

Waiting

The Groom and His Bride



A Discipleship School

David Boan

10



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Unit 10

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“For they...report about us what kind of reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.” [1Thessalonians 1.9-10].

“... maranatha - Our lord come!” [1 Corinthians 16.22b].

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life....He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come Lord Jesus” . [Revelation 22.17-20 NIV]

Session 9 - In Review: stated as an outcome

We Christians have a faith which is a response to revelation. What is revealed to us is a hidden, 'alien' work of God in which His most powerful work for redemption was carried out in humility, seeming weakness and powerlessness. This is what we know. It is this perspective that enables us to understand how to recognise the present reign of Christ as already active upon the earth.

Working in tandem with the fire of God, we know our prayers to be significant movers of world history. As we suffer and live in the hostile environment in which we are placed, we cry out to God and he moves in response to our cry.

In regard to our talking with Him: [1] we have faith in God Himself; we speak to Him as those who know His character, mercy and wisdom. All of which require us to ask according to His will - and we know to leave Him freedom to answer us as He will. [2] We have faith in God's promises. We study the tenor of those promises, where they were made and according to what criterion. We know that no promise of God is ever received without trust in his word. [3] We understand that, of ourselves to be quite unable to pray at all without the empowering life of the Holy Spirit of Christ within us. We look to the Spirit to intercede for us.

Our Rabbi taught us how to pray. We keep our prayers secret to the Father, we don't indulge in repetitive praying as Gentiles do, we address our Father as being in heaven, we hallow his Name, we ask for his will to come on the earth. Every day we ask for food, forgiveness, - we forgive others - and deliverance from the devil. We know the kingdom rule, the power and the glory is rightfully our Father's; it is not the devil's.

We have begun the new life and entered the Church of God as baptised people; immersed in the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus - who lived His life for us, in our place and in our stead. Baptism in water and Spirit was the sacrament - the mystery - of our entry.

We continue to eat and drink at the Lord's table. This is the sacrament - the mystery - of our continued life. We are constantly living, remembering where we came from. Our sins which once separated us from God, now we find, with every Lord's Supper, they bind us to Him. It is a fellowship with one another as we all eat and drink from the same Source.

Drawing from the great mystery of Christ in us, our talking with God, our being immersed in His Son's vicarious life, our eating and drinking, our table fellowship with one another in love and unity is all part of the full orbit of our relating.

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1 - The fullness of time

452 - Living in the last days

When God, at the Incarnation, entered His own creation, He came into space and time - two created aspects of the world God made for us to live in. We live in a contingent world, where what happens often causes other things to happen; events are said to be contingent upon one another. We think of time as a "creature" of God. He Himself, is not subject to time, but lives in an eternal Now, but He has freely entered time and space for our sakes and for our salvation.

The "last days", are the days of created time when our God brings to fruition His purposes. Waiting is an issue of created "time" only. To share God's life now, by the Spirit, is to have a future which He promises. This future, which we are looking forward to, has an affect on our present life. This affect, which we might call the 'presence of the future' already breaking in to our creaturely setting, makes us bouyant and hopeful in our present waiting. It creates a longing for what is to be. Created ones, such as ourselves, can hardly envisage what He has prepared for us who love Him.

At the beginning of these 10 Units of the Discipleship School, we saw that 'covenant' was prior to the creation [Boan, 2013, God and Us #4-8]. In that section we recognised that the Church was a waiting Bride. We looked back to the Bridegroom's former history even before the creation of the world. We traced the way that God had elected Himself to be our God. His out-going love was the basic drive for creating us and the world in which we were to live.

In our Discipleship School we considered how the early preparation for the coming of Christ was given within the Hebrew people's dealing with such a gracious covenant God. The new covenant which was prophesied by Jeremiah has come to fruition. Many Gentile peoples have come into the kingdom of God, yet it is not fully taken up by the ancient Jewish people. As we have seen [Boan, Offering, # 342-348] there are promises of things yet to come. These future promises apply for both the Church of Jesus Christ and the Jewish people themselves, as their history is played out in lock-step together.

453 - Waiting is a matter of living between the times

Hebrews 1.1-4

Waiting describes a hopeful attitude expressed in the present by a focus on the future. In that respect, "waiting" is based upon the human experience that we are always in the present moment, passing from the "now" moment to the "next" moment. The next moment is, when perceived from the present one, the future.

However, we are never seeing the future simply in this abstract, disconnected, observer-

based way. We do not really think of the passing of some “now” moments into the “next” moments. What is central to us Christians is that we are a Bride, who is focussed upon our returning Bridegroom. Throughout our studies we have been attending to the revelation of He Who is the “I am” who spoke to Moses and who has come to be known by us, in these last days, as the eternal Word of God who has taken flesh as the God man.

454 - Waiting can express itself in an unbalanced way.

Sometimes when we are waiting, the time passes so slowly. Present moments seem to be so dominated by the coming future event that we almost lose interest in the present, and so cease to value it. We would typify this attitude about the present then as so pre-occupied with the future that we are just “waiting about”. Our longing has reduced us to inactivity.

This can become a place of imbalance as we are almost drawn into wasting the moments we have by such a deep longing for the future. To counter this natural imbalance our Lord taught parables that emphasised the need to be active and obedient to the business of life that He has set before us. He stressed the need to be alert about the future unfolding, but not so preoccupied that we became slack and lost interest in the present moments.

455 - Waiting is living in tension; it always involves suffering.

Romans 8.18-30; Boan, 2013, Relating #409

A woman waiting for the birth of her baby experiences uncomfortable days. She knows that they have an end, and her present suffering is seen in the light of the future hope. In this sense the waiting for the child to be born is:

[a] strengthened and endured by knowledge that it will end,

[b] encouraged that there will be fruitful product of this waiting,

[c] interpreted by her as a purposeful, gestative time; something is being brought to fruition that requires it to be uncomfortably endured at the moment. The period of waiting is not, of itself, meaningless, but necessary; something is being formed.

[d] about a contrast with arrival. The contrast implied about the present, sees it as being half-way there; it is not the fulfilment. The future will so eclipse the present that the time of suffering and longing will be overwhelmed by the future joy. So there is no fear that the present will be looked back upon as “down time”, as wasted effort which could disappoint us when we arrive at the future.

The future hope has such an impact on the present that the apostle Paul thought of the whole creation groaning and travailing in its pregnant, present moment as it awaited the future return of the Lord and the finished redemption of mankind [Romans 8.18-30].

Paul mentions in that section of Romans 8 that **the present life**; [1] is a matter of enduring suffering [verse 18a]; [2] has no comparison with the glory that is to be revealed to us [18b]; [3] has a cosmic aspect: the whole of creation is groaning with a pregnant anticipation [19a]; knowing that its future is connected with the full revelation of the sons of God [19b]; [4] sees the creation, in its present state, as placed by God, in hope of its redemption, in this seemingly futile position verse 20]. It is an intentional movement by God. If things seem empty and futile for the creation, they are not really, for God has a plan for the redemption of men and women and all of creation with them; [5] looks forward to the redemption of men and women, and then, in that order, the creation will have its turn to be free from corruption and bondage [verses 21-22]; [6] for Christian people is dominated by an anticipation of the redemption of their bodies. Having the firstfruit of the Spirit, they are encouraged to trust for the final instalment [verse 23]; [7] recognises that to hope for this future consummation is not the same thing as to see it. We are, by definition, in a state of hope, not a state of fulfilment. This calls for patience and endurance [verse 25]; [8] registers within ourselves the groaning of the Spirit. For when we pray, He is helping us from within in our time of incomplete knowledge and ability. Not knowing how to pray, or what to pray for, He helps us in this interim period by His own groanings deep within us. From the inner relations within the Trinity, as the Spirit groans, and the Father sees our hearts, our prayers are communicated to the God to Whom we pray [verse 26-27]; [9] Further, God has begun a sequence of initiatives towards us, we stand as those called of God by His own purpose and will. He will take us to the final end which He has in mind for us [verse 28-30].

456 - "Serving now" and "waiting for" Someone

1 Thessalonians 1.9-10

The earliest letter of Paul's that we have, 1 Thessalonians, was probably written from Corinth in AD 51 [Acts 18.11]. Paul gives a simple summary of the Thessalonian response to the Gospel message from an apostle.

"For they...report about us what kind of reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." [1Thessalonians 1.9-10].

The main actions described here are a turning from idols, a serving of God who is true, and a waiting for His Son from heaven. Turning, serving and waiting is the summary of what life is for every Christian. Paul sets our serving of God in this life against the background of a waiting for Someone. How we wait for someone to come depends upon who is coming. When we wait for the King, Jesus Christ, we are doing the last thing that He said to do as we wait for His appearance when He will set the next thing that we shall do.

2 - 'Last Days' began at Jesus' First Coming

457 - The "comings" of Jesus

The history of Jesus is seen as a unity, and the same words are used for each phase of action within His historical Life. The word ἐρχόμαι, is used for his "comings" and is used indiscriminately for all three comings listed below. It is applied to:

[1] his birth or Incarnation [Matthew 5.17, 9.13, 10.34-35, 11.3 John 1.11, 3.19, 5.43, 7.28, 1 Timothy 1.15]

[2] his second coming [Matthew 24.30, 44, 46, 25.13, 31 Mark 13.26, 14.62, Acts 1.11, 2 Corinthians 4.5, 11.26, 2 Thessalonians 1.10]

[3] the coming of the Holy Spirit [John 15.26, 16.7, 8, 13]

Jesus Himself uses this term "coming" in such a way that it is hard to tell whether He means His resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, or His second advent [John 14.18, 16-17, 28, 26-27, 16.1].

There are a number of other terms which are used in connection with these three aspects of Jesus' coming as well: such as "reveal", "revelation", "appear", "appearance", "time", "opportunity", "eternal life", "hour", "day".

458 - When Jesus first came, it was the "last days"

Boan, 2013, God as Man, #54-56

At the coming of the Lord we have entered the last days [Hebrews 1.2, 1 Peter 1.20, "these last days"]. When Jesus came into the world the kingdom of God came with Him [Matthew 12.28, Luke 17.21 "kingdom of God is among you"]

We have already noticed the three divisions in the narratives of the synoptic Gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke [Boan, 2013, God as Man, #54-56]. In the first section we saw that Jesus came in a radical way, as One in command, a Judge who strode through Israel as a Messiah who is visiting His people. He made judgments, speaking, healing, delivering, acting as a Person in charge.

The presence of the King is the personification of the rule of the kingdom. As with all ancient kings, where the king is present, His rule is being stated as it is announced, His judgments are being enacted and enforced.

As He came, Jesus opposed and bound the "strong man", Satan. So, He liberated people who were oppressed by demons. On sending out His disciples with His authority into Israel, He spoke of seeing "Satan falling from heaven" [Luke 10.18].

In the “year of the Lord’s favour” [Luke 4.17-22, Is 61.1-2a], there was a deliverance of captives: the demons were driven out [Matthew 12.22-29, Luke 11.14-22]. As the demons left people, they cried out in dread [Mark 1.23, 5.5-6], finding themselves powerless [Mark 1.34, 3.11, 5.12] and in great fear of torment [Mark 1.24, 5.7].

459 - The Transfiguration prefigured the ‘glory’ of the Lord.

Malachi 3.1; 4.5; Colossians 3.3-4; Boan, 2013, God as man, #83-88; Relating, #388-390

Jesus was transfigured before the three disciples, in the company of Moses and Elijah. Moses, had led the Hebrew people through the Exodus. He had taken them out from Egypt, through the Sea, into the desert and then on to Canaan. Elijah was to come and restore all things before the day of the Lord came [Malachi 3.1; 4.5]. Both these men were discussing with Jesus the ‘exodus’ - his crucifixion - that He was shortly to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Peter, who was present at the time on the mountain, later writes of this ‘glory’ of Jesus.

“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honour and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased’ - and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” [2 Peter 1.16-18 ASV].

Stunningly impressed with the august company around them, the disciples needed to be corrected by God the Father that they were to listen to Jesus only - because He was God’s Son. So, as they came down from the mountain, Jesus began to address them about the fact that Elijah’s coming had been accomplished in John the Baptist.

Further, after the glory they had just witnessed Jesus began to teach them about the pattern of obscurity and suffering which not only typified the ministry of John the Baptist, it would be the mark of Jesus’ own ministry. Now, in our time, it is also the mark of the ministry of every Christian person until the coming of the Lord. There is a hiddenness attending the lives of Christians; their full reality is hidden with Christ in God [Colossians 3.3-4].

