



Diakrisis (Australia)

‘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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New Questionnaire Section

In the ‘*All Resources*’ section of our website we have now included a ‘Questionnaire’ section. We currently have two pdf documents - ‘*What Do You Know About ‘Tongues’*’ and ‘*What Do You Know About Calvinism and Arminianism?*’. The questionnaires come with answer sections. The questions are designed to show how much or how little people understand these topics.

Editor's Comment

What excites Christians, what motivates them? What moves their emotions? Today Christians are being moved by many things that are said to be spiritual. A picture of Jesus begging people to come to him; an image in a rain cloud said to be Jesus causes people to gasp in awe; signs and wonders; miracles and healing claims - all capture the imagination and emotion of many Christians today.

Christians are being moved by a sissified Jesus who is just longing for us, begging us to come to Him, with His hands tied waiting for the seeker to choose Him. Yet God says man is *'dead in sins and trespasses'* (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13), is not seeking after God (Rom.3:11) and cannot come to Him (Rom.8:7; 1Cor.2:14) unless *'quicken'* by the Spirit (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13) with the power of the Gospel (Rom.1:16,17). Unsaved man is never found seeking or choosing God for salvation. It's a sovereign God who quickens, calls, chooses us before the *'foundation of the world'* and justifies the believer with not any merit in regard to man's will or ability (Eph.1:4,5; Mk.13:20; Jn.1:12,13; Acts 9:15; Rom.16:13; 2Thess.2:13; 2Tim.2:4; Rev.17:14). Oh, the *pride* of mankind - they cannot bear the thought that they had nothing to do with their *possible* salvation? Yet, to portray a powerless creator as begging with outstretched hands to a disobedient creation is the most appalling blasphemy.

Would many Christians today be excited by the image of Jesus in Revelation chapter 19 who does *'judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire...he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood...out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God and...on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS'* (vs.11-18)?

What excites and motivates Christians today? Does doctrine, the teaching of scripture and expositional preaching capture the Christian mind today?

Today Christians are busy taking notes and listening to preachers telling them God has a wonderful plan for their lives, their *'best life is now'*, God wants them to be healed, to have prosperity. Along with this is an ecstatic selfish worship which titillates the flesh and lacks brokenness. Welcome to modern *'Christianity'*.

What excites Christians? What motivates them? Does the Gospel heard, preached and studied move them to see how amazing grace really is? What of the Jesus who died in agony for our sins? What about the offence of the cross, the wrath of God and His anger upon sin being stored up and poured out in the last days? Does this bring fear and awe?

What excites Christians today? What motivates them? Does preaching and Bible study excite Christians? We are living in the last days of a lukewarm christianity which will be spewed out of God's mouth (Rev.3:14-16).

Our hearts need to be checked for what really motivates us. We are living in days when hard words need to be spoken about the state of Christianity which would all but be lost except for the remnant of true believers kept by God's Spirit and His Word.

Terry Arnold

The Fruit of Hillsong Continues



In earlier years we warned of the moral declension, as well as the music, in the Assemblies of God and Hillsong. We were at times castigated for exposing men and naming names of those who had fallen in gross sin and deceptions. The declension continued unabated with many leaders falling, including founder Brian Houston's own father finally being exposed as a paedophile.

The most recent shock has been Carl Lentz, leader of New York's Hillsong. Many previous attempts to raise the alarm concerning several sexual transgressions at New York's Hillsong have been ignored. But finally, in November, leader Carl Lentz was stood down by Brian Houston for '*leadership issues and breaches of trust, plus a recent revelation of moral failures*'.

Carl is married for 17 years with three children. He was a celebrity with hipster fashionable clothing and tattoos. He made headlines with his drinking and partying with stars the likes of pop singer Justin Bieber who he baptised. Lentz's ministry reached over 210,000 people weekly. His church at Irving Plaza was a church by day and a club by night.

Lentz admitted to an extra-marital affair but in his original statement there was no mention of sinning against God! He asked for forgiveness from the church and spoke of his wonderful time in Hillsong and the lack of '*protecting my own spirit, refilling my own soul...*' and that the most important relationship in his life was his marriage. Nothing about the sin and God!

A New York City designer/actress, a Muslim identified as *Ranin*, claimed to be the woman Carl Lentz was in a relationship with. She said she had no idea at first that he was a popular Christian minister. Lentz told her he was a 'sports agent' who 'managed celebrities'. She said he hid his true identity. She spoke out because she was greatly hurt after the megachurch pastor told his followers about his infidelity and she wanted to share her side of the story. She stated the affair went on for more than 5 months and was not just a 'fling' as reported. She said it was not just a sexual relationship but a 'love affair'. Lentz had reportedly approached her in a park and after a conversation they exchanged numbers. She did not know Lentz was married until late in the relationship. Ranin said Lentz had said '*God told him to tell me that I need to know my worth and there's something special about me...whatever, whatever*'.

It all came to a head when Lentz's wife Laura discovered that Lentz and Ranin were having an affair after seeing intimate conversations on Carl's work computer at church, which was linked to his phone.

Hillsong truly has become a global secular company, a sensual pool of apostasy. The rate of, and the number of leaders falling, is indicative of a systematic falling away from doctrine and character. Christ is not the head of this church for this is truly the epitome of the Laodicean church. As we keep warning - 'come out of her', for this is not the bride of Christ.

Greg Laurie - 12 Errors in Under 3 Minutes

Recently someone sent us a short 3 minute video of Greg Laurie attempting to explain 'Calvinism' (the sovereignty of God in the salvation of man).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=OOZ8Z_iGeOw&app=desktop

The video contained typical rhetoric and sheer ignorance on a topic that is misunderstood more than almost any topic in Christianity today. But the number of errors in this short 2:40 minutes is staggering.

Laurie says it's '*free will vs predestination*'. But this is not the antinomy understood or stated by so called 'Calvinists' both historic and modern. The tension is rather between 'the responsibility of man vs election'. (Even Arminians have 'Free will vs. election'). Laurie has confused 'free will' with 'the responsibility of man' and then 'predestination' with 'election' as is also shown by two misquotes at the end. All these terms have quite differing meanings.

