**Response to Glenn Hill’s Book**

***Christianity’s Great Dilemma***

1. Much of the early pages of Hill’s book declare that mainstream evangelicalism’s drumbeat that “Jesus is coming soon” is flawed doctrine. I happen to agree. Many have failed to rightly divide the NT books of Israel’s earthly hope from the books of the heavenly hope (the later Paulines). Because we are currently under “the dispensation of the secret”, in which the promise to believers is “every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ” (Eph.1:3), what have we to do with Israel’s earthly hope and the expectation of an earthly return of Christ to rule the earth? Most of Christianity’s flawed expectations arise from a massive failure to “be diligent … rightly dividing the word of the truth” – one of Paul’s last commands to faithful men (number 11 out of 34 commands in his last book, 2 Timothy). I should point out that concerning “Jesus is coming soon”, the part I cannot endorse is the “soon” condition.
2. The principal line of the book goes like this. Jesus said He would return within a generation. Jesus is not a liar. Therefore, He must have returned already. And the event that most coincides with this conclusion would be the judgment on Judea/Jerusalem around AD 70. So the argument is purely deductive reasoning. But for a deductive conclusion to be valid, the hypothesis – Jesus said He would return in a generation – must be correct. I differ with the book here also.
3. Besides Christianity’s failure to rightly divide the word of the truth, there is a failure to pay attention to what the word of God actually says in its details. The remedy requires looking beyond favored English translations, because most of them get it wrong in some respects. Take, for example, the matter of the timing of Christ’s return. How about that oft-quoted Mat.24:34? –

“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.” (p.16)

What it says literally is:

“Truly I say to you that this generation may by no means pass by (pass away) until if all these things may come to be.”

The two verbs are in the Subjunctive, or conditional mood. “Until if” is a literal translation of *heōs an*. This interesting combination, *heōs an*, needs a study of its own. *Heōs* means “until” and *an* is a contraction of *ean,* the conditional form of the conjunction “if”. Because “until if” is stilted English, I will use “until perhaps”, a more idiomatic English rendering.

A very similar statement is at Mat.16:28 –

“Truly I say to you that there are some having stood here who may in no wise taste death until perhaps they may see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.”

So what Jesus said in effect was that there was a distinct possibility that some of his hearers MIGHT live to see His return and take up His kingdom. This, like so many Old Testament prophecies was meant to stimulate a *moral response* – this is the real purpose of prophecy, not to demonstrate what a good predictor God is. Among believers, it should be an unshakeable tenet that God is omniscient. To what degree He sees fit to share His prescience with his creatures is yet another matter. He has not written us blueprints of the future that can be checked by us beforehand for mathematical precision – some prophecies are precise, while others are vague. God is looking for faith from those who proclaim to follow Him, faith in the face of opposition and contradiction. So He expresses Himself at times in ways that can be contradicted by the ignorant and unbelieving. He even allows these opposers to flourish, so that the hearts of His people can be proven (1 Thes.2:4).

Hill makes the case on p.35 for a better handling of v.27, based on translating *mellō* as “about to” – i.e., “the Son of man is about to come in the glory of His Father…” While this is a possible rendering of *mellō*, it does not do justice to some of its nuances. In Thayer, under definition 2. (“joined to an infinitive”), we find:

1. *to be on the point of doing*
2. *to intend, have in mind, think to*
3. as in Greek writers from Homer down, of those things which will come to pass … by fixed necessity or divine appointment
4. in general, of what is *sure* to happen
5. to be on the point of doing without ever doing, i.e., *to delay*

While I don’t think that Jesus was using definition e), I also don’t think He meant a) to the exclusion of b), c), and d), which seems to be Hill’s interpretation. Was there some immediacy in His meaning? Yes, there was the potential for that, as I have brought out in my translation of v.28 – a generational immediacy, but provisional in nature (the implied provision: that Israel responds). Please bear in mind that the idea of “next” is part of the meaning of *mellō*, as in the depiction of Jesus in Eph.1:21 –

“up above every principality and authority and power and lordship and every name named, not only in this age but also in the **coming** *one* (or next one).”

There is no indication here that the coming age is on the point of beginning – only that it will follow the present age. So the next thing on Jesus’ agenda, where His covenant purposes were concerned, was to be (and will yet be) His return to earth. But none of the covenant prophecies foresaw the interruption (the ‘parenthesis’, as some have called it) that is called “the dispensation of the secret” (Eph.3:9, per the best Gk. Mss.) – this was not revealed formerly to the sons of men (Eph.3:2-6). One can with the wisdom of hindsight see an allowance for such a gap in Israel’s prophetic clock in the gap between Pentecost and Tabernacles, the gap between early and late harvests, and the gap indicated by the Lo-Ammi prophecies of Hosea 1:9-10; 3:3-4. Of course none of these things revealed the non-ethnic blessings indicated in Eph.3:2-6. Today we are living in a time of “No Covenant”.

Let’s explore some of those other *heōs an* texts.Mat.5:18 –

“For truly I say to you, until perhaps the heaven and the earth may pass away, one *yôd* or one pen-stroke may by no means pass away from **the law** until perhaps all things may come to pass.”

This statement is couched in conditionality (3 Subjunctives and 2 instances of *heōs an*) and generality – what did He mean by “all things” (*panta*)? – and what are the meanings of the pen-strokes of the law (each letter in Heb. & Aram. required a set number of pen-strokes for its composition)? What this statement seems to me to be saying is that some points of the law – perhaps very fine points, like pen-strokes – may not be fulfilled prophetically. This COULD mean good news for Israel, considering that some parts of the law constituted the curse for covenant-breaking – Deu.28:15-68. I suspect Jesus’ declaration could mean much more than this.

The next occurrence of *panta*, in Mat.7:12, may further complicate an understanding of Mat.5:18.

“Therefore, all things whatsoever if (*ean*) you may *desire* that men may do for you, thus even you do (Imperative mood) for them, for this is **the law** and the prophets.”

Luk.6:31 simplifies this a bit (omits reference to the law), but then the Lukan context adds other difficult statements, like don’t resist violence or the theft of your goods (vv.29-30). This would seem to be part of the “all things” that constitute “the law and the prophets” for Israel. But couldn’t one man’s *desires* run a bit ahead of the law? Mat.7:12 seems to open the door of the law very, very wide.

Jesus’ sermon on the plain contains another *heōs an* text in Mat.5:26 –

“Truly I say to you, you may by no means come out from there (prison) until perhaps you may pay the last penny.”

Two more Subjunctives with *heōs an*. The immediate context is full of harsh judgment for one’s treatment of a brother – e.g., Gehenna (a criminal’s end) for calling him “fool”. These are severe judgments, and without forgiveness, not even a penny’s worth! In what way did this become part of the “all things” of **the law**? Wouldn’t the offended brother, in wanting to “do unto others” forgive the offender the penny? Well, maybe. And wouldn’t a brother who followed Jesus’ teaching by praying “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Mat.6:12) be a hypocrite if he failed to show a penny’s worth of forgiveness? And how about “Judge not, lest you may be judged” (Mat.7:1, with another Subjunctive).

