

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor)

Hello Terry, Thank you so much for the materials on Jehovah Witnesses. I will gradually introduce my friend to the info. You have been my torch bearer for so many years, clearing up messy subjects with your plain common sense, directing us always to the Book!

(K.F, NSW)

NEW SERMON - What Is The Gospel?

Recently the editor has been preaching through the book of Romans. One particular sermon we believe may interest our subscribers and would compliment some of the recent editorials and in particular the editorial in this edition, which concerns the true and authentic Gospel - the link is below. We believe this short sermon which caused a re-think by many, could help readers to hear what is the Gospel and what is not. We encourage its distribution. <https://BibleChurch.sermon.net/pa/21666471.mp3>

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The site is '*Diakrisis TV*'; or the link is:

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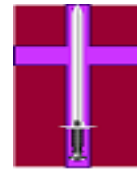
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'But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern [*diakrisis*] both good and evil', (Heb.5:14)

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry,
teaching, informing and equipping the church.
Editor: Terry Arnold (Dr.Th; MABS; Dip.Bib.&Min.)

The editor may not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by subscribers in this newsletter.

We welcome comments or items contributed by readers. Unless otherwise requested, these may be included in following newsletters at the discretion of the editor.

Articles in this newsletter may be copied or reproduced provided it is in context and proper credit and references are given. We encourage distribution of this newsletter that others might be *taught, informed and equipped*.

This newsletter is distributed bi-monthly *free* of charge. The cost to this ministry is approximately \$20.00 per subscriber annually. Any donation to help with these expenses is received with gratitude.

Contents

- P.2,3** Editor's Comment
- P.4** Covid - Church Statistics
- P.5** Jehovah Witnesses and the Gospel; A Message for Ministers, Pastors, Elders, Teachers
- P.6-12** How The Holy Spirit Speaks - The Great Divide
- P.13-17** A Fresh Look at Revelation - Part 5
- P.18** David Pawson and the Vision of Jesus
- P.19,20** Comments & Questions

NEW SERMON

Recently the editor has been preaching through the book of Romans. One particular sermon we believe may interest our subscribers and would compliment the recent editorials and in particular the editorial in this edition, which concerns the true and authentic Gospel - the link is below.

This short sermon caused a re-think by many. It could help readers to hear what is the Gospel and what *is not*. We encourage distribution.

<https://BibleChurch.sermon.net/pa/21666471.mp3>

Editor's Comment

I am currently writing a book about something I believe is fast being lost, added to, and confused - *the Gospel*. The Gospel has always fascinated me. It has a simplicity in how we might present it to a non christian; yet it has a depth of doctrine that is bottomless and full of gems to delight the hungry soul - for who understands all there is to know about redemption, propitiation, substitution, justification and the doctrines that make up 'Christ and him crucified'?

As a Roman Catholic I rejected the simplicity of the Biblical Gospel and for nearly two years before salvation resisted what I read and those who had shared it with me. But God in his great salvation plan called, drew me, freed my will and gave me faith to believe in what Christ had done for this sinful soul.

In later years I became increasingly alarmed at the way churches were adding so much to the Gospel message itself - the message that I was a sinner, dead in sins and under judgement (Jn.3:36; Eph.5:6); dead and helpless to do anything in and of myself to be saved (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13); that Christ as the mediator and the great substitute had died in my place (2Cor.5:21), been buried and rose again for my justification (Rom.4:25); that God has been satisfied and appeased with a blood sacrifice done once and for all (Rom.3:25; Heb.9:26,28; 10:10,12). My response to be saved was only to *believe*, nothing more, for there is nothing we can do as it is '*not of ourselves*' towards salvation (Eph.2:8,9).

It is especially in the last point that I see a huge falling away from the biblical Gospel. Today most churches, most Christians I speak with, have added to the Gospel *what man can do*. They add to and confuse the Gospel with new responses to the Gospel which man 'dead in sins' is incapable of.

A brief series of '*is*' and '*is not*' may help readers to understand this great departure from the true Gospel. When I have shared these statements with Christians in public and in private I have seen confusion and even shock on some faces when the Gospel is stripped of the baggage so often accumulated today.

The Gospel *is not* about *us* or what we can do, except that we are sinners under the judgement of God. The 'Gospel' *is* about *Christ and what He did for us, and no more. We had no part in the Gospel itself, except that we were sinners, it being solely the work of Christ on the cross, his burial and resurrection. The Gospel is about God's perfect and finished work in Christ for us helpless sinners.*

When Jesus died he said '*it is finished*'. But in the new gospel today it is not finished, for we are being told there is so much we can do apart from believe. We can decide, choose, pray the 'sinners prayer' to be saved, come forward at a meeting...yet none of this is in the Gospel! If there is any part of us in the Gospel it is that we were running away from God in sin as did Adam and Eve, the first sinners who as new slaves to sin were not seeking after God.

The Gospel *is not* '*Accept Jesus into your heart*'; '*Give your heart to Jesus*'; '*Give your life to Jesus*'; '*Make your decision for Christ*'. These new terminologies have replaced '*believe*' and '*repent*'!

God does not want your heart which is deceitfully wicked and evil (Jer.17:9)! No one has ever been saved by 'giving their heart' to Jesus! You can give

Your Comments and Questions

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Terry, was King David a prophet, king and priest just like Jesus?

Editor's reply:

The Psalms declare David was a prophet. He was also king of Israel, but never a priest. The priesthood was restricted to the tribe of Levi. David's grandfather, Aaron, was a priest. All are incomparable to Jesus the divine prophet, priest and king.

