

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

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## *PROGRESSIVE BIBLE STUDY*

It is my earnest desire that all who come into contact with my spoken or written ministry shall understand the nature of the work, which I do as unto the Lord. My labors as a minister of Jesus Christ do not follow the usual patterns of service in which men engage who seek to serve God. My work is peculiar. However, I cannot help but believe that divinely arranged circumstances have so shaped my life and ministry that now I am doing the work that the Lord would have me do. I stand only before the Lord in regard to this, and welcome no suggestions from anyone that some other form of labor would be more acceptable in God's sight.

My service to the Lord is perpetual and progressive Bible study, and the setting forth by every means available that which I find as a result of these efforts. By "perpetual study" I mean that my investigations can never come to an end in regard to any subject dealt with in the Word of God. My study of a subject may come to a temporary halt while results are appraised and assimilated. At such times I may set forth in writing my findings to date. But I accept as a Biblical fact the declaration that even when I think I know a thing, I still know nothing as I ought to know it (1 Cor. 8:2); therefore, the study must be resumed.

By "progressive study" I mean that I must advance, change, correct, or clarify my position concerning any subject to bring my thoughts into harmony with every new fact, which I discover in the Word of God. And since Truth is a unit, readjustment at one point will call for some re-adjustment at a hundred other points. It is this fact that keeps many men from receiving even one new ray of light. They become frightened when they see how many other changes must also be made, and that each of these changes may call for other adjustments.

If a student advances, changes, corrects, or clarifies his position as the result of the truth he finds, it will leave a trail of discarded ideas and abandoned positions. But this is a price that must be paid if we would "buy the truth" (Proverbs 23:23); a price that is all the more difficult to pay when one has thousands of books or pamphlets in print; a price that cannot be paid by anyone who has pledged eternal fidelity to a static system of theology.

My own trail of discarded ideas and abandoned positions may lay me open to a charge of instability, and it may embarrass those followers who have accepted me as a final authority, but this cannot be otherwise if I do the work the Lord has called me to do. I will make no attempt to dodge the consequences that come from following a true course. If in making any change I should lose "my following," I will still have God's leading. And since I am more interested in "His leading" than I am in "my following," all changes that are forced upon me by increasing light from the Word of God will readily be made.

This does not mean that I will quickly throw overboard without due exercise of heart and mind anything that I have believed and held to be true. Neither does it mean that all that I believe and teach is still open to question. I am not among those who are ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. But since I am learning as well as teaching, I can never pose as having nothing more to learn. In fact, my work of teaching is one process by which I learn. All my hearers and readers know this. Those who are looking for authoritarian dogma will not find it in my ministry.

My service unto the Lord is in relationship to the truth, which He has placed within the book we call the Bible. If, as some claim, there is truth in the stars, I leave it to them to bring it out. If, as others claim, it is to be found in the pyramids, they will have to crawl through its dusty passages without my fellowship. If, as many believe, the truth is hidden in great libraries, someone else will have to do the research to bring it forth. My ministry unto the Lord is related only to the truth that God has placed within His book. And inasmuch as I believe that every precious truth of the Scriptures has been overwhelmed by and buried under the ecclesiastical rubbish and human tradition that has been heaped upon it, it is my conviction that my work lies in the realm of uncovering and recovering the truth that God declares by means of His Word. This puts me in direct conflict with those who would not only preserve the rubbish, but who would pile it still higher. I do not like this conflict, and do not seek to intensify it, but must accept it as part of my work for the Lord.

I believe that in serving the Lord in relationship to His truth that I also serve those men in whose hearts God has awakened a desire for the truth. In the providence of God, lest the love of the truth should utterly perish from the hearts of men, He is constantly kindling in them a desire to know what He has said in His Word. It is evident that many snuff out this flame the moment it begins to burn, but a limited number fan the spark. I seek to serve these men who honestly desire to know, but since their number is limited, it makes a limited ministry, especially so since no great number of them can be found in anyone place. The most difficult fact which the man of God must accept is the limitation, which the truth places upon the service he performs. Some have abandoned the truth in order to have what they call a "wider ministry."

If the service I perform in behalf of the truth is ever in any way hampered by the service I seek to perform for men, then my service in behalf of the truth must remain preeminent. Well meaning friends regularly point out the greater service that can be performed if I will leave out or go easy on that which hurts in the truth. I reprove anyone who makes such a suggestion, for truth is of greater importance to me than any service I can perform. A wider ministry would be most welcome, but more truth is even more desirable. I will give up nothing, which I believe to be the truth in order to serve men. In view of this I trust my readers will understand when I say frankly that the ministry I perform is not in relationship to men, it does not have the welfare of men as its goal, it is not inspired by the love I have for my fellow-man. I serve Jesus Christ; my service is related to His Truth; it has God's glory for its goal, and it is inspired by my love for the personal and written Word of God, that is, Jesus Christ and the Bible. If this should seem blunt, then it needs to be understood that I feel such statements are necessary in a time when most service has men in view, when the goal of all service is to reach men, when love for men has replaced love for God, when devotion to service has

replaced devotion to the truth.

### An Example of Progress

What I have said above is a rather lengthy introduction of a pertinent example of progressive Bible study from my own personal experience. It might better be called an example of how the truth unfolds. There are many who believe that if a man sits down at his desk with his Bible open and his other books before him, that he can get the truth on any passage in a few hours' time, more or less. This is not true. I would be the last to depreciate such study, since this must be done if any passage or problem concerning it is to be understood, but there is no guarantee that understanding of the truth can be gained by a few hours of research.

In this issue the reader will find what, to him, will probably be a new interpretation and a new position which I set forth in regard to Matthew 16:28. Since this represents a somewhat radical change of viewpoint, he may well wonder about the processes by which I arrived at my present position. The passage reads:

**Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His Kingdom. Matt. 16:28.**

My studies in the Word of God began when I was eighteen years of age. My first efforts were mostly reading, as my sole purpose at that time was to gain familiarity. In view of this the major difficulty, which was apparent in this passage did not bother me too much. But others bothered me about it or with it so I desired a solution. This desire was intensified when a minister who held the post-millennial view on prophecy argued with me that the second coming of Christ had to be something which took place while some of the twelve disciples were still alive. This verse was presented by him as the basis of his argument.

The first interpretation or explanation of this passage which I accepted and taught was that in the transfiguration which took place six days later, three of His disciples saw a type or picture of the second coming. Thus not one of them had died, and three of them saw a pattern of the kingdom.

I believe that I first came upon this explanation in the writings of Arno C. Gaebelein. It was also taught to me by a teacher in the Bible institute I attended, and since it was concurred in by the notes in the *Scofield Reference Bible*, I accepted it as being a satisfactory interpretation of the meaning of our Lord's words. I passed this on to others as being my understanding of the passage. Nevertheless, the interpretation was wrong.

At this point it seems well to state that the acceptance of this wrong interpretation did me no harm, it did no harm to anyone to whom I taught it, neither did it do any damage to the unbreakable Word of God. It even served as a temporary resting place in my search for the truth. Real harm might have come from it if I had not been a student, or if I had been determined to hold this view in order to be consistent. A false position leaves no room for the truth, but it was impossible for me to have the truth on this passage until certain other erroneous ideas, which were the original source of the difficulty were banished from my mind. This was to be a long process.

As time went by, my familiarity with the Gospel of Matthew greatly increased, and this resulted in a feeling that my interpretation of this passage left much to be desired. It jarred against the context. It made my Lord look ridiculous to interpret His words so as to make Him say that some out of twelve men would live for at least six days; which is just what we make Him to say if we explain His words as meaning an experience that was to be the lot of three of them in six days. I could no longer teach this interpretation, for I no longer believed it. This left me without an honest explanation of the difficulties in this passage. I was back where I began. This condition continued for several years. The desire for a satisfactory explanation, which would leave no difficulties was always with me.

My next explanation and position came after careful consideration. It was suggested by *The Companion Bible*. In this passage (also in Matt. 10:23 and 24:34) there is an untranslated particle, *an*, which denotes a contingency or dependency, and when used in the subjunctive mood makes a statement to be hypothetical rather than a direct assertion. This particle is untranslatable into English, but it would make this passage read, "Till they may see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." This explanation will be found in writing in Volume VIII, Number 5, of *The Word of Truth*. I was very well satisfied with this interpretation. I received it myself and taught it to others. And, while I do not say that it is wrong, it is not a satisfactory explanation of this passage.

About a year after I wrote the article mentioned above, I was examining the Greek text of another passage, in no way related to this subject. In it I came upon the particle *an*, and it dawned upon me at once that while it denoted a contingency, it in no manner made the statement to be hypothetical. I determined to check at once every passage in which this particle occurred, and when I did the whole idea based upon the occurrence of this word in Matthew 16:28 was in ruins at my feet. I had reasoned upon a few facts, without taking into consideration all the facts. I was back where I was at the start, with the same seemingly insoluble problems, which I had in the beginning.

However, just at that time certain other studies were driving from my mind certain deep-seated errors, and it was these errors that had caused the difficulties in the first place.

The first of these was the idea that in all passages such as this where the word *coming* is used that it refers to the personal, literal second coming of Christ.

The second was an erroneous understanding of the word *kingdom*. I made this to be the concrete instead of abstract, and thought that it included such elements as a territory, a city, a people, a law, and a king. This may be true of the English word *kingdom*, but it is not true of the **Greek word *basileia* or the Hebrew word *malkulh***.

The third error was that "the kingdom of heaven" is the millennium of Revelation 20:1-6 and the final error that grew out of this was that the kingdom was postponed; that it never started.

It was these four errors, picked up the first year in which I knew the Lord, that created the difficulties in Matthew 16:28 in the first place. These errors led me to think that Christ said some of these men standing with Him should not experience death until they had seen the Son of man coming the second time and establishing His millennial reign.

My studies in the Word of God long ago convinced me that there are quite a few passages in which the coming of Christ is mentioned that have no reference to His personal, visible second coming. For example, in John 14:18 He said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Only one true position is possible concerning this. He did not leave them comfortless; He came to them; therefore, this is not His second coming. This conviction led me to reconsider every passage, which has been arbitrarily assigned to the second coming.

Careful consideration of every occurrence of the Greek word translated *kingdom* showed the error of requiring that this word encompass a land, a city, a law, and a king. See Matthew 12:28, Luke 12:20, 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and Colossians 1:13, where the word *kingdom* appears and these things are not in view. The conviction came that the Greek word for *kingdom* really means government.

Then I came to realize that the kingdom of the heavens is not the millennium of Revelation 20:1-6, but that it precedes the millennium, and that the heavens actually began their government to a certain extent the moment that Christ arose from the dead.

With these errors in my thinking straightened out, the next time I looked at Matthew 16:28 there was no difficulty there. Eleven of the men to whom these words were spoken remained alive and saw "the Son of man coming in His kingdom." Judas died by his own hand before the first great

manifestation of heavens' government was seen. The reader is asked to see the article on *The Kingdom of the Heavens*, in this issue for a fuller exposition of this truth.

I have set forth these experiences which cover a period of almost thirty years to show the process by which I have been led into my present position on this one passage. And yet I find people who are frankly disappointed and ready to cast it aside just because they cannot understand the whole Bible "in one easy lesson."

Those who do not understand the nature of my service unto the Lord will be inclined to ask how I can know or feel that I am right in my present understanding, in view of the fact that I have abandoned two previous positions. Some may even declare that a man who makes such changes is not a safe teacher.

I would answer these by saying that if I desired to cause men to believe that I speak with absolute authority, if I desired them to look upon me as infallible, if I aspired to deify myself so that people would regard me as God's spokesman upon the earth, I would meticulously avoid making any such changes. Such confessions of error serve effectively to destroy any illusion that I am an authority, it keeps men from looking to me for truth instead of to God, and it reveals that I am nothing more than a student of the Word of God.

Tracing one's position or belief back to its source will help greatly in determining whether it originated with man or with God. I can do this in regard to my present position on Matthew 16:28, and feel assured that my present understanding is correct. However, study will not cease, and if I should be wrong, even this will come to light. This is the glory of perpetual study. What one believes must be again and again exposed to the light. That position which has come from constant study, and which is the result of thoughts often revised and corrected, is more likely to be the truth than that which has come from arbitrary decisions that a certain interpretation is the true one.

The demand for certainty seems to be one, which is natural to man, so men look for an authority who will settle things for them. Because of this a cocksure prophet is assured of a larger and more devoted following than one who makes no claim beyond being an honest student of the Word. To endure uncertainty even for a short time is difficult to all, and impossible for some. They will believe anything just to get a matter settled. They have not trained themselves to withhold judgment until all the evidence can be secured and considered. To be able to endure uncertainty is a virtue, which must be cultivated.

If the reader of these lines is seeking an authority who speaks infallibly and never needs to change, I am not that man. If he desires fellowship with a student whose life is devoted to perpetual and progressive Bible study, then come along with me. I may probably be of some help to you. You probably can be of some help to me.

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## ***THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS***

**(Continued from Vol. XII, No. 4)**

In our previous study we considered the four great parables related to the kingdom of the heavens which were spoken in public. We now come to those which were spoken to the disciples inside the house after the Lord Jesus had sent the multitude away. These are all introduced by the familiar

words "the kingdom of the heavens is like." As these parables spoken in the house have, in my judgment, a higher spiritual content than those spoken to the public, there are certain truths related to the kingdom of the heavens which we will need to know and consider before we can fully appreciate these parables.