These are some very “hard sayings” by Jesus when you begin comparing them, and it is no wonder that many were spoken in a conditional sense. They were meant to awaken possibilities, and provoke people’s thinking about what would be required to keep the law to perfection. And if no man could attain that perfection without a spiritual enablement from above, then shouldn’t men reflect on that personal defect with the greatest humility? Think about the Sons of Thunder before Pentecost – even Jesus’ closest associates needed shaking up, and shaping up, if they were ever going to be fit to sit as judges of Israel.

I believe these teachings also convey some of the conditions under which Jesus might find His “lost sheep of the house of Israel” ready for His return to take up His earthly kingdom with Him. They were certainly not ready at His first visitation.

Another *heōs an* text tracks closely with the previous, Mat.10:23 –

“But when they may pursue you in this city, flee into the other. For truly I say to you, You may not by any means finish the cities of Israel until perhaps the Son of man may come.”

Note here the three Subjunctives, in addition to the *heōs an* phrase. This is another “maybe” situation. How would we take it if we used the standard of Glenn Hill’s book and stripped out the conditionality? We would have to conclude that Jesus returned well BEFORE the end of Acts, because it would not likely have taken the 40 years to AD 70 to cover the cities of Israel – just more deductive reasoning!

And how does Mat.10:23 compare with Mat.24:14?

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in the whole habitable world (usu. understood as the Roman Empire) as a witness to all the nations, and then will come the end.”

Even if “all the nations” is limited to those of the Roman Empire of that time, doesn’t it seem improbable that such a vast territory could be covered with the gospel message, while not all the cities of Israel got to hear it? But note the difference: Mat.10:23 is full of contingency, while Mat.24:14 is definite. Even so, the Twelve seem to have been in no great hurry to fulfill Mat.24:14. A beginning can be seen in Peter’s Pentecost speech to Jews “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5), but as for the nations in the sense of their non-Jewish nationals, as late as Acts 10 Peter was resisting going to Cornelius. The calling of Paul and Barnabas got to the heart of fulfilling Mat.24:14, while the Twelve concentrated on Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and also the Jews of the diaspora, many of whom were visiting Jerusalem to keep the Feasts of the law. But the comparison of these two texts still jars my sense of timing requirements.

Another problematic *heōs an* text is Mat.23:39 –

“For I say to you, You may in no wise see Me from now on, until perhaps you may say, ‘Blessed is One Coming in *the* name of *the* Lord.’”

Another text full of contingency. But what were His hearers lacking? The “great multitude” had already proclaimed this very thing in 21:8-9! But that was the enthusiasm of the mob, while Jesus was looking for a heart-felt recognition of all that He taught concerning His kingdom. Nor MIGHT they see Him again, until they got it right. When He does come, only a remnant (again) will have it right, for the OT gives an indication of the size of this minority: a third (Zec.13:8-9). As for not seeing Him again, there seems to be an implied “as King” in that statement.

Here’s another problem to consider. Did not Jesus’ prayer from the cross, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do” also apply to the hard-bitten leaders of Israel? I put it to you that it must have applied specifically to them. What was there to forgive among Jesus’ followers, except faint-heartedness – certainly not hard-heartedness, which belonged to His opposers. So, if Jesus pronounced terrible, unconditional judgments on His enemies before the cross, there MUST be the implied contingency that was embedded in His prayer for forgiveness. In effect: “if you keep it up, even after being forgiven your first crimes, here’s what you can expect.” Do we have any corroboration that such an implied contingency might apply to Jesus’ enemies among the Jews?

How about the prophecy of Jonah? One simple sentence was given to the idolatrous Ninevites – “Yet forty days and Nineveh *will be* overthrown!” So, what prompted the Ninevites to declare fasting, sackcloth and ashes, instead of eating, drinking and making merry? The account says that “they believed God.” They certainly didn’t believe Him in the sense that some expositors believe Him today. Firstly, they understood the nature of the warning to be palliative – “Mend your ways, or be overthrown!” They understood the need for a *moral response*, or else their punishment would be well-deserved.

If you study closely the methods of the OT prophets, you will note this pattern (oft repeated): allegations of wrongdoing, and threats of punishment (with an implied immediacy) followed by promises of restoration afterward – and that restoration was often a Messianic restoration (see *Appendix* at the end for an example from Isaiah to show how this works). This is why Daniel was so full of expectation at the end of Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years of punishment (Dan.9:2). Daniel’s prayer for national forgiveness was equivalent of the Apostles’ question, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” The answer given to both Daniel and the Eleven was, “Not yet.” Although the edict of Cyrus permitted all Israelites to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (2 Chr.36:22-23), only a remnant undertook the venture. Likewise, the invitation of the gospel during Acts was answered by a remnant only (Rom.11:5). Was the Acts period the kingdom promised to Israel from Moses to Malachi? Well, it was a foretaste, as Heb.6:4-6 explains –

“For *it is* powerless to those once having been enlightened, and having tasted the heavenly gift, and having become sharers of holy spirit, and having tasted God’s good word and **powers of an age to come**, and having fallen away to renew *them* again toward repentance…”

So the restoration after the Babylonian captivity, and God’s anointed Cyrus who proclaimed it (Isa.44:28-45:1), were types of the Gospels-Acts period call by God’s Anointed Jesus, which period itself was a preamble and a prelude to the “fullness” still being expected during late Acts period (Rom.11:11-12). That fullness (i.e., “fulfillment”) had the potential for realization by the generation that heard Jesus. It MIGHT have happened. But its outworking was contingent upon the *moral response* of Israel.

I also recommend for study the prophetic character of the Mosaic feasts. Israel’s prophetic calendar is laid out in their calendar of feasts. This, too, is part of the “all things” of the law.

The first Passover was a type, which Christ fulfilled for Israel for all time. Part of the Passover celebration was the week of Unleavened Bread, and Christ fulfilled that too (1 Cor.5:7-8). Christ also fulfilled First-fruits (1 Cor.15:20), which was offered during the seven day period generally known as “Passover”.

The very first Pentecost occurred the day that Moses rallied the people to ratify the old covenant at Sinai. It was a type of the ratification of the new covenant at Jerusalem (Acts 2:1 – note Pentecost was “fulfilled fully” – not simply *plēroō*, but *sumplēroō*). The Pentecost feast included a second first-fruits offering WITH leaven, signifying an acceptable offering of sinful men – whereas Christ the First-fruits was offered without leaven (i.e., without sin). See also Paul’s teaching on the two mountains and the two covenants (Gal.4:24-25).

The next cluster of feasts were appointed for the seventh month, the time of the great harvest (in distinction from early harvest which provided the First-fruits and Pentecost grain offerings). This “harvest” is often referred to in the LXX as *sunteleia*, which the NT speaks of significantly:

“And the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is *the* **end-time** of *the* age, and the reapers are angels.” etc. Mat.13:39, 40, 49

The latter harvest appears to have had no first, typical fulfillment in the books of Moses or elsewhere in the Bible. The *sunteleia* feast was composed of Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles. Significantly the first Biblical reference to trumpets was the summoning of Israel to meet with God, Who came down personally, dreadfully atop Sinai (Exo.19:13, 16, 19). Will Israel again join God in a wilderness? Rev.12:13-14 indicates so – and Rev.8 speaks of angelic trumpeters (vv.2, 6, 13) – thus, the historic account of Israel at Sinai is itself a manifold prophetic type.