Laurie then says '*Predestination is God knows everything...God chooses us before we choose him*'. But he has confused election with predestination. Predestination is a prior decree ('proorizo'). Election ('eklego') is a special choosing out by God.

Laurie says: '*All those verses that appeal to our free will*' - He then quotes John 3:16 and '*whosoever*' - a verse that says NIL about any 'free will' unless it is 'read' into the text. An interlinear will show that '*whosoever believes*' is '*all the believing ones*' ('*pas o pisteoun*'). It is simply 'all those who believe', nothing about any 'free will'. Laurie then quotes Rev.22:17 '*whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*' but he neglects to mention the first part of the verse ('*the Spirit and the bride say*') and also the context - which refers to '*things in the churches*' (vs.16) and '*the spirit and the bride*' (vs.17). The verse refers to the New Jerusalem and to God's '*servants*' (vs.6) taking '*the waters of life freely*'. Again, this has nothing to do with 'free will' in unsaved man. Finally Laurie quotes Matt.11:28 '*come unto me...*'. Again, the context is not to unsaved people to use their 'free will'. Search out '*come unto me*' and one next comes to '*...no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father*' (Jn.6:65). There is no 'free will' in any of these scriptures quoted by Laurie.

Laurie then rhetorically says '*do we choose or does God predestine us? ...the teaching of Calvinism which is usually total depravity says you are so depraved and dead in your sins that you do not even have the ability at all*'. Yet this is exactly what the scriptures literally teach! (Rom.8:7,8; 1Cor.2:14; Jn.6:44,65; Eph.2:1-5; 4:18; Col.2:13; Jer.17:9). He continues '*You have to be awakened by the Spirit if you have been chosen by God*' - again, this is exactly what the scriptures teach! (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13). And how does one explain God choosing us '*before the foundation of the world*' and being '*quicken*'? (Eph.1:4,5; Mk.13:20; Acts 9:15; Rom.16:13; 2Thess.2:13; 2Tim.2:4; Rev.17:14)?

Laurie then makes the classic error of confusing 'Calvinism' with hyper-Calvinism: '*You better hope you have not been Predestined to Hell*'. Yet the majority of historic and modern 'Calvinists' do *not* teach a positive

‘predestination to Hell’ which is more to do with ‘hyper-Calvinism’. The scriptures teach that all are ‘*already*’ condemned (Jn.3:18). Laurie continues with the strawman: ‘*God has not predestined anyone to hell*’. Yet ‘Calvinists’ would agree with this. Most historic ‘Calvinists’ taught that God ‘passes over’ those who are *already judged* and freely sinning - all get justice.

Laurie then says God is ‘*not willing that any should perish but all come to repentance*’ (2Pet.3:9). Again he misses *who* the verse is speaking to - the ‘*usward*’ (vs.9) and the ‘*beloved*’ mentioned at least 4 times in the passage (vs.1,8,14,17) as well as the references to ‘*you*’ being the ‘*beloved*’ and the ‘*any*’ and the ‘*all*’ cannot but refer to any other pronoun but to the ‘*us*’ previously written in the same verse. The ‘*us*’ are the ‘*beloved*’ throughout the whole passage! This scripture is in fact promoting the *preservation of the saints in Christ and the sureness of His coming!*

Laurie then uses more false strawman argumentation: ‘*Some would say I don’t want to preach the gospel because it might give false assurance to the non elect?*’ But this is not ‘Calvinism’ but hyper-Calvinism! ‘Calvinists’ preach to *all* that God will elect the ‘whosoever’ who would believe.

Laurie then erroneously quotes D.L. Moody as stating ‘*save the elect and then elect some more*’. But this is a quote from the ‘Calvinist’ Charles Spurgeon! It was a second hand account of what Spurgeon supposedly prayed in a *prayer meeting* when *praying for souls*. Yet Spurgeon was a strong believer in unconditional election and a set group of believers being elected before the foundation of the world. In prayer *he yearned for more souls*. On several levels this is a misquote by Laurie.

But then another misquote: Laurie says ‘*Spurgeon was once asked if he could reconcile election and free will ...he said I never reconcile friends*’. But actually Spurgeon used the terms ‘Divine sovereignty and human responsibility’, not any ‘free will’! Spurgeon did not believe in the freedom of the will for unsaved man! This quote by Laurie is regularly misquoted to suit a doctrine of ‘free will’.

Laurie then defends the ‘*preaching of the Gospel to all*’. But this is exactly what historic ‘Calvinists’ believed and did. This included the Reformers, the Puritans, the martyrs, the KJV translators and great evangelists in revivals.

Laurie concludes with a dangerous statement: ‘*How do you know if you have been chosen by God? - Believe in Jesus Christ and you just confirmed you have been chosen by God*’. But this is the cheap shallow gospel as preached by this crusade evangelist. It ignores the many scriptures teaching that believing without works, repentance and fruit is believing ‘*in vain*’ (1Cor.15:2; 2Cor.6:1). We are told to ‘*make our calling and election sure*’; to ‘*examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith*’ (2Pet.1:10; 2Cor.13:5). This statement by Laurie plays into the ‘decisional regeneration’ error of modern times. Laurie has been well exposed for his weak and decisional gospel. For more on Laurie’s doctrines, his preaching, his crusade figures (3-6% only show any fruit after 1 year but they are told they are ‘saved’) and his ecumenical associations and endorsements with Catholicism - see ‘*Greg Laurie’s Continuing Slide Into Apostasy*’ by ‘*Pulpit & Pen*’.

<https://pulpitandpen.org/2016/09/01/greg-lauries-continuing-slide-into-apostasy/>

The Puritans - Giants of the Faith

The Puritans were a group of pastors, preachers and writers who followed after a long line of Reformers from the Great Reformation in the 1500's. They saw themselves as 'dwarfs' on the shoulders of the Reformers, yet from this position they could well see where the church was slipping back into darkness and where further reforms were needed. Many historians believe the Puritans in many areas had the greatest impact on Christianity in nearly 2,000 years. They went beyond the Reformers in many areas, especially in the application of doctrine to life.