I have already shown in previous studies that the Greek word translated "**kingdom**" is properly abstract and that it **means government**. The word *heavens* stands here for that place and the beings who occupy that place (the angels or hosts of heaven). Both of these were created "in the beginning" and are set in God's order for rule or government. "That the heavens do rule" was a truth that Nebuchadnezzar had to learn, and it is a truth that many more need to learn today. See Daniel 4:26.

Therefore the kingdom of the heavens is in reality heavens' government. A small measure of heavens' government has been seen in times past in connection with certain things, and more of it was seen in the thirty-three years of the Acts period than at any other time since sin entered the world. At present heavens' government is suspended in its entirety. It is not seen in any detail of human experience. The earth does not now enjoy the benefits of heavens' glorious rule.

The Old Testament predicted that someday heavens' government would be imposed upon the earth, beginning first with the seed of Abraham. John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus both announced that heavens' government was at hand, meaning by this announcement that God was about to impose His government upon the earth. For it must be carefully noted that when this government is called "heavens' government," it is not that in an absolute sense. For if we should ask the heavens concerning their right to govern, or if we should ask concerning the source of their principles or laws, they would point us to the one who is the God of the heavens and who is also among the heavens.

The answer to every ill that afflicts mankind is government by the heavens, of the heavens, for the benefit of the human race. It is only under heavens' government that the world can ever realize and experience the glorious benefits that were purchased by the first coming of Jesus Christ. There is no moral, spiritual, social, economic, national, international or governmental ill that afflicts the world today which heavens' government will not alleviate.

With these facts before us, let us consider the likenesses of heavens' government, which our Lord gave to His disciples inside the house.

### **The Treasure Hid in a Field**

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Matthew 13:44.**

At this point it will be well to recognize that since many likenesses of the kingdom of the heavens are given, each parable deals with a different aspect of heavens' government. A parable may be presented as a likeness of heavens' government, yet when examined may deal with those who are governed, that is, the subjects of the kingdom. See Matthew 25:1 for a clear example of this. Since in one place it is said to be like leaven, something very cheap, then again like a pearl of great price, something very valuable, the only way we can understand these diverse parables is to recognize that they set forth different aspects of heaven's government.

In the parable of the treasure hid in the field, our Lord gives us one more likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. Now it is useless and fruitless to interpret this as a likeness of Israel, for

Israel was not the kingdom of the heavens. Neither is it of any value to interpret this as a likeness of Christ, making Him to be the treasure, as many do. The Lord gave this as a likeness of heavens' government, and faithful men will believe this without reservation and interpret it accordingly. This parable tells us of the value of heavens' government.

In spite of all the rich blessings that the rule of the heavens will bring, there are many features about it, which make it unacceptable to the average man. He simply cannot see government by the heavens. Men speak today in glowing terms of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And, as stated in the majestic words of Lincoln, men will go to any length to see that such government "shall not perish from the earth." Even though it has long been demonstrated that men cannot and will not govern themselves, men are loathe to give up this idea. Therefore, they cannot be expected to look favorably upon a government, which is of the heavens, and by the heavens. In fact, under the kingdom of the heavens, government of the people and by the people will actually perish from the earth.

Man likes a government which he can resist, and which he can change when his whim or need so dictates. He likes laws, which he individually can evade, or laws that can be nullified or repealed as the occasion demands. But heavens' government permits no resistance; its laws cannot be evaded or ignored. Not one precept laid down can ever be nullified or repealed. Under it there is no freedom of speech, for men will have to give an account of every idle word. No man will be free to hate his brother. There is to be no freedom of worship or of service. He must worship the Lord God and serve Him alone, and all worship and service must be in harmony with the divine order that will be made known to men in that day. Features such as these will make heavens' government repugnant to many. In fact, apart from a divine work, described by the Lord as being "born from above," no man could ever see the government of God. The Pharisees could not see it, for they had nothing that would give them a place in it. The rulers could not see it for they did not want to abandon their rule for the rule of the heavens.

In view of these facts, when I hear some men pray, "Thy kingdom come," I would like to answer, "It's coming, but I don't think you're going to like it."

These truths shed light on the parable we are considering. When men discover the true nature of heavens' government, when they realize that those features which seem to be so severe are for man's highest good and God's glory, then nothing can hold them back from becoming willing subjects under this government. They will gladly surrender every right, privilege, and liberty in order to come under this government. Heavens' government to them will be like a treasure hid in a field. Once they have found it, they will give up all to possess it.

When God again places His government in the earth, men will need to discover it is there and then they will need to recognize its value. They can discover it is there through the open work that God will do. They can know its value through the divine light that God will give them concerning it. From that time forth their attitude toward God's government will be a matter of life and death. If they seek to resist it, they will be purged. If they seek discipleship, they will become citizens of God's kingdom. This is not truth for today. It is not true in this dispensation of Grace. It will be true when God establishes the government of the heavens in the earth. This precedes the second coming of Christ. It is the fruit of the first coming.

In this connection it will be well to note that if any have ever wondered how the divine restoration of Israel to the Land will be accomplished, they have their answer here. Many have been puzzled as to what force would cause an Israelite, living in wealth and comfort in the United States, to pack up, turn his back upon it all, and return to the land of Palestine. He will do this without hesitation when he realizes the value of heavens' government, and that the only place he can come under this is in the land God gave to his fathers.

A word of warning needs to be sounded lest some seek to force meaning into every detail of this parable. They would make the field to be the world, then ask if one must buy the world in order to enter God's kingdom. This man bought the field because that was the only way he could get the treasure in it. When a man has seen God's government, he will do whatever he needs to do in order to secure it for his life.

### **The Pearl of Great Price**

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Matthew 13:45, 46.**

At the risk of being tedious, I must again say that this parable is not a likeness of Christ, of the church, of Israel, of the remnant in Israel, or of the gospel. It is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. Keep in mind that the central object in each likeness stands for heavens' government, and that the parable reveals a certain aspect. We have seen a man sowing good seed in his field, a grain of mustard seed, leaven, and a treasure hid in a field. Now the central object is a pearl of fabulous price, and next it will be a drag net cast into the sea. The pearl in the parable stands for heavens' government. If not, then the parable is no likeness of the kingdom of the heavens.

In understanding this it will help if we remember that good governments have always been the desire of good men. Bad men favor corrupt governments, since they can profit from such corruption, but good men have always sought for the best possible government, one that would assure and have as its end the virtue of its citizens, the welfare of its people, peace, prosperity, security, and the culture of its subjects. To this end men have long debated as to which is the ideally best form of government, and the world has had opportunity to observe many forms. There have been monarchies, autocracies, and democracies in endless variations. Some today contend for a capitalistic form, others for a socialistic, and still others for communistic. The most rabid exponents of these various forms of government declare that one or the other is that which will solve all of man's problems and deliver him from all his ills.

Honest men who make a study of government and who seek its best form are indeed like the merchant man, seeking goodly pearls. But they find none without flaw, none that has not been tried and discarded as imperfect. They cannot now find heavens' government for it is not available. Some day God is going to reveal it. And when He does, if these men are honest and unselfish in their search, even if one be the most rabid exponent of the communistic form of government, he will purge himself from every other idea and declare that he has found the one pearl of great price. This is what God did for Paul on the Damascus road. This is what God can do for every Israelite on earth. May God speed the day when heavens' government will again be a reality and men are brought to see its value and perfection. There is no hope in human government. There is hope in heavens' government.

### **The Drag Net**

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 13:47-50.**

We must avoid extremes in interpreting this parable. The central figure is a dragnet, and this is set forth as a representation of heavens' government. This has never yet been cast into the sea. Even though the Acts period was part of heavens' government, the work was not comparable to a net cast into the sea. It was to the Jew only from chapters 1 to 10 and to the Jew first from 10 to 28. But when heavens' government does move with power into the sea, it will gather in of every kind.

In the case cited in the parable, the net gathered in all kinds, some of which were good (edible) fish and some which were bad (inedible). When the eon of heavens' government comes to its conclusion, the angels will come forth and sever the wicked from the just. It must be kept in mind that this parable does not present a complete picture; it does not reveal all the truth, but only certain aspects.

When the heavens resume their government it will reach out to embrace all mankind. It will ask no permission, it will accept no repudiation. The fisherman does not ask the fish to come into the net, nor will men be invited to come under heavens' jurisdiction. Some men will be eliminated at once, even as a fisherman might destroy a shark caught in his net. This is revealed in such passages as Ezekiel 20:38 and Matthew 3:10. These are the openly rebellious. Nevertheless, many will come under heavens' government, pledge allegiance to it, but will never be assimilated into it. They yield only feigned obedience, and they *become* followers of Satan in the end. They are able to maintain their place in the kingdom, due to the restraining influences that will be present, but the moment these restraints are relaxed, they turn to Satan and *become* the sons of the wicked one, whom he establishes or plants among the sons of the kingdom. When the restraining influence is removed, they come out in open rebellion, but the rebellion will be short lived. The angels come forth and sever the wicked from the just. This severance is identical with that of Matthew 13:41.

This parable above all others proves that the kingdom of the heavens precedes the millennium.

### **The Kingdom Ecclesia**

As the ministry of the Lord Jesus neared its great climax, He announced the building or formation of an ecclesia which was to function in connection with God's government upon the earth. Thus the entire arrangement or system would be that God Absolute, expressed in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, would govern through those beings called "the heavens" and these would in turn act through a select group of human beings upon the earth, and out through these to those who are the subjects of the kingdom. This select company, a representative body, was the subject of our Lord's words in **Matthew 16:18, 19.**

**Upon this rock I will build my church (ecclesia); and the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound among the heavens and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed among the heavens. Free Translation.**

To this ecclesia was to be given the keys of the kingdom of the heavens. The key is the symbol of authority. To bind is to declare what shall be binding, and to loose is to declare what shall not be binding. This can be succinctly stated by the words *prohibit* and *permit*. Clear examples of this can be found in the Acts period, and these will be pointed out later.

From these words of our Lord we learn that there is to be an outcalled company upon the earth during the kingdom of the heavens and these will act in complete harmony with the heavens. Thus God in Christ will work through the heavens, and the heavens will work through a chosen company of men upon the earth. This is the company that was being formed, developed, trained, and tested throughout the Acts period. This kingdom ecclesia is a major truth in itself, and it can only be

touched upon in this present study. We will spare ourselves much confusion if we take God at His word and believe that the ecclesia of God of the Acts period was called "unto His kingdom and glory." 1 Thess. 2:12.

### **The Son Man Coming in His Kingdom**

No words could be plainer or more direct than the declaration of our Lord in **Matthew 16:28**. Speaking to His disciples He said:

**Verily I say unto you, 'There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His Kingdom.**

This verse has been dealt with in the article on *Progressive Bible Study*, which appears in this issue. In further consideration of this passage I would point out certain facts that need to be faced.

As noted before, these words were spoken to His disciples, which in this instance seems to have been limited to the twelve. He declares without qualification that some of them were not to experience death until after a certain event had taken place. This event is declared to be "the Son of man coming in His kingdom." Therefore, this event must be one, which took place while some of the apostles were still living.

The phrase "the Son of man coming in His kingdom," does not mean the personal second coming of Christ. We have made a mistake in taking it to mean this, for the words used here are such that it is plain that a personal coming is not meant. If the Lord had said, "till they see the Son of man coming," that would have meant a personal coming of the Son of man. The phrase "coming in His kingdom" tells the nature of the coming meant here. To come "in His kingdom" is positively not personal.

It hardly needs to be said that in Scripture a "coming" is not always personal. See Romans 9:9, Ephesians 2:17, John 14:18, John 17:13. We ourselves speak of "going to God in prayer," and the words "in prayer" explain how we go.

There can be no doubt as to what is meant here. The word *kingdom* means *government*, and the statement is that some standing there would not experience death till they saw the Son of man coming in His government. Since it had been made plain that this government would come in the same manner as seed emerges into grain, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:26-29), all that was needed to make good the Lord's words was for some of the twelve to live until they witnessed His government begin in a stage comparable to the blade in growing grain. His word was fulfilled to the letter, for eleven of these men lived to see the government of the Son of man begin in the earth. Furthermore, the event which announced its beginning was so manifest and of such magnitude that they actually saw the effects of the Son of man coming in His government.

When the Lord sent forth His disciples to proclaim that "the kingdom of the heavens is at hand," the most positive sign which revealed the benefits which men would receive under heaven's government was the resurrection of the dead. They were told to follow up their proclamation by raising the dead. See Matt. 10:8. This was not to prove the truth of their message, but to demonstrate the blessings for men that would come under heavens' government.

The record of the four Gospels tells us that when Jesus Christ was arrested and led away to be crucified the heavens in no way interfered. It was the hour of the powers of darkness. After His crucifixion He was laid in the tomb and was there for three days and three nights. The moment He

arose victorious over death the kingdom of the heavens began. In **Matthew 27:51-53** we are told that after His resurrection **'many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves, and went into Jerusalem and appeared to many.'** This amazing occurrence, so puzzling to many commentators, is the great demonstration that announced that "heavens' government" had begun. The blade had broken through the earth. From this point forward we can trace the orderly and sure growth of heavens' government. Every strange incident in the book of Acts can be explained by the fact that God in Christ had begun to govern the earth through the heavens. This development continues throughout the thirty-three years of the Acts period until heavens' government is suspended by Paul's pronouncement at Acts 28:28. The fact that Paul continued to proclaim the kingdom of God is not proof that it was not suspended. His proclamation dealt with its suspension and its future manifestation. We still proclaim this today.