Tabernacles was to be celebrated by building and occupying temporary shelters built of sticks and brush, as one might do in a wilderness. Again the Sinai experience became a type for a future Israelite occupation of a desert. Such temporary shelters were also used by warriors in the field of battle, and harvesters in their fields of crops. There was a later keeping of Tabernacles that seems significant for two reasons: 1) it indicates that it was the first keeping since the days of Joshua (why the long interim, I wonder? prophetic?), and 2) it was kept outdoors in the rebuilt Jerusalem (perhaps prophetic of a future, somewhat hasty reoccupation of a partially destroyed Jerusalem) – see Neh.8:14-17. A prophecy of keeping Tabernacles is reserved for the nations that will have come against Jerusalem in a future battle, and those that resist its observance will be dealt with severely (Zec.14:16-19). At the time of that battle against Jerusalem, Yahweh will defend His people (Zec.12:6-9), not abandon them, as the Roman general Titus proclaimed when he refused the laurels after defeating them. These prophecies in Zechariah 12 and 14 have not been fulfilled yet, so they must still be future.

To my mind the prophetic event that seems tied to Day of Atonement appears in Zec.12:10 – the “spirit of grace and supplication” poured out on the house of David and all dwelling in Jerusalem has also not happened yet. It will be a solemn religious event – a public and formal time of mourning – it will neither go unnoticed nor unheralded, and it will involve not just a few as in Acts 2, but a multitude by clan and by tribe, wives separately. We could well imagine a redeemed Israel perhaps wanting to sweep under the carpet that their own nation murdered the Anointed One promised by all the prophets, but they must get this national sin confessed and behind them. One cannot explain away Zechariah’s prophecies as having been accomplished during Acts or during the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem.

Some have given Rev.1:7 as a text showing that Zec.12:10 has, or will be fulfilled by the visions of John in that book. True, there is some hint of Zec.12:10, but they differ in several points. Rev.1:7 pertains to “all the tribes of the earth” (*pasai phulai tēs gēs*), while Zec.12:10 has in view only the house of David and dwellers of Jerusalem. Rev.1:7 speaks of a lament by the nations at seeing Christ in the clouds, while Zec.12:10 speaks of a lament by Jews as for an only son. Why will the nations lament seeing Christ return? The parallel for them seems to be in Rev.18:9 when “the kings of the earth” will lament the destruction of Babylon. The nations will be part of the wicked world-system controlled by Babylon. And consider that the first occurrence of this Greek phrase, *pasai phulai tēs gēs*, deals with blessings flowing out from Abraham (LXX of Gen.12:3). Does one wail over blessings arriving? Jesus mentioned that His sign appearing in the heavens would cause this wailing (Mat.24:30). And lastly, it is Zec.14:17 which shows “all the tribes of the earth” in a Millennial setting with the threat of their punishment, if still unrepentant. Rebellion is at the heart of the nations’ lament at seeing Christ’s return.

Here again, the English of KJV and NKJV can be deceiving – Zec.12:10 and Rev.1:7 both say “pierced”, but the Greek words differ. John 19:37 “they will look upon Him Whom they pierced” is the only other NT occurrence of *ekkenteō*, and the scripture fulfilled/speaking there would seem to be a combination of Zec.12:10 (without the lamenting) AND Rev.1:7 – a double fulfillment, at the cross without sorrow, and afterwards with sorrow.

Now if Jesus has already returned, when did “every eye see Him” (nations and Jews), and when did the “**sign** of the Son of man appear”?

And if the Jewish mourning of Zec.12:10 should fail to come to pass, then God’s word will have been broken!

Summarizing for the *sunteleia* feasts, they prophesy events that have not happened yet. There was, however, the potential for their fulfillment by the end of Acts. This was the gist of the hint that Jesus gave when He said, in effect, “maybe this generation”. But for lack of an appropriate *moral response* to the gospel, Jerusalem lost its divine defense and was destroyed – by Rome, and NOT by encompassing nations who will futuristically be defeated in battle, per Zec.12.

Because of the potential for a short time to elapse before Christ returned, His prophetic statements concerning both destruction and future blessing are interleaved – precisely the pattern of similar OT prophecies. Some statements about the doom of the people were NOT made conditionally, unlike the promises of His return. Thus, when Jesus laid the horrific condemnation of Mat.23:35 on the scribes and Pharisees among His hearers, He added, “Truly I say to you all these things will come upon this generation.” (v.36) Note the verb here: Future Indicative, rather than the Aorist Subjunctives that qualified His statement about returning. So, in spite of the implied “unless you repent”, this condemnation was fulfilled at AD 70. Some statements in the Mat.24 and Luk.21 *sunteleia* prophecies can be applied to 70 AD, but they are mingled with statements that cannot be applied to that typical event – a greater anti-type awaits their fulfillment. Here’s a review of those unfulfilled statements:

1. When did Jesus return, appearing like lightning in the sky, similarly as Yahweh did over Sinai? It had no witnesses, so we can only conjure up fanciful conjectures about it. The purpose of the “lightning” simile is to emphasize its great visibility over large distances. There should have been witnesses.
2. When did “many” come claiming to be the Christ?
3. When did “nation rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”? The Levant had been enjoying the Pax Romana for many years, with only the occasional rebellion (like Israel 66-73 AD) to be put down. Compare Jesus’ description of the times of His return with the turmoils of Dan.11:1-12:1, if you want a comparable period – a time of power vacuum and power competition. Rome had no competition in the 1st century AD. “Nation against nation” better describes times SINCE the decline of the Roman Empire.
4. Apart from Antiochus Epiphanes’ desecration, when did the “abomination of desecration” that Jesus spoke of ever stand in the holy place? This *topos hagios* must refer to the Temple, as all of its seventeen LXX references apply to it, except Psa.24:3, which has God’s heavenly habitation in view. Because Jesus’ prophecy reinforces Daniel’s prophecy, it demands validated testimony, not hearsay “evidence”. In line with this, when did “the man of sin” ever sit in God’s temple making out that HE was God? (2 Thess.1:1-4). Where is the testimony that this happened between 30 and 70 AD? Jesus in Matthew 24 and Paul in 2 Thessalonians spoke futuristically, so you cannot apply these to an historical Antiochus Epiphanes, who was the typical, not the final fulfillment. However, one CAN see the possibility of this “man of sin” in the Satanic beast of Rev.13, healed of a mortal wound (appearance of resurrection), mouth full of blasphemies against God, great power to work miracles through his prophet, having the worship of men, and having a name which by Gematria totals to 666 (Revelation does provide some verifiable hints as to its fulfillment). By an ingenious transliteration to Hebrew, *nrwn qsr* has been derived from *Nerōn Kaisar* to provide a total of 666, but I could point out that this solution ignores the *iota* (*yôd*) in *Kaisar*, and uses a *qôph* for the *kappa* rather than a *kaph*. At best, this is an ambiguous solution. Given that John wrote the Revelation in Greek, his Gematria solution will likely be found in the Hellenization of some name. The Greek Gematria of *Nerōn Kaisar* is rather = 1,337. But the crux here is, “When did Nero ever recover from a mortal wound?” His mortal wound was the suicidal plunge of the dagger into his own throat. When did he ever enjoy the worship of the people? He was greatly unpopular among the ruling classes, who plotted against his life on at least two occasions, and those who knew him best considered him a fop (admittedly, theirs was a biased point of view). The account of the beast in Rev.13:2 aligns with Dan.7:3-7, especially the 4th beast with the 10 horns and the mouth speaking great things – especially “Little Horn”. Little Horn will be judged by the “Ancient of Days”, slain, and his body given to the flame (Dan.7:9-12). When was this fulfilled with Nero? No, Nero might be considered something of a shadow of things to come.

