignores altogether the testimony of the Word of God concerning those events, which must precede the return of the Lord to the earth. These preceding events are shoved aside altogether to make way for an "any moment" coming idea that is so popular in many circles today.

There is no study of prophecy that is more fascinating than that which attempts to discover the true Scriptural order of events in regard to things to come. Once the proper sequence of events is established it permits us to have a panoramic view of coming events and helps us rightly divide every portion of the Word of God that applies to things that are still in the future. Prophecies concerning coming events are somewhat like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Event must be matched up with event, and then these larger segments must be fitted together to form a composite picture of things to come.

Some events have been already linked up or matched together by the Spirit of God. If these are separated, the separate parts will sometime seem to fit into the picture we are making, but if they are kept together, they will fit only in the true picture being drawn by the Spirit of God.

For example, the change and resurrection set forth in I Corinthians 15:51, 52 is immutably linked with "the last trump." By ignoring this tie, men are able to take the event set forth here and move it up in their charts to a place where it occurs before any trump is ever blown. However, in the divine chart it remains as happening simultaneously with the last trump.

Another example of this is seen in I Thessalonians 4:15-17. This event is linked up with the coming (*parousia*) of Jesus Christ. This coming (*parousia*) is set forth in Matthew 24, and we gain nothing by cutting them apart. The only reason anyone could have for severing the Thessalonian rapture from the *parousia* in Matthew 24 is in order to move it forward so that it can happen before any of the events set forth in Matthew take place.

If I were given three pieces of chain, two pieces of four links each and one a single link, I could join them together with one cut and one weld. There would be no reason for severing those already linked together unless I desired to rearrange the links. Since I do not wish to rearrange events already linked together in the Word, I refuse to separate the Corinthian event from the last trump, or the Thessalonian rapture from the *parousia* of Matthew 24.

It is my conviction that there can be no true understanding of the order of events of things to come if we fail to recognize the character of the dispensation in which we are now living. The peculiar period of time in which we live began about thirty-three years after the death of Christ. It began with the declaration of Paul recorded in Acts 28:28 that "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles." If the book of Acts is carefully read and the epistles written during the Acts period are examined, the honest mind will admit at once that the divine conditions which prevailed and certain truths which were in full force are not the divine program and order for the present time. Furthermore, it will be seen that every major event that took place in the Acts period was the fulfillment of some prophecy.

The time in which we live, the present purpose upon which God is working, is not the subject of any predictive prophecy in the Word of God. We live under a divine administration and we have been blessed in connection with a divine program, which was unrevealed until it was made known by the final ministry of the Apostle Paul. In this "dispensation of the secret" no prophecy of God has been fulfilled. An examination of history will verify this.

The past thirty-five years have made more history than the thousand years that preceded them. The first world war seemed to start a rapid happening of great events. It is almost impossible for the human mind to comprehend even a part of what has occurred between the assassination of Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo in 1914 and the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948. The past ten years when considered alone have been the most momentous that the world has ever experienced. Many world events have literally been fantastic. If someone ten years ago had predicted that in 1948 the United States, Great Britain, France, and Russia would each be controlling sectors of Berlin, while the city of Berlin itself would be surrounded by territory controlled by the Russians over which we could not pass except by air, he would have been pitied because of his demented ravings. Nevertheless, this is exactly what we see today. And this establishes the fact that world events are often unbelievably strange; therefore, men should not hesitate to believe the predictions of the Word of God even if those events seem fantastic.

There are sincere men who insist that all or most of the events that have taken place in the past thirty-five years are the fulfillment of some prophecy in the Word of God. However, this constant succession of mighty events stands as unimpeachable testimony against those who insist that current history is predicted in the Bible. Not one thing that has happened in the past thirty-five years has fulfilled any predictive prophecy. So far as fulfilled prophecy is concerned we stand exactly at that point where men stood when Paul declared that, "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles." Every prophecy, which at that point remained unfulfilled, still remains unfulfilled today.

The diligent student of the Bible knows that it contains hundreds of predictive prophecies. He knows also that many of these have had a literal and complete fulfillment. These now stand as fulfilled prophecies. Other prophecies have not yet been fulfilled and these must be classified as prophecies awaiting fulfillment. If we take every predictive prophecy in the Bible and classify them in two groups, those fulfilled and those awaiting fulfillment, it will be seen that since Acts 28:28 no prophecy has moved from the unfulfilled to the fulfilled category. Furthermore, not one of the stupendous events that has occurred in the past thirty-five years would cause us to move a single prophecy to the fulfilled group. If any think otherwise, then they should stand ready to point out an event in the past 1900 years that has fulfilled a Biblical prediction.

Let no one point to the Lord's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem, and then to the destruction of that city in A.D. 70 as being a fulfillment of prophecy. **I say without hesitation that that destruction did not fulfill the prophecy..** Jerusalem and its rebuilt temple will need to be destroyed again before our Lord's prophecy will be fulfilled. The conjunction and succession of events necessary for complete fulfillment were not present. The superficial think that the Lord predicted only the destruction of Jerusalem. The careful student knows that our Lord predicted a conjunction and succession of certain events, among which was the destruction of Jerusalem. Since the conjunction and succession of related events did not take place, our Lord's prophecy remains unfulfilled. If a man predicts snow in Florida on the first day of June, he has not made a simple prediction of snow. He has predicted an unusual conjunction of three things, snow, the first day of June, and Florida.