### **The Kingdom in the Acts Period**

In Acts 1:9-11 we have the record of the Lord's ascension. This was an absolute necessity under the government of the heavens. He must be in the very seat of government. When the cloud had received Him from their sight, two from among the heavens stood by the disciples and announced His personal return. These two were representatives of heavens' government, and they appear to speak with those who will head up this government upon the earth. Under the rule of the heavens, visitors from the heavens will regularly appear and confer with the ecclesia of God upon the earth. There have been no angelic visitations since the close of the Acts period. Heavens' government is now suspended.

The disciples feel no grief and no sense of loss at His departure. He had already made it plain to them that it would be to their advantage for Him to go away (John 16:7). They would be enabled to do even greater works than He had done because of His departure from them and His presence with the Father (John 14:12). If He did not go away the Comforter (Paraclete) would not come to them, but if He departed, He would send Him unto them (John 16:7).

Essential under heavens' government is an ecclesia of men who possess the Spirit of truth as an indwelling Paraclete who gives them implicit and exact instructions in regard to every matter. This blessing will extend to every subject of the kingdom, even though they are not of the ecclesia. However, it is evident that the leaders will need more light than those led, and the judges will need more light than those whom they judge. In John 14:16, 17 and John 16:7 we have the promises of the Spirit's work for those who were to make up the ecclesia of God.

John also reveals the work, which the Spirit of truth will do for the world, a promise which has never yet been fulfilled. But, it must be noted, John does not reveal in John 16:7-11 what the Spirit is doing now. The revelation of the Spirit's work in this the dispensation of the grace of God belongs to the final messages of Paul. John describes a work of the Spirit upon the world the effects of which will be visible, traceable, and open. The effects of the Spirit's work upon the unbeliever today are invisible, untraceable, and secret.

### **The Day of Pentecost**

God's kingdom purpose in the thirty-three years of the Acts period was to call, train, and test the ecclesia which was to function when His government came forth in full manifestation. A great step

in this purpose is seen in the next great manifestation of the kingdom which came ten days after His ascension. Christ being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He shed forth that which all present could both see and hear (Acts 2:33).

The sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind was a fitting symbol to announce that the Paraclete had come. His work in behalf of the ecclesia began at once. The tongues as of fire, which parted and sat upon each of them was a symbol that God's judgment had been given to each one of the 120 men and women assembled there. They are now identified with God's judgments, the new order which He will establish in the earth.

The speaking in other languages reveals that the curse imposed on mankind at the tower of Babal had been lifted so far as these 120 men and women are concerned. The barrier of language can never hinder for even a moment their service for God. And it should be carefully noted here that everyone in the great multitude that heard these men speak came under a direct manifestation of God's government in the earth. From this time forth they are responsible to the light they have seen and heard. Mercy or wrath will be their lot depending upon their response. The three thousand who believed made the proper response. They openly avowed their allegiance to the new government even though it was only in a stage comparable to the blade in growing grain. In doing this they were literally signing their own death warrants. But this proved their worthiness to be a part of the ecclesia of God. And even though they should be put to death, they will be raised later when the kingdom is in full manifestation.

### **The Lame Man Healed**

In the Acts period every kingdom manifestation is a kingdom lesson. Out of the myriads of things that happened, a few are recorded because of the lessons they teach. This is seen in the healing of the lame man as set forth in Acts 3. Our present human governments as a rule provide training for the handicapped, or if necessary will supply crutches, braces, artificial arms, or legs. Our own government has spent great sums seeking to perfect mechanical limbs for those who suffered such losses in military service. This is the very best that human governments can do. But heavens' government is a divine government, and under the kingdom of the heavens a missing limb is restored. A clear example of this is seen in the healing of this man. His legs were utterly useless. He had to be carried. Many lame men were probably healed in the Acts period, but this incident is recorded because of the clear lessons it teaches.

It is to be noted here that the heavens are anxious to bless. They have received freely and they desire to give freely. Peter and John have also received freely and are anxious to dispense what has been given to them. This lame man sought no healing, expected no healing, nor did he ask to be healed. He sought only a small alms from any who saw fit to give. Even when Peter and John stopped and demanded his attention, he still expected nothing more from them than a coin.

In considering this incident we must not fail to note the necessary inferences, which must be drawn in order to make the picture complete. First of all to be noted is that there is a God in heaven, even Jesus Christ. He ascended there after promising to pour out blessings upon the people. He is now doing the preliminary work, which is essential to the full manifestation of His government in the earth. His government now reaches out and incorporates this man. The kingdom came to him bringing a marvelous physical blessing, a blessing, which he did not seek or expect. But he has it, and he is now under full responsibility to honor the One who has so richly blessed him. That blessing was gracious, but from that point on his blessings will depend upon his walk. It is good to see that he walked with Peter and John into the temple.

Thus we can say that if this happened when the kingdom was in a stage comparable to the blade of growing grain, what will it be like when it reaches that stage that compares to the full grain in the ear. There will not be a crippled person upon the earth.

This miracle caused a great crowd to gather, and this brought forth the second message from Peter. It was addressed to "you men of Israel," and it sets forth a time of blessing, which must come before God sends Jesus Christ back again. The people are called on to submit (repent). When a new government is moving in, men can either submit or resist. Here Peter calls on Israel to submit and turn back to God. This is to be done with a view of blotting out their sins. Submission and turning can never erase a single sin, but it would bring them to the place at once where the blood of Christ would be available to them. If they did this, then the times of refreshing would come from the face (presence) of the Lord. Following these "times of refreshing" He would send back Jesus Christ. The heavens had received Him, and the heavens would hold Him until all things had been restored, as declared by the prophets. The divine order is:

1. Israel must repent. Israel will repent. God will see to this.
2. Israel must turn back to God. Israel will turn back to God. God will see to this.
3. The times of refreshing will come from the face of the Lord.
4. All things must be restored as set forth by the prophets. Elijah is God's man who will bring this to pass. Malachi 4:5, 6. Matthew 17:10-13.
5. Then God sends back Jesus Christ.

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## ***WILL THERE BE A PREMILLENNIAL KINGDOM***

**AN ANSWER TO**

**CORNELIUS R. STAM**

**HAROLD P. MORGAN**

**KEITH L. BROOKS**

The first published criticism of my teaching concerning the kingdom of the heavens appeared in the March issue of *The Berean Searchlight*. It was written by the Editor, Cornelius R. Stam. After reading it I decided that it was written entirely for those in Mr. Stam's own circle, and that it would fall flat among those who know "the Secret" and who recognize the correctness of the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line. Mr. Stam is what I would call a partial dispensationalist. He speaks very strongly against the practice of water baptism, but just as strongly in favor of what he calls "the Lord's supper." He believes that God's present calling began at Acts 13, that the first six epistles of Paul reveal the Secret set forth in Ephesians, and that the hope of God's present calling is the rapture spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Since most of these ideas were set forth in his article, I felt that it would answer itself for all who believe in full dispensational truth.

However, Mr. Stam's article in a carefully revised form was reprinted in the May issue of *Questions and Answers*. This article in its revised form does not reveal at any point what Mr. Stam believes. If his entire article had been published it would have shown that Mr. Stam is simply a

champion of the discredited *Darby-Scofield* system of prophetic interpretation, a fact that is carefully concealed from the readers of *Questions and Answers*. In a personal letter to me dated May 31, 1951 Mr. Stam says: "The article you refer to, which recently appeared in *Questions and Answers*, was not published with my permission. Mr. Morgan made some alterations and sent me a typewritten copy after it had gone to the press."

At this point I would say that I recognize Mr. Stam as a friend and brother in Christ, even though we do see fit to put on the gloves and step into the ring now and then. He deals hard blows, but does not cry "persecution" when he gets them back in return. He never deals in vilification, and never stoops to personal attacks.

Now a further condensation and revision of Mr. Stam's article has appeared in *Prophecy Monthly*, edited by Keith L. Brooks, under title of "Lost Chord Found." This article will be reproduced in full at the end of this reply, Thus Cornelius Stam, Keith Brooks, and Harold Morgan, men who are far apart in their doctrinal views, have found common ground in opposing my teaching on the kingdom of the heavens. These facts have led me to answer Mr. Stam's article. In fairness to all concerned, I will reproduce his criticisms word for word, and answer it portion by portion. This is in harmony with a principle under which I operate: Always state the case of an opponent fairly and fully. The text of his article can be clearly distinguished in these pages by the smaller type which appears in the next paragraph. His heading and his opening statements are as follows:

### **The Last Days**

#### **WILL THERE BE A PREMILLENNIAL KINGDOM?**

By CORNELIUS R. STAM

In these days of unrest people are naturally anxious about the future. They wonder whether we are living in the last days. They want to know what is going to happen and how it may affect them. Lecturers on prophecy and the signs of the times, though they have been embarrassed again and again by incorrect predictions, can still get large audiences to hear them.

The explanation of the particular times in which we live, however, is to be found in *the mystery* revealed to Paul, *not* in the prophetic Word. The present dispensation of God was a mystery "hid from ages and generations," and does not belong with "the times and the seasons" of prophecy.

These words are true. Many are anxious about the future, but it is an anxiety that is caused by fear, ignorance, and confusion. The student of the Word of God is interested, concerned, but not anxious. His interest in the future is created by the fact that the book he studies deals with things to come. The believer of the present time cannot say that these portions which deal with the future have no part in making "the man of God perfect and equipped for every good work" (See 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We who fully recognize that this present time is a parenthesis, know that this parenthesis is not going to continue forever. We who know that this is the dispensation of the Grace of God know also that it will some day come to an end. The time will come when our God will have completed His purpose to demonstrate the graciousness of His character, and when He has, some very radical changes are going to take place in God's method of dealing with the human race. These facts lead sincere seekers after the truth to ask the question, "What next?"

As one who professes to be a student and teacher of the Word, I want to provide an honest and Scriptural answer to this question. My studies in the Word of God have made it impossible for me to believe that this long display of Grace will end in catastrophic wrath, which will depopulate the

earth. I do not believe that God has exhausted all possible efforts in dealing with man. There is so much that He can do, so much that He has said He will do which He has never yet done. He has never yet reproved, convicted, or enlightened mankind of sin, righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:7-11). This by all means should be done before He takes "vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I believe that this dispensation will end by God reversing the declaration by which it began. It began at that point marked by Acts 28:28 when the Salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles. This was announced by Paul; an announcement that was essential since God operates secretly in the dispensation of Grace. When this dispensation ends, the Salvation of God will return to the seed of Abraham, Israel. This will not need to be announced, since God will then work openly, Christ will be unveiled, and men will soon realize that God is actively intervening in the affairs of men to establish His government in the earth. When the Salvation of God returns to Israel, it will result in their conversion, restoration, and blessing. I would like very much to be alive when this takes place. It would be a glorious experience to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" operate in behalf of the seed of Abraham. However, I do not say that this is my hope, for I have no guarantee that I will live to see that great work of salvation, which God will yet do for Israel. But since some believers who are of God's present calling will be alive and upon the earth when this event takes place, it is possible that it may be in my lifetime.

In his next paragraph, Mr. Stam reveals what he thinks is the hope of the believer.

The blessed hope of the believer is that *before* God again takes up His prophetic program, *before* the day of His wrath, "the Lord Himself" will come to *catch away* the members of His body to be forever with Him.

A glaring weakness is revealed here. Mr. Stam takes an event which is an incident connected with the *parousia* (coming) of Christ, and which is linked up with "the voice of the archangel" (Israel's angel) and makes this to be "the blessed hope of the believer." He does not hesitate to sever things that God has joined together. How can an experience such as this be "the blessed hope of the believer," when generation after generation of believers have lived and died and experienced no such blessing?

Paul declares in Titus 2:13 that "the blessed hope" is "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." This "glorious appearing" is arbitrarily made by many to be the second coming, others make it to be "a rapture" that precedes the second coming. The Greek here means "the manifesting of the glory." The time will yet come when it will be made plain in every square foot of the universe just who and what Jesus Christ is in the sight of God. The esteem in which the Father holds Him will be revealed. This is what Titus calls "the blessed hope." **It** is the manifesting of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. This should be the happy expectation of every believer in Christ. **It is** not an egocentric hope. It is Christocentric. **It** is not centered in something that is to happen to us. It is centered in something that will happen to Christ. Someday He will be unveiled. Someday He will shine forth. May God speed the day.

Mr. Stam takes one detail out of the Thessalonian passage and makes this to be "the blessed hope of the believer." An event which includes only a small percentage who happen to be alive when it takes place cannot be called "the blessed hope of the believer." An event, which has not been the experience of those believers who have already died cannot have been their hope. An event in which is included the saints of previous times and callings cannot be called our peculiar hope. To sum up, I know of no teaching that is more shallow or childish than that which declares that "the blessed hope" of God's present calling is to be caught away before the great tribulation begins.

Mr. Stam continues in his article to deal with what he calls the rapture.

This blessed truth of the rapture of the body was a "mystery," or secret, hid from the prophets (1 Cor. 15:51,52), for the simple reason that God's purpose concerning the body was itself a mystery until made known to and through the Apostle Paul (Eph. 3:1-11). Writing to the Thessalonian believers (mostly Gentiles, 1 Thess. 1:9, 10), the apostle so clearly describes this great event, and indicates so plainly that it does not belong to the prophesied "times and seasons," that we wonder how anyone could possibly misunderstand.