460 - Since John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffered violence

Matthew 11.2-19; Luke 7.18-25; Torrance T.F. [1957], chapter 11

In the Old Testament, the prophet Elijah’s ministry had not been simply words; he was also a man of action, with violent passions and expressions used to express his main themes. As Israel swayed between two opinions during the terrible reign of the weak king, Ahab, in tandem with his manipulative and powerful queen, Jezabel, Elijah’s controversy with the people of Israel was, “Would Israel serve God or Baal?” Elijah brought that question to a head on Mount Carmel. A decisive, violent and bloody victory was established for the Lord at that

dramatic time. Later, under his juniper tree, Elijah was disillusioned and wondered why God did not complete that work begun on Mt Carmel.

He had misunderstood the violence of God, so the Lord took Him to Mount Horeb [Sinai] to teach Him. On this mountain, there had been violence which had terrified the people of Israel in the past; so much so, that they didn't want to directly hear God's voice any more. Mighty winds, breaking rocks, earthquakes and fire had all been there. But God was not in any of them, but in a still small voice. It was that voice which was the power of God.

Elijah, as a prophet was to bring the Word of God, and to force the people to come to a decision. And the violence of the kingdom was mightier in that small voice than in the natural, created forces God could use. Ahab had recognised that when he called Elijah the "troubler of Israel".

Luke records that John the Baptist, languishing in prison, had sent messengers to the Lord asking Him, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" [Luke 7.18-20]. The Lord replied that they should tell John what they saw. But then the Lord went on to tell the disciples His perspective on John and where he fitted in the history of God's salvation dealings with Israel.

"11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew 11.11-15 RSV

There is some debate as to whether the verbs of the 12th verse of this section of Matthew should be translated in the active: "the Kingdom of Heaven presses in and men of determined purpose lay impatient hands upon it" or in the passive as the RSV, quoted above, does. The simple fact is that within the Gospels, both are true. In the earlier part of the Gospel records, the kingdom of God presses in. Later, determined men lay hands on the King.

The key is given in the expression "from the days of John the Baptist". It is connected with the fact that Jesus identified John as the Elijah who was prophesied to come [Malachi 3.1; 4.5].

John the Baptist, having fasted and prayed in the desert for 30 years, burst on the scene as an electrifying and stern prophet. He was no man in soft raiment. He preached in a demanding way with no compromise. This forceful and compelling preacher brought tens of thousands of Israelites to their knees in the Jordan, confessing their sins to God in preparation for the coming of a person. John saw that person as Messiah with a threshing instrument in his hand, Who, once He had gathered the grain and threshed it would then cast the chaff into the fire. He was a kingly Judge who, in John's view, would lay an axe to the trees that were not fruitful for God.

John was languishing in Herod's prison. He knew that Jesus was quietly sowing the seed of

the Word of God, caring as a physician for the flock, healing and watching over the poor and the needy. Could this non-violent man be the Deliverer of Israel? What was Jesus doing that would break Herod's power"? John was offended at the weakness of Jesus. "Are you the one that should come, or should we look for another?" he asked Jesus through the messengers he sent to Him.

Jesus' reply to John's messengers was that they should go and speak of what they saw. The blind were being healed, the deaf were hearing, the dead were raised, and the poor had the Gospel preached to them.

John had failed to understand the violence of God, the violence of the Gospel of grace. For Jesus was the still small voice of God come in the flesh.

Notice that Jesus did not repudiate the preaching of John. He made clear that since the days of John, the Kingdom would come with power and judgment, as it did with John's preaching. But it would also suffer violence after John's time. Indeed, as the victim of a conniving Herodias and the weak ruler, Herod, John the baptiser was beheaded on a whim, as it were. Jesus' teaching to the three disciples as they descended the mount of transfiguration, was that since the days of John the kingdom of God suffered violence as violent men pressed in upon it. Jesus made clear the same thing would happen to Him. He was preparing them for an "alien work" of God about to happen [Boan, 2013, *Relating*, # 388-9].

The astonishing paradox of Jesus is what baffled John; for the kingdom exerts itself in the suffering and humiliation and gentleness of Jesus, precisely as He suffers violence. From Jordan to Calvary He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter.

As the still small voice of the Gospel, the kingdom storms its way into the hearts of men, and only men of violence, men of purpose and determination, enter into that kingdom. People such as the determined, yet humble, Syro-Phoenecian woman, the two blind men, who besought Him repeatedly on the way to Jerusalem, the two on the Emmaus Rd who constrained Him when He made to pass on by.

So the kingdom of God exerts its power not as men imagine, but by the still small voice of the Gospel, or, after the Ascension of Jesus, as the "little book [scroll]" of Revelation 10. Jesus is never rude or violent. He never barges in, He knocks gently and makes as though He would pass by. We cannot have Him in our lives except by a passionate and determined conviction which is evoked by the word of God.

In the suffering of Jesus, the initiative of the kingdom is still to be seen. He suffered violence at the hands of His oppressors, but it is never presented in a way that the Gospel writers infer that He was not in control of the initiative of grace.

461 - The cross was the judgment of the world

John 12.31-33

At the time of Jesus' suffering and death, His prophetic teaching to the disciples was fulfilled. He had spoken about:

[1] love growing cold. The disciples abandoned him and Peter denied him.

[2] the call to watchfulness - In Gethsemane they are unable to continue, they cannot watch with Him.

[3] great persecution which will come at the end. This is something which comes upon Him.

[4] strange phenomena - darkening of heavenly bodies, earthquakes ["the earth shook and rocks were split" [Matthew 27.51]: both of which happened at the crucifixion. It is hardly strange that John calls the crucifixion a judgment of the world [John 12.31].

[5] treachery that will mark the end [Matthew 24.10]. Jesus was betrayed by Judas [Matthew 26.14-16; Luke 22.48]. So the crucifixion was seen in an eschatological light.

[6] John 19.28,30 all was now finished,... and to fulfil Scripture I thirst.. it is finished". These words "finished", fulfilled" all translate from the root word τέλος [end, goal].

[7] The graves were opened at the time of the crucifixion and the people appeared to others after the resurrection [Matthew 27.51-53].

462 - Proclaiming the death of Jesus until He comes

#2009.15 Prayer and Sacraments 434

There are a number of ways we have of proclaiming the Lord's awaited coming. The proclamation of our hope is central to every celebration of the Lord's Supper, where each Christian draws life from the death of Jesus, feeding on the body and blood of the Lord. Proclamation is made by the continual preaching of the everlasting gospel as it goes to all the nations, tribes and peoples and tongues.

We proclaim the death of the Lord because it is the great aggressive act of God. It is His master-stroke against His enemies. It is His victory manifested and expressed through the Resurrection. The preaching of the judgment of the world in the death of Jesus is the power of the gospel to save in the interim between His going into heaven and his coming from heaven for the second time.

463 - What does His coming mean for us?

1 and 2 Thessalonians; Colossians 3.3-4; 1 John 3.1-14

There are powerful reasons why any Christian would wait for Jesus with a real longing and

expectation. It is a time when:

[1] Jesus will bring with Him all those who have fallen asleep in Him. They shall precede those who are alive on the earth when He comes for us [1 Thessalonians 4.13-18]. There is an order here: [i] the Lord Himself will descend from heaven; [ii] He is accompanied by a shout, the voice of archangel and a trumpet of God; [iii] the dead in Christ will rise first; [iv] those remaining on the earth at that time will be caught/gathered up together with Him in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and [v] we are never to be separated from Him after that.

[2] He will establish our hearts to be without blame at the coming of Jesus with all His saints [1 Thessalonians 3.11-13].

[3] There is the promise of our personal “entire sanctification” with our spirit, soul and body preserved complete, without blame at the coming of Christ [1 Thessalonians 5.23].

[4] The revelation of Christ, Who is our life, will be a revelation of the hidden life we have with Him now. As He will be revealed, so shall we [Colossians 3.3-4].

[5] It will also be an instant knowledge of Him for us as well. Christ in us has always been our “hope of glory” [Colossians 1.27]. And it doesn’t appear how we shall be now, but then, we shall see Him face to face and shall come to know Him as we, ourselves, are known by Him. This massive and deep revelation of Jesus causes us to be “like Him” for “we shall see Him as He is” [1 John 3.1-4].

[6] When our mortal bodies will be changed in the “twinkling of an eye” [1 Corinthians 15.42-54]. Our bodies shall become eternally durable, glorious, powerful and spiritual bodies; we shall bear the image of the heavenly man, Christ Jesus. When this change happens, our victory over death will have been established.

464- What does His coming mean for others?

2 Peter 3; Luke 17.22-18.8; 1 Thessalonians 5.23

For those who do not know Him: [1] There will be a scoffing attitude prevalent among those who do not know the Lord. They will mock the very thought of his coming. [2] the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night at a time when they will be thinking of themselves in peace and safety. [3] They will just continue on doing whatever they were doing. They shall be engaged in ordinary human things; such as marrying, commercial enterprises, eating and drinking and daily chores [Luke 17.22-18.8]. [3] The coming is sudden and they shall not escape this coming wrath [1 Thessalonians 5.3].

465 - As a Bride, we are keeping our eyes upon the Person of Jesus

Often today, there is a great interest in “last things” or “end times”. What people most often talk about is a program that is going to take place. These programs are used to excite

people's interest, sometimes they are made fearful, often they are just curious. Some Christians are pre-occupied with how they are going to survive, how they will prepare in order to preserve their lives. This fear drives them toward their flesh, towards self preservation within the uncertainties of the times in which we live.

In this anxious pre-occupation of dealing with things and possible programs, more often than not, Jesus is left out. The test of these teachings is: "what place do we have for the Person of Christ?" For, what we are really dealing with in the Bible is not the last things, or the last times, but the last Person! For Jesus is the One in whom all "things" or "times" have their meaning. He is not only the Alpha but also the Omega, not only the "beginning" He is also the "end".

The Units of this course have focussed on three matters; on what God has done *for us* in Christ, and what He is doing now *in us* and, at the coming of the Lord Jesus, what He will do *with us*. That is, the last matters are not about "last things", but about the completion of the work God has been doing all along.

As we approach these future works that Jesus will do "with us", we must be careful not to go beyond our interest in Him. To do so is to lose our focus as a Bride, it is to forget the "beloved". If we do, we shall find it impossible to "wait for Him" and to be focussed on obeying Him. Instead, we shall think about last things, programs, Israel, politics, movements, opinions and differences in eschatology. We shall pre-occupy ourselves with millenniums some folks call "pre", "post" and "a" and many other things besides. We shall be more concerned about the timing of "raptures" than actually being caught up to our wonderful Sovereign.

Consider the prayer derived from Hebrews 1.1-2 below; it emphasises the last days that are now with us, but fixes us centrally upon the Son of God, Whom the Father has sent. Consider praying this prayer as you enter this study. Look it over, make it your own and then speak to the Lord.

3 - The Order of things to come

466 – Paul's order of events at the end

1 Corinthians 15; Boan, [2013], Jesus Exalted, # 151-153

We have already seen how Paul sees the resurrection of Christ as the place and time when the history of the world is divided into two ages. In the section of 1 Corinthians 15, which refers to the resurrection, Paul presented what will happen after the resurrection of the Christian dead.

We could list the points which he wants to make in 1 Corinthians 15.23-28 as:

[1] the resurrection of Christ, who is understood as the first fruits in relation to others [23]. Christ is understood as “reigning” [15.25] now, and that He has received this reign from the Father, Who is not subject to Christ [27].

[2] then, after Christ’s resurrection, those who are Christ’s, resurrect at His bodily coming [the presencing of Himself] [15.23] among us. We should perhaps think of this material of [1] and [2] above fitting in at section [13] of Jesus’ order of events stated below at # 455.

[3] then comes “the end” which is described as: [a] the abolition of all rule, authority and power. This has to do with His enemies, those who are currently opposing Him [15.24] and [b] the enemies are brought to be under His feet [15.24], the last enemy to be abolished is death. [This must be wider than just the Christian dead in its application].

[4] The Son hands back the kingdom and shows Himself as subject to the Father [15.28].

This outline of Paul’s does not contain everything he mentions in other places; but it does give an outline, a broad framework, and so helps us as we fit other factors into the larger puzzle of working out an order of what is to come.

467 - Jesus’ final prophecy about the future fall of the Temple

Matthew 21-23

After the cleansing of the Temple from the commercial money changers, Jesus retired to Bethany [Matthew 21.1-17]. He returned to the Temple on the next morning, where He was asked by the chief priests and the elders about His authority to do these things of clearing out the sellers and the money changers from the temple precinct [Matthew 21.23]. He spoke of the need for repentance and that the kingdom of God had been taken away from them because they wished to seize what was rightfully His own inheritance [Matthew 21.38,43]. They were enraged and wished to seize Him.

