

**“Plan A”**  
**Interpreting the Gospels**  
**In Light of the Anticipation**  
**of the**  
**Kingdom**

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# Introduction

The purpose of this book is to demonstrate that it was the intention of the Lord Jesus, during His first visit to this world, to establish His Kingdom here on earth among His people, Israel; but because of the universal unbelief of the Israelites, that intention was postponed at the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus. The Lord then decided to extend directly to gentiles, apart from the ambassadorship of Israelites, the invitation to be elevated to the status of the elect people of God through the gospel. It is the purpose of this book to demonstrate that the teaching of the Lord Jesus, up until the last days of His earthly ministry, assumed that His earthly reign would begin within the lifetime of most of those in His audience.

In order that the student of Scripture may harmonize the teaching of Jesus to the Jews and the teachings of Paul to the church, some apparent discrepancies must be resolved. It is apparent to the serious student of Scripture that some teachings of Jesus simply do not make sense to a church age saint. For example how could it be possible for a church age believer to enter into the life to come with one eye plucked out (Mark 9:47)? I thought in heaven we are going to receive perfect, glorified bodies. Or, how could the disciples of Jesus day not have preached through all of the cities in Israel before Christ's return as mentioned in Matthew chapter 10? Or, how could the Lord Jesus not have known the time of His own return as stated in Mark 13:32? Statements such as these from the mouth of the Lord must be reconciled with the reality which church age believers are experiencing today.

Or how about the standard of virtue that Jesus held up as prerequisites for entering the Kingdom of heaven? For example, in Matthew 5:22 the Lord threatens banishment to hell people who would dare to call another "fool". How can we reconcile statements like those with the security we know we have in Christ?

By the way, let me tell you a bit about my theology, just so you know where I am coming from. I am free grace in my theology; that is, I believe that it is possible for a person to be a genuine child of God but not growing. I believe a person is accounted eternally righteous before God on the basis of an act of faith which appropriates to ones self the value of what transpired on the cross of Christ. I believe that once a person is accounted eternally righteous before God, that person is eternally secure in his relationship to God. I believe the sole prerequisite to exercising faith in Christ is an abandoning of any hope in one's own integrity to eternally commend that person to God. This book assumes that the reader also believes these things; therefore, I will not set out any further to prove those positions in this book.

## **Let me first state my premise.**

My purpose today is to explain to the reader why the gospel presentation of the Lord Jesus while He was on this earth was not as easily discernable as the gospel presentation of the apostle Paul to the gentiles. There are five primary distinctions we need to make between the ministry of the Lord Jesus and the ministry of the apostle Paul if we are going to rightly discern the difference between John the Baptist's gospel of the Kingdom and the Apostle Paul's gospel of the grace of God through the merits of Christ crucified.

1. The Lord Jesus' efforts were primarily focused upon recovering Old Testament justified saints (His sheep) and bestowing upon them the gift of eternal life in preparation for the earthly Kingdom. Jesus would then use these saints in His Kingdom to evangelize the world.

The Lord Jesus journeyed through the land of Israel manifesting evidence as to His identity in order that His sheep would discover His identity, follow Him and be made ready for the Kingdom.

The ministry of the Apostle Paul was to take the message of God's salvation to gentiles, to people who had not been previously entrusted with the truths of God. The ministry of the Lord Jesus was to gather unto Himself those who were already related to Him through faith in Him as their substitute for sin.

2. The Lord Jesus had also come at the end of the dispensation of the Law and because it was the end of a dispensation, He had come to judge His people, the Israelites. That judgment was to conclude with bestowing upon believing Israelites a divine enablement similar to our new birth, which would enable them to serve as ambassadors and evangelists of God in His earthly Kingdom, to evangelize the world. Unbelieving Israelites would be forever banished from the Kingdom.

3. Because the Lord Jesus was teaching at the conclusion of the dispensation of the Law, He taught among the Jews in a deliberately cryptic fashion, teaching in such a way that only His sheep would comprehend His identity and mission. This occurred in order that those Israelites who had been guilty of neglecting the light might be judged and those who had been responsive to the light might recognize the Lord and embrace Him for whom He really was. Let me say that the Lord Jesus deliberately taught in a way among His people that was hard for many of those people to understand. The four gospel narratives which begin the books of our New Testament contain for us a record of that teaching.

4. The Lord Jesus had come to carry out eschatological plan A, which was to have concluded with the appearance of the earthly Kingdom. Most of His teaching, right up to the end of His earthly ministry, was in the context of that soon-to-appear Kingdom and not in the context of the church age. Plan A was abandoned at the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus because the nation of Israel as a whole did not discern the person and work of the Lord Jesus. So Jesus, in His mercy, postponed the appearance of their Kingdom and entrusted the fruit-bearing ministry of that Kingdom to another body of believers: the Church.

5. The new birth and subsequent filling of the Spirit to be experienced by the Jewish saints prior to their entrance into the Kingdom of Christ, would have resulted in a greater enablement to accomplish the will of God than the enablement that believers experience today. When a person is saved today, the maturity which needs to take place in his life in order to be prepared for every good work is a life-long process of assimilation of Bible doctrine and passing tests, resulting in gradual growth towards bearing the image of Christ. The transformation of the character of the Jewish saint entering the millennium appears to be an instantaneous transformation. This is important to see when we consider some of the very high standards of personal conduct

expected of the Jewish saint entering the Kingdom, as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>1</sup>

## **In a nutshell, here is plan A according to the Old Testament Prophets.**

1. Jesus is born of a virgin into this world.
2. He grows up in the midst of His people, the Israelites.
3. He is revealed to Israel, and travels through Israel seeking to harvest out of Israel unto Himself those whose faith is already oriented to grace, that is, already-justified Old Testament saints.<sup>1</sup>
4. He is crucified on a Roman cross for the sins of all of mankind.
5. He rises from the dead, enabling His own to fully experience the fullness of His Salvation through the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit, an instantaneous infusion of truth into their hearts and a time of tribulation through which His people are purified for the Kingdom.
6. The Lord Jesus then returns at the conclusion of this time of tribulation, defeats the persecutors of Israel, establishes His earthly Kingdom and His sovereignty over all the world and through these earthly Jewish saints evangelizes the world.

