

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

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The Coming Prince of Princes

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Rising within the Holy Scriptures are references to “princes” in the earth. These princes are men of leadership and power throughout the centuries of history. Such leaders are presented as exalted ones, men of greatness, prefects, rulers, those who have risen in prominence amidst both history and prophecy. This Christmas we view with hope the coming Prince of Peace Who will rise above all exalted ones of history.

Princes of Biblical History

Within the pages of biblical history, the concept of “prince” is understood as a person of

chief rank or authority. The title is given for the leader of a nation (1 Kings 14:7), a satrap over a province (Dan. 3:2), or the head of a tribe (Num. 1:16) or tribal family (Num. 25:14). The English word *prince* is a rendering from various Hebrew and Greek words.

We are first introduced to this title in Genesis 12:15, which speaks of princes who attended Pharaoh in Egypt, when Abraham went there to escape from the famine in Canaan. In Genesis 17:20 God promised Ishmael that twelve great princes would come from him. Princes are declared as leading, prominent men of the

This edition includes two more articles

The Concept and Appointment of Time and History
The Naivety of the Nativity

tribes of Israel. In Ezekiel 44 we read that during the Millennium, within the Temple built by Messiah, there will be a prince who will sit at the gate of the outward sanctuary, who will eat bread before the Lord. We also read of this prince in chapters 45 and 46. This particular prince cannot be Jesus Christ, for though great, this prince will personally be noted for worship and in leading the people in worship. It may be that God will honor David, who in the latter years of his life longed for a Temple for God, and prepared abundantly for it, yet was not permitted to build it. Possibly David will be this prince mentioned in Ezekiel, who longed to remain in the presence of the House of God, and (in time to come) will be in a glorified body leading Israel in worship to their King.

Ezekiel 28:2 reveals the prince of Tyrus (Tyre), an evil enemy of God's people. But there is presented

an authoritative prince behind this prince of Tyre who is Satan himself, described in 28:13–18. Here the prince/king of Tyre is a shadow and type of Satan.

First Corinthians 2:8 speaks of “the princes of this world,” whose hearts were set on crucifying the Lord Jesus. Had they known, however, what would result from the death of Jesus Christ, they would not have crucified Him. These were princes influenced by the prince Satan. Daniel 9:26 speaks of a “prince that shall come” who will destroy the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary. This prince (referring to Antichrist) will confirm a covenant with the Jews for one week.

Daniel's book gives much insight concerning princes who are great, high rulers in the spiritual world. The prince of Persia in Daniel 10:13 was the one who withstood Gabriel; the angel Gabriel was sent by God to speak with Daniel concerning his prayer at the outset of the chapter. It is stated that Michael, “one of the chief princes, came to help me.” The prince of Persia was Satan, the spiritual power behind the Persian Empire, who endeavored to convince Cyrus not to permit the Jews to return to Jerusalem at the end of the appointed time of seventy years. And yet the prince of the Jews, the angel Michael, fought against the prince of Persia, Satan. Michael won by moving upon Cyrus to let the Jews return to their homeland. We

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must remember that Satan is called the prince of this world (John 12:31) and the prince power of the air (Eph. 2:2).

The Eternal Prince of Princes

Another prince arises in biblical history Who is called “Messiah the Prince” (Dan. 9:25), Whom Daniel will also call the “Prince of princes” (8:25). Isaiah will call Him “The Prince of Peace” (9:6c). In the unfolding of the biblical history of princes, there will be the confrontation of the prince power of the air (the prince of this world) with the Prince of Peace, the Prince of princes, yea, Messiah the Prince. How will this confrontation come about and what will be its outcome?

To gain the answer to this twofold question, it is important to reflect upon the beginning and let the biblical story unfold. Dare we think upon the concept when time did not exist, when only the Trinitarian God existed in their eternal home of heaven. There was the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in a filial, interpenetrating relationship, as three distinct personalities, yet in the mystery of one substance. In this relationship the Father was eternally loving the Son, and the Son was eternally loving the Father, with the Holy Spirit eternally spirating or proceeding out of the Father through the Son in love.

Before the creation of the vast universe, even before the creation of space itself, there was God the Trinity,

and only the Trinity. The Father appointed the plan of a love gift for His Son. This love gift would be the fullness of creation. The creation of an immense universe became the initial presentation of this gift, which would include an innumerable host of angels composed of various orders in power and authority. They would be identified in the realms of principalities, powers, and dominions. Initially, in this love gift of creation, there was a spirit realm that existed in the presence of the Great Spirit God.

But in that unique angelic realm of innumerable hosts of angels, there was a prince, an anointed one, a cherub who covered the throne of God, one who seemed to have been the angel made for the Son, perfect in beauty, in music, in doxology to God. This was the son of the morning, Lucifer, who rose up against God His Creator. In his rebellion, this high ruler convinced one third of the angels to rebel with him against God; because of this rebellion, they were cast out of heaven, never to know a recovery from this fall and never to see the light of truth in the heaven of heavens again.

God then designed within the vastness of the universe a solar system with planets; its princely planet is call Earth. Here the Lord made many creatures; this variety of creation on the earth was a love gift for His Son. God created this love gift through His Son; nothing was made without coming into existence

through His Son (John 1:3). It was in this creation presented in Genesis 1:3 that God made a creature called man; this creature became the prince of all the creation on earth. He was to have dominion over all the creation of the earth (Gen. 1:26).