He spoke to them about the Wedding feast, in which He cast them as those who had despised it by not coming appropriately dressed for it. They would be cast out into outer darkness where there was a weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. [Matthew 22.1-14].

The chief priests and the elders tried to trap Him in his speech about the taxes to Caesar but could not [Matthew 22.15-22]. The Sadducees followed up with a question on the resurrection and He answered them with wisdom [Matthew 22.23-33]. Finally, the Pharisees and Sadducees banded together, questioning Him about the greatest commandment. Jesus counter-questioned them about how it was that David called the Christ Lord [22.41-46].

Matthew 23.1-38 recorded Jesus calling out woes [curses] upon the Pharisees. He wept over Jerusalem and spoke of how her house - the temple - would be desolated. He made it clear that they would not see Him until they welcomed Him with, “Blessed is He who comes in

the Name of the Lord"; that is, until they acknowledged that He is Messiah who came in His Father's Name.

468 - Three Questions about the future

Matthew 24, ; Luke 21; John 16.33

Jesus left the Temple and spoke privately to the disciples, He prophesied that the whole edifice would be torn down. Privately, on the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Him three questions concerning what He had just said, in the context of the Temple. They asked him concerning: [1] When will the things He said concerning the Temple happen? [2] what will be the sign of Your coming? and [3] [what will be the sign of the end of the age"? It is these questions that Jesus answers in Matthew 24.

469 - The Order of Matthew 24-25

Jesus laid down an order of events, beginning with the trouble [tribulation] which the disciples were going to find during their life between His going and coming.

It is expressed as a sequence; as Matthew 24 records, He spoke of the beginning, [verse 4-8] ...then [9], ...“when you see” [15], ...then [16], ...for then [21],... then [23], ...after the tribulation [29], ...and then [30a], ...and then [30b]

He recounted this to answer what the disciples asked: later He would speak of matters about which they did not know enough to ask. The following verse numbers refer to Matthew 24.

1. Beginning of the Birth Pangs, which is not “the end”. 24.4-8
2. Tribulation begins 24.9-14
3. Tribulation Intensifies with the Abomination of Desolation 24.15-27. See also Luke 21.20-24 which sets the timing much clearer.
4. The Description of the Sign of Jesus’ Coming 24.23-29
5. Immediately after the Tribulation 24.29a
6. The Sun will be darkened 24.29b
7. The Moon will not give its light 24.29c
8. The Stars will fall from the Sky 24.29d
- 9 The Powers of the heavens will be shaken 24.29e
- 10 The Sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the Sky 24.30a
12. The tribes of the earth shall mourn and they shall see Him coming on the clouds of the sky with great power and glory 24.30b

13. He shall send forth His angels with a trumpet and gather His elect from the four winds, [NSEW], from one end of the sky to the other 24.31

14. The Son of Man will then sit on His glorious throne - to Judge the Nations 25.31-46

470 - Beginnings of deception, war, natural phenomena; not "the end"

Matthew 24.4-8

The first thing Jesus is concerned about is that no one should lead his little flock astray. So He says what He says to prepare them for the eventuality of such deception. What they will have presented to them are as follows.

[1] Many false Christs would come so as to mislead many [4-5]; they were not to be mislead.

[2] There were to be wars and rumours of wars; they were not to fear [6]. This would need to happen but when they hear of these rumours the end is not yet.

[3] Nations would fight against each other, famines and earthquakes will happen. These things were simply the beginning of the action.

471 - Tribulation - sustained pressure - begins

Matthew 24.9-14

About a future time, Jesus said these things would happen:

[1] Jewish disciples of Jesus [or Jews in general] will be hated because of Jesus' name. They will be delivered to torture, and killed [9].

[2] At that time, men and women will find the going too hard, they will betray each other, and hate one another [10].

[3] False prophets will arise and mislead many people [11].

[4] Lawlessness will be on the increase and the love of many will grow cold, it will be a time of absence of compassion [12]

[5] Those who last out are assured to endure to the end [13].

[6] This gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world, for a witness to all the nations and then the "end" will come [14].

472 - The immanent future pressure of the "desolating sacrilege"

Daniel 11.31; 12.11; Matthew 24.15-27

The disciples are warned of matters that will transpire relatively soon in their own experience.

[1] Jesus spoke of the "abomination of desolation" standing in the Holy Place. This referred to

a defiling of the Temple in Jerusalem which was foreshadowed in the prophet Daniel. Daniel had spoken of armies surrounding Jerusalem and setting up pagan idols in the Temple. This would be a signal that it would be wise to get out of Judea [16-20], for then extreme pressure would begin [21-22] such as had never occurred before, since the beginning of the world.

[2] Luke 21.20-24 records that this desolation concerns Jerusalem being surrounded by armies [Luke 21.20]. It is a time when people in Judea should hide in the hills. Jesus warns his flock to quickly evacuate Jerusalem. The sword would take many people and there would be a dispersion of the Jews to all the nations of the earth. Jerusalem itself will be abandoned to the Gentiles to trample it. This dispersion and trampling will take place until the times of the Gentiles are done [Romans 11.25].

[3] For the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened [22]. If they had not been, no one would have been rescued.

These matters took place at the culmination of the Roman-Jewish War that had raged over AD 66-70. In AD 69 four Roman Emperors were brought down in violent ways, Nero, Otho, Viellius and Vespasian. As Vespasian left Palestine and went off to Rome to receive the Emperorship, his adopted son, Titus, marched on Jerusalem in AD 70, some 37 years after Jesus had said these words. Titus destroyed Jerusalem, burnt the Temple and crucified thousands of Jews.

473 - The Description of the Sign of Jesus' Coming

Matthew 24.23-29

Jesus' coming is universally obvious. This is stated lest people should be led astray and deceived in the time of the Great Tribulation. He said to the disciples:

[1] Following the events of the sack of Jerusalem, Jesus warned the disciples that the deceptive Christ's would still be a feature of the future times. They were not believe anyone who identified himself as "the Christ", [23] because there will be so many false 'Christs' and false prophets around with many signs and wonders. Jesus had forewarned his disciples [24-25].

[2] It was in the context of mentioning these false Christs that Jesus clarified that the reason they should not be believed is because the coming of the Christ will be spectacular and will be seen by all [27]. In this, we see He has begun to answer the disciples' 2nd question - "what will be the sign of your coming?"

[3] The sign of his coming will be a happening in the sky. It will be as fast as lightning, and seen from east to west, over the whole of the visible heavens.

[4] Then Jesus stated an observable principle: where the corpse is, the eagles [vultures] will gather there. What this states is something that every person who lived in the middle-east would understand. That the presence of birds circling in the sky is a sign [in the sky] of some-

thing that is taking place upon the ground. Jesus' point is very clear, what you see happening in the air will signify that the Son of Man has come to the earth.

The implication here is that He could come to one localised place [Mount of Olives], but all over the world there is something happening in the sky which will indicate that He has come. Not everyone will see Him at the Mount of Olives, but everyone can see the sky wherever they are in the world. Now, what follows is a return to the order of events.

474 - Events of the "end" - things that follow His coming

Matthew 24.24-31

Having stated that the sign of his coming would be fast and highly visible, Jesus back-tracked to fit that sign of His coming into a sequence of the end. Immediately after the trouble of those days [24.29a] the following will happen:

1. The Sun will be darkened 24.29b
2. The Moon will not give its light 24.29c
3. The Stars will fall from the Sky 24.29d
4. The Powers of the heavens will be shaken 24.29e
5. The Sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the Sky 24.30a [27]
6. The tribes of the earth shall mourn and they shall see Him coming on the clouds of the sky with great power and glory 24.30b
7. He shall send forth His angels with a trumpet and gather His elect from the four winds, [NSEW], from one end of the sky to the other 24.31

475 - Exhortations for the waiting disciples

Matthew 24.32-25.30; Luke 17.20-37

There were the things the disciples did not know enough to ask. Jesus gave them exhortations concerning their preparation for His coming again. It is spoken from the perspective of those on the earth.

[a] Parable of the Fig tree - when you see all these things, know that He is at the very door [24.32-33].

[b] The Jewish people [genea = race] OR Jewish disciples, will not pass away until all these things take place, the heavens and the earth will pass away, but Jesus' words will not [24.34-35].

[c] No one but the Father knows the hour [24.36].

[d] The disciples need to be alert and ready.

[i] The analogy of the unbelieving people of Noah's day is that they didn't understand, they just kept on living and doing things normally until Noah entered the ark and the judgment came. So will the coming of the Son of Man be [24.37-39]. There will be one taken; one left [24.40-41]. Luke says the same thing adding the example of Lot as well [Luke 17.20-37].

[ii] Disciples, who believe, need to be alert also, for they don't know the hour either, like the head of house in the story He told them doesn't know when the thief will come.

[iii] Jesus predicted that when He does come, there will be those who think that He is not coming [24.42-44]. The disciples need to consider themselves at work, faithfully carrying out the orders left for them while the master went away - they must be constantly faithful [24.46-51].

[iv] He implied that there will come a time when, after a long delay, people will need to sustain their readiness. He told two parables that spoke of having to deal with what looks like a delay. As we shall see, they may refer to the lifetime span of the ones' who are waiting. These parables are presented in # #480-481.

476 - The Son of Man on His glorious throne, as Judge of the Nations

Psalm 2; Matthew 25.31-46

[1] He judges the nations, all of which are gathered before Him.

[2] He separates them into two classes:

[a] Sheep, on His right, who are nations who have cared for Him when He was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and in prison, which means they have cared for the "brothers" of Jesus.

[b] Goats, the nations on His left go to the fire with the devil and his angels, because they did not care for the least of His brothers. They go to eternal punishment.

[3] Both classes did not understand what it was that they were doing in these actions of their life. The first because they were not self-referred, the second because they were ignorant and darkened in understanding.

4 - How to live while we wait

477 - Waiting, "watching" - discerning mixture within God's people

Romans 9-11; Matthew 7.13-29

Our long exposition upon predestination and calling within the context of the universal

mercy of God [Romans 8.28-11.36] has left us with a very clear perception of the way that the people of God always takes two forms within history - vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath which are always found together [Boan,[2013], Offering, #327-350].

This is not just simply within the history of Israel of the Old Covenant. It is true within the Church of Jesus, where there is, at present, in these "last days" of tension before the end, a discernable mixture. A study of Matthew 7.13-29 tells us that once we have entered by the narrow gate, then there are people of whom we should beware.

[1] We should not be surprised that there are also "wolves" who appear "in sheep's clothing". Their presence trains us to be alert, to look for the fruits of God's work in the lives of His people. We are not to rest on any external institutions as the place of safety, but the recognition of the infallible fruit of the Spirit in people - this is a sure sign of their relation with Jesus.

[2] As to doctrine, there are many who have a "right confession", they call Jesus "Lord". Their words sound right, but the test rests on the obedience of their lives.

[3] There are others who do "mighty works" and they do them in the Lord's Name. These only appear clearly on "that day"; they plead their works with the Lord. He tells them that they never knew Him, and that their life was lawless.

Now, these parables of the householders, the virgins, the talent men, the sheep and goats all speak of division and separation as a matter of judgment that comes to light at the coming of the Son of Man; who, because He is the Son of Man, has been given all authority on heaven and earth. They speak of the judgment seat of Christ which is an element of His return. They encourage us to look up for our redemption draws nigh. But as at the Cross, any redemption is accomplished in the midst of and through judgment.

It behoves us then, to believe firmly in the fact that we have passed from death to life, and that the judgment of our works, what deeds we have done in the body, will testify to that fact. We need a confidence about our works that they are of a kind that come from the power of the Spirit at work within us, and so the kind that the Master, whom we know intimately, would approve.

478 - Obediently waiting, in that the arrival time is unknown

Matthew 24.42-51

The teaching of Matthew 24, concerning the second coming of our Lord, was recorded as spoken towards the end of the Lord's ministry. He prophesied the destruction of the temple [24.2] and the disciples had asked Him about the timing of this matter and also about the sign of His own coming [24.3]. His reply is recorded towards the end of Matthew 24.

While encouraging them to be very alert [24.42,44] he spoke to them as those who are charged with the care of the household while He is away. As slaves of a Master, in charge of his possessions, included the people of the household as well [24.45-51]. He warned them that the elapse of a long time, seen as “delay” from the servants point of view, may lead evil slaves to use their authority to beat the others and to have a licence with the master’s goods. He assured the disciples that such evil slaves would be caught out.

One of the great dangers of those who are preoccupied with what is called, “end times”, is that they are always watching what is happening so that they will understand the order and proximity of things. Their preoccupation, if not their motive, is that of the evil slave - a man who was constantly estimating times. To be sure, the evil slave does it to estimate how long he can get away with beating the household. Jesus’ word to him is that he will be caught out!

