



The Sword & The Plow

Newsletter of the Bimillennial Preterist Association

Vol. XVI, No. 8 – August 2013

Dispensationalism Defined Historically

by STEPHEN SIZER

*Delivered at the Musalaha Theological Seminar:
Jerusalem September 1997 Bringing together
Palestinian and Messianic Leaders*

I would like to begin by putting dispensationalism within its historical context.

1. Evangelicalism

The term 'Evangelicalism' denotes a broad spectrum of theological opinion arising out of the Reformation, Puritanism and Revivalism. Tertullian was one of the first to use the term around AD 200 in his defense of biblical truth against Marcion. Martin Luther used the term to describe John Hus, but it was Thomas More who introduced the word to the English language. In a 'vitriolic attack' on William Tyndale in 1532, More

referred to those '*evangelicalles*'. The distinctive doctrines of Evangelicalism include a belief in the supreme authority of scripture over tradition (*sola Scriptura*); in the literal interpretation of scripture; adherence to the historic creeds; the need for a personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and holiness; and a belief in the imminent, visible and personal return of Jesus Christ.

2. Fundamentalism

Within Western evangelicalism there are many strands defined by adherents as much as by opponents. These include those of fundamentalist, conservative, and liberal. This spectrum has sometimes been simplified into the three categories of right, centre and left. The fastest growing and most influential of these is fundamentalism, also known in the United States as the

'Evangelical Right'. Fundamentalism draws its support primarily from the Baptist, Pentecostal and Independent Bible churches. The term 'fundamentalist' derives from a series of tracts entitled 'The Fundamentals' published from 1910 onwards in an attempt by American conservative evangelicals to defend the basis of historic Christianity and repudiate what they saw as 'modernism' and theological liberalism. The term 'fundamentalism' was first used by Curtis Lee Laws, the editor of the Baptist Watchman Examiner, in 1918 to describe the movement within Baptist circles dedicated to such a position.

Within contemporary Evangelicalism and American Fundamentalism in particular, the most influential theological interpretation of history is known as *premillennial dispensationalism*.

3. Premillennialism

Traditionally there have been three mutually exclusive interpretations of the references to a millennial reign of Christ in Revelation 20 depending on whether it is understood literally or figuratively. These are amillennial, postmillennial, and premillennial. Premillennialists hold to the belief that Christ will return prior to the millennium, and will reign on earth for a thousand years with the risen saints. Premillennialists are themselves divided on the question as to when the so called 'rapture' will occur. Four distinct positions have and continue to be held within premillennialist circles. The traditional view is known as pre-tribulationism. Some dispensationalists have come to hold alternative views known as mid-tribulation, post-tribulation and pre-wrath tribulation. We don't have time to examine them today but I will just mention the main one - pre-tribulationism.

J. N. Darby influenced by Edward Irving and followed by C. I. Scofield and the early dispensationalists such as Lewis S. Chafer and Charles Ryrie held to this position. Ryrie describes pre-tribulationism as 'normative dispensational eschatology' and 'a regular feature of classic dispensational premillennialism'. Pre-tribulationist premillennialists believe that Jesus Christ will return in the air to secretly 'rapture' true believers before the Tribulation begins on earth. After seven years of tribulation, Christ will return with His saints to overcome the Antichrist and his forces and establish God's millennial kingdom on earth. One popular exponent of this position is Tim LaHaye.

"Are you ready for Christ's return? Do you believe that at any instant you could find yourself hurtling through the skies to meet your Lord face to face? Are you confident that God will spare you and your loved ones the horrifying judgment of the Tribulation...Are you

living your life as if each moment could be your last on earth?"

At the late 19th Century Niagara Prophetic Conferences attended by men like D. L. Moody and C. I. Scofield, alternative views of the chronology of the rapture, already present in the increasingly sectarian Brethren circles, emerged here also and caused considerable internal division within dispensational circles. This came to be known as the 'Rapture-Rupture'

4. Dispensationalism

4.1 The Origins of Dispensationalism

J.N. Darby is regarded by many as the father of premillennial dispensationalism and the most influential figure in the development of its prodigy, Christian Zionism. However, William Kelly and Edward Irving played no small part in the restoration of premillennial speculations out of which Darby's dispensationalism arose. Charles Ryrie the foremost dispensationalist scholar today attempts to show how latent dispensational ideas can be found in earlier times - for example in the writings of an amillennial Calvinist named John Edwards (not Jonathan) (1637-1716), a French mystic, Pierre Poiret (1646-1719), and the hymn writer, Isaac Watts (1674-1748). Ryrie does, however, concede that the 'system' of dispensationalism is recent in origin.

Coad, the Brethren historian claims to trace Darby's views back to the works of a Jesuit, Francesco Ribera of the sixteenth century, whose writings were later popularised in the nineteenth century by another Spanish Jesuit, Manuel Lacunza. Lacunza used the pseudonym Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra, allegedly a converted Jew, for his book, 'The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty' which Edward Irving translated into English. Irving's 203 page preface to the translation superimposed his own prophetic speculations about the end of the world, predicting, like Darby, the apostasy of Christendom, then subsequently the restoration of the Jews and finally the imminent return of Christ.

4.1.1 J.N. Darby

Darby had been ordained into the Church of Ireland in 1825 with a burning desire to convert Roman Catholics through the work of the Home Mission. His own writings indicate that he apparently achieved a degree of success.

He claimed that Catholics were 'becoming Protestants at a rate of 600 to 800 a week' which amounted to

something of a revival. However, when his Bishop insisted that converts also swear an oath of allegiance to the English Crown, Darby protested that this was unthinkable because it was, 'unscriptural, and derogatory to the glory of Christ'. His Bishop was unmoved, so Darby, remaining resolutely consistent with his own emerging theological stance, took the logical step of renouncing the visible church, both Anglican and Dissenting, as apostate. 'This manifestation of the glory of Christ by the Church in unity no longer exists.'

His analysis of the contemporary ecclesiastical scene was to become increasingly pessimistic, judgmental and sectarian. His repeated response was to declare 'The Church is in ruins.' He went on to insist that this was not merely the result of denominational division but that, '...the entire nature and purpose of the church has become so perverted that it is diametrically opposed to the fundamental reason for which it is instituted'. The prevailing eschatology arising from the 18th Century Great Awakening was essentially postmillennial, inspiring great optimism and the rise of world-wide missionary endeavour. This Darby, and others like Irving, opposed strongly and vigorously. In a lecture given in 1840, Darby insisted,

“What we are about to consider will tend to show that, instead of permitting ourselves to hope for a continued progress of good, we must expect a progress of evil; and that the hope of the earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord before the exercise of His judgment, and the consummation of this judgment on the earth, is delusive. We are to expect evil, until it becomes so flagrant that it will be necessary for the Lord to judge it...I am afraid than many a cherished feeling, dear to the children of God, has been shocked this evening; I mean, their hope that the gospel will spread by itself over the whole earth during the actual dispensation.”

During the period 1826-1828 he began meeting with a few influential friends for prayer, study and fellowship in 1828 they established what in effect became an informal house church. Their meetings drew others disenchanted with the religious establishment and soon developed into a close knit and exclusive connection of fellowships known as the 'Brethren'. Darby was the undeniable founder of the Brethren movement. Doctrinally, he was the primary influence in expressing and propagating what came to be the distinctive theology of the Brethren, forging and maintaining a rigid, almost fanatical creed of doctrinal purity, in what he and others believed were the final days of history.

Darby's distinctive premillennial views were inevitably influenced by those of a similar persuasion whom he

met, for example, at the Powerscourt prophetic conferences held near Dublin in the early 1830's, which came to be shaped by his dominating and charismatic leadership. These exclusive prophetic gatherings which focused on a pessimistic interpretation of world events and the imminent return of Christ, confirmed both Darby's denunciation of the established churches, and also his own prophetic calling. Coad insists, 'He felt himself an instrument of God, burdened with an urgent call to His people to come out of associations doomed to judgment.'

For Darby, 'Separation from evil was the divine principle of unity,' since doctrinal error led, he claimed, to 'gross moral contamination.' Not surprisingly perhaps, Charles Spurgeon observed in Darbyism, a growing tendency to isolationism, obscurantism and a party spirit. Darby was a charismatic figure, a dominant personality, persuasive speaker and zealous missionary for his dispensationalist beliefs. He personally founded Plymouth Brethren churches as far away as Germany, Switzerland, France and the United States.

The churches Darby planted with the seeds of a separatist premillennial dispensationalism, in turn sent missionaries to Africa, the West Indies, Australia and New Zealand, so that by the time of his death in 1885, around 1500 Plymouth Brethren churches had already been founded world-wide. His views also came to influence the Bible and Prophetic Conferences associated with Niagara and other centres in North America from 1875.

During his lifetime, Darby wrote more hymns than the Wesleys, travelled further than the Apostle Paul, and was a Greek and Hebrew scholar. His writings filled forty volumes....If Brightman was the father of Christian Zionism, then Darby was its greatest apostle and missionary.

4.1.2 Darby's Innovative Dispensational Scheme

Darby was not the first to discover 'dispensations' within Biblical history, nor was his own scheme universally accepted even within Brethren circles. He was the first however to promote a form of dispensationalism, in which he perceived that biblical history was broken into discreet dispensations, distinguished by an irreversible and sequential change in the means by which God has apparently dealt with mankind. This enabled Darby to speculate about an imminent change of dispensation in which true believers would soon be 'raptured' to heaven and replaced by the Jews who would be the people of God on earth during the final millennium.

