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The Millennium of Revelation Chapter Twenty

(Part Two, vv.4-10)¹

John K. Pfeiffer

Revelation 20:4

Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους, καὶ ἐκάθισαν ἐπ’ αὐτούς, καὶ κρίμα ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδὲ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαβον τὸ χάραγμα ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῶν. καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη.²

And I saw thrones, and then they sit upon them and judgment is given to them, even the souls of the ones having been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus, and because of the word of God, and whoever does not bow to the beast, nor his image, and does not receive the mark upon the forehead, and upon their hand; also they come to life and rule with Christ one thousand years (JKP).³

Verbal Actions

Καὶ εἶδον—and I saw, aorist active indicative. This is John’s way of introducing a new vision (cf. v.1).

When John uses the aorist to speak of his own actions, I translate with the past tense. When he uses the aorist to describe the events of the vision, I use the present tense. I believe this makes it more vivid.

ψυχὰς is accusative and an object of the verb εἶδον, “and I saw thrones . . . and the souls . . .”

Nestle-Aland inserts a comma after αὐτοῖς. The Byzantine text uses a semicolon. This exegete favors using commas to offset the two clauses after θρόνους, so that it is more apparent that ψυχὰς the object of εἶδον.

¹ Part One appeared in the *Journal of Theology*, Volume 58, Number 4 (Winter 2018).

² Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, 26th Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979)

³ Bible quotations identified as “JKP” are the author’s own translation.

ἐκάθισαν—*they sit*, aorist active indicative. While the verb is used for the action of sitting down, it is also used for the state of being seated. The verb is referring either to the fact that the subjects sit down at the initiation of the vision or to the fact that they were already seated when the vision commenced. The aorist active indicative and the context seem to favor the former. First, John saw the thrones, and then he saw *them* sit down.

ἐκάθισαν—used of a king upon his throne (Acts 2:30) and of a judge upon the bench (Luke 22:30; 1 Corinthians 6:4). Both judging and ruling are to be understood in connection with this term. Judging can be understood as a subset of ruling.

ἐδόθη—*it is given*, aorist passive indicative. The authority to judge belongs to God. It is He who gives this authority to His people. The aorist indicative places this action coincidental with the previous action. As they sit, the gavel is placed in their hands.

πεπελεκισμένων—*having been beheaded*, perfect passive participle. This action preceded the events of the vision.⁴

⁴ In the very first verse of Revelation, John writes:

Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός, δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants—things which must necessarily shortly take place. And He showed by signs, transmitting through His messenger to His servant John. (JKP)

To this author's knowledge, these are the only words in Revelation that govern our understanding of the *whole* book. To interpret the revelations of Jesus without the application of the principles here set forth is to create a methodology of interpretation from one's own mind. (If the reader is aware of an additional, internal guideline for interpretation, please notify me.)

Therefore, the reader is informed that the visions are speaking of things which will come to pass *after* the time of revealing, that is, after the time when the visions were given to John.

Throughout the book, careful consideration should be given to the Greek verbal tenses which are not always clearly represented in corresponding English translations. If the text of the vision uses a tense that refers to something having been completed in the past (e.g. the Greek perfect tense), then the vision, at that point, is relating something that happened before the inception of the other events in the vision.

For instance, we read in Revelation 5:6:

Καὶ εἶδον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἄρνιον ἑστηκός ὡς ἐσφαγμένον, ἔχων κέρατα ἑπτὰ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἑπτὰ, οἳ εἰσιν τὰ [ἑπτὰ] πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεσταλμένοι εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν.

προσεκύνησαν—*they bow*, aorist active indicative, punctiliar, a statement of fact covering their lifetime

ἔλαβον—*they receive*, aorist active indicative, coincidental with the preceding

ἔζησαν—*they come to life*, aorist active indicative, punctiliar, a statement of fact

ζῶω — 1. to live, be among the living, be alive (not lifeless, not dead); to be no longer dead, to recover life, be restored to life,
2. emphatically, and in the Messianic sense, to enjoy real life, i.e., to have true life and worthy of the name—active, blessed, endless in the kingdom of God, 3. to live i.e., pass life, of the manner of living and acting, II. Metaphorically, of inanimate things (e.g., living water)⁵

And I saw, in the midst of the throne and of the four living beings and in the midst of the elders, a lamb standing as having been slain having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God having been sent into all the earth. (JKP)

The perfect tense in ἔσφαγμένον and ἀπεσταλμένοι indicate that the Lamb had been slain prior to this event (i.e., the lamb standing). Likewise, the “seven Spirits of God” had been sent out into the world prior to this event.

One vision upon which this has a particular impact is that of the woman giving birth to the child (chapter twelve). Many understand this to refer to the birth of Christ. However, this cannot be the interpretation since His birth took place prior to the giving of the revelation, but the tenses speak of something occurring at the time of the vision—either as a one-time action (aorist) or an iterative action (aorist), or an on-going action (present).

Furthermore, there are portions of the vision which simply cannot apply to the birth of Christ. For instance, if this is understood as the literal birth of Christ, are we to understand Mary’s flight into the wilderness as literal? Was Satan waiting in the stable to literally devour Christ? Also, since the number twelve is the number of the Church, we would have to say that the Church is Mary’s crown, to which the papists would agree.

The interpretation that seems most acceptable is that the woman is the Church—the bride of Christ—giving birth to the individual Christian by means of the gospel. As for Satan, he is always “seeking to devour” the Christian (1 Peter 5:8).

Regarding the word “shortly” (Revelation 1:1)—Since the New Testament frequently speaks of the time from the apostles until the End as a *brief* time, we understand that the visions of this book could refer to any portion of this time period.

It is noteworthy that the expression of John, “to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1), is substantially repeated by Jesus in Revelation 4:1, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.” This demonstrates that the revelation of future things does not begin until chapter four. In chapters two and three, the letters to the seven churches speak of things in John’s past and present.

⁵Thayer, Joseph Henry, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Zondervan Publishing House, (Grand Rapids: First Edition 1889, Logos release 2010).

Friberg suggests, “of return from death—become alive again,”⁶ UBS suggests, “come back to life.”⁷ The English Standard Version (ESV), New International Version (NIV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), and New American Standard Bible (NASB) Bibles all translate, “come to life.”

Consider the following passages in support of the concept of “coming to life”: Matthew 9:18, John 5:25, Romans 7:9; 14:9, and Revelation 2:8. Since verse five speaks of “the rest of the dead,” those who are mentioned in verse four must have been dead also. Therefore, they “come to life” from the dead.

The reason for choosing “come to life,” instead of “return to life,” is explained under verse five (q.v.), namely, it is not the same persons that return to life, but new people of the same type that “come to life.” “Return to life” implies the resurrection of those same people.

ἐβασίλευσαν—*they rule*, aorist active indicative, coincidental with the preceding verb. The fact that they rule for a long period of time is not addressed by the verb. The aorist looks at the entire time as a singular event.

Interpretation

John sees something new. He sees believers (cf. Revelation 5:10; Luke 22:30) as they sit down upon thrones and are given the authority to judge. Whether or not they began to exercise this authority is not revealed at this point. John sees, also, the souls of those who gave their lives for Christ. They were willing to do so, because they were committed to the gospel (*testimony of Jesus*) as well as to all the teachings of Scripture (*the word of God*)—even to the point of death.

These are the souls of believing martyrs who suffered during the pre-Reformation reign of the Antichrist (the beast). They did not bow to the Pope, but gave testimony about Jesus even to the point of death. They refused to be identified with the Antichrist.

τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ — *his mark* (cf. Revelation 13:16; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4), The mark of the beast is not a literal, physical mark. A mark is a means of

⁶ Friberg, Timothy and Barbara, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2005)

⁷ Newman, Barclay M., Jr, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, United Bible Societies (UBS), (New York: 1971) and Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (Stuttgart: 1993). Accessed via *BibleWorks*.

identification. So, those who receive the “mark” are identified with the Antichrist. They revere, adore, and submit to him as if he were a god, following his decreets without question. God alone can see the mark, i.e., only He can see who truly worships the beast. Membership in the Roman Catholic Church is not in itself the mark of the beast.

καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη — *they also come to life and rule with Christ a thousand years*. This resurrection is symbolic. It is a picture of what happens (see verse five for the explanation).

Revelation 20:5

οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔζησαν ἄχρι τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη. αὕτη ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη.

And the rest of the dead do not come to life until the thousand years should be completed. This the first resurrection. (JKP)

Verbal Actions

ἔζησαν—*they do not come to life*, aorist active indicative, a statement of fact. The choice of the present tense in translation is intended to reflect the aspectual nature of the aorist. The action is viewed as singular without reference to time. The temporal nature of the action is determined by the context.⁸

τελεσθῇ—it *should be completed*, aorist passive subjunctive. The “potential subjunctive” may refer “to a single event at an indefinite future time.”⁹ The indefiniteness relates to the ignorance of the termination point of the thousand years from the perspective of John. However, the moment was not indefinite to God.

⁸ If indeed, this is similar to the Hebrew prophetic perfect, then the action/event is so certain that it is presented as being “as good as done.” This writer is holding this interpretation of the aorist in abeyance for the present.