While many folks do not have such things on their hearts today, and think of estimating times so as to be ready, their mistake is fundamentally the same. For they are using the proximity of the time schedule as a basis for being ready when He comes. That is not the way. Readiness does not depend on knowing the time of His arrival - a matter He made clear to His disciples that they would be ignorant about to the very end [Matt 24.42,44].

The faithful and sensible slave is exclusively preoccupied with the work that the Master has been given, and pre-eminently with the care of the household of the Master - that is, pre-occupied with the care of the Church of Jesus, which is the household of the Father. That is, faithfulness is not about estimating times, but about constancy of attention to the work throughout the whole of the time of waiting. Being “alert” [25.42] is about faithfulness, expressed every day to the task - not about prediction. That slave is blessed because His Master, when - and whenever - He comes, found him “so doing” - not predicting the arrival time.

479 - Waiting means we read the Gospels in the light of the finished work of Christ

Matthew 25.1-30; Luke 19.11-27

It is important to understand that between the time of Jesus speaking these things, and the time of His return, some events take place. This is intimated by the expression “went on a journey to receive a kingdom and return” of Luke 19.

Those events are the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the High Priestly work of Christ presenting His blood in the heavenly sanctuary, and the Father’s acceptance of that blood, as shown by Christ’s sitting down to rule [Hebrews 10.12-13]. So that the application of the time to which our two parables apply - the foolish and wise virgins and the men with the talents - presumes an experience of the resurrected Christ and a share in His resurrection life.

This resurrected life meant for Him, [a] being declared Son of God, despite the fact that when

He was on the cross He had looked anything but that, [b] being sanctified, following the defilement on the cross, [c] being justified or as Paul says it to Timothy, vindicated, for on the cross He was made sin and appeared as a evil doer, and [d] being glorified contrary to the shame and ignominy of the cross.

The Christian life involves sharing in the resurrected life of the One we are in union with through faith. For us too, as for the apostles, there is a sonship, a knowing that we are justified, sanctified [as event and process], and that we shall be glorified.

The two parables we are about to study [#480-481] need to be read assuming this post-resurrection status of Christ and also of the Christian. The promises of the Gospels are statements of the Messiah which, when read after the events the narrative records, depend on His cross and resurrection for anyone to have an experience of them.

480 - Waiting tests perseverance and the security of a relationship

In Matthew 25, Jesus is speaking two parables of the kingdom concerning the coming of the Son of Man in the light of a perceived delay. Waiting is an important time of testing for the security of a relationship. Both parables focus on the actions of the waiting ones as indications of their relationship to the Master.

The first, that of the ten virgins, [25.1-13] speaks of the prudent as those who prepare for a long wait from the beginning. The foolish do not prepare for the long haul, they miss the opportunity to greet the Bridegroom through lack of preparation for a consistent enduring.

This parable emphasises individual responsibilities in waiting over the whole of one's life. We need to be very sure that we have counted the cost of a life-time of waiting on/for the Lord Jesus. It also directs us to our relationship with Him. For, as we shall see in both these parables, how the relationship is at the start is reflected all the way through the life-time of the individuals. To be wrong about the relation we have with the Master at the start, will become evident at His coming.

It also makes clear what was previously noted about the "end times" watchers. While we saw that the wicked household servant watched the times so that he could continue his wickedness; the parable of the virgins puts the last minute watching in a different light again. It reminds us that we cannot make ready at the end - we make ready at the start and persevere in what we have from there. If we think that by careful watching we shall have time to dash off and find some more oil, then we shall run a risk, that the day will arrive and show us to have been foolish throughout our life.

481 – The Master's return manifests the waiting relationship

Matthew 25.1-30; Luke 19.11-27

The parable of the talented Men [25.14-30], is set in the context of the master, having gone on a journey to receive a kingdom, who entrusts His servants with talents to use while He is bodily absent from them.

The parable dwells on the productivity of faithful servants, and in such a way that the end reveals what was the foundation of the relation with the master. How this relationship was experienced by each man determined the productivity each had at the end of the waiting process. But the product itself is not the end the Master had in view. The productivity is the sign that something else is right. For, their produce is not the cause of their acceptance by their Master at His return; it is a sign that they have had a loving and secure relationship with Him all their life – so, of course, they are productive.

[1] It is the Journey of the Master which necessitates His bodily absence [19.2].

Spoken to the disciples when it was, this parable anticipated that the Master is going on a journey. The parallel in Luke [19.12-27] says that the reason He is going on this journey is to receive a kingdom. That is to receive an authority to rule. We have already applied this to the period between his death and resurrection so the context is of His return; by which is meant the return of Him in the flesh, in all His glory.

[2] The Handing over of His possessions [19.3].

In the story, the Master commits to his slaves the people and goods of his household. He is charging them with the use of these possessions. He is happy to commit his goods to them. His return is a time when He is looking for some return on what He had under his control when He left for the journey. He recognises that there is variety of abilities in his slaves. But He does not set a figure they must aim at; there is no contract. The initial outlay varies for each, 5, 2 and 1. But in the case of the faithful men, while they are diverse in their original allotments; they are common in the multiplication that they bring to the Master.

[3] The action of all three slaves is immediate [19.4].

The man with five makes ten, the man with two makes four and the man with one buries it. Notice that the time lapse is not the issue for the productivity. For their action takes place at once, and the amount of time is constant to them all.

[4] "Now, after a long time" [19.5].

This comes to be a settling of accounts. So it is a judgment of their work; but, as we shall see, their work is a reflection of their relationship. Accounting is common to all three initially. But the exchange between the Master and each is the focus as all give account.

The meaning of the parable turns on the contrasting situation between the 10 and 4 talent men and the man with one.

[5] The "Ten" and "Four" Men [19.6].

About these two men we can note the following.

[a] Confidence in their work

Both of these slaves are pleased to show what they have done for their master, they rush forward with confidence to say “see”. But this cannot be because they are confident in the amount of return they have generated, for there was no hint given about what was required as a dividend. However, they are confident that they have done what they were asked. This becomes apparent when we see what the Master says.

[b] Their confidence came from where they drew their glory in the first place.

It is their understanding of the Master which informs the grounds of their confidence. They know that they have been faithful to Him in their handling of their stewardship. What is at issue is found in the word that they used for the initial transaction “you entrusted...to me” [verse 20.22]. They saw the work given as a trust between persons - not primarily as a goal which was set to achieve - and they were honoured by His trust of them. Then it must have been true that they knew Him in a way that they drew their glory from Him, for that is what trust conveys in an honoured relationship.

[c] What is praised is their work; but work as a sign of faithfulness.

The Master affirms that they have understood Him rightly. Their security in their relationship was well placed. For He does not look at the multiple, or the 10 and 4 talents as a good return, he praised the relational way they had acted towards Him in the matter of the possessions they had stewarded. “Well done, good and faithful servant...” [21-22]. They, as persons, have “done well” - the work is praised, but the work is not the end in itself, but the sign of the faithfulness which they have exercised in relation to Himself. The relation is the reality; the work is the sign.

[d] Joy is the real reward of relationship.

If the originally given talents were an honoured trust given by the Master, then the multiplied talents are a sign of the productivity and faithfulness of the servants, sustained through their waiting by the confidence in that original relationship. It is the relationship that made them fruitful.

Then what they “enter into” now is the joy of their Master. Joy is their experience of His pleasure of which their faithfulness is the occasion. This is the word of the Master which assures us, the readers, that these productive men have understood Him truly. And their waiting accordingly was based upon the honour they knew which His trust of them implied.

[e] The present work that has been accounted for is actually revealed to be a small work, in the light of the great things which are to follow the return of the Master who now has a kingdom.

The talents are the opportunity to show the faithfulness of a man's lifework. In terms of "things done" it is seen to be the handling of a "few things" - what awaits such faithful ones is the opening of trust to "many things". The Master who left with few responsibilities to commit to others, returns with a kingdom of vastly increased responsibilities.

But the "many things", the expansion of responsibilities, are not so that more things may be accomplished, but so that the joy might increase. More "things" are occasions for greater honour from the Master and at the same time an increased occasion for more joy.

[6] The One-Talent Man [19.7].

[a] He tells what his knowledge of the Master was.

We have noticed above that he immediately hid the talent given to him. So, it must be true that his perception of the Master, which he relates at the end, was his original perception. He has lived out his life with the view of the Master that he had at the beginning.

[b] He has a perception of the Master as a "hard man" -

He has thought of the Master as someone whose heart is ruthless and cruel, interested only in the product, and so not in his servant as a person but in what he can make for the Master. This is a projection of his own hard heart, and as we shall see, he has been delivered over to it.

[c] He has judged his Master

This man sees the master as a person who "reaps...and gathers" where He does not sow. He sees Him as One who is not entitled to the product and the increase. He denies Him the good reaping He receives. He will not allow that there can be any windfalls which are due to His Master, for he does not share his Master's interests. So his view is that you should only get what you work for. God "helps those who help themselves" is his motto. His understanding of life is that common grace does not even apply. Everything a man has he ought to have by his own labour. We deserve only what is our due and what is due is understood to be a result of our own labour.

His position in this accounting is a product of his own self-centred, and self-referred life that he projects onto his Master. It is an idolatrous view of Jesus. He transfers the techniques of business and commerce in a hard world to the relationship with Jesus - he imports into the kingdom the values of the world.

The 10 and 4 talent men are released from their self-centred life - they are freed by the security of acceptance of the Master so that they can operate without the fear of punishment. They see themselves as honoured men - and therefore as grateful men, for it is the grace of relationship they have received. They are free slaves of a master.

[d] The third man hides what he has been given.

The reason he hides his talent is that he does not want to lose what is the possession of the Master. And while he has expressed that it was something his master wasn't right to have, at the same time He fears His censure ["I was afraid" v.25]. What motivates him is not the honour of being entrusted, but the liability to punishment. His insecurity in relationship drives him to protect himself.

He, who is frightened of loss, must be dealing with things, or deeds or ministries which can be perceived as lost. Whereas those who experience a gracious and loving relationship await the return of the Master knowing that they were always accepted by Him independent of their performance. Further, knowing this grace, their performance arises from the security of their acceptance. The gift of relationship makes certain that the task will be done, and done well, and there will be joy.

[e] The third man offers back the talent as preserved.

He is satisfied not to have suffered loss, so he hands the talent back as something which has been preserved for the Master. He understood his Master to have given him something for safe keeping. He projected onto the Master his own view of himself, as someone frightened of losing what He had. He understands his achievement as preserving things from loss; but in doing so, he misses the joy of the relationship which is the foundation for the use of the thing itself. The thing has little meaning for the Master except as a sign of the relationship between them. Alas, this thing, in the way that it is handled turns out to be truly a sign of the relationship - it signifies an idol, a view of the Master which is hard, ungracious, fearful, punishing and exacting about things while not showing his heart to his servants.

[f] The third man manifests a depraved, irrational mind; which is the wrath of God [Romans 1.18,24-28].

It is clear that the Master indicates that the man has lived irrationally, and He shows this by using the man's thinking against him. For in calling him "wicked, lazy", he goes on to say that if the servant's view of the Master was what he says it is - why then did he not have the sense to actually put it in the bank? That is, let someone else steward it; for money banked is money we no longer steward, so that the Master would at least have had the interest from his asset.

The third man's behaviour is, in itself, an indication of a depraved and irrational mind - this shows that from the first he was experiencing the wrath of God. So, he is not able to be consistent, even to his depraved and fallen view of the Master - such is the case of the unsaved.

[g] So his talent, a bestowed trust which found no relationship of grace to operate it, is taken away.

The man suffers loss, and his position having become relationally clear, his talent is removed and given to the one with ten. It is given to a man who has, by grace, received a relation-

ship which he has operated to the joy of the Master - for the Master should have joy in his servants and their use of talents.

The time of the waiting shows how men operate; on the one hand, by grace accompanied by security, fruit and joy, or, on the other hand, under wrath, in fear of punishment, insecure under the responsibility given, irrationally, and without fruit. The waiting is what we are experiencing right now, the end does not make the relationship, it simply declares it's nature.

[h] He is cast into hell, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Here, as he lived, so he dies - away from the presence of the Lord and in the knowledge of God which he had. He is delivered to a life of his own making, to fear, punishment, insecurity, irrationality. A fruitless life of weeping and grinding of teeth.

So the parable teaches us that the delay, or the timing, is not the main thing. It asks about our life today. It asks what is our view of the Lord – and of our relationship to Him. On what is it grounded? How shall we be secure in it? For we only wait properly as we trust in the deep security and honour which has been bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus.

