

'All the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.'

Revelation 13:3-5

You are warmly invited to meetings arranged by the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, to be held, God willing, at
NEW LIFE BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
44 SALUSBURY ROAD, LONDON, NW6 6NN

**Theme for 2016 – Foreshadowings of the Antichrist
Spring Conference - April 22nd, 4pm and 7pm**

Afternoon Subject: Ishmael

Evening Subject: Herod

Speaker: Brian Green

May 27th, 7pm

Subject: Haman

Speaker: Ian Shaw

June 24th, 7pm

Subject: Pharaoh

Speaker: Ivan Foster

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Watching and Waiting

LIGHT FOR PERILOUS TIMES

SCRIPTURAL

Reformed, Protestant, Puritan, Prophetical, Expository, Doctrinal

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The objects are:

1. To teach the nearing approach of our Lord's return. James 5:8
2. To hold forth the Truth and to expose and resist error. Jude 3
3. To note passing events in the light of 'the Scripture of Truth.' 2 Peter 1:19
4. To unfold the Word of God by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Acts 17:11
5. To encourage missionary endeavour, and all service for Truth. Acts 1:8
6. To comfort and strengthen those who seek to stand with the Lord, apart from abounding lawlessness. 2 Timothy 2:19
7. To call for separation from false ecumenism. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

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Six - Six - Six

It is coming! Are you ready? God speaks in the Bible of the number '666,' and it is described in Revelation 13:18 as 'the number of the beast.' What, or who, is this beast?

The earlier part of this same chapter tells us the answer to that question. He is the person who will be the final ruler, or dictator, over the prophetic earth (that area with which Scriptural prophecy is concerned). The Bible gives us a lot of information about this man and supplies us with a variety of names which describe him. Amongst these names are 'The Man of Sin,' 'The Antichrist,' and, as we have it in Revelation 13, 'The Beast.'

Things in this present generation seem to be happening very quickly so that this 'Beast' could possibly be alive today. We have to wait God's time for his appearance on the world scene, but there seem to be ample pointers to the likelihood of the prophecies in Holy Scripture, concerning the last seven years of this age, being fulfilled before too long.

In the first place, the Nation of Israel, which has been scattered for centuries, is now a State in its own land. Then, with the European Union, there is continued pressure for a uniting of the nations. Additionally, there have been, and continue to be, dramatic scenes amongst the Arab nations in the Middle East and North Africa, and we know these countries are all in the region of the prophetic earth. Other things are now happening before our eyes.

We are told specifically in Revelation 13:4 that it is the dragon (Satan) who will give the beast his power. At present, world leaders are looking for a kind of superman, and it will, of course, be this 'Beast' or 'Antichrist' whom they will receive. Daniel 11:21 describes him as 'a vile person' who will 'come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.' At the present time, political, economic, and religious systems are all actively preparing for this man.

We know he is coming because the Bible says so. Referring to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thessalonians 2:3 tells us 'that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (*apostasy*) first, and that man of sin be revealed.'

With all the technological developments, the world is certainly preparing for the arising of the antichrist. Some have pointed out that 666 is in every bar-code. We believe the final developments will be far more obvious than this, but surely, things like bar-codes and payments with plastic cards are all preparation for the man of sin. Televisions and computers are not necessarily wrong in themselves (although I have always been happy not to have had a television) but it is not difficult to see that in the hands of ungodly men they can be mighty tools to influence for evil.

We are told that it is wisdom to watch for the number of the beast. We are also told of the wickedness of this man who will set himself up to be god, and will persecute God's people and seek to annihilate the Jewish nation.

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The solemn thing is that God has clearly and definitely stated in Revelation 14:9-11, 'If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.'

These are very plain words showing the extreme folly of any compromise. However, it will not be easy to stand against the antichrist system, and we are brought to realise this when we read in Revelation 13:15-17, 'as many as would not worship the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast, or the number of his name.'

That is why we asked the question, 'Are you ready?' The situation gives cause for great concern as it seems that many professing Christians do not study these Scriptures which give the needful information about the end of this age. Sadly, many preachers never mention these things, and those of us that do are often accused of always preaching prophecy.

The Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Take ye heed: behold I have foretold you all things ... watch and pray' (Mark 13:23,33). We cannot take heed if we do not know the things revealed in the Bible. Amongst those things of which the Saviour spoke was a reference to the antichrist and his idol (verse 14), and He specifically stated that we should understand these things. In these momentous days, all Christians should be carefully reading and studying such chapters as Mark 13, Matthew 24, and Luke 21 as well as the many other passages that inform us about the end of this evil age.

What God has said must be fulfilled and Christians do well to prepare for the perilous times which are coming upon the earth. Sadly, Satan has deceived many by making them think that this antichrist is the pope. All popes are antichrist but **the antichrist** will be far worse than them all. The popes and the papacy do not fulfil all the prophecies concerning this last world ruler.

At our meetings this year, we are considering some of the persons of history who were 'types' of the antichrist; but, evil as they may have been, none of them has been as wicked as he will be.

For further information on this subject we would recommend, amongst others, two publications, obtainable from ourselves – 'The Antichrist Future also 1260 Days of Antichrist's Reign Future' by Benjamin Wills Newton, price £4; and 'The Development of Antichrist' by Andrew Bonar, price £4; the two books for £6.

S.A.T.

Daniel at Prayer

By John Douglas

(This is a summary of the first part of a message on Daniel 9 given at a Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony Conference on 25th September, 2015. We hope to include the remainder of the message in a later issue of our magazine).

Daniel 9 is a vital, all-important chapter. So much turns on what is recorded here. The preceding chapters, in a way, lead up to chapter 9, and the following chapters are certainly affected by what we find in Daniel 9. The chapter begins with the mention of the seventy years captivity and the desolations of Jerusalem, and the chapter ends with the seventy weeks of years. Keep that in mind as a summary of the chapter. So you have **'seventy'** and **'seventy,'** and that is a convenient way to sum up the chapter. From Daniel's perspective, the seventy years at the start of the chapter belonged to the past, and the seventy weeks of years are very much part of Israel's future. So we have the two different standpoints of time here in this chapter.

At the start of Daniel 9, Daniel was meditating on the seventy years of captivity and the desolations of Jerusalem, but he was able to see, by the eye of faith, not only the end of the seventy years captivity but on into the future time, even future to us, to what is called 'the end.'

The Scope of the Chapter

Daniel 9 divides into two. **First of all, the prayer (verses 1-19). Then the prophecy (verses 20-27).**

Let us look at the prayer. Regretfully I will not have time to go into the detail of the prayer. It really deserves close attention.. It is a marvellous prayer. Examine it as you can. I believe this is one of the greatest prayers in the Bible.

I will attempt to give a summary. **It is prayer with a burden.** Look at verse 3. *'I set my face.'* There was determination. There was purpose. *'I set my face unto the Lord.'* It was not just a matter of saying prayers, or meeting and praying in a formal fashion, but of setting his face unto the Lord God *'to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.'* Does that not indicate the burden of heart that he carried? This was no formal prayer. This was no casual prayer. It was the very utterance of a soul. That is the burden of his prayer.

Then you will see, **secondly, this is a prayer from the Book of God.** In verse 2 we are told, *'In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books;'* and that enables us to say Daniel prayed with the prompting of the Word of God in his soul. He understood the Word.

Thirdly, it was also a prayer with evident blessing. These past few days I have been speaking on the Book of Zechariah and in the course of that time we noted, using Ezra 5:1, how in the second year of Darius, God through Zechariah and Haggai moved His

people in Jerusalem to start building the house of God again. Their hearts were stirred. The devil had opposed the building and even stopped the work so no progress had been made until these two prophets, Zechariah and Haggai, came by the power of the Spirit. As a result, the hearts of the people were stirred and the work of God began again.

Notice verses 1 and 2 of Daniel 9. Do you see something that is mentioned twice? The first words of the chapter are *'In the first year of Darius;'* and in case you should read so swiftly that you did not take it in, verse 2 starts, *'In the first year of his reign.'* That is not coincidence. *'God speaketh once, yea twice, and man perceiveth it not.'* That is the sad thing about us.

You will discover, looking at the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, that they prophesied in the second year of Darius, but Daniel's prayer was the first year. There was the beginning of the answer to Daniel's prayer. In the second year, the very next year, God gave a token of His blessing on this prayer. The year following Daniel's prayer, the work of building the Temple at Jerusalem began to go forward with evident blessing from God.