The History

Most historians place the Puritan era between the mid 1500's and the 1700's. The term originated in 1560's as a negative term for those who wanted further reformation in England. The Puritans were persecuted for their refusal to accept the rituals of the established Church of England in which they saw a lack of holiness. The Puritans were known for their piety, their striving for holiness. Their preaching and writings left a permanent mark on the societies they lived in.

Depending on the various monarchies in power, many anti Puritan 'Acts' were enforced in England and backed by the Church of England. Between 1604-1609 nearly 90 ministers were suspended from churches for refusing to comply with Church of England practises. In 1628 Charles I installed Bishop Laud as his advisor and then as bishop of London in 1633. Bishop Laud opposed the Puritans vehemently and forbade them to preach certain doctrines including predestination, and required them to use the Book of Common Prayer, wear vestments and kneel at the Communion services. Those who refused this were called 'non-conformists'. Many Puritans, for their own safety, left England for the European continent or sailed to New England on the American continent.

In 1637 Bishop Laud had the nonconformist William Prynne (1600-1669) ears cut off and his face branded with hot irons. The Scots rebelled against this treatment and the country went into civil war (1642-48). Archbishop Laud was later charged with treason and executed after the war won by Oliver Cromwell.

But the tide swung again to the Church of England after Cromwell died. In 1662 an *Act of Uniformity* prevented Puritans from preaching in many areas of England. Many refused to use the book of Common Prayer and some including Richard Baxter and John Bunyan were imprisoned. Two thousand Puritans refused to conform and many again left England. The *Coventicle Acts* of 1664 further prevented the Puritans from preaching and then a *Five mile Act* of 1665 prevented them from preaching within 5 miles of their own churches.

However, Puritan preaching was not silenced as many found new areas to preach in or secretly preached against the law in remote places. John Bunyan at times preached in the woods wherever people would gather. John Flavel (1627-1691) once disguised himself as women to ride to a town to administer baptism.

Puritan pens were also not silenced. Almost all the Puritans were prolific writers of sermons and books. Eventually in 1689 an *Act of Toleration* lifted the

bans and many Puritans from abroad returned to England.

The Puritan era is said to have ended by the 1700's with Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) but others believe that remnants of 'Puritans' existed thereafter even as far as Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) and Martyn Lloyd Jones (1899-1981). Spurgeon widely read and recommended Puritan works. Certainly these latter men were 'Puritans' theologically.

Their Lives, Families and Hardships

Puritans were well known for their uncompromised preaching. Several taught before kings and queens and Anglican hierarchy. Some sermons landed them with suspensions from preaching. The Church of England burned many of the Puritan works and imprisoned pastors. Many families were left without a father and considering most Puritans had large families this made for great hardships. Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) spent two months in prison for publishing a book. He had 7 sons and 6 daughters. Richard Baxter was imprisoned at least 3 times and once for 5 months for preaching. John Bunyan was imprisoned for two lots of 6 years each (1660-1672). In prison he made shoelaces for income.

Robert Harris (1581-1658) in 1642 was threatened by royalist soldiers not to preach again. Next week he preached under the threat of being shot. Soldiers approached and one aimed his gun, yet Harris continued to preach. Later the soldiers burned his family's possessions and they were forced to flee to London. Harris would later become one of the 'Westminster Divines'. The Westminster Assembly of Divines was a council of divines (theologians) from 1643 to 1653 to restructure the Church of England. Several major Confessions of Faith resulted from this assembly to which most of our early denominations followed.

Depending on the ebb and flow of the monarchies of the day, the Puritans continued to suffer trials for their faith and their refusal to accept the standards of the Church of England. Christopher Love (1618-1651) was tried for alleged conspiracy with the Presbyterian Scots against the king and beheaded in 1651 at age 33. His last words were *'blessed be God for Jesus Christ'*.

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) began in a small church which grew to 250. His first wife died in child birth. He married again and had one son and 8 daughters, three of which died in infancy. He later died after a fall from a horse.

The Puritans often enraged Anglican ministers. James Janeway (1636-1674) was threatened and later shot twice, a bullet piercing his hat. His church was destroyed. The people rebuilt it. He died at 38 of tuberculosis.

Nathaniel Vincent (1638-1697) was once pulled out of the pulpit by his hair, dragged through the streets by soldiers and sent to prison for months. In another instance he escaped through a side door but later was imprisoned for three months.

The Baptist Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) endured Anglicans encouraging people to throw dead animals, vegetables and stones at him. Keach was also well known for his heated debates with Seventh Day Adventists and Quakers.

The Puritans were not immune to sicknesses and the diseases of the day. Some endured the Plague of London in 1665-1666 when at least 68,000 people died and

then the Great Fire of London in 1666 in which some Puritans lost their entire libraries. Most Puritans did not live a long life, most dying in their fifties, some dying before they reached 40. Robert Asty (1642-1681) lived 40 years; George Gillespie (1613-1648) only 35 and Andrew Gray (1633-1656) only 33 years.

Puritans had large families. Richard Gilpin (1625-1700) had 13 children. Many children died in infancy, most Puritans burying up to half their children. John Owen (1616-1683) had 11 children of which 10 died in infancy. Many Puritans had wives who died giving birth and so Puritans remarried often. John Flavel's (1628-1691) first wife died giving birth to their first child (who also died). He married 4 times, 3 of his wives dying. William Gurnall (1616-1679) had 14 children, only 6 survived him. John Trapp had 12 children of whom 4 died in the first 12 years of marriage. Abraham Hellenboek (1658-1731) was left childless as 4 died in infancy, 2 daughters died at age 19 and 25, and then finally his last daughter died and he was left childless. He accepted this as from the Lord.