God placed this man in a royal garden called the Garden of Eden. The Lord God gave a stipulation to the man: he could partake of the fruit of all the trees of the garden for his pleasure, but one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was forbidden fruit. God made it clear that in the day that he ate of that tree, he would surely die. Yet there was also a Tree of Life that awaited the man; the partaking of this tree would seal a perpetual, unending time of existence. It must be remembered that God made man with the ability not to sin or die; if he had partaken of the Tree of Life, then God would have sealed him with the inability to sin or die. Sadly, Adam chose to fall away from his Creator, to bring death to the creation, and to carve out his own path that would lead to destruction. Because of man's choice to fall away from God, all of creation would be plunged into subjection to vanity (Gen. 3:14–19; Rom. 8:20).

The man Adam was expelled from the garden, kept from the Tree of Life, and both his individual life and all of humanity were given to the great nature of sin and the trouble it would bring. Job's words certainly became a part of the testimony of

humanity: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). The unfolding of Bible history declares the tragedy of humanity in its plight of sin, darkness, despair, and hopelessness without God. Although there was no hope of recovery from the fall of the angels, would there be any hope for man and the planet Earth?

Rising from the shadows and types of the Old Testament and from the clear announcement of the New Testament, the Gospel tells of a plan that God made from the foundation of the world. In this plan God would somehow bring about the restoration of this love gift to His Son. The cost of this gift would be overwhelmingly great: it will cost His very Son, the *supreme* love of the Father's heart. Yes, it would mean the very life of this Eternal Son—in death. The plan was sealed even before the earth was made; this plan gave fallen man mercy and the postponement of judgment.

A sliver of prophetic light was given that day at the fall of man. The serpent, which Satan used as an instrument to bring the temptation, would be cast to the ground by God, to the very dust from which man was taken. This great mystery behind this curse of the serpent would be unveiled one day when the woman's seed would crush the serpent's head. Yet in the crushing of the serpent's head, the seed of the woman's heel would be crushed. The serpent's

head would be brought to the dust, yet God would come through the dust of man to crush its head.

The Coming of the Prince of Princes

Four thousand years of history unfolded as God's men preached the message of the Gospel to come. Providential expressions of shadows and types were given, as many prophecies that became voices of hope poured forth from the prophets. Then, when the fullness of time was known in history, God the Holy Spirit came to a young virgin and created a microscopic seed which was used to bring about a holy conception within her. At that moment, the Son of God left the palace of heaven and slipped into that creation within the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Son, the second member of the Trinity, entered into that womb; and, from that moment on and forever, was joined with creation. The eternal Son now entered the dimension of time as a man. For nine months the Father formed and fashioned the precious body of His Son (Heb. 10:5).

Then came the appointed night when the Child was born among men, yet He was the Son that was given. Yes, God had now entered "into" creation; God now inhabited "time." For 33½ years He became obedient to the law of the Jewish ethnic race into which He was born; He perfectly kept that Law in all of its aspects. One day He stepped out

of a crowd to be baptized by John, who announced Him to the Jewish world. He preached, He lived. He lived as a man, as a servant, and gave the fullness of earthly life to His Father on earth in the dimension of time.

But the day came when He knew that His crucial "hour" had come (John 13:3). This "hour" was a season of time that commenced in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He was alone praying. It was here that God the Father showed Him a cup. Although certainly it was to be a cup of suffering, down in that cup was a deep darkness that had never been known before. The Son prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus uses the infinitive instead of the imperative in this request. It deepens the note of humility and resignation, as if to say, "Father, if Thou art willing to remove this cup from me . . ." The infinitive indicates that there is no expectation of a response; it is almost a sigh, for no further request is made. "Father, if Thy decreed will is to remove this cup from me . . . nevertheless not my wish (or desired will), but thine be done."

The depth of this cup revealed something beyond the sufferings of the cross; it revealed that in His drinking of that cup, the Son and Father would be separated from each other. Because He would bear the sins and judgment of all history, it

necessitated the experience of eternal separation, for that was part of the judgment of eternity a sinner would bear. Hell is an eternal banishment of the sinner from God. Therefore, the Father would have to turn His back on His Son Who would become the substitute for the sinner. An eternal separation would take place in time. This separation was an eternal judgment which the eternal Son experienced. This is a mystery that only God could comprehend and that only God could bring about.

Jesus, the Son of God, had told a betraying disciple earlier that night, "That that thou doest do quickly." This Judas Iscariot began gathering many soldiers provided by the Sanhedrin Court; he came into that Garden of the "Olive Press." Also in the Garden of Gethsemane, the battle against the prince power of the air began, as Christ entered into an agony so deep that the Father had to send an angel to strengthen him (Luke 22:43, 44). His "agony" was not a struggle of His will over the cup that would be given to Him by the Father to drink. No, this agony was where the battle commenced with the Devil, that culminated in the judgment of the Devil on the cross.

It was early that morning that Judas came and betrayed the Son of God with a kiss. The Son was taken through six court trials and suffered in His created body four great beatings by men. He had to be on the cross by 9:00 a.m., the time of

the morning sacrifice, and would hang for six hours (the number of man) until the evening sacrifice at 3:00 p.m.

The first three hours Christ resolved the appointment of His personal life to the Father in a Burnt Offering—He had become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Phil. 2:8). This was the sweet-smelling savor of the Son's death before the Father. Then His address to the Father now turned to "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" At noon, He entered into the judgment of the Father, as He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21) and bore our sins in His created body (1 Pet. 2:24). Within those hours, the Eternal Son of God experienced the greatest chastenings of God upon Him, including the eternal damnation of hell and of separation from God.