⁹ The potential subjunctive is used in indefinite subordinate clauses like the following, introduced by a word such as εἰάν (*eán*) “if by chance” containing the particle ἄν (*án*): 1) “If by chance . . .”, “until such time as . . .” or “before such time as...” referring to a single event at an indefinite future time; 2) “Whenever . . .”, “whoever . . .”, “if ever . . .” etc. referring to repeated events in an indefinite present time. [Wikiwand; Subjunctive (Ancient Greek). Accessed February 26, 2021. [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Subjunctive_\(Ancient_Greek\)](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Subjunctive_(Ancient_Greek))]

The aorist subjunctive may refer to events which, though repeated, precede the time of the main verb.¹⁰ This would demonstrate that the *coming to life* of the *rest of the dead* happens *after* the completion of the thousand years. Once again, this would bring into question the interpretation that the thousand years refers to the entire New Testament period.

Interpretation

οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν νεκρῶν—*The rest of the dead*. This refers to those who rejected the life which comes through faith in Jesus Christ and embraced the Antichrist and his teachings.

αὕτη—*this*—refers to ἔζησαν in verse four. Verse six states that those who are partaking of the first resurrection are blessed and holy. “*The rest of the dead*” cannot be so described since they bowed to the beast and his image and have the mark of the beast on them.

ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη—*The first resurrection*. In Scripture, there are three *kinds* of resurrection.¹¹

1. The resurrection (συνεγείρω) of the spiritually dead, which takes place when a man comes to faith in Jesus Christ; he is then spiritually alive (Colossians 2:12; 3:1).
2. The resurrection of the physically dead, which takes place on Judgment Day—also when Christ and His disciples raised those who had died (1 Corinthians 15).
3. A figurative/typical resurrection (Jeremiah 30:9; Malachi 4:5; Ezekiel 37:11-14).
 - a) Taking place from the time of Christ’s ascension or Pentecost until Judgment Day, or

¹⁰ The difference between the present and aorist subjunctive is one of aspect rather than of time. In sentences looking forward to the future such as “I am afraid it may happen”, the aorist describes single events, whereas the present subjunctive primarily refers to situations or habitually repeated events. In sentences describing repeated events at an indefinite time such as “whenever he has finished, he sits down”, **the aorist refers to events which, though repeated, precede the time of the main verb.** [Wikiwand; Subjunctive (Ancient Greek). Accessed February 26, 2021. [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Subjunctive_\(Ancient_Greek\)](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Subjunctive_(Ancient_Greek))]

¹¹ The concept of “kinds” of resurrection is present also in John 5:29, “. . . *those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*”

- b) Taking place during a specific time period in the New Testament era. This is the kind of resurrection that fits this passage. We can make this conclusion based on the following observations.

Resurrection 1: There are those who interpret the first resurrection (verse six) as the spiritually dead coming to life through conversion. The reason that this does not fit is found in this verse. If “*come to life*” in verse four is referring to conversion, then what is the *coming to life* (“*did not come to life until . . .*”) in verse five? Is this, also, referring conversion? If so, we should expect universal conversion at the close of the 1000 years.

Resurrection 2: If this is referring to a physical resurrection, then verse four also is speaking of a physical resurrection—ἐζήσαν is used in both verses. This is clearly not the intent of this revelation.

Resurrection 3: Is this a resurrection in type? The only other possibility (millennialism not being a possibility) is that the expressions of time are symbolic, referring to the preaching of the gospel throughout a time period foreknown only to God. It is in connection with the preaching of the gospel that the first resurrection takes place. The brief time of the devil’s release would, then, refer to Satan’s ability to hinder the preaching of the gospel. The outcome of such a scenario, therefore, would be the prevention of the first resurrection.

Resurrection 3a: Many conservative Lutherans *do* interpret the thousand years as a time period, namely, the New Testament era from Christ’s ascension until Judgment Day. However, they struggle with the brief time of Satan’s release. Some try to patch it into the closing framework of the thousand years, even though the text states that the brief time does not commence *until* the thousand years are completed (τελεσθῆναι). It is *after this* that Satan is set free, and then he begins to deceive the nations. If the thousand years is the entire New Testament era during which the gospel is preached, then the brief time would have to be a time period before Judgment Day during which the gospel will not be preached. But, of course, the Lord refutes this in Matthew 24:14 and 16:18.

Resurrection 3b: In Jeremiah 30:9, God says that He will raise up (אֲדָמָה) David. This was fulfilled when Christ came, He is this *David*. Christ was a type of David, fighting against and defeating the enemies of His people. Malachi (4:5) speaks of Elijah being sent, and Elijah came to

life in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14). John the Baptist was a type of Elijah in appearance and in diet, but more so in his ministry.

In Revelation chapter twenty, it is the bold confessors of truth who are raised up. These are not the same persons, but the same *type*—having the same courageous spirit of commitment to Jesus and His Gospel—out of the abundance of their hearts, their mouths speak. One might say that the apostle Paul was *raised up* in the person of Martin Luther. Both were great defenders of the doctrine of justification by faith. Even more recently, we have seen bold confessors testifying to the truth even in the face of persecution and deprivation.

This is not new to the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter eleven has a resurrection in type. It speaks of two witnesses (Christ and the Church) who are *killed*, but who return to life. This is a *typical* resurrection. The killing occurs whenever gospel witnesses are silenced. The resurrection occurs when others are raised up to resume the testimony. Call this a revival—a restoration to life, if you will.

Although the Holy Christian Church is never dead and gone, it appeared to be so during the era of the Antichrist's domination (ca. AD 500-1500). With the arrival of the thousand years, the Church sprang back to "life" in the persons of those bold witnesses who publicly proclaimed the gospel. This is the "first resurrection."

Meanwhile, "*the rest of the dead lived not again until . . .*" Those who served the Antichrist and dominated the western world during the Middle Ages did not rise up to do so during this millennium. Their *type* was denied the ability to plague the Church and dominate the nations as they had during the era of the Antichrist. However, after the completion of the thousand years, their type comes to life in the form of Gog and Magog (see verse eight below).

Revelation 20:6

μακάριος καὶ ἅγιος ὁ ἔχων μέρος ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῇ πρώτῃ· ἐπὶ τούτων ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ' ἔσονται ἱερεῖς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ [τὰ] χίλια ἔτη.

Blesséd and holy the one having a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will rule with Him a thousand years. (JKP)

Verbal Actions

ἔχων—*having*, present active participle. The present participle expresses the thought that this state is ongoing. It is always true of these bold confessors. Since there is no main verb in this clause, we are left with a verbal idea that is understood: *blesséd are*. However, it is difficult to link the participle to a non-existent verb. Therefore, the use of the participle does not specify the time period during which the action/state takes place, but only speaks to the ongoing nature of the action/state regardless of the time period. As was said, this *having* is always true of these bold confessors.

ἔχει—*it has*, present active indicative. The present tense indicates that the second death is taking victims, although not from the “*first resurrection*” group.

ἔσονται—*they will be*, future middle indicative. The future tense (especially in view of the preceding present tense) indicates that *this* priesthood and rule will take place after their participation in the first resurrection. *After* being raised up, they take the sword of the Spirit and go forth into the world with the dominating power of the gospel.

βασιλεύσουσιν—*they will rule*, future active indicative.

Interpretation

Blesséd and holy the one having a part in the first resurrection—the term μακάριος reveals the status of these faithful confessors of the truth. They are in *blesséd* status, a position that is glorious and that places them in the best of relationships with the heavenly Father.

They are holy, also—holy, separate, set apart. They have been set apart from the wicked, condemned world and set apart unto righteousness, salvation, and fellowship with God. Picture a ship caught in a maelstrom. The passengers are having a great time, imagining that they are twirling around in some aquatic theme park. Meanwhile, a small group has left the ship and is rowing away from the whirlpool. This group is bound for the Promised Land. Even so, the *rest of the dead* rejoice in their evil lives while being sucked down into eternal destruction aboard a “ship of fools.” Meanwhile, the witnesses for Christ are set apart from the damned and are forever freed from the otherwise inescapable “suction” of the second death.

ἐπὶ τούτων ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν—*over these the second death has no authority*. Eternal death (verse fourteen) has no authority over these faithful witnesses of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Romans 8:31ff). These are witnesses in the true sense of the word—they are the ones who have personally witnessed that to which they bear witness. They experienced what they say, they believe what they say, and they say what they believe. Here is God's assurance that those who confess with their mouths the faith that is in their hearts will not be put to shame.

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame' (Romans 10:10,11).