Adding to the above, Little Horn’s adventures include taking away the daily sacrifices, and the “transgression of desolation”, but with a resolution and cleansing of the sanctuary after 2,300 days (Dan.8:9-14). Not only was Nero dead, when the siege of Jerusalem began, but the destruction of the Temple at the end of that siege allowed for no cleansing. People who claim that Nero was the beast of Revelation need to study the whole book of Daniel. Each chapter of Daniel, beginning at chapter 2, adds layer upon layer of explanation about the end of the age.

1. This was to be the greatest tribulation since the beginning of the world (Mat.24:21). Did the Roman siege of Jerusalem, one city, accomplish all that? Were the days shortened, like Jesus said in v.22? The siege was similar to the Babylonian siege centuries earlier – there were comparable afflictions on Jerusalemites. But Nebuchadnezzar’s siege lasted a year and half, while Titus’ only a half-year – so that might be considered a shortening. True, the Romans punished with crucifixion – but remarkably a Jewish general of the Galilean campaign, Josephus, was shown clemency when he gave up the fight. When Titus had finally prevailed (in 73 AD, not 70 AD) in his Judean campaign, there were enough Jews left in the land for them to prosper again. The Jews were able after less than 60 years to mount the *bar Kokhba* revolt against Roman rule. This revolt was dealt with more severely than the previous one, with only a few thousand Jews being left in the Land. So I ask again, was the siege of Jerusalem “the greatest tribulation since the beginning of the world”?
2. When did “all the tribes of the earth mourn”, when they saw “the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory”. Where is the testimony to this great event? Contrasting this with a much earlier global terror, there are Great Flood legends among virtually every people scattered over the face of the earth. Are there similar legends concerning the return of the Son of God?
3. When did those angelic trumpets sound? Who heard them and wrote about them?
4. How about the darkening of sun, moon and stars, with the powers of heaven being shaken? This was also part of Joel’s “day of the Lord” prophecy, that applied in its first part so visibly during the Acts period (Joel 2:28-32, quoted in Acts 2:16-21). Did the day of the Lord really come and go that quietly in AD 70? To sequester the fulfillment of the day of the Lord to an esoteric vision given to a selected individual (or select few) is the message of a cult – not the gospel of the kingdom. Thus, because of their spiritualizing of the 2,520 days of the final “week” of Dan. 9:27, Jehovah’s Witnesses first prophesied Christ’s return in 1914, then afterward declared it as a *fait accompli* by His invisible Logos. Do you begin to see how convoluted these speculations can become through spiritualizing?
5. When did Christ ever come in His glory and separate all the nations into two camps for judgment? (Mat.25:31-46). Note that Christ will hold conversations with these groups telling them why their judgments fall out as they do. This is no judgment *in absentia* – the standers in the dock will hear their judgments direct from the Judge.

Wait, there’s more –

1. When did Jesus ever return to the Mount of Olives “thus in that manner you saw Him going from you into the heaven” (Acts 1:11)? Was His departure into heaven merely a vision, or was it real? Who were the witnesses who saw His return “in that manner”?
2. If the day of the Lord came in AD 70, why isn’t the Mount of Olives split in half, east to west? (Zec.14:1-4)? If the cleft mountain isn’t there, then the day of the Lord has not come, nor has He fought against the nations encompassing Jerusalem – yet! OR, when Jesus said “earthquakes (*seismos*) in places” (Mat.24:7) did He mean spiritual earthquakes? – the way a Quaker might describe it. But have a caution here – spiritualizing a text should not be done without a very strong case for it – we aren’t permitted to cherry-pick these. By the way, what do you think Jesus meant by “the **sign** of His coming”? In the first place it would have to be something VISIBLE and verifiable in order to qualify as a “sign”, otherwise it would have no significance. The “sign of Jonah” that Jesus offered twice in response to a request for a sign from the Jews (Mat.12:39; 16:4) would qualify – a dead man rising could hardly be overlooked. Because Jesus gave his end-time discourse on the Mount of Olives, it seems likely that Jesus appearing in the clouds like lightning, the Mount of Olives being cleft, and Jesus touching down on that mount would separate His wondrous appearing from all the other “signs and lying wonders” of that age (2 Thes.2:9). THAT will be “the **sign** of His coming”.
3. At the beginning of the 2nd woe in Rev.9:14-15 four angels imprisoned at the Euphrates will be released – their activity will kill a third of mankind. Their means will be an army of “twenty thousands of thousands”. Even allowing for a rounding of the number, something in the vicinity of 200,000,000 will be the number of combatants. Now when Vespasian and Titus had assembled their full complement of troops, it was 4 Roman legions – estimated between 30,000 to 36,000 men. Not even close! I can imagine at the time John wrote, that a 200 million man army would have seemed unimaginable. One estimate I have seen for WW II is 70,000,000 mobilized troops from all nations for the duration of the war (10 years). Getting closer, but not even halfway there yet! I think today we can imagine a conflict involving an army of 200,000,000, and with the Euphrates River as the Biblical hint, the mustering of an inflamed Islam, from Indonesia to N. Africa, could quite easily fill that bill today. A current estimate for the Islamic percentage of world population is 24%, and it would be quite imaginable, allowing for collateral civilian deaths and non-Islamic nations being drawn into another great war, for a third of the world’s population being killed. But I’m not saying this prophecy is for today or anytime soon – this is just a “what-if” exercise on my part. The fulfillment of Rev.9 is not on the horizon, as long as God is having His “dispensation of the secret”. But bear in mind that Islam is a tradition almost 1,400 years old, and the dispute between the sons of Ishmael and sons of Isaac much older than that. These conflicts are unlikely to fade away.