But the moment came when He knew that all had been fulfilled (John 19:28), and He cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30), or the Greek rendering, "It is absolutely perfected, consummated, brought to completion." It would be here that the Prince of Peace, Messiah the Prince, would judge in the final verdict the prince of this world, the prince power of the air, the Devil. This Prince Messiah made peace between God and man, that whosoever would believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Christ had to die in time, for Adam fell in time, on a given day, in a moment of crisis. Christ died on

a tree, the means through which the first temptation came to Eve, and it was through the symbol of that tree (the term being used six times in the New Testament to represent the cross) that man was reconciled to God. The hanging on a tree was added to the aftermath of a capital punishment; the dead body was hung and displayed on a tree to expose the shame of the cursed one (Deut. 21:20–23). Christ would take the place of rebellious sons and bear in Himself the curse for man.

Though slain from the foundation of the world in the eternal present-tense mind of God, the Son had to enter time and wrought salvation for man in time. He dismissed His Spirit from that body, which went to the place of the departed spirits of men, His body being placed in a tomb. But on a given day, the first day of the week, His Spirit slipped back into that carefully preserved body and arose from the dead in time. He shewed Himself alive with many infallible proofs during a forty-day period. He then ascended into heaven where today He waits for the word from His Father to come and take His waiting people home to heaven. Until then He is the Prince of Peace ruling within the hearts of those who believe and have come to put their trust in Him.

Conclusion

It has been two thousand years since that glorious ascension of the

Son into heaven, leading captive all of those righteous from upper Hades. Only God the Father knows the day when He will send His Son back to the air, Who will descend from heaven with all who are in Him in heaven (1 Thess. 4:14), and then take a generation of watching, waiting saints upon the earth unto Himself. He will then return to heaven with them, as His second ascension. He will take a book from the hand of His Father, open the seals of that book, and resolve the Day of Man in judgments upon the earth. He alone knows the time period.

Daniel's Last Week against the Jewish nation will begin the last seven years of the Tribulation Period—the time of Jacob's Trouble. The Son will then come from heaven with all the saints in glorified bodies; His feet will touch the Mount of Olives, causing an earthquake, wherein He will make His way to Megiddo (Zechariah 14). The thirty-day Battle of Armageddon will take place followed by a period of forty-five days (possibly for the renovation of the planet, Isaiah 35); then the Millennium will begin. Satan will be cast into a bottomless pit (Revelation 20) but released at the end of those days for a final, futile battle (Rev. 20:7–10) followed by the White Throne judgment.

[Although some would not agree with our *ordo apokalupsis* (order of events), we take the Book of Revelation in a natural unfolding sequence with the conjunctions *and*

and *now* being constantly used for the beginning of chapters and verses. Whatever the order one takes, there must be the firm allegiance to the Second Coming of Christ and His resolve of all of history.]

We are then told, in Revelation 21 and 22, that a new heaven and a new earth will consummate the restoration of all things. Though in the Millennium the curse is partially lifted, the new earth will be one of perfection. Humanity will step from the final days of the Millennium into the new earth, where nations will inhabit the planet forever, with nations and families bringing forth children sinless and living forever. When Christ and God the Father come within a New Jerusalem, they will be the temple and the light, for the sun will be no more. God will move to His footstool.

As we reflect this season on the first coming of Messiah the Prince, the Prince of Peace, may we ever be reminded that He is the Prince of princes. One day He will return for His own; He will set up His kingdom and rule the world; and there will come a “time” when He will bring in a new earth that will exist with His presence and the presence of His people forever and ever. A people will be wrought by God’s amazing grace, redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, and nation throughout the history of the earth to be the Bride of God’s Son throughout the ages. We conclude with words from my

dear father’s commentary *The Book of Revelation*:

Between the heaven and the earth, regenerated and glorified, with the Lamb and the saints and the perpetual generations translated to the New Jerusalem City, the Lamb and the Lamb’s wife will be all the glory. Then the holy angels in the principalities, powers, and the dominions will be taught by the saints the manifold wisdom of God as revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3). Then all the holy angels will acquiesce in holy awe and respond in wonder that they knew He was great in power, but because of Jesus at Calvary, they now know of the Gospel and that He is also great in grace. Then all the universe will ring out the reverence of worship and the song of the final victory, “Worthy is the Lamb, Worthy is the Lamb, Worthy is the Lamb!” And the Eternal Golden Ages will roll on and on and on. Hallelujah! Amen! (page 144).

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The Concept and Appointment Of Time and History

Dr. H. T. Spence

Daniel described the End Time as “troublous times”; Paul described them as “perilous times.” Are such times divinely appointed for us at this time in history? As we come to the end of another year in God’s good providence, perhaps we need to ponder the “concept” of time for our present age and the future, in the light of the Scriptures. We must consider if these troublous and perilous times are to be a part of God’s appointment for our history?

Eternity versus Time

First, several concepts must be presented in order to understand where we are in history. In our last article we observed that God is eternal and dwells in the dimension of eternity. He has no beginning and He has no end. Therefore, there is no past or future with God. He dwells in the infinite present tense of His continual existence. He is not a part of the concept of time; thus, all of His purposes and plans are found in eternity.

We also observed that when God created the universe (including the angels), He simultaneously created the dimension of time, which automatically initiated the concept of beginnings, a past, a present, and a future. Nevertheless, the concept of universe time and even angelic

time is different from our time on earth. It is interesting to note that the evolutionists declare millions and billions of years for the formation of the stars and the universe; however, these evolutionists are measuring only from earth’s perspective, a time perspective very limited and very different from other time dimensions of the universe.