Hi Terry, Thanks for a wonderful sola scriptura publication. As I read the May/June edition on Pentecostalism I was reminded of the excellent book 'Strange Fire' by John MacArthur and the audios he put out at the 'Strange Fire' Conference. Strange fire is the Bible story of the sons of Aaron who offered strange fire as a sacrifice and God destroyed them (Lev.10; Nu.3 &26).

Well done with your publication and God's blessings on your work in these degenerate times as the Lord's coming draws ever nearer.

(J.N.)

Terry & Mike, Blessings and thankfulness to your faithfulness to the ministry of the truthfulness of God's infallible and everlasting Word. Blessings and prayers.

(V.F., Qld)

Dear Terry, Thank you very much for 'Diakrisis'. I can't wait to read it when it arrives... 'For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all your ways' (Is.91:11). In Christ our Saviour.

(M.R., NSW)

Dear Terry, Thank you for your good work in giving/teaching us wonderful insights into God's word.

(B.W., Vict)

Dear Terry, Thankyou for your hard work in defending the Bible. I look forward to reading each 'Diakrisis'. They have some very good teaching...

(J.Y., Qld)

Terry, we really enjoy the content of 'Diakrisis' over the many years. There is nothing else like it out there. I know it takes time to produce. It is appreciated. Thank you.

(H&S. M., SA)

David Pawson and the 'Vision' of Jesus

Mike, what do you think of David Pawson and in particular the 'vision' of Jesus in the clouds which he referred to in some messages.

(T.A. Qld.)

Sub-editor's reply:

David Pawson was Pentecostal/Charismatic in theology, an advocate of present-day Apostolic signs and wonders...he spoke in unknown tongues and 'prophesied', etc. However, as a Pentecostal he was considered more conservative and did write some scripturally accurate books on some topics. He often attempted (unsuccessfully in my opinion) to bridge the gap between the Pentecostal and the Evangelical community during his lifetime. He was often invited to speak in the churches and conferences of both affiliations.

The vision you are referring to was cited by Pawson as one supposedly seen by a person flying across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand from Australia during a violent thunderstorm some decades ago. The passenger took a photo through the window and claimed it revealed an image of 'Jesus' in a cloud formation. Pawson spoke of the storm, and then a calm that descended upon the aircraft once the picture was taken. If you look closely at the image enlarged you clearly see it is a rain cloud - with actual rain falling beneath it. There are dozens of such images put forward by people claiming visions from heaven. This is one of them.



Does Jesus really inhabit Cumulonimbus rain clouds? Would he be found hovering over aircraft during turbulence? Probably not. For David to intimate that this could be possible seems naive in the extreme to me. I have a suspicion that Jesus may be at this time seated at the right hand of God?

Some years ago I watched a recorded conference presentation by Pawson in which he told of himself sitting in a room with a group of men when tongues of fire descended on the heads of all present. Pawson was somewhat of a mystic. He fed many minds with half truths and Pentecostal doctrine. He put forward a so called 'classic' Pentecostal approach and was touted as a moderate by opposing the 'Toronto Blessing', 'Pensacola Revival' etc, but deep down the roots of extra biblical Pentecostal doctrines were still evident.

Pawson did not honour the efficacy of the shed Blood of Christ for sinners. He taught that if Christians do not 'overcome' they will have their names removed from the Book of Life. Space does not permit a full analysis of this, but the scriptures clearly teach that we are saved by Grace through faith, not by works and 'overcoming'.

Don't be deceived by the signs and wonders of this age. The scriptures are clear that they will deceive many (Matt.12:39; 24:24; Mk.13:22; 2Thess.2:9).

The teachings of this man are largely to be avoided?

NOTHING to Jesus. *It is God who gave!* - He gave his only Son that all the believing ones would not perish but have everlasting life (Jn.3:16); *It was Christ who 'gave himself for me'* (Gal.2:20).

The Gospel is not man accepting Jesus as His Saviour but that God accepted the person of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice. The Gospel is about what Christ has done, not what man can do, for it is 'not of ourselves' (Eph.2:8,9).

The Gospel is not 'come to Jesus' because he loves you and he will give you love, joy, peace or even everlasting life...' The Gospel is not him giving us anything except His Son (Jn.3:16)!

Is the Gospel of *what Christ has done* on the cross being preached in your church? Is Christ magnified and lifted up as the sole source of salvation in who He is and what He did? Or is the gospel preached about what man can do?

The true Gospel message is not asking the sinner to give anything or to do anything, except believe. When the Gospel is spelt out clearly as being Christ alone and his work alone - only then are we told to '*believe*', to '*call upon the name of the Lord*', to '*receive*' Christ (Mk.1:15; Acts 2:21; Rom.10:13; Jn.1:12). But sadly many feel they need to help God the Holy Spirit to 'close the deal' that an impotent God is attempting to make with man. But is it not God and His Spirit *alone* who calls, draws, quickens, justifies and saves (Jn.6:37,44,65; Eph.2:5)?

Do we really trust the Gospel and only the Gospel itself to do the work in the heart that is necessary to 'draw', to 'quicken' the will of the person who is '*DEAD in sins*' (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13)? Why have we invented new methods and new terminologies to do what *only God can do*? Is this not a lack of faith in God's '*power*' within the Gospel message (Rom.1:16,17)?