“...the dispensations themselves all declare some leading principles or interference of God, some condition in which He has placed man, principles which in themselves are everlastingly sanctioned of God, but in the course of these dispensations placed responsibility in the hands of man for the display and discovery of what he was, and the bringing in their infallible establishment in Him to whom the glory of them all rightly belonged....in every instance, there was a total and immediate failure as regarded man (sic), however the patience of God might tolerate and carry on by grace the dispensation in which man thus failed in the outset; and further, that there is no instance of the restoration of a dispensation afforded us, though there might be partial revivals of it through faith.”

Darby recognized that his interpretation was novel, but insisted this was for two reasons. First, because others had not studied the Scriptures correctly.

“The covenant is a word common in the language of a large class of Christian professors...but in its development and detail, as to its unfolded principles, much obscurity appears to me to have arisen from a want of simple attention to Scripture.”

The second reason Darby insisted that his interpretation was correct was because he believed the Lord had revealed it to him personally and directly.

“For my part, if I were bound to receive all that has been said by the Millenarians, I would reject the whole system, but their views and statements weigh with me not one feather. But this does not hinder me from enquiring by the teaching of the same spirit...what God has with infinite graciousness revealed to me concerning His dealing with the Church...”

“...But I must, though without comment, direct attention to chapter 32 of the same prophet; which I do the rather, because it was in this the Lord was pleased, without man's teaching, first to open my eyes on this subject, that I might learn His will concerning it throughout.”

In response to public reaction to his doctrine of the dispensations, he wrote,

“...I believe it to be the one true Scriptural ground of the church...I am daily more struck with the connection of the great principles on which my mind was exercised...Christ coming to receive us to Himself; and collaterally with that, the setting up of a new earthly dispensation, from Isaiah XXXII...It was a vague fact that received form in my mind long after, that there must be a wholly new order of things...”

Even Coad, in his otherwise positive history of the Brethren Movement, admits that 'For the traditional view of the Revelation, another was substituted.'

James Barr is less sympathetic arguing premillennial dispensationalism was,

'...individually invented by J. N. Darby...concocted in complete contradiction to all main Christian tradition...'

Referring to Darby's dispensational ideas, Bass concludes,

'Such a concept is singularly missing from historic Christian theology...Darby is pointedly correct in stating that this came to him as a new truth, since it is not to be found in theological literature prior to his proclamation of it. It is not that exegetes prior to his time did not see a covenant between God and Israel, or a future relation of Israel to the millennial reign, but they always viewed the church as the continuation of God's single program of redemption begun in Israel.'

Darby's contribution then, to the development of Christian Zionism and a rigid differentiation between the Church and Israel arose out of ecclesiastical expediency, his novel dispensational speculations and an independent and rigid literalist hermeneutic. These led him to formulate two innovative doctrines concerning the Church and Israel. Both marked a significant departure from Christian orthodoxy and evangelicalism in particular.

The first might be termed a 'replacement theology'. Darby taught that Israel would soon replace the Church, rather than the Church having replaced, superseded, incorporated or indeed become, Israel. To accomplish this, Darby postulated his second distinctive doctrine involving two stages to the return of Christ instead of one, the first being to secretly gather the Church to heaven in a 'rapture' leaving a revived and gathered nation of Israel to rule on earth for the millennium.

4.1.3 Darby's Ecclesiology - A Replacement Theology

Darby's strong and repeated condemnation of the visible Church as apostate, clearly influenced his innovative belief that the Church era was now merely a 'parenthesis' of the Last Days soon to be replaced by Israel as God's chosen people on earth. 'Satan having beguiled the Church, the church is in the position of earthliness and united in system with the world.'

Darby regarded the church as merely one more dispensation that had failed like the previous five. Each

in turn had lost its place in the divine economy and was under God's judgment. Just as Israel had been cut off, so he believed the Church would be. Just as only a small remnant of Israel had been saved, so would only a small remnant of the Church be saved. The remnant taken from the ruins of the Church would conveniently be, he claimed, his own followers, also known as 'the Assembly'. His answer to the condition of the visible Church was not to insist on the need for a new reformation, national repentance or even a revival, since to attempt to restore or repair the ruins would actually be sinful.

“We insist on the fact that the house has been ruined, its ordinances perverted, its orders and all its arrangements forsaken or destroyed; that human ordinances, a human order, have been substituted for them; and what merits all the attention of faith, we insist that the Lord...is coming soon in His power and glory to judge all this state of things.”

To those who saw things differently, Darby repeatedly asserted, “The house is in ruin, and you are bad imitators acting from your own leading and wrongly.” Because Darby insisted on there being irreversible and progressive dispensations, in which the Church was merely one such dispensation, he deduced, a priori, that there could be no future earthly hope for the Church. He argued that the Scriptures do not,

“...present the restoration of a dispensation; it never justifies its actual condition; though grace may...effect revivals during the long suffering of God, the dispensation, as such, is actually gone, that the glory of the principle contained in it may shine forth in the hands of the Messiah. The attempt to set this dispensation on another footing, as to its continuance than those dispensations which have failed already shows ignorance of the principles of God's dealing for the calling of God was always by Grace.”

Instead he speculated that the Church would soon be replaced in God's purposes on earth by a revived national Israel.

“The Church has sought to settle itself here, but it has no place on the earth...[Though] making a most constructive parenthesis, it forms no part of the regular order of God's earthly plans, but is merely an interruption of them to give a fuller character and meaning to them (the Jews).”

Darby, through his rigid literalist interpretation of Scripture, regarded the covenantal relationship between God and Abraham as binding forever, and that the promises pertaining to the nation of Israel, as yet unfulfilled, would find their consummation in the reign

of Jesus Christ on earth during the millennium. He thereby encouraged an essential dichotomy between those promises that applied to Israel and those to the Church. In an article in the Christian Witness published in 1838, and attributed to Darby, he went further arguing that,

“There are two great subjects which occupy the sphere of millennial prophecy and testimony - The Church and its glory in Christ, and the Jews and their glory as a redeemed nation in Christ - the heavenly people and the earthly people. The habitation and scene of the one being the heavens; of the other, the earth.”

In a lecture entitled, 'The Hopes of the Church of God', Darby claimed that Israel was the theatre through which God had displayed His character.

“It is in this people, by the ways of God revealed to them, that the character of Jehovah is fully revealed, that the nations will know Jehovah, and that we shall ourselves learn to know him”

Following his literalist interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, every promise and prediction concerning Israel that did not appear to have been fulfilled completely must, according to his logic, apply to the future.

“The great object of prophecy...is, the combat which takes place between the Second Adam and Satan. It is from this centre of truth that all light which is found in Scripture radiates. This great combat may take place either for the earthly things...and then it is in the Jews; or for the Church...and then it is in the heavenly places. It is on this account that the subject of prophecy divides itself into two parts, the hope of the Church, and those of the Jews...”

In his developing scheme, Darby therefore laid the foundation for a dispensationalism in which the Church was seen as a mere parenthesis to God's continuing covenantal relationship with Israel, which would be His primary instrument of rule on earth during the millennium. This fundamental error appears a result of Darby's narrow sectarian ecclesiology, indeed one that he superimposed on Scripture by virtue of his dispensational framework.

It is not that exegetes prior to his time did not see a covenant between God and Israel, or a future relation of Israel to the millennial reign, but they always viewed the church as a continuation of God's single program of redemption begun in Israel. It is dispensationalism's rigid insistence on a distinct cleavage between Israel and the church, and its belief in a later unconditional fulfilment of the Abrahamic

covenant, that sets it off from the historic faith of the church.

H. C. Leupold, professor of Old Testament exegesis at the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, in his commentary on Genesis 12:3 and the promise made to Abraham, makes the following critique of Darby's dispensationalism,

“Now surely, as commentators of all times have clearly pointed out, especially already Luther and Calvin, this promise to Israel is conditional, requiring faith...History is the best commentary on how the promise is meant. When the Jews definitely cast off Christ, they were definitely as a nation expelled from the land. All who fall back upon this promise as guaranteeing a restoration of Palestine to the Jews...have laid into it a meaning which the words simply do not carry.”

4.1.4 Darby's Eschatology - An Imminent Secret Pre-Tribulation Rapture

It was into this dispensational scheme that Darby and his contemporary Edward Irving postulated two stages to Christ's imminent return. First, there would be an invisible 'appearing' when Christians would meet Christ in the air and be removed from the earth, a process which came to be known as 'the rapture of the saints'. With the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit removed from the world, the Anti-Christ would arise. His rule would finally be crushed by the public 'appearing' of Jesus Christ. Darby argued that, regarding the rapture,

“The Church's joining Christ has nothing to do with Christ's appearing or coming to earth. Her place is elsewhere. She sits in Him already in heavenly places. She has to be brought there as to bodily presence.”

“...We go up to meet Christ in the air. Nothing is clearer, then, than that we are to go up to meet Him, and not await His coming to earth; but that this coming to receive us to Himself is not His appearing is still clearer...”

“..This is the rapture of the saints, preceding their and Christ's appearing ...so that at their rapture He has not appeared yet...This rapture before the appearing of Christ is a matter of express revelation, as we have seen from Colossians 3:4.”

In commenting on 1 Thessalonians 4:15, in his Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, Darby asserts,

“Observe, also, that this revelation gives another direction to the hope of the Thessalonians, because it

distinguishes with much precision between our departure hence to join the Lord in the air, and our return to the earth with Him.”

Critiques argue that these passages actually say nothing about any secret rapture in any dispensational sense, still less that the Church will be removed and return later to earth with Christ at His public appearing. Bass insists, 'Only by involved exegetical interpretation can the pre-tribulation rapture be supported.'