Below is an Old Testament context which enumerates for us plan A. Notice nowhere do we find mention of the church.

Zechariah 13:7-9 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, Against the Man who is My Companion," Says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My

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<sup>1</sup> By the way, this does not mean that the Lord Jesus was not Himself reaching out to Gentiles during His earthly ministry. The Lord had frequent encounters with those who the Jews would have considered unworthy of citizenship. The Centurion, The woman at the well, etc are just a few of the many encounters that the Lord had with non-Jewish people. In fact, He often used these encounters in an attempt to rebuke the Jews for their lack of faith. Even though the official ministry was to the lost sheep of Israel, we see our Lord often going out of His way to introduce Himself to His sheep of another fold.

hand against the little ones. And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "*That* two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die, But *one-* third shall be left in it: I will bring the *one-third* through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This *is* My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD *is* my God.' "

## **So what is the Kingdom?**

The Kingdom will be that time in the history of the world during which the Lord Jesus Christ will be reigning on earth, on top of Mount Zion. It will be the time during which the nation of Israel will be exalted above all nations of the earth as the center of world government. The curse will be removed from the land of Israel; the borders of Israel will be expanded in every direction and, in Israel, Jewish saints, both living and resurrected, will enjoy the presence of the Lord. The topography of Israel will also be transformed to accommodate the world's approach to Israel as center of world government. The Jewish saints, both living and resurrected, will help the Lord call the shots on the earth. During the millennial reign of Christ, He will reign over the rest of the inhabitants of the earth with a rod of iron, which means the rest of the world will be subjugated to the reign of Christ, willing or otherwise. During the millennial reign of Christ, the Lord Jesus will reign over the earth on top of Mount Zion, with earthly Jewish saints enjoying the reign of Christ, the abundance of Israel with the curse having been removed, and the freedom from oppression of other nations. Resurrected Jewish saints will dwell on Mount Zion in close proximity to the Lord. Meanwhile, the church will dwell in the New Jerusalem (which will be a heavenly expanse on top of Mount Zion, surrounding the throne of Christ) in glorified bodies, likewise helping the Lord call the shots over the rest of the conquered world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a complete discussion of the age to come, read my book *The Age to Come*.

Psalm 48:1-5 A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised In the city of our God, *In* His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, The joy of the whole earth, *Is* Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north, The city of the great King. God *is* in her palaces; He is known as her refuge. For behold, the kings assembled, They passed by together. They saw *it*, *and* so they marveled; They were troubled, they hastened away.

Psalm 2 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' " Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish *in* the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

The above two contexts take place during the millennium, where the Lord is exalted on His throne. Some of the nations of the earth don't like it and plot twice to overthrow the Lord. Both times they chicken out and abandon their plans.

By way, these are just two of the dozens of Psalms in the Scriptures that are written from the context of the Lord's reign in the millennium.

Christians today need to stop trying to press all the teachings of the Lord Jesus into the mold of church age doctrine because much of it

just doesn't fit. The teachings of the Lord Jesus are best understood in the context of the coming earthly millennial Kingdom and the preparation of His people, the Jews, to serve as His ambassadors in that Kingdom. To fail to discern this is to create tension between the teachings of Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles and the teachings of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus in the midst of His chosen people, the Israelites.

The Lord Jesus came to this earth to carry out and fulfill eschatological plan A of the Old Testament prophets. He ended up carrying out plan B, which is the Church.

Okay, so let's go through each of these points one by one.

## **1. The Lord Jesus was on a sheep recovery mission.**

Probably one of the best Old Testament contexts, identifying for us the ministry of the Lord while he was upon the earth, is found in Ezekiel chapter 34.

Ezekiel 34:10-16 "Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them." 'For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. "As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. "And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. "I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. "I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD. "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was

driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."

**We see in this context a two-fold priority concerning the first advent of Christ.**

**1. To judge the corrupt leadership of Israel.**

Matthew 3:7-12 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. "His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Notice in the above context that John the Baptist was rather indignant that the false leadership of Israel was approaching him for baptism. That is because the plan of God in any scenario was to deliver Christ's sheep from their corrupt leadership and to cut the leaders off from the Kingdom promises.

**2. To recover the lost into the Millennial Kingdom,** where these saints will be able to enjoy the bounty of the land of an Israel which has had the curse removed from it, which has been topologically altered to accommodate an abundant agricultural economy, and which has had vanquished from it all foreign influence which could in any way intimidate them.

By the way, who are “the lost”? The lost are Israelites who have been victimized by bad shepherding. The lost sheep are Jewish saints who are under bad leadership and who need to be gathered to the true Shepherd: Christ. From the following verses we can see that the primary ministry of the Lord Jesus was to gather together these Jewish saints.

We can see the above priority in Jesus’ commissioning of His disciples in the context below:

Matthew 10:5, 6 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans." But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Likewise in His response to the woman of Canaan He said the following:

Matthew 15:22-24 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Even in the gospel of John, we still see the Lord’s priority to secure His sheep:

John 10:26-29 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand.