There are many examples of great past evangelists who preached the Gospel in purity. They had no altar calls, did not have the listeners do anything but called them to believe *as a response* to the Gospel. The likes of Charles Spurgeon and Martyn Lloyd Jones *never gave the listeners anything to do, except to believe and receive Christ*. But this was after preaching sin within *the Gospel of the person of Christ and His work for us*. At the end of Lloyd Jones' life there were hundreds of letters flooded in to testify of people who were saved in various meetings under various sermons as he consistently preached *Christ crucified*. There were no altar calls or any of the modern methods used today. And most of the converts stood the test of time, unlike today where we have a huge fall away rate of 80% or more. Neither were these men interested in 'results'. Preaching the Gospel took priority. The results are God's business since it is *his work, not ours*.

The Gospel is not an 'offer', an 'invitation', but a proclamation! It is the good news of *Christ and his offering to God for our sins*. We urge readers and pastors, preachers, evangelists, to study the Gospel in depth and to hold fast to it being *about Christ*, not us; *his work* on the cross, not ours; his free gift *given*, not anything given of us - it's '*not of yourselves*' (Eph.2:8,9). The '*power*' is in the Gospel message itself and '*the righteousness therein*' (Rom.1:16,17).

We are ambassadors to the king who requires his message be delivered with faith in, and without adding to, the truth and power of His word.

Terry Arnold

Covid and Church Statistics

As many as one in five churches could permanently close as a result of shutdowns stemming from the Corona virus pandemic, according to David Kinnaman, president of the prominent Christian research organization Barna Group. He noted that although many churches have opened...their services have had 'a lot less people coming'. 'They're recognizing that the relationships that they thought were much deeper with people were actually not as deep as they expected'...Kinnaman said that 'as time passes, we'll look back at this pandemic as a fundamental change to the way Americans handled church attendance and church donations. Obviously, there will be a lot more online attendance than ever before, even after all churches reopen. I think this digital church is here to stay...I think also it's really going to change the way people think about their donation relationship with local churches as well'...

Many churches in the United States have been hit hard economically by shutdowns aimed at curbing the spread of the novel Corona virus...The NAE survey of about 1,000 churches found that 34% of churches reported a decline in giving by 10-20% or more; 22% reported a decline of 30-50% or more; and 9% reported a drop of 75% or more.

(Michael Gryboski, *Christian Post* Reporter, August 26, 2020)

Editor's Comment:

These trends are not unexpected when statistics before Covid are viewed, although there has been a rapid increase in the falling away of professing Christians since Covid. The real church is a smaller remnant than what many think. A Pew research poll showed that in the last 10 years, the percentage of Americans identifying as 'Christian' has dropped another 8%; those unaffiliated with religion from 17% to 26%; Protestant Americans dropped from 51% to 43% by 2019; the percentage of atheists doubled.

Church attendances have been falling for decades. The falling away is also in colleges - about 72% of college professors are politically liberal; 25% are professing atheists or agnostics; only 6% said the Bible is 'the actual word of God'; 51% described it as 'an ancient book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts'; 75% believe religion does not belong in public schools.

Other statistics show there has been a drastic reduction in young people attending church. Data from the Southern Baptist Convention indicates that they are currently losing 70-88% of their youth after their freshman year in college; 70% of teenagers involved in church youth groups stop attending church within two years of their high school graduation and only 35% return later; 88% of children in evangelical homes leave church at the age of 18. Most of the reasons given is that they do not have 'evidence' of faith and many were influenced by social media, the internet and science.

Indeed today few churches engage in apologetics - defending the faith, so that young people can see and hear defences against the tide of social media attacks.

What is important about this angel who *covers the whole world* with his one foot '*on the earth*' and the other '*upon the sea*' - is that he holds open a '*little book*'. This book is probably the same one mentioned in Revelation chapter 5 which was there unopened. The entire earth here is to be judged. Some see this book as the '*title deed to the earth*'.

John hears him cry out with a loud voice which is followed by '*seven thunders uttered their voices*'. The '*seven thunders*' arguably would be the voice of God since God's voice in many scriptures is described as thunder (Job 38:25, Ps.81:7), especially in judgement as recorded in the plagues of Egypt (Ex.9:23) and in other parts of Revelation (8:5; 11:19). Seven is the complete number of perfection as used many times in scripture and in the book of Revelation. John is about to write what is uttered when he is interrupted by '*a voice from Heaven*' and told not to write but to '*seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered*'. Similarly Daniel was also forbidden to reveal what was prophesied to him (Dan.8:6; 12:9).

The angel then points to Heaven and '*swore by him that lives forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer*'. This is a description of the sovereignty and eternity of God. The reason given is that with the seventh angel and the seventh trumpet judgement '*the mystery of God should be finished*' as declared '*by the prophets*'.

John then hears the same voice from Heaven say '*take the little book*' and John takes the little book from the angel who orders him to '*eat it up*'. He is told '*it shall make your belly bitter but...your mouth sweet as honey*' which then John experiences as he eats. The obvious figurative language here is similarly used elsewhere for the Word of God: '*More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*' (Ps.19:10); '*Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by your name, O Lord God of hosts*' (Jer.15:16).

Finally John is told he '*must prophesy before many peoples, and nations, and kings*'.

Today we have that final closed infallible inspired Word concluded in the Book of Revelation - the unveiling of God's judgements and his coming to earth to reign with his saints.

Terry Arnold

'But though I cannot make you see sin, yet I can leave this truth with you, - you will one day feel what sin means, unless you repent of it, for He that spared not his own Son will not spare you. If the Judge upon the throne smote Christ, who had no sin of his own, - smote him so sternly for other men's sins, - what will He do with you? If He spared not his beloved Son, what will He do with his enemies?'