Darby's interpretation actually denies what the passage teaches (the blessed hope of the Church does have to do with the coming of Christ) and affirms what it does not teach (the blessed hope is the secret going and later public returning of the church). Darby admitted as much that his doctrine of the rapture was an innovation, the result of 'express revelation', indeed he seemed quite pleased with the reaction to it.

“The rapture of the saints to meet the Lord in the air, before His manifestation to the earth, and the existence of a Jewish remnant in whom the Spirit of God is graciously working before the Lord manifests Himself to them for their deliverance, is happily attracting the attention of Christians. It has made sufficient way to be the occasion of renewed opposition...”

Following his literalist hermeneutic, Darby insisted that the tribulation would end seven years after the rapture when Jesus Christ would return to Jerusalem to set up his kingdom from which he would rule the world for a thousand years. Indeed Darby made the 'pre-tribulation rapture' yet one more of his exclusive tests of Brethren orthodoxy.

“It is this conviction, that the Church is properly heavenly, in its calling and relationship with Christ, forming no part of the course of events of the earth, which makes the rapture so simple and clear, and on the other hand, it shows how the denial of its rapture brings down the Church to an earthly position, and destroys its whole spiritual character and position.”

His attitude toward those who disagreed with his doctrine of the secret rapture was scathing,

“...Wherever this is enfeebled, Satan is at work...He who awaits Christ's appearing, as the time in which he is to go to be with Him, has denied the proper hope and proper relationship of the Church with Christ. On this point there can be no compromise. Ignorance of privilege is one thing...the denial of it another.”

He regarded disinterest in his teaching of the rapture as a sign that the church was apostate and his own 'Assembly' elect.

“The rapture of the saints before the appearing of Christ, strange as it may appear to some, has nothing to say to the church, directly or exclusively; but as we form part of those caught up, it of course, interests us in the highest degree.”

Darby and his supporters clearly believed the 'secret rapture' would occur in their own life time and certainly before the end of the 19th Century. Looking back, Blair Neatby, writing his history of the Brethren in 1901 reflects,

“If anyone had told the first Brethren that three quarters of a century might elapse and the Church be on earth, the answer would probably have been a smile, partly of pity, partly of disapproval, wholly of incredulity. Yet so it has proved. It is impossible not to respect hopes so congenial to an ardent devotion; yet it is clear now that Brethrenism took shape under the influence of a delusion, and that delusion was a decisive element in all of its distinctive features.”

Among Darby's supporters however, 'his delineations of millennial glory dazzled the minds of his hearers.' Despite its novelty, Darby's belief of the 'pre-tribulation rapture' became central to his doctrine of the Church as well as his dispensational eschatology, and subsequently came to be 'a foundation for contemporary Christian Zionism'

4.2 Darby's Dispensationalism Criticized and Refined

Darby's novel ideas were not left unchallenged even within Brethren circles. B. W. Newton, his chief assistant in Plymouth, confronted Darby arguing that these views were heretical and a departure from Biblical orthodoxy. Darby's intransigence led to one of many splits within the Brethren movement, and with former colleagues like Irving from the prophetic conference days in Albury. Strong differences also repeatedly emerged within the Brethren movement, particularly between Darby and Newton, as to the implications of his new doctrines concerning the rapture and the relationship of the Church to Israel. If the Church had already been removed before the Antichrist could persecute them, who then would be the remnant persecuted under his rule? For Darby, a Jewish remnant would reign on earth after the rapture and remain faithful to the Law under persecution, seeing the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies still to be realized. The church however, Darby insisted, would play no part in this earthly reign. 'This remnant has neither the church's heavenly blessings nor the church's hopes.'

Newton and other Brethren leaders saw Darby's elevation of Israel above the Church as 'full-blown heresy' since the Church in Scripture is made up of both Jews and Gentiles who are now one in Christ, and Darby's scheme, followed logically, implied two distinct and separate ways to salvation. Samuel Tregelles, an early Plymouth Brethren and Biblical scholar was another who rejected Darby's interpretation as the 'height of speculative nonsense.'

If the Church were removed and a Jewish remnant were the fruit of God's redemptive work apart from Christ then it must be the result of 'another' Gospel condemned by the Apostle Paul in Galatians.

Newton and others within the Brethren sought to devise alternative, less problematic interpretations of the future to Darby's system which, even to those favorably disposed to the Brethren, like Coad, admitted was built on a 'completely new structure of Biblical interpretation.' These included what came to be known as 'the partial rapture.' In 1836, for example, Newton contradicted Darby's scheme arguing, 'Accordingly, the resurrection glory of the saints is as distinctly connected with Israel and Jerusalem, as with the earth.'

Newton also argued that the New Testament writers spiritualized the promises in the Old Testament to the inheritance of a literal land.

“It is thus that the descriptions which in the Old Testament are confined to the earthly city, are used by the Apostles to express the glories of Jerusalem which is above; for these are the expansion and heavenly antitype of the typical (though real) glories of Jerusalem below. They both belong to the same system - they are different courts of the same glorious temple visibly united yet distinct.”

Newton postulated a millennial reign whereby the dispensations were not consecutive and in which Israel would be restored under the same covenant of faith as the Church, not one in which, as Darby claimed, national Israel would be restored and the Church excluded. Newton did not see the means of blessing as parallel and distinct but converging, both on the basis of grace through faith, and a foretaste of heaven. In 1838 Newton sought a reconciliation between Darby's dispensationalism and more orthodox Covenant theology. In a paper called 'The Dispensations' he argued that in Abraham,

“This covenant therefore must be everlasting, and all that ever will be effectually blessed either in earth or in heaven, hand upon it as a covenant of promise. Upon this covenant the natural seed of Abraham, Israel according to the flesh is secretly sustained now...

...But not only the earthly Jerusalem and the land, the Heavenly Jerusalem likewise does equally rest upon the covenant of promise to Abraham; for the promise was not made simply to Abraham, but equally to his seed, i.e. Christ (Galatians iii). 'And therefore if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise.'"

Like Darby, Newton believed that the Church would be raptured, and that the Jews would be restored, but instead, he brought together Darby's views of the 'heavenly' Church and 'earthly' Israel arguing this would all occur after the tribulation and return of Christ, not before and that the remnant of Jews in Jerusalem would be brought to faith in Messiah and so too be blessed.

"The dispensation, therefore, which commenced with Abraham, is necessarily an eternal one, for (though many earthly and temporary blessings yet to be accomplished were included in it), it had respect to a heavenly and eternal city-Jerusalem which is above...the manifestation of Sarah blessing is altogether future and will not be shown forth in its power until the whole family both in earth and heaven, Jerusalem above and Jerusalem below, are alike manifestly brought under its bond of blessing."

"Restored Israel in Jerusalem, will in many respects resemble the Church now. Not indeed, in suffering, for that is a privilege possessed by the Church of the first-born distinctly. But as it is now said of the Church, that they are a chosen generation, a royal Priesthood; so it is written of Israel in that day, that they shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

It seems inexplicable that Darby should have ignored these attempts by other Brethren leaders like Newton to accommodate themselves to his own idiosyncratic doctrinal position, nor recognize that their views fitted the Scriptures more convincingly than his own speculations.

Only the supposition of a mental block can explain Darby's total failure to acknowledge that what was proposed was a strengthening, not a weakening, of his own system. Not only did it bring his teaching back into accord with the basic Reformed orthodoxies, without denying anything essential in it, but it also cured the dangerous Docetic tendencies that were latent in Darby's own vivid distinction between the exclusively earthly hopes of Israel and the exclusively heavenly hopes of the Church. It is significant that a tendency to Doceticism has always been a serious flaw in Darbyite thinking.

Friction between Darby and Newton came to a head in 1843 when Newton published his *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, and Darby felt impelled to attack it. Coad summarizes the split between Darby and Newton.

"Newton, to Darby, was depriving the Church of its glories in Christ. The simple thought that Newton's system did nothing of the kind, but that it rather added the glories of the redeemed Israel to the glories of the redeemed Church, seems never to have entered Darby's mind."

Darby's response to opposition was to charge his critics with sectarianism and to excommunicate them. Darby led the 'Exclusive' Brethren and Newton the 'Open' Brethren. George Muller and others tried to remain neutral, refusing, as Darby insisted, on excommunicating those who remained in fellowship with Newton. Those who suffered his wrath in this way included Groves, Muller, Harris and Newton, and by 1865 without them, his hold over the Exclusive Brethren gradually waned. Darby's Exclusive Brethren underwent further schism splitting into three parties by 1881, known after the names of their leaders as the Darbyites, Kellyites and Cluffites.

4.3 Darby's Influence on the Rise of Modern Dispensationalism

Professor Francis W. Newman was a contemporary of Darby and offers this assessment of his impact on those who came under his influence.

"For the first time I perceived that so vehement a champion of the sufficiency of the Scriptures, so staunch an opposer of creed and churches, was wedded to an extra-scriptural creed of his own, by which he tested the spiritual state of his brethren."

"...this gentleman has every where (sic) displayed a wonderful power of bending other minds to his own, and even stamping upon them the tones of his voice and all sorts of slavish imitation. Over the general results of his action I have long deeply mourned, as blunting his natural tenderness and sacrificing his wisdom to the Letter, dwarfing men's understandings, contracting their hearts, crushing their moral sensibilities, and setting those at variance who ought to love, yet oh! how specious it was in the beginning! he only wanted men 'to submit their understanding to God,' that is to the Bible, that is to his interpretation."

From 1862 onwards, as his influence over Brethrenism in Britain waned, Darby focused his ministry more and more on North America, making seven journeys in the next twenty years. During that time he had a considerable influence on such evangelical leaders as

Dwight L. Moody, William Blackstone and C.I. Scofield, as well as the emerging Bible and Prophecy Conference movement which, '...set the tone for the evangelical and fundamentalist movements in North America between 1875 and 1920.'