Our time is based on our solar system, which is very small compared to other heavenly systems; and time to us, both circular and linear, is based on the rotation of our planet and its revolution around the sun. In contrast, an angelic-time concept is not based on our solar system.

Although God inhabits eternity, He works in time and through time. The universe was created by God before this physical earth, and we do not know the concept of time God worked through to create the universe. But, we are clearly told in Scripture that God worked in six earthly days to bring about the creation of this earth, rather than choosing to create it in a moment of time.

Genesis 1:14 states, “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and

for days, and years.” It is declared from this verse that God used these firmament lights for the concept of time. Times were appointed, and at the end of the week of creation, there was the appointment of the Sabbath, the seventh day. Time commenced with linear *history* and *chronology* and with circular *seconds*, *minutes*, and *hours* (as we divide daily time).

The Appointment of Time

Just how important is time in God’s thinking as it concerns planet Earth and mankind? Leviticus 23 speaks of divinely appointed feasts that were to be held on selected days of the year. The Feast of Passover was to be on 14th day of the first month (our April), the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th, and the Feast of First Fruits on the 16th. The Feast of Pentecost was fifty days from the Feast of First Fruits. Then in the tenth month (our October) the Feast of Trumpets fell on the 1st, the Feast Day of Atonement on the 10th, and the Feast of Tabernacles on the 15th.

Though God resides in eternity, He is deeply concerned with time—His use of time is not an accident. When He works in His creation, He is infinitely meticulous in that work within the dimension of time. Let us note just a few of the announced times of God’s works, callings, and appointments. The Bible is careful to record that Abraham was 75 years

old when he entered into the land of Canaan; he was 86 when Ishmael was born and 100 years old when Isaac was born. Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold by his brothers to the Midianites going down into Egypt, and 30 years old when he was taken from prison and made prime minister of Egypt. The story unfolds with 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine. Then Jacob sends his sons down into Egypt 2 years into the famine. Later we read in Exodus 12 of the exodus taking place 430 years to the day from the time that Jacob went down into Egypt. Centuries later, Jeremiah 29 speaks of the captivity of Judah lasting 70 years. Within the Book of Daniel we read at the end of the 70 years, another 70 “weeks” of years with a total of 490 years being appointed against the Jews and Jerusalem. Then those weeks of years are broken down to 7 weeks of years (49 years), 62 weeks of years (434 years), and one remaining week (7 years).

In Hebrews 1:2 we are told that God made the “worlds” (Gr. “ages”). These ages or segments of time for the history of the world have already been appointed by Him. Daniel 8:19 states that God has appointed the end of time. Acts 17:26 gives the words of Paul: “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” In Acts 17:31 Paul

declares, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." Christ spoke in the Olivet Discourse of the treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Such "times" began with Nebuchadnezzar and will continue through Antichrist.

The Bible also speaks of time appointed by God for individuals. The classic chapter on time is Ecclesiastes 3; it presents beginnings and continuances, with the providential principle, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (verse 1). Following this statement, sixteen couplets of time are listed covering life and its appointments. Solomon reveals the truth in Ecclesiastes 8:6, "To every purpose there is time and judgment"; he will also reveal in 8:5b that "a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment." Job declares in chapter 14 verse 14, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait." In Hebrews 9:27 we are told that "it is appointed unto man once to die"; the literal Greek rendering is that there is a specific day laid up for one's death. Also note Genesis 47:29: "The time drew nigh that Israel must die."

Reasons for Time

Five main reasons for time may be observed. (1) God works in and through His creation in the

dimension of time. (2) Time is given as probation of an individual, or a church, or a community, or a nation, or the world. (3) God deals in seasons with mankind, either for man to get right with God or to enter into a deeper realm of spiritual living. Genesis 6:3 states, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." To the Christian—Today if you hear His voice, harden not your heart. For individuals to get right with God, there is a time element (a season) that God has appointed. Mercy is not so much the doing away of judgment; mercy is the *postponement* or the delay of judgment. Often in this mercy period a soul gets right with God. (4) Time is needed for the building of character, for the entering into the deeper things of God, and for the perfection of the Atonement in the Christian life. (And also, the building of an ungodly life over the process of time demands a segment of time.) (5) Time brings out what is in us—whether in a person, church, school, nation, or world. How much time is needed or taken is up to the individual heart, local church, family, nation, or world.

God gave Cain an opportunity of time. Genesis 4:7 declares, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Although a season of opportunity was given to Cain, Cain eventually killed Abel. He passed

the day of opportunity to right his wrong heart. Another season of time is presented in Genesis 6, where God declared to Noah that only 120 years would be given in His striving with man before the judgment of all flesh would come. Centuries later, our Beloved Lord grieved over the city Jerusalem when He lamented, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Luke 13:34, 35). At the Triumphal Entry the Lord, beholding the city and weeping over it, said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:42, 44b).

Seasons of God's Dealings

God has appointed seasons of dealing with humanity. We come into the world as a baby and enter a season of life for childhood, then for a teenager, then as a young adult, into a prime adult season, and finally into the autumn season. How will we respond to God in *each* of these seasons?

In these days of modern evangelism, we must be aware that an individual cannot come to Christ anytime he or she chooses. A person must come to Christ in God's season:

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). There must be godly sorrow that works repentance unto salvation (2 Cor. 7:10). It must be, "To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:7, 8a). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). We also read in Jeremiah 46:17, "They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed." Felix believed he could dictate the appropriate time to hear God's Word through Paul. Although he requested a more convenient season, we never read that Felix "trembled" again after Paul's initial preaching (Acts 24:25, 26).