(Charles Spurgeon)

thousands of years by a longsuffering God (2Pet.3:7-12). Jesus often warned of the *'wrath to come'* at an appointed time (Matt.3:7; Lk.3:7; 21:23; Rom.2:5; 1Thess.1:10).

At this time it is also evident that the church and also the convicting power of the Holy Spirit are noticeably absent.

10:1-11

'And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that lives forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven spoke unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which stands upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make your belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, You must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.'

This is a parenthetical passage (a pause) between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgements.

Is this *'mighty angel'* from heaven Jesus or an angel (possibly Gabriel)? Some say the description matches the Christ of Revelation chapter 1 and Daniel chapter 10. But a comparison will show that the Revelation 1:13-18 description is clear and precise as to it being Christ, Him being *'he that lives, and was dead'* and *'out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword'*. When Christ is described it comes with titles such as *'the son of man'* (1:13), *'the first and the last'* (1:17) *'the Amen faithful and true'* (3:14), etc. In Revelation chapter 10 here the only description of the appearance of this angel is *'the rainbow upon his head and his face as it were the sun and his feet as pillars of fire'*. This angel also comes out of Heaven to earth which would make it too similar to a second coming of Christ. The use of the phrase *'another angel'* also would show that this angel is similar to the previous angels in the trumpet judgements. (The word for *'another'* here is *'allos'*, not *'heteros'* which would be used if a different kind of *'angel'*, as Christ would be).

Continued next page >

Jehovah Witnesses and the Gospel

A look at Jehovah Witness tracts will show the lack of something that one can ask them for evidence of - the Gospel that saves *now*. Most of their tracts show pictures of a beautiful *'new world'*, a heaven with no pain or tears and with the benefits of *'meaningful and satisfying work'*, a *'happy, unending life with family and friends...Jehovah and Jesus want to help us to enjoy a happy future...'*

But what is not evident is any Gospel which saves *now*. Questions to ask Jehovah Witnesses are *'how can I be saved now...at this moment'*. *'Can I be saved without going to the Kingdom Hall?'* *'What is your salvation plan for this moment?'* The answers will clearly show a false works gospel and a dependence on Jehovah Witnesses and their Kingdom Hall.

It is important to press them for a salvation plan for *now*. Quote scriptures for *believing* the Gospel of Jesus dying for our sins to receiving eternal life *now*.

A Message for Ministers, Pastors, Elders, Teachers...

'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2Tim.3:16,17).

We need to teach the Bible. No one needs our wisdom; no one even needs our experiences; no one needs to hear about our life stories. God needs a group of men who stand before other men and when they open up their mouths they have one purpose - to proclaim what God has said and to make it known to explain its good for teaching but it's also good for reproof and for correction.

Any minister who does not clearly rebuke people and correct them is a coward and is loveless. He loves himself more than he loves the people. He wants people to like him and that's his goal. But we must teach the truth. We must also tell people they are wrong and then we must tell people what they must do to be right. That is our task and that is why in many cases the world hates us. Do you know why Europe hates Christianity, true Christianity? For the same reason the United States hates true Christianity - because we're the only ones telling it it's wrong and that's the greatest crime you can commit today.

Christian ministers of Christ that are true are standing up and telling the world you are wrong and they hate us...That's why the two witnesses in the book of Revelation when they die the world is happy because finally the Word of God is silenced and no one is afflicting the conscience of the world anymore. There's peace, peace, because the witnesses of Christ have gone away now, we can live in our sin and live in our rebellion and we don't have to have any affliction of heart because there's no voice of God on the planet.

What's sad is that many people can go into an evangelical church and experience the same. The minister may even teach good theology but he never tells people they're wrong he never corrects them...'

Paul Washer

How The Holy Spirit Speaks - The Great Divide

Ask Christians today how the Holy Spirit speaks to them and you will invariably get a wide range of answers. Some will say the Spirit has only spoken through the Word of God. Others will say the Spirit still speaks via ‘promptings’, ‘impressions’ and ‘inner voices’. Others will also say the Spirit can speak through modern day prophets or in speaking in ‘tongues’ who thus prophesy words from God. All of these answers fall into two main categories - words which are only found in the Word of God or that found in the Word of God *plus*.

Why are there so many of these other methods of hearing from God and why is there such a great divide between the two categories? Indeed today it divides the Pentecostal/Charismatic Christian from those Christians who say God has finally spoken only in his Word. This divide is great indeed as it affects the way Christians view the Bible, God, and the Holy Spirit. This then affects the practice of how we walk with God on a daily basis. However, it can be much more serious than this in that if the voices or impressions are not from God and are a counterfeit, then what deception and what spirit could be involved? How do we know that when we hear from God apart from the written words of the Bible that we are authentically hearing from God? How can we ‘test the spirits’ (1Jn.4:1) to be sure we are hearing revelation from God alone?

The questions that need to be asked and answered here are: Where is the Word of God found? How is it delivered? How does God speak to us today? Can He speak apart from the Bible? Why are there so many different views on this? What is the difference between ‘general revelation’ and ‘special revelation’? Are there other revelations? What about personal words from God and ‘prophecies’? What about impressions, ‘promptings’, inner voices? How does the Holy Spirit ‘lead’?...

General Revelation

General revelation is taught in Romans chapter 1: ‘*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*’ (vs.19,20). Creation and the revelation in nature scream out ‘there is a God!’ Even the complexities of the human body show a higher creator.

This ‘general revelation’ as it is called, is a revelation that there is a creator God. It is not a voice that speaks to us of what God is saying at any one time. It is *revelation to all*, saved and unsaved. It is not designed to save man but leave man ‘*without excuse*’ and damn him because nature itself shows there is a God.