Some Puritans suffered from depression. Others suffered lifelong illnesses and many died painful deaths from the diseases of the day. Nicholas Byfield suffered kidney stones for 15 years before dying in 1622 of a huge stone. Some contracted Malaria (John Cotton 1585-1652) and smallpox (Tobias Crisp 1600-1643).

Many wrote accounts of their dying thoughts, their love for Christ and their desire to be with the Lord. Thomas Taylor (1576-1632) on his deathbed stated '*In Christ I am more than a conqueror. Oh I serve a good God who covers all imperfections and gives great wages for little and in mercy has provided for me*'. The famous John Bunyan's last words as he raised his hands were: '*take me for I come to thee*'. Andrew Gray (1633-1656) lived only 33 years and often wrote about his desire to be with the Lord. The Lord granted his wish early.

Their Scholarship and Writings

With few exceptions, the Puritans were highly trained and educated men, almost all trained at Oxford or Cambridge. It is doubtful we will ever see a group of church pastors as learned as the Puritans. Their writings were solidly grounded in scripture and showed great skill in exegesis and exposition, more than any group before or after. Most had Masters degrees and many were professors and Doctors of Theology. Interestingly some were saved after their formal training in languages, the arts and even theology. Most had a command of several languages including Hebrew and Greek. Herman Witsius (1636-1708) began Latin learning at age 5. At 15 he took up theological studies and could then speak Latin, Hebrew and Greek fluently. He was also a masterful debater.

Jonathan Edwards, considered by many to be the Einstein of Christianity, had a brilliant mind which delved deeply into the things of God. He preached the most famous American sermon '*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*'.

Their Preaching

The Puritans saw themselves as ambassadors for God in their preaching and

writings. They often preached expositively through passages and entire books. Their services had the primary act of worship as the preaching of the Word (averaging one hour sermons). Because most were pastors they saw the application of the Word as vital. Many historians see this period of history as the ‘golden age of preaching’ and arguably ‘no group of preachers in church history has matched their comprehensively and powerfully biblical doctrinal experimental and practical preaching’. (1) Their loyalty to the Word, their zeal in preaching and their dependency on the Spirit was unmatched. Many approached the pulpit as if it were their last sermon. Their plain style differed from the Anglican ministers of the day. They addressed the conscience and the mind. Richard Baxter saw it as ‘a dying man speaking to a dying man’. (2)

Their sermon preparation was exegetical, expositional and then applicatory. Many spoke of days of sermon preparation time. They interpreted the Bible literally and grammatically. They depended on the Holy Spirit for illumination and so their sermons were bathed in much prayer.

The Gospel and Evangelism

The Puritans were masters at teaching the law and grace in the Gospel. Perkins stated ‘*The sharp needle of the law must first pierce the heart before the scarlet thread of the Gospel is drawn in*’. (3) Flavel wrote: ‘*The law wounds; the Gospel cures*’. (4) They disagreed with the Lutherans who said the law was only for condemnation for sin and who tended to not value the law after salvation. However, the Puritans saw the law as a moral rule for life. They strongly denounced antinomianism (‘against the law’ - a low view of sin and the law). Conversion was not a new manner but a new life. Some spoke of ‘the third use of the law’ - the ‘first’ being the civil to restrain men; the ‘second’ evangelical in the Gospel for conviction; and the ‘third’ use as a rule of life after conversion when the law becomes ‘the law of liberty’. Watson wrote: ‘*The gospel sweetens the law, it makes us serve God with delight*’. (5)

Puritan writing and preaching was highly gospel based, evangelistic and with the law to convict of sin. They called people to come to Christ. The retention rate of professions was high. They expected fruit to show true conversions. They preached to the will knowing unsaved man’s will is ‘dead in sins’ and cannot choose Christ of itself and so they depended on the Holy Spirit’s quickening.

Puritan sermons and literature reached into national churches, into homes and educational institutions. The Puritans were the forerunners of tracts and evangelistic materials. Many saw revivals on the mission field as well as in their own churches. John Elliot (1604-1690), before he translated the Bible for the native Americans, set up ‘praying towns’ and saw over 1,000 converted.

Their Doctrines

Although their doctrines were similar to the Reformers before them, the Puritans delved more into the ‘experimental’ side of theology, desiring doctrine

to be lived out in experience and applications in life. Their striving for intimacy and their fellowship with God shaped their writings, emotions and minds as well as their preaching. They were well known for their reflective thoughts and meditations on God, His attributes and His Heaven. Puritans had a unique passion for fellowship with God which penetrated their very souls and their emotions. God's goodness and his holiness were explored in great detail. The Puritans grappled with and meditated on the idea of 'eternity' and the concepts of time. They linked eternity with God's immutability as a necessary attribute of God, immutability being where all attributes unite. Stephen Charnock (1628-1680) - wrote at great lengths on the attributes of God. (6)

The Puritan era was essentially a holiness movement seeking further reformation and renewal in churches. But the Puritan impact on the populace in England and on the continent was especially because most of the Puritans were not just theologians but local church pastors. This fact cannot be understated in their impact on whole nations. Despite their scholarship they were known for their plain language in preaching, preaching that often saw revival.

The Puritans were an offence and often an embarrassment to Church of England ministers, as Puritan preaching was popular with the common people often causing large numbers to attend their sermons. Some too were masterful debaters who knew the scriptures so well that those opposing them were no match. William Ames (1576-1633) was considered to be the '*hammer of the Arminians*' in his debates and writings against them.

The Puritans were ever distancing themselves from the Lutheran and Anglican churches which they believed held over too many Roman practices, although they agreed with them on Justification by faith alone. The Puritans wrote and preached extensively on the Doctrines of Grace, Justification by faith alone and the imputed righteousness. Arguably the Puritans developed these doctrines with a more Christocentric approach as well as 'experimental' - applying the doctrines to the life and experience of the believers they preached to.

The Puritans were Congregationalists, some Baptists (John Bunyan) and others Presbyterian. Hence they differed widely and at times had sharp disagreements on church government styles, which was a barrier to unity. (Most were Presbyterian in government). John Owen in his lifetime gravitated from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism.