It tells us that our waiting for the Second Coming is set by our understanding and appropriation of the first Coming. What we have made of that first visitation, as the foundation of God's grace in our own life, will carry us through to fruitfulness and joy that will be manifested at the second visitation. It is about lives that demonstrate those good works which God has foreordained for those who love Him.

482 - Waiting involves resisting lies told about the Beloved

1 John 2.18, 22; 4.3; 2 John 7; 2 Peter 1.20-21; 2 Corinthians 11.3
Philippians 3.2-11, Galatians 2.6-3.5

[1] The Antichrists - the spirit and its manifestation.

The word antiChrist consists of the Greek preposition "anti" and the noun "Christ". There are two possible uses of the Greek preposition "anti"- for it may mean either [a] "instead of", "in place of" or [b] "against". If we think of [a] then it is very close to what Jesus calls a false Christ, by which He means a pretender, someone who makes himself out as being the Christ [Matthew 24.24].

But in the sense of [b]; it speaks of someone who is opposed to Christ. It is a word used only in the letters of John [1 John 2.18, 22; 4.3; 2 John 7]. There is a "spirit" of Antichrist, there is a phenomenon called Antichrist and there are many "antichrists" who are present at the time John wrote.

In 1 John 4.3 he writes that "every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of antichrist" and 2 John 7 mentions "many deceivers" who have entered the world who do not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. About

this matter we can list the following:

[a] The stress lies in the words “in the flesh”. So it is not a denial of Jesus as being the Messiah, or of His coming, but of His true humanity. It is stating that He is not a real man.

[b] The persons to whom this name is given had once been in the visible fellowship of the church. They were described as being “among us” but they were not “of us”.

[c] They seem to make a Christian confession, and under its guise they are “deceivers” - they deny a primary and distinctive truth. This is what characterises them. They are called by John “deceivers” and also the “false” one and as well as “the beguiling” one. They teach a fatal heresy under the guise of Christian discipleship.

[d] In 1 John 2.2 it is said that he is the Antichrist who “denies the Father and the Son”. This means that to deny the Son necessarily involves denying the Father, since they are relational terms. The Father without the Son is not the true God. “Whoever denies the Son has not the Father”.

[e] The word is used in the plural. There are many “Antichrists” - there are many persons who hold these views which are so antichristian in nature and in results.

[f] In John then, the antichrists are not one person singled out, but a collective of many such deceivers. This is particularly clear in the 2 John 7 - the going out of the many who are not confessing Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh is stated. And then the next statement is that “this” [singular] is “the deceiver” [singular] and “the antichrist” [singular]. It has the sense that, the going out of many deceivers has, at the back of it, a singular source, what we may call “the deceiver” and “the antichrist”.

[g] These antichrists are already in the world, doing their work of deception.

[2] False teachers - who claim to speak for the Beloved. There is a need to contend for the apostolic faith.

Because prophecy is not an act of human will, but is a result of men being moved by the Holy Spirit, then it is also true that the interpretation of prophecy is not a matter of one’s own interpretation either.

As there were false prophets in the Old Covenant, so there are false teachers in the New Covenant, for it is the teachers who interpret the meaning of those prophecies. Such interpretation of the old prophecies needs to be a matter of the Holy Spirit moving on the teachers as well [2 Peter 1.20-21].

For, as Paul shows, the false apostles he had to contend with in Corinth were leading astray the Corinthians from the simplicity of their devotion to Christ [2 Corinthians 11.3]. The marks of these false teachers who secretly introduce destructive heresies is seen in their fleshy life style.

[a] They follow their sensuality and so the way of truth is given a bad name [2 Peter 2.2]; they turn grace into licence [Jude 3], they revel and carouse, having no reverence for the Lord's Supper [2 Peter 2.13, Jude 12].

[b] They are greedy, and so exploit people with false words [2 Peter 2.3].

[c] They are indulging the flesh, following corrupt desires, and so despise authority [2 Peter 2.10]. They promise freedom from sensual life, and are themselves enslaved to it [2 Peter 2.18-19]

[d] They are very daring in the way they speak to angels, and they revile [rubbish] high angelic powers [Jude 8,10; 2 Peter 2.2]

[e] They are speakers of God's word for hire, peddling the word of God for money like Balaam did [2 Peter 2.15, Jude 11].

[f] Their judgment and destruction is assured [2 Peter 2.12]

[3] Mockers - who say that our Beloved Lord is not returning.

Both Jude 18-19 and 2 Peter 3 make a clear example of the mockers who come in these last days. Those who wait for Jesus need to be on their guard that they are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men [2 Peter 3.16]. The mockers have things in common with the false teachers:

[a] they are following after their own lusts as well

[b] they cause divisions, are worldly minded and devoid of the Spirit

[c] they think of the Lord's coming as delayed - and show that they have forgotten the flood, when God said He would destroy the earth and did! They need to understand that it is the fire next time!

[d] They have forgotten the meaning of the patience of God: it is time given by a God who does not wish to kill - it is time for repentance [Romans 2.4-5; 2 Peter 3.9]

[4] The false circumcision: legalists who try to move us from grace back to law again.

There will be people who, after our Beloved has died for us, and established our life with Him and His Father, will try to make us put our confidence in the flesh again. In Paul's day, these were shown as the "false circumcision" and he describes them in Philippians 3.2-11, Galatians 2.6-3.5. They seek to make His death useless, by making us no longer hold to it as the most basic matter of our new life with Him.

483 - Waiting involves sharing our Beloved's sufferings

[1] Shunning the life which follows our lusts

God has granted us in Christ all we need pertaining to life and godliness; and this has come through a true knowledge of Christ. And we have become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust [2 Peter 1.3-4].

The letter to the Colossians 2.11-14 develops the theme of how the death of Christ was a circumcision of Christ where we put off the body of the flesh. It makes clear that there is a death to the flesh, a crucifixion of it in our lives.

1 Peter 2.11; 4.1-6, 2 Peter 1.4, Galatians 5.13-21 all teach that if we are to share in Christ's sufferings [for He suffered in the flesh] then we must avoid living after the lusts of the flesh. Indeed, the mark of the false teachers and the mockers is that they entice us into this fleshly way of life.

[2] Suffering for doing what is right

One of the implications of the submissive life of the Christian is that it opens the door to suffering under unjust masters. When patiently endured such suffering for doing right is really acceptable to God, for it mirrors the Lord's example for He suffered at the hands of unjust men [1 Peter 2.18-24].

Often this will cost life for us - in which case when it is laid down it is the victory of Christ worked out in our life for Him. For this is the way that He overcame [Revelation 2.11,13; 3.21; 12.11] by laying down His life in submission to His Father which involved a submission to unjust men [1 Thessalonians 2.14]. The way of the cross is a way of suffering. It is through this suffering that the victory of the cross of the Lord is enforced in the world.

484 - Waiting involves a submissive way of life among the house of God

As the household and children of the Father and the Bride of the Son, the church is living a life here upon the earth waiting in readiness for the coming of the Lord. We manifest the sort of life that Jesus brings to His people.

Christ as the Head requires submission one to another. For all of the relations into which God has called us involve us in submitting to one another in some way or other constantly. There is no other way for the Headship of Christ to manifest except that the whole body of Christ functions under His headship with due appreciation of the gifts and ministries which are among the whole for the common good.

These include the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers of Ephesians 4.10-16 who will equip us to grow to maturity. And among the local body of Christ there will be

found all the ministries of the Holy Spirit's charisms which He apportions as He wills [1 Corinthians 12-14; Romans 12].

It also includes the mutually submissive relations which are to be found among husbands-wives, children-parents, masters-servants, of Ephesians 5.21-6-9; Colossians 3.18-4.1].

There is to be a peacefulness among Christians, a tender hearted approach to one another, compassionate hearts, kindness and humility, with gentleness and patience. Much forgiveness needs to be shown in love. [Colossians 3.12-17; Philippians 2.5-11].

485 - Waiting involves understanding the present mixture of people

Matthew 13.36-43; Revelation 21.9-2; 2 Thessalonians 2.1-12

The disciples asked Jesus to make clear the parable of the weeds. His answer gave them the allegorical keys to each element in the story He had told the crowd. [1] The "man" is Himself, the Son of Man. He is the active sower looking for his harvest to mature. [2] The field is the world. [3] The good seed sown are the children of the Kingdom [4] The darnell, the bad seed, are the work of the devil. [5] The harvest is the end of time. [6] The reapers are the angels

As we noted, the field was the world but by the end it is the kingdom of the Christ. So the end is the arrival of the Son of Man to the earth. This is made very clear in Jesus' teaching to his disciples in [Luke 17-20-37].

In speaking about the Son of Man sending out his angels at the end Jesus states that the angels will gather out of his kingdom everything that causes offence, and all whose deeds which were evil. These are committed to the furnace of fire and also to the gnashing of teeth.

The "place of wailing and grinding of teeth" [NEB 1961] implies a removal of people to judgment. Their judgment is not pleasant, being one of personal torment and also that of great personal anguish and regret.

This expression of Jesus is found in seven places. In the following places it is spoken as a warning to the Pharisees and scribes, or to the sons of Israel: [1] Matthew 8.5-13 concerning the Centurion's Request; [2] Matthew 13.36-42 Parable of the Tares; [3] Matthew 13.47-50 Parable of the Dragnet; [4] Matthew 22.1-14 Wedding Feast [in setting of 21.23-46]; [5] Luke 13.22-30 "Only a few saved?"

It is also used in reference to Jesus' teaching by parables told to his disciples on his coming again to the earth. They concern how to wait for his coming again; [6] Matthew 24.45-51 Slave in charge of house; [7] Matthew 25.14-30 Parable of the Talents.

All of these contexts deal with the issue of mixture within the invited people of God. Second, all of them have in common that the judgment is pronounced upon them, seen from the point of view of the end where the fate of the persons is clear.

On the basis that the judgment is announced to us beforehand, these parables function as a warning. It is a gracious warning - for the design of the parables to us is not to drive us to works as a means to salvation; but as a way of understanding the works as demonstrating the people for who they are. And all is visible by virtue of the resultant works they are doing now. Luke's material has the sense of the angels as the agents of God in executing the judgment which has been pronounced upon them.

The removal of the tares, at the time of the coming again of the Son of Man to the world which is now his kingdom, is the removal from the kingdom of "all that is offensive and those whose deeds are evil."

This removal means that the previous mixture is now clarified. And the purity of the persons who are left means that they can now shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Their purity is not defiled by the mixture. All this pertains to the Father's glory. It is that there is no persons doing anything offensive or compromising with in the kingdom of God.

We see similar themes developed in the Revelation to John 21.9-27. Here, the bride, the wife of the Lamb is shown. She is portrayed as a heavenly city, founded upon the foundation stones of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and having gates with the names of the tribes of Israel. The Lord God and the Lamb are the light of this city, and there is no one in it who is doing anything shameful.

486 - Waiting involves being prepared for both evil and good to ripen

Sometimes people ask as to whether the world is getting better or worse as time goes by. And there are people who point to evidences of greater good as a change, and also to increasing evil as well - for there are evidences for either of these optimistic or pessimistic views. And this should alert us to the fact that the question, put as an either-or, is the wrong one.

It is not that either is increasing at the expense of the other. For the fact is that world testifies to an increase in both. Progress is not simply in the good, so that the evil is gradually driven out of the arena of life. Nor is it true that the evil increases so that the good disappears. As time goes forward, it is clearly the fact that good and evil are coming to their maturity, they are moving to a climax where they will show their ripest fruit. Not only this, their conflict will intensify as well, for they shall be showing what each can do in the face of the other.

This is what the Lord taught in this parable of the wheat and the tares [weeds]. They should be allowed to ripen together, and then climactically, at the great judgement, there will be a separation of the good and the evil and the evil will come to be burned.

We also notice that as the historical struggle intensifies, the character of sin manifests itself in deeper spiritual forms. There is a crowning wickedness which manifests just before the

coming of our Lord where the man of sin arises as a malignant, prideful personage, only to be judged and destroyed by the Lord at his coming.

487 - Waiting people know of a coming apostasy and a final rebellion

2 Thessalonians 2.3-12

So that the Thessalonians might not be deceived into thinking the day of the Lord has already come, Paul mentions two things that are going to precede that day. There will be [i] a great apostasy from Christ; and a [ii] final rebellion against God, when wickedness is to be revealed in human form – a man of sin, whose destiny is he is doomed to destruction.

What this man will do is that he: [a] exalts himself; [b] opposes all that is called god; [c] opposes all that is worshipped; [d] usurps the place of God; [e] falsely claims to be God, enthroning himself 'in the temple'.

The apostles had already taught the Thessalonians about a restraining power, currently at work, which holds back this man of sin's appearance until the appointed time.

