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8/11/13 "Upon the thrones I saw twenty-four Elders"

Recently, I had a discussion with an old dear friend who has come to the position that Messiah will not return to rule the whole earth from Jerusalem for a literal thousand years. Since most of Revelation is prophetic, we came across the passage Rev.4:4: "And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads." The question was asked regarding why God used the number 24.

A significant part of the Church Universal believes the thousand year reign is not literal and that when Messiah actually returns in power, it will be to rule over the whole house of God with the new heavens and earth. How serious is this? Besides how the Adversary has split asunder the message of the Church, if prophesying is forth-telling or teaching the truth of God's Scripture, then one of the above opposing views is false. If prophesying that Rev.20:4, "the souls of those who had been beheaded because of Jesus and those who had not worshiped the Beast came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years," will not literally happen, but it does; then what does it make those teachers and prophets who are false? "In all things, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" 1Cor3:15 I told my good friend we will end up at the same place--one may take a detour or the other a shortcut, but God is gracious.

Oh, how we have forgotten about the miracle of God's Word: when man makes things up, he mucks it up; when God makes things up, it's a miracle. Outside of His inerrant Word, we know nothing of God. I personally believe that if it says, "upon the twenty-four thrones I saw twenty-four elders," then it's because there's 24 elders. How much more miraculous can it be than 24 topguns of the faith sitting on thrones around the Father's throne.

I'm reminded of Hos11:1 in Matt2:15: "I called my son out of Egypt." It is true Egypt is the world and the Church is called out of it, and that Israel's exodus is typical of Yeshua's coming out and returning to Nazareth to grow up. But, it is false to say there was no Egypt. In the same way, it is true God says there will be these 24 elders, but it is false that because we don't know why God chose that number, then they won't really exist, i.e. they are only a metaphor. I'm sure God means for some symbolism, but God is able to do both: an exodus of Israel and a return of young Yeshua, 24 real elders and a metaphor, and so Almighty God is able to reign a literal thousand years in a very Jewish world and reign by the spirit in the Church. He has a reason for everything, and if language means anything at all [Charles R.], then God in His way, will say what He means, and mean what He says [David C.]. To Him Be The Glory, Amen

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"I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David"

Many voices of the Church Universal say that God is building His "House", today, a spiritual kingdom, which He means to replace Israel and the thousand year kingdom promised to her descendents. Unlike myself, who believes God means literally to establish His thousand year rule over all the earth, they say that, for instance, "the Tabernacle of David" in Acts 15:16 is this House. Acts 15:16-17 reads, "After these things, I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it in order that the rest of men even all the gentiles upon whom My Name has been called may seek the Lord." Let's look at this in its context from the point of view of those who first heard it, then look at it as those did in Jesus' day who heard it first.

In Acts 15, the speaker in the first century is quoting from Amos 9:9-12 some seven centuries before. Amos is telling Israel in his day that in a certain time in the future, "all the sinners of My People will die by the sword", and these are those who say, "The calamity will not overtake or confront us." Amos continues, "In that day I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David, And wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Adam and all the nations upon whom My Name has been called," declares the LORD who does this.

Notice, "all the sinners will die...in that day." In the context of which "day" is Israel among all the nations "shaken as grain in a sieve," and of which "day" does God declares of "My People" that "all its sinners will die." There is only one day Israel is purified so wholly that Paul confirms in Romans 11, "All Israel will be saved." Let me digress: the naysayers may say that this is not really National Israel, but the Church; yet, there is nothing said anywhere here that God is talking to Israel, but really intends for them understand He is talking about gentiles, too. Is it possible, believers, today, think God promises to one, a spiritual body of one race, then gives to another, a spiritual body from all races? Seems, so.

To continue: the reader of Scripture is told about only one time of global trouble for Israel, and that is the future time of "Jacob's Trouble" named so in Jeremiah 30. If we can take God at His Word to be plain about the history of the past, then we can take Him at His Word to be plain about the history of the future. And, this "day" of "trouble" ends with Israel universally proclaiming from Psalm 118, "O' LORD, do save, we beg You. Blessed is the one who comes in the Name of the LORD." So, Messiah, standing by, acts without delay to rescue all Israel. Revelation 19 says, "heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True."

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What more miraculous and spectacular a scene we anticipate than the plain meaning, here. I feel so sorry for those who allegorize this, I really do.

All this to say that "this day the LORD has made" must be the same as "that day" about which God then puts a personal promise to Israel in Amos' mouth, "I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David, and wall up its breaches. I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old". God refers to "the fallen tabernacle of David," and there is nothing indicated, here, that He means otherwise. God is actually talking about rebuilding a house from a tabernacle, tent, or ruined shack having been fallen from judgment by the nations. God says that this was the house that long ago David built for himself in 2 Samuel 5. It was the symbol of David's ruling power, nonetheless still an actual house, in this case, a palace. So, God gave Amos the sight to see into the future when this palace, the symbol of Israel's ruling power would be build up again, and its ruins raised as in the zenith of David's rule.