You may think of Daniel at prayer throughout this prophecy. In chapter 2, there is **prayer about the dream**, that is, the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. In chapter 6 there is **prayer in connection with the den**, that is, the den of lions. In chapters 7 and 8 there is **prayer in relation to the destroyer** of the Gentiles, that is, the Antichrist, depicted as the little horn. These prayers were offered in relation to what God says concerning the destroyer of the Gentiles. Here, in chapter 9, there is **prayer in connection with the eventual deliverance** of Israel. That is our subject.

This prayer is directed to a covenant-keeping God (verse 4). That verse deserves much more attention than we can give it now, but as the covenant-keeping God, He is abundantly merciful and gracious. He keepeth His covenant for ever. Although Israel wilfully departed from Him and broke His covenant, yet the Lord says in Judges 2:1, *'I will never break My covenant with you.'*

The Date of Daniel Chapter Nine

We have observed the date in Daniel 9 and seen that it is emphasised twice over. (Note: Rationalistic scholars have long disputed the date of The Book of Daniel, putting the prophet into the second century BC. How utterly mistaken they are. The Holy Spirit Himself specifies and authenticates the time of the prophet's ministry).

There is another reason for mentioning that first year because that would have been the year when Daniel was preferred above the presidents and the princes and his appointment instigated great jealousy. Therefore these men determined to have him thrown into the den of lions. Daniel then kept on praying. He knew the penalty imposed upon him if he prayed - he would be cast into the den of lions. Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem and prayed as before. The prayer which attracted such a severe penalty was, I believe, offered in the first year of Darius, the time of Daniel's preferment above the rest of his fellows.

If that is the case, then Daniel 9 is a specimen of the kind of prayer he offered when he opened the windows. The spies lying in wait for him would have been delighted to

have the evidence. This is an all-important chapter. Its importance becomes more obvious. Daniel was nearly killed for offering this prayer. He was put into the den of lions for offering a prayer after this sort. It was a prayer which nearly cost him his life. I can see the devil's hand in that because given the nature of this prayer, and the scope of the prophecy, besides God's ultimate purpose for Israel - how as a covenant-keeping God, He will turn again with blessing upon His ancient people, you can well see how the devil wanted to stifle that prayer, hinder God's servant and even put an end to his praying voice.

Salient Points in Daniel's Prayer

What kind of prayer do we find here in Daniel 9? I have given you basic facts already about this prayer, namely, it was a prayer that came from the depths of his soul and it was a prayer prompted by the Word of God. Let us take it further. What exactly did Daniel pray here in Daniel 9? We do not have time to examine the whole prayer so let us take a sample from verses 15-19. We are putting the question, what kind of prayer did Daniel pray? What the prophet had in mind as he prayed affects the conclusion to chapter 9, so it is an all-important question.

You can see from verse 15 **the people for whom Daniel prayed are described.** He prayed for Israel, the nation which was formerly held in captivity in the land of Egypt. *Thou 'hast brought Thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten Thee renown, as at this day.'*

Notice that **throughout the prayer the plural form of the pronoun is used** - 'We have sinned,' 'to us belongeth confusion of face,' 'our sins.' So why the plural pronoun? We can see Daniel was not praying for himself. He was in Babylon. He had secreted himself in his own room, but nevertheless he had opened the windows and the spies could hear and determine that he prayed as ever before. He had made no change. He identified with Israel, his people and that is why we have the plural pronoun used throughout.

He **acknowledged the judgment of God** (verse 13), *'As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us.'* Even the suffering of the curse is mentioned (verse 11), *'the curse is poured upon us.'* He understood the wrath of God had fallen upon Israel, because they had rebelled against Him. He identified with his people, and he used the plural to show that we are not to think of the prayer as being offered for the Gentile Church, commonly called the Church of the New Testament. No, he used 'we,' 'our,' 'us,' and the people he had in view were the people who were in Egypt. It was the Israel in Egypt which suffered affliction in the days of Pharaoh, and Moses is mentioned in the prayer, showing that part of history.

Thus, **when Daniel prayed, We have sinned. Lord, Thy wrath has fallen upon us, he prayed for Israel as a people.** Then Daniel said (verse 16), *'Lord ... I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem.'*

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Was Daniel's Prayer Answered?