The same thing is seen in regard to another prophecy. A lack of spiritual discernment is shown by those who say that our Lord predicted there would be wars and earthquakes, and since there have been wars and earthquakes, prophecy has been fulfilled before our eyes. Our Lord made no simple prediction that there would be wars and earthquakes, as a reading of Matthew 24 will show. If He had made a simple prediction such as this it could not be honored with the title of predictive prophecy. There had been wars and earthquakes before He uttered these words. Any man in His day would have been on safe ground in predicting wars and earthquakes, as these had ever been the constantly recurring experience of the human race. For the Lord to have predicted wars and earthquakes would be about the same as if I should predict that in the coming year there will be automobile accidents and airplane crashes. Since there are sure to be such, it demonstrates no predictive ability to declare that there will be. However, if one should predict that on a certain day on a regularly scheduled airline flight between Los Angeles and Chicago the plane will crash and come to earth on Highway 66 and hit an automobile containing a United States Senator; if this should take place as predicted, the one who made the prediction would certainly be able to claim a knowledge of the future. It is a mark of false prophets that they always predict things that are likely to happen; they always generalize and they never predict a conjunction of events.

Our Lord was no such prophet. He made no simple prediction of wars and earthquakes. In fact, in Matthew 24, He was not predicting the future at all. He was giving the signs of His coming. The sign was not in the events He set forth. The sign was in the conjunction and succession of events. Among these events He mentioned wars and earthquakes. This does not mean that wars and earthquakes are signs of His coming. They are not. But certain wars and earthquakes will be signs of His coming when they happen in relationship to other events. Wars and earthquakes, which are no part of that sequence of events which is to be the sign of His coming cannot be considered as a fulfillment of this prophecy. This truth becomes crystal clear when one considers in Matthew 24 the constantly recurring words that designate sequence such as *then*, *immediately*, and *when*.

If we are willing to accept the truth of God's word and refuse all else beside, we will come to realize that **no prophecy is being fulfilled in the present administration**. God's present program is not the subject of any prophecy. A radical change in God's administration will need to take place; God's present program will need to come to an end; His present purpose will need to be fully accomplished before work on His program predicted in the Old Testament and the Gospels will be resumed. This will be considered later, but first we must examine another erroneous idea that stands in the path of entering into the truth concerning things to come.

It is believed and taught by many that the **first** great event in the order of things to come is the "rapture of all living believers," brought about by the second coming of Jesus Christ. It is held that this is the very first in that long series of prophesied events that will culminate first in the kingdom and later in the new heavens and earth. This is the teaching of the *Darby Scofield* system of prophetic interpretation, and it is a very popular view at the present time. In my view, possibly wrong, but based on long observation, many who hold this view have settled the matter emotionally and no amount of logical reasoning based upon the simple facts of Scripture can alter their view in the least. They believe their idea is based upon Scripture since it is supported by certain passages from the epistles of Paul. However, these references are taken and made to teach a different aspect or phase of the second coming than the one set forth in Matthew 24. This is false interpretation, as there is no reference to the second coming in the epistles of Paul where the return of Christ is the subject of the passage. The second coming is referred to in connection with other subjects being presented, but it is not the subject of any passage in which the reference occurs. Take for example I Thessalonians 4:13-18. The subject of this passage is "those who are asleep." In connection with Paul's message concerning them he refers to the coming (*parousia*) of Christ. If we seek information of this coming (*parousia*) there is only one place we can find it in its fullness. This is in Matthew 24.

Therefore, the second coming referred to in Paul's epistles can be none other than the one set forth in the one great chapter that deals with this subject. The second coming set forth in Matthew 24 takes place at the close of the great tribulation. There is no other coming of Christ in the Word of God.

When God's present purpose is complete, when this dispensation comes to an end, it will not be brought to an end by the return of Christ or by a rapture of all living believers. I Thessalonians 4:17 does positively teach that there will be a rapture of certain of God's people, but these people are emphatically declared to be those "who are alive and remain unto the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord." Inasmuch as the word here translated "coming" also appears in Matthew 24:27 and 39, we have every right to say, having compared spiritual things with spiritual things, that the rapture set forth in I Thessalonians 4:17 will be the experience of those who are alive and upon the earth at that great event (*parousia*) set forth in Matthew 24. Since the second coming in Matthew 24 takes place only after certain other events have occurred, the second coming cannot be the initial event that marks the resumption of God's prophetic program.

This idea, that a rapture of all living believers is to be the next and first great event when God resumes His prophesied program, has warped the thinking of so many Christians that they have lost sight of "His coming" and substituted "their going" in its place. They are so convinced that to "go without dying" is going to be their portion, that even to suggest that it may not be is, in their words, "to rob them of their blessed hope." Since to "go without dying" has not been the portion of any believer in the past 1900 years, why should we think that it is to be the lot of believers in this generation. Some boldly say, "All signs point to His imminent return," but this is merely an emotional statement, not based on either Scripture or logic. It has become customary in certain circles to make every outstanding event recorded in the newspaper to be a sign of His immediate return.

Many writers by means of books and charts have attempted to set forth an order of events of things to come. I have examined many of these, and have found most of them to be wanting because of their being committed to the ideas that the rapture of living believers must be the first event, that there must be two comings of Christ, and that there must not be more than two resurrections. Furthermore, they fail to allow place or time for some of the most important events set forth in the Word. I shall try to avoid all these errors in this study.

### **The Close of the Present Dispensation**

This dispensation in which we live, the dispensation of the grace of God, had its beginning when Paul announced that, "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles." Acts 28:28. In fact, this dispensation began by the salvation of God being sent to the Gentiles. This does not mean "the gospel" was sent to the Gentiles, for that had taken place about twenty-three years before Paul made his pronouncement. This dispensation will close when God reverses the action that Paul announced in Rome. He announced that the salvation of God had been sent to the Gentiles. When God decrees that it shall return to Israel, this dispensation will be at an end. The relationship of God to Israel that existed throughout the Old Testament and up to Acts 28:28 will be restored. Israel, the descendants of Abraham, will again be "God's people," and God will undertake to make them what His people should be.