Explicitly stating that he does not wish these Thessalonians to be ignorant concerning their loved ones, the apostle goes on to explain:

**"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:**

**"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**

**"Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**

**"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord So cometh as a thief in the night.**

**"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thes. 4:16-5:3).**

Mark well: they *needed* enlightenment regarding the Lord's return to catch them away, *but of the times and seasons they had full knowledge*. Obviously then, "the rapture" does not belong to "the times and the seasons."

Mark further that the apostle says: "WE," believers, shall be "caught up" with our comrades who "sleep in Jesus" and "so shall WE ever be with the Lord." But "when THEY (of the world) shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon THEM, as travail upon a woman with child; and THEY shall not escape." "But YE, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (Verse 4).

What does this mean; merely that the Thessalonian believers should be awake and ready for the thief? No, for the apostle does not say: "ye are not *asleep*," but ye are not in *darkness*," and adds: ". . . we are not OF the night, nor OF the darkness" (Verse 5).\* That is, we do not belong in the same category.

And then, to silence all doubt and fear, the apostle says: **"FOR GOD HATH NOT APPOINTED US UNTO WRATH, BUT TO OBTAIN SALVATION BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. "WHO DIED FOR US, THAT WHETHER WE WAKE OR SLEEP," WE SHOULD LIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM" (1 Thess. 5:9, 10).**

What a hope! How we should encourage each other with the blessed promise! Thus, after describing the rapture itself, the apostle exhorts us to *"comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thess. 4:18), and after assuring us that we will *not* go through the tribulation which follows, he again exhorts us: *"Wherefore comfort yourselves together"* (1 Thess. 5:11).

\*It is on this basis that he urges them not to sleep as the others. \*\*Referring again to the living and the dead in Christ.

I cannot help but marvel at the audacity of those who separate the catching away of I Thessalonians 4: 17 from the *parousia* (coming) of Christ. A book recently published and widely distributed bears the title of, "First, the Rapture." In this the author (Mr. J. F. Strombeck) argues that the first event when God resumes His prophesied program will be the sudden secret removal of all living believers from the earth. This is to be next, or first, according to Mr. Strombeck, a view in

which Mr. Stam heartily concurs. But I can tell them two ways by which they can test the truth of their position.

First, Paul says, "the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16); therefore, a more accurate title for Mr. Strombeck's book would have been "First, the Resurrection." But this is only a detail, so we will proceed to a more positive test.

In I Thessalonians 4:15 Paul uses the word *parousia* to identify the main event of which he is speaking. He says "we who are alive and remain unto the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord. This statement in a most positive way makes this "catching away" to be an incident in connection with His *parousia*. This word literally means "personal presence" when used of beings. In Matthew 24 the Lord Himself took up the matter of His *parousia* in answer to a question put by His disciples, "What shall be the sign of your coming (*parousia*)?" He answered this by setting forth a definite order of events which are to precede His *parousia*, among which in proper order is the great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15-26). Following this He declares:

**For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of man be. Matt. 24:26.**

Following this He says:

**For as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of man be. Matt. 24:37.**

Furthermore, He reveals a "catching away" in connection with the *parousia* in declaring:

**Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Matt. 24:39-40.**

Various attempts have been made to explain away this "rapture" here, which is so forcefully declared by our Lord. It is said that those "taken" are taken away to judgment, while those left are to be blessed upon the earth. This is proven by the fact that those whom the flood "took away" perished in the flood. But the Greek word in verse 39 for "took" is *airo* while the word for "taken" in verse 40 is *paralambano*, a word which always means to take alongside oneself. See Matt. 1:20; 17:1; Mark 5:40 for other pertinent occurrences of this word. Furthermore, Matthew 25 tells exactly how the great separation is made, how the sheep are divided from the goats. It is not accomplished by one being pulled out of the field or one being pulled out of the bed. Of what value would the separation of Matthew 25:33 be if it has already been made? With all my heart, after the most careful investigation of every possible fact, I believe that 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and Matthew 24:40, 41 are the same event. Both happen in connection with His *parousia*.

In view of this Mr. Stam or Mr. Strombeck should be able to say "First, the Parousia," for if the rapture is first, then the great event of which it is a part must also be first. But they dare not say this since our Lord reveals that His *parousia* follows the great Tribulation.

Now to consider Mr. Stam's statement that "the rapture" was a secret. This he bases upon 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52. Ignoring altogether the fact that this is an event, which takes place at "the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52), he moves this up to a time that precedes the blowing of any trump. It is entirely true that Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:51 that he is declaring or revealing "a secret." A secret in Scripture is a truth that has been hidden and not revealed before. His first statement is, "we shall not all sleep." This could not be a secret for the same truth had been declared by our Lord twenty-five years before. That some would never die was emphatically declared by Him in John 11:26. Furthermore, this had also been revealed by Paul to the Thessalonians about five years before (I Thess. 4:13-17). The secret truth revealed here is not found in the statement, "we shall not all sleep." It is to be found in the declaration "we shall all be changed," and in the details which follow.

Mr. Stam's teaching here concerning "the times and the seasons" is not accurate Bible exposition. He seeks to prove that "the rapture" is no part of "the times and the seasons" on the supposed basis that "they *needed* enlightenment regarding the Lord's return to catch them away, *but of the times and seasons they had full knowledge.*" Obviously then, 'the rapture' does not belong to "the times and the seasons," Mr. Stam assuredly declares.

As I read this portion it is obvious to me that they needed enlightenment "concerning them which are asleep," not regarding the Lord's return to catch them away as Mr. Stam interprets it. His is an interpretation born of desperation, and I marvel at his audacity in setting it forth. But as I said before, Mr. Stam writes for his own circle, and I doubt if many of them will trace this matter out.

The times and the seasons of I Thessalonians 5:1 are the time and seasons of the events of which the Apostle has been speaking. These things are the subject of this portion. If on reading I Thessalonians 5:1 we ask "Times and seasons of what?" there is only one answer possible. The times and seasons of the things that are being presented. These are set forth in the preceding statement as being the *parousia* of the Lord, His descent from heaven, the archangel's voice, the trump of God, the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the rapture of the living. Concerning the times and seasons of these related events there was no need for Paul to write to them since they knew perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. All these events are in harmony with Matthew 24 and they all happen in the day of the Lord. How then can it be said that "the rapture" is not related to the times and seasons when it is one of the details related to the great events, which is the subject of the times and seasons?

Supposing that I write briefly to a friend in Europe telling him that I will visit him in the spring of 1952 arriving on March 20. Later I write him again giving more details, saying that I will arrive by plane, will be accompanied by my wife, and will plan to stay for two months. Following this I say, "Now as to the *times and dates* there is no need for me to say anything since you already know the time of my visit." If this took place, how could my friend make the "times and dates" refer to anything else but that which preceded these words in my letter? Mr. Stam is hoping and groping for something, which will make it possible for him to separate "the rapture" from the *parousia*, but he has not found it in this interpretation.

"What a hope!" Mr. Stam cries in exultation. Yet he has no assurance that he will be alive and remain until the *parousia* of the Lord. And if not, then he will die and be raised, but this is no different than the hope of every saint of the Old Testament. Let us go on to his next paragraphs.

### **BEWARE LEST ANY MAN ROB YOU**

As we consider our blessed hope we do well to heed the admonition of Paul to the Colossians: "*Beware lest any man rob you,*" for Satan is always on the alert to rob us of the blessings which are ours in Christ, and often he employs children of God unwittingly to do his work for him. Especially would he rob us of the "blessed hope," for if he can confuse us as to God's program, and discourage us from daily looking for our Lord to come, he will find it easier to lull us to sleep as those who are of the night.

We sound this warning because, with the recovery of dispensational truth there has sprung up a pseudodispensationalism which would rob the believer of the blessed hope and leave him in a maze of uncertainty and doubt as to the future. Its exponents "divide" the Word of Truth, indeed, but they seem to have forgotten that we shall be approved of God only as we "*rightly* divide" it. Too often these brethren "solve" problems merely by making more divisions, without inquiring carefully

enough whether these divisions fit into the *whole* plan or simply leave loose ends. The result of this illegitimate use of dispensationalism is anything but orderly thinking; it is bound to leave a thousand loose ends on one's understanding of the plan and purpose of God.

This is the cry of "Wolf, wolf," to arouse the people into thinking they are going to be robbed of something precious. This makes them cling all the more tightly to their beloved errors. If to be "caught away before the day of His wrath" is the blessed hope of all believers, as Mr. Stam affirms, then no man can take it from any believer. Since it would be based upon a God-given hope, and not upon "watching" or "looking" it cannot be lost. I tried to find this admonition of Paul in Colossians but the quotation "Beware lest any man rob you," is not in my copy. I do read, "**Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and empty deceit**" (Co!. 2:8) ; and that is exactly what I believe some men are doing in regard to this "rapture" which is supposed to be the next great event. The idea of a rapture which is distinct from the *parousia* of Matthew 24 is an idea that originated outside of the Bible. It must first be assumed, after which snippets from Scripture are used to prove it.

I wonder if Mr. Stam has ever considered how death robs the believer of this experience, which he calls "the blessed hope." If, as Mr. Stam believes, the believer at death goes to be with Christ, how then can he experience a rapture, which is supposed to take him to be with Christ? In view of this I cannot help but be amused as Mr. Stam infers throughout his article that he is not "confused"; he is in no "maze of uncertainty"; he has no "doubts as to the future"; there are no "loose ends" in his theology; his thinking is "orderly"; etc. I know his situation too well to believe this. He is in the same position, as many others who hold his views. Concerning "Christ's second coming as the blessed hope of the church," the *Sunday School Times* recently confessed:

It is more than likely that many who are now in middle life have felt a decided "letdown," tending toward discouragement and indifference to this great truth, as they look back thirty years and remember the tremendous enthusiasm that was created by prophetic teaching, and think of many friends who looked for the coming of the Lord, but have had to pass through death. (*Sunday School Times*, August 19, 1950).

This puts the question squarely before each one. How can "the rapture" be "the blessed hope" when no one to date has ever experienced it? What guarantee does Mr. Stam have that his hope of rapture will be realized? And if it is not realized, then how will his experience as a member of God's present calling be any different from the faithful saint of former dispensations?

But, we have spent enough time here. Let us consider Mr. Stam's next statement.

Arguing from half of Paul's statement in Acts 26:22, 23, the exponents of this pseudo-dispensationalism insist that before Acts 28:23 Paul proclaimed only a prophetic-kingdom message, and that the joint body and the revelation of the mystery did not begin until his imprisonment in Rome. Therefore, it is argued, this blessed hope, of which Paul wrote *before* Acts 28, is not *our* hope, but is rather associated with the kingdom reign of Christ.

But we read distinctly of "the mystery" and of "the body of Christ" in Paul's *earlier* epistles, written before Acts 28, as well as in those written after. To "solve" this difficulty of their own making, our friends have simply made another division. They conclude there must be *two* bodies of Christ; that "the body of Christ" of which Paul writes in Romans and 1 Corinthians is a different body from "the body of Christ" of which he writes in his later epistles.

Actually, they are *driven* to this conclusion, for such an explanation is, to say the least, forced and unnatural. They resort to this explanation to maintain their claim that the body of this dispensation did not begin until Acts 28, but we cannot help feeling that such theories must sound shabby even to those who advance them and should cause them to re-examine the foundation of their structure.

This term "pseudo-dispensationalism" is a term often hurled at Mr. Stam by those who are not quite the same type of dispensationalist as he is. He catches these terms that others hurl at him and then gets rid of them by hurling them at me. I refuse to catch them or to pass them on, as they are words that do not inform. They contain some heat but no light.

The mere fact that the words "the mystery" and "the body of Christ" appear in Paul's early epistles have nothing to do with the subject under consideration. The words "the mystery" can be found in Matthew. The word "kingdom" occurs in Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy, but this does not mean that "the secret" of Ephesians can be found in Matthew or that the three epistles mentioned are kingdom epistles. I have no time for those interpretations of Scripture, which are based upon the occurrence of words or the non-occurrence of words in certain books. This is illogical. It reminds me of the woman who spoke to me saying, "Mr. Sellers, I understand that you do not believe in water baptism." "That is right," I confessed. "But" she said, "the Bible speaks of baptism." "Sure it does," I replied, "but what does it say?" She did not know.

When the terms "the mystery," "the body," or "kingdom" appear the question to be answered is "What mystery," or "What kingdom," or "What body"? It would be well also to answer the question, "What is the body of Christ?" Again I say, define your terms.

Some years ago a friend of ours asked a Bible teacher whether or not the Gentiles were included in the New Covenant. The Bible teacher answered that though the Bible did not say so, he felt there were *two* New Covenants. Our friend listened respectfully to the explanation, but left with the impression that the Bible teacher was *forcing* a solution to a problem with which he was experiencing difficulty. This is how we feel about the two-body theory.

Does Paul, in his revelation, *say* anything about *two* bodies? Certainly not. He *does* say, both in his earlier and later epistles, that there is "*one* body" (Rom. 12:4, 5, 1 Cor. 12:12, 13, 20, Eph. 2:16, 4:4, Col. 3:15). And after all his emphasis on *one* body, it is not reasonable to assume that if the "one body" in existence *before* Acts 28 were a different body from the "one body" after Acts 28; if there were *two* "one bodies," the apostle would have been very careful to explain this?