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

ἱερεῖς—*priests* (5:10). One of the great truths that was emphasized by Luther is "the priesthood of all believers." The priests of the Old Testament were a select group of men, who alone were allowed to enter into the presence of God in the temple on behalf of the people. Since Christ set us free from our sins and from the bondage to the law, all believers have direct access to God through Christ (Hebrews 4:16, 10:19-22; Ephesians 2:18; Psalm 51:17, 116:17). Likewise, as priests, we offer sacrifices to God, but these are spiritual rather than physical (1 Peter 2:9; Psalm 141:2). Such is the nature of worship under the New Covenant. *"The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23).*

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

Under the Antichrist, the clergy are called priests because they are perceived as intermediaries between the people and God. What is worse—and a denial of the vicarious atonement—is their belief that as priests they repeatedly offer Christ as an unbloody sacrifice for their sins. This supposedly occurs in every Mass ("the sacrifice of the Mass"). They hold to this belief because they reject the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, teaching instead that His death covers original sin only. This teaching serves to keep their people in bondage by convincing them that there is no forgiveness outside of the Roman priesthood—they alone can sacrifice Christ for daily sins.

βασιλεύσουσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ χίλια ἔτη—*they shall reign with Him one thousand years*. The resurrected witnesses offered their priestly sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving by proclaiming the wonders of salvation at home, at church, in the community, and to the ends of the earth. And, as they do, they reign with Christ. By means of the gospel, the Church does indeed rule on the earth. It is not a political rule, but a spiritual one. Rulers control. Even so, the Church controls everything. Spiritually, every enemy must bow before us as we carry the message of victory through the world. Each hearer must respond. The one will respond by coming to faith—such will live and reign with us. The other will respond by rejecting the gospel and will suffer a death blow (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, 2:14-16). No one can remain neutral. Wherever the gospel is preached, the kingdom of Satan is invaded and war ensues. The “sword of the Spirit” cuts the chains of some of the Devil’s combatants and frees them to join the ranks of Christ (Acts 26:18). As for those who reject the work of the Spirit, they are slain by the same sword. (Reminder: this is all *spiritual* in nature.)

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15,16).

During the great missionary era (ca. the 16th century through the 20th century), the gospel was spread throughout the world. This did not mean the end of sin and unbelief nor the end of the opposition to Christ. Indeed, missionaries were persecuted and killed. However, it was a time when the Church invaded the kingdom of Satan as never before in recorded history and freed many souls. In fact, whole nations were freed from the political domination of the beast, i.e., the Antichrist. The Pope was not able to “blockade” the advance of the kingdom of Christ during this time. By the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Christian Church victoriously “ruled” in the world (Revelation 12:11; 1 John 2:14, 5:4; John 16:33; Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 2:14).

Revelation 20:7

Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, λυθήσεται ὁ Σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ,

And whenever the thousand years should be completed, Satan will be loosed out of his prison. (JKP)

Verbal Actions

τελεσθῇ — *it should be completed*, aorist passive subjunctive. In verse five, ἄχρι is used with the aorist subjunctive, τελεσθῇ. Here the conjunction ὅταν is used. The impact is the same—the time of the completion of the thousand years was uncertain from the temporal perspective of John, but not from the eternal perspective of God.

ὅταν, a particle of time, compound of ὅτε and ἄν — *at the time that, whenever* (German: *dann wann; wann irgend*); used of things which one assumes will really occur, but the time of whose occurrence he does not definitely fix.¹²

λυθήσεται — *he will be loosed*, future passive indicative. The loosing will follow the completion.

Commentary

λυθήσεται ὁ Σατανᾶς — *Satan will be loosed*. The preaching of the gospel is the key which binds the Devil. Where the gospel is not preached, there Satan can run rampant. Even if all other doctrines of Scripture were being proclaimed (not possible), the absence of the gospel sets Satan free to rule.

In the Roman Catholic Church, the outward motions of the law of God are proclaimed with some accuracy. That is acceptable to Satan, for the law is his tool for enslaving souls. He wants them to believe that they must keep the law in order to be saved. Then, he plagues their hearts with accusations and condemnations because they are unable to keep it. The law, after all, is “*the strength of sin*” (1 Corinthians 15:56). Sin within man is stirred up by the law, finding in it the opportunity to violate the will of God (Romans 7:5-11). Only the gospel can liberate the heart from enslavement to sin and Satan. The Roman Catholic Church curses gospel-preaching in *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent — On Justification* (Official Roman Catholic doctrine).

Canon IX: If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.

¹² Thayer, Joseph Henry, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Zondervan Publishing House, (Grand Rapids: First Edition 1889, Logos release 2010).

Canon XIII: If any one saith, that it is necessary for every one, for the obtaining the remission of sins, that he believe for certain, and without any wavering arising from his own infirmity and disposition, that his sins are forgiven him; let him be anathema.

Canon XXIV: If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema.¹³

The preaching of full and free forgiveness through Jesus Christ is becoming a rare thing in the twenty-first century. Even churches that bear the name “Lutheran” are casting aside this good news in favor of the philosophies of men. Social change is seen as more important than spiritual change.

Revelation 20:8

καὶ ἐξελεύσεται πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαρσιν γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, τὸν Γὼγ καὶ Μαγὼγ, συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης.

And he will go out to lead astray the nations, the ones in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the war, of whom the number like the sand of the sea. (JKP)

Verbal Actions

ἐξελεύσεται – *he will go out*, future middle indicative. This is future relative to the 1000 years.

πλανῆσαι – *to lead astray*, aorist active Infinitive, expressing the purpose of the main verb: *he will go out in order to lead astray*. The aorist expresses the fact of the matter.

συναγαγεῖν — *to gather*, aorist active infinitive expressing an extended purpose of the main verb: *he will go out in order to lead astray in order to gather*. The gathering must be preceded by the deception.

¹³ Waterworth, ed. and trans., J. (1848). *The Council of Trent, The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, Retrieved (10/7/18) from www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1545-1545,_Concilium_Tridentinum,_Canons_And_Decrees,_EN.pdf

Other Terms

τὰ ἔθνη – *nations*. Churches used to carry the simple gospel to the nations. Even though some were heterodox, we rejoice that the gospel itself was still proclaimed (cf. Philippians 1:16-18). However, during the twentieth century, more and more churches abandoned evangelism in favor of a social gospel. Improving the physical, economic, social, and political condition of the people has become the goal. The eternal has been forsaken for the sake of the temporal. With the triumphant gospel out of the picture, Satan is loose and in a position to deceive entire nations. Though these nations do not realize it, Satan is rallying them to his cause.

During the prior “1000 years,” the populations of the nations of the earth were largely heathen. However, the Lord did not allow them as nations to be deceived into believing that Christianity was their inveterate foe. Therefore, during the *millennium*, nations as political entities did not rally their forces against evangelists. Even among some Moslems, there was a toleration of Christian churches, although they were not allowed to proselytize.

τὸν Γῶγ καὶ Μαγῶγ—*Gog and Magog*. Magog was the son of Japheth, Noah’s son. His descendants are thought to have settled in the region around the Black Sea. Hundreds of years later, Ezekiel (chapters 38-39) writes about a certain “Gog” who was a powerful ruler in the region of Magog. He prophesies that Gog will gather the nations which surround Israel and will bring them against the people of God. God will allow this, but He will use it to display His own glory because in the end He will destroy them as He did so many other nations that He used. Then, He will exalt His people forever.

This writer’s examination of the history of the nation of Israel reveals *no* time when all aspects of Ezekiel’s vision were fulfilled. There were times when some parts of the prophecy appeared to have been fulfilled (e.g., the Maccabean period) and different times when other portions seemed to be fulfilled. However, Ezekiel prophesied about a contiguous flow of events. Such a flow has not taken place in the history of the nation of Israel.

Moreover, with the coming of Christ and the fulfilment of His work, Israel’s Old Covenant relationship with God gave way to the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31ff) and physical Israel faded away as spiritual Israel burst forth in the full bloom of the Savior’s righteousness. From that time on, the Israel of God is the Holy Christian Church (Romans 9:6ff; Galatians 3:29), the flower of God’s grace in Christ (cf. Isaiah 35). If we cannot find fulfilment of Ezekiel’s prophecy

in the history of physical Israel, then we need to look for fulfilment in the history of spiritual Israel (Ezekiel 38:8 - “from many peoples”). That fulfilment of Ezekiel’s prophecy is found in Revelation chapter twenty.

Gog and Magog, along with all their cohorts which surrounded Israel, are types of the enemies of the Church who seek her destruction. In the end, it is they who will be destroyed while the Church is triumphantly exalted to everlasting glory.

In John’s vision, Satan assembles God and Magog. This does not refer to some specific ruler or nation. They are identified as “*the nations which are in the four corners of the earth*” and therefore on all sides of the Church militant. As in the book of Ezekiel, this is a vision of the combined forces of the world surrounding and attacking the Church of Christ (more to follow).¹⁴

συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον – *to gather them together to battle*. There is a unification (συναγαγεῖν) of the nations for the specific purpose of battling against the Church.

ὥς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης – *as the sand of the sea*. Like the numberless grains of sand, so numerous are the armies of Satan that one despairs of trying to count them. However, one person with Christ outnumbers a vast horde without Christ.