And consider also –

1. Ezekiel chapters 40-48 give a very detailed prescription for the rebuilding of City and Temple and redistribution of the Land after the captivity in Babylon. Nearly a fourth of the book is devoted to this (23%, by word count), so it must have been very important for Ezekiel to reveal this to Israel. This was part of his commission –

“You son of man declare to *the* house of Israel the House (i.e., Temple), so they will be ashamed on account of their iniquities, and they will measure the pattern. And **IF** they have been ashamed from all that they have done, declare to them the form of the House and its arrangement, and its exits and its entrances, and its whole form and all its statutes, and all its forms and all its laws. And write *it* in their sight so they may keep its whole form and all its statutes and do them.” Eze.43:10-11

This prophecy is quite definite in being indefinite. There is a “Big If” in the pronouncement. Given that nothing like the entire Ezekiel pattern came out of the Ezra-Nehemiah reconstruction, and given that this was clearly a Temple under old covenant provisions (14 mentions of sin offerings for the people, 4 of trespass offerings, 31 of whole burnt offerings), then this was a prophecy that was provisional and will not be fulfilled. This example shows more clearly than perhaps most others that God offered promises conditioned on the *moral response* He received. Not every prophecy will be fulfilled, at least not to the letter originally given.

1. How about the radical blessings of Isa.60? When did this ever take place for Israel in the past? –

“Arise, shine, for your light has come. And Yahweh’s glory has risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness will cover *the* earth, and a heavy cloud *the* peoples, but over you will rise Yahweh and His glory will be seen over you. And nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about and see. They all have assembled; they have come to you. Your sons will come from a distance, and your daughters will be nourished at *your* side. Then you will see and become radiant, and your heart will dread and swell, for *the* abundance of *the* sea will be overturned upon you, wealth of nations will come to you. Abundance of camels will cover you – young camels of Midian and Ephah. All those from Sheba will come. They will carry gold and frankincense, and they will proclaim praises of Yahweh. All flocks of Kedar will be gathered to you. Rams of Nebaioth will serve you – they will ascend upon *the* favor of My altar, and I will beautify *the* house of My beauty. Who are these like a dark cloud flies, and like doves to their cotes? For coastlands will wait for Me, and ships of Tarshish in first *place*, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them to *the* name of Yahweh your Elohim, to the Holy One of Israel, for He has beautified you. And sons of foreignness will build your walls and their kings will serve you, for in My wrath I struck you but in My favor I was compassionate to you. And your gates will be open continually. Day and night they will not be shut in order to bring into you wealth of nations, and their kings leading on. **For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, and those nations will certainly be wasted**. The glory of Lebanon will come to you – cypress, elm and box-tree together – to beautify *the* place of My sanctuary, and I will glorify *the* place of My feet. And *the* sons of those afflicting you will come to you to bow down, and all those spurning you will prostrate themselves toward the soles of your feet. And they will call regarding you, City of Yahweh, Zion of *the* Holy One of Israel. Instead of your becoming forsaken and hated, so none passing by, but I will set you for exaltation of an age, a joy of generations. And you will suck *the* milk of nations, and suck the breast of kings. And you will know that I, Yahweh, *am* your Savior and your Redeemer, *the* Mighty One of Jacob. Instead of the copper I will bring gold, and instead of the iron I will bring silver, and instead of the wood, copper, and instead of the stones, iron. And I will set your overseers *as* peace, and your rulers *as* righteousness. Violence will not be heard again in your land, wasting and destruction in your borders. But you will call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. *The* sun will not become for you light of day any longer, nor for brightness will the moon give light to you. But Yahweh will become to you for a light of an age, and your Elohim for your beauty. Your sun will no longer come and go, nor your moon be removed, for Yahweh will become to you for a light of an age, and your days of mourning will be at peace. And your whole people *will be* righteous. They will inherit *the* land for an age, a sprout of My planting, a work of My hands to beautify Myself. The youth will become for a thousand, and the little one for a mighty nation. I, Yahweh, will hasten it in its time.”

Again it seemed expedient to me to quote a text at length. The extensiveness of this declaration of blessing is beyond compare. There were shadows of some of these blessings during the reign of Solomon, who preceded Isaiah. And some of these blessings seem to align with what the Revelation says in 21:23-26 concerning New Jerusalem. But regardless of the exact future timing of these blessings, they will be the possession of Israel and nothing to this extent has ever happened to them. One could make the case that the high point of their history came under Solomon early in his reign, and that Yahweh’s glory that shone over the nation faded over time, and never really returned after the Babylonian Captivity. So when was Isaiah 60 ever fulfilled? Surely not during Acts, so when exactly?

And note that these expressions of extravagant blessing continue through Isaiah chapters 61 and 62 – especially emphatic is 62:8 –

“**Yahweh has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength**, ‘Behold, I will no longer give your grain *as* food for your enemies, and behold, sons of foreignness will not drink your wine which you have toiled over.”

1. More tidbits from Isaiah –

When has Damascus ever ceased from being a city? (17:1) It is one of the oldest, continuously inhabited cities of the world, and it has not ceased since Isaiah’s day.

When did Israel, Egypt and Assyria ever become partners in serving Yahweh? (19:24)

1. How about Mat.19:28? –

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man may sit on the throne of His glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

His seating is linked with His coming in Mat.25:31, so it is a public seating of the Judge. A first problem with Mat.19:28 is that it was spoken in definite terms to the Twelve of that time – it included Judas in the promise. IF he had remained in Jesus’ following, even with all of his failings, that promise would STILL apply to him. So, no matter how definite some pronouncements of prophecy may be, there is always this implied condition of *moral response*. The second problem is that if Jesus’ kingdom came in AD 70, then James must have been resurrected at that time (and any others of the Twelve who had died by then) and they must have assumed their roles as judges of the twelve tribes. Where is the eyewitness testimony to these events?

I wrote most of the above after delving about 10 pages into Hill’s book. But in his latter pages are other issues that also need addressing.

1. On p.43 Hill quotes Mat.26:64 and makes the case that even Jesus’ enemies would see His coming. Here’s my translation of the text –

“Jesus says to him (His accuser, the chief priest), ‘You (*sing*.) said *it*. Yet I say to you (pl. – i.e., the whole council), from now you (pl.) will see the Son of man sitting from the right (side) of the Power, and coming upon the clouds of the heaven.”

Now, if there were some standing at His earlier discourses who MIGHT see His coming, why would they not include some of the leaders? But here Jesus’ statement is more definite about the observance of His coming. What He did not say concerning the leaders was that they “will not taste death”, “not pass away”, or words to that effect. This opens the possibility that they would be among those spoken of in Dan.12:1 –

“At that time Michael will take a stand, the great prince who *is* standing over *the* sons of your people. And a time of distress (LXX *thlipsis*, as in Mat.24:21) will come to pass, which has not come from the coming of a nation until that time. And at that time your people will be delivered – all who are found written in *the* book.”

The text continues with no break in the narrative style into v.2 –

“And many from sleeping *in the* land of dust will awake – these to lives of an age, those to reproach, to abhorrence of an age.”