Special Revelation

The Bible testifies that God spoke *particularly* to individuals such as Abraham, Moses and Paul. This ‘specific revelation’ is stated in Hebrews chapter 1: ‘*God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past unto the*

‘*heard*’ by John. This number could mean a literal number considering the cardinal number ‘*two*’ is used, although the ‘*thousand thousand*’ is indefinite (‘*muriás muriás*’ - myriads of myriads; indefinite).

A frightening description of the horsemen follows - ‘*having breastplates of fire...of jacinth...brimstone: and the heads of the horses as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone*’. The ‘*breastplates*’ are a fiery red; the ‘*jacinth*’ is a dark transparent colour, possibly red or orange. All this comes with the sulfurous burning colour of Brimstone (Gen.19:24; Lk.17:29) and Hell (Rev.14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

Psalm 11:6 may also be a prophecy of this event: ‘*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup*’.

Some will designate all this language as figurative only, but nevertheless it is what John ‘*saw*’ and ‘*heard*’ in a literal vision. The fact that these creatures kill men would assume they are real demonic creatures following real commands. The fire and brimstone is as literal as the fire and brimstone is literal in the Lake of Fire.

The force of these creatures is swift and mighty - the ‘*power is in their mouths and in their tails*’ which were ‘*like unto serpents*’ (vs.19). The ‘*hurt*’ they inflict is swift and brutal, killing *one third* of the earth’s population with ‘*fire and brimstone*’. The detail of the creatures and the ‘*one third*’ deaths shows this is an intentional judgement by a particular means rather any natural disaster.

9:20,21

‘*And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts*’.

The rest of the population not killed is yet defiant of their idolatry. ‘*The works of their hands*’ is a phrase used often in the Old Testament for idols made by men and summarised in Acts 7:41.

These people left alive are unrepentant of their ‘*murders*’, ‘*sorceries*’, ‘*fornication*’, ‘*thefts*’. All this is after some years of judgements and even the Jewish evangelists witnessing God’s Gospel! It is indicative of the depraved heart of mankind now hardened even further. It does appear here that all the false worship and false religion now comes to a head.

The word ‘*sorceries*’ (‘*pharmakeía*’) literally refers to drugs, used in Greek culture for either medicinal or poisonous use. Drugs were sometimes also used to gain a higher religious ecstatic state and to commune with deities. ‘*Pharmakeía*’ is elsewhere translated ‘*witchcraft*’ and ‘*sorcery*’ (Gal.5:20; Rev.18:23). The word ‘*fornication*’ (‘*porneía*’) is any sexual activity outside of marriage.

It is not hard to see here that the world is in a terrible state of evil, sinfulness and is being afflicted with grievous judgements of increasing intensity. It is important to understand that these judgements have been ‘*stored*’ up for

should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts’.

9:13

The sixth trumpet judgement brings a more severe judgement - death. The sixth angel sounds a trumpet and John hears ‘*a voice*’ (literally ‘*one voice*’). This is a single voice alone ‘*from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God*’.

The voice could be that of the ‘Lamb’ (Christ) or the angel who was standing at the altar in chapter 8:3.

John here is clearly *seeing* and *hearing*. The altar is clearly Jewish - the horns were the four projecting corners of the Jewish Old Testament altar (Ex.27:2). In chapter 8:3 the ‘golden altar’ was mentioned and there ‘*another angel*’ offers worship to God on the altar before the throne with incense and the ‘*prayers of all the saints*’.

The ‘*golden altar*’ here is the heavenly counterpart of the one mentioned four times in the Old Testament (described in detail in the Tabernacle (Ex.30:1-10; 39:8; 40:26), in the duties of the Levites (Nu.4:11), and in Solomon’s temple (2Chr.4:19).

The altar is ‘*before God*’ as the offerings thereof are offered to God only. It was located in front of the veil which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. In these chapters here the altar becomes an altar of judgement.

9:14,15

The ‘*voice*’ coming from the altar commands the sixth angel with the trumpet to ‘*loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates*’. These four angels are ‘*bound*’ which tells us they are evil angels. Holy angels are never said to be ‘bound’. The perfect tense here tells us that these angels were bound in the past and still bound, ready to be loosed to fulfil God’s purposes. These angels were imprisoned at the ‘*river Euphrates*’, a river which was near the site where the first sin began, the first murder, and then the tower of Babel.

The definite article arguably shows these angels were specially designated for this judgement. They were ‘*prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year*’ - an exact time as God planned.

These angels are no ordinary soldiers in any ordinary army, but are described as supernatural creatures. They are not themselves killed by the fire and brimstone. They are sent with a most deadly judgement ‘*to slay the third part of men*’. In chapter 6:8 the fourth ‘seal’ killed ‘one fourth’ of the earth. Now more than half the earth’s population will be destroyed by these creatures in divine judgements!

9:16-19

The army of these horsemen is said to be ‘*two hundred thousand thousand*’ as

fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds’ (vs.1,2).

Note the ‘*various times*’ - there were gaps in revelation, hundreds of years when *God did not speak*.

Note the ‘*different ways*’ - first natural revelation as in Genesis; then the patriarchs; then the prophets in dreams, prophecies, visions, audible voices, tablets of stone and law; then the apostles; and *finally in ‘his son’, Jesus Christ*.

Note the phrase ‘*spoke in time past unto the fathers by [in] the prophets*’ - the tense here is ‘*having spoken*’ - *past*, completed, and there is no more revelation to ‘prophets’. Prophets were ones who ‘prophesied’ - literally to ‘speak forth the word of God’. Jesus is the final ‘prophet’ to speak God’s revelation.