While there are secret, wicked forces already at work, they remain secret until the restraining power is removed. Once that restraining power is removed, then the work of these secret forces will become manifest.

The man of sin will then be revealed, but his destruction will come when the Lord appears. His word and his radiance will destroy this man.

The man of sin is a work of Satan; he is at the back of this man. This man, this work of Satan, comes with all the signs and miracles that falsehood can devise. Under this man's impact, those who did not find their salvation through loving the truth will be doomed to destruction. God Himself allows such people to come under this compelling delusion to believe what is false. In this way, all who have not believed the truth, but have made sin their choice, will be brought to judgment.

488 - The appearance of a man of sin due to removal of restraint

2 Thessalonians 2.6-12

What do we know about the Restrainer? We consider 2 Thessalonians 2; verses 6-8a.

[1] The mentioning of the "the restraining one" is an idea known to the Thessalonians from Paul's previous teaching. As readers they would have understood what he was speaking about.

[2] The expression is not found anywhere else in Jewish or Christian writings. Except of course when they are speaking about this passage of the Thessalonian letters.

[3] The Greek expression for the English translation 'the restrainer', *κατέχων*, is a present

participle. We could treat it as primarily verbal, in the sense of, 'restraining', or as a name, in the sense of 'the restrainer'. Both ways of handling a participle with the definite article are appropriate.

If we think of it verbally, then the meaning of the action will take its meaning from the verb, which has a range of meanings such as "to hold fast, to gain possession of, be master of, occupy, prevail".

However when we come to interpret the participle κατέχον, we need to make certain that we give it the meaning of the verb from which it was constructed. So we might think of the restraining action as that of a 'possessor' or an 'occupier' who is in place;

489 - The hope of His coming is the source of our purity

1 John 3.1-3

The First Letter of John makes it clear that where there is sin in our life and impurity in our motives we need a purifying hope. John tells us that the sure hope of seeing Jesus implies that we shall be like Him. This hope, he says, purifies us. It is the certainty that God will bring to completion what He has begun in us [Philippians 1.6] that allows us to forget ourselves. To live for the kingdom and for Christ in a way that we are sure of our maturing, since it is in God's hands, sets us free from relying upon our own performance. This allows us to trust in his sovereign grace, which works in us both "to will and to do". This forward hope purifies our present motives. It is one example of the 'presence of the future'.

5 - Christ's present rule from heaven

The Revelation to John

After the Second World War, Thomas F. Torrance [b:1913d:2007] preached sixteen sermons in Scottish parish churches. In this following overview, designed to set out the grand themes of the book, Revelation, I am deeply indebted to his work. I have added some small additions concerning the text myself, but the bulk of Torrance's wonderful overview controls this summary. A much fuller exposition of Revelation is available on www.davidboan.net and also in audio www.thegraciousgod.net.

Many prophets of the Old Testament used imagery to convey their vision of God to Israel. At the Ascension of Jesus into heaven, the scene of His directing activity for the Church on earth originates there. The revelation made to John draws heavily on the pictures of the Old Testament, as it centres them around Christ and His reign in heaven. In following through the rich Old Testament references and allusions, we see that sometimes the action pictured is in heaven, sometimes upon the earth. To comprehend the actions on the earth we must first appreciate that they have their origin in the heavenly reign of Jesus.

As you work through this brief summary, my suggestion is that you read beforehand all the Scripture references set in 'flush right' after the title of the section. In that way, you will know the Bible portions well enough to recognise what each explanatory section speaks about.

Revelation is a book of the Bible that every Christian should be instructed in quite early in their walk. It is the most wonderful material to equip the Christian to persevere and hold in very adverse circumstances of the world we live in. True, it is a book so rich in the Old Testament allusions that we need a working knowledge of the Scripture to understand and apply it. It is also true that today, in the 21st Century, its ability to be grasped is blurred by a whole series of assumptions about the way that it must be interpreted. So much so, that many people give up. But remember that it is meant to be read now - in our present time on the earth. So it is prophecy, given for our encouragement, edification and consolation [1 Corinthians 14.3]. As we read it together, taking it at face value, it will strengthen and encourage us.

490 - "*The tribulation, kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus*"

Revelation 1.9; Boan, 2013, Relating, # 388-392

The apocalypse is an unveiling of the history of the world already conquered by Christ. It is the history in which we are engaged right now. It is the kingdom, or the rule of God, that we are experiencing as tribulation and perseverance. Because it tells us what Jesus Christ is doing now, it is a wonderful encouragement to our waiting. It is the unveiling of His current, but hidden, work. For it tells us of the risen and exalted life of our Beloved Groom in heaven, providing glimpses of what He is doing now and how that is preparing for what He will do when He comes again.

We have already raised in Unit 9 that from the perspective of we earth-dwellers, we have a hidden life that is found in Christ who is with God [Boan, 2013, Relating, # 388-392]. The same section of our Units raised the hiddenness of God's work on earth; that it is an 'alien work' that God does upon the earth, only seen and embraced through faith in what God says.

The 'cross' - a shorthand expression for the effective death of Jesus - is already going forth into the field of human history, overruling the world and its sin. As the saving work of Christ is preached, each Christian is a present example of its power to bring men and women to freely yield their lives to Him, as they live under grace.

The Christian life is one of "waiting" in circumstances of a hostile environment. We are not surprised that John, in exile on the island of Patmos, off the coast of Asia Minor [modern Turkey], can describe the Christian life as *tribulation* - constant external pressure; the *kingdom* as the hidden rule of Christ known only to Christians; and the *perseverance* as the importance of enduring and holding fast under pressure. All of this, he says, is what our life is "*in Jesus*". Such is the situation for those Christians upon the earth.

Revelation 1.1-9 is paralleled by the description in Romans 1.1-4. Jesus is the first and the last,

He is the living One because resurrected. He was dead but is alive forevermore [Revelation 10.6] so death no longer has dominion over Him and He has the keys of death and Hades - He has authority to open and shut all the things that men fear.

491 - Glorified Christ overseeing the Church on earth

Revelation 1; Ezekiel 1.26, Daniel 7.9,13,10.16; Revelation 14.14; Judges 5.31

The churches of the earth, as precious, golden lampstands in a dark place, experience the Lord walking in their midst administrating and overseeing their lives. The Lord is the Son of Man [Ezekiel 1.26, Daniel 7.13,10.16; Revelation 14.14]. He is clothed in a robe of One who governs [Daniel 10.5-6]; with the purity and eternity of the ancient of days, the God of Israel, expressed by his white hair [Daniel 7.9]; with an infinite knowledge and penetrating intelligence of the church's scene [eyes of flaming fire]. He stands strongly and firmly on His feet, with an authoritative voice that cannot be ignored. He administrates [by his right hand] the churches. His mouth has a two edged sword in it, to condemn and approve and His face is like the sun in its full strength, transfigured in glory [Matthew 17.2]. His enemies perish as He arises [Judges 5.31].

492 - When Christ speaks to the churches

Revelation 2-3

The voice of Christ is the same as "what the Spirit says to the churches" so we know that He is addressing the Christian Church during the time gap between his going and coming. The Church is spoken to at the place where each assembly is located, as a 'church of the town'. These churches are 'lampstands' - a light emitting source in the midst of the darkness surrounding their location.

In each speech we notice that: [a] There is a title of Christ announced. These titles are taken from the vision already provided in chapter 1. [b] He commends the church in question; [c] His complaint against the church is heard; and [d] He gives His advice and counsel to that local church.

He speaks in an encouraging way, He is also rebuking and bringing His word to those who are His people upon the earth. This voice of Christ is administered to us by the Spirit.

493 - The heavenly calm of the Throne of God is shown to us

Revelation 4; Ezekiel 1.4-28; 10.1-22; and Daniel 7.2-8

Revelation assures us that there is a final outcome ["after these things"] of world history. We are given to know the end even while the present flow of history is still going on. We are encouraged in our waiting to know that there is an assured outcome. There will come a peace and a concord to creation. Almighty is the Lord who is in the midst of it all.

Ezekiel 1.4-28; 10.1-22; and Daniel 7.2-8 should be read. These alert us to the four living creatures [cherubim] representing all created things made for God's glory. They will be later contrasted with the four beasts of Daniel when the chaos ensues. But right now, Revelation 4 wants to convey to us that the assured outcome is a calm sea. The sea, ever moving and never still, is a picture often found in the Old Testament as an image of the raging nations. Later, we shall notice that the beasts emerge out of the "sea" of the nations.

Here, in the heavenly realm, the nations are no longer raging. The rainbow surrounds the throne, the floods are gone forever, the covenants of God with His creation are enacted, the whole creation is tamed and redeemed.

Men, angels and creatures are around the throne together. There is no mouth speaking blasphemies but "holy holy holy" is the call. There is the church of the Old Covenant and the church of the New covenant in completion together, pictured as 24 elders.

This calm tells us clearly that while things may be hard-pressed upon the earth, it is not so in heaven. Heaven is a place of the restored order of God [See Chapter 12 later]; since the Ascension of Christ it does not have to live in the disorder of rebellion.

494 - The sealed book and the Lamb

Revelation 5

This is not a look at history which has passed, nor the consummation and the end of history but a look at what is happening now - we are seeing the processes of history from the point of view of the divine revealing of their secret meaning. It tells us of an order behind the troublesome times. God's purpose is actually being fulfilled now.

The Lamb has conquered so as to open the book. That is, the cross is now the dominant matter for the destiny upon the world. All the historical process of the current world are happening affected by the impact upon by the cross of Jesus Christ.

John weeps because no one is worthy to reveal the secret of human existence. It is a guilty existence and the cross speaks of a victory over the past history. The Lamb is slain, but standing; He is alive and governing with power and intelligence [eyes = Spirit of God, sent out to all the earth] and He commands an informed, world rule.

He has conquered as the Lion of Judah - He is a powerful ruler. But He is this because He is a Lamb. A slain Lamb who now rules. This wonderful imagery tells us of the hiddenness of the victory of the cross - it is known in heaven. They know how a Lion is in fact a Lamb. This gentle Lamb, who keeps us free and does not violate our freedom, who draws us by his grace to us, will later be contrasted in this book with the beasts, who violate, control and destroy.

495 - The ordeal of present history

Revelation 6

Six seals are broken but not the seventh; there are wars and rumours of wars, but the end is not yet. The first four seals will reveal four scourges on the earth. The fifth will speak of spiritual suffering and the sixth of judgment. [As we shall see this '1st-4th, then a 5th and then a 6th' pattern will re-appear.]

Each of the horsemen has his authority "given" to him - he is not the prime mover of his action. War, militaristic action, famine, and death and hell follow as a sequence. These four are afflicting mankind today, and yet they are under the command of God; they are on a leash. They teach us that the course of world history is the course of world judgment. The fire is raging, but God is in the fire.

The fifth seal tells us that behind all history is a powerful, ingrained hatred of the Word of God. All who profess this Word are attacked and killed. The present martyrs must wait - for God is continuing to stay His hand until the last judgment. He waits to be gracious, but doesn't condone evil.

The sixth seal opens on an earthquake and a heaven-quake as well. There is a great cosmic shaking of all things before the day of reckoning.

The wrath of the Lamb is the wrath of love. Having done the absolute utmost for mankind, He has the consuming passion of his holy love that wills to destroy all that is unloving and untrue.

A pause here does not signal a break in the process of history, but in the vision given.

496 - The relation between providence of God and grace of God

Revelation 7; Ezekiel 9

All the evils in our life are exposed to God's gaze; He knows them all. They are in His control, even if they look capricious. Whether the winds are calm or blowing, they are submissive to the angel of God. They are not to blow until the saints are sealed, marked with God's ownership. We know ourselves as living people who are sealed with the Holy Spirit as the possession of the Lord. The four angels of providence take their orders from the angel of grace just as the winds and the waves of Galilee obeyed the Saviour of men.

The undergirding thought behind the Revelation to John is that there is absolutely nothing that happens except that God uses it and governs it for the purposes of His grace. His sovereignty is assured over all matters, even ideas and motivations that arise, not from His own mind, but that of his enemies.

The saints are sealed on their foreheads - their minds [Ezekiel 9]. We shall only know if we are true to our baptism when we endure trials and pressures. There is a Jewish contingent and

a Gentile one. And they have come out of the great tribulation, a phrase that describes the trouble which has been going on since the crucifixion of Jesus until now. They have white robes made white by blood of Lamb – purified and cleansed in His blood. Those martyrs live with Him and serve Him.

497 - The hidden master powers behind world history

Revelation 8; Review # 464 where we considered the "Violence of God"

The reader might be expecting the end - the seventh seal - but seven trumpets are now introduced. Trumpets are used in history and the Old Testament to warn the city and also to warn troops in battle of danger. These trumpets are the warnings for the dwellers on the earth.