Just when do we expect to see the Ninevites rise in the judgment and condemn “that generation” of Israel who rejected Jesus? (per Luk.11:32) It will be at the beginning of His kingdom, not at the Great White Throne after the thousand years and the “little season” have passed. This is why Jesus tied His sign so affirmatively to the sign of Jonah (Luk.11:30). Just as some nations will go into “age-abiding pruning (*kolasis*)” for the Millennium (Mat.25:46) at His coming, the judgment upon “that generation” of Israel will be “the darkness the outer” – i.e., being thrust from the kingdom, while seeing many gentiles from east and west reclining at table with father Abraham (Mat.8:11-12). If you believe “that generation” of Israel has already suffered “the outer darkness”, then you must also believe that they witnessed the resurrection and rewarding of Abraham in AD 70. If you believe the Jewish rebels defeated in 68-73 AD had reason for “the weeping and the gnashing of the teeth”, how much more so “the sons of the rebellion” when they see the REAL kingdom glory pass out of their hands.

1. On pg.51 Hill quotes Rev.1:1 and draws conclusions from it on the verses following it concerning time hints in the book. My translation of 1:1 –

“*The* revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show His servants – which things must come to pass **in haste**. And *its* sending He made known through His angel to His servant John.”

Note that “in haste” is ambiguous and could mean either “quickly” (once started) or “soon” (without delay). With the former sense agree observations of “little” (*oligos*) spaces of time for the events of Rev.12:12 and 17:10. But there is more at v.3 – “…for the season is **near**.” and v.10: “I came to be in spirit **on the Lord’s day**…” Considering all that John records in the book, this “Lord’s day” is not a single day but a time period, a season called “day of the Lord” or “day of Yahweh” by the OT prophets. Hear what some of them said about the Day of the Lord –

1. “Howl, for the day of the Lord *is* **near**…” Isa.13:6 (written ca. 600 BC)
2. “Son of man prophesy and say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, Howl! Alas for the day! For the day *is* **near**, even the day of the Lord *is* **near**…” Eze.30:2-3 (478 BC)
3. “Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is **near**…” Joel 1:15 (ca. 480 BC)
4. “Blow a trumpet in Zion, and give a shout in My holy mountain. Let all those dwelling in the land quake, for the day of the Lord *is* coming, for *it is* **near**.” Joel 2:1 (and see vv.11, 31 for more of its terrible consequences)
5. “Confusion, confusion in the valley of decision, for the day of the Lord *is* **near** in the valley of decision.” Joel 3:14
6. “For the day of the Lord *is* **near** upon all the nations…” Oba.1:15 (ca. 480 BC)
7. “For the day of the Lord *is* **near**, for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice…” Zep.1:7 (518 BC)
8. “*Is* **near** the great day of the Lord. *It is* **near and exceedingly quickly**…” Zep.1:14

The contexts of these “day of the Lord” texts are full of humiliation, deprivation and destruction for Israel – but some of them resolve in eventual salvation and restoration. Each of these OT prophets wrote with urgency for their time, their generation. So “the day of the Lord” was near for Isaiah’s generation in 600 BC. It was near again for Zephaniah’s generation in 518 BC. Then it was near once more for the generation of Joel, Ezekiel and Obadiah in 480 BC. Finally, it was near for John’s generation about 43 AD. And all of these men spoke as God directed.

Now compare Mal.4:5 (ca. 375 BC) –

“Behold, I am sending to you Elijah the prophet before the great and fearful day of the Lord.”

John the Baptist has been described as an Elijah (Luk.1:17; Mat.11:14) , but he himself disclaimed being Elijah (Joh.1:21). I believe there will be another appearing, possibly the resurrection of the first Elijah to fully fill Mal.4:5. Another aspect of the day of Lord is that it will come as a thief in the night (1 Th.5:2; 2 Pet.3:10). Not only is a house-breaking sneak thief limited to the hours of darkness, but a successful thief makes haste in his deeds! Applying this simile to the day of the Lord – it will come suddenly, unlooked for by the multitudes, and be over quickly. As for its being over quickly, if that were not so –

“And if those days were not **shortened**, all flesh perhaps (*an*) was not saved, but on account of the elect **those days will be shortened**.” Mat.24:22

This last text explains the “in haste” of Rev.1:1, while the OT “day of the Lord” texts illuminate the “near” of Rev.1:3; 22:10. For John, as for the OT visionaries, their prophecies were real and urgent – the prophets experienced them as being quite “near”. The forecasted events were all quite possible within the lives of the prophets who recorded them. The threats were real, not imagined.

1. On p. 59 Hill makes the point that John was commanded to “seal not” the book of Revelation, while about 450 years earlier Daniel was told to seal his book. His point here was that Daniel’s prophecy was for a time far off, while the Revelation was about to happen with little or no delay. I agree, but with provisions.

Actually two words are used repeatedly in Daniel – **shut up** or **hide** (*şâtham*), and **seal** (*châtham*).

Psa.51:6 gives some insight on hiddenness –

“Behold, You delighted in truth in *the* inward parts, and in **hiding** You will make known to me wisdom.”

Wisdom is hidden from many, but to truth-seekers it is revealed **inwardly**. And see Eze.28:3, addressed to the “prince of Tyre” –

“Behold, you *are* wiser than Daniel. Every **hidden thing** *is* not kept dark to you.”

So wise Daniel was a knower of secrets, but the prince of Tyre will be wiser, like his archetype the “king of Tyre” in v.12 – “**sealing** measurement, full of wisdom”.

After the breaking of the four successors of Alexander, a “king of fierce face will stand up, understanding **riddles**.” (Dan.8:21-23). This would seem to fit Ezekiel’s “prince of Tyre”. But Daniel was given wisdom to know and to reveal secrets also (Dan.2:30).

How are we to understand “shut up” or “hide” in Daniel?

1. “And *the* appearance of the evening and the morning which was told, it *is* truth. Then you **shut up** the vision, for *it is* for many days *hence*.” (8:26)
2. “But you, Daniel, **shut up** the words and **seal** the book until *the* time of *the* end. Many will rush about and the knowledge will increase.” (12:4)
3. “Go, Daniel, for the words are **shut up** and **sealed** until *the* time of *the* end.” (12:9)

Now did Daniel put the book aside in a time-capsule marked “for the time of the end”? I think not. Daniel, like John in his vision, had understanding deeper than what he put down in writing (e.g., the “seven thunders” that John was told not to record). Daniel had likely gone as far as a man could go in understanding the 70 years of Jeremiah’s prophecy (Dan.9:2), when an angel was sent to reveal to him the 490 year delay that was being added to Jeremiah’s 70. Dan.9:24 is particularly enigmatic, but I believe that Daniel understood its significance better than we do. Two things were said to be **sealed** in that verse – “sin” (or the “sin-offering”) and “vision and prophet”. This would seem to apply peculiarly to the prophet Daniel and to his vision, because other prophets were sent after his time. Why sealed? Sealing on its first occurrence in Daniel signifies a keeping or guarding –

“And a stone was brought and set upon the mouth of the pit, and the king **sealed** it with his signet and with *the* signet of his lords, *that the issue with Daniel might not be changed*.” 6:17

So the command to Daniel to **seal** the book did not mean to hide it from prying eyes, but to safeguard it and keep it from *being changed*. **Shutting up** the vision meant not to elaborate on it, as I am doing here. The prophecy was indeed for a later time, 490 years away by the angel’s measurement. In that “time of the end”, knowledge concerning Daniel’s vision would be increased (Dan.12:4), and that is just what we have with Jesus’ *sunteleia* prophecy and John’s vision in the Revelation.