Now, in Christ's day some years after the cross, one of Messiah's actual brothers, the Apostle James found himself the recognized leader of the Church of Jerusalem. In the verses leading up to our passage in Acts 15, James was faced with whether or not the Church should, now, accept gentiles into the Church because some gentiles were receiving the Holy Spirit from faith alone in Messiah's salvation work. Certain Hebrew Christians were trying to lay requirements of the Mosaic Law like circumcision on them. So, James is saying based on Amos 9, the ruling palace of David will be rebuilt, and standing to show Israel's ruling power in Jerusalem over all the nations of Earth. And, by this power, God continues, "all the nations called by My Name will seek the LORD" at Jerusalem come the new age. Therefore, James requested, "it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles," i.e., it was his request to all church that they not bother the newly saved gentiles Church with certain requirements of the Law because they were neither necessary for salvation or the spiritual life.

8/25/13 "After this, I will pour out My Spirit"

There is a passage in Joel 2 that Peter uses in his gospel message of Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. Its plain reading on the salvation work of God the Holy Spirit in the midst of worldwide calamity ranks up with any passage in the biblical record on God the Son's power over the physical realm of this world. Why do I say that? It says, "And it will come about after this, that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind, and your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants, I will pour out My

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Spirit in those days. And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth: blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, there will be those who escape, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls." More than one could think or imagine, no? Interpretations vary that this is being fulfilled in the physical realm at this time, or that it will be a reality some time in the future, or even, that it is allegorical confined to the spiritual realm of the Church. Let's look at it from the evidence of the reading God showed Joel, then next week see it from Peter's view in Jesus' day.

Having looked at this, mused on it for many years with the many diverse comments on it, the following view to me is most true to the context and reading of the text, and therefore gives the most glory to God. Joel 2:28 says, "And it will come about after this, that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind." In Hebrew, it begins, "after this". It is saying, "on the hind end of" or "immediately at the end of"; not at some undetermined time afterwards. "Immediately at the end of" what, is the next question? When you read the things in the first ten verses of Joel 2, you see things on the scale of horrible events found also in the Great Tribulation, so we will assume this is the same time period at this point in our investigation. The context of Joel 1 is the destruction of locust insects on the land of Israel in Joel's time, however the context of Joel 2 is so much worse, they can not possibly be insects. In fact, the similarities in form and action between the army in Joel 2 and the demon armies of Revelation 9 leads the reader to make them the same especially since no other prophecies remotely fit. Besides, an army of insects won't have "the appearance of horses," have "a noise as of chariots," make "the people be in anguish," or make "all faces turn pale;" but, then again, an army of demons will.

Thus, the front terminus (point of inception regarding fulfillment in time) of our passage according to the evidence is, in general, the Great Tribulation. Therefore, when God says, "I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind," the evidence of this passage alone shows it only happens after the Great Tribulation. One must only look around to see that these words are definitely not being fulfilled in the physical realm at this time. But, our passage also gives its own end terminus: "before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes." Now, "the day of the LORD" depending on the context can mean basically the broad time period of the entire Great Tribulation, or it can mean the actual day of Jesus' 2nd advent. In light of the context of the passage and the context of its own phrase: "before

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the great and awesome day of the LORD," this "day" is the day the Lord Jesus returns to earth in power and glory and, therefore, this "day" is the end terminus of our passage. Why is this important?

The events from Joel 2, which I am about to list by the evidence, have to be part of the end of the Great Tribulation; yet before the Lord Jesus returns, and ends it: "Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. On the male and female servants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth: blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood."

There are many passages that weigh heavily for the argument that this passage's fulfillment is, yet, future, and realized in the salvation of all Israel; but none more than a passage from Hosea 6. Hosea 6 says, "Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. "He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day That we may live before Him." God places in the mouth of Hosea the very words of Israel that would survive the physical horror of Jacob's Trouble, and in raw chronology, he sets out in jaw dropping wonder, the actual days His Spirit is poured out on all Israel to save her. Taken at face value, the plain reading fits only one situation in Scripture: God's Chosen Race turning with one mind to the LORD when He has broken their will; and God, over a period of three days, completely enlivening their spirit so they may enter their Kingdom. So, to sum up, Joel 2:28 and following show us that Israel will only come to the LORD and accept Jesus as Messiah in the last three days of the Great Tribulation, and not until then will they as a nation beg Messiah to physically rescue them; and thus, "whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, there will be those who escape, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls." Last week we saw in our passage from Joel 2 that he was prophesying about the end time; and, taken together with Hosea from his sixth chapter, it is about the end three days during which God will pour out His Spirit upon Israel to bring about the glorious return of Jesus to earth. Now, let's see how Peter uses what Joel said. Let's return to the morning, ten days after Jesus ascended, and see what Peter on Pentecost Day of fulfillment, and the Mystery-Body of Christ breaks forth upon the earth.