Note the phrase ‘*these last days spoken*’. Some commentators use the phrase ‘last dispensation’ to describe this as the ‘church age’ or ‘Gospel age’.

Note the phrase ‘*spoken unto us by his Son*’. The words ‘*has spoken*’ is something that is *past* and done *once in time* (Greek aorist indicative).

Christ’s Spirit guided certain ‘*holy men of God [who] spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*’ to write down the ‘*prophecy of the scripture*’ (2Pet.1:19-21). The early church called this the ‘*canon*’ [rule] of scripture. It was written and settled in the 1st century and sealed in the 2nd. The Scriptures themselves are clear that God has spoken *finally* in and through this Word. There are no extra words from God apart from the canon of scripture. *The early church fathers allowed for no extra words from God by any means to be added to scripture.*

What About Personal Words / Prophecies From God?

Some use examples in scripture where God spoke to people in differing ways, even audible voices. The problem with this is that these were rare instances and *written down* by God as *revelation to be fulfilled* in Jesus Christ (Heb.1:1,2), and not to be added to. If we accept new words from God today whether in ‘prophecies’ or any other means, then why are we not writing them down in the same way again, and adding them to scripture? Why are we not recording them as revelations from God and adding to our Bible? The answer is in scripture itself: ‘*For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book*’ (Rev.22:18).

The issue is *how* God has chosen to speak. In the Old Testament he spoke through mediators; but now there is only ‘*one mediator*’ (1Tim.2:5). He chose to speak through the prophets for a limited time - ‘*in time past*’ (Heb.1:2). Examples of God speaking in audible words is now *past* and even then were also *rare*. Again, there were long periods when God did not speak at all in any way. From Joseph through 80 years of Moses’ life, there was no record of God speaking.

In contrast, today it is *every day* that God supposedly is speaking words and messages to ‘prophets’, pastors and Christians all over the world and at thousands of services each weekend. All this is apart from and *added to* the written inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God. With all these extra words, how do we know

for sure God has spoken? *There is no objective test.* Even if it lines up with the Bible this does not mean it was a voice from God - that can be counterfeited. How do we know it is not someone else's voice, our own imagination, or the inner voice of our own conscience? Can we tell between the Lord's voice and a demon when *both speak truth*? Can we tell it is God and not 'an angel of light', a perfect counterfeit? If one answers yes, they have raised their egos to being divine and are prime candidates for deception. God does not speak by voices today but 'spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets' (Heb.1:1,2). Simply put, many Christians today confuse the inner voice of their own conscience with what they think is the Holy Spirit speaking to them!

What About Impressions / Promptings / Inner Voices...?

One hears a word/impression to sell one's house and shift to another town. How does one test this? You cannot test this with scripture as there is no command to shift or not to shift. Some examples may help here. The author once had a friend who believed the Lord had shown him he was going to sell his house within so many days. But it did not sell in that time. What 'voice' did he hear? When he was challenged on this he had to admit *it was not God's voice*. But he was most disturbed when then asked 'whose voice was it then?'

One author addresses this issue: '*God guides through His Word and its principles. This is one of the most neglected dimensions of guidance today. It sounds terribly spiritual to say 'God led me', but I am always suspicious of a person who implies that he has a personal pipeline to God. When no one else senses that what the person suggests is the will of God, then we had better be careful. God has been blamed for the most outlandish things by people who have confused their own inverted pride with God's will. Occasionally I hear of a guy who, in the name of spiritual guidance, rushes up to a girl and says, 'Susie, God has told me you're to marry me'. I have news for him. If that is the will of God, then Susie is going to get the message too. If she does not, somebody's radar is jammed, and it's not hard to tell whose' . (1)*

God, Satan, an angel, a demon, human emotions, hormonal imbalances, insomnia, medication, an upset stomach - all can cause a person to think that they have heard from God. Impressions, 'promptings', inner voices, etc, *are not authoritative and cannot be tested objectively.*

Some claim to have heard from the Holy Spirit by 'promptings' and then when they see 'fruit' or 'testimony' that matches, it is believed that this must have come from God speaking. But *Scripture never commands us to tune into any inner voice, prompting or impression!* We are simply commanded to study and meditate on Scripture (Josh.1:8; Ps.1:1-2). How do we know that inner voices and mental impressions are not the lies of a deceitful heart, imagination, or even demonic, even if it does not contradict scripture? Again, *the voice of one's own conscience must not be confused with any supposed voice of the Holy Spirit.*

The author once was in conversation with a professing Christian man who described hearing God speak to him by impression/prompting that he could marry

A Fresh Look at Revelation

Part 5

In **Part 1** (chapters 1-4 - see *Diakrisis* July/August 2019) the intent was to show that the book of Revelation *is to be understood* at least as far as *that which John saw and described*.

What is figurative and what is more literal can be determined with the language and referencing to other scriptures (Scripture interprets scripture).

It is necessary to have studied the book of Daniel first, as much of Revelation is referenced in that book.

The *timing and the order of events* in the first three chapters are presented as events in John's day *with a divide in time and order at chapter 4* (see 1:19).

In **Part 2** (chapters 4,5 - see *Diakrisis* September/October 2019) we continued to explore *what should be 'literal' or 'figurative'* and *why*; as well as the *timing and order of events*. This was done using standard methods and tracking the same *symbols, signs and wording* elsewhere.

In **Part 3** (chapters 6-8 - see *Diakrisis* July/August 2020) we saw the first of three distinct judgements beginning with the seven 'seals' (ch.6), all increasing in intensity.