Yes, God has seasons of His workings for an individual, and individuals must not fall behind the time of grace. This is also true of God's dealings with a local church; for if they do not respond when the truth is brought to them, God may not send that spiritual opportunity again. The callings of God for a people to repent and return to Him are only for a season. This has been true of the Fundamentalist movement. It may have sinned beyond the time of God's dealings to now witness God giving it over to the Neo-Christianity. It is possible to pass the day of grace.

History: Planned by God

We repeat the truth that time and history are a love gift from the Father to the Son. Both time and history have already been planned out and are unfolding according to the appointment of a Sovereign God. The thousands of prophecies given in Scripture prove that God knows both the future and that He is the controlling factor of history. Note Daniel 2:21, 22:

And He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.

After having received from God the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and being brought before him for the interpretation, Daniel made it known to him:

The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king: But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these: As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass (2:27–29).

Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar was anxious to learn from the prophetic

information conveyed by the dream in order to change prophecy, that a new time or season be established. However, Daniel made it clear that the God of the Jews was the One Who arranged the times and the seasons. The word *times* is the broader term for the years, and the word *seasons* refers to the suitable time to do a thing. Note Daniel 7:25:

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times, and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

This passage reveals that the Antichrist will come speaking great words against the God of heaven. Likewise, his attitude toward God's saints will be with equal hatred. Not only will the Antichrist make war with the saints, but also he will harass them (7:21). Another declaration is noted that this man will "think" that he can change times and laws—the "laws" being the basic laws such as government, property, marriage, morals, etc. But such changes will come down upon him with great destruction. We are reminded of how during the French Revolution of the 1700s the leaders tried to change the week from seven days to ten with the hope of getting more work out of the people; they soon discovered it profoundly affected both working beasts and men. The Antichrist will even "think" to change the calendar and history, but he will

not do it. Nevertheless, we are told some existing concepts will be given into his hands for 3½ years.

Daniel 2 reveals that God establishes the rise and fall of empires; Isaiah 45 speaks of His divine appointment of certain men used to bring about the downfall of previous empires (such as Cyrus who would overthrow Babylon). These times will be called by Jesus Christ “the times of the Gentiles” (covering from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the Antichrist). Paul declared in Acts 17:26, “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of his habitation.”

Yes, all the times and seasons have been meticulously appointed by God. God has also appointed all of the epochs that unfold history. Whatever we may call them—the good times, the bad times, the evil times, the troublous times, or the perilous times—they all are a part of the flow of God’s sovereignty. God uses men; God uses men in spite of men. He does not make them do evil, but He works through their evil. Even the wrath of men will praise God (Ps. 76:10). Only God could work history out amidst all the workings of evil men.

The Last Days and the End Time

The Bible gives clear evidence that God has appointed a time in history

when the Last Days will begin. This time period began with the coming of God’s Son (Acts 2:16,17; Heb. 1:2). The last days would be appointed for the Church, that is, the Church mainly of the Gentile world. The last two thousand years have been the Church Ages, for as Paul designated in Romans 11:25, “That blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” This fullness of the Gentiles will come to an end at the Rapture, when the Church concept will cease. Another time of God’s dispensational economy will then begin—the Great Tribulation Period.

God has appointed the ages. And though man’s world system seems to presently control and dominate the concept of time, God is working through it all in accordance with His times and seasons. Though we find ourselves in the Last Days, yet there is a concluding time prophesied. Daniel spoke of the End Time (Dan. 8:17b, 19b). Jesus Himself gave us greater details in the two segments of the End Time and the end of the age. There is the beginning of the End Time (Matt. 24:4–8) and then the end of the End Time (24:9–14). We truly believe we are in this second segment.

The Church on earth has gone through many apostasies. When God brought the Reformation into history, it profoundly affected the *age time* for Christianity. The Evangelical Revival

brought the Church into its deepest insights of redemption, drawing the heart more to the inward workings of grace rather than simply the outward. This became a movement in a time period to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ.

But, oh, how sad, after the greatest spiritual move of God within the Church on earth, the present Church age has brought the final plunge of the Church into the global apostasy, becoming the prelude to the coming of Antichrist. This is the worst, the most deceptive falling away of the Church in all of its history. It is not so much the apostasy of Romanism (the oldest Christian apostasy); it is the apostasy of the great move of God in the Reformation and the Evangelical revivalist movements. We have entered into the public, universal falling away of the institutional church, which continues to declare the terms *Gospel, Jesus Christ, and Christianity*. Yet it is another Gospel, another Jesus, and another Christianity, because the institutional church has denounced the literality of the Bible and the historical Jesus. Christianity is the only religion that has publicly renounced the historicity of its sacred writing, the Bible, and its true Christ, and has created a modern Jesus and a modern concept of being a “Christian.” Yes, we have witnessed the *public* death of Christianity. We have come to the *end* of the Church as a witness on earth; it has become the voice of apostasy rather than “the

pillar and ground of truth.”

Troublous Times/Perilous Times

God’s Word gives witness that just before the Great Tribulation Period, there will be tribulation, troubles, like never before. The reason for these troubles is not only to set the stage in God’s providence for the coming of Antichrist, but also for the final preparation of a people to end the Church age—the precious fruit at the end of the Church. The concept of the Church is only for the Last Days; there will come an end for its need.

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (James 5:7, 8).