What no one had insight into was that God had another program to introduce, “the dispensation of the secret”, not revealed previously to the sons of men – not contained in Israel’s prophetic timetable. So Israel’s prophetic clock stopped sometime after Acts 28:28 (the last of three threats, uttering the Isa.6:9-10 judgment – the only one by an apostle of the Lord). Concerning what has intervened during the parenthesis, there is not a hint anywhere in previous scripture. After God is done with us and called us to glory in the heavenlies (Col.3:1-4), He will take up where He left off with Israel’s earthly program. And if I have understood the remainder of Israel’s unfulfilled prophecies correctly, this “time of the end” is likely to come suddenly, and be over quickly (Daniel and John are very specific about a 3 ½ year period, and other overlapping periods that differ by a few days). As for the question, who might be Israel today? – God only knows. It is His program, and I would not venture to meddle with it.

1. Hill declares that Christians misuse the “later seasons” prophecy of 1 Tim.4:1-4 by applying it to the church today (p.?). The same must apply then to the “last days” prophecy of 2 Tim.3:1-3, which Paul wrote afterwards. Both epistles were written very late in Paul’s apostolic career, and he wrote them for today’s “dispensation of the secret” – not for Israel’s end-times. Failure to apply these to the church today is a failure to see the need for “rightly dividing the word of the truth” (2 Tim.2:15). Note the double definite articles in this quote. “The word of truth” is all of God’s word, undifferentiated. “The word of the truth” is the truth given peculiarly to the church today, based on a promise made NOT to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, or anyone else among the prophets, but given from the Father to the Son, “before the overthrow of the world” (Eph.1:3-4) – at a time when only angels existed, many of them fallen. We are a church composed not of Jew first and also Greek, but a new creation, a new mankind composed of a hyper-reconciled (*apokatalassō*) gentile-Israelite body of believers – no more middle wall of partition between us, differentiating us (Eph.chs.2-3). We are also hyper-reconciled with the angelic creation (Col.1:16-20), because the heavenly domain is home to “the heavenly kingdom” that we are participants of (2 Tim.4:18).
2. In various places in the book (pp.72, 80, for example) Hill makes it clear that he believes the charter for the church today is the New Covenant. But read carefully what the New Covenant says:

“Behold, days *are* coming – an utterance of Yahweh – and I will sow *the* house of **Israel** and *the* house of **Judah** a sowing of man and a sowing of cattle. And it will come to pass as I have watched over them to root out and to break down and to throw down and to destroy and to injure, so I will watch over them to build and to plant – an utterance of Yahweh. In those days they will not say again, ‘Fathers have eaten an unripe grape, and *their* sons’ teeth have been dulled.’ Surely then a man will die for his iniquity. Every man who eats the unripe grape his teeth will be dulled. Behold, days *are* coming – an utterance of Yahweh – and I will cut *the* house of **Israel** and *the* house of **Judah** a new covenant – not like *the* covenant I cut their fathers in *the* day I strengthened by their hand to bring them out of *the* land of Egypt, which My covenant they broke – and I married among them – an utterance of Yahweh. For this *is* the covenant which I will cut the house of **Israel** after those days – an utterance of Yahweh – I will put My spirit in their inward parts (or “midst”) and upon their heart I will write *it*. And I will become to them for Elohim, and they will become to Me for a people. And they will not teach again a man his friend and a man his brother, saying, ‘Know Yahweh’, for they all will know Me from *the* small of them up to *the* great of them – an utterance of Yahweh – for I will forgive regarding their iniquity, and regarding their sin I will not remember again. Thus said Yahweh, appointing sun for light by day, ordinances of moon and stars for light of night, disturbing the sea and its waves roar – Yahweh of Armies, His name, ‘**If** those ordinances depart from before Me – an utterance of Yahweh – also the sowing of **Israel** may cease from being a nation before Me all the days’. Thus said Yahweh, ‘**If** heavens from above may be measured, and foundations of earth from below may be searched, also I might cast aside all *the* sowing of **Israel** on account of all that they have done – an utterance of Yahweh.” Jer.31:27-37

I have seen the need to quote this text at length, because this glib age of ours is too much given to “sound bites” for their wisdom. On the other hand, serious Bible students should be digging into context for a fuller understanding of God’s wisdom. Note what the promise of the new covenant includes: 1) it is exclusively to the two houses of Jacob (Northern and Southern kingdoms), 2) it concludes punishment with blessing, and 3) it is as irrevocable as the covenants of the material creation (cp. also Jer.33:20). This seminal text is emphasized five times as an “utterance of Yahweh”. When this covenant began to go into effect during Acts, there was some initial acceptance among the Jews. But when this stalled, Paul was anointed to carry it to “the Jew first and also the Greek.” He explained in Rom.11:11-27 that the gentile during Acts was brought in “contrary to nature” “to provoke to jealousy” the stubborn nation of Israel. “This secret” was to continue only until “the fullness of the nations” (i.e., their full number, a set number determined by God) was accounted for – until then there would be blindness in part among Israel (11:25). We today are NOT that fullness. That was a “revelation of a secret kept silent **since** age-times” (Rom.16:25). Our secret, a heavenly secret, goes back “**before** the overthrow of the world” at Gen.1:2. And note the status of the gentile during Acts – he was grafted into Israel “contrary to nature” –

“And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted among them and became a sharer of the root of the richness of the olive tree, despise not the branches. But if you despise – you do not bear the root, but the root you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be engrafted.’ *It is* well. By the unbelief they were broken off, but you have stood by the faith. Be not arrogant minded, but fear. For if God spared not the branches according to nature, neither will He spare you. Therefore observe God’s kindness and severity – indeed severity upon those having fallen, but upon you kindness, if you continue in the kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. But even those, if they continue not in the unbelief, will be engrafted, for God is powerful to engraft them again. For if you were cut off from the wild olive tree according to nature and were engrafted against nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more these, the according to nature *branches* will be engrafted in their own olive tree?” Rom.11:17-24

I quote this at length so that all gentile believers today who think to abscond with Israel’s New Covenant may reflect – if that New Covenant were still in effect today, then fear, and don’t despise “the root”.

Also note that Jeremiah, who was given the promise of the new covenant to give exclusively to Israel (5 mentions) and Judah (2 mentions), was at his commissioning set apart thus – “I appointed you prophet of nations.” (Jer.1:5) But the non-Israelite nations are nowhere in sight in this promise of a new covenant – at least not in Jeremiah. Instead Jeremiah pronounced doom on these nations – particularly he had much to say against the nations whom Nebuchadnezzar would subdue (e.g., in ch. 25 and elsewhere) and against Babylon (chs. 50-51).