Mr. Stam's friend who asked the question and the Bible teacher who answered it should both read Jeremiah 31:27-40. That is the place to find with whom the new covenant is to be made, and if any Gentiles are included.

Concerning this "two-body theory" of which Mr. Stam makes so much, I do not think he knows what he is talking about, and I am sure I do not. For years he and his mentor, Pastor J. C. O'Hair, have led the people to believe that if you divide at Acts 13 you have only "one body," but if you divide at Acts 28:28 you have "two bodies." Since I divide at Acts 28:28 they charge me with teaching a "two-body theory." In answer to this crude description of my teaching, I can only state what I DO believe.

It is my understanding, carefully arrived at after weighing all facts and coming to my own conclusions, that all who put their faith in Jesus Christ during the Acts period were called in connection with God's kingdom purposes, the same kingdom that was heralded in the four gospels. This includes the "Jews that believed," "Gentiles that believed"; Paul's converts as well as Peter's converts. These were all a part of the ecclesia of God, which I believe to be the kingdom ecclesia. I do not believe that "the ecclesia of God" which Paul persecuted before Acts 9 was a different ecclesia of God than the one addressed in Thessalonians and Corinthians (See 1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2). Paul declares in 1 Cor. 12:13 that in one Spirit they had all been "baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." He declares to these Corinthians that the world is to be judged by them (1 Cor. 6:2); which is definite proof that they were related to God's government over the earth. Paul declares that the Thessalonians were called by God "unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess.

2:12). Now if this is not the same "kingdom" as is proclaimed in the gospels, then let Mr. Stam explain what it is, and take care that he does not use a "two-kingdom" theory to do it.

I believe that at Acts 28:28 all of God's purposes in relationship to the kingdom were suspended, and a new divine purpose came in which is a parenthesis in God's prophetic program of the kingdom. During the time of this parenthesis our God establishes a monumental demonstration to the graciousness of His character, a memorial which will endure through all eons to come. Those who have become related to God through Christ since Acts 28:28 are called in connection with God's present purpose to demonstrate His Grace. In fact, they are the results of Grace actively demonstrated, and in all ages to come we will serve God in the sphere of education rather than in the sphere of administration. We will have to do with truth, and not with laws and their enforcement. We will make known the truth of His gracious character to all, but we will never rule over ten cities, five cities, or one city. We will make known this truth concerning God to the world, but we will never judge the world. We will not serve in fellowship with the angels in heaven, but we will serve in fellowship with the sons of God in the heavens of heavens.

Now while this does make two distinct callings, it does not make "two bodies." If Mr. Stam insists that it does, then he should stand ready to give a Scriptural definition of the word "body." When the Lord said, "take, eat, this is My body," is that the same "body" as in 'Ephesians 4:4? Is the body of Luke 17:37 the same as that in Colossians 1:24? Let Mr. Stam answer these questions, but take care that he fall not into what he calls the "two-body theory" in order to do it.

Candidly I wish to say that the terms "body truth" and "body of Christ" are being used as catch phrases by many. It is my opinion that a lot more work needs to be done before we can claim to know God's truth concerning "the body of Christ." But I find very little interest in this study project, especially among those who claim to have "body truth." Let us return to Mr. Stam's article.

Does the Old Testament prophecy say anything about the followers of Messiah being "caught up"? Not one word. The idea that 1 Thess. 4:16-18 is a kingdom hope comes from building upon the false premise that it was Paul's contention in Acts 26:22 that until then he had preached nothing but what the prophets and Moses had already predicted, while he actually said nothing of the kind. What he did say was that *the fact that Christ should suffer, rise and show light to Israel and the Gentiles*, was nothing but what Moses and the prophets had said should come. (See Ver. 22 and 23).

In our limited space we cannot begin to deal with all the loose ends, the unexplained problems, left by the two-body theory, but when men continue to follow such faulty reasoning and interpretations as we have discussed above, it is not strange to see their unnatural and arbitrary explanations multiply with their problems.

Here we get a new interpretation of Acts 26:22, 23. This is one that I did not know about. The passage under consideration reads as follows:

**Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. Acts 26:22, 23.**

As to the meaning of these words, I say that Paul declares that from the time of his conversion to the day he stood before Agrippa, he had witnessed to both small and great, saying nothing beyond what Moses and the prophets did say should come; that Christ should suffer, etc.

Mr. Stam revises this whole statement of Paul and holds that Paul declares that his teaching that Christ should suffer, rise and show light to Israel and the Gentiles, was nothing but what Moses and the prophets had said should come.

In other words, I say that up to this time Paul had said nothing but what Moses and the prophets said. Mr. Stam says that Paul, pointing out certain of his teachings says they were nothing but what Moses and the prophets had said.

Or to establish a parallel, it is as if I would say, "The proverb I quoted is nothing but what the Bible says." That would mean one thing, but if I said, "I have quoted no proverb that cannot be found in the Bible," that is something quite different. Now, one of these statements is akin to what Paul said, and I insist it is the latter. No translator and no commentator has ever felt the need of twisting Paul's words around as Mr. Stam has done. Let us look at this in several translations.

**"To this day I have had the help of God in standing, as I now do, to testify to low and high, never uttering a single syllable beyond what the prophets and Moses predicted should take place." *Moffatt Version.***

**"Having, however, obtained the help which is from God, I have stood firm until now, and have solemnly exhorted rich and poor alike, saying nothing except what the Prophets and Moses predicted as soon to happen." *Weymouth Version.***

The sense of what Paul said is simple and easily understood. But Mr. Stam thinks that Paul's words need to be straightened out. His interpretation of Paul's words are his own invention and a perversion of Biblical thought.

At long last Mr. Stam finally gets to his announced subject. We will examine all he has to say.

## THE TWO-KINGDOM THEORY

Now a proponent of the two-body theory, Mr. Otis Q. Sellers, offers a *two-kingdom* theory as a key to what he considers insurmountable prophetic problems. Mr. Sellers does not consider his discovery a theory, however, but an established fact. He teaches dogmatically that in addition to the millennial kingdom there is also to be a *pre* millennial kingdom; that *before* the second coming of Christ there will be "an era of peace, righteousness, justice and equity on earth" and that *this* period, not the millennium, is what the *Old Testament* Scriptures refer to as "the last days" (The Last Days, p. 3).

The "discoverer" of this new theory claims that "after years of searching, after years of seeking to scale walls that make further advance impossible. . . he has laid hold of a great truth of God" (p. 3). He calls this supposed truth a "lost chord" which, once found, breaks down barriers to progress.

"This period of time," says Mr. Sellers, "will be the most glorious era that mankind has experienced since the fall," though he agrees that its glory will, in turn, be excelled by that of the millennium (p. 3). As to its duration, he says: "That period called 'the last days' is not a short time. My studies have led me to think that it may be as much as five centuries in length" (p. 4).

In regard to the first paragraph above, I desire to state that I am no proponent of any "two-body theory," and neither do I offer any "two kingdom theory" as a key to prophetic problems. I do not believe in two kingdoms, one before and one after the millennium. If anything in my writings has led Mr. Stam to think that I teach "two kingdoms" he now has it straight from me that I teach no such thing. Thus at the start he builds a straw man, which he will successfully hack to pieces in such manner that Keith Brooks will declare "he is leading the fight against Sellers and arguing well."

In matters of controversy it is not fair to take the teachings of another and state them as crudely as possible in our own words. The public can better apprehend a man's views from his own mode of setting them forth, than when these views are awkwardly stated by a third party. In presenting my views Mr. Stam quotes first a part of a sentence from the middle of paragraph 2 of page 3 of my book "The Last Days," then he goes back to pick up a part of a sentence from the first part of the same paragraph. Following this he gives a part of a sentence from the next paragraph, then he jumps to page 4 to pick up another sentence. Then he jumps to Volume XI, Number 5 of *The Word of Truth* for another snippet from my writings. Next he jumps to Volume XI, Number 6 for another sentence, and this jumble of "texts out of context" he presents as my teaching. I insist, this is no way to *present* a man's message. It is the ideal method when one desires to *misrepresent* a man's teaching, and it is very effective in circles where people will let anything else that comes along take the place of honest investigation and thinking. I would like for the reader to compare Mr. Stam's crude, garbled presentation of my teaching with what I actually said. In my book "The Last Days" I said:

"At least a third of the Bible is unfulfilled prophecy. Prophetic truths are interwoven in the Bible in such manner that our knowledge of God's Word will be limited to the extent that we comprehend the prophetic message. Ignorance of the prophetic books will seriously affect our proper understanding of the balance of the Word of God. However, those who seek an understanding of the prophetic message by means of a penetrating study of the prophetic books will come face to face with undeniable difficulties as they seek the meaning of the things set forth. A bewildering number of personages and events are encountered, and it seems almost impossible to bring order out of this confusion. The truth seeker longs, yes he prays, for something that will bring about a true harmony of the great body of prophetic truth.

"When after years of searching, after years of seeking to scale walls that make further advance impossible, one finds a truth that clears away innumerable difficulties and solves innumerable problems, he cannot help but feel that he has laid hold of a great truth of God. It is my conviction that the present lack of harmony in prophetic truth is caused by a "lost chord," and that this lost chord is God's revelation concerning a period of time which precedes the second coming of Christ and the millennium, when God through divine intervention will bring about an era of peace, righteousness, justice and equity in the earth. The truth concerning this period of time is so obvious that all one needs to do to establish it is to point out simple Scriptural facts. This is what I propose to do in this study. And as Bishop Butler has said, "A truth being established, objections are nothing; the one is founded upon our knowledge, the other upon our ignorance." Due heed given to this principle will keep the searcher from rejecting truth just because he does not understand it perfectly or completely."

But let us return to Mr. Stam's statement that I teach "two kingdoms." I believe that the Greek word *basileia*, which is usually translated "**kingdom**" is an abstract word and can probably best be expressed by our English word *government*. Even then we will need to explain what we mean by the word *government*, for it seems there is no word in English that expresses the marvelous comprehensiveness of this Greek word. Therefore, to me, when the *King James Version* says "the kingdom of the heavens," "the kingdom of Christ" or "the kingdom of God," this means heavens' government, Christ's government, or God's government. The words rule, control, dominion, authority, or sovereignty can be substituted for "government" if one so desires. Both heavens' government and Christ's government can be also called God's government. This is done by the Spirit of God in Mark and Luke. I believe that heavens' government comes in stages comparable to the blade, the ear, the full grain in the ear, and the ripened grain. It is also my belief that the heavens began their government when Christ arose from the dead and that this continued through the thirty-three years covered by the book of Acts. This stage is comparable to the blade stage in growing grain. I further believe that heavens' government was suspended when the Salvation of God was sent

to the Gentiles at Acts 28:28 and that it will be resumed the moment that God decrees that His salvation shall return to Israel. Thus the heavens resume their government before the second coming of Christ, and will govern for a period at least five centuries in length. But after many centuries of blessing men will again grow careless and fail to watch, and this will result in a rebellion against this government of the heavens. This rebellion brings about the great tribulation and it is ruthlessly put down by the second coming of Christ. He then governs or rules for a thousand years, following which there is another rebellion when Satan is loosed for a little season. Again the rebellious are ruthlessly (but justly) eliminated and this is followed by the heaven and the new earth.

Thus we see three great periods of divine government, one before the millennium, then the millennium itself, and finally the new heavens and new earth. However, I would emphatically state, this is one divine government or kingdom all the way through. I do not believe in two kingdoms. Therefore to clarify and avoid misunderstandings, I would state this again as follows:

FIRST, comes the kingdom of the heavens. This is preeminently heaven's government over the earth. This can properly be called premillennial, since it precedes the millennium.

SECOND, comes the kingdom of Christ. This is preeminently Christ's government, even though the heavens will still be active. This is the millennium.

THIRD, comes the new heaven and the new earth. This is the kingdom of God, since Christ has delivered the kingdom to God. See I Cor. 15:24-28. This is preeminently God's government.

In the first of these, God governs through the heavens; in the second God governs through Christ; in the third God governs direct. Nevertheless this is one government, and God, Christ and the heavens have a place in all three stages of it.

The first of these is preeminently the day of Christ, the second is preeminently the day of the Lord, the third is preeminently the day of God.

We return now to Mr. Stam's article.

But while Mr. Sellers, in his booklet, *The Last Days*, specifically states that the prophecies concerning "the last days" refer, *not* to the millennial kingdom, but to a premillennial kingdom, to be established *before* the return of Christ, in another article on the same subject, he prepares himself room to escape in case of impossible situations. In Vol. XI, No.5 of *The Word of Truth*, on page 101, he says: "Practically every prophecy concerning the kingdom will have a precursory fulfillment in the premillennial kingdom. . . . Therefore, we must not attempt to divide these prophecies into two distinct groups, those that apply to the premillennial and those that apply to the millennial kingdom."

Here is a glaring contradiction, for if the prophecies of the kingdom have only *precursory* fulfillment in the premillennial kingdom, then the glowing promises concerning the last days will have their *real* and *final* fulfillment in the *millennial* kingdom. Thus the prophecies concerning the last days would refer primarily to the millennial kingdom and *not* to the alleged era preceding it.

In answer to this bit of confusion, I will state my beliefs in my own words. The "last days" of Isaiah 2, Joel 2, and Acts 2 are not the millennial period. The "last days" here is a definite period of time that precedes the day of the Lord. The millennium is in the day of the Lord; therefore, these last days precede it.