¹⁴ “Ezekiel used ‘the latter days’ as the time frame for the attack of Gog and Magog upon ‘My people Israel.’ Gog and Magog are the subject of chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel. Thereafter they drop out of prophetic sight until the twentieth chapter of Revelation when Satan is released to deceive the nations, which are called ‘Gog and Magog,’ and to gather them for a final assault upon ‘the camp of the saints and the beloved city’ (Revelation 20:8-9). The ‘Gog and Magog’ of Ezekiel’s day were quite possibly the Scythians (Josephus renders ‘Gog’ with ‘Scythians’) and other fierce tribes whose territory bordered the Black Sea and lay in the Caucasus. Five centuries later the Apostle John wrote of the assault of Gog and Magog as lying in the distant future. In prophetic language the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel that terrorized the Kingdom in the form of the restored nation of Israel were symbolic names for the future enemies of the Kingdom in the New Testament form of the Church. Thus chapters 38-39 form, in addition to the contrast with the foregoing chapter 37 and the following chapters 40-48, the dark and threatening counterpart to the glorious description of the Kingdom in the Messianic age of the Church (Isaiah 2 and Micah 4). The ‘latter days’ point to the latter days of the present era.” (Nolting, Paul F., ‘A PROPHETIC TIME-TERM: be’achar lth hayyamim.’ *Journal of Theology*, Volume 24, September 1984, Number 3, pp. 30-31)

Revelation 20:9

καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκύκλευσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην. καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς.

And they go up upon the breadth of the earth, and they surround the fortress of the saints and the city, the one having been loved; and fire comes down out of heaven from God, and completely devours them. (JKP)

Verbal Actions

ἀνέβησαν – *they go up*, aorist active indicative. See comments on ἔζησαν in verse five. In this context, it is the future tense of verse eight that governs the time frame. In connection with that future event, the nations of the earth go up. This is a simple statement of fact. *Going up* is a common usage for expressing the action of an army attacking its enemy.

ἐκύκλευσαν — *they surround*, aorist active indicative. See preceding verb.

ἡγαπημένην – having been loved, perfect passive participle (Romans 9:25, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13). The perfect tense indicates that the love which God has for the Church began in the past and resulted in a present state. The passages listed below show a consistent use of this verb form to express the idea that the Church has been loved and is in a present beloved status.¹⁵

Commentary

The breadth of the earth – It is frightening to see the vast hordes of Satanic forces swarming over the face of the earth.

Surrounded the fortress of the saints and the beloved city – In the vision, the Holy Christian Church is seen as a fortified city, surrounded by Satan's army (City of God – Hebrews 11:10,16, 12:22-24; Galatians 4:26; Revelation 3:12, 21:2,10; see also Psalm 46).

¹⁵ “The basic thought of the perfect tense is that the progress of an action has been completed and the results of the action are continuing on in full effect. In other words, the progress of the action has reached its culmination and the finished results are not in existence. Unlike the English perfect which indicates a completed past action, the Greek perfect tense indicates the continuation and present state of a completed past action.” Corey Keating, *Greek Verbs (Shorter Definitions)*, [Re-sources for Learning New Testament Greek](http://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm), www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm (accessed 11/12/18).

The nature of the perfect tense makes its participial form well-suited for use as an adjective.

παρεμβολήν -- Used in the book of Acts six times to refer to army barracks. Used twice in the book of Hebrews to refer to the camp of Israel in the wilderness and once to refer to an army. Since camp and city do not seem parallel, fortress is chosen as the translation that draws the two thoughts together.

πῦρ – fire. Verse three said that this onslaught would last only for a “little season.” As in Ezekiel, the end comes swiftly and suddenly. Then, fire from God completely devours all His/our enemies. How quickly and how easily He is able to stop them.

Along with all the earthly enemies of the Church, including the Antichrist and his prophet, Satan himself is cast into everlasting destruction.

Fulfilment

This writer sees the 1000 years as a long and specific period of time beginning with the Reformation (16th century) when God liberated His gospel from Roman bondage and sent it forth to the nations of the world. Prior to this (approximately 5th to 15th century), the voice of the gospel had been muted for many by the papacy and by Islam. The good news had been replaced with bad news, “another gospel,” a “gospel” of righteousness by works.

Those who attempted to preach the truth were persecuted, tortured, and killed under the sanctions of the *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*. Satan had seriously slowed mission work during the Dark Ages by keeping the nations in delusion (e.g., “the Roman Church is the Holy Christian Church outside of which there is no salvation”). However, the liberation of the gospel marked the binding of Satan. In the Reformation, the true gospel became a rock of ages cast into the waters of earth, its evangelical ripples rolling throughout Europe.

As for the other continents of the world, the political and religious powers of the nations of the world had hindered evangelism within their boundaries. In the Middle East, Islam was the state religion of many nations. In the Far East, Asian dynasties ruling with an iron fist enforced eastern religions such as ancestor worship, heaven worship, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. In some of the eastern religions, dualism was the common philosophy (i.e., the spiritual is good, the material is evil).

However, Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the new world nine years after Luther’s birth (coincidence? I think not) and the subsequent colonialism

by European Christian nations opened national doors to evangelism. Thus, the missionary era was inaugurated during which Satan was bound, being prevented from deceiving the nations on a national level. Although, he continued to tempt and torment individuals, he no longer had entire nations in his grip. Under the protection of colonial powers, European missionaries began to pour across Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas. Even among the heterodox, there were those who carried the simple gospel to the heathen—a cause for rejoicing. “. . . *whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice*” (Philippians 1:18).

For a defined and extended period of time (the millennium), the gospel spread to the four corners of the earth. However, as we proceed into the twenty-first century, the missionary era has been drawing to a close. Although sporadic and isolated mission work is still taking place, little, true gospel-preaching is happening. Instead, modern missionaries spread a social gospel, pressing for economic and social equality. Satan is once again free to deceive the nations. The following presents my view of Satan’s final plan of attack.

Attack #1 – Blot Out the Natural Knowledge of God

Since the beginning of time, it has been widely believed that the universe is the product of divine creation. Knowing this, men have sought to discover who the Creator is and how they might please Him (cf. Acts 17:22ff). They grope about in the darkness of ignorance, until God brings them face-to-face with the gospel which alone reveals the true God and the only way of salvation. It is their natural knowledge of God to which Christian preachers usually appeal, when contact is made.

In the second half of the 19th century, Charles Darwin regurgitated his theory of natural selection which was the springboard for the modern theory of evolution. The popularity of this theory has silenced the voice of nature for multitudes so that in the ears of a great many, nature is no longer “declaring the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). Out of a desire to ban God from their lives, they plug their ears and shut their eyes to creation’s clear testimony concerning God’s eternal power and divine nature (Romans 1:20). Such people have swallowed not only Satan’s bait, but also the hook, line, sinker, and even the fishing pole.

As evidence of Satan’s power over nations, within the United States Satan has employed the government to promote his agenda. Through public and private schools and universities, Satan is feeding the poison of evolution to the

youth of our land. — Satan's first attack has succeeded in obscuring the natural proof of God's existence from the nations of this world.

Attack #2 – Blot out the revealed knowledge of God

Since the time of the apostles, those churches that called themselves "Christian" have acknowledged the Bible as the Word of God. This is true even of those churches that twisted and distorted its teachings. Although they claimed that it is from God, they tried to use it to defend their errors.

During the last century, the denial of the doctrine of verbal inspiration has been growing by horrendous proportions within "Christianity." Church leaders have been the vanguard in this battle against the Bible. People have come to the conclusion that the Bible cannot be trusted or that they can decide for themselves what parts of the Bible are true. Instead of subjecting their thinking to the Bible, they subject the Bible to their thinking.

Satan's second attack has succeeded in obscuring the revealed knowledge of God from many of the churches of the world.

Attack #3 – Blot out the light of the gospel

When the shadow of doubt is cast upon the Bible, it is bound to affect the gospel itself. Where such doubts exist, false teachers are more than ready to substitute "another gospel."

The popular new gospel is the social gospel and liberation theology. Such a gospel seeks to create a heaven on earth by getting rid of "social injustice." The concerns of the people have been turned away from the saving good news—liberation from sin, death, and Satan. Now, they are only concerned about liberation from poverty, slavery, bigotry, and abuse. The World Council of Churches has this as its agenda.

Satan's third attack on the gospel has been successful insofar as the voice of the true gospel is no longer heard in many churches calling themselves "Christian."

Attack #4 – Unite the religious opponents of Christ

During the last century, the heterodox churches of this world have been moving steadily in the direction of outward unity. The ecumenical movement continues to grow stronger. They unite in their commitment to cast aside the truths of God's Word.

Ecumenism is found not only within the pale of "Christianity," but also outside. Leaders of "Christian" churches have been reaching out to the

heathen and embracing idolaters as spiritual brothers (e.g., www.acommonword.com/world-council-of-churches-backs-dialogue-with-islam).

Together, they have one, common enemy on earth: the Holy Christian Church. Their hatred of Christ and His Word drives them to attack those who steadfastly proclaim Christ's teachings. Satan's fourth attack on the gospel has been successful as the religious organizations combine in their opposition to the Church and its message.

Attack #5 – Unite the political world against the Church.