The “former rain” was for the sowing of the seed, which came on the Day of Pentecost and continued for many years through the Book of Acts. But we are in the “latter rain,” the preparation of the harvest, which seems to have commenced around 1850. But just before the coming of the Lord (as revealed in Matthew 24 and many other passages of Scripture), trouble will be a part of the End Time. Only troubles can bring about the fruit. The eve of the Great Tribulation Period will also have tribulation; it will be difficult for the remnant Christian. There will be wars and rumors of

wars. It will necessitate individuals such as the present political leaders to bring about the perilous times, the troublous times, nations with perplexities, yea, forerunners of the Antichrist, forerunners of the False Prophet, to place the world in the posture of the finality of the Day of Man.

Conclusion

We are convinced that historically and prophetically the entirety of history is to be found in the Bible, yet God has placed enough mystery in the prophecies that only He knows the complete detail. There will be a coming battle between Michael and the Dragon Satan (Rev. 12:7–12), which Satan will lose and be cast to the ground; he will know that his time is short when this happens (according to his own readings of the Bible). As Nebuchadnezzar perhaps desired to alter history by wanting to know prophecy, Satan will try to do this. Nevertheless, God is *sovereign*! Only God knows the fullness of time and the intricacies of that time; and no matter what man or the Devil will do, God is in absolute control.

Troublous times are now found in every compartment of mankind. We are on the eve of a world war that will eclipse all previous world wars of the twentieth century. The powers of Russia, as well as China, are on the rise; the earthly insanity of Iran and North Korea is flaunting itself before the West. Will the next

twelve months witness the end of America as we have known it; what will be its end? We pray that in God's wrath He will remember mercy on the Remnant.

There is a final action that the Lamb of God will secure for the resolve of these increasing troublous times. Revelation 5:7 speaks of the Lamb of God taking a book of seven seals from the hand of the Father. What is this book? We read initially that it will take a "worthy" one to even look upon it: "And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon" (verse 3); and John the Beloved "wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon" (verse 4). So, this book or scroll must be of great value for man and the provisions of God's promises for man. Some have speculated that this book is the Scriptures; but thank God, the Bible is not sealed to us! Others have thought of it to be the scroll of history, or the sealed scroll of God's eternal purpose. My earthly father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, writes the following in his commentary *The Book of Revelation*:

Since previous chapters have dealt with the church, this cannot be the church. "Church" will only come back into the book of Revelation in the conclusion (22:16), and only address it as in the beginning. Since creation was dealt with in

chapter 4, this book is not of creation. This book represents “the title deed” to an estate that man, in the Garden of Eden, lost in his fall. A “possession” is to be redeemed (Ephesians 1:14). Note also Romans for the need of this. There is a final redemption promised in the New Testament, yet in the future. This is it; this “book,” here in this context, is the title deed to that redemption. This consummates the “Day of the Lord” and Christian destiny! . . . These seals are viewed as binding a scroll at seven different places, which in the unfolding will bring the reader to each sealed point. All seven will be broken before the end. The Great Tribulation Period begins with Seal One (page 27).

This acknowledgment of the “book” is needed here to present the title-deed of total restoration of all that was lost in the fall. Also, this is the grand provision of greater grace than was received before the fall. Beyond the arrival of the saints here, there still remains the future glory yet to be made manifest and revealed in the Book of Revelation by John (page 30).

The breaking of the seals reveals judgments from God needed before the Redeemer is to take possession of the earth to restore the final inheritance possession. The time of these things includes the entire duration of the Judgment Period (page 31).

Remember that Christ through

the Tribulation Period is taking that book sealed with seven seals and bringing about the resolve of the Day of Man. When this is resolved, He will come and set up His kingdom, and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. The stone out of the mountain (Daniel 2) will come and smite the image at the feet, at the finality of man’s kingdom, scattering it all to the winds. Then that Stone will fill the whole earth, and we will witness the rule and reign of Christ on earth. The last Adam will restore what the first man Adam lost. Yes, the Son of Man will redeem what Adam lost in the Fall.

This, dear reader, is our hope, our Blessed Hope. Yea, this is a picture of the love gift of the Father to the Son and of how it all will be given to Him. David saw this Messianic King resolving time and history:

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him (Ps. 2:6–12).

By God's sovereign decree, this resolving of time and history will come to pass!

Postscript

What will be the concept of time after this resolution? Both in the Hebrew and Greek languages, the Old and New Testament speak of eternity in a time concept—it is “ages upon ages,” a time unending, or time that is never spent. We must remember that Jesus Christ, Who resided in eternity (the habitation of God) before He came to earth, then entered into time as part of His permanent existence.

From the time He entered into that body within the womb of the Virgin Mary, He has existed in two dimensions. It is part of His existence forever. When we read of events in heaven (such as Revelation chapters 4, 5, or 19), a sequence is found that demands a concept of time. But let us not get caught up in only one *concept* of time. Everything that has a beginning lives in a dimension of time. There is

angelic time, which is different from human time. Human time now is based on the rotation of the earth as well as its revolution around the sun. There is no sun or rotation concept in heaven, and there will be no sun for the new earth. However, this does not mean there is no time; heavenly time simply will not be a concept of time as we know now.

The unfolding “of the ages upon ages” will bring the exploration of the universe, worship to God, singing, and proclamation of eternal truth to all of the creation of God. Time will be part of this eternal experience, but again, what will be the concept of time then? It could not be said then that time is being “wasted” or that we are “spending too much time” on something, for time will never be spent up. The anonymously-added verse to John Newton's autobiographical hymn sums it up clearly:

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

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SCENES FROM CHRISTMAS

Dr. H.T. Spence

I remember Christmas Past,
When our family was a few:
Father, Mother, little children too.
Happy home, loving hearts,
Peace that only God imparts.
I remember, yes, I remember the past.