9/2/13 "This Is What Was Spoken Of"

Last week we saw in our passage from Joel 2 that he was prophesying about the end time; and, taken together with Hosea from his sixth chapter, it is about the end three days during which God will pour out His Spirit upon Israel to bring about the glorious return of Jesus to earth. Now, let's see how

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In Acts 2, devout Jewish pilgrims are in Jerusalem "from every nation under heaven." And when "tongues parting asunder, like fire, sat upon each one of them," that is, the apostles, "and they began to speak with different tongues just as the Spirit gave them utter," these pilgrims asked, "What is the reason for this?" So, Peter explains, "this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel", and quoting almost word for word from Joel 2, he says, "And it shall be in the last days, God says, That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; Even upon My bond-slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above, And signs on the earth beneath, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

I think it would be good, here, to remind ourselves briefly of the four ways writers of the New Testament used the writers of the Old Testament, all of them Jewish; and that's important. In fact, that's why I believe all non-Jewish interpreters of Scripture should have a Messianic friend; and that's no joke.

First: O.T. can be used literally, as when Matthew 2 uses Micah 5 which says, "O' Bethlehem Ephrathah, little among the thousands of Judah, out of you One will go forth for Me to be Ruler in Israel." Matthew uses it to say, "where the Christ should be born, in Bethlehem of Judea."

Second: O. T. can be used as a type, as when Matthew 2 uses Hosea 11 which says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." Matthew uses Israel from Hosea as a type of Jesus Who returned out of Egypt after Joseph "took the young child and his mother by night, departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod."

Third: O. T. can be used as a metaphor, as when Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 uses Exodus 17 where Israel complained at Meribah for water, and Moses struck the Rock, a metaphor for our immovable Christ Jesus Who was struck to open living waters to us. So, Paul writes: "They were drinking from a spiritual Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ."

Fourth: O. T. can be used in application or summary, as when Matthew 2 says that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus "came, and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene." This use from the word, nezer or

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"branch," in Isaiah 11 cannot be used, here, for Jesus because the branch of a tree is not literally a city, in this case, Nazareth, or one from Nazareth, a Nazarene. Look as you may, the writers don't do that. "Branch" is a metaphor for Jesus, but not in this context Matthew uses it. Here, John 1 infers that anyone from Nazareth was despised. Secondly, Matthew says, "through the prophets", so he is using at least two prophets; indeed, reading from Isaiah 49, 53, and Psalm 22, you see Messiah depicted as One Who was Despised. So, Matthews uses them to summarize or apply to Jesus Who was despised suffering at His first coming.

So, let's compare each of these ways very briefly to see how Peter uses Joel:

Literal:

With one exception, not a thing in Joel actually happens on the Day of Pentecost according to Peter: not dreams nor visions as seen in Joel, not wonders of blood nor columns of smoke as seen in Joel, not sun turned to darkness nor moon to blood as seen in Joel. Neither does Joel mention speaking in tongues as seen in Acts which is not the same as prophesying according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 14. According to Joel and Hosea as seen last week, these wonders were understood to happen at the end of the Tribulation, and before the Lord Jesus returns to rescue Israel, neither of which taken literally has occurred in human history. This doesn't fit.

Typical

Prophecy is not a type. Fulfillment of prophecy is entirely an animal of a different kind from the fulfillment of type or simile. This doesn't fit, here.

Metaphorical

Used when an unreal symbol serves better to show Gods work than a real one. God has no need for metaphor in these contexts to show His power over the physical universe. This doesn't fit, either.

Application

In one point, do Peter and Joel intersect, that is, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Peter uses this outpouring in Joel to apply to the outpouring in his day. Though, they differ in results, nevertheless, they both are works of might by the same Holy Spirit.

Joel's results in the prophesying and salvation of all Israel with accompanying wonders in the moon and sun. Peter's results in "tongues of fire" upon Galileans who begin "speaking in different languages" from every nation on earth that their Jewish brethren from those nations might be saved.

On a final note this week, prophecy from Isaiah 6 and 28 say, "For this people's heart is become thick. Seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not lest with their heart they understand."