As long as there are political divisions in the world, governments are so busy fighting each other that they have little time to battle against Christ and His Church. However, during the last century, great steps have been taken to bring the nations together. First there was the League of Nations. This was followed by the United Nations. With the fall of the Soviet Union, another step was taken to bring political peace and unity to the world. Add to this the European Union. More recently, there has been a major push toward globalism. Since Christianity is a religion set apart—in the world, but not of the world—it is seen as a hindrance to globalism. Therefore, political globalists are increasing their attacks on professing Christians and on the teachings of Christ.

Attack #5 is successful as the nations of the world become more united.

Gog and Magog

Gog and Magog could very well be the religion of the world, including fake Christianity, and the nations of the world joining forces to do battle with the Church—ecumenism + globalism vs. the Holy Christian Church. From the four corners of the world they have been gathering for battle. The people of God are surrounded. In many churches of this world, the pastors themselves are attacking the Christians within their congregations—attacking them with false teaching, “even denying the Lord who bought them” (2 Peter 2:1). In many churches, the desire to hear the teachings of the Bible has been replaced by a desire for entertainment. In the schools of the nations—kindergarten through university—evolution and its handmaiden, humanism, are leading the youth away from Christ. Wherever there are committed Christians, Gog and Magog are uniting against the faith and against the faithful.

Let there be no mistake. We may watch cable news and get a humanist perspective of times and events, but we are not getting the true picture. The

truth is that, behind the visual and rational façade, Satan is furiously trying to destroy the Holy Christian Church. He knows that his time is drawing to a close. His hatred toward the Son of God is so complete that even though he knows that he has been defeated, he continues on his rampage.

SATAN IS ON THE LOOSE!

THE END IS NEAR!

But then. . .

Revelation 20:10

καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου, ὅπου καὶ τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

The devil, the one deceiving them, is cast into the lake of the fire and brimstone where also the beast and the false prophet are; And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (JKP)



In Memoriam

Kevin Paul McKenney

(1963-2019)

Kevin Paul McKenney was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on July 29, 1963. He was the fifth son born to Harold and Della (Zorn) McKenney. He was baptized in the name of the Triune God on August 18, 1963. In 1966 his family moved to Marinette, Wisconsin where he attended Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church and School and was confirmed on June 5, 1977.

Kevin wanted to be a parochial school teacher, so he left his home in Marinette to attend high school at Northwestern Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin. An older brother who was studying to be a pastor encouraged Kevin to consider the pastoral ministry. Following this encouragement, Kevin prayerfully changed course and decided to pursue the pastoral ministry.

Kevin graduated from Northwestern Preparatory School in 1981. He continued his education at Northwestern College in Watertown. While a student there, he was an assistant coach for the Northwestern Prep wrestling team. He graduated on May 27, 1985 with a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree.

In the fall of 1985 Kevin entered the pastoral training program at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, WI. During his third year at the seminary, he completed a one year vicarship at Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church and School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Kevin graduated on May 26, 1989 with a Master of Divinity degree.

On July 25, 1987 Kevin was united in marriage to Kim Seelow at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, WI. He was ordained and installed at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Aberdeen, South Dakota on June 18, 1989. While at Trinity, he regularly held a campus-ministry Bible study with students from Northern State University and also served a one-year principal vacancy at Trinity Lutheran School in addition to his pastoral call.

In 1992, Kevin accepted a call to Lakeside Lutheran High School in Lake Mills, Wisconsin. He taught freshman and sophomore religion, was the head wrestling coach, and the assistant Junior Varsity football coach.

On July 21, 1996, Kevin was installed as pastor at Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS) in Fremont, California.

In July 1997, God led Kevin to leave the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) because of its failure to follow sound doctrine and practice. In August 1997, Kevin prayerfully made the decision to move with Kim and his family to Wisconsin and begin the colloquy process to become a pastor in the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Kevin, Kim, and their family became members of Messiah Lutheran Church in Hales Corners, Wisconsin by profession of faith in September 1997. Kevin worked various jobs to support his family during the colloquy process. He worked as a car salesman, an employment specialist at an employment agency, and as a manager at a rent-to-own store. He also served Immanuel Lutheran Church, Addison, Illinois in a shared pastoral vacancy call.

In April of 1998, Kevin completed his colloquy and became a pastor in the CLC. In May 1999, Kevin was installed as pastor serving the dual parish of Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church in Middleton, Wisconsin and Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cambridge, Wisconsin. In early 2002, Kevin accepted the call of Faith to be its pastor solely. While serving Faith, Kevin also worked for five years for the Social Security Administration as a disability determination specialist.

In 2003 Kevin was diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis. Despite this illness and its progression, he continued to serve Faith congregation until the day Jesus took him to Heaven.

Kevin was a loving husband and father and enjoyed spending time with his wife and five children. Together they enjoyed traveling, sports, listening to music, singing, and dancing. Kevin also enjoyed working in the yard and garden.

Kevin fell asleep into the loving arms of Jesus on Monday, January 7, 2019 at his home. The days which the Lord had graciously numbered for Kevin were fifty-five years, five months, and nine days. His body was cremated and awaits the resurrection on the last day.

A victory service was held on Friday, January 18, 2019 at Messiah Lutheran Church, Hales Corners. Pastors Michael Eichstadt and Mark Bernthal officiated. The sermon, "I Will Be with You" was based on Joshua 1:9. Mr. Barry Hay served as the organist, and a called-servant choir made up of Kevin's colleagues in the ministry sang, "Jesus Shepherd of the Sheep."

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

The following is a sermon that Kevin preached on July 5, 2015 (Pentecost 6). The Scripture readings were: Lamentations 3:22-33 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-9. The hymns were: 537, 524:7, 433, 396.

Text: Mark 5:21-24a,35-43

Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at [Jesus'] feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." So Jesus went with him. . . . While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.

In the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, my dear friends:

Early in life, most of us breeze through our medical physicals. In fact, we almost take for granted that the doctor will give us a clean bill of health. But I remember very clearly the day when it was suggested that I might have multiple sclerosis. What a jolt that was! I felt so fragile, so helpless.

But I would guess that it is far worse to be told that one of your children is very sick, or that her life is hanging by a thread. That very thing is what confronted Jairus, one of the synagogue rulers. His daughter was very sick, "at the point of death," Jairus says. So, we can understand his panic and why "he fell at Jesus' feet and begged Him earnestly."

But did Jairus ask too much when he begged, *“Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live”*? Jesus doesn’t reprimand Jairus for his request; rather, He just drops everything and sets out right away for the ruler’s house.

In the midst of life we are in death. Even Christian families are not exempt from that fact of earthly life. Physical death is still the wages of sin, even for those who know and believe that God has forgiven every sin for Jesus’ sake. Is it a waste of time, then, to go to God in prayer for the sick and dying?

The men who brought Jairus the news that his daughter had died, suggested that he better not bother Jesus any more. There was no hope. But Jesus knew the answer to that suggestion. He ignored what those men said and told Jairus, *“Do not be afraid; only believe.”* Now was the time for true, saving faith. Now was the time for unflinching trust in the promises of God. Now was the time to hope against hope. Now was the time to trust in Jesus, the Son of God.

When our hope for healing seems dashed and the angels carry our loved ones to Abraham’s side, or when our own health fails and death comes knocking on our door, like Jairus, we must never think that all hope is lost. Instead, we will cling to Jesus’ words, *“Do not be afraid; only believe.”*

When Jesus arrived at Jairus’s home, He told the mourners, *“The child is not dead, but sleeping.”* How could He say that? The people knew that Jairus’s daughter was dead, not just sleeping. Jesus knew it too. But Jesus could say what He said because He is the one who has the power over death. He turned our eternal death sentence around when He died for our sins. Then Jesus proved that He had overcome death by rising from the dead on the third day. In the events of our text, He proved His power over death by bringing Jairus’s daughter back to life. The mourners had a lesson to learn and a Savior with whom to become acquainted.

This account of Jesus raising Jairus’s daughter also teaches us a very important lesson. It shows us beyond doubt that Jesus is not lying when He says, *“He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”* (John 11:25f). Or, as the Lord says in Hosea 13:14, *“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.”* This doesn’t deny the reality of death, but it tells us that there is one who has the power to release us from death, and that is Jesus.

Thus, death has become like sleep for us children of God. When we go to bed at night, we expect to get up again in the morning. When we face death,

we can look at it like sleep because we know that we will get up again in the morning—we will rise again to live forever with our Lord. That is what the Lord promises us when He says, *“Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forever. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death”* (Revelation 1:17-18). Anyone who falls asleep trusting in the crucified and risen Lord will surely rise again.

When Jesus promised life for Jairus’s dead daughter, the people laughed and ridiculed Him. But it wasn’t really a time for laughing. When we go to pay respects for the dead, we certainly don’t think of laughing. Death silences laughter. But there will come a time for laughter. Christ, who paid our ransom, silences death. Where death has been overcome, tears will be dried, and there will be cause for joy and laughter.

That’s God’s order of things. First come the times of testing and sadness that cause us to lean on God. When His Word has become so very important to us, then He sends relief. The psalmist puts it this way, *“Weeping may endure for a night, / but joy comes in the morning”* (Psalm 30:5).