Krauss, the church historian claims that by 1901, following a good deal of controversy at these prophetic conferences toward the end of the 19th Century,

"...the dispensationalists had won the day so completely that for the next fifty years friend and foe alike largely identified dispensationalism with premillennialism."

Darby's influence over D.L. Moody came about through one of Darby's disciples, a young evangelist Henry Moorehouse who impressed Moody with his 'extraordinary' preaching. According to his son, Moody's message and style were revolutionized, 'Mr. Moorehouse taught Moody to draw his sword full length, to fling the scabbard away, and to enter the battle with the naked blade.' Newman, a contemporary American historian confirmed the strong influence Darby and his colleagues had over Moody,

"The large class of evangelists, of whom Dwight L. Moody was the most eminent, have drawn their inspiration and their Scripture interpretation largely from the writings and the personal influence of the Brethren."

Bass, in his definitive critique of Dispensationalism concludes,

"The line of continuity from Darby to the present can be traced unbroken from the works of his contemporaries, C.H. Mackintosh, William Trotter, William Kelly, and F.W. Grant, through the intermediary works of W.E. Blackstone, James Hall Brooks, A. J. Frost, G. Campbell Morgan, Harry Ironside, A.C. Gaebelein, C.I. Scofield, and his Scofield Bible, to the contemporary adherents of his views...Suffice it to say that he stamped his movement with his own personality. Much of its spiritual atmosphere undoubtedly belongs to his influence; and certainly its interpretative principles, its divisive compartmentalization of the redemptive plan of God, its literalness as to prophetic interpretation, and its separatist spirit may be traced to this personality. Perhaps it is too broad a summary to say that Darby's personality influenced directly the spirit of contemporary dispensationalism, but certainly the pattern which he set into motion is reflected in it."

Similarly, George Marsden, in his history of the rise of fundamentalism between 1870 and 1930, traces the

considerable influence of Darby's dispensationalism on the American evangelical world of Moody and Scofield.

"This new form of premillennial teaching, imported from England, first spread in America through prophecy conferences where the Bible was studied intently. Summer conferences, a newly popular form of vacation in the age of the trains, were particularly effective. Most importantly, Dwight L. Moody had sympathies with the broad outlines of dispensationalism and had as his closest lieutenants dispensationalist leaders such as Reuben A. Torrey (1856-1928), James M. Gray (1851-1925), C. I. Scofield (1843-1921), William J. Erdman (1833-1923), A.C. Dixon (1854-1925), and A. J. Gordon (1836-1895). These men were activist evangelists who promoted a host of Bible conferences and other missionary and evangelistic efforts. They also gave the dispensationalist movement institutional permanence by assuming leadership of the new Bible institutes such as the Moody Bible Institute (1886), the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (1907), and the Philadelphia College of the Bible (1914). The network of related institutes that soon sprang up became the nucleus for much of the important fundamentalist movement of the twentieth century. Dispensationalist leaders, in fact, actively organized this antimodernist effort. Notably, they oversaw the publication between 1910-1915 of the widely distributed twelve-volume paperback series, *The Fundamentals*."

Darby's dispensational views would however probably have remained the exotic preserve of the dwindling and divided Brethren sects were it not for the energetic efforts of C.I. Scofield and his associates to introduce them to a wider audience in America and the English speaking British Empire and bestow a measure of respectability through his Scofield Reference Bible. The publication of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909 by the Oxford University Press was something of a innovative literary coup for the movement, since for the first time, overtly dispensationalist notes were added to the pages of the biblical text. What distinguishes Darby's scheme and subsequent dispensationalists from the earlier attempts to categorize redemptive history is the conviction that the dispensations are irreversible and progressive. While such a dispensational chronology of events was largely unknown prior to the teaching of Darby and Scofield, the Scofield Reference Bible became the leading bible used by American Evangelicals and Fundamentalists for the next sixty years.

4.4 A Summary of Traditional Dispensational Doctrine

4.4.1 The Seven Dispensations

Dispensationalists claim to find in Scripture evidence of seven distinct dispensations during which mankind has been tested in respect of specific revelation as to the will of God.

1. Innocence (Genesis 1,28);
2. Conscience or Moral Responsibility (Genesis 3,7)
3. Human Government (Genesis 8,15);
4. Promise (Genesis 12,1);
5. Law (Exodus 19,3);
6. Church (Acts 2,1);
7. Kingdom (Revelation 20,4)

In each, mankind, including in the sixth dispensation, the visible Church, has failed the test according to the distinct way in which God responded to humankind. These dispensations began with Creation and will end, it is claimed, in the Millennial kingdom. What distinguishes Darby's scheme and subsequent dispensationalists from earlier attempts to describe phases in biblical history is the conviction that God's way of dealing with humanity in previous dispensations were and remain, irreversible and progressive. These dispensations are seen by proponents as 'providing us with a chronological map to guide us.'

4.4.2 Israel and the Church

Dispensationalism claims that God has two separate but parallel means of working, one through the Church, the other through Israel, the former being a parenthesis to the later. As Ryrie insists, "A dispensationalist keeps Israel and the church distinct." Thus there remains a distinction, 'between Israel, the gentiles and the church.' Chafer elaborates this dichotomy,

"The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity."

Dispensationalism therefore refutes the supposition inherent in covenant theology that God has one purpose for all people and that in Jesus Christ the earthly is transformed into the heavenly.

This is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a person is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive. The one who fails to distinguish Israel and the church consistently will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions; and one who does will.

Darby's insistence on two dispensations, one for the Church and another for Israel is the basis on which much non-evangelistic but triumphalist Christian Zionism views Israel, the stance taken for example by the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, the Messianic Testimony, and in large measure, Christian Friends of Israel. This framework expects the revival among Jews to occur after Jesus returns.

4.4.3 Literalist Hermeneutic

Dispensationalism is based on a hermeneutic in which all Scripture, and especially the prophetic, must always be interpreted literally. Scofield, who popularized and synthesized Darby's theology, taught,

"Not one instance exists of a 'spiritual' or figurative fulfillment of prophecy... Jerusalem is always Jerusalem, Israel is always Israel, Zion is always Zion...Prophecies may never be spiritualized, but are always literal."

Chafer likewise criticizes non-dispensational theology for giving a spiritual interpretation to earthly realities. Ryrie insists that dispensationalism and, in particular, 'this distinction between Israel and the church is born out of a system of hermeneutics that is usually called literal interpretation.' One is left in no doubt that such an interpretation is the only consistent one for evangelicals who claim to hold to a literal as opposed to liberal allegorical hermeneutic. Ryrie asserts,

"To be sure, literal/historical/grammatical interpretation is not the sole possession or practice of dispensationalists, but the consistent use of it in all areas of biblical interpretation is."

Based on such an interpretative principle, dispensationalists hold that the promises made to Abraham and Israel must await future fulfillment since they were never completely fulfilled in the past. So, for example, it is an article of normative dispensational belief that all Israel will be literally saved; that the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham and his descendants will be literally instituted; that Jesus Christ will return to a literal and theocratic kingdom centered on Jerusalem in the State of Israel.

For dispensationalists then, the church is relegated to the status of a parenthesis in God's future and literal

kingdom rule. This will be centered on Jerusalem during the millennium in which the Temple will be rebuilt and sacrifices restored. Often this kind of dogma, based on forced exegesis, is also asserted by those who are uncomfortable with or disillusioned by Jewish resistance to proselytism and who rest in the belief that 'all Israel will be saved' when or after Christ returns.

4.5 Progressive Dispensationalism

A new generation of younger dispensationalists among the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary have attempted to redefine their movement as 'progressive dispensationalism'.

They distance themselves from what they regard as the 'naïveté' of the founder's vision, distinguishing the traditional dispensationalism of Lewis Chafer and Charles Ryrie from 'Scofieldism', as well as from 'the popular 'apocalypticism' of Lindseyism'. They regard themselves as 'less land centered' and less 'future centered'. Ryrie is skeptical, however, unwilling to concede to such revisionism. He prefers to describe the position of theologians such as Blaising and Bock as 'neo-dispensationalist' or 'covenant dispensationalist', for holding for instance to a 'slippery' hermeneutic.

4.6 Hyper-Dispensationalism

Ryrie similarly insists on distinguishing normative dispensationalism from 'Ultradispensationalism'. This is rooted in the teaching of Ethelbert W. Bullinger (1837-1913) and his successor Charles H. Welch, who, according to Ryrie, have merely carried dispensationalism to its 'logical extremes'. Ultradispensationalists hold for instance, that the Church did not begin at Pentecost but in Acts 28 when Israel was set aside; the Great Commission of Matthew

and Mark is Jewish and therefore not for the Church; the Gospels and Acts describe the dispensation of the Law; only the Pauline prison epistles, that is Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, relate to the Church Age; water baptism is not for the Church Age; and Israel, not the Church, is the Bride of Christ. Their teachings are perpetuated today by the Berean Bible Society, Berean Expositor, Berean Publishing Trust and Grace Mission.

4.7 Dispensationalism Summarised

Following Scofield's literalistic hermeneutic, most contemporary premillennial dispensationalists of whatever type, equate the State of Israel with biblical Israel; the Jews are still regarded as God's 'chosen people'; and consequently people of Jewish descent have a divine right to the land in perpetuity.