They were united in rejection of the office of 'bishop' as it was in the Anglican churches. The Puritans saw the job of the pastor to feed the flock, pray, administer sacraments, defend the gospel, labour for souls, preach the word, care for needs and lead a Godly life (1Tim.4:16). Deacons were appointed to help with the needs of the people and receive offerings in the church (1Tim.3:8-13).

The Puritans were united in demolishing the doctrines of Roman Catholicism and their semi-Pelagianism. (7) They also strongly refuted the Socinians who rejected the Trinity, the deity of Christ, substitution and predestination and who rationalised many of these things.

The Puritans were Monotheists (1Cor.8:6; Dt.6:4; 32:39; Is.44:8). They attributed deity to all three persons of the Godhead. Owen summarised the trinity:

‘That God is one; that this one God is Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; that the Father is the Father of the Son; and the Son the Son of the Father; and the Holy Ghost the Spirit of the Father...’

Their Trinitarian doctrines were deeply thought out and meditated on with sections in catechisms developed on this. Much of their theology centred around each person of the Godhead. Each person shares fully in the life of the other (‘Intra-trinitarian Communion’). Puritans sought communion with all three members, something arguably lacking today in theologies which focus often on one member of the Godhead to the minimising of the others. Their christology was pneumatic (on the Holy Spirit) and their pneumatology was Christocentric. They steered a path between the rationalists who denied the subjective work of the Spirit, and the ‘fanatics’ who developed mystical operations of the Spirit.

The Puritans also refuted what they called the ‘Free will’ Arminians. Puritans believed in what would be termed ‘free agency’ - *‘agents, as the wills of men, are causes most free and indefinite, or unlimited lords of their own actions, in respect of their internal principle of operation (that is their own nature)’*. (8) ‘Free Will’ differs from ‘Free Agency’ in that free will says man has complete freedom in and of himself to choose Christ for salvation - this contradicts much scripture (1Cor.2:14; Rom.8:7,8; Jn.6:44; 2Cor.4:4; Jn.8:36; Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13; Rom.6:9,14). Charnock responded to Arminian teachings by once stating *‘election is the cause of faith, and not faith the cause of election...Men are not chosen because they believe, but they believe because they were chosen’*. This theology was uniform across the board of Reformers and Puritans.

The Westminster Confession in 1647 and Savoy Declaration 1658 accurately represented the bulk of the Puritan teachings. Many of the Puritans, because of their extensive knowledge, were called to prepare and write these confessions. The Westminster Larger Catechism was also largely composed by Puritans. These Catechisms were also extensively used in home devotions and with children.

On some subjects the Puritans differed - in baptism they varied in doctrine and mode. The differences here were in the understanding of the Abrahamic covenant and the participants of the covenant and how this related to the New Covenant.

On the Lord’s Supper they rejected Rome’s ‘transubstantiation’ but differed on who should take communion and in restrictions and ‘examinations’ of new participants.

Their Soteriology

The Puritans followed the Reformers in their teaching of salvation and in Justification and Sanctification. Most set Justification as being at the point of salvation; others spoke of the aspect of eternity. The Westminster Confession somewhat combined these ideas: *‘God did from all eternity decree to justify the elect,; and Christ did in the fullness of time, die for their sins and rise again for their justification; nevertheless they are not justified until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them’* (Ch.11.4). Goodwin stated the elect are ungodly and under a wrath until justified and they believe.

The Puritans wrote much about the ‘Ordo Salutis’ (‘order of salvation’) in the Calling, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Glorification. Almost all were united in the passive nature of man in the calling to salvation. *‘A spiritual principle of grace is generated in the will of man’* (Ames 1:26.21).

The Puritans were similar to the earlier Reformers in that they were strong advocates of the ‘Doctrines of Grace’ now renamed and often redescribed as ‘Calvinism’. (8) The original terms were usually Total Depravity/Inability; Unconditional Election; Effectual Calling; Particular Redemption; Preservation of the saints. In the 20th century these were redescribed in an acronym ‘TULIP’ (Total Depravity; Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints). (9) Some Puritans such as Richard Baxter, differed on the doctrine of ‘Particular Redemption’ and thus some were arguably more ‘Arminian’ than others. All were strong on ‘unconditional election’, the ‘effectual calling’ and the ‘depravity’/inability of man. Most if not all opposed strongly the Arminian doctrines refuted at the Synod of Dort (1618-19) and in many of the Confessions of the day. A few Puritans were considered somewhat ‘high’ or ‘strong’ ‘Calvinists’ (eg. Matthew Henry, John Gill).

The Puritans clearly saw Predestination and Election as in eternity *‘before the foundation of the world’* (Eph:1:4). Election was a special ‘choosing out of’ (*‘eklēgo’*). Predestination was a decree to foreordain to some end. Election involves the end; predestination involves the means. William Perkins, often considered the ‘father of Puritanism’ wrote much on Predestination. Ian Murray says: *‘The doctrine of election was vital to the Puritans...’ [it was] the golden thread that runs through the whole Christian system’*. (10) The Puritans, like the Reformers and most church leaders in history, rejected the Belgian heresy (and now a common modern teaching) concerning God’s choosing according to ‘his foreknowledge of mans free will’. Perkins also countered the Roman Catholic semi-Pelagian predestination which taught a grounds of mercy with a foreseen human preparation and meritorious works. Most Puritans taught God saves some from his mercy and others he leaves to be judged in their sins (an ‘infralapsarian’ view common to the Confessions of faith) (11). Some Puritans went further than this and were considered ‘high Calvinists’ with a ‘supralapsarian’ view in that they taught some were actively or positively damned because of their sin entirely and that predestination concerning both has no other cause than God’s will. (11) All rejected the idea that God was the author of sin. God decreed the fall of man but did not cause man to sin. God had a purpose for the fall but did not see the fall as good. The goodness of God was the motive behind all the Puritan thought on these doctrines of God’s sovereignty

The Puritans were united against Arminianism and what was sometimes called ‘middle knowledge’ - that God elects certain individuals not freely but depending on whether that individual will of himself choose Christ or not. This was repulsive to the Reformers and the Puritans alike. This had God responding to possible choices by man and made God not sovereign in his decrees.