All prophecies that relate to these "last days," that is, all prophecies in which it says "it shall come to pass in the last days," will come to pass and be fulfilled in that period of time. All prophecies concerning these "last days" refer to the last days and not to the millennium. For example, in the last days men will beat their swords into plowshares and this will result in an era of peace. This is not a

precursory fulfillment as it will be absolute. They will do this in these "last days." But this is only a forerunner of the glorious peace of the millennium, a peace that is imposed by the presence of Christ. There will never be one sword in the millennium to be beaten into a plowshare. There will never be a spear to be beaten into a pruning hook. Proof of this will be found in Matthew 13:41 where we read of an event which immediately precedes the millennium.

Mr. Stam continues his criticism:

We acknowledge, of course, that there are "lost chords," so to speak, which, when found, go a long way toward revealing the beautiful harmony of the Scriptures, and if this new discovery is such we want to find the lost chord and enjoy the heavenly music too. As we put this theory to the Berean test, however, we are convinced that no such lost chord has been found but that rather another *discordant* note has been added to Mr. Sellers' teachings. We regret that he put this blunder into print, especially in view of his own admission: "I would emphatically state that I do not claim to have reached any degree of finality concerning this great truth" (*Word of Truth*, Vol. XI, No.6).

The statement, which Mr. Stam quotes was written by me in January, 1950. Now, nineteen months later I would again make the same statement:

"I do not claim to have reached any degree of finality concerning this great truth." Mr. Stam does not seem to appreciate the spirit, which is behind this frank confession. Dr. E. W. Bullinger once made a statement which has made a deep impression upon me, and one which has been incorporated into my life and thinking.

"Any discrepancy in our various works must be explained by the fact that we are learning as well as teaching; and shall never pose as having no more to learn. In this light, our readers must take our more recent utterances and editions as representing such advances in our learning, and kindly judge us by these." *Things to Come*, February, 1905.

This quotation reveals the spirit that made this man to be what Dr. Wilbur N. Smith described as "that indefatigable Bible student." We need more men of this spirit. The creedal smugness of the present generation of so-called Bible teachers is paralyzing.

Let us now consider Mr. Stam's next paragraph.

Mr. Sellers' argument for the so-called premillennial kingdom of the last days centers around the fact that in Acts 2 Peter, quoting from Joel 2, points out that the pouring out of the Spirit and the signs of the last days were to come to pass "before that great and notable day of the Lord come" and that therefore "the last days" must *precede* "the day of the Lord," or the millennial reign of Christ. But the language here does not at all exclude "the day of the Lord" from "the last days."

My arguments for a period of blessing before the second coming of Christ do not center in Acts 2 or Joel 2. This teaching finds support in every book in the word of God except Ephesians and Colossians. By this I do not mean that every book except these two make this period of blessing their theme, but I do believe that every book except these two have references in them which can be honestly explained only by seeing them in relationship to this time of blessing.

Peter's language in Acts 2 is simple and direct. He says that certain things shall come to pass in the last days before the great and notable day of the Lord comes. See Acts 2:17 and 20. Now whether "the last days" include "the day of the Lord" is not the question. I say without reservation that everyone of these things will come to pass and precede the day of the Lord.

Next Mr. Stam presents some questions, which he both asks and answers. There is a temptation

here to go into details, but first let us ask a few basic questions:

1. Does the Bible say anything about *two* divine kingdoms to be established on earth? It does not. While admittedly we do not understand all of prophecy, the prophecies concerning future peace and blessing under "the Lord's dynasty" would surely lead the unbiased reader to conclude that God has *one* glorious kingdom in mind.

2. Do Joel 2 or Acts 2 say that "the last days" were to come *before* "the day of the Lord"? They do not. They simply say: "It shall come to pass *IN* the last days," that certain things shall transpire before, or shall usher in, the day of the Lord. This does not exclude "the day of the Lord" from "the last days."

3. If this notable period of perhaps five centuries of peace and blessing constitutes "the last days," what is it the last days of? We can understand that the prophets should view the future in general as "the last days," or should view the coming of Christ in general as taking place in "the last days," for this present dispensation was a mystery in *their* days. We can understand how our Lord should speak of the tribulation period and the establishment of His kingdom as taking place in "the last days," for these were the last, or latter, days of the prophetic program, and the mystery was not even then made known. We can understand how Peter at Pentecost should speak of the pouring out of the Spirit as belonging to "the last days" for had these days not been interrupted by the mystery and the dispensation of grace, the rest of Joel's prophecy would have come to pass and "the day of the Lord" would have been ushered in. We can also understand how Paul should speak of "the last days" of this present dispensation. All this is simple and obvious.

But if there is to be a kingdom set up *before* the millennium, why is it spoken of as being established in "the last days"? We ask: the last days of what? These would certainly not be the last days of the prophetic program, or of Israel, or of the body of Christ. Mr. Sellers seeks to clear up this difficulty by explaining that the word *last*, or *latter*, in this connection carries the idea of "*resultant*," but the interesting fact is that he himself insists, as we shall see, that these days are not the result of what has gone before, but of the Spirit's direct intervention during the last days themselves! Thus the change from *last* or *latter*, to *resultant* fails utterly to explain in what sense these could possibly be called "the last days."

Even though Mr. Stam "begs the question" by providing the answers, even though he assumes as true that which needs to be proven, I will give my answers to his three questions.

1. The Bible says nothing of two divine kingdoms to be established on earth. Who is Mr. Stam arguing with? He brings out his "straw man" here for another fast round. If he has any further trouble demolishing this "two kingdom theory," I will be glad to help him. Together we will stand back and laugh at it, and this should kill it once for all.

However while the Bible says nothing of two divine kingdoms, it does speak of seasons of refreshing from the face of the Lord, which must take place before He sends back Jesus Christ. Acts 3:19-20. It declares that God will pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh before the great and notable day of the Lord comes. Acts 2:17-20. It tells of "rebuilding the tabernacle of David which is fallen down" and rebuilding the ruins thereof, and this is certainly not the millennium. It also speaks eloquently about "the kingdom of the heavens," a great blessing which was based upon Christ's first coming and not His second.

2. I beg to differ. Joel 2 and Acts 2 both declare that the period called here "the last days" comes before the day of the Lord. If certain events are to come to pass in the last days before the great and notable day of the Lord comes, then the last days must precede the day of the Lord. Furthermore, that term "shall usher in" is somewhat like an extra card, which a gambler would slip into the deck.

Mr. Stam is struggling hard to get these blessings into the day of the Lord. Long after he has exhausted himself the word of God will still say that these blessings are to come to pass in the last days, *before* the great and notable day of the Lord comes.

3. The term "the last days" in Scripture never means the final days of any period of time, even though "the last days" may be the final days of the period under consideration. They are not called last because they are final, but because they are the conclusion or the result of the days that have gone before. The last chapter of a book is without doubt the final one, but it is also the conclusion or result of the chapters that have preceded it. If the bookbinder should mix up the folios and bind the last chapter first, then the final chapter would not be the last chapter. It would not be the result of what has been said before.

In Matthew 12:45 the Lord tells of a man whose last state was worse than his previous one. This was not the man's final state, for it was a state that resulted from nothing being brought in to take the place of that which was purged.

In Matthew 27:63 the Pharisees declared that the last error would be worse than the previous error. It is evident that they did not mean the final error, but the error they felt would be the result if the Lord's body disappeared.

In 1 Peter 1:20 we read that Christ was manifested in these last times for you. The time of our Lord upon the earth were not the final times, as history and Scripture abundantly proves. But the time of His manifestation was the result of Him having been "foreordained before the foundation of the world."

In Mr. Stam's last paragraph quoted above he deliberately misrepresents my teaching. He says that I insist that these last days are NOT the result of what has gone before. But this is exactly what I do insist. I hold that the last days of Isaiah 2 and Acts 2 are the result of all God's works that have been done before, beginning with the call of Abraham. Even the intervention of the Spirit of God in the last days is the result of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. I set this forth in my pamphlet on "The Last Days" but Mr. Stam chose to ignore it in order to build another straw man. In proof, I will quote from "The Last Days," page 14.

"We have been considering first of all that period of time which issues forth from all of God's dealings with the people of Israel. His work or purpose with them began with the call of Abraham, and it continued through Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs. God preserved them in Egypt, brought them forth from it, carried them through forty years of wilderness wanderings and settled them in the land of Canaan. He gave them the law, entered into covenants with them, provided them with judges, prophets, and kings. The result of all this is to be glorious. Not a bit of this has been useless, or of no effect. The resultant days will be the best days that Israel and the world have ever experienced. The result has long been postponed, but it will surely come. None of His works, none of His words will ever return void. "Though it tarry, wait for it," is God's word concerning the outcome of His word and work."

In his next two paragraphs Mr. Stam, in slightly different words, repeats what he has already said before.

Now for some of the details:

## THE SIGNS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

As the two-body theory is based on an erroneous interpretation of Acts 26:22, so the two-kingdom theory is based on an erroneous interpretation of Acts 2:16-21.

Because Peter here, quoting Joel's prophecy, points out that the pouring out of the Spirit, the prophecies, visions, dreams, and other signs of "the last days" are to precede "the day of the Lord," Mr. Sellers concludes that "the last days" *themselves* are to be considered as separate and distinct from "the day of the Lord"; that "the day of the Lord" is not included in "the last days."

But on every hand the Old Testament prophecies concerning "the last days" describe what seems to be the kingdom reign of Christ. Then, says Mr. Sellers, there must be *two* kingdoms, for Joel's prophecy says the last days must come *before* the day of the Lord! Of course the prophecy does *not* say this, but Mr. Sellers feels sure it does, and is willing to change his interpretation of prophecy all around on the basis of this one verse.

Since I do not believe in any "two-body theory" or "two-kingdom theory" I will not deal with the first paragraph quoted above. My, what a beating this straw man is taking! As to the second paragraph, I repeat the last days in which Isaiah 2 and Acts 2 are fulfilled precede the day of the Lord. I have the explicit statement of Scripture on my side here, and I do not intend to move from this solid rock in order to debate whether the day of the Lord is included in the last days. So let us go on to his next statements, which are a little more interesting.

But this interpretation of Joel's prophecy confronts Mr. Sellers with more problems. The Old Testament prophecies concerning the last days speak of Israel's future glory and lead Mr. Sellers to believe that this period of time "will be the most glorious era that mankind has experienced since the fall." But *Joel's* prophecy of the last days speaks of "blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke." It speaks of the sun being turned to darkness and the moon into blood. Indeed all this is to usher in what the Old Testament prophecy itself calls "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:2).\*

This difficulty has forced Mr. Sellers to conclude that Acts 2:16-21 does not mean exactly what it seems to say.

Of the "wonders in the heavens above, and signs in the earth beneath," he says: "Here we see God Himself *giving further knowledge* by means of wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath" (Last Days, p. 6, our emphasis).

The "blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke"? "The meaning," he says, "is at present somewhat obscure. However, we can rest assured that it is not a curse. It appears in a list of blessings"! (Last Days, p. 6). Does this description sound like blessing? No. Does Mr. Sellers have any definite proof that it *is* a blessing? No, but it *must* be, for "it appears in a list of blessings!

But the "list of blessings" includes the sun being turned into darkness and the moon into blood. What about this? Mr. Sellers explains this away by the argument that in the last days (preceding the millennium the enlightenment which man will receive will eclipse the light of the sun so that "the sun will seem pale by comparison"! (Last Days, p. 6). He seems not to be too sure of his interpretation here, however, for he adds: "However, no matter what interpretation one may give to the details of blessing recorded in verses 17 to 20, we can rest assured that every item is a blessing related to knowledge" (Last Days, p. 6).

Think of this in the light of our Lord's own words as to these things:

**Matthew 24:29:** "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and **THE POWERS OF THE HEAVENS SHALL BE SHAKEN:**

**Mark 13:24, 25:** "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, "And the stars of heaven shall fall, and **THE POWERS THAT ARE IN HEAVEN SHALL BE SHAKEN.**

**Luke 21:25, 26:** "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; **AND UPON THE EARTH DISTRESS OF NATIONS, WITH PERPLEXITY; THE SEA AND THE WAVES ROARING; "MEN'S HEARTS FAILING THEM FOR FEAR, AND FOR LOOKING AFTER THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE COMING ON THE EARTH: FOR THE POWERS OF HEAVEN SHALL BE SHAKEN."**

All three of these passages refer to the same time spoken of in Acts 2:16-21, for in each case the next verse goes on to describe the return of Christ. Can anyone call these passages "lists of blessings"?

\*See also Joel 2:11: "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible." In this portion Mr. Stam makes some of his greatest blunders. I cannot help but be amused when he says, "Does this description sound like blessing?" Since when do we interpret Scripture by sound? Again he says, "Does Mr. Sellers have any definite proof that it is a blessing?" This he answers himself with an emphatic "No"; however, it would be well to let Mr. Sellers give his own answer since the question concerns him. I do have the most definite proof that the things listed in Acts 2:17-20, all of which are to come to pass before the great day of the Lord begins, are positive blessings. Let us consider these step by step. This list of blessings is prefaced by the words: "It shall come to pass **IN** the last days, saith God:"

***I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.*** Now to me, that even sounds like a blessing. Does it sound like a curse to Mr. Stam? Can words like these describe a curse? If so, then I may as well abandon all hope of ever understanding the truth of God. That the thing promised here is a most positive blessing, all must admit.

***Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.*** To me the verb prophesy means to tell forth the Word of God as God's own spokesman. The promise here includes the message to be declared as well as the ability to tell it forth. This is in harmony with Isaiah 2:2, and it is a most positive blessing.

***Your young men shall see visions.*** This does not sound like a curse. This is not a curse. This is a positive blessing. The whole world will advance in knowledge through what these young men see.

***And your old men shall dream dreams.*** Are these hideous nightmares, or are these dreams the work of the Spirit of God acting while men sleep, redeeming each moment of time for God's glory? I insist that this is a blessing.

***And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy.*** Again I say, this even *sounds* like a blessing. Does it sound like a curse to Mr. Stam?

***And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath.*** *Do these words describe curses or blessings?* Does God show these wonders in heaven and signs upon earth for man's good or ill? Are these done to terrify men, or to reveal God? See Psalm 105:5, 106:7; Isaiah 8:18. But let us not break this passage here in the middle of the thought. We are told in the next statement just what signs and wonders are that are to be in

heaven and earth.

**Blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke.** In the great Psalm of Asaph (Psalm 74) he laments to the Lord: "We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." Psalm 74:9. Now Acts 2 tells of a time when this deplorable condition in Israel will no longer be true. When God fulfills these promises, there will be men in Israel who will have understanding of the times, men who do the work of the prophet, and the signs will be restored and multiplied. The first of these signs that will be in both heaven and earth is declared to be "blood." Since only the diamond can cut the diamond, we must seek to interpret Scripture by Scripture. Blood as a sign can be indicative of great blessing, and blood as a fact may indicate a curse. But here we are considering blood as a God-given sign to both heaven and earth. Note these passages.

The blood shall be to you for a token. Exodus 12:13. When I see the blood I will pass over you. Exodus 12:13. Behold the blood of the covenant. Exodus 24:8.

It is the blood that maketh atonement. Lev. 17:11.

At this stage of my understanding I am not able to say with any degree of certainty just what the sign of blood in heaven and in earth means. I believe it has to do with the blood of Christ. Hebrews 10:26-31 belongs to that time after men have received the knowledge of the truth and have been sanctified by the blood of the covenant. This is under the kingdom of the heavens. The sign of the blood will be an actual fact in those days. To honor it will mean blessing, to despise it will bring a curse.

Now let us consider "fire and vapour of smoke" together. Again we will let Scripture interpret Scripture. Note first a few passages.

**The angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire. Exodus 3:2.**

**And the Lord went away before them in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light. Exodus 13:21, 22.**

Passages such as these could be multiplied; but the most important passage in this connection is **Isaiah 4:4, 5.**

**When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense (covering).**

I believe that this "cloud and smoke. . . and flaming fire" mentioned by Isaiah is identical with the "fire and vapour of smoke" of Acts 2 and the "fire and pillars of smoke" of Joel 2. Isaiah speaks of one great cloud, Joel speaks of the "pillars" that come down upon every dwelling on mount Zion, and Acts speaks of the great cloud. This cloud and its pillars will become a shining of a flaming fire by night. It will be one of the most majestic sights that men have ever witnessed. Travelers from all over the world will go to Palestine to see this. What will it be? Is it a greater manifestation of the Shekinah glory, which Israel saw of old? Does it appear only at certain times, or will it be a continuous spectacle? I do not have the answers, but I have no doubt of the fact. The fleeting glimpses I have had of the aurora borealis tells me a little of what it may be like. Yes, with all my heart I believe that "blood, fire, and vapor" speak of blessings to the world. These words even "sound" like blessings when we get in tune with the Word of God.

We will now consider the last two "wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath."

***The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.*** We must not forget that these are two of the signs and wonders. This will be more graphic if we consider it as follows:

- A. I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath.
  - a. Blood
  - b. fire
  - c. vapor of smoke
  - d. sun turned into darkness
  - e. moon turned into blood.

That these are not curses should be plain at once from the fact that God has declared these five things are signs and wonders, which He will show in heaven and on earth. But since Mr. Stam denies that they are blessings, we will examine them carefully. To do this we will need to face certain stubborn facts that cannot be denied.

This matter of "the sun being turned into darkness" is positively dated. It takes place *before* the day of the Lord comes. Not *in*, not *after*, but *before*.

In Matthew 24:29 and Mark 13:24 we read of the sun being darkened, etc., but in both passages this event is positively dated. This happens "after the tribulation of those days," or as Mark says it, "after that tribulation. "

Now it is my understanding, and it is also Mr. Stam's view, that the tribulation is entirely within and a part of the day of the Lord. In fact it is my understanding that the day of the Lord begins with the seventieth week of Daniel, continues throughout the millennium, and also includes the little season after the thousand years. Since the tribulation is the last three and a half years of Daniel's seventieth week, an event that takes place "after the tribulation" must happen in the day of the Lord. I hate to point out the obvious, but an event that happens *before* the day of the Lord comes cannot be the same as an event that takes place (*after* the day of the Lord has come. Therefore, for Mr. Stam to say as he does that Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24, 25 and Luke 21:25, 26 "refer to the same time spoken of in Acts 2:16-21," is to deliberately ignore the plain statements made in these passages. One says "before the day of the Lord." The other says "after the tribulation." These times cannot be the same.

Honesty of interpretation forces me to believe that the sun being turned into darkness before the day of the Lord, and the sun being darkened in the day of the Lord are two entirely different events. The first of these is a sign or wonder that God will show in heaven and on earth. The second is a curse and is connected with the wrath of God that is poured upon the world after the tribulation. The character of this great sign can only be understood by means of other Scripture truths.

When Paul met the Lord on the Damascus road the sun was, to state it in figurative language, "turned into darkness." The light he saw was "above the brightness of the sun" (Acts 26:22). This being the case, Paul and his traveling companions could have found relief for their eyes by looking away from this light and gazing directly into the noon day Syrian sun. This incident, to me, makes it plain just how the sun could figuratively speaking be turned into darkness. In Isaiah 60:19 we read a promise to Israel:

**The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Isa. 60:19.**

When this is a reality, then the sun will be darkened and the moon will be turned into blood.

Neither of these expressions are literal.

It is interesting to note here that in Joel 2:13 we read of the sun being turned into darkness *before* the day of the Lord, but in Joel 3:15 we read of "the sun and moon being darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining," and this takes place in the day of the Lord. These are two different things. They happen at two different times. The first is a blessing of God, the second is related to the wrath of God.

But, we have tarried too long here. Let us go on to Mr. Stam's next paragraph.

This is what comes from the erroneous and arbitrary conclusion that Acts 2:20 teaches that "the last days" *precede* "the day of the Lord," while in fact the passage by no means excludes "the day of the Lord" from "the last days," nor does it even exclude these signs from the day of the Lord in its broader sense, for, while "the day of the Lord" here in Joel 2 and Acts 2 refers to the reign of Christ itself, in other passages it includes the judgments by which He will usher it in. These particular and general uses of the term are perfectly natural, for while man's day *finally* and *fully* comes to an end when Christ takes His place on David's throne, it *begins* to come to an end when the Lord visits the earth with judgments. Thus man's day will give place to the day of the Lord during the period of His judgments and by means of them. When the prophets speak of the judgments by which the actual reign of Christ will be ushered in it is most natural that they use the phrase, "the day of the Lord" in its more confined and particular sense.

I have read this paragraph quoted above a half-dozen times and cannot understand it; therefore, I can say nothing about it. If words make an argument, I will concede this round. As the writer of Hebrews says: "Let us go on."

### **THE POURING OUT OF THE SPIRIT**

As to the pouring out of the Spirit in the last days, Mr. Sellers lays great stress upon the fact that the Spirit was to be poured out upon "all flesh" (Acts 2:17). The "all" here, he argues, means *all without exception*. The Spirit will be poured out upon all men all over the world. He speaks of this as "the full literal fulfillment of this prophecy." If an all-inclusive *all* is what constitutes a full, literal fulfillment of this prophecy, however, our brother ought to go along with those who teach that the Spirit will also be poured out upon the dogs and cats and upon the wild animals, and that this accounts for the change in the animal creation so beautifully described in prophecy. Surely Mr. Sellers would not deny that the animal creation is also flesh, and Acts 2:17 says "*all flesh*." "There is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." (I Cor. 15:39).

No, Mr. Sellers would not think of denying "that animal creation is also flesh." In fact, here is where Mr. Stam is going to get a jolt. In spite of the fact that he has made a blessed truth utterly ridiculous by speaking of the Spirit being "poured out upon the dogs and cats," I do believe with all my heart that "all flesh" in Acts 2:17 includes the animal creation. However, let's keep the record straight-I believe that God is going to pour out OF His Spirit. This does not mean that the Spirit in His entirety will be poured forth on "all flesh." This pouring forth of God's Spirit will be measured to all creation. It will mean one thing to Israel, another thing to the nations, another thing to the animal creation.

In Isaiah 11:6.9 we read of a time to come when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf, the lion, and the fading will walk together, and a little child

shall lead them; the cow and the bear find their pasture together; the lion will eat straw like the ox; the infant shall play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child shall place its hand over a viper's den. No animal will hurt or destroy under God's holy government, because the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the basin of the sea. Since this peaceful condition among the animals is attributed to the earth being filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, then the animals must be given their share of this knowledge. I believe that this condition will be one of the results of God pouring out OF His Spirit on the animal creation. Yes, no dog will ever chase a cat, and no cat will ever kill a bird after God has done this.

Many will say that they can easily believe this of the millennium, but they cannot believe that it takes place before the second coming of Christ. What we can or cannot believe should not be the basis of truth. The Bible reveals that a condition of animal life somewhat like this existed till the time of the flood. Furthermore, the deliverance of the animal creation from the curse was one of the benefits that was to come from the first coming of Christ. A glimpse of this was seen even before His death. He was with the wild beasts and they did Him no harm (Mark 1:13). The colt upon which no man ever sat was gentle under His weight (Mark 11:2). He gave His disciples power to tread on serpents and scorpions (Luke 10:19). After His death and resurrection He commanded His disciples to go into all the world and herald the good news that is related to every creature (Mark 16:15); and one of the evidences of God's control was "they shall take up serpents."

Mr. Stam continues to deal with "all flesh" in the next portion of his article.

The simple fact is that the word *all*, both in Scripture and as we ourselves use it, does not always mean all *without exception*. Often it means all, *without distinction*. Here it means all *kinds of flesh in Israel*: sons, daughters, young men, old men, God's servants, His handmaidens, etc., as the context plainly shows. We quote **Acts 2:17** here to emphasize the fact that it deals exclusively with Israel:

**"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and YOUR sons and YOUR daughters shall prophesy, and YOUR young men shall see visions, and YOUR old men shall dream dreams:"**

Mr. Sellers connects his misinterpretation of this passage with John 16:7, 8, which he also grossly misinterprets. We quote the passage: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I .go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:"

To Mr. Sellers this means that, "Thus God will literally pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh" (Last Days, p. 5). Pointing out that the word "Comforter" (Gr. Parakletos) means *one called alongside to help*, he says: "the Spirit of Truth will some day act to all mankind as a Paraclete" (Word of Truth, Vol. XI, No.5, P. 113).

But in John 16:8 our Lord said that the Comforter would "*reprove*" the world of sin, etc. Does this sound like the pouring out of the Spirit upon them so that they may prophesy, etc.? Mr. Sellers has that explained too. He simply waters down the word "reprove" to make it "a tender word", though he must acknowledge that "it contains also the ideas of to shame, to put to shame; to do so by proving one in the wrong." But surely this is not the effect that the pouring out of the Spirit had upon the disciples in Acts 2.

We confess that we are amazed at such handling of the Scriptures as this. Does it make no difference that the Lord says to His disciples: "The Comforter will. . . come unto YOU. . . I will send Him unto YOU ' but "He will reprove THE WORLD"?

Mr. Stam's emphasis of the pronouns fails to show that this passage deals exclusively with Israel. True, it was addressed to the men of Israel, and all the pronouns refer to Israel, but while speaking to Israel God announced that He would pour out of His Spirit upon ALL FLESH.

Following this Mr. Stam is quite careful not to reveal to his readers my real teaching concerning John 16:7-8. He quotes a snippet from my pamphlet *The Last Days* and another from Volume XI, Number 5 of *The Word of Truth*, and presents this as my teaching. I make no attempt to answer this criticism, but will continue on to his next portion.

Elsewhere in John's Gospel it is made clear that the world was not to receive the Spirit: John 14:16, 17: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give YOU another

Comforter, that He may abide with YOU for ever; "EVEN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE IT SEETH HIM NOT, NEITHER KNOWETH HIM: BUT YE KNOW HIM; FOR HE DWELLETH WITH YOU, AND SHALL BE IN YOU."

One more detail should be noted in connection with the supposed pouring out of the Spirit to enlighten all the world. Is it not true that when the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, by the Spirit: "*THIS IS THAT which was spoken by the prophet Joel; . . . I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh*"? Was the Spirit at that time poured out upon the Gentiles? We might say that as the fulfillment of the prophecy had but begun with *Israel's* sons and daughters, but Mr. Sellers insists that "*your sons. . . your daughters,*" etc. includes all mankind (Last Days, p. 4).

Does Mr. Stam know what he is saying here? Anyone who believes the Lord readily admits that the world cannot receive the Spirit. But will Mr. Stam go so far as to say that the Spirit can do nothing for a man of the world, or that no man of the world ever receives the Spirit? What about Starn? What about Sellers? I was once in the world and of the world. The Spirit worked on me, led me to the Savior, and today I have the Holy Spirit.