Notice in the above context how the Father already knows these sheep. They are already the possession of the Father but they have not yet been endowed with eternal life.

This brings us to an important point: we need to understand eternal life as Jesus described it.

John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

From the above verse we can see that eternal life is communion with God. When we are born again we gain the capacity for communion with God through the enablement of the new birth. As we grow in grace, that capacity for communion is strengthened. Moreover, even though eternal life is the everlasting possession of the believer, the believer's experience of that life here and now is proportional to the degree he occupies himself in that life.

We can also see the priority to gather together the sheep in the following verse:

John 10:8, 9 "All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them." I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

This above context is a description of the liberty that an earthly saint will have during the millennial Kingdom. Is not the above passage a fulfillment of what we have already seen in Ezekiel 34 and also Zephaniah 3:13?

Zephaniah 3:13 "The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed *their* flocks and lie down, And no one shall make *them* afraid."

Going in and out and finding pasture would be a description of the salvation experience of a Jew during the millennium, having been delivered from gentile oppression. It would also be in anticipation of a people no longer having to rely on the protection of a walled city, as well as a people finding pastures, where before they had mountainous terrain. Notice the description of Israel existing during the millennium as described below:

Ezekiel 38:11 "You will say, 'I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates'—“

During the millennium, God's people will experience freedom from oppression from foreigners and abundance of farmland for an agrarian economy.

## **2. The law of the dispensation: Jesus came at the conclusion of the dispensation of the law.**

The Lord Jesus had also come at the end of the dispensation of the law and because it was the end of a dispensation, He had come to judge His people, Israel. That judgment was to conclude with bestowing upon believing Israelites a divine enablement similar to our new birth, which would enable them to serve as ambassadors and evangelists of God in His earthly Kingdom, to evangelize the world. Unbelieving Israelites would be forever banished from the Kingdom.

### **The principle of the dispensation**

We cannot forget that part of the agenda of the Lord Jesus during His first advent, had He implemented plan A, was to enter into a judgment with the people of Israel and judge out of Israel those who, up to that time, had made light of their access to the teaching of the prophets.

So what is a dispensation? A dispensation is a period of time beginning with God's dispensing to a people a revelation

concerning Himself. Then, God gives the people plenty of time to respond positively to that truth. The dispensation then concludes with a judgment, during which those who had responded positively to the light are “saved” into the next dispensation, while those who had been neglectful toward the light are condemned in judgment. There are many such periods of testing recorded for us in the Scriptures.

Jesus taught in such a way as to bring to an end the opportunity of those who had been neglectful of the light to continue as the special people of God. Light spurned is the basis upon which God executed judgment upon the people of Israel. That is the dispensational principle which governed the way the Lord very carefully parsed the light to the people of Israel, a people whom He already expected to understand the salvific timetable of God. The Lord expected His people to have already put together the fact that the Messiah was going to arrive as a suffering substitute. In addition, He was bringing to an end the opportunity of the unbelieving Israelite to further function as an ambassador of God to the world.

We see this principle of the dispensation articulated for us in the following context:

Matthew 13:10-15 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they

should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'

Let us comment on this context briefly. Notice that the teaching of the Lord Jesus was designed to enhance the relationship with God that the believing Israelite already had, while at the same time, bringing to an end the opportunity of the neglectful Israelites to continue as the priestly people of God.

Notice the statement in this verse, “whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

The principle here is this: the person who had not been neglectful to contemplate the Old Testament prophetic revelation concerning the Messiah, the person who was looking for the suffering substitute, to him more truth was going to be given in order that he might experience the abundance of salvation and enter into the Kingdom. But to the Israelite who had made light of his opportunity in the light, and was not looking for the suffering substitute, it was time to shut him down from continuing as the representative of God here on earth.

Later on in this same chapter we read, Matthew 13:34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, and in Mark 4:34, But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

Jesus taught in parables in order that those who had been neglectful would not receive additional light, in order that they might be judged; while at the same time, those who were anticipating a suffering substitute would recognize Christ, embrace Him and be secured for the earthly Kingdom. This is the principle of the dispensation, which governed the way the Lord Jesus carefully parsed His teachings in the midst of the Israelites.

All four of the Gospels record for us this cryptic teaching method of the Lord Jesus. In fact it wasn't until the upper room, when Jesus was alone with the eleven apostles, that he stopped teaching in enigmas.

John 16:29 His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!"

Not only did the Lord Jesus speak in parables; but He also came right out and instructed His apostles to not reveal His identity to anyone.

Luke 9:18-21 And it happened, as He was alone praying, *that* His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some *say* Elijah; and others *say* that one of the old prophets has risen again." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." And He strictly warned them and commanded them to tell this to no one,

Mark 3:10-12 For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

Incidentally, if according to John 20:31, believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is a component of saving faith, then why did the Lord Jesus repeatedly exhort those who knew His true identity to reveal that fact to nobody? Once again, the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus was not focused on evangelism. The law of the dispensation was the Lord calling those to whom the message of the coming Messiah had already been sown. He was now calling them into account concerning the light already revealed to them.

God had already revealed to these people, the Israelites, His plan of Salvation. He had not come to re-sow the message to the spiritually complacent; He had come to harvest into his Kingdom those who had become responsive to that message. He had also come to cut off in judgment those who had refused to consider His message of grace.