The big question is, Was Daniel's prayer answered as he expressed the burden of his soul to God? What if God in hearing his prayer did exactly the opposite? Instead of forgiving Israel, instead of lifting away the cloud of His wrath, what if then God rejected Israel and forsook His covenant and abandoned the land?

I possess a copy of the Authorised Version with a marginal comment in reference to the seventy weeks. *The comment in the margin has Daniel praying that Israel may no longer be a people.* That is far removed from the Hebrew text. It has no place in Scripture, but it shows the interpolation, how men have suggested something else for the fulfilment of these seventy weeks. This amounts, in effect, to God, instead of having heard the prayer as Daniel put it, turning right around and doing the opposite. Daniel asked the Lord to receive His people again, to take them back, and embrace them in His love, and forgive them; but these interpreters are saying, instead of God doing that, He did the opposite. He cast them off that they may no longer be a people. That is unacceptable.

One of the things Daniel prayed (verse 17) is, '*Cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary.*' For God to answer that prayer exactly as Daniel prayed it will mean that God will grant acceptance in Christ to Israel. It means also that God will show His face again to them. '*Cause Thy face to shine.*' He speaks of God's countenance, God's face.

That has to do with acceptance; but more, it indicates that where before a cloud has arisen to hide the face of God, there is a veil put in place. Thus now he is saying in effect, Lord, take the veil away, and let Thy face shine upon us in Thy mercy and grace. It means also that God has restored the light of His presence in the sanctuary. The Shekinah glory then will be manifested again to God's people.

'*Cause Thy face to shine.*' That is like the Aaronic prayer, given in Numbers 6, '*Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up His countenance (that is the countenance which before was hidden behind the veil) upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put My Name upon the children of Israel: and I will bless them.*' So, when Daniel prayed, '*Cause Thy face to shine,*' he was going back to the days of Moses, to the blessings of the covenant and he was saying, Lord, to enter into the fullness of the blessing means that Thou wilt cause Thy face to shine.

A Threefold Intensity

Notice the three petitions in verse 19. This is important. Remember I have been asking what has Daniel actually prayed; because we want to check and see either if God answered that prayer, or if the Lord turned around and did the opposite. This verse is like a high point in his prayer, '*O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do.*' He put the name of the Lord into each of the three petitions. Sometimes when Christians pray they use the name of the Lord more times than they may intend. It may

be that in public prayer the person has worries about difficulty with speech, so he puts in the name of the Lord as a kind of punctuation mark. That is not the way Daniel prayed.

Every time the august title of 'Lord' is brought into the simple petition, Daniel emphasised that it is the Lord alone, the Lord Himself. '*O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do.*' In the Hebrew Bible, these three verbs, 'hear,' 'forgive,' 'hearken' have an extra letter added for emphasis. This letter follows on at the end of the word and the appendage is a normal thing where the verb is particularly emphatic, and this is to be observed here. I do not know how I can express that in the English because I cannot add a letter and give the impression that I desire. Therefore I have to use an additional word or two - O Lord, hear I pray Thee. That is emphatic. O Lord, forgive I beseech Thee. O Lord, hearken and do, I beg of you. There I have added words to show the emphasis. In the Hebrew Bible just one letter is added each time to indicate that this threefold petition is particularly emphatic.

Did God do the Opposite to what Daniel Asked?

We have reached a high point in the prayer. You see that verses 19-20 show he was praying for 'Thy city' and 'Thy people that are called by Thy Name.' **He prayed for Israel.** Look again at verse 16, where reference is made to 'Thy city' and in case you were not too sure how to identify which city, **he named Jerusalem.** Is there any mistaking that? What was he praying for? He was praying for 'Thy city, Jerusalem.' And his request was for the Lord to forgive and restore the nation, and in mercy to let His face shine upon Israel again. It is unmistakeable.

Verse 16 mentions 'Thy city Jerusalem' and also 'Thy holy mountain.' That holy mountain is Mount Moriah. 'Thy people' are also mentioned, and then mark these words in verse 17, 'Thy sanctuary.' That ties in with the holy mountain. Daniel prayed about 'Thy sanctuary' as if the sacred edifice was still standing; but there was no temple there. There was only a heap of rubbish, yet it was 'Thy sanctuary.' By this we learn that God's sanctuary is really a place rather than a building. When Daniel prayed for God's sanctuary, he was praying about a place. It was not specifically Solomon's temple, wonderful as it was, that Daniel had in mind when he said 'Thy sanctuary.' Many people may make that mistake, when they read about the sanctuary; they think of Solomon's temple, yet they know that by this time Solomon's temple had been destroyed.