Mockers turn it all upside down. They laugh now, poking fun at God’s promises and thinking believers are foolish and gullible. But God’s Word will prove true, especially on resurrection morning. Jesus said, *“You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy”* (John 16:20).

Is it wrong for us to cry when someone we love dies and leaves this earthly life forever? A crowd of mourners gathered at the home of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. They came to weep and to wail, and there was a lot of commotion. That was the Jewish custom. How you go about grieving depends on where you live. Grieving is something we learn from others. In some places you can expect wailing and sobbing over the casket. In other places there will be quiet tears and hugs among the mourners. Others might wear black and grieve with quiet dignity.

When all of his children were killed in a terrible storm, Job *“tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD’”* (Job 1:20-21).

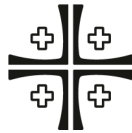
There we have the key to grieving, namely, we bring our grief to God who raises the dead to life. Like little children, we run to our heavenly Father and

shed our tears in His strong arms. The way in which we take our grief to the Lord in prayer will always be part of our grieving process. We put ourselves in the hands of the LORD who assures us, as He assured the mourners at Jairus's home, *"The child is not dead, but sleeping."*

After Jesus—the life-bringing Savior—raised Jairus's daughter, the dead girl was truly alive again. She walked around and eventually had something to eat. Next, Jesus *"commanded them strictly that no one should know"* about the miracle He had just performed. God has chosen to keep some things secret, but the story of Jairus's twelve year old daughter, her death, and Jesus' miracle of bringing her back to life, is no longer a secret. The secret of Jesus' power over death can be told to everyone.

The same Jesus who raised Jairus's daughter is with us today. He is with us to hear and answer our prayers.

When we are sick, we go to a doctor, or to the hospital, or we might even have an operation. When this sort of thing happens in our lives, let us never forget the greatest physician of them all—the Physician of body and soul, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has promised to be with us, to hear and answer our prayers, and to bless us here in time and hereafter in eternity. Trust His promises always, or as He Himself has said, *"Do not be afraid; only believe."* Amen.



The Need and Importance of Prison/Jail Ministries

Paul D. Nolting

“I was in prison and you came to Me. . . . Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:36b, 40b).

“Every person has dignity and potential. But one in four American adults has a criminal record, which limits their access to education, jobs, housing, and other things they need to reach their potential.”¹

This first of two articles on the topic of prison or jail ministries will introduce the concept of prison/jail ministries, explore what the Bible has to say regarding such ministries, and demonstrate their need and importance. Our goal is to encourage more of our pastors and congregations to establish and engage in such ministries.

What are prison/jail ministries?

Prison or jail ministries take many forms and come in many sizes. Therefore, they can be defined in a variety of ways. Some are confined to occasional visits with individual prisoners in local jails or state and federal prisons. Others conduct regular Bible studies or worship services in such facilities. Still others seek to address the many needs of the prisoners while they are incarcerated, or after being released from custody. They may also address the needs of the incarcerated individuals’ families. In all cases, genuine prison/jail ministries seek ways to share God’s Word and express God’s love to the men and women involved in our criminal justice system and to their families. This is important work, challenging work, and necessary work!

What does the Bible say about prison or jail ministries?

Speaking to believers at the end of time, Jesus says, *“I was in prison and you came to Me. . . . Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”* (Matthew 25:36b, 40b). Visiting people in prison is to be taken literally, as are Jesus’ other examples of good works, *“for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you*

¹ Prison Fellowship® Landsowne, VA. Email dated November 20, 2019.

gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me” (Matthew 25:35-36a). While this passage does not speak of an organized program of prison/jail ministry, it does address directly our relationship with those in prison—Jesus views taking an interest in them and visiting them as a direct service to Him!

Other passages also address the idea of prisoners and the impact of imprisonment on their families.

A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land” (Psalm 68:5-6).

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1).

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also (Hebrews 13:3).

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

It can be argued that the primary meaning of the first two of these verses deals with spiritual bondage and imprisonment, but even that application has special force when dealing with those who are physically imprisoned. Who more than those physically imprisoned need to hear about spiritual release?

It can also be argued that the wives of prisoners are not widows, and their children are not orphans, but the reality of imprisonment leaves wives and children without husbands and fathers to provide for them and to protect them. We in the church are certainly and especially to bring the good news of God’s gospel Word to these prisoners and their families affected by imprisonment.

Our Savior was neither uncomfortable nor afraid to consort with *“many tax collectors and sinners”* and when He was criticized by *“the scribes and Pharisees,”* He told them, *“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but*

those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mark 2:15-17). Certainly those impacted by incarceration are among those who are sick and in need of our heavenly Physician!

The apostle Paul assures us, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death"* (Romans 8:1-2). Who needs this blessed assurance and announcement of freedom more than those who have been brought to their knees because they have walked *"according to the flesh"* and are enduring the consequences of their actions through imprisonment?

Paul goes on to encourage us believers: *"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble"* (Romans 12:9-16a). These are general encouragements regarding our relationship with all people, but they certainly include our relationships with those who are imprisoned and those affected by such imprisonments

The apostle Paul reminds us, that *"God our Savior . . . desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:3b-4), while the apostle Peter adds, *"The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Without question, the Scriptures teach us about God's love, concern, and desires for all people, including those who are incarcerated and their families!

How necessary are prison/jail ministries?

It is difficult to determine the exact number of people incarcerated within our country. We have a complex system of both public and private community, county, state, and national facilities where prisoners are incarcerated. There are many statistics quoted on a variety of websites regarding prison populations, and unless you have a practiced eye and a certain amount of knowledge regarding the criminal justice system, the various sites may well seem to contradict one another. Prison Fellowship, the organization founded by Charles Colson and one of the largest organizations involved with prison

ministry, states on its website that there are 2.2 million men and women currently incarcerated in the United States.²

The federal Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reports that the incarceration rate as a percentage of the United States' population has declined each year since 2009 with 2016 (the last year of available statistics) having the lowest percentage since 1996. However, at the same time the BJS reports that there are an estimated 6,613,500 people still either imprisoned or under judicial supervision within the United States.³ The vast majority of these—an estimated 87%—are incarcerated at the local or state levels. No website disputes the fact that the United States has a greater percentage of its adult population incarcerated than any other country in the world! Prison Fellowship also reports that 95% of the people incarcerated will ultimately be released and that more than 600,000 will be released during 2019.⁴

It is similarly difficult to determine recidivism rates and the impact of prison/jail ministries on those rates. There is a myriad of studies accessible both in libraries and on the internet, but again, many seem to contradict one another. It would appear that, in general, at least 80% of all imprisoned individuals who are released will commit further crimes and return to prison at some point in the future.⁵ There is considerable evidence, however, that prison/jail ministries do positively affect the recidivism rates.⁶ Yet, the results vary depending on a variety of circumstances: the background of those incarcerated, the types of crimes for which they were originally incarcerated, the amount of time spent in the program during their incarceration, and the level of support provided by ministries after the incarceration ends.

² "Why Help Prisoners?" Prison Fellowship, www.prisonfellowship.org

³ www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6626

⁴ "Why Help Prisoners?" Prison Fellowship, www.prisonfellowship.org

⁵ "What Makes a Reentry Program Successful?" Jeremiah Mosteller, charleskochinstitute.org

⁶ Grant Duwe and Byron Johnson, "Estimating the Benefits of a Faith-Based Correctional Program," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 2013, pp. 227-239

In summary, we offer the following seven reasons why prison/jail ministries are necessary. These reasons are taken directly from an article titled: “Prison Ministry—Why Prison Ministry” (https://www.biblesnet.com/prison_ministry.html).⁷

1. Prison ministry has a direct Scriptural mandate (Matthew 25:31-40). Throughout the Bible are examples, descriptions, and commandments about prisons, prisoners, bondage, captivity, and slavery. The Bible mentions prisons, prisoners, or imprisonment more than 130 times.
2. We should follow the example Christ set by ministering to prisoners.
3. Prisons meet the criteria of any mission field: Lost people and a need for laborers.
4. God is not willing that any should perish—not even serial killers, rapists, and molesters (2 Peter 3:9). God loves even the “worst of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).
5. Chaplains cannot minister to more than a small percentage of inmates in their care. They cannot do all of the necessary work themselves, as there is just not enough time to do so.
6. Many jails and prisons have no professional chaplains and many have no religious services at all.
7. For every person incarcerated, there are three to five other people affected: mates, children, parents, etc. Inmates and their families represent a large segment of society in any culture.⁷

A Personal Testimony to the Importance of Prison/Jail Ministries

Hello! My name is Yella Hensley. My pastor (Paul D. Nolting) asked me to write to you discussing my personal experience being involved with our ministry while in prison and upon my release. I guess he wishes me to be the face of the prison ministry that is currently being run by our CLC congregation (Immanuel, Mankato, MN).

⁷ https://www.biblesnet.com/prison_ministry.html

It has been over two years since I was incarcerated. Since then I have directed and operated a pale reflection of what God did for me through my pastor and, by extension, my CLC congregation. The dilemma for me is how am I to be the face, the example, when God's work is far from finished in me? I still find myself holding on to the hope of my faith, shivering as if the bitter waters from which I was rescued still soaked my clothes—the cold waves of my past still present and wet in my hair, beads of yesterday on my brow.