By the way, the Lord will once again exercise this principle of judgment upon gentiles, during the time of His wrath as we read in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12: And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

### **3. Jesus deliberately taught in a cryptic fashion.**

One thing that is puzzling to many students of the Scriptures is this fact: if Jesus was serious about His mission of enabling people to receive everlasting life, then why didn't He teach more plainly than He did?

The mistake that most commentators make concerning the teachings of Jesus is the presupposition that Jesus' ministry while present on the earth was primarily an evangelistic one. Most fail to consider that the Lord Jesus might have actually had a different stated purpose, which was to gather people already related to Him unto Himself. Most evangelicals, because evangelism is so important to us, just assume that the teachings of the Lord Jesus must be evangelistic in scope. It is this insistence that Jesus' ministry was primarily evangelistic in scope which drives people to come to the wrong conclusions concerning the teachings of the Lord Jesus.

But so I not be misunderstood, the Lord Jesus did come to die for the sins of all of mankind, and it was His desire that all the world eventually believe on Him for everlasting life (John 3:16); but Plan A, according the Scriptures, was to evangelize the world through His people, that is, believing Israelites; moreover, the bulk of the Lord's ministry while here the first time was to gather together a group of believing Israelites for just that purpose.

According to the Scriptures themselves, Jesus always taught in the midst of the Jews in a fashion which was difficult to understand. As a matter of fact, the audience of the Lord Jesus was always complaining about how hard it was to figure out the point He was trying to make. In fact the Lord Jesus Himself states that his teachings were not clear. Consider the following contexts:

John 10:24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly".

John 16:25-29 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father." "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; "for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God." "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!"

In other words, "Lord, it is about time that you drop the parable stuff!"

Matthew 13:34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them,

So, the Lord Jesus always addressed His general audience speaking in parables.

John 6:52-60 The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this *Man* give us *His* flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. "This is the bread which came down from heaven -- not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

From the above passages we can see that Jesus taught in a cryptic fashion to be recognized only by His sheep. His sheep heard His voice, and they knew Him, and He bestowed upon them the enablement of the new birth in order that those sheep might experience genuine everlasting life.

John 10:26-28 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

One additional point about this everlasting life that Jesus planned to bestow upon His sheep: the bestowal of everlasting life on those whom Jesus already considered sheep was not justification by faith, which is logically followed by the new birth as we consider it today. The sheep of whom Jesus referred to in the Gospel of John were already believers in grace and were already looking for their suffering substitute; however, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given because as we read in John 7:38, 39," "He who believes in Me, as the

Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

So, technically, before the resurrection of Christ, nobody was permanently indwelt with the Holy Spirit, and thus nobody was born again. In that sense, nobody had eternal life. They were justified and in an eternally secure relationship with the Father, but the gift of eternal life had not yet been bestowed upon them.

#### **4. Jesus taught according to plan A.**

In a nutshell, plan A is spelled out for us in order in the book of Zechariah.

Zechariah 13:6-9 “And *one* will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will answer, '*Those* with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.' " Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, Against the Man who is My Companion," Says the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My hand against the little ones. And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "*That* two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die, But *one-* third shall be left in it: I will bring the *one-third* through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, '*This is My people*'; And each one will say, '*The LORD is my God.*' "

Notice in the above context is no mention of the Church. It is because plan A in the revealed will of God was to utilize born again, Jewish saints, to evangelize the world. The Lord Jesus came desiring to carry out plan A, but because of His mercy, and the unbelief of the Israelites, He offered His “special people” status directly to gentiles, apart from any association with the theocracy of Israel.

Moreover, in Zechariah, we have the description of the battle of Armageddon during which the surrounding armies of the gentiles are defeated and which begins the period of time during which the entire world is subjugated to the Lord, who will be ruling from the top of Mount Zion during his earthly millennial reign.

Zechariah 14:1-8 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, *Making* a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, *And* all the saints with You. It shall come to pass in that day *That* there will be no light; The lights will diminish. It shall be one day Which is known to the LORD—Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen *That* it will be light. And in that day it shall be *That* living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur.

Here is just one verse which demonstrates for us the unique position the Jewish saint was to have had in the Kingdom, as the evangelists of God.

Zechariah 8:23 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard *that* God *is* with you."

Here is another context demonstrating that Jerusalem will one day be the center of world evangelism:

Isaiah 2:2, 3 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *That* the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

We also see the priority of a nation of Jewish evangelists in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:14, 15 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house.

Once again, this passage anticipates a Jewish priesthood with its center of world outreach located in the City of Jerusalem.

So it was plan A that Jews be the first to experience grace, be gathered into the Kingdom and then, through that nation, the rest of the world would be evangelized. This is why, even in the teachings of Paul, we repeatedly see the phrase "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Moreover, according to plan A, the ultimate salvation for the Jew, was to survive the great tribulation and arrive in the earthly millennial Kingdom of Christ in a flesh and blood body. This is the salvation they were striving for, and it was, by the way, a salvation that involved a degree of worthiness.

Luke 21:34-36 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life,

and that Day come on you unexpectedly.”For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Now we know that having a right eternal standing before God in no way involved any degree of personal worthiness, because all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We know that. But a Jew bypassing the troubles of the great tribulation and entering the earthly Kingdom unscathed involved more than that Jewish saint’s being declared righteous by God. To be counted worthy of escaping the trials of the great tribulation involved watchfulness in the life of the Jewish believer. It involved his having achieved a level of maturity before the events of the great tribulation, in order that he might be counted worthy of escaping those trials.