The six seals had spoken of human history, powers and principalities and the dark powers apparently overwhelming the cause of God. But now we are given to see deeper into things. For the real master powers behind the history of the world are seen to be the prayers of the saints and the fire of God [Revelation 8.3-5]. The real aggressor is the cross of Jesus, as is also the man or woman who prays in His Name.

So all history is moving at the impulse of prayer and the fire of Jesus. These taken together affect all the regions of human life, the land, and the earth, the sea and the sky, not to mention the rivers. Many unbelieving men and women die of bitterness; they become embittered toward the Christian gospel. This is going on in our lifetime and has been since the death of Jesus.

498 - Christian prayer this leads to the opening of the bottomless pit

Revelation 9

A star falls from heaven, with the key of the bottomless pit of human passions. As it is opened smoke comes out of it and then locusts arise from the smoke to torment unsealed people. They are not to hurt the inanimate creation, their target is only men who are not sealed.

One third of mankind is killed by horsemen as fire, smoke and brimstone issue out of the mouths of the horses they ride. The rest of mankind does not repent of their sorceries, idolatries, murders, immoralities and thefts. The picture is of a hardened people moving to a place beyond repentance.

499 - The Word of God itself - the "little book" or "little scroll"

Revelation 10.1 - 11.13

In the interlude at Chapter 7 the focus was on those who believe in the word of God as they were sealed. Here, between the sixth and seventh trumpet, we see the emphasis falls on the

Word of God itself.

The rainbow, reminding us of God's covenant with Noah and Ezekiel's vision, speaks of God's covenant faithfulness to His earth. The strong angel is clothed with a cloud, partially visible, partly mysterious. His feet straddle the sea and the land. The operation of the "little book" dominates the land and the sea; it towers over the human arena, the theatre of their action and events.

John is invited to take part in the vision. The Word of God is sweet to the mouth of the Church as it eats it - takes it in and digests it. It brings to Christians peace with God, rested consciences and comfort. But as it works down into the stomach and enters mature life of bearing witness to it then, throughout the ages, the Church encounters a bitterness and trouble on the earth because of the Word.

500 - The witness of the repentant Church upon the earth

Chapter 11.1 begins with a vision of the Church portrayed as two witnesses bearing testimony to the Word of God. There are two sources of light [lampstands, olive trees 11.4, Zechariah 4]] because, in the Old Testament, the mouth of two witnesses establishes the truth of a matter under judgment. The Church carries a witness of truth which is its own peculiar function - it bears witness, testifies to what it knows. The Church is the temple of God where God dwells; with the altar, for there are those who are suffering [6.9-10] worshippers.

The outer court of the church's sphere of witness is trodden by unbelievers. The church is reduced to measurable proportions and is in sackcloth, she is a repentant church - that is why she has a powerful witness [11.2-3].

The word of God comes from the mouth of the witnesses; it is fire for their enemies. It brings death for the enemies of the church. The witnesses have power to open and shut heaven, release water for all to drink, to resist unto blood all the evil forces and to smite the earth with plagues.

The witness of the church has such an effect the beast is aroused to come forth to slay them; to destroy the church as he tried to destroy her Lord [See the themes of 11.15-12.17].

The church is killed outside Jerusalem, where Jesus was; in the territory of Babylon, Sodom and Egypt - the places of rebellion and recipients of wrath. The church dies 'in the world'. Every tribe rejoices, but won't bury them because to see them dead re-assures them. They rejoice and make merry, celebrating the death of the church that tormented the earth dwellers with the gospel.

Three and a half days is in the midst of the seven day period the prophet Daniel speaks of as the final week in God's plan. All through this final week the Church is rising and ascending as they die. The church knows resurrection power when it practises penitence, humiliation and

resisting to the point of blood and death. The effect on the enemies of the witnesses is one of terror and judgment. A tenth of the city [Babylon], as happened to Sodom and Egypt, fell. The enemies had seen the power of God.

501 - The Kingdom of God suffers violence

Revelation 11.15-12.17; Matthew 11.12-14; John 16.20-22,33

As the seventh angel sounded the trumpet the scene changes. We have another panoramic view of history.

[1] The seven seals opened the book of destiny to show the order behind the help-less confusion of men and the darkness of the spiritual powers.

[2] The seven warning trumpets showed us that the potent factors in the affairs of men are the prayers of the saints and the fire of God.

[3] The seventh trumpet will lead to the vials [bowls] and we shall see into the Temple of God in heaven to understand how God works out salvation from the perspective of the finished work of Christ.

The statement made [11.17] leads to the question, "How do the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ"? Chapter 12 provides the answer to this question.

[a] There is first a vision of the Incarnation of Christ, the Lamb of God. We are presented with a woman [Israel, Eve, Mary] who before the gaze of the world, gives birth. God is making a miraculous intervention into history.

[b] The birth of our Lord is the signal for the evil powers to launch their attack on the redeeming purposes of God [12.1-6].

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus reported that He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven as his disciples went out into Israel with his authority. With the Incarnation completing its course in the Cross, the decisive battle has been won in the kingdom of God. Spiritual evil has been utterly defeated and de-throned [John 16.20-22,33].

Because of this defeat at the cross the devil and his minions [12.9] have gathered to direct the pride, passions and lusts of men against the Kingdom of God. As the Ascension of Christ happens, all the forces of the dragon come into play against the Christian church of God. The 10 heads and 7 horns speak of universal rulers/powers which takes many forms - they turn up again and again as heads - Nero, Dalmatian, Caesar, Fuhrers, Amin, dictators, demagogues.

The two ways to recognise this multiform monster in our day is that

[a] it deceives the world [it is total war] and it

[b] accuses the brethren. It is the purpose of the devil to deceive us out of our good con-

science and terrorise us by his accusations. What defeats him is that the saints overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, the word of God, and being prepared to die [= patience/endurance of the saints 1.9].

Satan has no power against the Man-child born into the world. He works his anger out against Jews [anti Semitism] and Christians [Antichrist] who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus [12.17].

502 - The mystery of Iniquity

Revelation 13; Daniel 7.21

John is no longer looking into heaven, but standing at the sea shore. His object is the ocean of humanity out of which comes beastly forms that plague the earth and attempt to destroy the people of God, the Church.

Up to this point we have seen the four horsemen lead by the antichrist [6.2-8]; we have seen the beast from the bottomless pit of the human heart [9.1-11] and we have just considered the dragon [12.3]; now we see all three working together as a trinity of evil.

[1] First beast is from the sea – from among the peoples of the earth.

The dragon has an earthly counterpart coming out of humanity, many headed and horned - with much power and different forms [13.2]. This beast has the dragon's throne [2.12-13] and authority. The whole earth follows the beast [13.3]; which comes to mean that they worship the dragon [13.4] because he has given the beast his authority. Whatever people follow, they must know the authority behind it! The beast blasphemes God and makes war on the saints and overcomes them [Daniel 7.21]. All the earth worships the beast, except the saints who are written in the book of life of the Lamb.

[2] The second beast comes out of the earth.

He pretends to be a lamb but speaks as a dragon. Here is an antichristian power [a counterfeit of the Lamb] but his speech betrays him as demonic.

This second beast succeeds in his deception of worldly power and propaganda and sets up an image of the first beast - a talking likeness. The image is made up of people [13.14], all sorts [13.16], who have the mark of the beast on their foreheads - their mind and imagination - or on their right hands - their executive, administering power. In this way, the stamp of the mark of the beast is on the societies, in what they think and what they do. It is a collective image that secures itself by an economic cartel, giving people permission to trade or not.

[3] The number of the beast - 666.

The word beast which, in Greek, adds to 666 would have been a recurring matter to the early church. They would have seen Nero and Caesar die, and then be followed by Domitian, who

was like a Nero come again. These beasts don't stop: they have many heads that can reappear, as it were.

We have a trinity of 666 which always falls short of the Trinity of 777. We have seen the 7 plagues; and when it comes to six, then God has the final say. This vision finds its key in an unholy, unsuccessful trinity of evil [the dragon, the incarnate evil and the image] which constantly apes 777 and then consistently falls short.

503 - The Triumph of the Gospel

Revelation 14; Psalm 103.5,17-18; Exodus 34.6-7

John looks upward, not to dwell on the mystery of iniquity but upon the Lamb. He is standing astride Mt Zion [= the mountain of the Lord] with 144,000 - a large, complete number - who have the name of the Lamb on their foreheads; a sign that they are redeemed and have died and risen with Christ; they have His image imprinted on their minds.

They are virgins [= in contrast to fornicating Babylon 14.4]; they are baptised in Christ's baptism; they have robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. They follow Him wherever He goes, even to death, they remain faithful and put their trust in Him. They are the first fruits of the harvest.

They have not become: [a] vain in their imaginations [Romans 1.18-32]; [b] those who confuse the Word of God with the forces of nature; [c] compromisers of the message of the cross or adulterated the message of grace with pride or power; [d] collaborators with the guile of the Antichrist in prostituting communal good to the service of pride.

It is the preaching of the gospel which confronts men and is itself the agent of judgment [14.6]. With the fall of Babylon, John gives two contrastive pictures [14.8]; [a] those who perish in the judgment of God [14.9-12] and [b] those who rest as blessed [14.13].

From [a] we learn that the character of Hell is that ceaseless resentment before the face of the Lamb and His holy angels. It is the constant coming back of the soul to that decision it made against the truth.

The sickle of judgment is in the hand of the Lamb and His holy angels who proceed from the inner shrine of His mercy and truth and also from the altar of sacrifice [14.14-15; Psalm 103.5,17-18; Exodus 34.6-7].

504 - The wrath of the Lamb

Revelation 15-16; Hebrews 12.18,22,24

Chapter 15 prepares us for the seven bowls, so that we have the right perspective on the wrath of the Lamb.

Moses and the Lamb [15.3] point us to law and grace. We are reminded of the walk through the Red Sea where tormenting Egypt was judged in a blend of mercy and truth, love and judgment. Until this day there has been this constant parallel between Sinai and the work of the Lamb bringing us to heavenly Zion [Hebrews 12.18,22,24].

There is a mystery of judgment in the heart of love, for the voice of Calvary is also the voice of judgment at Sinai. The voice of forgiving love is also revealed as identical with the accusing voice of conscience. These two voices are always held apart from the perspective of the sinner, but here the perfect realisation that love casts out fear means that there is a perfect unity between love and judgment. But before that day, says Hebrews 12.27, God will shake the earth [seven bowls of wrath].

The tabernacle of testimony presents:

[1] the angels come from the innermost part of the Temple [where the work of God dealing with sin and atonement are found. Forgiveness issues from the Temple].

[2] angels as clothed with pure linen and breasts with golden girdles - they bring a pure wrath, not the wrath of man, no bestial passion, spite, anger or sin.

[3] a judgment of the whole creation - the four living creatures put the bowls in their hands.

505 - The counterfeit trinity of evil - Dragon, Beast and False Prophet

Revelation 17-18

The dragon is John's way of describing the devil; the power of spiritual evil. The beast is the enthronement of that power in the passions of men and its embodiment in the increasing debasement and brutalising of the world. The false prophet is the devil's messiah whose lying spirit seduces the nations and intoxicates them into passionate worship of the beast in a confederacy of temporal powers.

This confederacy is revealed in the history of Babylon in which all the nations of the earth are gathered up into one great "empire".

Babylon, also described as a harlot, is flirting with the inhabitants of earth, commanding their devotion and lust [17.3]. John describes her as either: [a] wanton with all, sitting upon the many waters of the nations [17.15] or [b] sitting upon the scarlet beast [17.3; 18.12 Matthew 27.28]. She is at the beast's mercy, for he may eat her flesh and make her desolate. There is a deep hatred between the beast and the harlot [17.16].

Just as Jesus was crucified by religious pride, so the pressure of the evangelising gospel brings out an organised, collective opposition of human pride.

506 - The Lord Omnipotent Reigns

Revelation 19

Before this, the Revelation has presented us with God acting throughout history, fashioning the Church by the power of the Cross in the midst of plagues, tribulations, the beastliness of the nations and God's righteous judgments upon them. We have seen them [a] under the altar, [b] mastered by brute forces and laying down their lives; and [c] as those for whom creation waits, longing and groaning for them to be manifest.

Here, in the 19th chapter, we see that although the church is earthbound before this, she is really a heavenly assembly of the redeemed and a victorious group. For chapters 19-22 shows God's complete sovereignty.

The wedding march of the Bride takes up a song [19.1-4] which recalls the judgments upon the harlot, the counterfeit bride. The contrast of this 19th chapter with the Babylonian harlotry that has adulterated the word of God with the word of man is clear. The Old Testament speaks of idolatry of a nation as harlotry because of the alliances made with other gods.