In ‘Regeneration’ - they saw this as an act of God giving faith to the sinner. Regeneration to many Puritans was not necessarily a single event. The

Westminster Confession often uses the terms conversion, regeneration and the calling interchangeably. Whately (1583-1639) in describing the new birth, stated '*If Christ should come, and die, for one man, ten thousand times; all those deaths should profit that one man nothing at all for his salvation, unless he be made a new creature*'. (12) Man is passive in regeneration; he is born of the Spirit (Jn.3:5,6). Man is impotent in and of himself (Rom.8:7; Jn.6:44); he is not born of the Spirit *and* his own free will.

The doctrine of the 'Effectual Calling' (now called by many 'Irresistible Grace') was taught at length. The external call is extended to all but only the elect will heed to the 'effectual call' (Jn.6.37-44,65; Acts 16:14).

Like the Reformers, the Puritans were united in their opposition to Roman Catholicism. In teaching justification by faith alone and not by works and sacraments, they fought against the 'double justification' of Catholicism whereby it was claimed there was an infusion of grace in baptism and that original sin was extinguished, and that good works also infused grace. John Owen argued that this was a confusion between Justification and Sanctification. Owen argued there were only two ways a man could be justified - by the law or by grace. Imputation solves this problem. Two things must be done for the sinner - *his sins forgiven and a righteousness given*. The law must be obeyed for him. They held to the typical Reformers view on the 'double' aspect of justification - that our sin is imputed to Christ and righteousness is imputed to us upon belief (2Cor.5:21).

The Puritans had what they commonly called the 'golden chain' of decrees from God: effectual calling was the first part (Jn.6:37-44); then the breaking of a sinners heart by the law and an understanding of sin. The chain ended in glorification (Rom.8:28-30).

Many Puritans taught much on 'covenants' and the idea that Adam was under a *covenant of works* before the fall and then a *covenant of grace*. The doctrine was probably invented by Puritan Didley Fenner (1558-1587). Puritan expositions were often based around these covenants. William Ames saw the covenant of grace 'continuing through' historical dispensations until finally in the last day believers will be swept up into glory, and the covenant of grace inaugurated at the fall will finally be consummated. (13)

On the Scriptures...

They saw the scriptures as the rule for Sanctification (Jn.17:17). Other methods they said produced moralism, legalism and self improvement. (14) The Puritans believed that knowledge of God is not possible unless God gives revelation. Salvation is only by God revealing Christ to the sinner by the means of the Holy Spirit. Natural theology ('general revelation') is only sufficient to leave humans 'without excuse' (Rom.1:18-21) - it cannot save them but only prepare a man for grace. A supernatural faith is required to believe supernatural revelation. (15) But the Puritans were strongly opposed to extrabiblical revelations as was shown by the refutations of the Quakers.

The Quakers were a group not dissimilar to the Charismatic/Pentecostal

movement of the 20th century. John Owen strongly opposed these Quakers who separated the Word from the Spirit and relied on promptings, impressions ‘direct’ from the Spirit. Owen quoted Hebrews 1:1,2 and wrote whole defenses against the new Quaker teachings. The authority of the Word comes from itself. ‘*He that would utterly separate the Spirit from the Word had as good burn his Bible*’. (16) A high view on the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture meant the Puritans saw the scriptures as the only rule for understanding the mind of God. (17)

Calvin, Luther and many Reformers were theologians of the Holy Spirit but the Puritans were to take this to another level, especially when confronted with groups like the Quakers who at one time numbered 30,000-40,000 in Britain in the 1600’s. John Owen led the way in many discourses and refutations of the day. The Quakers were anti intellectualism as they saw it. They even tried to sway students of Owen and others against their study methods and to trust the ‘inner light’ of the Spirit (they quoted John 1:9). They relied heavily on this ‘light’ of their own consciences. At one time this led to a Quaker, Elizabeth Fletcher, to bare her breasts to arrest the students attention and walk half naked through the streets of Oxford as a protest against the Presbyterians and Independants. Owen accused them of blaspheming the Spirit and profaning the scriptures. They were whipped and expelled from the town.

Eventually the Quakers taught that the ‘voice’ of the Spirit they were relying on was above scriptures which had been fulfilled in its role. (18) Owen saw this as a failure to understand the Trinity and their roles. He also saw the problem similar to Roman Catholicism in that ‘*Roman Catholicism rejected its sufficiency; while the Quakers denied its necessity*’. (19)

Their Hermeneutics, Exegesis

Puritans addressed many heresies as a failing to interpret scripture properly. The Puritans far excelled other ministers in the depth of their interpreting and exposition of scripture. As pastors they applied the scriptures to the everyday lives of their hearers. Although most Puritans rejected allegorical interpretation, some did slip into allegorising unnecessarily but often for the purposes of application. They were strong on typology and saw Christ in every area of scripture. Thomas Adam (1583-1652) wrote: ‘*Christ is the sum of the whole Bible, prophesied, typified, prefigured, exhibited, demonstrated, to be found in every leaf, almost in every line... Christ is the main, the centre...*’ (20) Hence they read books like the Song of Solomon as being all about Christ and his church.

Their Prayer life and ‘Meditations’

The Puritans were deep thinkers and writers on prayer. Their holiness and piety were renown. Their prayer lives were a model for all. Many prayed for hours each day and several times a day. Yet they were often brutally honest in their battles with the flesh in the discipline of prayer.