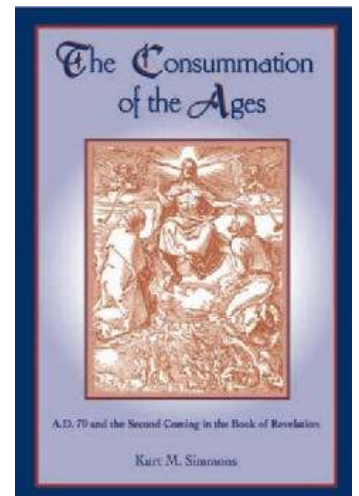
Crucial to the premillennial dispensationalist reading of biblical prophecy, drawn principally from Daniel and Revelation, is the assertion that the Jewish Temple will be rebuilt on the Temple Mount as a precursor to the Lord returning to restore the Kingdom of Israel centered on Jerusalem. This pivotal event is also seen as the trigger for the start of the war of Armageddon. Premillennial Dispensationalism has come to dominate American Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism especially through the influence of Dallas Theological Seminary and the Moody Bible Institute, to the point where the two (Evangelicalism and Dispensationalism) are virtually synonymous. Leading exponents include Charles Ryrie, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dwight Pentecost, John Walvoord, Eric Sauer, Hal Lindsey and Mike Price. The movement has grown in popularity within evangelical circles, particularly in America and especially since 1967, coinciding with the Arab-Israeli Six Day War and a few years later in 1970 with the publication of Hal Lindsey's blockbuster 'The Late Great Planet Earth.'

The Consummation of the Ages

468 pages, Hardcover

\$24.95

A.D. 70 and the Second Coming in the Book of Revelation



Symbolism of Heavens and Earth: National & Political, or Covenantal?

Kurt Simmons

Like the question “Which death was destroyed in AD 70?” (Ans: Hadean), the proper interpretation of the symbolism behind use of “heavens and earth” in prophetic imagery is becoming more and more important to Preterism. In this article, we show that the prophets consistently use the imagery of the heavens and earth as symbols of thrones and dominions, and peoples and nations, and never in reference to the Old or New Testament.

Preterist Misconceptions

The probable majority of Preterists interpret the “heavens and earth” of New Testament prophecy as symbolic references to Jerusalem, the temple, and the Mosaic law. This interpretation reflects apologetic attempts to harmonize passages like II Peter 3 with predictions tying Christ’s return to the fall of Jerusalem. The apostles sat upon the Mount of Olives and asked Jesus about the sign of his coming and the end of the world; he answered by describing events largely confined to the fall of Jerusalem. Add to this passages like Heb. 12:27, which describes a shaking of the heavens and earth in connection with the removal of the old law, and the conclusion seems inescapable: The heavens and earth of New Testament prophecy should be understood as metaphors for Jerusalem and the old law.

This view has had notable proponents over the centuries. Names like John Owen, John Lightfoot, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon can be marshaled in at least partial defense of this position. Given the prominence the fall of Jerusalem and the temple receive in scripture, we feel it is natural – perhaps even unavoidable - for students to reach this conclusion early in their studies. Indeed, this was our view for almost 25 years. More recently, however, we have come to reject it as scripturally indefensible.

Established Usage

Consistent use of “heavens and earth” by the prophets shows that it was *always* used nationally and politically, *never* locally or “covenantally.” There is not a single occurrence in the Old Testament where “heavens and earth” are used as symbols or metaphors

for the law of Moses, temple service, or priesthood. Not one. All instances are strictly confined to instances of world-wide judgment upon men and nations.

Isa. 13:9-11 - Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to **lay the land desolate**: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the **stars of heaven** and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: **the sun** shall be darkened in his going forth, and **the moon** shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish **the world** for [their] evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

This is a classic Preterist proof text; it has been used innumerable times to show that there have been many comings and days of the Lord, and that the language of a collapsing universe is purely figurative. We call to your attention two additional points, generally overlooked:

1) There is no covenantal aspect to this prophecy. God’s wrath is based exclusively upon his moral judgments against the wickedness of man, not the Mosaic law. The especial object of judgment in this passage is Babylon, which was never in covenant relation with God. The figure of the heavens and earth in this passage is therefore easily seen to be *national and political*; it describes the overthrow of *thrones and dominions*, not the temple or its service.

2) This prophecy reflects a time of *world-wide* judgment. Isaiah specifically states that the fall of Babylon was merely part of a larger time of world-wrath at the hands of the Medes and Persians. The Mede-Persian Empire was like a great whirlwind of destruction that ranged from Elam in the North to Egypt in the West, and Arabia in the south to Europe in the north. No nation escaped; all felt the rod of God’s chastisement by their hand.

Isa. 34:1-4 - Come near, **ye nations**, to hear; and hearken, **ye people**: let **the earth** hear, and all that is therein; **the world**, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD [is] upon **all nations**,

and [his] fury upon **all their armies**: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be **melted** with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be **dissolved**, and the heavens shall be **rolled together** as a scroll: and all their host shall **fall down**, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling [fig] from the fig tree.

Here is another classic Preterist proof text. Its power and testimony to the figurative nature of prophetic imagery and language is unequalled. It corresponds perfectly with Matthew twenty-four, II Peter 3, and the imagery of Revelation. Despite the language of collapsing universe, the specific object of wrath named in this passage is Edom. However, in our haste to prove the figurative nature of prophetic language, we have overlooked several things:

1) The passage expressly describes a time of *world-wrath* by the Babylonian Empire; Edom would fall in the course of God's judgment upon the nations.

2) Its language is clearly national and political, not covenantal. The judgments described had no connection to the Old Testament law.

Of course, there are passages identical to these, which describe judgment upon Old Testament Judea by the Babylonians; events that occurred within the very sweep of the prophecy concerning the fall of Edom, above. For example, Zephaniah describes God's judgment upon Judah in similar language. However, the same book also describes simultaneous judgment upon numerous other cities and nations, including Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, the Cherethites, Canaan, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, and the Ethiopians! Although judgment upon Judah necessarily involved the nation's violation of the old law, the fact that identical language is used to describe judgment upon nations to whom the law did not apply proves that it is national and political, not covenantal; the fall of stars from the heavens and the dissolution of the earth describe the overthrow of thrones and dominions, and have no reference to the Old Testament at all.

Planting the Heavens & Founding the Earth

Isaiah fifty-one is another favorite text, supposedly affirming that "heavens and earth" carry a covenantal connotation. However, an objective reading of the text will show this is wrong:

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the

Lord...Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: and they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away...The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the Lord thy God, that **divided the sea**, whose waves roared: The Lord of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may **plant the heavens**, and **lay the foundations of the earth**, and say unto Zion, thou art my people." Isa. 51:3, 11, 14-16.

Reference to the sea is correctly identified with God's parting the Red Sea for Israel at the exodus. This is then typically coupled with the language about "planting the heavens," and "laying the foundations of the earth" as evidence that "heavens and earth" here refers to establishing the covenant at Sinai. However, this is really very bad exegesis, and belies a fundamental lack of comprehension. The context of the passage is plainly to the Babylonian captivity and God's promise to bring a remnant back to the land. Notice that reference to dividing the Red Sea is in the *past tense, indicative mood*. Note also that reference to "planting the heavens" and laying the "foundations of the earth" is in the *future tense, subjunctive mood* ("that I may"). This shows that these two events are not connected in time; God is evoking the example of the Red Sea crossing from the *past* example as a demonstration of his ability to redeem his people out of captivity in the *future*. "Planting the heavens" is a poetic reference to repopulating the land by sowing it with the seed of men; "laying the foundations of the earth" describes the rebuilding of the waste and desolate places; the cities left uninhabited when their peoples were taken into captivity. This is easily seen by a simple comparison of similar passages. (Cf. Jer. 31:27; Ezek. 36:33, 36; Hos. 2:23)

Hebrews: Shaking the Heavens & Earth

It is true, of course, that Hebrews speaks about shaking the heavens and earth in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-28). This is cited by Preterists as evidence that the heavens and earth to be removed were covenantal, and referred to the Old Testament, and that the new heavens and earth refer, in turn, to the New Testament. Thus, Max King:

"The writer of the Book of Hebrews referred to this transformation as the shaking of heaven and earth, which signified the removing of the temporal Old Covenant world that was created at Mount Sinai (Hebrews 12:26-27)...The destruction of Jerusalem and the earthly temple in A.D. 70 provides the context for the passing of the old heaven and earth...He sums up the new creation in terms of the coming of

the kingdom of God in power by writing, “since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe” (Hebrews 12:28). Max R. King, *Israel's New Heaven and Earth*, Mar 26, 2005

However, this is plainly wrong. Shaking of the heavens and earth at the eschaton was in no wise limited to Jerusalem and the Jews. The eschaton was a time of world-wrath, reaching from Italy, Spain, Germany, and Gaul, to Armenia, Asia, Egypt, and Palestine. One would have to be ignorant of world history at the time of Jerusalem's fall not to see this. He would also have to be willing to overlook numerous passages of scripture that plainly signify the worldwide nature of the eschaton. Haggai, whom the writer of Hebrews quotes, provides its own best refutation of the “local” and “covenantal” eschaton model.

Hag. 2:6, 7; 3:21, 22 – For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts...I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen.”

As Preterists, we have interpreted this passage as quoted by the Hebrew writer in terms of Jerusalem's fall, but, as we see, its *actual, original, and intended* scope was universal – the eschaton would be a time when *all nations* of the greater Roman world were shaken and the throne of *heathen kingdoms* overthrown. We should also note that the *heavens and earth* in this context point to higher powers and earth's governments; they have *no covenantal significance* whatever.