When the salvation of God returns to Israel, the activities of the Holy Spirit in convicting, drawing, quickening, and calling will be to the Jew only, as it was in the first ten chapters of Acts. No man can come to Jesus Christ except he be drawn by the Father. When the salvation of God returns to Israel, He will cease to draw the Gentiles. I do not believe that any Gentile will come into personal faith in Jesus Christ after this dispensation has closed. I believe that the greatest turning to God the world has ever witnessed will take place among the descendants of Abraham. These truths have been more fully dealt with in previous studies that have appeared in these pages. The point I desire to emphasize here is that the first great act of God in the order of things to come is to return the salvation of God to Israel. When this occurs the day of Gentile opportunity will have come to a close. The promised day of Israel's great opportunity will have begun.

This change will be a spiritual change and not a physical or material change. It will not be announced by any spokesman, sign, or event. It will be determined by God, but the effects of it will soon appear among the descendants of Abraham.

Those who are enamored with the spectacular will probably not be very happy about this dispensation coming to an end in such manner. They insist that if it ends this way, no one will know it.

That men shall know it has ended is not necessary. It will not personally affect the life or walk of the present day believer. It will not concern the unbeliever. It will be a real trial for the servant of God as he labors on without results from his efforts, but God requires only that stewards be faithful, not successful. It will give the true servant an opportunity to demonstrate his faithfulness to his commission to "Proclaim the word, be instant in season, out of season." However, when this dispensation comes to an end, I believe that those who are instructed in the Word will come to know it, understand it, and will act accordingly.

When the salvation of God returns to Israel, it will not be like a great and strong wind, neither will it be like fire or earthquake. It will be like a still small voice among them. But since it will be the work of God it will result in Israel being brought to Him. It will be the first step toward the fulfillment of the promise of God in **Hosea 2:14-15**.

**Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.**

When this prophecy is carefully considered it will bring the conviction that if it is not fulfilled before the great tribulation, it will never be fulfilled at all. How else can the "valley of Achor" (trouble) be a door of hope? Some who have recognized this as a prophecy that deals with Israel before the tribulation and before the kingdom, stultify the truth by making it apply to a remnant. This is wholly imaginary since it is Israel and not a remnant that is in view in the context.

When the salvation of God returns to His people Israel it will be with a view of bringing about the repentance and conversion of His people Israel. That which the *Darby-Scofield* view holds is going to happen only to remnant, I believe the Scriptures teach will happen to Israel as a whole. Repentance and conversion were the divine conditions set forth by Peter in Acts 3:18-21 that must be met by Israel before God sends back Jesus Christ again. This condition has never been changed or lessened in the least. In view of Peter's declaration we can feel assured as to the order of events that first take place when God begins anew His prophesied program.

**1. The Salvation of God returns to the people of Israel.** This reverses the declaration of Acts 28:28 and brings again the same relationship between God and Israel that existed when Peter gave his first message at Pentecost. At Pentecost the early rain fell upon Israel. It produced a remnant, and a people from among the Gentiles as the complement of that remnant. When the salvation of God returns to them, the latter rain will fall, and this will result in the repentance and conversion of the people.

**2. The repentance of the people of Israel.** This condition of the Lord's return, set forth by Peter, had been declared before by Hosea:

**I will depart and return unto My place! Till what time they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face. In their trouble they will make for Me diligent search. Come and let us return unto Jehovah! For He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. He will bring us to life after two days, on the third day He will raise us up that we may live before Him. Then let us know - let us press on to know - Jehovah, like the dawn is His coming forth assured; that He may come like a downpour upon us; like the harvest - rain and the seed-rain of the land. Hosea 5:15.6:3.**

We can depend upon it. God will yet give Israel repentance to the acknowledging of the truth concerning their guilt and concerning the Lord Jesus as their Messiah.

**3. The conversion of Israel.** Repentant Israel will turn to the Lord. This will be a turning without parallel in history. It will be so complete and so intense that two days after it has reached its zenith, the Lord will have lifted the burden of their sin and they will know that God has met with them.

**4. The times of refreshing from the face of the Lord.** These times of refreshing must precede the return of the Lord as Acts 3:18, 20 clearly shows. These are not the blessings of the Kingdom eon. They precede it. We read of these blessings in Hosea 2:21-23, Hosea 6:3, Hosea 14:5-7, Joel 2:18-31. Among the blessings that will come to Israel will be that God will gather them from the nations and bring them into their own land. There they will be blessed nationally and individually, with both spiritual and material blessings. They will be the one nation upon earth that has solved their governmental, financial, social, religious, and racial problems. They will rebuild their temple on its former site. They will be the one bright spot in a dark world that still struggles under the confusion we now see on every hand. These great blessings will cause them to be envied, hated, and courted by the other nations. They will figure that the extraordinary superiority of this nation will also be the

portion of the nation or nations with whom it is aligned. Thus the people that were allured by God are allured by other nations. It is tragic to contemplate, but false prophets among the people will lead them into an alignment with the nations. This will cause God to withdraw while Israel learns her last bitter lesson. This development will be more fully considered later. Meanwhile, we must consider a question that is upon the minds of many:

What will happen to the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are living upon the earth when the salvation of God returns to Israel? In order to leave no room for misunderstanding, my answer to this question is, "Nothing, absolutely nothing." All attempts to link up a rapture or resurrection with the end of the dispensation of grace are as unreasonable as they are unscriptural. God did not remove all living believers when He sent His salvation to the Gentiles at Acts 28:28, and He will not do it when His salvation returns to Israel. This change will have no effect whatsoever on the believer's relationship to God or his walk before God. It will have an effect upon the results that ordinarily follow the proclaiming of the Word; therefore, it will mean that the proclamation of the Word will no longer be a savor of life to some. However, faithful men will continue to proclaim it, knowing that it is the work the Lord gave them to do. If Noah preached more than a hundred years without result, you or I should be able to carry on the balance of our lives if God's salvation should return to Israel in our lifetime.