To a Jew, to be saved meant to survive the great tribulation and enter the earthly Kingdom in a flesh and blood body. When Jesus said “He that endures to the end shall be saved”, in every context that that phrase occurs, it is in the context of a Jew surviving the great tribulation. By the way, this does not mean that the Jewish saint who perished in the great tribulation would go to hell, it just meant that he would not enter the Kingdom in a flesh and blood body, which was the hope of every Jewish saint, but rather be resurrected into the Kingdom in a glorified body. This is why the Lord exhorts Jewish saints to cut off limbs, which might cause them to stumble and enter into life physically incomplete.

Matthew 18:8,9 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

The Lord Jesus in the above context cannot possibly be talking about a glorified saint entering heaven. Glorified bodies will not be missing hands or eyes. This can only be talking about a Jewish saint surviving the great tribulation and entering into the earthly Kingdom of Christ with the characteristics of a physical body still intact.

So do you see the importance of interpreting the Gospels in light of the eschatological sequence anticipated in the Old Testament? To fail to do that will ultimately result in an attempt to throttle the church age message of free grace with the dispensational warnings of John the Baptist and Jesus in the four gospel accounts. An attempt to synthesize Paul's message of Grace with the Lord's preaching of the Kingdom will result in a distortion of the free grace message.

### **Plan A: The Kingdom offer Withdrawn**

But plan A was not implemented. Instead, what Israel got is spelled out for us in the last verse of the Old Testament.

Malachi 4:5, 6 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Or as the Lord Jesus articulated it in the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 19:42-44 saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things *that make* for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. "For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, "and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

Matthew 21:41-43 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'? "Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

Luke 20:21-25 Then they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Why do you test Me?" Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?" They answered and said, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The Christ, executing plan A, would have never said, "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." The Christ, according to plan A, was destined to crush the government of Caesar, and the Jewish rulers knew that. So Christ's answer demonstrated to them something had drastically changed concerning His mission. The Jews were going to have to endure a continued domination of pagan kings.

That the Jews were going to have to continue accommodating gentile rulers, instead of flourishing under a Jewish king, was also obvious from the Lord's response in the following context.

Luke 16:9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.'

In other words, you'd better get yourself some secular friends, because you are about to be abandoned by your King. It is worthy

to note that this exhortation occurs after the withdrawing of the Kingdom offer, which occurred in Luke at the end of chapter 13.

So, what we have in the Gospels is God's sincere effort to fulfill the offer He promised to the Old Testament saints: to gather them together in faith, establish them in their Kingdom and utilize them to evangelize the world. But, because of the unbelief of the Israelites as a whole, God postponed His purpose for Israel; and instead, and at this time, has chosen to use gentile believers, the church, as God's priestly ambassadors to the world.

**5. The enablement produced by the new birth, to be experienced by the Jewish saint, will produce a more immediate and complete enablement to accomplish the will of God, than the enablement experienced by the church age saint.**

Several verses make this apparent.

Jeremiah 31:33, 34 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The above cannot be said of the church age saint. Growth in the church age saint is a product of assimilating truth, fellowship with other believers, exhortation from elders, trials, and the chastening hand of God; and still most of us are blowing it in our walk with the Lord. Not so of the Jewish saint entering the millennium. He will not need others continually exhorting him to continue in communion with the Lord. Notice once again what is says in our context, "None of them will teach his neighbor, and every man his brother saying, 'Know the Lord'. In other words, Jewish saints entering the millennium will not need the exhortation

of others to stay in fellowship. This is in sharp contrast to the constant watchfulness church age saints are to exercise with respect to one another as we read in Hebrews 3:13, "but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Unlike the church age saint whose assimilation of truth is a life-long process, apparently the Jewish saint will have an instantaneous infusion of divine perspective into His soul, enabling him to have a walk with the Lord worthy of the high expectations of the millennial Kingdom. The following passage also demonstrates this higher enablement that the saint entering the age to come will have over the church age saint.

Hebrews 8:10-12 "For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

In the age to come, saints will not have to be exhorting other saints to continue to abide in fellowship with the Lord.

Jeremiah 32:40 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.'

Contrast the above verse with this verse to the church age saint:

Hebrews 3:12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

Ezekiel 11:19 "Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,

Ezekiel 36:25-30 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols."I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do [them.]"Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. "I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. "And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations.

Notice in the above context the higher degree of enablement the saint entering the millennium will have over the church age saint. Growth for the church age saint is not automatic, no not at all! On the contrary, most church age saints do not maintain a consistent enough occupation with the grace of God to mature into a person who is genuinely pleasing to the Father. In the age to come, because of instantaneous infusion of the precepts of God into the heart of the believer, such a reckless walk with the Lord will not be tolerated.

This is why, in the Sermon on the Mount, the expected standards of conduct are so stringent. The Sermon on the Mount contains the civil code which will be enforced in the Kingdom of Christ during the millennium. An example of these very tough standards would be the following context:

Matthew 5:23-26 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison."Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny".

Wow, can you imagine going to jail, for having an unresolved beef with a brother?

Incidentally, this context contains the idea of being cast into a prison from which you will eventually be released. This, therefore, cannot be a threat of either heaven or hell, because both of those possibilities are irreversible. Rather, this can only be a reality which exists in the age to come. This verse is a threat of prison for a rather minor manifestation of ungodliness in the life of a believer.