The number of passages proving the eschaton was in no way localized to Judea and Galilee are so many it is almost tedious to read and recount them. Nevertheless, we provide here a few. Dan. 2:28-45; 7:1-28; Ps.2:8, 9; 96:11-13; cf. 98:9; 110:5, 6; Ezek. 38, 39; Joel 3; Mic. 4:3, 11-13; Zech. 12:3; 14:12; Matt. 25:31, 32; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 2:8, 9; I Cor. 7:29, 31; II Thess. 2:8; II Tim. 4:1 Acts 17:30, 31; Revelation. It is axiomatic that if the eschaton involved the whole Roman world, then the heavens and earth dissolved at Christ's coming were much more than Judea.

Isaac Newton: Heavens & Earth National and Political

We noted above that many great names down through the centuries have interpreted the heavens and earth of

II Peter three and Hebrews twelve in reference to the fall of Jerusalem, while overlooking Christ's wrath upon the rest of the Roman world. However, with the possible exception of Lightfoot, none of those cited interpreted the heavens and earth in “covenantal” terms, so far as we are aware. And even Lightfoot interpreted only the “elements” in reference to the Mosaic law, not the “heavens and earth.” Hence, even these great commentators would agree that “heavens and earth” refer to thrones and dominions, not the Old or New Covenants *per se*.¹ The following explanation by Isaac Newton we submit is the correct one.

"The figurative language of the prophets is taken from the analogy between the world natural and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly, the world natural, consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people, or so much of it as is considered in prophecy; and the things in that world signify the analogous things in this. For the heavens and the things therein signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them: and the earth, with the things thereon, the inferior people; and the lowest parts of the earth, called Hades or Hell, the lowest or most miserable part of them. Great earthquakes, and the shaking of heaven and earth, are put for the shaking of kingdoms, so as to distract and overthrow them; the creating of a new heaven and earth, and the passing of an old one; or the beginning and end of a world, for the rise and ruin of a body politic signified thereby. The sun, for the whole species and race of kings, in the kingdoms of the world politic; the moon, for the body of common people considered as the king's wife; the stars, for subordinate princes and great men; or for bishops and rulers of the people of God, when the sun is Christ. Setting of the sun, moon, and stars; darkening the sun, turning the moon into blood, and falling of the stars, for the ceasing of a kingdom." (*Observations on the Prophecies*, Part i. chap. ii)

If the heavens and earth put down at Christ's coming were the throne and dominions of Nero Caesar, the

¹ We cite John Owen as but one example: 'It is evident, then, that in the prophetic idiom and manner of speech, by heavens and earth, the civil and religious state and combination of men in the world, and the men of them, were often understood. So were the heavens and earth that world which then was destroyed by the flood...On this foundation I affirm that the heavens and earth here intended in this prophecy of Peter, the coming of the Lord, the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, mentioned in the destruction of that heaven and earth, do all of them relate, not to the last and final judgment of the world, but to that utter desolation and destruction that was to be made of the Judaical church and state.' John Owen, *Sermon on II Peter 3:11*.

Sanhedrin and rulers of the Jews, together with other temporal power who rejected the gospel and persecuted the church, then the new heavens and earth are best understood as the government of Christ, ruling the nations in righteousness with an iron rod.

Covenantal Heavens & Earth: All the Rage among Universalists

It is no secret that Presence Ministries of Max R. King, who has built his writing career on the covenantal heavens and earth model, has gone over to Universalism. The number of articles and quotes that may be marshaled in support of this charge make it beyond successful refutation. Indeed, Presence Ministries feels no need to even deny the accusation by issuing a statement or disclaimer. We here provide quotes from Universalists of varying shades and colors, all of whom make happy use of the covenantal heavens and earth concept to advance their cause. The last quote is by Tim Martin; although not a Universalist, his theology nevertheless bears an obvious logical connection thereto. All the people quoted accept the basic covenantal heavens and earth model of King. Please note the progression of thought:

Tim King² - "Simply stated, man is changed because his world changed. Man is reconciled to God because he no longer lives under the rule of sin and death as determined by the Mosaic world. Through the gift of Christ he dwells in a world of righteousness and life. The issue is cosmic and corporate, not individual and limited." Tim King, *Comprehensive Grace*, 2005

Kevin Beck³ - "There's no sin and no sin-related death in a world that has the New Jerusalem in its midst." Kevin Beck, *The Creation of Jerusalem*, Feb, 08

David Timm⁴ - The second Adam (Christ) reversed all the spiritual separation brought by the first Adam, not just part of it...in the new world people are reconciled to God without any say in the matter. God loves all those that He has made in His image equally. David Timm, *Grace Upon All*, Oct. 2006

David Embury⁵ - "A man was who he was according to his 'world', and for the Jews their world centred

² Tim King is Max King's son and former president of King's Presence Ministries

³ Kevin Beck is president of Presence Ministries

⁴ David Timm is author of a Universalist article entitled *Grace Upon All* was posted by Presence Ministries in October, 2006.

⁵ Embury espouses a form of Universalism he styles "pantelism."

around Yahweh - they were His people and He their God, and so by covenant. Who were the first-fruit believers in Paul's eyes? None other than the 'Body of Christ'. Having been crucified, buried and raised in Christ they were thus delivered out of the body of sin and death i.e., the Old Covenant world, or what we might call the 'Body of Moses' – Paul having spoken of "the fathers" being "baptized into Moses" etc. [can you see the train of thought?] The designation "the flesh" is not one facet of man as opposed to another part of man i.e., "the spirit", but rather "the flesh" speaks of man as a whole in a given mode or realm of existence, as does likewise *the spirit*. So Paul's spirit/flesh language was indicative of life under covenant, either of the "flesh" as in OC or of the "spirit" as in NC – reading Gal 3 and Phil 3 bears this out." David Embury, Planet Preterist post, Friday, December 05 @ 20:23:16 PST

Ed Burely⁶ – "In spite of the fact that I do not believe that the first chapters of Genesis have anything to do with the physical creation (but instead with a covenant creation), I still will not buy an argument that says "young earth" but not with biblical evidence. A covenantal view of the bible's beginning, along with scientific data, speaks to me that this earth, and this universe is old." Ed Burely, Planet Preterist, Tuesday, November 13 @ 10:56:06 PST

Tim Martin⁷ - "Just as the formation of Israel and giving of the Law was the metaphorical creation of "heaven and earth," so the destruction of the Judaic society, the Law, the priesthood, and temple would be the passing away of Israel's "heaven and earth." Tim Martin, *Beyond Creation Science* (unpublished manuscript version)

"Do you believe that there were any people outside of the garden at creation? If all were in the garden in God's first (what you take to be physical) creation, wouldn't that have implications for God's redemption?...As you can see, it could be that it's never been about us doing anything (right or wrong); *it's always been about God redeeming his creation; not just small parts of it.*" Tim Martin, Planet Preterist Post, Thursday, February 21 @ 09:48, 52:05 PST

"Redeeming all of his creation" means all in the "covenant creation" ("covenantal heavens and earth"). Thus, to avoid the Universalism inherent in placing all

⁶ Burely is author of *The Death of Death*, an article affirming all who were dead in Adam are now alive in Christ, regardless of faith or obedience. *The Death of Death* posted on Planet Preterist, Wednesday, February 25 @ 07:10:51 PST

⁷ Martin is co-author of *Beyond Creation Science*, a book that synthesizes King's Covenant Eschatology with Old Earth Creationism and a local (vs. universal) flood.

men in Revelation's new heavens and earth (where these are interpreted as the New Testament), Martin is forced to place other men outside of his "covenantal garden of Eden." Tim King and Kevin Beck, on the other hand, make no qualms that all mankind is redeemed in the new heavens and earth. Such is the mischief the covenantal heavens and earth model has wrought.

Conclusion

Established usage shows that "heavens and earth" were metaphors for thrones and dominions, peoples and nations. They have never had any covenantal signification in scripture.

-oo0oo-

Questions from our Readers

Q: What does Matt.5:17-19 mean if the law was not to be kept? It appears to mean it was to be kept until heaven and earth passed away. I don't believe that is to a literal H/E but must mean the Jewish way of life. I believe you are right but Paul was still keeping the Law as well as others in Acts 21. Please explain what they were doing in transition period and why they felt it necessary to keep the law. I feel Matt. 5:17-19 must be in their minds. Thanks for your great work.

A: The thrust of Matt. 5:17-19 is *fulfillment* of the law and prophets. Jesus said "*I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*" The phrase "*I am come to fulfill*" clearly contemplates Jesus' *first coming* to die on Calvary, not his second coming to put his enemies beneath his feet. Thus, "heaven and earth" are *not* used as enigmatic references to the Jewish law and economy, but are parabolic; they stand for something firm and immutable. But if the heavens and earth are firm and immutable, the word of God and his promised redemption in Christ are even more certain and unailing. That this is the meaning is seen in the parallel passage in Luke 16:17 where Jesus said "*it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one jot or tittle of the law to fail.*" In other words, it is easier that the whole physical creation should vanish away than the prophetic types and shadows of the law should fail to be fulfilled in Jesus' death on Calvary.

The blood sacrifices, national feasts, priesthood, and temple ritual were a grand object lesson showing man his sin, the need for atonement, and a priestly intercessor. Paul said that the law was a "shadow" of good things to come, "but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:17). A shadow ENDS where the body BEGINS. Thus, the law ends where the gospel and New Testament start. The question thus becomes, "When did the gospel and New Testament become of force and effect? At Calvary or AD 70?" Here there can be no question: the gospel and New Testament began at Calvary. Jesus said "*the law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it*" (Lk. 16:16). "Kingdom of God" here is equal to the gospel. The law and Moses were preached until John, but the New Testament was already begun to be announced. Hebrews says "*a testament is of force after men are dead*" (Heb. 9:14). The New Testament therefore came into force and effect at Calvary, at Jesus' death.