At this moment, God has upon the earth a company of people whom He has called into relationship with Himself. These people are to be found in every nation, and their relationship to God is based upon a work that He has done for them individually and personally. They are no part of that company of people God called to Himself in the Acts period. They are not an elect remnant of Israel, neither are they the complement of Gentiles identified with that remnant. They are no part of that future calling which will be exclusively Jewish believers. They are unique in character as they are the people that came to know God as the result of His demonstrating and establishing the graciousness of His character by means of a dispensation of grace. There has not been a day since Acts 28:28 that there has not been upon earth a company of believers of God's present calling.

This company of believers has always been losing its members, No year passes but what some of them die and can no longer be counted among its numbers. However, as God continues to be both passively and actively gracious it has resulted in more being redeemed to take the place of those who have fallen asleep. Has the reader ever asked what would happen if God should cease this activity so that no additions were made, but the withdrawals by death continued? The answer is obvious. The time would come when there would not be a man alive upon the earth who came to know God through Christ in the dispensation of the grace of God. This is what will happen when God's salvation leaves the nations (Gentiles) and returns to the one nation, Israel.

(To Be Continued, Vol. XI, No. 2)

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## ***STUDIES IN ACTS - - CHAPTER 1***

**1:3. To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days. and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.**

"Shewed" here means presented, "passion" means suffering, and "being seen" means being visible. Luke was a scientific historian as his writings give witness. He does not hesitate to apply the definite

word "proofs" to the evidence he had investigated concerning the resurrection of Christ. The phrase "the kingdom of God" will always be obscure as long as men refuse to reconsider their strongly held opinions and prejudices concerning the word *kingdom*. In its simplest form the Greek word means a realm or sovereignty, but this realm or sovereignty is not necessarily a kingdom unless it is ruled over by a king, or at least has a king as the symbol of its sovereignty. The realm (kingdom) of God will be a reality when the new heavens and new earth come into existence. However, whatsoever God does is in relationship to that eon; therefore, all His works are in view of the coming realm of God. This is the widest, most inclusive term in Scripture, and any conversation about the works of God is conversation about the kingdom of God. When the New Testament writers need to be more specific, narrower terms are used, such as, the kingdom of the heavens. For example, the statement, "Many oranges are grown in the United States" is general; nevertheless, it is entirely true. "Many oranges are grown in California," is more specific, but no more true than the first statement. Neither will a comparison of the two statements prove that the United States and California are identical expressions. In view of this we must be careful about assuming "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of the heavens" to be synonymous merely because both terms are used in similar parables.

**1:4-5. And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem. but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.**

That they should tarry in Jerusalem was a charge not contained in any of the commissions. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" is the commission as Matthew reports it (28:19). "Go ye into all the world," is a commission recorded by Mark (16:15). Neither of these, suggest any waiting period. Luke reports that He instructed them to tarry in Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). After they received this power, they remained in Jerusalem. This was not unfaithfulness. It was fidelity to the directions He gave them during the forty days.

John had indeed baptized with water. The Lord was to baptize them with the Holy Ghost. Fictional ideas concerning baptism stand in the road of the average Christian ever-knowing God's truth about it. Such statements as: Water baptism is a seal of believers; that it takes the place of circumcision; that it is a sign for unbelievers; that it is a confession of Christ; that it is a symbol of our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ; that it is the initiatory ordinance of Christianity; that it is putting on the uniform of a Christian; that by it we are identified with a rejected Christ; that it is a burial with Christ; that it is a means of grace—are entirely fictional, and not one of these statements are in accord with the facts set forth in the Word of God. Strange indeed that such statements as these cannot be found by honest students who have microscopically examined every verse and context that could possibly deal with water baptism. These fictional ideas make it impossible for those who hold them to give honest consideration to the Biblical passages that deal with baptism. They cause men to drag in water baptism everywhere and to see it everywhere in the Word of God. They cause men to give baptism a glory, which the Scriptures give to the blood of Christ.

Bishop W. R. Nicholson in his book *Oneness With Christ* says of baptism: "The being baptized into anything is the being brought under, and saturated with its influence and power." This definition will stand the test of Scripture, and when summed up it will be best expressed in the word *identification*.

There are three great baptisms in the New Testament; or, in other words, three identifications. There is identification with water, identification with the Spirit, and identification with the death of Christ. Two of these identifications are set forth in Acts 1:4. The third will be found in Romans 6:3–4. Identification with water means identification with what water stood for—that is, repentance. Those baptized by John become identified before God and before the people with the repentant ones in

Israel. And since the Gentiles of the Acts period were identified with Israel, they, too, were baptized with water. At Pentecost, those assembled were publicly identified with the Spirit, and this was demonstrated by their doing the things that only the Spirit of God could do. But they were also by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ identified with Him in His death. After the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28), water baptism has no place for it is not linked with God's present purpose. Neither does Spirit baptism have any place, for it was a promise made to Israel. The believer since Acts 28:28 has the Holy Spirit, but he is not baptized in the Spirit. We are baptized into (identified) with the death of Christ, the only baptism that has any place in the dispensation of the grace of God. The idea that believers were ever baptized into "the body of Christ" by the Spirit is a false idea based upon the poor translation and worse interpretation of I Corinthians 12:13.

**1:6-8. When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him saying, Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them. It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**

These disciples take it for granted that the kingdom (sovereignty) would again be restored to Israel. They are thinking of a glorious earthly rule for Israel. The Old Testament and the words of Christ gave them a sure foundation for these convictions. The Lord did not say one word to change these ideas. The only question was the *time*, and He patiently instructs them that this is not for them to know.