The place is the holy hill of the Psalms. In Psalm 2, God says, '*Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion* (the hill of My holiness).' Here we have the first time in the Book of Psalms the holy hill is brought to the attention of the reader. That is an important reference in the Psalms, that first reference. And when the sanctuary was mentioned by Daniel, it was the place, not necessarily a building. It is the place described as 'My holy hill.'

We see as well in Daniel 9:20, he brought his '*supplication before the LORD ... for the*

holy mountain of my God. I have purposely emphasised all these points, given that I have put the question, Was Daniel's prayer answered exactly or was it answered some other way? Has God given up on Israel? Has God determined to do the very opposite to what Daniel asked? If God has rejected Israel, forsaken His covenant, abandoned the land and given up Israel that would mean Daniel's prayer was not heard and answered.

The Great Answer to Daniel's Prayer

Consider verses 20-22 for there is the answer. There the prayer of Daniel was answered. *'Whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel (for all their faults) and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain (yes, the place, the holy mountain, Mount Moriah) of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly (the answer came quickly), touched me at the time of the evening oblation (the hour of prayer). And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.'*

Then Gabriel said, *'At the beginning of thy supplication.'* Daniel's prayer had been heard from the very beginning, from the first time he prayed. Gabriel is mentioned in chapter 8:16, and we need to turn back to this verse. This is where the process began. Verse 17 says, *'Understand, O son of man: for at the end shall be the vision.'* So, that brings us to the very end of the times of the Gentiles, the seventy weeks; and in verse 19, *'I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.'* In the context of what I am asking concerning Daniel's prayer being answered or not, there is every evidence to show that God's favour is bestowed upon Daniel. In chapters 9 and 10 Daniel is three times called God's 'Beloved.' If God has used this term for Daniel, especially after his moving prayer in chapter 9, does that not signify a lot? Does Daniel have God's favour or does he not? The question is answered; and in 10:14 the Word of the Lord intimated, *'Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.'* Hence it is clear God has answered Daniel. He did not cast off Israel, His ancient people. God has not turned away His favour from Daniel and God has not shut up the windows of heaven against Daniel; nor has He cut him off as a man of intercession. Daniel's supplication for Israel and for Jerusalem is heard. That is one of the features of this portion.

Called Home

Mr Ken James Taylor was called home on 20th July, 2015, age 69. Coming from a worldly background, the ministry of Pastor L E Squires was made a blessing to him. Having been brought to know the Lord, he was baptised in May, 1965 and joined the church at 'Ebenezer' Chapel, Bermondsey, where for 25 years he served as church

secretary, until he and his wife removed to the Isle of Wight. He took an interest in the work and witness of the International Council of Christian Churches in the early days of the formation of an English supporting group. He also served on the committee of the Bible Spreading Union, which he joined in 1976 and, whilst he resided in the London area, he helped in this work of spreading God's Word. He and his wife, Evelyn, were married in August 1970 and together they did much to support the witness of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, making it possible for the monthly meetings to be held at Bermondsey from 1984-1998. Those who attended the meetings at Bermondsey during that time will remember him with affection.

Mr Henry Thomas Hudson went to be with the Lord on 11th December, 2015, age 83. Born and bred in England, he came to know the Lord at 17 years of age. He was conscripted into the Royal Military Police and served in Italy. Following this period of national service he went to the U.S.A. and attended the Milwaukee Bible Institute. After missionary work in Europe he became the founding pastor of Calvary Chapel in Massillon where he served many years. The following testimony was written by Mr Hudson and is taken from *Watching and Waiting*, September, 1973.

A Personal Testimony

By Henry T Hudson

Shortly after my conversion to Jesus Christ, I was introduced to the dispensational method of Bible study. I found it to be very helpful in providing me with a comprehensive understanding of the content of Holy Scripture. But, without really being aware of what was happening, my mind was subtly undergoing an almost computer-like process of programming, so that my thinking was directed into accepting the presupposition that there would be two future comings of Christ and that they would be separated by a period of at least seven years. In other words, by *a priori* reasoning, I was led to accept what is commonly known as the pre-tribulation theory of Christ's coming. While I had been taught to build my beliefs upon the solid foundation of God's Word, I had unconsciously imbibed a doctrine which was really without one single verse of scriptural support.