Again I must correct Mr. Stam as he seeks to hang around my neck the millstone of something, which I do not teach. I neither say or insist as he declares that "*Your sons. . . your daughters, etc.,*" includes all mankind. He cites "Last Days, page 4" as proof of this, but there is not a line there to support his charge. In fact, on page 5 of "The Last Days" I say the very opposite. In regard to "*Your sons and your daughters*" I say: "This promise here is, I believe, limited to Israel, and it tells what the true sons and daughters of Israel will do in the last days."

Mr. Stam should not attempt to deceive his readers in this manner. I once had a school teacher whose favorite phrases seemed to be, "Find the antecedent." or, "What is the antecedent?" I have never forgotten these instructions in dealing with the Word of God. The words of Acts 2:14-39 are addressed to Israel, both here and in Joel from which they were quoted. In connection with what is said to Israel it is said that God will pour out of His Spirit on all flesh. But Peter is not speaking to "all flesh"; therefore, it is impossible that "your sons" or "your daughters" could mean the sons and daughters of all flesh. "All flesh" is not the antecedent of the plural pronoun "your," as any schoolboy will know. So why charge me with teaching this.

We will consider his next statements.

## **DEPARTURE FROM the MYSTERY**

Many, many more flaws could be pointed out in Mr. Sellers' arguments for a supposed premillennial kingdom, particularly in his exposition of the parable of the wheat and the tares, the former part of which he interprets to mean that the Lord, before His return, will

sow "the entire world" with "sons of the kingdom"; that only later will tares be sown among them. But the foundation for the two-kingdom theory is so weak, and the superstructure so poorly put together that the building, foundation and all, must be condemned.

The great pity is that Mr. Sellers is departing farther and farther from "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery." Paul, by the Spirit, calls this great truth the capstone of divine revelation (Col. 1:25, 26), he says that hearts are knit together and encouraged by it (Col. 2:1-3), that saints are established by it (Rom. 16:25), that God would make known the riches of the glory of it (Col. 1:27), that he prayed most earnestly that believers might see the glorious truth of the mystery (Eph. 1:15-23), that they might comprehend "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of it (Eph. 3:14-18). He suffered bonds and imprisonment to make it known (Eph. 6:19, 20, Col. 4:3, 11 Tim. 2:9).

But Mr. Sellers has found something still more wonderful than the truth of the body of Christ with its position, blessings and prospect "far above all." He says:

"I CONSIDER THIS TRUTH OF THE PREMILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS TO BE THE MOST TRANSCENDANT THAT IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO UNCOVER AND DECLARE" (Word of Truth, Vol. XI, No.5, p. 98, all caps).

From this it is clear enough that the proclamation of the mystery no longer holds first place with Mr. Sellers. This is not strange in the light of the fact that he has for years been discouraging believers from appropriating blessings associated with the mystery; blessings meant particularly for us in this dispensation of the grace of God. In this connection a humble old saint of God once said to us: "If Satan can't keep you from seeing the mystery, he'll push you clear through."

If any man thinks more of that transcendent truth which Paul calls the Secret, if any man holds it in higher reverence, if anyone is doing more than I am to open up the hearts of God's people to consider this truth, then let him prove it by his deeds and not by his words. I slowly came into this truth, but ever since that day 18 years ago when the beauty and glory of this truth dawned upon me, I have let nothing stand in the road of possessing it, proclaiming it, and making its glories known. Some years ago I got the conviction that some of the darkness, some of the problems, some of the difficulties that still surround this truth were caused by an improper understanding of the Acts period which preceded it, and the state or condition which follows it. This more than anything else led me into my present study, which to me has been so fruitful and has been of rich blessing to many people.

Inasmuch as my commission is to proclaim the Word, I am free to deal with anything that is in the Word. The fact that much of my labors at present are in that portion of the Word that deals with the kingdom of the heavens does not mean for one second that I have departed from "the Mystery." I repudiate this criticism coming as it does from one who has not yet gone beyond his ankles so far as the truth of the Secret is concerned. Mr. Stam thinks you have seen "the Mystery" when you give up water baptism, but he brands you as an ultra-dispensationalist when you abandon all attempts to observe parts of Israel's passover under the guise of the Lord's supper.

Now we come to Mr. Stam's final word:

It is paradoxical, but not surprising, that the very one who teaches that *Joel's* prophecy concerning *Israel's* sons and daughters includes all mankind, should also teach that the rapture, of which *Paul* wrote to the *Gentile* Thessalonians, is a kingdom hope, and not for us.

Let us not be confused by such handling of the Scriptures. No promise was ever made to Israel about being "caught up" to heaven. It is Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, who urges us to be always waiting and looking for our Lord to come and catch us away; always listening for the shout (I Thess. 1:10, 4:16, Phil. 3:20, Tit. 2:13).

This does not mean that we are disinterested in what will take place on earth after that. It fills us with a holy joy to think that God will one day put down this wicked rebellion against His Son, and that this earth, where at present He is despised and blasphemed, will yet be His footstool with all the world honoring and worshipping Him. Indeed, as the days grow darker it seems that the dispensation of grace may soon be over; that the Lord may soon recall His ambassadors and prepare to declare war.

Let us, then, who are saved, buy up the time and give ourselves unreservedly for the proclamation of the truth. And should this message fall into the hands of an unsaved friend: "*we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God:*" before it is too late,

"FOR GOD HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US, WHO KNEW NO SIN; THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM" (11 Cor. 5:20, 21).

Well, here we are-back to "the rapture" again. This is where I came in, and it is where I am going out. As a parting word let me say that when God does declare war it will be against Satan and not against man.

### **Dr. Keith Brooks' Criticism**

Let us now consider the criticism of Dr. Keith L Brooks, published in *Prophecy Monthly*. He writes under the heading of *Lost Chord Found*, and I reproduce his article in full.

The hair-splitting is still going on among the ultra-dispensationalists. We had hoped that the dissecting of Scripture, which leads to the dividing of believers would proceed no further, but we were disappointed, for now a battle is on over a new theory which holds that there is to be a "Premillennial Kingdom" *prior* to the Millennial Kingdom. This teachings is promoted by Otis Q. Sellers. So extreme is this that another man whose extreme dispensationalism has been exposed in a number of Fundamental papers, is leading the fight against Sellers and arguing well.

Mr. Sellers presents his teaching as a personal discovery. In his recent pamphlet, "The Last Days" he teaches that *before* the second coming of Christ there is to be an era of peace and righteousness, justice and equity on earth. This period, and not the Millennium, he contends, is what the Old Testament Scriptures refer to as "the last days." Mr. Sellers says the discovery is the "lost chord" which now makes for the harmonious understanding of Scripture.

He says this period which must precede Christ's return is to be the most glorious era that mankind has experienced since the fall, although the glory of the Millennial age will surpass it. He declares that this newly discovered period is not to be short. "My studies have led me to think that it may be as much as five centuries in length," he says.

What is the principal Scripture on which Mr. Sellers bases this idea? It is Acts 2 where Peter, quoting from Joel 2 shows that the pouring out of the Spirit and the signs of the last days were to come to pass "before that great and notable day of the Lord come." He argues that "the last days" must come before "the day of the Lord" which includes the Millennium. Let the reader decide for himself where the language excludes the day of the

Lord from the last days. If the Bible teaches two divine kingdoms on earth, we have never come upon it in 40 years of rather thorough searching of the Book.

Some have thought that if Uncle Sam could concoct a big enough atomic or hydrogen bomb, he could hold the gun on all other nations and thus preserve the peace of the world. This would be assuming that our Uncle Sam is a man of the purest motives and so clever that the devil could not outsmart him. Something tells us that only the coming of the Prince of peace Himself can bring peace.

Anyone reading this will see that Dr. Brooks' knowledge of my teaching came entirely from Mr. Stam's criticism. He is inclined to get much of his information in this manner. In this same issue a minister complains that Dr. Brooks had not presented his position faithfully, and Dr. Brooks replied by saying that his remarks were based more upon another man's summary than on any direct statement from the man himself. This is so often the case. In the article by Dr. Brooks reprinted above he says only what Stam said, plus a childish paragraph about an atomic bomb, which has no bearing on the subject. In answer to his last sentence I would say the Prince of peace came. He died upon the cross and purchased peace for the world. The world has never yet experienced the peace that He purchased in His first coming. .

### POSTSCRIPT

Since writing the answer to Mr. Stam's criticism the June issue of *Questions and Answers* has been placed in my hands. In view of the announcement in the May issue that the editor, Harold P. Morgan, accepted the invitation of John H. Kessler to deal with the word "reprove" in John 16:7, 8, we expected a major article on this subject. But instead almost half the June issue is taken up by a letter written to my good friend of many years standing Harry Miller. This letter is supposed to deal with my teaching on the kingdom of the heavens. It is published under the strange title of "The Menace of Pseudo-Scholarship" and the subtitle of "A Factual, Objective Viewpoint." I personally cannot see that it is either factual or objective. When the facts should have been given they are missing, and unless the object of the letter was to create confusion, it is not objective to say the least. He gives a history of his contacts with those who have written on the kingdom, but this has no bearing upon the subject. When he does finally get around to my teachings on the kingdom of the heavens here is what he has to say:

Mr. Sellers, it seems, would have us believe that his views on the Kingdom differ radically from all those who have preceded him, especially the teachings of Mr. Philip Mauro. Despite all that Mr. Sellers has to say to the contrary, there are strong, marked resemblances between what the editor of *The Word of Truth* has to say and Mr. Mauro's later teachings. Any dissimilarities between these two writers are trivial.

In answer to this I would say that throughout my entire ministry I have received help from the writings of many men. Sometimes this help has been only a choice word, sometimes a phrase, again a pertinent sentence, and at times an idea, interpretation, or a teaching. At one time I was an omnivorous reader, and am ready to acknowledge the help I have received from other writers. In fact most of my theological education came that way. However, I wish to emphatically state that at no time have the writings of Philip Mauro ever contributed so much as one idea to my meager fund of knowledge. Therefore, to infer that my teachings on the kingdom of the heavens came from Philip Mauro is a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts and is not the truth. And since my views and those held by Mauro are poles apart, to say that black is white is nothing compared to saying that our views on the kingdom are the same. Of course Morgan does not say they are the same. He uses such

terms as "strong marked resemblances" and "any dissimilarities between these two writers are trivial." I know of no better answer to this than to quote that little masterpiece by Rod Maclean, which appeared in *Collier's* several months ago.

**Broccoli,  
While not exoccoli,  
Is within an inach  
Of being spinach.**

In the next paragraph of his published letter to Harry Miller, Morgan declares:

Elsewhere, I purpose showing that Mr. Sellers' notions of a "Premillennial Kingdom, which he maintains is to last for Five Hundred Years is a "lift" from other men's writings.

The word "elsewhere" covers a big territory, but I fail to find any fulfillment of this promise in the fifteen remaining paragraphs, which follow it. This promise is made, then forgotten.

Again he says:

Relative to the theory of a "Premillennial Kingdom," the foundation for which teaching Mr. Sellers tells us he finds in the gospel of John, and which he boldly asserts he himself dug out of the Word of God, it may surprise you to learn that there are several books extant, written and published before Mr. Sellers was even born; that give in detail identical views regarding this theory of a Premillennial Kingdom.

It is to be noted that the names of these books are not given. I, and many others, would very much like to know the names of these books, the authors, and the publishers. If someone did set forth these identical views over fifty years ago, *I want those books*. There is nothing that would please me more than to find that others had discovered and presented these great truths before me. I know I did not get these truths from the writings of other men. Therefore, if others by independent study have come to see the same truth that I have found by my own independent study, it will further assure me as to the correctness of my present position. The truth can be much better established by the mouths of two or three witnesses. *Let us have the names of these books*. I honestly thrill in anticipation of reading the works of others who "give in detail identical views" with mine. I am going to be frankly disappointed if Morgan fails to name these books. And if he does, I promise to share this information with my readers in the next issue.

In conclusion I desire to say that I was not born yesterday. Years of hard knocks in the school of experience has taught me many lessons and has led to certain courses of action. For example, if after I have conversed with a man I find that my words have been twisted and they come back at me as something I never meant, my rule is to break off all conversations. Again, if I correspond with a man and later find that my statements have been interpreted to say something that I never intended to say, then my rule is never to write again, not even answer when they write to me. There is little value in correspondence if your misinterpreted letters become a part of a *dossier*, which is later to be used against you. Finally, I have learned to take a long, hard, suspicious look at every proposal that comes from those who have no sympathy with me or my ministry. When anyone comes to me with a proposition that he be permitted to come into a meeting where I am teaching and to ask me ten carefully worded and prepared questions, I am suspicious. Especially so when that person insists that I must publish in *The Word of Truth* his ten questions and my answers. A proper answer to one question might take as much as one hour, and when this is multiplied by ten, the impossibility of such a session is manifest. My extemporaneous, unprepared answers to ten carefully prepared and cleverly worded questions would, when the stenographic record was published, make me look

ridiculous. Yet this was the proposition offered first by phone, and later by telegram to the Committee of the Bible Fellowship of Philadelphia. When anyone presents such a proposition to me, and if I know in advance that this is the contents of such a letter, the sender will get it back unopened marked, "Refused, return to sender."

If Morgan has questions to ask me, he has his own publication in which to do so. I have my publication for carefully studied answers, if I see fit to answer.

***The End***

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