We must not abuse the words that follow concerning witnessing. Do we need to read into this such ideas as the apostles witnessing by word of mouth and traveling on foot? Does it say here that this would be fully accomplished in their lifetime? Did the apostles' ministry end with their death, or was it merely suspended until resurrection? Why charge them with failure, or charge God with failing to keep His promise to them. Remember, the books are not yet closed on this declaration. There are many passages like this in the Word. "Out of Egypt have I called My Son," seems to speak only of Israel when we read it in Hosea. But when Matthew quotes it we discover that it has a much deeper meaning than at first appears. The witnessing in the Acts period may have been only a precursory fulfillment of the prediction of Christ in Acts 1:8.

**1:9. And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.**

It is upon the writings of Luke that we depend for our knowledge of the ascension. Mark makes a single reference to it (Mark 16:19). Here in Acts, Luke tells us what the witnesses saw, and when this account and the one in Luke's Gospel are brought together we are in possession of all the pertinent facts. The Lord had been speaking to them, but His message is now complete. The eyes of the apostles are fixed upon Him. He did not suddenly vanish as He had done before when leaving them. This time He moves upward slowly and visibly. He had spread forth His hands to bless them (Luke 25:40) when majestically He began to arise. They gaze intently, but a cloud enfolds Him, bringing their view of the ascension to an end. The cloud did not carry Him up. It served only to hide Him from their view. It is probable that the moment the cloud hid Him from view He was instantly and timelessly in the heavens. Their seeing of the actual ascension is part of the preparation of the ministry they are to perform.

**1:10-11. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.**

In conjunction with their strained and earnest looking toward heaven as He ascended, two men stood by them clothed in white apparel. These men can rightly be called angels, providing we know from Scripture what an angel is. But if our conception of angels comes from Roman Catholic tradition, we had better keep the idea out altogether. The Greek word *angelos* means a messenger. It is used of such men as John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10), the disciples of John (Luke 7:24), the Lord's disciples (Luke 9:52). These *angelos* were human beings. The word is also used of messengers who were not human beings. We know very little about these beings, but we can say for sure that they always appear as men, never as women, maidens, or children.

It should always be remembered that the Bible as a treatise, concerns God and men, not God and angels; therefore, we are told all we need to know about the nature of men, but nothing about the nature of angels. By appearing as men it is possible for these heavenly couriers to come very close to men and to perform their mission more efficiently than if they appeared in some less commonplace form. An extraordinary form would center attention upon them. **The commonplace form centered attention upon their message.** The two who appeared at the ascension were to all appearances "men;" nevertheless, they stand before -the apostles in greatness, power and glory. They are God's spokesmen to confirm the finality of the ascension, and to connect it with the future return of the Lord.

The message of these two witnesses is filled with emphatic words. We read "**this same Jesus. . . shall so come in like manner.**" A cloud received Him out of their sight. He is coming with clouds (Rev. 1:7). **He departed visibly. He will return visibly. He went away bodily. He will return bodily. He went into heaven. He will descend from heaven. He ascended from the Mount of Olives. He will return to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:3-4).**

**1:12.14. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas. Bartholomew, and Matthew. James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued in one accord in prayer and supplication. with the women. and Mary the mother of Jesus. and with His brethren.**

After the ascension of the Lord Jesus the apostles returned to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet which is spoken of as a sabbath day's journey; that is, a little less than a mile. Upon arrival in Jerusalem they went into an upper room where the eleven were abiding. They are mentioned here by name. This was their residence while in Jerusalem, the permanent quarters, which they had established there. In his gospel Luke says they returned with great joy. The eleven names recorded is the roll of those who witnessed the ascension. We will know who to approach in the eons to come if we desire an eyewitness account of this event. These eleven men with oneness of heart and mind continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication. This does not mean that they had a continuous ten-day prayer meeting with audible praying going on constantly. The verses that follow show that Luke has no such idea in mind. Neither should we think of them as praying in the upper room, the place of their residence. Their place of prayer was the temple. Luke 24:52-53 forces upon us the truth that the temple was the gathering place of these believers. See also Acts 2:46 and 3:1-4. Certain women joined with them in prayer. Among these was the mother of the Lord Jesus. This is the last mention of Mary we find in the New Testament. Definite proof is seen here that she was not as prominent in the Acts period as she has been made in some circles today. It is interesting that in this last mention of her we find her at prayer.

What were they praying for? The Holy Spirit? No, this had been given to them in the upper room before the ascension. See John 20:22. It would have been a complete lapse of faith for them to ask for it as if it had not been given. For the baptism of the Holy Spirit? *No*, for this had been promised as coming to them "not many days hence." This had removed this blessing out of the realm of prayer, and made it a matter of believing God and waiting for Him to perform His word. To pray for it would have shown unbelief, doubt and impatience. We are not told what they supplicated for, but we can eliminate both the Spirit and baptism in the Spirit as proper objects of prayer among these men. It is probable that they wanted to keep in very close touch with God and used the means he ordained for doing this very thing, prayer and supplication.

**1:15. And in those *days* Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty).**

"Those days" are the days between the Ascension and the day of Pentecost. Luke gives the number of assembled disciples here as being "about an hundred and twenty." A gathering of this size could hardly have been held in the upper room where the eleven resided. We are not told where this meeting was held. The idea that all events recorded between Acts 1:12 and 2:13 happened in the upper room where the eleven made their residence is a gratuitous assumption. We are left without information as to where Matthias was selected or where the Holy Spirit descended. This is in harmony with the purpose of God to make little of places. The flesh attaches much importance to sacred places, but God ignores the locality and emphasizes the act of His that took place.