They developed the art of meditation to new levels. Many like John Flavel and

the later Jonathan Edwards claimed to have had joy so full in meditations as to lose sight of the world and be ‘overcome’. Simply put, Puritan piety and holiness was unmatched. They were diligent seekers of a deeper communion with God and were never satisfied with their own efforts. Many of their meditations on such things as the glories of Heaven and the beauties of Christ show a hunger rarely seen in any other group of ministers. At first glance it could appear they were almost mystical in their endeavours in prayer and meditations. Yet they were adamantly opposed to the ‘fanatics’ of the day who disregarded the Word of God and Christ and concentrated on the Spirit.

On Angels and Demons

More than the Reformers the Puritans developed further a biblical theology on angels both good and evil. They also had to contend with and put a balance to a lot of folklore introduced from centuries of Roman Catholicism.

On Eschatology

Similar to the Reformers, the Puritans did not excel in this area. The range of views amongst the Puritans was at times wide. Millennialism was somewhat revived by some and popular by the 17th Century. Many believed also in a mass conversion of the Jews in the last days. Some went to extremes in setting dates for the Millennium, often incited by social and political circumstances of the times. The arrival in New England of the British Puritans caused some, such as the Mathers family, to see this as a dawning of a new age and even the millennium being ushered in. New England was seen as akin to a ‘promised land’ and even a ‘New Jerusalem’ (John Cotton 1585-1652). Cotton believed the Millennium would begin in his lifetime and even in a certain decade. Revivals were predicted. However, New England did not live up to the expectations, yet these failed views actually motivated many preachers in evangelism and missions.

On The Christian ‘Sabbath’

Calvin and the Reformers affirmed a Sabbath for Christians but not as the Puritans did. Calvin’s understanding of Hebrews 4 shows that the Sabbath was something that could be done on any day of the week. But the Puritans drove the idea further and were renowned for their Sabbath observance. They rejected sports and other events and attempted to reform the Church of England in this. The ‘Sabbath’ became a much disputed topic.

Conclusion

Truly the Puritans were ‘giants’ of the faith once delivered. They excelled in theology and the scriptures both in doctrine and practise. Their holiness and piety in life was legendary, the likes which arguably was not seen prior or seen

thereafter. We would do well to study their writings as well as their lives!

Terry Arnold

Bibliography

'A Puritan Theology - Doctrine For Life'. In more than 1,000 pages this book published by Reformation Heritage Books arguably has no equal for its depth and wideness of review. The references and bibliography are exhaustive. The authors, Joel Beeke and Mark Jones, are considered foremost scholars in Puritan history and theology. The list of endorsees is extensive. The book covers theology from Christology to Eschatology.

References

- (1) Joel Beeke, *'Puritan Evangelism: a Biblical Approach'*.
- (2) *'The Dying Thoughts of the Reverend and Learned and Holy Mr. Richard Baxter'*, 167.
- (3) Perkins as Quoted in Ernest Kevin *'The Grace of Law' - a study in Puritan theology'*, Sola Dio Gloria Pub. 1993
- (4) Flavel, *'Method of Grace'* in Works 2:297.
- (5) Watson, *'Body of Practical Divinity'*, 241.
- (6) Charnock, *'Existence and Attributes'*, 200.
- (7) A synergistic understanding of salvation (both man and God) as opposed to monergistic (God alone). Man is not fully 'dead' in sins. Condemned in two synods. See *'Calvinism & Arminianism - Out of the Maze'* by the author.
- (8) John Owen, *'A Display of Arminianism'*, in *Works*, 10:36.
- (9) See our book *'Calvinism & Arminianism - Out of the Maze'* by the author.
- (10) Iain Murray *'The Puritans and the Doctrine of Election'*, Ch.5.
- (11) Supralapsarianism has God ordaining the Fall, creating certain people for the purpose of being condemned and then providing salvation for those He elected. Supralapsarians would say the reprobate (non-elect) are *'vessels of wrath fitted for destruction'* (Rom.9:22), were ordained to that role and the means by which they fell into sin was ordained. Supralapsarianism suggests that God's decree of election logically preceded His decree to permit Adam's fall; that their damnation is first of all an act of divine sovereignty and only secondarily an act of divine justice. This view distinguishes them from the Infralapsarian position being the position held by most of the Reformers, Puritans and the major Confessions in history (including the Westminster). The latter position has God allowing the Fall and providing salvation. God chose the elect and 'passed over' the non-elect who are rightly judged for their sins. For more see *'Calvinism & Arminianism - Out of the Maze'* by the author.
- (12) Whately (1583-1639), *'The New Birth'*, 13
- (13) *'A Puritan Theology'*, Joel Beeke, P.50
- (14) *Ibid*, P.533
- (15) Goodwin, *'Of the Creatures'*, Works, Vol.7
- (16) Owen, *'A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit'*, Works, 3:192
- (17) *'A Puritan Theology'*, Joel Beeke, P.21
- (18) Isaac Penington, *'Letter'* 202-3.
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- (20) *'Meditations Upon Some Parts of the Creed'*, Works, 3:224.

A Fresh Look at Revelation - Part 6

In **Part 1** (chapters 1-4 - *Diakrisis* July/August 2019) the intent was to show that the book of Revelation *is to be understood* at least as far as *what 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 - *Diakrisis* September/October 2019) we continued to explore *what is 'literal' or 'figurative' and why*. This was done by searching the same *symbols, signs and wording* elsewhere.

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

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

Part 5 (chapters 9,10 - *Diakrisis* November/December 2020) - The sixth trumpet judgement brings a more severe judgement - *death*. More than half the earth's population is now destroyed in divine judgements! The people left alive are unrepentant.

Part 6 (Chapter 11)

Vs.1,2 *'And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months'*.

Most believe this is the temple in the time of the great tribulation. The 'reed' was a measuring rod (mentioned again in Rev.21:15,16). Here it says to measure three things - *'the temple...the altar and them that worship therein'*.

The outer 'Gentile' court is not to be measured, for this section and the 'holy city' they *'shall tread under foot forty and two months'*. Luke 21:24 mentions a time when Jerusalem will be *'compassed with armies'*, there will be *'wrath upon this people'* and *'Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled'*. The period of time when Jerusalem will be *'trodden under foot'* is *'forty and two months'* - three and a half years.