In **Part 4** (chapters 8,9 - see *Diakrisis* September/October 2020) we saw the second set of seven judgements begin *the Trumpet Judgements* and the increasing intensity in three last graphic 'woes'. A perfect God has to have a perfect judgement!

Part 5 (Chapters 9,10)

9:13-21

'And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a [one] voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they

utterances, visions, prophecies and claims of direct revelations from the Holy Spirit. Montanus and two women, Mazimilla and Priscilla expected an imminent revival. False prophecies came and went.

The Montanist movement replaced the Word of God as the voice of the Spirit. *The result was moral failure and scandal.* Montanus eventually hung himself and Maximilla followed a few years later. The sect lasted a few hundred years and disappeared between 500-550 AD. Yet this error saw a resurgence in excesses in the 19th C. holiness movements and then the new Pentecostal and later Charismatic movement of the 20th C.

In the Scriptures God has revealed all that is sufficient for life and godliness (Deut.29:29; 2Pet.1:3). God has severely warned not to add to His Word at any time (Deut.4:2; 12:32; Prov.30:6; Rev.22:18,19). We must not go beyond the Word (1Cor.4:6) or seek such signs (Matt.12:39).

One author sums this up: *'...And why not both? Why not the illumination of Scripture coupled with new revelations of the Spirit? Simply because if you declare a need for both, you have implied the insufficiency of one. You have placed yourself back in the frame work of the Old Covenant, in a time when new revelations were required because of the incompleteness of the old. But Christ is the final Word. No further word for the redemption of men in the present age is needed. In Scripture is found all the truth that is needed for life and godliness...The Reformers who paid with their life blood for freedom from dominance by the traditions of the church were especially jealous in guarding future generations from the oppressions created by supposed words from the Lord. 'Scripture Alone' was their uncompromising cry. Only the written Word of God, an objective standard which all men can see and read, communicates infallible truth to God's people, since God now has stopped using His former methods of revealing His will to the church, (Heb.1:1). But the search goes on for a new way for God to continue revealing His will in ways other than through Holy Scripture. Each new generation offers a slightly different twist on the recurring theme.'* (3)

God does not desire his people to have a low view of the scriptures. The judgement for adding to his Word will be severe. *'He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day'* (Jn.12:48)

Christians should not be divided over this when the Word of God is so clear. Let the sufficiency of the Word of God not be muddied by today's 'prophets' and the systems of doctrine they aspire to that would teach us to have an ear to hear new revelations from God. The final revelation we have from God is the 'prophecy of the scripture' which is still the 'more sure word of prophecy' (2Pet.1:19,20)! *'Every Word of God is pure...add you not unto His words...'* (Ps.30:5,6).

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(1) Paul Little, 'Affirming The Will Of God'

<https://thinkpoint.wordpress.com/2007/05/26/do-inner-promptings-reveal-gods-will/>

(2) John F. MacArthur Jr., 'Reckless Faith', P.189-193

(3) O. Palmer Robertson, 'The Final Word', P.135 & P.86

a certain person from a non Christian faith. After marriage the partner came to profess faith in Christ. He stated this was 'proof' his original impression was of God. However, he was challenged as to why God would disobey His own word *at any time* in decreeing a marriage against His Word (2Cor.6). Can God do this even for pragmatic reasons? The scriptures answer: *'And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just'* (Rom.3:8). What does it prove if 'good' things happen as a result? Does that prove the voice was from God? The man's conscience was swayed by subjective motives to contradict the Word of God.

The Mormons teach that if you read the Book of Mormon and you have a 'burning in the bosom' it is then the Word of God. The conscience is well capable of being swayed by subjective means to speak contrary to the Word of God.

Another example experienced by the author of a conscience being informed wrongly and speaking contrary to scripture is when once in conversation with a Christian on the issue of 'tongues'. The person quoted Romans 8:26 *'The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered'*. This person stated that the Spirit had convicted, impressed, showed them, that this was Holy Spirit 'tongues' and their 'heavenly language'. The conscience convinced the person this scripture was the Spirit witnessing to them of unknown 'tongues'. The person was then asked: why if it was 'tongues' spoken by the Spirit, does the same Spirit in the same verse say it is that which 'cannot be uttered'? The person was visibly checked before the next question - *'where did your prompting/conviction come from'*? Clearly the conscience can be ill fed and confused with the Holy Spirit speaking or 'prompting'.

Today people want the experiential. They want the promptings, impressions, inner voices from God the Holy Spirit. These are often from an ill fed and fallen conscience *confused with the Holy Spirit*. Yet the Bible gives no encouragement to hear God in these ways and no means to test such. These ways encourage the subjective heart, not the objective mind where true discernment is couched. *'He who trusts in his own heart is a fool'* (Pr.28:26).

One author sums this up: *'Scripture never commands us to tune into any inner voice. We're commanded to study and meditate on Scripture (Josh.1:8; Ps.1:1-2). We're instructed to cultivate wisdom and discernment (Pr.4:5-8). We're told to walk wisely and make the most of our time (Eph.5:15-16). We're ordered to be obedient to God's commands (Dt.28:1-2; Jn.15:14)...we are never encouraged to listen for inner promptings. On the contrary, we are warned that our hearts are so deceitful and desperately wicked that we cannot understand them (Jer.17:9). Surely this should make us very reluctant to heed promptings and messages that arise from within ourselves. Those willing to heed inner voices and mental impressions may be listening to the lies of a deceitful heart, the fantasies of an overactive imagination, or even the voice of a demon. Once objective criteria are cast aside, there is no way to know the difference between truth and falsehood. Those who follow subjective impressions are by definition undiscerning'*. (2)

The full revelation of Christ has been set down in the written Word of God. It is now the 'prophecy of the scripture' (2Pet.1:20) being the 'more sure word'

(vs.19) rather than any vision or voice as past prophets spoke (vs.17,18).