**1:16-17. Men and brethren. this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the *Holy Ghost* by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.**

The fact of the betrayal of Christ by Judas was an exceedingly bitter truth for the disciples. Peter does not seek to bring any false comfort by denying or altering the fact. He faces it honestly and openly and declares it was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit had spoken in advance through David's mouth concerning Judas. In this statement Peter reveals his understanding of inspiration. It was David's mouth, but the words were the words of the Holy Spirit. Peter believed in verbal inspiration.

The prophecy fulfilled by the act of Judas is found in **Psalm 41:9:**

**Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread. hath lifted up his heel against me.**

When this prophecy is examined it will be seen that it was not necessary for Judas to betray Christ in order to fulfill it. In fact, Psalm 41:9 could have been fulfilled in Peter's denial, since he was one who ate bread with the Lord, and he also lifted up his heel (turned his back) against Him when he denied Him three times. God did not decree that Judas should betray Christ. He foretold the betrayal in a general way. We know from the words of Peter that Judas' act specifically fulfilled that prophecy.

We must never ignore or discount in the least the truth that Judas had been numbered with the twelve. Judas was an apostle. In John 6:70 the Lord said: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Judas had received from Christ the high privilege, which was available to only twelve men in all Israel. As one of the twelve he had the expectation of sitting on one of the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Judas was present when the words recorded in Matthew 19:28-29 were spoken. But Judas never forsook any land. He was buying more land with money stolen from the common fund of the twelve apostles.

**1:18.19. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of Iniquity: and falling headlong, he burst as under In the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.**

A good rule of interpretation to follow in considering this passage is "things that differ are not the same." This purchase of a field is usually confused with the act of the chief priests in purchasing a potter's field in Matthew 27:6-8. Men arbitrarily assume that these accounts deal with the same transaction, and then because the accounts vary, they charge the Word of God with contradictions and discrepancies. Others attempt to reconcile the two accounts by saying that Judas purchased the field even though the high priests performed the act. This, to me, gets into the realm of doubtful morals. It can never be just to charge a man with doing something when he had nothing to do with it whatsoever. Furthermore, their further attempts to reconcile the two accounts of Judas' death leads them into fantastic ideas, such as that he hanged himself, but the rope broke causing him to fall and burst asunder. Some even go so far as to have him hang himself over the edge of a cliff.

The account in Matthew and the account in Acts differ in so many points that the only logical conclusion is that they are not the same. In Acts we read that "this man," that is Judas, purchased a field; in Matthew the chief priests are the purchasers. In Acts the property purchased is spoken of as a *chorion* meaning a place, estate or property, with improvements implied; while in Matthew the property purchased is called an *agros*. Acts speaks of a small place, while Matthew speaks of a large, open field. In Acts the word for purchase is *ptaomai*; while in Matthew the word is *agorazo*.

In spite of the arguments based upon similarities in the two incidents, the only logical conclusion is that the two fields are not the same. The field purchased by the priests with the money Judas returned to them, which had originally been paid to him for betraying Christ, cannot be the one Judas himself purchased. Upon what ethical principle can men be operating when they teach that Judas was responsible for whatever was done with the money after he returned it to the original owners?

The entire problem arises from making the "reward of iniquity" in Acts 1:18 to be the thirty pieces of silver Judas received for the betrayal. This is nothing more than jumping at a conclusion. If there were only one sum of money in the life of Judas that could be called the wages of iniquity, then the conclusion would be justified. But since there were two sums of money in the life of Judas that were "the reward of iniquity" we must carefully consider which sum is in view here. The first sum of money that can be called the wages of iniquity is that which he embezzled while serving as treasurer of the twelve disciples. See John 12:6. The second is the thirty pieces of silver he received for the betrayal. Since we know exactly what he did with the betrayal money, and since we know that he did not buy a field with it, we know that the betrayal money is not the reward of iniquity spoken of here. The story can be easily reconstructed from Biblical facts.

Judas, one of the twelve, acted as treasurer of the funds that were the common property of the Lord and his disciples. He was in the habit of embezzling from this fund. See John 12:6. With this stolen money he bought, secretly, a small property, or as we would say, a small country place. Once he had title to this place, he was no longer interested in serving the Lord, and he betrayed Him in the hope that the twelve would break up, be scattered and he could go and live on his little farm. Acts 1 :25. He apparently did not wish to do more than break up the association, but matters took a different course than he expected or desired. When he saw that the Lord Jesus was condemned to death, he hastened to the chief priests and elders and sought to return the money he had been paid for the betrayal. They refused to take the money, so Judas cast it over the wall into the priest's court where only they could go. This put the disposal of it up to them, so they purchased a field with it to bury strangers in. This field was afterward called "the field of blood" because it had been purchased with the price of blood. See Matt. 27:3-8. Judas then went to the place he had bought and there hanged

himself. Having bought the place secretly, nobody would ever think of looking for him there. By the time the suicide was discovered, the processes of decay had caused his body to swell and burst open. This tragic scene so impressed the dwellers in Jerusalem that they called the property after that, Aeldama, meaning place of blood.

**1:20. For it is written in the book of Psalms. Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.**

The domicile of Judas was to be desolate. This is the place he had acquired with the money he had embezzled from the disciples' treasury. It was to become desolate. No man was to dwell in it. When we realize the deep feeling of aversion the Hebrew had concerning anything defiled by blood, we can readily understand how quickly this place would become deserted. His place in the apostolic ministry was to be taken by another. The office was to continue, and the Lord would provide a worthy successor.