Under plan A, the Jewish saint had the new birth available to him upon the resurrection of Christ and the subsequent release of the Holy spirit to believers, thus making possible for the Jewish saint to immediately begin growing in grace. To what degree the Jewish saint had advanced in grace between the resurrection of Christ and the start of the great tribulation would have determined, under plan A, the degree of protection they would have been afforded through the great tribulation. The Lord Jesus held out the possibility of a Jewish saint so growing in grace that it would be possible for him to completely escape the trials of the great tribulation:

Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Not many Jewish saints would be counted worthy of entering the millennial Kingdom unscathed by the great tribulation. In fact two thirds of the Jews were to die during this event:

Zechariah 13:9 I will bring the [one-third] through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This [is] My people'; And each one will say, 'The LORD [is] my God.' "

Just because a Jew died during the great tribulation did not necessarily mean he was headed for hell. It simply meant that instead of entering the Kingdom in a flesh and blood body, which was the ultimate salvation offered to the Jew, a deceased Jewish saint would be resurrected into the Kingdom with a glorified body.

A combination of being born again, a heart softening tribulation, and an instantaneous infusion of the precepts of God into the heart of the initial saints of the millennium, will result in the holy deportment which we are told will be the possession of every saint initially entering the millennium.

Zephaniah 3:12, 13 I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed their flocks and lie down, And no one shall make them afraid."

However, the supernatural divine enablement of the tribulational age saint entering the millennium in a flesh and blood body, will apparently not carry over to their children.

Zechariah 13:3 "It shall come to pass [that] if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, 'You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD.' And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies."

One final point before we leave this section. Could this higher enablement to walk with the Lord, to be experienced by the saint entering the age to come, be the reason why Paul refers to the experience of the church age saint as having the firstfruits of the Spirit?

Romans 8:23 Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Of the church age saint, it is said that “sin so easily ensnares us.” (Hebrews 12:1) This constant struggle with sin creates a groaning within the soul of the church age saint, whose inner man desires full and total fellowship unhindered by the unredeemed fleshly frame of reference which still exists in our souls. Certainly, as we read in Hebrews 6:5, we have tasted of the powers of the age to come; however, the age to come will afford the participant of that Kingdom a higher enablement to walk in truth than even the church age saint has today!

### **What about the Foreknowledge of God?**

One of the biggest objections I get to this type of teaching is, “didn’t the Lord know how the Jews would respond?” To which I respond, “Leave your discussion concerning the foreknowledge of God to your philosophy class; it has no place in the discussion of the revealed will of God in the Scriptures.” Many a false doctrine has begun with an assumption concerning the foreknowledge of God. All I know is this: God did not make a disingenuous offer to the Israelites. It was His desire to, sooner rather than later establish them in their land of promise, as His people. As the Lord Jesus told them in Luke 12:32, “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” Likewise the Lord spent the bulk of His earthly ministry attempting to righteously bring the promise of the Kingdom to pass. During the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, we can also safely assume that His efforts to secure His people were genuine as demonstrated in the following parable of the fig tree:

Luke 13:6-9 He also spoke this parable: “A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.” Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ “But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize *it*.’ And if it bears fruit, *well*. But if not, after that you can cut it down.”

Likewise at the conclusion of the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, we must assume that the Lord exhibits genuine sorrow for the unwillingness of His people as a nation to respond to Him in faith.

Matthew 23:37-39 " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! "See! Your house is left to you desolate; "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "

From the above three contexts we can see that the offer of the Kingdom was genuine, the desire of the Father was real and the unbelief of the Jewish nation brought genuine sorrow.

## **Some additional teachings which better harmonize with grace when understood in light of the coming Kingdom**

### **The earthly ministry of John the Baptist.**

Luke 3:3-6 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; <sup>and</sup> all flesh shall see the salvation of God' "

We could have also turned to Matthew 3, but Luke captures for us the millennial aspect of the preaching of John the Baptist.

Let's look at the context in Isaiah from which the preaching of John the Baptist is taken.

Isaiah 40:3-5 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see *it* together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

John the Baptist is proclaiming the realities of the millennial rule of Christ, complete with the physical transformations which will occur in Israel. These transformations will occur in order to make Israel a more productive agricultural environment for the earthly citizens of Israel; in addition, a highway will be constructed across the landscape to accommodate the flowing of the nations of the world to Israel as the center of world government.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Sermon on the Mount**

The Sermon on the Mount is the legal code of the earthly Kingdom of God which Christ had come to establish. Several things make that obvious.

The character of those blessed, match the character of those who will be blessed in the millennium.

Isaiah 29:17-19 *Is it not yet a very little while* Till Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, And the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest? In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The humble also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD, And the poor among men shall rejoice In the Holy One of Israel.

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<sup>3</sup> For a more complete discussion of the subject of the transformation of Israel read my book *The Age to Come*.

## **The purpose of God for those entering the Kingdom**

Matthew 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house."Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

The above is the purpose of God for the children of Israel. Under Plan A, they are to serve as a priestly nation, commending the peoples of the world to a relationship with God through the merits of Christ crucified. This purpose of God for Israel will ultimately be fulfilled in the age to come.

Micah 4:1-4 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *That* the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths. "For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make *them* afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

## **The strict civil code enumerated in the Sermon on the Mount.**

Matthew 5:21-26 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your

brother has something against you, "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison." Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny."

Several things about this context:

This cannot be a legal code of conduct which existed during this age or during the time while Christ was on the earth. Look especially at verse 26; it describes a prison from which a person can be set free. But notice the reason for the punishment: it is basically for not loving your neighbor with the love of God. This is a higher code of conduct than what existed during the time of Moses or even exists in the church today. Going to prison for being angry with your brother will be a reality in the age to come.

Of course, this code of conduct is to be expected of a people who's born again experience includes an infusion of the complete precepts of God into their hearts. As we read in Jeremiah 31:33, 34, "But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

This writing of the precepts of God in the heart does not automatically occur in the heart of the church age believer; but it will be a reality of the Jewish saints entering into the Kingdom.