The Lamb marries the Church which has remained true to the Word of God in the face of the seductions of the world. That is why she is not fashioned by the culture and civilisation around her, she is always repenting, shedding her outer garments. She is a church always in ferment, conversion, revolution, renewal and reformation. She is conformed to her Lord and not to the world.

There is a marriage supper of the Lamb - which is the entry of the church into a heavenly state, a marriage of power and faith. It is those with oil in their lamps and with no Babylonian garment.

"No one knows except himself" - to know someone's name is to have power over them. The Word of God reserves the mystery and the power of its own name; it cannot be controlled or manipulated to serve other ends. This is so of the church, the word of God revives her.

507 - The 1000 years

Revelation 20; Psalm 90.4; 2 Peter 3.8

We cannot take this time literally, for our reckoning is not as God's, any more than we take the 10 headed and 7 horned monsters literally [Psalm 90.4; 2 Peter 3.8]. As the latter are a repeating symbol throughout time, so is the 1000 years.

Our passage of time is a struggle on the earth - it has labour, sweat, hopes and achievements, sorrows and joys. It has a beginning and an end, and yet, as day follows night, there is an emptiness, a vanity, a circular sense that nothing is new. This is the time of sinful history. It is a history devoured by guilt - for there are deeds which cannot be undone, words that cannot be taken back, opportunities which are lost and that have slipped through our fingers.

God's time is very different. He neither faints nor is weary: He constantly renews the youth for those who trust Him. Somehow the present, past and future are in one another and don't simply follow one another. It is a time of life that is abundant and fulfilling; it gathers up the end in the beginning. It is like a thousand years - perfect in duration, complete in itself, in which guilt is bound, in which things can mature and have a perfect fulfilment of eternal life with God.

In Chapter 19 the vision ended with the beast and the false prophet thrown into the lake of fire and judgment. Now we look behind them to the source, the Devil himself. In Jesus, the Kingdom of God invaded the world and bound the devil [Matthew 12.29]. Consequently, the end time is already with us now; the time of the alpha and the omega. So that behind the course of sinful, human history, the reign of Christ has been taking place. Satan can do nothing without permission. We see that, behind all history, Satan has really been on a chain. One day, the outside shell of sinful history is broken open and then the real millennial/Kingdom of God's time is exposed for us. It opens to us the back side of history; which was the hidden reign of Jesus Christ.

The judgment passed on Christ by Pilate was really the great judgment the world passed on itself. Ever since then, men have been judged by what they think of Jesus Christ. As the church bears witness and suffers with Christ, she reigns with Christ. The history of the world is the history of the verdict the world has brought upon the church of Jesus Christ, for that is the history of judgment [20.4].

All this is possible, because the resurrection changed everything; world history was broken into two stages, in Adam and in Christ. The Resurrection changed the issue to one of triumph and reign of the Kingdom of God. So it is a joy for the saints to suffer because no real harm can come to them [7.1-6].

In a real sense, suffering at the hands of the world gave them the opportunity to put their sealing to the test - to make it clear that they bore the mark of the Lord Jesus.

This period of time, signified by the 1000 years, has a number of features:

[1] An angel from heaven with the authority over the abyss and a chain appears. He binds Satan for the thousands years. This binding has to do with restricting Satan's area of actions.

[2] Satan is bound and confined in his wicked work to the abyss. Here his work is limited to that of working with human passions and drives. As he has used the nations prior to this - as Daniel's prophecy has made clear - he is now prevented from deceiving the nations for this period. After that he must be set free for a short time. An inference here is that he will then be able to work internationally again. Is this angel who does this work of confining Satan the "restrainer" who is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians [# 488]? Certainly that "retrainer is with reference to the appearance of the incarnate man of sin, whose work has an international impact.

[2] Those who are typified through the book of Revelation as those who keep the testimony of Jesus and are faithful to the Word of God come to life and reign throughout this thousand years. This is called the first resurrection. A real resurrection has taken place in each Christian; he is a new creation. He has eternity in his heart; he will rise again and the second death cannot keep him in captivity [Galatians 2.20].

These people are blessed and holy, they are exempt from the second death and are the priests of God and Christ and they will reign with Him. This describes the Christians to/for whom John wrote [Revelation 1.6].

So we learn that there is a definite span, shown by the loosing of Satan again, to bring the work of evil to a head, a final desperate attempt to delude the nations.

508 - New Heaven and a new Earth

Revelation 21.1- 22.5

In the previous chapter, under the figure of the millennium, we see the reign of Christ which has broken decisively into world history at the Cross; it runs through our history, and it is a reign which is present behind all the calamity. It is a reign visible only to faith.

This chapter brings visions of the eternal kingdom itself. The first thing stated is that the Kingdom of God is not just a heavenly realm but also a homely kingdom which is on the earth as well [21.1]. We see eight elements to this reign.

[1] new heaven - all that is spiritually evil disappears, all the relations are born again, and there is a purity in the heavenly life. Perfection in the Christian life includes the perfection of heaven.

[2] no more sea - this doesn't state something about the geography of the new creation, but about the new humanity which is present. The new heaven and earth is peopled by those who walk in obedience to God as sons and in loving fellowship with one another as brothers. God knows each one by name, each name is in the book of life. The nations walk in the light of the Lord and the kings bring their worship and honour the Lord.

[3] the holy city, the new Jerusalem - the perfect form which the kingdom of God will take is a divine city which comes from heaven to the earth. It is a heaven on earth; not as a utopia of men's making, but born from above.

[4] the tabernacle of God - is with men. God is in intimate fellowship and this means life in abundance and no pain. The city has already come down in Jesus Christ - it is in Him that the new humanity arises and finds its blessed communion with the Father. We don't see this right now, but we have in the Lord's Supper the visible tangible elements which point to this day when we drink it new in the Kingdom of God. In Him, union with things visible and invisible is effected.

[5] no temple there - only in a fallen world is there a need for a plot of ground, fenced off from the polluting environment: for the harmony between heaven and earth is broken. Not so here, the Father, Son and The Spirit are the temple of God. Here there is a full knowledge of the Lord. We are at home and there is a lovely naturalness to our worship here for God is a Father and Jesus is our elder Brother.

[6] no night there - there is nothing to darken the face of God for us [21.13, 22.5].

[7] pure river of the water of life - thinking back to the garden of Eden, we are presented with a contrast. Here the new creation bears all that Eden possessed but here there is no barrier to the tree of life. There is constant food for God's children, the power for redemption is perpetuated forever, and it flows continually to quench their thirst.

[8] No longer any curse - to serve the Lord with labour which has no toil in it is an entry into joy [22.3].

509 - The Water of Life

Revelation 22.6-21

This recapitulates what was said at the start of the book [1.1-3]. It emphasises the urgency and the truth of the message. It is not the last stage of history that Jesus, speaking to us through John, is concerned with; the decisive moment is right now.

The New Testament does not think of the difference between Christ being here and now, and then, to come later; it is not a matter of time at all. Rather, it sees Him as always imminent; and so the way it speaks is of Him veiled and unveiled.

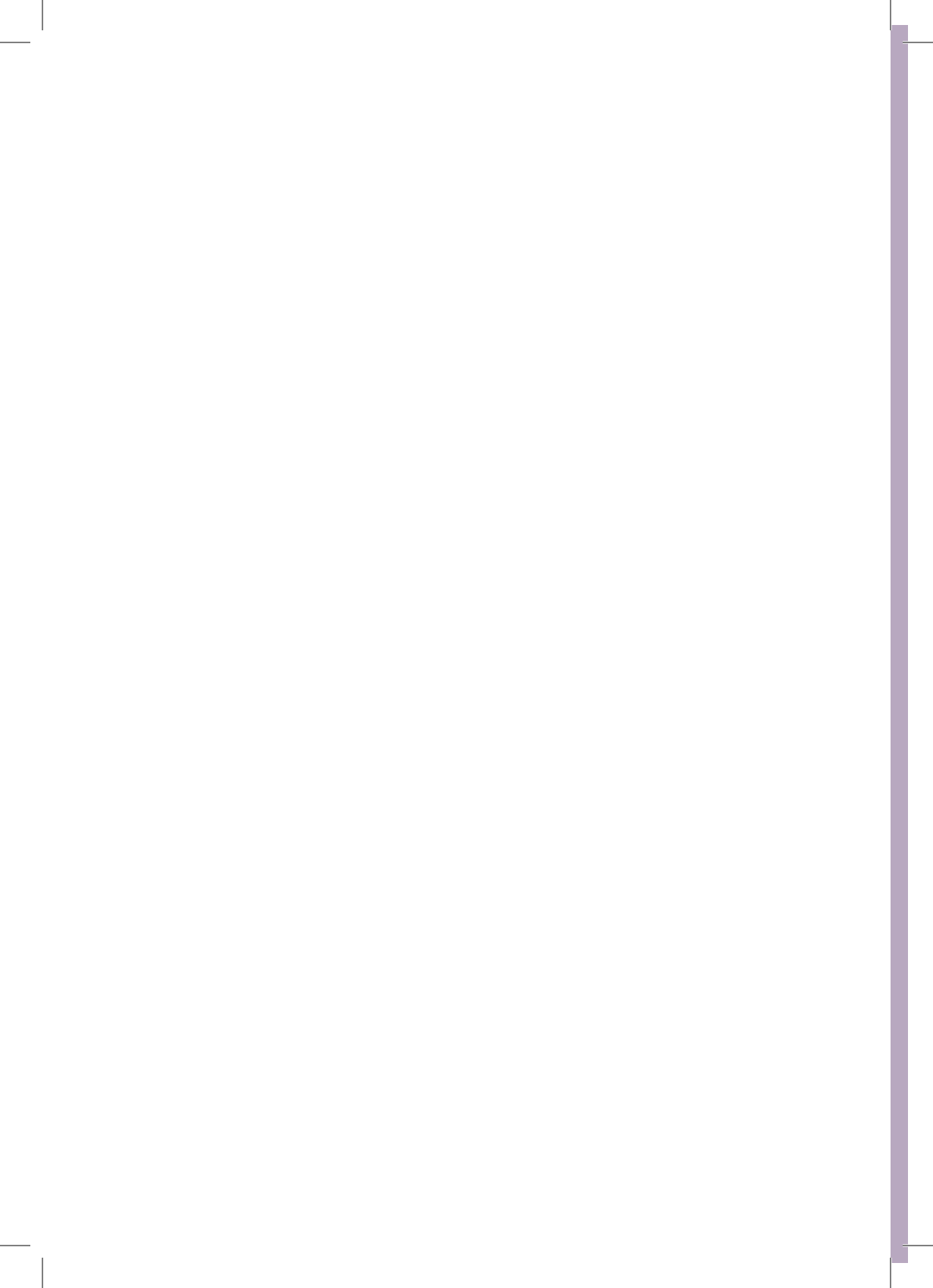
Jesus Christ is so close to us. The context is one of immediate communion and so the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. So the angel tells John to heed the words of this book. He is not to seal it up because it is immediately relevant and therefore it is of the utmost urgency to the people of his period of writing and to all successive periods of history.

At any moment the eternal Kingdom of God can break into the flow of time and then 22.11 would apply; all time for change of people has frozen - things are eternally fixed then. The time for repentance and change are at an end, people who are outside the gates stay there.

Lastly, the voice of Jesus breaks through the angel's voice and the apostle's voice with a gracious invitation - but it is an urgent one, for the curtain can come down at any time [22.16-21]. That, after all, is the very real possibility for all "waiters".









Janice and David Boan, an Australian couple, live in Perth, the capital city of the state of Western Australia.

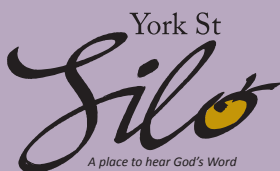
They have been married for 46 years and have five children and 19 grand-children. Throughout this time, they have been teaching the Lord's Word among Christians.

After David was ordained in 1967, he served in two Anglican parishes and a School Chaplaincy in Melbourne. They trained for missionary service but after health issues prevented them going overseas, they taught in a community at the Montrose House and later took the parish of St. Jude's Carlton for seven years. Moving to Perth in Western Australia in 1981, David cared for the Anglican parish of St Alban's in Highgate for seven years.

In 1988, they left the Anglican scene to teach into scattered and smaller groups of Christians in some Australian towns. Later the work extended into the UK, Italy, and India throughout 1995-2000.

At the beginning of 2012, in concert with others, their work became more accessible at the York St Silo, at 4 York Street in North Perth. It is here that David and Jan share the work of the putting forth of God's Word.

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