**1:21-22. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection.**

Peter names the qualifications, which the man who is to replace Judas must have. He must be a man that had companied the apostles from the baptism of John until the day of the Lord's ascension. The one chosen should be a personal witness who can speak from his own experience of the ministry, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. In harmony with these qualifications, only two out of the hundred and twenty can be found.

**1:23. And they appointed two. Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.**

"Appointed" means made to stand or stood up. The eleven did this, these two being the only ones who had the required qualifications.

**1:24-25. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.**

Inasmuch as the Lord had told these men that if two of them agreed on earth as touching anything they asked it would be done for them, we can believe nothing else but that this prayer was answered. See Matt. 18:19. Again he said to them that if they asked anything in His name He would do it. John 14:14. These men have no selfish motive. All they wish is to know the will of the Lord. If He did not grant their request, He broke His promise to them. Their request is specific. They want to know which one He has chosen.

**1:26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.**

The Greek word translated "lot" appears four times in this chapter. It is translated *part* in verse 17 and 25 and *lot* twice in this verse. Each disciple gave his part and when the parts were counted eleven men declared that they believed the Lord had chosen Matthias. In this matter there could be no dissenting voice. Therefore, Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles.

**(To Be Continued, Vol. XI, No. 2)**

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## ***WHAT DOES DIOKO MEAN?***

In a recent issue of *The Berean Expositor* (Vol. 34 - No.9) Mr. C. H. Welch, the able Editor of that publication, uses a very pertinent illustration in connection with an article on Ephesians 2:12. He says:

“The reader may have seen in his newspaper some sort of "Quiz" in which general knowledge and intelligence tests are a feature. One such test is that which is known as "Spot the intruder" or some such name, and is generally a collection of words containing one that is outside of the category. For example, in such a list of names as Shakespeare, Tennyson, Beethoven, and Browning, it is obvious that "Beethoven" is the intruder, a Musician among Poets.”

As stated before, Mr. Welch uses this excellent illustration in connection with his exposition of Ephesians 2:12, but I wish to use it in connection with another passage. In Philippians 3:4-6 Paul gives a list of things in which he could have confidence, things of the flesh in which he could trust, the things that he declared were gain to him. The list is as follows:

1. Circumcised the eighth day.
2. Of the stock of Israel.
3. Of the tribe of Benjamin.
4. An Hebrew of the Hebrews.
5. As touching the law, a Pharisee.
6. Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.
7. Touching the righteousness of the law, blameless.

It is not quite as simple here to "spot the intruder" as it is to spot a well-known musician's name among familiar poets; nevertheless, when these seven things are carefully considered in the light of the truth that they are most certainly a list of things that were at one time gain to Paul and which he later counted as loss and refuse, then the intruder is easily identified. The sixth item, "persecuting the church" is an intruder if we make it to mean the havoc Paul wrought among the believers in Christ. This was Paul's greatest mistake; it was his greatest sin; and it should not appear in any list of things that were gain to him.

There are times when a businessman, seeking to establish credit, finds it necessary to submit a list of his assets along with a list of his obligations. The list of assets is those material things in which he can have confidence, things in which he can trust, things, which he has gained, and are, therefore, gain to him. In the list of Paul, everyone of the items were of real value to the Israelite, except the sixth item, if we make it to mean the damage Paul wrought to the ecclesia.

Paul's statement about "persecuting the church" ceases to be an intruder, it ceases to be an obligation mistakenly listed among the assets when we see that men have read the wrong meaning into his words. In English, the word *persecute* has a twofold meaning. I learned this while very young and it is unreasonable that I should fail to consider this fact in interpreting this verse. The word *persecute* was one that my father used, more often in a good sense than in a bad sense. I have certain recollections about bringing from school report cards with grades that were not too good. He would study my card, then say to me: "Son, I feel you have failed to persecute your studies during the past month." He would then admonish me to be more diligent, inferring that more drastic action on his part might be the result if I failed to persecute my studies in the coming month. So, my spirit being willing, I would resolve to persecute pleasure less and to persecute my studies more. Then as I

would read in *Fox's Book of Martyrs* about the terrible persecution of the early Christians, it would be indelibly impressed upon my mind that *persecute* had two different meanings. .

It is unthinkable that I should forget or abandon this bit of knowledge in considering Philippians 3:6. This is a thing done too often by those who read the Bible. They ignore or forget every law of interpretation; they ignore the plain meaning of plain words; then gratuitously assume that a passage says a certain thing when it may be something quite different. I insist that it is not accurate Bible study for anyone to interpret Philippians 3:6 without fully considering whether the word *persecute* means to do good or to do evil.

However, we are not primarily interested in what the English word *persecute* means. Our interest is in the word *dioko*, the word translated "persecute" in Philippians 3:6. Does it also have a twofold meaning, one good and one bad? Does its meaning need to be established by the context each time it appears? My studies have convinced me that it does have a twofold meaning, and in view of this we need to establish its exact meaning from the setting in which the Spirit of God has placed it. This word appears in the epistles of Paul twenty-two times. Eleven times it is used in a good sense, and ten times in an evil sense, as is plainly indicated by the context. The only occurrence concerning which any question can be raised is Philippians 3:6. Whether it is used in a good or evil sense here must be decided by the immediate context. Since it is evident that Paul uses it in a bad sense ten times, it is childish to point to one of these occurrences as proof that it means this in Philippians 3:6. In order that the student may intelligently follow the study, a concordance to all occurrences of *dioko* in Paul's epistles is given. In each passage the word (or words) in italics is the word *dioko* in the original.