## Salt and Light

Matthew 5:13-16 " You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house."Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

This above passage, which occurs in the Sermon on the Mount, puts forth both plan A and plan B to the audience of the Lord. It contemplates Jews as being at the center of God's evangelistic purpose for the world. This evangelistic purpose was to have culminated with the millennial Kingdom, with Jerusalem being divinely atop of Mount Zion and all the nations of the earth flowing to her for leadership and truth. This was to be the exalted position of Israel in the age to come.

However, the above context also contains a threat: "if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." In other words, if those people whom God has chosen to glorify Him behave no differently than the world, then they are good for nothing more than pavement. By the way, at the end of the Lord's earthly ministry, he made good on the threat contained in this context:

Luke 21:24 "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

It is worthy to note that this verse in Luke occurs after the Kingdom offer by the Lord has been abandoned.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to see that in Matthew 21:43, Mark 12:9 and Luke 13:35 the Kingdom offer is abandoned. The teachings of the Lord after that assume a postponed appearance of the Kingdom.

## **Entering into life with a mutilated body**

Matthew 5:29,30 "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."

Let's look at a cross reference to this verse.

Matthew 18:8, 9 "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire."

Notice that this verse puts forth the possibility of entering into the life to come with severed body parts. This cannot possibly be talking about heaven. The glorified bodies of believers will not contain missing body parts nor will glorified saints with incorruptible bodies be missing body parts. This context can only be speaking of an earthly Kingdom, concerning which it is possible that a Jewish saint could survive the great tribulation in a flesh and blood body. We know that is the case. The hope of the Jewish saints is to enter into the Kingdom and enjoy the Kingdom in a flesh and blood body. As we read in Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

It was the hope of the Jewish saint living during the time of Christ to escape the trouble of the great tribulation and arrive unscathed in the earthly Kingdom of Christ.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Matthew 6:9-13 "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer that has very little application for the believer today. The Lord's Prayer is actually a prayer which the Lord directed Jewish saints to pray. The core subject matter of the Lord's Prayer is that it is a prayer for the earthly Kingdom of Christ to appear sooner rather than later.

**Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

The second half of verse 10 stands in apposition to the first half. That is, the second half of the verse further defines the first half. It might better be translated, "thy Kingdom come; that is, the will of you, let it be done, as it is in heaven, upon the earth."

During the millennial reign of Christ, the will of God as it exists in heaven, will be accomplished upon the earth.

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

This is not a prayer that we not go hungry. The operative word in this verse is the word "daily"; this is a prayer concerning how the Lord supplies us our necessary bread.

Nor are the physical necessities of the saint provided through prayer. Prayers are not usually for getting our physical needs met. The way a believer is to get his basic needs met is by prioritizing the assimilation of truth. As a result of truth-seeking, the Lord will make sure our needs are met (Matt. 6:33).

Psalm 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.

So what is the bread of which this verse speaks?

“The bread of necessity” is the best rendering in the Greek. As Job said in Job 23:12, “I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food.”

The bread of necessity referred to in the Sermon on the Mount is likely a reference to Job 23:12.

Matthew 6:13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Now stop and think what this verse is saying: not leading us into temptation. I thought the Bible taught that God does not tempt anyone, as we read in James 1:13,14, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”

Back to Matthew 6:13, certainly Jesus cannot be instructing the Israelites to ask God to do something it is impossible for Him to do. No, I believe the trials that the Lord speaks of in this verse are the troubles of the great tribulation. After all, in this context, the Lord appears to set up for us a contrast between trials or being delivered from the Evil One. It is interesting to note that the preposition for “from” in verse 13 is the Greek preposition “apo”, which means “away from.” Could this not be a prayer that the Lord was encouraging the Jewish saint to pray in hope of being one of those Jewish saints who might be counted worthy to altogether escape the afflictions of the great tribulation? After all, the Scriptures do speak of a remnant of Jewish saints who were to altogether escape the persecution of the beast. As we read in

Revelation 12:14, “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”

This would fit with the context of the Lord’s Prayer. After all, the previous verse asks the Father to forgive them as they forgive others. Now this is certainly not a formula for justification by faith as Paul countless times enumerates for us in his epistles. No, it is rather a test of spiritual maturity, such as might qualify a Jewish saint to be counted worthy to escape the trouble of the great tribulation. As we once again see in Luke 21:36, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

So, the Lord’s Prayer was quite meaningful to the Jewish saint desiring to escape the coming trouble of the great tribulation, but it is not applicable to the church age saint, which is why at Weston Street Bible Church, we do not pray the Lord’s Prayer.

As long as we are talking about the hope of the earthly Israelite to arrive in the Kingdom in a flesh and blood body, let us look elsewhere in the Scriptures where that possibility is held out to the Jewish saint.

### **Enduring to the end**

Matthew 24:13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

Mark 13:13 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

You will notice without exception, every place in the New Testament where this salvation formula, “he that endures to the end will be saved” is articulated; it is in the context of the great tribulation.

To be saved in these verses does not mean to escape hell; rather, it means to possess your physical life into the Kingdom.

Luke said it this way:

Luke 21:19 "By your patience possess your souls."

The key to perceiving that Luke's formula is identical to Matthew's formula is by seeing that in the Greek, the words "endure" in Matthew and "patience" in Luke is the same word. To endure or to exercise patience is to draw upon Biblical viewpoint during times of testing or trial. To possess your soul is to preserve your physical life during the tribulation. So we see that the formula for the Jew to arrive in the earthly Kingdom is by drawing upon divine truth to bear himself through the trial of the great tribulation.