How was such a deceptive experience possible? Now, when I look back, the explanation is quite simple. My acceptance of the principles of dispensationalism had opened up the Bible to me in such a gratifying manner that in my consequent appreciation I did not pause to question all correlative elements. It was something like the experience of signing a contract without first reading the fine print.

What was it that opened my eyes to the fallacies of pre-tribulationism? It all started when I began to take notice of what seemed like very unusual differences among those who held to the pre-tribulational position. For example, they could not seem to agree

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whether certain passages spoke of the supposed coming before, or the coming after the tribulation. They would dispute in all earnestness such passages as Colossians 3:1-4 and Philippians 3:20-21. Then soon it began to dawn upon me that certain aspects of dispensational eschatology were based upon paradoxical assumptions which permitted those embracing them to see things in texts of Holy Scripture which were not there. This, admittedly, might be queried, but psychologically it is not an infrequent phenomenon where prejudice prevails.

Let me try to illustrate what I mean by the fallacy of a foundationless assumption. If I were to ask for a 'proof text' to give credibility to the pre-tribulation theory, I am sure that in nine cases out of ten I would be given 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. So often, with genuine sincerity and with avid conviction this passage is set forth as containing conclusive evidence of a pre-tribulational advent. Now the irony here is that among the more extreme dispensationalists there is unanimity that the events of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 do not take place before, but rather after the tribulation. So much for the incontestable evidence of this passage. How can one group claim unequivocally to see something in a passage of Scripture when another group remains firmly convinced that such teaching cannot be found therein? The answer is that the different dispensational schools, under the direct impulse of their *a priori* presuppositions, were simply predetermining what could be found.

This prejudicial approach to Scripture is even more clearly demonstrated in the more general differences among dispensationalists. Some find a pre-tribulational coming all through the New Testament. Others deny this notion and declare that it can be found only in Paul's epistles. A few are willing to include the General Epistles. And still others, controvert such 'inconsistent' dispensationalism, and argue that the pre-tribulational coming of Christ is exclusively restricted to Paul's prison epistles.

It was against this background of bewildering claims that I began to wonder about the causes of so much confusion. Moreover, I must mention that heretofore I had never met anyone, nor read any book, that advocated the post-tribulation coming.

What was it then that caused me to change my viewpoint? It came about as the direct result of personal private Bible study. I decided that when opportunity presented itself I would look at every reference in the New Testament to the coming of Christ and try to ascertain from the respective contexts precisely when Christ would return. I was not interested in setting calendar dates. All I wanted to find out was which passages would clearly support the fact that the Lord Jesus would come back before the tribulation. It was not until I was on the mission field that I began this survey. Early every morning for approximately two hours I would set about my self-assigned task. There were some interruptions, but after about two years I had completed the study.

No words could express my consternation over my findings. My mind was greatly disturbed. I had not found one text in Scripture anywhere which supported something I had been preaching and teaching for the last five years. I had come across ample evidence that Christ would return after the tribulation, but not one scintilla of proof that He would return prior to the tribulation. Perhaps the reader will find it difficult to understand the reasons for my anguish of soul. You see, I did not know at the time that

pre-tribulationism was a recent nineteenth century innovation and that there were great Bible teachers who had, and who were still opposing the error. I felt I was alone and I was convinced that my studies must have gone wrong somewhere. Yet, the wealth of scriptural evidence was before my eyes. How could I have been deceived? How could my esteemed brethren back home be in error? No, there had to be some other explanation. Everyone I knew was a convinced pre-tribulationist. Was I the only one in the world who had seen the unscripturalness of this doctrine?

It was about this time, just prior to my return from the field, that God in His providence wonderfully intervened. Through written communication I was introduced to the work of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony. It was a source of stimulating encouragement to learn that many outstanding Bible teachers of the past and the present had studied pre-tribulational claims and had rejected them.