Christmas Present now is near;
Children grown, their families here;
Father, mother now are parents grand.
But the times on earth have changed;
Christmas Present seems so strange:
Broken homes and sadness now fill our land.

Christmas Future will be known
When the little ones have grown.
Years will tell the story, oh so clear,
Whether grace and truth were known,
Or through sin was life o'erthrown.
Christmas Future, will it bring comfort or fear?

Refrain

Christmas Past now is gone,
And we meditate upon
The Christ-child Who was born
To die to save from sin.
Now the Present Christmas day
Calls our hearts in hope to pray
For the Christmas message to be known again.

The Naivety of the Nativity

From *The Human Spirit*, Vol. 2

Dr. O. Tamadge Spence

I never think of Christmas any more without contemplating and desiring the naivety of the Nativity. What a wonderful, true naivety we view when we take the time to stoop down to look into the Manger of the Lord Jesus. There are at least eight striking situations which we would set forth as the Naiveties of the Nativity. These center around six persons and two groups: Zacharias, Elisabeth, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, the Shepherds, and the Wise Men. It is refreshing to view our Christmas Story with the artless, natural, ingenuous, and unaffected simplicity of these personalities.

Zacharias accepted both the simple conversation with the angel Gabriel, as well as the dumbness of his imposed question (cf. Luke 1:11–13 & 18–20). We see him naturally and quite simply talking with an angel, and at the same time “showing a lack of informed judgment.” He saw nothing unusual in talking with the angel, yet he, in ignorance of how two old people could have a child, blurted out an unsanctified question. Should we expect this godly man (Luke 1:1, 2) to possess absolute perfection in all of these things? I think not. The naivety of the creature would forbid it. We are all inborn as a creature; we are born babies. Although we will grow up

and mature, we will only be mature children. Sometimes the spit and polish of our professional approach to life destroys the fruit of time. In Zacharias we see the naivety of **age**.

Elisabeth was marvelously naive in a number of things. She conceived her child, John the Baptist, hid herself five months in a naive way, and rejoiced that her “reproach among men” was taken away (Luke 1:24, 25). What was her “reproach among men” in the sense in which she meant it? Very few scholars write on this matter. Evidently, very few of us know how to appreciate a sanctified naivety. Was it because Elisabeth was keenly aware of and felt a Jewish reproach for her husband who wanted an heir? Did she want a child because of the hope of Messiah in her own heart? Or, was it simply because she was a woman, first, and in her bosom longed for a child? The matter was clear. First, Elisabeth would bear a child in old age; later, it was revealed that Mary would bring forth the Messiah. Once again, she simply accepts the Miracle with utter simplicity and trust. Does this not signify a true naivety of the heart? In Elisabeth we see the naivety of **faith**.

Mary is unique in her naivety; she experiences the greatest possible misunderstanding a woman could ever know. She would birth a child

without a human father. Yet, she received the announcement of this virgin birth without doubt. She asked the very same question Zacharias asked (cf. Luke 1:18 & 34), but her heart and attitude were different. Without questioning the possibility and the fact, she only inquires about its glory. She goes to the “hill country” (Luke 1:39) for several reasons. One reason could have been to allow Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, to consider severance from their relationship of love and life. Yet, she trusted God implicitly. In Mary we see the naivety of **wonder**.

Joseph contemplated, prior to his own understanding of these things, putting Mary away from their engagement to marriage in a private and courteous way so as to avoid embarrassment and injury to her reputation. How naive can you get? “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:20, 21). We should carefully note that to Joseph was given the honor of naming the Son of God—JESUS! Without question, “showing some lack of informed judgment,” Joseph responded and saved an otherwise tragedy of his marriage.

He proceeded to fulfill a great word of God. In Joseph we see the naivety of **trust**.

Simeon was led of the Holy Spirit in the Temple at the very moment of the coming of the parents with Jesus to fulfill the Law. His *Nunc Dimittis* reveals that his life’s longing was finally satisfied. Yes, all of these Christmas personalities enjoyed special revelation concerning this great Miracle. Yet, we must not forget that a certain trust and faith exercised itself in the soil of utter simplicity and true naivety. In Simeon we see the naivety of **hope**.

Anna, a prophetess, likewise, entered the Temple at the precise moment to testify to “all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). She, undoubtedly, heard Simeon’s wonderful words and her own words acted as a footnote. “Anna was evidently deeply moved and repeated her thanksgiving and kept speaking to all them that were looking for redemption” (Robertson). There was evidently a group of such spirits who gathered in the Temple either around her and Simeon, or whom she met from time to time. This might indicate that when Christ did appear at that first Christmastime, a nucleus of old saints in Jerusalem was prepared for the coming of the Messiah. Zacharias, who had sung of redemption for Israel (cf. Luke 1:68 & Isa. 40:2), and Simeon, who had been looking for the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25), were now to be

enlarged by this widow. In Anna we see the naivety of **devotion**.

The Shepherds were naive about their occupation. Undoubtedly, they were Jewish shepherds and they had been faithfully “abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (Luke 2:8). After receiving the glorious revelation and announcement of the birth of Jesus, with a very unpretentious sign of the “babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger,” they made haste to see Him (Luke 2:16). Did they simply abandon their flock? The Record is not detailed, but we would assume they left their flock under supervision by someone or ones. Still, there is a certain naivety present. It is filled with holy adventure with a kind of abandonment away from their ordinary lives. In the Shepherds we see the naivety of **spontaneity**.