So we can see that the salvation the Jew was hoping for is not the same salvation that the apostle Paul held out to the Gentiles. Paul's invitation to salvation meant that those who believed in Jesus as their sin-bearing substitute were placed in Christ so that they were guaranteed an eternal home in heaven. However, the salvation that the Jew was hoping for involved a degree of worthiness. The Jewish saint who believed in grace but was not counted worthy to escape the trials of the great tribulation did not go to hell. Worst-case scenario is, they would have arrived in the Kingdom of Christ, not in a flesh and blood body, but rather in a resurrected body. So, the Jew was counted righteous before God by believing the same thing believers in grace believe today. However their concept of salvation was more than just justification by faith. The Jewish concept of salvation included arriving safely and securely in a physical body in the earthly Kingdom of Christ. This Jewish hope involved more than just justification, which is why we see some Jewish salvation contexts including the concept of personal worthiness.

## **Jesus not knowing the time of His return**

Mark 13:32 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

Could it be that the reason the Lord Jesus, at this point in history, did not know the time of His return is because the verdict was still out on whether or not the Kingdom would appear immediately, or whether the Kingdom promises were to be postponed and the priestly ministry of the Jews would be forfeited to a gentile assembly of saints?

## **The Apostles’ preaching tour being disrupted by the return of Christ**

Matthew 10:16-23 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. "But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues." You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. "But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; "for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes”.

The preaching ministry of the Apostles being disrupted by the return of Christ would have been possible if the desire of the Lord to carry out Plan A had been fulfilled. It is worthy to note that, at this point in the Gospel of Matthew, the Kingdom offer had not yet been withdrawn. In fact, the Kingdom offer in the Gospel of Matthew is not withdrawn until the parable of the landowner in

Matthew 23 which concludes as follows:

Matthew 21:43 "Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."

We must, therefore, conclude that right up to that time, the Lord's invitation is genuine and His desire that there be a sooner rather than later appearance of His Kingdom is also genuine.

### **The Lord's reluctance to minister to non Jews**

Matthew 15:22-24 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Even though we see Jesus' official ministry was to the lost sheep of Israel, it is really quite amusing the number of times He used the faith (divine perspective) of the gentiles that He did encounter to put to shame the lack of divine perspective of the Jews. The Canaanite woman above is a perfect example of this. Let's read on in the context:

Matthew 15:25-28 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

The response of the Canaanite woman demonstrated that she understood the priority of "to the Jew first." But her response also demonstrated that she, being a gentile would be an indirect

beneficiary from the Lord's blessing of the Jew. "Even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the master's table" indicated that she understood that, even though she was a gentile, she would benefit from the Lord's relationship with the Jew. This understanding in the heart of the Canaanite woman, coupled with her recognition of who Jesus was (she called him "Lord") was more than the Lord could resist.

Matthew 10:5, 6 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans." But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel". Once again, it is because the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus is not immediately evangelistic in its scope, but rather a sheep-gathering mission, that we see the Lord issuing these commands.

### ***Conclusion***

It is very important for the church age believer to understand the perspective from which the four Gospel narratives at the beginning of our New Testament are written. It is important for the believer in grace to distinguish between the hope of heaven of the church age saint and the hope of the earthly Kingdom of the Jewish saint living during the time of the Law. To fail to make such a distinction will leave the believer in grace confused concerning the many statements in the four Gospels which, on the surface, seem to combine personal virtue with grace as the condition upon which God grants an eternally right relationship with Himself. Such confusion will cause the believer to have an uncertain or weak grasp on the grace of God. Such an uncertain grasp leads to doubt, despair and disqualification for service. Genuine growth in grace can only occur in the life of the believer when he possesses certainty concerning the power of grace alone to eternally commend himself to God. Properly understanding the four Gospels in light of the anticipation of the Kingdom clears up for the believer many passages in the four Gospels which, on the surface, seem to contradict the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith

alone, in the merits of Christ our Savior alone. It is my prayer that this book has helped the reader gain a firmer grasp on grace.

Dan Lash  
July 2011

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From Weston Street Bible Church**

BookNo.	Title	Level
#1	Noah's Ark	2 Basic
#2	God's Wonderful Solution to our Sin	1 Basic
#3	Understanding the Old Sin Nature	2 Basic
#4	15 Basic Characteristics of God	2 Basic
#5	Apostolic Authority	Advanced
#6	Christianity vs. Islam	Intermediate
#7	Eternal Security	Intermediate
#8	Heaven is only the Beginning	Intermediate
#9	The King James Only Movement	Advanced
#10	Rightly Dividing the Bible	Intermediate
#11	True Evangelism	Intermediate
#12	The Bible: How it came to us	Intermediate
#13	The Plan of Salvation Through the Ages	Advanced
#14	Verses that Seemingly Refute Eternal Security	Intermediate
#15	What Must I do to go to Heaven?	1 Basic
#16	Christ's Work on the Cross	2 Basic
#17	The Christian Businessman's Secret to Success	Intermediate
#18	Resting in God's Promises	2 Basic
#19	The Gospel; Exactly what is it?	2 Basic
#20	Fifteen Words (Concerning Salvation)	1 Basic
#21	A Chronological Harmony of the Gospels	Intermediate
#22	Christianity: A Cognitive Reality	2 Basic
#23	The Age To Come	Advanced
#24	A Critique of the Crossless Gospel	Intermediate
#25	"Plan A" Interpreting the Gospels	Advanced