1. While I place no prophetic significance on the political creation of a nation-state that today calls itself “Israel”, those living in that place and all the rest of the world are eligible to hear “the gospel of the peace” (Eph.6:15), not the “gospel of the kingdom” (Mat.24:14). Today is not a dispensation of covenant promises, with “to the Jew first” applying like it did during Acts (Rom.1:16; 2:9, 10). That covenant dispensation is in abeyance, like the keeping of Tabernacles between the times of Joshua and Nehemiah – like the pause between the earlier and the latter harvests.
2. *More Considerations-*

If the church today has taken over the covenants of Israel, what does that do to the promise to and covenant with Abraham? Gen.12:1-3 –

“And Yahweh said to Abram, ‘Go out from your land and away from your kin and from your father’s house to the land which I will show you. And I will make you for a great nation, and I will bless you and grow up (raise up) your name. And you become (Imperative) a blessing! And I will bless those blessing you, and those trifling you I will curse. And will be blessed in you all clans of the ground.’”

Note how this promise speaks of kin, family, clans, nation and land – everything has a physical basis. Is the church today the object of this blessing “in Abraham”? If we have taken over the New Covenant from Israel, there is an implied assumption of all its foundational covenants. And if we have not, and if there is no more Israel, then God must have revoked the Abrahamic promise and covenant. Some might object that we are “spiritual Israel”. On what basis? – their failure? Sure there was a gentile graft in Romans, but the root was physical Israel (“beloved for the fathers sake”). Did the gentile church take over this root function? If you answer “Yes”, then you are not being consistent if you don’t also admit that God is leaving much in “the law and the prophets” unfulfilled and will NEVER fulfill them.

Even more to the point, is today’s church to receive heavenly or earthly blessings? You have to make up your mind here – what is the promise to us? Is it –

1. Blessings of basket and store, once given to covenant Israel (Deu.28:1-13, et al.), or
2. “every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ” (Eph.1:3)

Are we a heavenly or earthly company? If heavenly, then who will rule the earth during the Millennium? If you want (or claim) to have both, doesn’t that make you a spiritual hog?

1. Once more – the “unashamed workman” must be “rightly dividing the word of the truth” (2 Tim.2:15)

*Appendix*: Analysis of Isaiah’s Prophecy

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| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Accusation/ Condemnation of Wrongdoing** | **Future Threats or Punishments Already Inflicted** | **Eventual Blessing (M=Messianic)** | **Exhortations to Do Well or Repent** | | 1:3-4, 10-14, 21-23 | 1:5-8, 15, 24, 28-31 | 1:9, 18-19, 25-27 | 1:16-17 | |  | 2:6-9, 11-22 | 2:2-5 | 2:10 | |  | 3:1-8, 11-14 | 3:10 |  | |  | 4:4 | 4:1-6 |  | | 5:1-4, 7, 11-12, 18, 20-23 | 5:5, 8-11, 13-18, 19-30 |  |  | | 6:9-10 | 6:11-12 | 6:10, 13 | 6:10 | |  | 7:8, 17-25 | 7:10-16(M) |  | | 8:19-20 | 8:1-15, 17, 21-22 |  | 8:11 | | 9:8-10 | 9:1, 11-21 | 9:2-7(M) |  | | 10:1-2 | 10:1, 3-6, 12, 16-19, 22, 24-25 | 10:20-34 |  | |  | 11:4 | 11:1-16(M) |  | |  | 12:1 | 12:1-6 |  | |  |  | 14:1-4 (burden of Babylon) |  | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Accusation/ Condemnation of Wrongdoing** | **Future Threats or Punishments Already Inflicted** | **Eventual Blessing (M=Messianic)** | **Exhortations to Do Well or Repent** | | | | | | dooms of Babylon (ch.13), Moab (ch.15), Edom (ch.34), Damascus/Ethiopia/Egypt (chs.17-19), Wilderness of the Sea (ch.21), Tyre (ch.23) have no blessings for Israel | | | | |  |  | 16:3-5 |  | |  | 17:3-4 |  |  | |  |  | 19:24 (burden of Egypt) |  | |  | 20:5-6 |  |  | | 22:13-14 | 22:1-11, 14-19, 25 | 22:20-24 | 22:12 | |  |  | 25:8-9 |  | | 26:10 | 26:11, 16-18, 20-21 | 26:1-6, 12, 15, 19 | 26:7-9 | |  |  | 27:2-12 |  | | 28:7-15 | 28:1-4, 13, 17-22 | 28:5-6, 16(M) | 28:22-29 | | 29:9-13, 21-22 | 29:1-8, 10, 14-17, 20 | 29:18-19, 23-24 |  | | 30:1-2, 9-12, 15-16 | 30:3-8, 13-14, 16-17 | 29:15, 18-33 |  | | 31:1, 6 | 31:2-3 | 31:4-5, 7-9 | 31:6 | |  | 32:9-14 | 32:1-8, 15-20 |  | | 33:8 | 33:1, 7-12, 14 | 33:2-6, 15-24 | 33:13 | |  |  | 35:1-10 |  | |  |  | 40:1-31 |  | |  |  | 41:8-20 |  | | 42:17, 24 | 42:13-15, 22-25 | 42:1-9(M), 16 | 42:18-21 | | 43:22-23, 27 | 43:28 | 43:1-21, 25 | 26 | | 44:9-20, 25 |  | 44:1-8, 21-24, 26-28(Cyrus) | 44:21 | | 45:9-10, 16, 24 |  | 45:1-8(Cyrus), 11-15, 17-25 |  | | 46:5-8,12 |  | 46:3-4, 13 | 46:8-12 | |  | 47:6 | 47:4 |  | | 48:1-8 | 48:10, 22 | 48:9, 17-21 | 48:11-18 | |  |  | 49:1-26 |  | | 50:1, 11 | 50:1,11 | 50:2-9(M) | 50:10 | |  | 51:17-22 | 51:3-5, 7-16, 22-23 | 51:1-2, 6, 17 | | **Accusation/ Condemnation of Wrongdoing** | **Future Threats or Punishments Already Inflicted** | **Eventual Blessing (M=Messianic)** | **Exhortations to Do Well or Repent** | | 53:5, 8 |  | 53:1-12(M) |  | |  | 54:6-8 | 54:1-17 |  | | 55:8-9 |  | 55:3-5, 10-15 | 55:1-2, 6-7 | | 56:9-12 |  | 56:1-2, 4-8 | 56:1-4 | | 57:1, 3-13, 20 | 57:16-17, 21 | 57:2, 13, 15, 18-19 | 57:15 | | 58:1-5 |  | 58:8-14 | 58:6-7, 10-11, 13 | | 59:1-16 | 59:8, 11 | 59:16-21 |  | |  | 60:10 | 60:1-22 |  | |  | 61:2 | 61:1-11 |  | |  | 62:4 | 62:1-12 |  | | 63:10 | 63:10, 17-19 | 63:1-9 (M - doom of Edom is blessing for Israel), 11-16 |  | | 64:5-7 | 64:7-12 | 64:1-5 |  | | 65:1-5, 11 | 65:6-7, 11-15 | 65:8-10, 13-25 |  | | 66:3-4, 16-18 | 66:4, 14-17, 24 | 66:1-2, 5-13-14, 19-23 |  | |