Therefore, the word of the LORD shall become to them: tsav latsav, tsav latsav; qav laqav, qav

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laqav—here a little, there a little; for, with a stammering lip and a different tongue will He speak to this people." This prophecy appears to have the beginning of its literal fulfillment in our passage of Acts 2 where the apostles speak "in tongues" to His People, Israel. On that Day of Pentecost, "three thousand" souls were added to the remnant, that is, "the Israel of God." Though, most sadly, this generation of Israel as a nation would not heed the sign of "tongues" that they be healed, we rejoice that some future generation of National Israel as prophesied in Joel 2 shall.

Glory Be to God, Amen

9/22/2013 "The Land on Which You Lie"

This, I hope, is my last article on the subject to follow. The point worth making, I think, regarding conclusions we make on theological questions is: if the conclusion we make is absurd, then we have to confess that somewhere along the way we took a wrong turn. As I continue my own devotional readings, and ponder this belief some hold of "no literal thousand year kingdom," God's message, as I see it, continues to be without equivocation that He keeps all promises to whom He speaks. Indeed, God keeps them precisely as He made them and the hearers understood them. If I promised something to you, and then gave something else to you, or gave it to someone else, what would we call that? Well, whatever one calls it, it seems to me quite absurd that God would do that. Is it possible for God to promise one thing, a land to one race of people, all the while knowing He would give them something else, not a literal land, or to promise one race of people something all the while knowing He would not keep it to them but give it to another people of all races. Indeed, it is impossible, for God knows all, and can not even be tempted.

Another point, before we see a few pertinent passages from plain reading, is how those who doubt this "kingdom on this earth" do so by allegorizing the plain reading of the Word, then proselytize others to do the same without the time or inclination for scholarship. They make the metaphor supreme over the plain word, making the plain word a guessing game. If it is by God's might and Spirit that teacher or hearer receives the Truth, then what are these teachers who do this trying to make themselves, if not smarter than the Creator of the plain Word? Indeed, do they not, inadvertently or not, make understanding plain reading for their hearers who are reading on their own twice as hard? I'm sorry, but the claim that one should not criticize this position before a great deal of study of its scholarly origins diminishes God's power and purpose in His Word. God invented language, so it only goes to reason He uses it to communicate in the most clearest of terms His plain message to the world.

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We take a few passages as evidence that this is so from one week of plain reading:

The first of five: "The LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the River Euphrates' Gen15:18. This could have only been understood by Abram with these well known landmarks as that ground of Israel given to his blood descendents. Anything else besides God fulfilling this precisely in some future revealed time period would make God a deceiver; indeed, any other intervening events would not cancel it even if they caught God unawares. Not likely, either.

The second: To Isaac, "the LORD said, 'Do not go down to Egypt. Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands'" Genesis 26:2-3. This, a reiteration of the same thing of that same ground and those same blood descendents, God makes very clear to Isaac, the next generation. Understood any other way makes a God a deceiver, again, impossible.

Third: To Jacob, He said, "the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants" Genesis 28:13. Notice the words, "the land on which you lie," which tells Jacob precisely what grounds of which He means. This ground under him is promised to him and his physical seed at some future time, and any other understanding of these words can only be deception.

At this point, it must be mentioned how the New Testament writers interpreted passages like this, not because it is not very plain, but because some say they interpret these things we have been discussing to belong to the Church, not Israel. Let's look at how Jesus Himself, Prophet and God, interpreted them as the one speaking, this being the focal point of the interpreter.

To continue, the fourth of five: Jesus said while on this earth, "I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" Matthew 8:11. Jesus, Himself, could only intend the hearers to understand, and therefore the hearers could only understand this meant their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, in the land of promise at a future time or as the hearers of that time called this kingdom, that "of heaven", the seat of its Creator. This being the case, Matthew had to understand this as well, so we do, too.

Finally, the fifth puts this to bed in my mind: how does the same New Testament writer handle Jesus' overview of future things for Israel? On the Mt. of Olives during Passion week, His disciples among whom was Matthew, asked Him about Israel in the future. They asked, "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" Matthew 24:3 Within the body of His answer, Jesus talks of a coming time in this creation, He talks of a defining event in this period

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still part of this creation, then of the climactic event after which the things on this earth will be unlike what we have ever known before.

He says, "Then, there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall" Matthew 24:21.

He says, "When you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" Matthew 24:15-16.

He says, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" Matthew 24:29-31.

All of these speak to the hearers, the New Testament writers, as real events in this world claiming the authority of the ancient prophet, ending in the fruition of the promised time, and bearing the very stamp of God's approval in His Son's own words. In my mind, the popular idea that God will not return in power and glory to set up His kingdom on this earth is ended, and so am I.

To God and His Son Belong All The Glory, Amen.