The Bible speaks of a sanctification based on the Word of God only. The process of this points specifically to the 'truth' of the Word of God: '*Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth*' (Jn.17:17). But sadly that is not enough today? Where does our daily 'manna' come from? Are we to be like the Israelites who had it supplied to them for 38 years until they rebelled and wanted more? So too, we live in an age that seeks after signs, visions, dreams, promptings, inner voices and impressions - all of which are often *confused with our own voice of the conscience*. Like the Israelites the issue at heart may well be pride and arrogance that *we do not accept what God has limited*. We simply do not need to know or tell what God is doing or saying apart from His infallible Word. *We become false prophets when we presume to hear from God other than the Word of God*.

The call is to trust in the '*more sure word of God...the prophecy of the scriptures*' (1Pet.1:19-21).

The Confusion with the 'Conscience'

The understanding of 'conscience' is generally that it is a cognitive function of the mind that brings understanding largely based on the moral system or world view of that person. It is the faculty that leads to a decision making. Metaphors used for the conscience speak of it as an 'inner voice' or an 'inner light'.

In the New Testament the Greek word for conscience, '*suneidesis*', is defined by Greek commentators as that which refers to *an awareness of oneself as a witness*. It is a faculty of the mind which distinguishes between right and wrong and prompts one, even to choose right and reject or avoid the wrong. It largely has a moral capacity (Jn.8:9; Rom.2:15; 9:1; 1Tim.4:2; Tit.1:15; Heb.10:2).

The Christian conscience ideally *confirms* the truth of revelation from God. As a 'voice' it can hardly be ignored. As Christians it behooves us to bring this 'voice' in line with the voice of God. But the two are not intrinsically the same, as one is without error, the other, the conscience, is fallen from the Adamic world. *When the conscience speaks as an inner voice to us, this must not be assumed as a direct voice from the Holy Spirit*. It is at this point that there is much confusion today in how the Holy Spirit speaks to us. In short, many hear their inner voice of the conscience but wrongly assume it is the Holy Spirit speaking *directly* to them. This is the breeding ground of false prophecies, inner voices and 'God told me' revelations of which there is a plethora of in the modern church today. *The conscience on its own is not the voice of the Holy Spirit but the inner voice of self. Today what many believe to be the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to them is often their own conscience, their own fallible inner voice*.

How Does the Holy Spirit 'Lead'?

Although the modern ideas of 'promptings' 'impressions' used for the Holy Spirit supposedly speaking personally apart from scripture - have no doctrinal

basis in scripture, there is the 'leading' of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:14; Gal.5:18). '*Those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God*' (Rom.8:14). This verse does not suggest we look to inner promptings from the Spirit for guidance (the context is about abstaining from 'sin' and the 'flesh'). It ends with '*the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*' (vs.16). It is this '*bearing witness*' that is a key phrase in understanding how the Holy Spirit 'leads'!

The Holy Spirit may well 'lead' us through the conscience which is being 'renewed in the mind'. '*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost*' (Rom.9:1). But it is '*my conscience*' which is quite human, and it is witnessing to a *truth* of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is going *before* and *leading*. *But this Spirit does not speak to us separate to the written Word*. Any 'witness' by the Spirit to our conscience for the purposes of discernment should be a result of being '*renewed in the mind*' by the Word of God (Eph.4:23; 2Cor.4:16; Col.3:10). This is where 'discernment' begins!

Thus, developing the conscience enables the Spirit to witness to it in a Godly fashion and 'lead' us. The way that God 'leads' is through the conscience in shaping our lives with convictions, attitudes, judgments. This is not a matter of inward 'promptings' apart from the Word, but of *our conscience being fed and informed with the Word of God as the Spirit directs*.

God's 'leading' is also found in *God's providence* - the control of God in our lives. However, unlike the idea of God in any instant supposedly speaking by 'prompting' and impressions, the biblical 'leading' of God is not seen until *after* the circumstances God brings to pass. God goes *before us* in this leading. This is vastly different to the modern ideas of 'promptings' and impressions at any one time to speak to us in the present. The leading of God and his providence is not as a genie at our beck and call. In the leading of God and in his providence *He goes before us and orders our steps* (Ps.37:23).

God's leading is found in the *will of God*. It is His will for us to be sanctified (1Thess.4:3; Rom.8:27-29); filled with the Spirit (Eph.5:17,18); give thanks in all things (1Thess.5:18); and the 'perfect will of God' for us to be '*transformed by the renewing of our mind*' - to prove that '*good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*' (Rom.12:1,2). We can be confident God's providence is to go before us and 'lead' us in our conscience as we work out our salvation in his will, being filled with the Spirit and renewing our minds with the truth of His word (Jn.17:17).

Conclusion

There is a great divide that exists today between those who say they hear from God apart from the Bible and those who hear from God as it is written in scripture. The latter is often seen as a narrow view and yet it was the accepted orthodox Biblical view down the running centuries. It was the widely held view of the Reformers, the Puritans and the teaching of the great historic revivals and Awakenings. The former view with its additions of prophecies, promptings, impressions and inner voices has its roots in Montanism of early centuries which was deemed by the church fathers to be heresy. The Montanists practised ecstatic