No man can have two wills at one time; the Old Testament ceased to be legally effective when the New Testament became of force. That the atonement was then and there effective and the way into God's presence opened is shown by the fact the veil of the temple was "rent in twain" at Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51), showing the whole temple service was now obsolete. Pointing to the removal of the law and its segregation of Jews and Gentiles in the temple worship, where a physical wall actually separated them, Paul says "*For his is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*" (Eph. 2:14,15). Thus, the whole law of the temple service was done away in Christ's flesh. "*For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*" (Heb. 7:12).

The disciples continued to keep the law, yes, but ONLY lest they be an offense to the Jews. This is why Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts:16:1-3), not because circumcision was valid anymore, but lest Timothy's lack of circumcision become an obstacle to Jews receiving the gospel message. This is also true of Acts 21, where Paul offered sacrifice and took a vow and underwent ritual purification. He was merely trying to alleviate Jewish prejudice that he was an apostate from God by showing that he still had a conscience toward God and worshipped the same God as they did. Peter did the same thing. When among the Gentiles he ate with them, showing the law that had forbidden Jews to keep company with Gentiles was done away (Acts 10), but when some Judaizing men came from Jerusalem, he drew back and separated himself from the Gentiles. Peter did this because the law had forbidden casual

table fellowship with Gentiles and he did not want to offend, but Paul rebuked Peter for his duplicity (Gal. 2:11-14). What Peter was required to do while at Jerusalem while living and preaching among the Jews there, he had no excuse for doing while away, living and preaching among the Gentiles, so Paul rebuked him.

Finally, note that the argument of some about Matt. 5:17-19 is that ALL the law was valid until NONE of it was valid. A friend of mine says this dozens of times in his books. He sets this argument up against futurists, so he can say that if Jesus' second coming has not occurred, then we are still under the law. He says Matt. 5:17-19 teaches that the law all stood or fell together. "Not one jot would pass until it *all* passed." The other side of this argument is that if even one law can be shown to have passed, then all of it had passed.

Well, what does the New Testament show? Does it show that *all* the law was still binding, or does it show that at least portions of it were invalid? Here there can be no doubt: We have numerous direct statements by Peter and Paul saying that portions of the law (dietary restrictions, association with Gentiles, circumcision, etc.) were *not valid* or binding any more. Therefore, if all the law was valid until none of it was valid, then it is clear none of it was valid during the period of Acts and the Gentile mission. The argument from Matt. 5:17-19 proves too much and that the law ended at the cross.

Q: What is the Coming for Salvation of Hebrews 9:28? "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27, 28).

A: Some believe the second appearance of Christ in this passage is to save from sin; viz., that justification was somehow held in abeyance until the second coming. But this is clearly wrong.

The salvation of Heb. 9:28, by its own terms, is not for sin. The writer says this explicitly. Jesus accomplished this salvation at his first coming to die on Calvary. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Thus, we must search for other possibilities.

The Hebrew Christians were under a time of persecution, being pressured by unbelieving Jews to abandon Christ and return to the ritual of the law. This is clear from the whole context of the letter and is why the writer states, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood

striving against sin" (12:4). Heb. 10:32-35 makes specific reference to the persecutions believers had formerly endured (probably the persecution over Stephen), urging them to persevere the present persecution, assuring them that Christ's coming was in a "very, very little while" (v. 37). Thus, the coming in Heb. 10:37 by its express terms was to save the church from persecution. But if the coming in Heb. 10:37 is to save out of persecution, so is that of Heb. 9:27, for they are the same coming.

The coming for salvation in Heb. 9:28 would save the saints from the persecution of the Jews, who were pressuring Christian Hebrews to abandon Christ and return to the old law.

Q: What is the "creation" of Rom. 8:19-23. We answer that question. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

A: The "creation" of Romans 8:19-23 refers to humankind. The creation/humankind was subjected to the futility and vanity of physical and, ultimately, eternal death. God did not subject man to this vanity willingly, but in hope that man would search out God and repent from sin, and so attain to immortality through Jesus Christ.

There are two groups in the text: "they" and "ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit". "They" refers to the Gentiles. "Ourselves which have the first fruits of the Spirit" refers to the Jews. The Jews were the firstfruits of the Spirit by the gospel. (Eph. 1:12; Jam. 1:18; Rev. 7:1-8; 15:4). Alternatively, "they" can refer to those outside of Christ, who have not obeyed the gospel, and "we" to the first generation of believers. The "whole creation" equals "every nation" of the great commission (Mk. 16:15, 16) or all mankind. All nations of men groaned and travailed in pain, waiting for "manifestation of the sons of God" or resurrection from the dead. Not "they" (the Gentiles) only, but "we ourselves which have the first fruits of the Spirit" (the Jews). Both groups groaned in travail for salvation from the bondage to sin and death.

The "redemption" and "adoption" of "our body" (v. 23) refers to the receipt of the individual's immortal body in heaven above. We are adopted sons now through faith, repentance, and baptism (Gal. 4:5, 5; Rom. 8:15), but the fullness of our sonship will not be realized until receipt of our eternal inheritance in heaven above.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified,; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29, 30).

"Being conformed to the image of Christ" looks to our glorification in heaven at our resurrection. The eschatological resurrection occurred in AD 70 (Dan. 12:2, 7; Rev. 20:11-15). This was announced by a trumpet (I Cor. 15:52). This trumpet was inaudible to mortal man on earth, being directed only to the spirits in Hades, and is best understood as the voice of Christ, the Archangel of God (I Thess.4:16). However, it is my opinion that there is another trumpet mentioned by Paul: "the last trumpet" that calls each of us from this world to the next, which also marks the "change" of our body from physical to spiritual and mortal to immortal. "For we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet" (I Cor. 15:52). That the trumpet which raises the dead and the "last trumpet" are not the same trumpet is seen in the absence of the definite article in the Greek. Paul says "the last trumpet" will mark each of our change, but "a trumpet" would raise the dead. And since the dead are already raised, but you and I have not been changed, then there must be a last trumpet that will call each of us out of this world and will mark the time when we put on immortality.

Q: Thanks for adding me to your mailing list. My question is, from the understanding that I've gleaned about the New World Order and their take over of society and the way they've shaped our culture through media and the school system, do you think there might be a conspiracy for political/economical gain through pushing the pre-trib view and that they might have set the pre-trib idea in motion?

A: Thanks for writing. I can't speak authoritatively about a conspiracy vis-a-vis Dispensationalism and the Pre-tribulation Rapture view, but it does seem very plausible. The Scofield Study Bible is largely responsible for disseminating Dispensationalism and was published by Oxford. Why Oxford should publish this Bible is something of a mystery. I have read that if

you trace the moving personalities behind publication of the Scofield Bible by Oxford, you will find Jewish money. An internet search of "Jewish money behind the Scofield Bible" will produce many sources confirming Jews had a hand in this book, which has been so instrumental in propagating the errors of Dispensationalism. The Jews were able to resettle modern Israel through the *Balfour Declaration* obtained by Lord Rothschild following WWI, about the same time the Scofield Bible was produced. Support for Jewish control of Palestine is greatly augmented by Dispensationalism, which falsely teaches the Jews are still God's chosen people. There is no question that the modern State of Israel plays the prophecy populizers and televangelists like a fiddle to keep the U.S. firmly in Israel's pocket. See the book *"One Nation Under Israel"* by Andrew J. Hurley for the full story of Israel lobby's control of the U.S. government. So, yes! There is does appear to be a conspiracy of sorts by the Jews to advance Dispensationalism among Christians.

Q: Thanks for the latest issue of the "Sword...". Not only do I get good theology, I get a good history lesson from the Biblical era. What is taking place in Acts 21:26-27. It appears that Paul is obeying the Law and entering the temple. If the Law was annulled at the cross, what's he doing?

A: Great to hear from you. In Acts 21:26, 27, Paul is *appeasing the Jews*, showing that he is not teaching out-and-out apostasy from Moses and the God of the Jews. His message that circumcision was unnecessary and even wrong (Gal. 5:2; 6:15), was misunderstood by the Jews, who took this as apostasy from Moses, going over to the Greeks, etc. What the Jews did not understand is that the law of Moses was *provisional and temporary*, and was to be replaced by the gospel and New Testament when the Messiah appeared. Thus, Paul was not apostatizing from God by forsaking the law of Moses, he was obeying God and, by implication, Moses, who foretold Christ's coming and enjoined the Jews to receive and obey Christ in all he commanded (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22, 3). It was the Jews who were in darkness, clinging to the law and rejecting the gospel of Christ, which justifies men by the obedience of faith. Paul's appeasing the Jews this way was a kind of *missionary concession*, lest by offending them, they would be unwilling to listen to his explanation of the gospel of Christ. He did something similar to this when he circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), so that the Jews would receive them and they could preach to them, Timothy being Greek.

The Man Who Fired The Shot Heard 'Round The World

By Chuck Baldwin

In II Samuel 19 there is the story about an often-overlooked man by the name of Barzillai. He was a Gileadite who helped save King David's life. The Scripture says of him: "He was a very great man." Today, I'm going to tell you about a very great man. In fact, I'm going to talk about several great men.

I am reminded of these men, because tomorrow I have the distinct honor of speaking at a giant freedom rally on Lexington Green, Massachusetts, on the occasion of the 238th anniversary of the famous Battle of Lexington and Concord. If you live within driving distance, please come and join us. Oath Keepers founder, Stewart Rhodes, will also be speaking at this event. I believe the rally begins at 2pm local time.