Vs.3,4 *'And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy*

a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth

The 'two witnesses' are literal beings (they have bodies and clothing) and are witnesses for Christ ('*my two witnesses*'). (Two witnesses are important for a 'testimony' to be 'confirmed' - Dt.17:6; 19:15 Matt.18:16).

Many believe these two witnesses to be Enoch and Elijah who were translated and did not see death. Others believe they are Moses and Elijah because of the close similarity to the miracles of Moses. Malachi 4:5 prophesies '*I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*'.

The two witnesses will 'prophesy' for 3.5 years, the last half of the Great Tribulation. 'Prophesy' means to *speak forth the Word of God*. They do this in '*sackcloth*' - a Jewish symbol of mourning (Gen.37:34; Dan.9:3). This preaching will no doubt include judgements and the Gospel. These two witnesses are represented by the figures of '*two olive trees*' and '*two candlesticks*'. The same symbols are mentioned in Zechariah chapter 4 where they are '*the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth*' (vs.14). In Zechariah there is a 'double reference' - the first to two witnesses Joshua and Zerubbabel, but also a future reference to the two witnesses here in Revelation. The symbols of the '*olive trees*' and the '*candlesticks*' most likely refer to a flow of oil from the trees to the lamps and this being Holy Spirit power (Zech.4:6).

Vs.5,6 '*And if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will*'.

Is this to be taken literally? Note the similarity to the plagues that were put upon Egypt in the time of Moses which are usually taken literally.

The purpose of miracles is to authenticate the person. Similarly to many such miracles in the Old Testament, these beings have been given great 'power' to '*devour their enemies*' with '*fire*', '*shut the heavens*' from rain, turn '*water to blood*' and to send '*plagues*' on the earth in the period of 1,260 days,

Vs.7 '*And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them*'.

When the two witnesses finish their 'testimony' for Christ after 3.5 years, the antichrist '*beast*' arises to full power. This beast is energised by the Devil (he is described as the '*dragon*' in Chapter 12). This here is the first mention of the beast from the '*pit*' who is to be a world ruler (ch.13). He kills the two witnesses.

Vs.8-10 '*And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in*

graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth’.

These literal beings from Heaven have ‘bodies’ that ‘lie in the street’ in Jerusalem (‘where...our lord was crucified’), called ‘Sodom and Egypt’ (because of the spiritual depravity). People will ‘see’ their bodies unburied for ‘three and a half days’. The technology for this is now here. The unsaved on the earth will ‘rejoice’ and celebrate the deaths as the ‘torment’ delivered by them is ended.

Vs.11-14 *‘And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly’*

After 3.5 days the ‘Spirit of life’ (see Gen.3:7) resurrects the bodies of the two witnesses and they ‘stand up’. Fear falls on all who see this. A ‘voice from Heaven’ raptures them up and this is seen by their ‘enemies’. This ascension ‘in a cloud’ is similar to the Lord’s ascension. The second ‘woe’ strikes the earth with a ‘great earthquake’ that causes ‘one tenth’ of Jerusalem to be destroyed and 7,000 killed. Those left in Jerusalem are in fear and repentance, ‘giving glory to the God in heaven’. The seventh trumpet and the ‘third woe’ is coming ‘quickly’.

These ‘trumpet’ judgements are not the same as the ‘last trump’ (1Thess.4:16; 1Cor.15:52). The former is over a period of time; the latter a ‘moment’.

Vs.15-19 *‘The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, Saying, We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and was, and are to come; because you have taken to you your great power, and have reigned. And the nations were angry, and your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward unto your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail’.*

Each of the series of judgements (seals, trumpets and vials or bowls) has a parenthetical pause between the 6th and 7th judgement event. Many of the events in this last pause do not occur till chapter 15 and beyond. The seventh trumpet is now preparing the way for the return of Christ, the ‘Day of the Lord’.

Verses 15-17 describe ‘voices in heaven’ declaring the coming earthly reign of Christ in which ‘the kingdoms of the earth’ are become ‘the kingdoms of our

Lord, and of his Christ’ in which he shall *‘reign’*. The Greek tense here (in vs.15 and 18) is peculiarly a Greek futuristic aorist - describing something as already having taken place (*‘are become’*) yet the event had not occurred yet.

Much scripture points to a literal Millennial reign of Christ *upon the earth* on *David’s throne* in *Jerusalem* (Rev.5:10; Is.2:1-4; 9:6-7; 24:23; Zech.14:1-21; Jer.23:5-8; Mic.4:1-5). Daniel chapter 2 and 7 also look forward to this kingdom.

Note the equality of the two persons of the Trinity here (*‘Our Lord and his Christ’*) in this *‘kingdom’*. At this the *‘twenty four elders’* in thanks worship God as being eternal (*‘are, was and to come’*). The *‘twenty four elders’* (mentioned in Chapter 4,5,7,11,19) worship the one on the throne (4:10; 5:9-14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4); they proclaim him as Christ (5:5,6); and have the *‘prayers of the saints’* (5:8). They are most likely redeemed men from earth as they are *‘clothed in white raiment’*, a phrase used for the imputed righteousness toward the saints; and are made *‘kings and priests and shall reign on the earth’* (5:10). They have crowns of victory (*‘stéphanos’*) as redeemed by Christ.

The *‘anger’* of the nations is matched by the *‘wrath’* of God. The *‘dead’* are *‘judged’*; all the believers, those who *‘fear his name’* are *‘rewarded’*; and those who *‘destroy the earth’* with sin and evil will be destroyed.

The temple in Heaven is opened revealing the *‘ark of His Testament’* in the Holy of Holies, which contains God’s law and covenant and place of atonement for sin. The application here is showing a communion, a fellowship with God’s people. With this comes the often mentioned *‘lightnings...thunderings, an earthquake and great hail’* (4:5; 8:5; 16:17,18).

The great final outpouring of God’s wrath is under way in the final cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil.

‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God’ (Heb.10:31).

Terry Arnold

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