Yet, God has chosen to bless me. Do I speak to you of a family lost, casualties of one man's war against the world? Then that same family given back to me in blessing far better than God blessed Job. A son and a wife returned to reunite with me in a wholeness that was unknown in the past. Should I hold that up as some type of proof of righteousness? But we in the CLC know there is no proof of righteousness in these things. We know that God's blessings are because of His goodness not our worthiness. *"For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust"* (Matthew 5:45). *"And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"* (Exodus 33:19).

My pastor suggested perhaps speaking of the improbability of my membership in the CLC—the fact that I, a black afro-centric Democrat attend a German Lutheran church that is largely well in the camp of the religious right. But here too, I hesitate. How does one shed the proper light on such a situation, speaking of the many blessings from prison to freedom I have received from this congregation, without speaking of the cultural and political abrasions we have shared—united in brotherhood and acceptance of the Word as fact, yet as men still different in our every day application? Can I truly lift this circumstance that God has created as proof of prison ministry success when I remain the only *brotha* in race and culture, and the only *brotha* in the spirit, rescued from those brackish waters behind the cold stone walls and razor wire fences of prison? The prison ministry cannot be justified by my existence!

I would though tell you of my son Gaius, a boy of eleven. He is one of the many young Christian soldiers being taught at our congregation's parochial school. If I were to go into the differences of our childhoods I would need a book, not a paper. You should understand that the world has had my family in a generational choke hold. My first of three prison bids was for attempted armed robbery (I was nineteen). While still in the county jail I received a call from my mother. She had read about my arrest from her prison cell. Generational curses are real! They can only be broken by the grace given us in Christ Jesus. The crowbar God used to break through my personal wall of

resistance was the prison ministry of my present congregation, spearheaded and physically manifested by my pastor. Last week I got my son's report card. All "A's" and one "B." The "B" was out of character for him. He usually gets straight "A's." Maybe he will grow up to be an architect or a doctor, maybe a minister. God-willing, he will be a mighty man of God and the faith!

His mother, Sookie, is taking adult study to become a member of our congregation. She should be done in a couple of weeks (at the time of writing)—a matter of days after we were reunited in marriage. Our son will watch his mother and father take communion together in December—the month we celebrate the birth of our Lord.

Because one man answered the call of the Lord (Matthew 25:36) and entered a county jail to preach the Good News, not [just] one man, but a family was saved—not [just] one man, but generations!

Inside Minnesota's prisons languish thousands—fathers, sons, brothers, and friends. Men whose absence affects tens of thousands—positions of leadership and heads of households unfilled. Men whose hearts have been hardened to God probably since childhood when mommies' addictions were not healed or daddies never came home. Men whose heads have been under water so long that they no longer believe in the fresh air of hope. Boys that were broken so many times that they have grown up crooked, unable to even dream of being whole. Also there are men whose hearts have been broken by recent tragedies and, like ground freshly tilled, are open to the Word of God—ready for salvation. Others still walking haltingly, or moving forward with purpose in God's grace. All of these we, the CLC, as keepers of God's Word, have been called to minister to. We who stand on God's Word as truth—we are the sowers of seed, the fishers of men, the body of Christ! *"Do you not say, 'There are still four months, then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest"* (John 4:35).



Book Reviews

David T. Lau

Daniel Deutschlander: *On Giving Advice to God – Devotions on the Wisdom of God and the Foolishness of Man (Part 1)*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2017, hard cover, 225 pages, 6 preliminary pages.

This is an excellent devotional book for pastors, teachers, and other church leaders who are tempted to spiritual pride and intellectual arrogance because of their many God-given abilities and prominence in the church. Those who are wise in their own conceits are taken down a peg or two as we follow God's plan of salvation as worked out in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On page after page we are pointed to the vast difference between the human way of thinking and action and God's way, which seems so wrong but always turns out to be just right. The tone is set in the author's preface as he introduces the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and continues: "And so begins the centuries-long and universal arrogance and foolishness of all their children, who imagine that God rarely gets things right. Luther once remarked that all the world thinks that God is the poorest and most dull-witted student there ever was. If he would just listen to us, then all would be well" (page v).

The devotions follow the order of the festival half of the church year, beginning with Advent and Christmas, and continuing with Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Ascension. The non-festival half of the church year is covered in the second volume (see below).

Each devotion is based on a Bible passage or longer selection, covers about two pages, and concludes with a well-thought prayer. Much attention is given to the application of Scripture to the individual Christian, tempted as he or she always is by the notion that human wisdom is superior to the wisdom of God.

Daniel Deutschlander: *On Giving Advice to God – Devotions on the Wisdom of God and the Foolishness of Man (Part 2)*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2018, hard cover, 281 pages.

This second volume begins with devotions for Pentecost and Trinity and continues with devotions on the following topics: Christ's Saving Work—Atonement, Reconciliation, Justification (pp. 22-54); The Means of Grace (pp. 55-85); The Church and Her Pastors (pp. 86-104); How Should We Then Live?—

Jesus' Parables (pp. 105-214); Last Things (pp. 215-232); And Now as the Sum of All (pp. 233-245). There are two appendices: 1) devotions for the festivals of St. Michael, Reformation, and Thanksgiving, and 2) meditations on the Lord's Prayer.

Each devotion is about two pages long and generally requires self-examination and close concentration. The author is well aware of the struggle between flesh and spirit as described by the apostle Paul in Romans chapter seven. God's Law is used to uncover the kinds of sins that mature Christians tend to overlook, the more secret sins of selfishness and pride and lust and greed and lovelessness. The writer writes as one who knows these sins by examining himself. The title is rather strange, but it is intended to demonstrate that the Christian is always tempted to substitute his own wisdom and will as his guide rather than God's word in Scripture.

But in every devotion, God's law does not have the last word and so the result of reading this book is not despair. It would be despair if there were no gospel. But there is gospel and it is this glorious gospel that is featured in every devotion as the remedy for our sin and also as the motivation for any kind of improvement there will ever be in our lives. Choose any page, and before long you will find the remedy and the motivation to carry on.

I happened to open the book to page twenty-nine, and this is what I read: "You have nothing that you can offer by way of defense or excuse. You have nothing to give that will earn a pardon: not past works (which themselves were flawed), not pious intentions never to sin again, not new works that can undo the damage done. You need someone to plead your case." Since this is a devotion on First John 2:1-2, what follows is a description of our High Priest, Jesus, who pleads our case with words like these: "I have paid the penalty of this sin for this sinner. See, here is my cross and passion; see, here is my suffering, my blood, my death! The sin has been atoned for, atoned for in full!"

A little further (p. 30), there is this reminder: "Your sin is not trivial and unimportant. It is so great that nothing less than an advocate who is Priest and sacrifice can relieve you of its curse. And there he is: Jesus, our Great High Priest and advocate, ever pleading for us in the Most Holy Place, in heaven itself. And there is his Father, the righteous judge of all the earth, pleased still to accept the prayer of his Son, our Savior. Perhaps if we thought of that great drama more often our prayers for forgiveness would be less mechanical. Perhaps they would become more earnest and heartfelt. Yes, then our great joy in forgiveness brought to us in the preaching of the gospel, the absolution

after confession, and the perfect seal of the same in the sacraments would grow always greater too. And our eagerness to live the life that John urges on us in the rest of his letter would also become ever more fruitful."

Each such devotion is ended by a thoughtful prayer incorporating the thoughts of the preceding devotion.

It seems to me that Christian pastors, teachers, and other leaders would find this book of devotions very helpful in reminding them not to become so full of themselves and so proud of their spiritual accomplishments that they forget how their whole lives are still pervaded by the sin that infects us all. But even as the bubble of their self-importance bursts, they will not despair if they listen to the unfolding of the gospel in Christ's works and words.

In his devotion for Reformation Day, Deutschlander asserts: "Thus our celebration of the Reformation is a celebration of what God has done for us in Christ and in us through his pure Word. Far be it from us to ever want to depart so much as a hairbreadth from that Word. Does that Word say things at times that hurt our feelings? Of course! So what?! Our feelings are more than salved by the gospel. Does that Word say things at times that fly in the face of fallen reason and majority opinion? Of course! So what?! It is the Word of the God who created all things and who knows all things; to take his Word instead of my own or that of anyone else should seem the obvious choice" (p. 253).

Emphasis on the Word of God is evident throughout these devotions. "For the loss of his Word is God's own judgment on those who are too lazy or indifferent to treasure and preserve it" (p. 258). "Since our sin has been forgiven and our shame washed away, it would be perverse of us to contradict any part of God's Word by which forgiveness and washing were made our own. Thus we will not want to contradict any part of God's law and declare that sins condemned in his Word are not sins. . . . Likewise, we dread and abhor any mixing of the gospel with teachings of human invention that poison the pure water of the Word by which our faith is created and sustained" (p. 258).

This book of devotions is highly recommended for those who are willing to let God's law and gospel speak to them in the way God has always intended.