### Concordance to *Dioko* in Paul's Epistles

Rom. 9:31 -Israel, which followed after the law

Rom. 12:13 -necessity of saints; *given* to hospitality

Rom.12:14 -Bless them *which persecute* you

Rom. 14:19 -therefore *follow after* the things

I Cor. 4:12 -*being persecuted*, we suffer it

I Cor. 14:1 -*Follow after* charity, and desire spiritual

I Cor. 15:9 -because I *persecuted* the Church of God

II Cor. 4:9 -*Persecuted*, but not forsaken; cast down

Gal. 1:13 -beyond measure *I persecuted* the church

Gal. 1:23 -he *which persecuted* us in times past

Gal. 4:29 -*persecuted* him that was born after

Gal. 5:11 -why do I yet *suffer* persecution

Gal. 6:12 -*should suffer persecution* for the cross

Phil. 3:6 -Concerning zeal, *persecuting* the church

Phil. 3:12 -*I follow after*, if that I may

Phil. 3:14 -*I press* toward the mark for

I Thess. 5:15 -ever *follow* that which is good

- I Tim. 6:11 *-follow after* righteousness, godliness
- II Tim. 2:22 *-follow* righteousness, faith charity
- II Tim. 3:12 *-in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*
- Heb.12:14 *-Follow* peace with all men, and holiness

In I Corinthians 15:9 Paul confessed that he was not fit to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God. In Galatians 1:13 in order to contrast his past attitude toward the church of God with his attitude at that time he declares that beyond measure he persecuted the church of God and wasted it. Here *persecute* clearly speaks of the evil he did to the church. But he does not glory in it or count it as any gain. He recounts these things sorrowfully. But he does not do this in Philippians. There he sets forth the things that were gain to him, valuable things that must be given up in order for him to attain to "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." One of these is the reward that was his because of his great zeal in *persecuting* the church. This can have no reference to the evil that he did to the church before His conversion. It can only refer to the good he did for it after the Lord appeared to him on the Damascus road. This service had brought him great reward, but he counted this as refuse when placed alongside a position in the church, which is His body.

A fact usually ignored by those considering this matter is that the word *dioko* appears three times in this portion. It is translated persecute, follow, and press. From this fact we can confidently say that what Paul told the Romans to do concerning hospitality (Romans 12:13), what he told the Corinthians to do concerning love (I Cor. 14:1), what he told the Thessalonians to do concerning good (I Thess. 5:15), the things he did himself concerning the high calling (Phil. 3:14), is the very thing that Paul did in behalf of the church of God after his conversion. It is this service that he sets forth in proof of his zeal. Whatever *dioko* means in Philippians 3:12 and 14, it means in Philippians 3:6. I heartily agree with the statement: "No interpretation of Scripture can be accepted if it does not stand the test of being examined in the light of both the near and remote contexts."

**The End**

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***THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS***

\*\*\*\*I plan, the Lord willing, to be in the Middle-west and East from April 20to May 10. Groups desiring my ministry should correspond at once as all plans should be complete and itinerary decided upon before March 15. The three weeks I will be there makes it impossible for me to be in any one place more than a few days, and in some places will have to limit it to one message only. No place or group is too small for me to visit, and no financial obligation whatsoever is laid upon any group that desires my services.

\*\*\*\*Many thanks to every friend of this witness who responded to the appeal for help with the printed page ministry. We are now moving ahead with plans that will result in the widest and largest publishing ministry we have ever attempted. Much literature on many subjects is urgently needed. I seldom give a study in public but what someone does not come to me and say, "Will you be putting that into print?" In the coming year we expect to print a number of four-page leaflets dealing with pertinent subjects. The first of these on "Examine Yourself, You Could Be Wrong" has already been printed. The second and third leaflets are now ready for the typesetters. Our readers will receive copies of these in a few weeks. As far as possible, these leaflets will be supplied free to those who wish to read or to distribute them. Your gifts have made this possible.

\*\*\*\*Every issue I am faced with the problem of deciding what must be left out in order to make the copy fit the paper. All printers talk about a "typesqueezer" but I think this is one of those tools somewhat like the left-handed monkey wrench. As a rule my honorary agents in England and New Zealand are the victims of this squeeze. This explains why their names are often omitted. Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Gibbs are still my devoted helpers. When their names do not appear it is because they got too near the end of the last page and were shoved off.

\*\*\*\*Our radio ministry in Grand Rapids, Michigan, can be heard every Sunday afternoon over WFUR, 1570 Kc. from 2:30 to 3:00 P.M. We have received correspondence from Kalamazoo, Lansing, and Milwaukee from those who have heard this broadcast. Many radios cannot receive stations that are above the 1500 Kc. wave length. As a rule *this* is a matter of adjustment. The engineers tell me that this is a simple operation, requiring that only one screw be tightened.

\*\*\*\*My associate in THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY, Mr. Herbert Baudistel, is spending the month of February with his parents in New Jersey. Enroute he visited the Fellowships in Chicago and Rockford, Illinois, and while there will minister to the Fellowship in Philadelphia.

\*\*\*\*I believe the friends of this witness will be interested in our latest effort in the task of spreading the truth. We call this our "Letter Ministry." It consists of a form letter, which is mailed every two weeks. The messages in these letters are quite simple and are intended to stir professing Christians in regard to their duties toward the Christ of God and the Truth of God. We are beginning with a list of 2000 names, all of them in Southern California, and these will receive twenty-six letters from us in the coming year.

Throughout the years, the teaching in our magazine has advanced to the place that it is no longer suited for general distribution to those who are not yet exercised about the Truth. This new ministry is an attempt to overcome this. It will supply the milk of the Word in small regular portions. We believe that the regular arrival of these letters every two weeks will be a forceful witness. This witness will in time be extended to other cities, and when it is we will be calling upon you for names that may be upon your heart. These letters will not be sent to the readers of this magazine, but if any should desire to see samples we will be glad to send several issues. Pray for this ministry. We trust it will be used of God to bring many to a deeper appreciation of Jesus Christ and the Truth of God's Word.

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