When I did eventually return home and began to share my doubts and my questions, I was not prepared for the hostility they aroused. Within a very short space of time, my supposed 'apostasy' was common knowledge. Of all my countless friends and fellow-labourers in the Gospel, only a handful were kind enough to assure me of their continued love and concern. I tried to inform those who were ostracising me from their fellowship that such an action would exclude many great giants of the faith from their fellowship, but it was to no avail.

My resignation from the mission organisation was requested. I protested on the ground that my doubts about pre-tribulationism would in no way affect the work on the foreign field. The people to whom I ministered did not even understand the elementary significance of Christ's first coming, let alone that of His second coming. My pleas fell upon deaf ears.

I was prompted to attempt one other expediency. Since most of my acquaintances boasted in the exemplary behaviour of the noble Bereans of Acts 17:11, I would put some kind of a paper together and urge them to emulate that quality in the Bereans which they so ardently admired. All I really wanted was for them to understand why I could not unreservedly sign a doctrinal statement that dogmatically supported pre-tribulationism. I sent out over 300 copies of the paper and urged the recipients to give me their constructive criticisms. Apart from a few brow-beating replies, I received but one real attempt to answer my mimeographed study.

In essence, the only scriptural support proffered was a straw-grasping exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:3 which took the Greek word *apostasia* and tried to make it mean a bodily rapturous-type departure from earth toward heaven. Such exegetical desperation belied the entire chimerical character of pre-tribulationism. I am now writing some ten years after this whole experience and I still await a reply which would not only confute what I wrote but would give a sound scriptural basis for believing that Christ will return before the tribulation.

By way of reflection, I might add a few concluding thoughts. While I remain sensitive to dangers that are inherent in various dispensational systems of theology (surely similar dangers exist in accepting any human theological system *in toto*), I would not want to contribute to the growing spirit of anti-dispensationalism. Such a spirit is quite

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evident in recent attacks upon the doctrine of the premillennial coming of Christ, Unfortunately, some students of Holy Scripture who have recently been led to repudiate pre-tribulationism, have turned somewhat bitterly against any possible value in dispensationalism. I can readily sympathise with them, but is this not a little like throwing out the proverbial baby with the dirty bath water?

Some of the principles undergirding dispensational Bible study are, even as B W Newton recognised, of much merit. If we are not careful, I believe we will overreact and quite superficially judge and condemn solely on the basis of association. Yes, it is true that pre-tribulationists tend to be dispensationalists, and that an objective research of Holy Scripture fails to support pre-tribulationism, but it does not necessarily follow that the fundamental idea behind the dispensational appreciation of Bible truth is wrong. A good statement of the use of making dispensational distinctions can be found on page 12 of B W Newton's *Events that are to Precede the Return of our Lord*.

Many parts of the Old Testament belong to dispensations that have passed away; others to dispensations yet to come. Such passages, though they may supply certain principles capable of being applied to believers now, yet cannot be primarily interpreted of them; for we are not under law as Israel was, nor in millennial rest as, in the next dispensation, Israel will be. So, likewise, in the Gospels, many instructions were addressed to the disciples in their then present circumstances – circumstances that ceased to exist after the death and resurrection of their Lord; and all such instructions were, of necessity, limited to the time then present. Thus it is not now said to us, 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any villages of the Samaritans enter ye not;' nor are we commanded to observe the bidding of those 'who sit in Moses' seat,' for with the death of Jesus the claims of the Mosaic economy terminated.

In conclusion, what have I learned from my experiences and from discussing these matters with Christian brethren who remain bound by pre-tribulationist preconceptions? First of all, I have learned patience. Then I have learned that before ever I stand up with a 'Thus saith the Lord' I had better make absolutely sure that I am really on solid Biblical ground. Like the great reformers of the sixteenth century, I must demand 'chapter and verse.'

As far as how to deal with brethren who labour under pre-tribulation delusions, I do not believe there is an infallible formula. I usually proceed by what I might call the simply categorical approach. In a straightforward manner I recite what they believe and then I ask them to show me where the Bible explicitly states that the Saviour will return before the tribulation. I can show them where it declares He will return after the tribulation (e.g. Matthew 24:29-31), but of course they cannot produce any passage to substantiate their claims. Now when I do this, I am not necessarily conveying truth to them, but at least I am demonstrating that they are knocking at the wrong door. If they will acknowledge this, then it will not be too long before they begin knocking at the right door.

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