In truth, April 19, 1775, should be regarded as important a date to Americans as July 4, 1776. It's a shame that we don't celebrate it as enthusiastically as we do Independence Day. It's even more shameful that many Americans don't even remember what happened on this day back in 1775. For the record, historians call this day, "Patriot's Day." More specifically, it was the day that the shot heard 'round the world was fired. It was the day America's War for Independence began.

Being warned of approaching British troops by Dr. Joseph Warren and Paul Revere, Pastor Jonas Clark and his male congregants of the Church of Lexington (numbering 60-70) were the ones that stood with their muskets in front of the Crown's troops (numbering over 800), who were on orders to seize a cache of arms which were stored at Concord and arrest Sam Adams and John Hancock (who were known to be in the area, and who had actually taken refuge in Pastor Clark's home).

According to eyewitnesses, the king's troops opened fire on the militiamen without warning, immediately killing eight of Pastor Clark's parishioners. In self defense, the Minutemen returned fire. These were the first shots of the Revolutionary War. This took place on Lexington Green, which was located directly beside the church-house where those men worshipped each Sunday. Adams and Hancock were not apprehended. A

few of Pastor Clark's men led them to safety as their Christian brothers were preparing to stand in front of the British troops. Sam Adams and John Hancock owed their lives to Pastor Clark and his brave Minutemen.

According to Pastor Clark, these are the names of the eight men who died on Lexington Green as the sun rose on April 19, 1775: Robert Munroe, Jonas Parker, Samuel Hadley, Jonathan Harrington, Jr., Isaac Muzzy, Caleb Harrington, and John Brown, all of Lexington, and one Mr. Porter of Woburn.

However, by the time the British troops arrived at the Concord Bridge, hundreds of colonists had amassed a defense of the bridge. A horrific battle took place, and the British troops were routed and soon retreated back to Boston. America's War for Independence had begun!

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, these two elements of American history are lost to the vast majority of historians today: 1) it was the attempted gun confiscation and seizure of two patriot leaders by British troops that ignited America's War for Independence; and, 2) it was a local church pastor and his male congregants that mostly comprised the Minutemen who fired the shots that started our great Revolution.

With that thought in mind, I want to devote today's column to honoring the brave preachers of Colonial America—these "children of the Pilgrims," as one colonial pastor's descendent put it.

It really wasn't that long ago. However, with the way America's clergymen act today, one would think that preachers such as James Caldwell, John Peter Muhlenberg, Joab Houghton, and Jonas Clark never existed. But they did exist; and without them, this country we call the United States of America would not exist.

Caldwell was a Presbyterian; Muhlenberg was a Lutheran; Houghton was a Baptist; and no one really seems to know what denomination (if any) Jonas Clark claimed, although one historian referred to Clark as a Trinitarian and Calvinist. But these men had one thing in common (besides their faith in Jesus Christ): they were all ardent patriots who participated in America's War for Independence, and in the case of Jonas Clark, actually ignited it.

James Caldwell

James Caldwell was called "The Rebel High Priest" or "The Fighting Chaplain." Caldwell is most famous for the "Give 'em Watts!" story.

During the Springfield (New Jersey) engagement, the Colonial militia ran out of wadding for their muskets. Quickly, Caldwell mounted his horse and galloped to the Presbyterian church, and returning with an armload of hymnals, threw them to the ground, and hollered, "Now, boys, give 'em Watts!" He was referring to the famous hymn writer, Isaac Watts, of course.

The British hated Caldwell so much, they murdered his wife, Hannah, in her own home, as she sat with her children on her bed. Later, a fellow American was bribed by the British to assassinate Pastor Caldwell—which is exactly what he did. Americans loyal to the Crown burned both his house and church. No less than three cities and two public schools in the State of New Jersey bear his name.

John Peter Muhlenberg

John Peter Muhlenberg was pastor of a Lutheran church in Woodstock, Virginia, when hostilities erupted between Great Britain and the American colonies. When news of Bunker Hill reached Virginia, Muhlenberg preached a sermon from Ecclesiastes 3 to his congregation. He reminded his parishioners that there was a time to preach and a time to fight. He said that, for him, the time to preach was past and it was time to fight. He then threw off his vestments and stood before his congregants in the uniform of a Virginia colonel.

Muhlenberg was later promoted to brigadier-general in the Continental Army, and then to major general. He participated in the battles of Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth, and Yorktown. He went on to serve in both the US House of Representatives and US Senate.

Joab Houghton

Joab Houghton was in the Hopewell (New Jersey) Baptist Meeting House at worship when he received the first information regarding the battles at Lexington and Concord. His great-grandson gives the following eloquent description of the way he treated the tidings:

"[M]ounting the great stone block in front of the meeting-house, he beckoned the people to stop. Men and women paused to hear, curious to know what so unusual a sequel to the service of the day could mean. At the first, words a silence, stern as death, fell over all. The Sabbath quiet of the hour and of the place was deepened into a terrible solemnity. He told them all the story of the cowardly murder at Lexington by the royal troops; the heroic vengeance following hard upon it; the retreat of Percy; the gathering of the children of the Pilgrims round the beleaguered hills of Boston; then pausing, and looking over the silent throng, he said slowly, 'Men of New Jersey, the red coats are murdering our brethren of New England! Who follows me to Boston?' And every man in that audience stepped out of line, and answered, 'I!' There was not a coward or a traitor in old Hopewell Baptist Meeting-House that day." (Cathcart, William. *Baptists and the American Revolution*. Philadelphia: S.A. George, 1876, rev. 1976. Print.)

Jonas Clark

As I said at the beginning of this column, Jonas Clark was pastor of the Church of Lexington, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775, the day that British troops marched on Concord with orders to arrest Sam Adams and John Hancock, and to seize a cache of firearms. It was Pastor Clark's male congregants who were the first ones to face-off against the British troops as they marched through Lexington. When you hear the story of the Minutemen at the Battle of Lexington, remember those Minutemen were mostly Pastor Jonas Clark and the men of his congregation.

On the One Year Anniversary of the Battle of Lexington, Clark preached a sermon based upon his eyewitness testimony of the event. He called his sermon, "The Fate of Blood-Thirsty Oppressors and God's Tender Care of His Distressed People." His sermon has been republished by Nordskog Publishing under the title, "The Battle of Lexington, A Sermon and Eyewitness Narrative, Jonas Clark, Pastor, Church of Lexington."

Of course, these four brave preachers were not the only ones to participate in America's fight for independence. There were Episcopalian ministers such as Dr. Samuel Provost of New York, Dr. John Croes of New Jersey, and Robert Smith of South Carolina.

Presbyterian ministers such as Adam Boyd of North Carolina and James Armstrong of Maryland, along with many others, also took part.

Numerous Baptist preachers participated in America's War for Independence, so many that at the conclusion of the war, President George Washington wrote a personal letter to the Baptist people saying, "I recollect with satisfaction that the religious societies of which you are a member have been, throughout America, uniformly and almost unanimously, the firm friends to civil liberty, and the preserving promoters of our glorious Revolution." It also explains how Thomas Jefferson could write to a Baptist congregation and say, "We have acted together from the origin to the end of a memorable Revolution." (McDaniel, George White. The People Called Baptists. The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1918. Print.)

And although not every pastor was able to actively participate in our fight for independence, because so many pastors throughout colonial America preached the principles of liberty and independence from their pulpits, the Crown created a moniker for them: The Black Regiment (referring to the long, black robes that so many colonial clergymen wore in the pulpit). Without question, the courageous preaching and example of colonial America's patriot-pastors provided the colonists with the inspiration and resolve to resist the tyranny of the Crown and win America's freedom and independence.

I invite readers to visit my Black Regiment web page to learn more about my attempt to resurrect America's Black-Robed Regiment. Go to:

Black Regiment

Readers should know, too, that a brand new book co-authored by me and my constitutional attorney son, Tim, entitled, "To Keep Or Not To Keep: Why Christians Should Not Give Up Their Guns," will be released in just a few days. This book examines the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, and proves conclusively that nowhere does God expect His people to surrender their arms in the face of any would-be tyrant. With hundreds of references, we show from both Natural and Revealed Law that the right of self-defense, the right to keep and bear arms, is a God-ordained right and responsibility. This book is sure to be a blockbuster. To order the book, go to:

Keep Your Arms

This is the fighting heritage of America's pastors and preachers. So, what has happened? What has happened

to that fighting spirit that once existed, almost universally, throughout America's Christian denominations? How have preachers become so timid, so shy, and so cowardly that they will stand apathetic and mute as America faces the destruction of its liberties? Where are the preachers to explain, expound, and extrapolate the principles of liberty from Holy Writ?

I am absolutely convinced that one of the biggest reasons America is in the sad condition that it is in today is because the sermons Americans frequently hear from modern pulpits deal mostly with prosperity theology, entertainment evangelism, feelgoodism, emotionalism, and Aren't-I-Wonderful ear tickling! One man recently wrote and told me that his ears had been tickled so much in church that he had calluses on them.

This milquetoast preaching, along with a totally false "obey-the-government-no-matter-what" interpretation of Romans 13, have made it next to impossible to find Christian men with the courage and resolve to stand against the onslaught of socialism, corporatism, and, yes, fascism that is swallowing America whole.

Tim and I also wrote a book entitled, "Romans 13: The True Meaning of Submission." This book examines Romans 13, and the rest of Scripture, and shows that nowhere does God demand that His people yield to wicked and unjust government.

As we celebrate Patriot's Day tomorrow, please remember Jonas Clark (along with James Caldwell, John Peter Muhlenberg, Joab Houghton, and the other brave pastors of colonial America). "He was a very great man."