Gwenfair Walters Adams, Editor: *Romans 1-8* (Reformation Commentary on Scripture – New Testament VII), InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2019, hard cover, 612 pages, 68 preliminary pages.

This is the thirteenth volume of the series. It contains comments on the first eight chapters of the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans from various pastors, teachers, and other leaders from the age of the Reformation. These commentators include Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, Anabaptists, and reform-minded Roman Catholics. It seems that the Lutheran leader quoted most often in this volume is John (Johannes) Brenz (1499-1570), a preacher in Schwaebisch-Hall, Wuerttemberg, and Tuebingen. His biographical sketch (p. 531) says of him: "His central achievement lay in his talent for organization." He "also helped establish Lutheran orthodoxy through treatises, commentaries, and catechisms."

Here are some of Brenz's comments on the first chapter of Romans: "From the world it can be known – by natural reasoning – that there is a God and that he is eternal" (p. 65). On the use of the tongue Brenz speaks words that are just as much in place today as when he first wrote them: "The tongue was created so that it might glorify God, speak the truth, and say those things that promote the edification of our neighbor. Therefore, people who abuse the name of God in profanity, or who lie, or who rip apart their neighbors with insults, or who are stumbling blocks to the weak on account of their impious or foul words—such people dishonor their tongues" (p. 74). From Romans 1:32 Brenz concludes: "The doer and the consentor are worthy of the same punishment" (p. 79).

All the Lutheran comments in this volume show a clear understanding of the difference between God's condemning law and God's saving gospel. Following the lead of the apostle Paul in Romans 3, Brenz declares: "Who can say, 'My heart is pure'? I answer, 'No one can.' Who then will be preserved in the day of God's judgment?' I answer, 'No one will.' If then the sentence required by the law of God is pronounced against us, to whom should we turn? Away from judgment and toward mercy! Away from the law and toward the gospel! Away from Moses and toward Christ! For if you look only to the severity of the law or of the divine judgment, all men and women are liable for damnation. 'No one living is justified,' he said, 'in the sight of God.' If, however, you should become converted to Christ the Son of God and believe that your sins have been expiated by his death and that the wrath of God has been placated toward you, the Judge's sentence concerning you will be pronounced not according to the severity of the law but according to the promise of the gospel" (p. 83).

How thankful we can be to our gracious God that He supplied to His people other brave confessors of the saving truth besides the Wittenberg trio of Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and Johannes Bugenhagen! Brenz did his reforming work south of Wittenberg. Among those working north of Wittenberg was the Danish reformer Niels Hemmingsen (1513-1600), who attended the University of Wittenberg and then returned to his native land. This commentary says of him: He “oversaw the preparation and publication of the first Danish Bible.” He was also “a prolific author, writing commentaries on the New Testament and Psalms, sermon collections and several methodological, theological, and pastoral handbooks” (p. 550). In his discussion of the fourth chapter of Romans, Hemmingsen presents nine reasons for teaching that we are saved by grace, rather than by works. “The fourth is that grace and debt are placed in opposition by Paul, so that it is impossible to say they are the same. . . . The sixth is that the sinful are justified by the remission of sins that make them righteous by the imputation of an alien righteousness, namely Christ’s.” His conclusion: “He casts aside confidence in works and places it instead in the righteousness of God, which is received and seized by faith in Jesus Christ” (p. 212).

It is sometimes claimed that the reformers knew nothing of what we today call objective or universal justification. The term was not used, but the concept was understood even if the emphasis was on what we call subjective justification, or the reception of justification by faith. Note that the above quotation speaks of the righteousness of God (justification) as something that faith receives. Likewise, Erasmus Sarcerius (1501-1559) in his discussion of Romans 3: 21-26 says that “all have sinned” and that “the righteousness of God is available to all” (p. 166). In further explanation he says: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Therefore all are justified freely by grace.” . . . “‘To sin’ and ‘to be justified,’ as well as ‘to fall short of the glory of God’ and ‘grace’ are here set in opposition one to another in a most beautiful fashion.” Sarcerius speaks of “Christ on whose account a righteousness is available, the redemption that Christ worked, and Christ’s merit.” This righteousness is available to all, and “faith lays hold of that grace unto righteousness” (p. 169).

Other little-known Lutherans are featured in this volume, such as Andreas Knoepken of Riga, David Runge of Wittenberg, Christoph Corner of Frankfurt (one of the co-drafters of the *Formula of Concord*), Friedrich Balduin of Wittenberg (“known for his commitment to Lutheran orthodoxy,” p. 526), and Aegidius Hunnius of Wittenberg, who “was unafraid to engage in confessional polemics from the pulpit” (p. 553).

Even though there were serious controversies among Lutherans after Luther's death, the Lutherans featured in this commentary seem to have agreed on the great reformation principle uncovered and displayed to the world by Luther in every possible way: justification by faith without the deeds of the law, as stated clearly by the apostle Paul in Romans 3:28: "*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*" The people of those days were indeed surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1).

Paul Hensel: *The Hardening of Israel's Heart & the Hardening of Heart in the Church* (translated by Floyd Brand), Peace Lutheran Church, Oelwein, Iowa, 2020, paperback, 478 pages, 12 preliminary pages.

Back in the 1930's, Paul Hensel was well-known among Wisconsin Synod Lutherans. For those were days of heated controversy between synodical officials and a group of pastors that became known as Protes'tants.

One of the key terms in the controversy was the German word *Verstockung*. In 1926, Pastor Paul Hensel of Manitowoc County in Wisconsin was given the assignment by his neighboring pastors of studying this controversial word. What began as a 1926 assignment developed into a historical study of *Verstockung*—hardening of the heart. The sixty-one installments were printed in the Protes'tant German-language periodical *Faith-Life* during the years 1930 to 1935. Now this study is available in English, thanks to the present editor of *Faith-Life*, Floyd Brand and Pastor Michael Holmen of Oelwein, Iowa.

As we learn from the account in Exodus, hardening of the heart occurs when an individual or group resists God's Word in law or gospel. This self-hardening sometimes results, according to God's inscrutable will, in a dire situation described as God's hardening of the heart. The apostle Paul refers to this in Romans 9:18, "*Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.*"

Pastor Hensel is not much interested in the hardening of unbelievers like the Pharaoh of Egypt. Most of his book is a history of the Israelite nation as it responded to God's amazing blessings with ingratitude, disobedience, and defiance. Over and over again the history is repeated. Those brief periods when Israel responded to God's grace with joy and a willing spirit were few and far between.

Hensel calls the prophet Isaiah “the evangelist of the old covenant” (p. 150). He shows how God blessed His people through Isaiah with precious promises of God’s deliverance from Babylon through King Cyrus of Persia and deliverance from sin through the virgin-born Christ, the Lamb of God who bore the sin of the world. But what was God’s Word to Isaiah concerning this message? *“Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed”* (Isaiah 6: 9-10).

Hensel remarks: “God expressly commands Isaiah to preach all this to his own generation so that they may be hardened. God rejected fleshly Israel and gave her over to total blindness. She was to hear this wonderful Gospel but not understand it. They were not to be converted; they were not to be healed. Isaiah’s preaching was meant to intensify the curse Israel had brought upon itself and to hasten the inevitable outward judgment. Isaiah was the executioner for his people. His preaching was the noose and gallows. This judgment was kept hidden behind the veil of the five senses. No one took it seriously. This cold unbelief was itself an essential part of the judgment” (p. 152).

Hensel’s last chapters take us into the New Testament and conclude with the hardening that is evident in the books of Second Peter and Jude. He says: “Peter and Jude are describing people whose sin will not be forgiven either in this world or the next. They are warning Christians against the influence of the rebellious and against the judgment of hardening. They remind them how the Lord, who first helped the people out of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who believed not” (p. 472). “For the Church, the Bride of Christ beautifully arrayed in garments of salvation, has ever and again after only the short time of her first love turned into the world’s whore. Grown cold toward her Lord, weary of the Gospel, she becomes lax in her conduct. She lusts for strange flesh, for strange masters, for strange doctrines and statutes. Then, in short order, like Sodom, she is bankrupt and played out” (p. 473).

Surely we twenty-first century Christians can relate to all of this. Hensel saw the sad history of Israel repeating itself among the Synodical Conference Lutherans of his day, who had been so highly blessed in their history, especially

by the Wauwatosa theologians of the Wisconsin Synod. Almost every chapter of his book makes reference to the Protestant controversy. The editor's introduction gives a brief history of the controversy. Numerous footnotes throughout the book illuminate Hensel's references to events and persons of his time.



Notes from the Editor:

For several years, the *Journal of Theology* issues have been dated twelve to eighteen months behind the actual date of publication. To bring the issue dates in alignment with publication dates, we are vacating the years 2019 and 2020. The issue volume numbers will, however, continue chronologically without any effect from this adjustment.

Historically, the *Journal of Theology* has published an annual index for its volumes that facilitated searches by author, title, subject matter, and Scripture references. The full archive of *Journal of Theology* issues is now available online and is searchable (JournalofTheology.org). For this reason, we will no longer be publishing an annual index.

Thank you for your readership, we pray your time in the Word through the *Journal* is edifying.