The Wise Men followed a Star in a most peculiar way. Today, even astronomers following a star would seem comical to us. By the way, how do you follow a star? But this situation is magnified by the simplistic manner in which they trusted their approach to King Herod seeking information concerning the birth of Jesus. Their exact words were: “Where is he that is born King of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2)? Would they not have considered the possibility of King Herod’s becoming jealous of King Jesus? If God had not warned them of danger in their return to Herod (Matt. 2:12), we know not

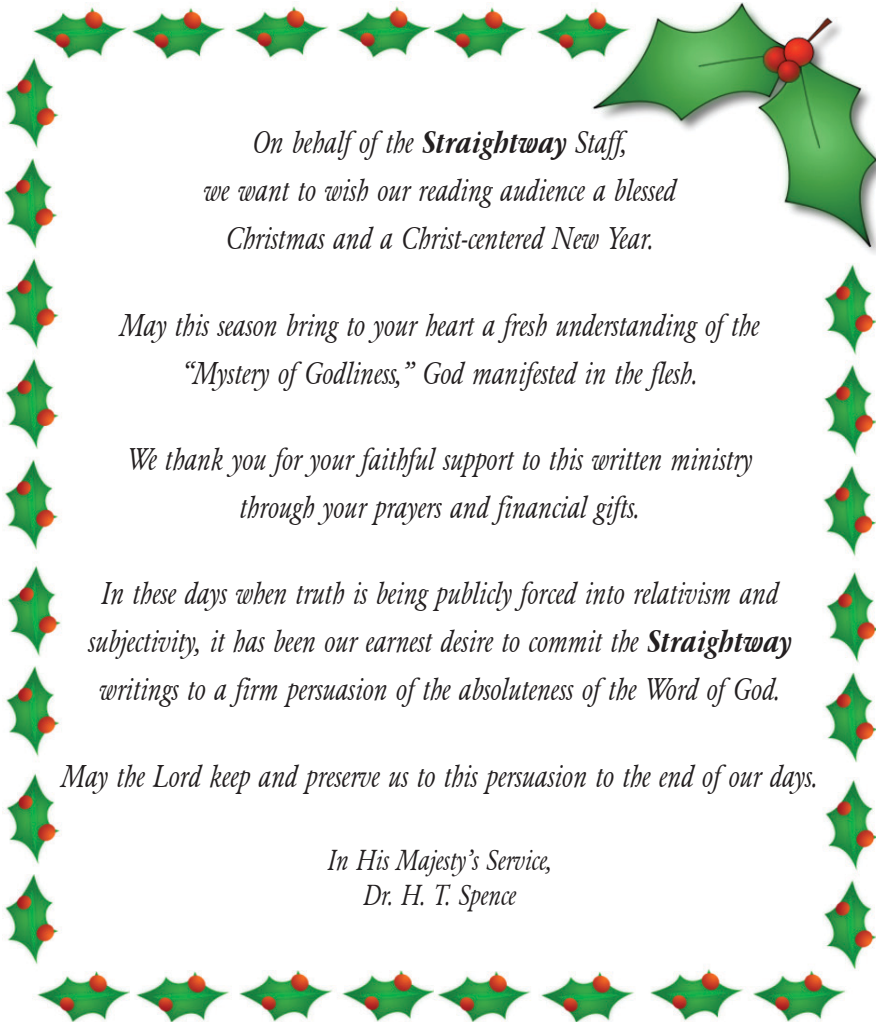
what would have been the end of the Wise Men as well as the infants. In the Wise Men we see the naivety of **inquisition**. . . .

The first sin I remember committing was at the age of six years. I took from the dining room table a box of crayons containing two dimes which belonged to my oldest sister. With a frightened heart, I proceeded to the local candy store and purchased thirty “Mary Janes” (three for a penny) and ten pieces of bubble gum. I went to what was known in those days as the woodshed, sat on an orange crate, and endeavored to consume these forty comestibles as fast as possible. In the final analysis, guilt of sin hindered me from enjoying the escapade at all. Being a preacher’s child and having been taught to believe the Bible, I imagined, as I looked through one of the cracks in the woodshed, that my Heavenly Father was in the process of sending an angel to my mother in the kitchen to inform her that her only son was out in the woodshed eating candy purchased by stolen money. In what would be called a rather naive way, I could see the judgment of the Lord falling upon me in the form of a spanking administered by my earthly father. Possibly, I would even be sent to bed without supper. None of that happened, and I was able to get by that sin without the detection of it by my parents, although later on I confessed it to them in naive repentance. That was something of

the naivety of my nativity-life. I have often wondered, across the years, if it would not be very important to pray for the retention of such a conscience without jeopardy to my manhood in Christ. I want to continue remembering there are angels watching me under the all-seeing Eye of God Almighty. If in the growing and maturing of the later life of saints we do not maintain this

sanctified naivety, how will we arrive in heaven without the brashness of our worldly-wise ways? Are we mature because we are worldly-wise, clever, and smooth? Somehow or other I believe this age is bent on destroying not only our souls but our childlikeness in Christ as well. Then, one day, we will realize too late that hypocrisy has replaced our naivety.

□



*On behalf of the **Straightway** Staff,
we want to wish our reading audience a blessed
Christmas and a Christ-centered New Year.*

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*In His Majesty’s Service,
Dr. H. T. Spence*