

# HISTORY AND THE GOSPEL

By

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The history of man is a story of oppressions and bondage, the struggle for freedom, and the hope for some supernatural relief from perpetual struggle. Since Adam's sin man has grappled with the problem of individual bondage to sin. From the beginning of nations men have wrestled with the problem of national bondage. Nimrod was probably the first leader of a collectivist nation (Gen. 10:9–10). Israel had suffered often at the hands of world rulers, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and finally the Romans.

Israel had lived in bondage to every one of the great world powers! It is not surprising then that the prophets spoke concerning the hope of freedom! Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel, called attention to a day in which the city of Zion would be built in such a way that no enemy could destroy it nor disturb its peace and joy. When Christ began His earthly ministry the foremost issue in Judea was freedom from political bondage. Hopes for such freedom has appeared throughout history in different forms and under many banners. For over 200 years, beginning with the Illuminati in France in 1776, the cry of revolution has been "Freedom, Brotherhood and Equality", and in the past century multiplied millions have been slain under the banner of socialism and the same promise of freedom.

Satan promised Adam and Eve freedom; freedom from restraint. It was this false concept of freedom, the same idea that dominates our world today — that man can establish freedom for himself — that constituted the original sin. After the sin and the bondage to death which resulted, God gave His promise of freedom as he spoke to the Devil: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The seed refers to Christ, who was to bruise the head of Satan in His death and resurrection. The first promise of freedom from the bondage brought by sin was related to the Gospel, the event of Christ's death and resurrection. The hope of such deliverance was repeated to Abraham, and his descendants were given the responsibility of keeping the hope alive. "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you..." (Gen. 17:7). Paul explained this to embrace the gospel: "He said not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to your seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). So the hope of Abraham and all the Hebrews after him was to culminate in the freedom that would be established by Christ. The Hebrew writer points out that Abraham and the other faithful of God under the Old Covenant died without realizing the promise, but that they would realize it in the resurrection (Heb. 1:39–40).

Isaiah, who saw the Babylonian captivity in the future of Israel, began his promise of hope with the promise of one born of the virgin (Isa. 7:14), obviously Christ. The gloom and darkness are to be dispelled. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined...For unto us a child is born, unto us son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder...of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end,

upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever” (Isa. 9:2,6–7). The application of these prophecies are not left to the opinions of men but are interpreted for us by Gospel writers. Matthew quoted from this portion of Scripture, stating that it was fulfilled by Christ! (Matt. 4:13–16).

Nowhere is there a prophetic overview of history so clear and complete as that given by the prophet Daniel. Living through the 70 years of Babylonian captivity, Daniel was as much aware of the history of his people and as concerned with its freedom as any Hebrew that ever lived. His prophecy, beginning with the Babylonian empire, encompasses the history of all world empires; Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Roman, and attempts for world empire even to the end. But the focal point of Daniel’s prophecy is not political, but spiritual, centering on the Gospel of Christ. His first prophecy dealt with the great image of gold, silver, brass and iron, being struck by a stone that was “cut out without hands.” The different portions of the image represented the world empires, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecian, and Roman, the latter a “divided kingdom.” “And in the days of those kings (the Roman empire) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).

Jesus declared that He was the stone (Matt. 21:42–44), and Peter declared the same thing (Acts 4:11). No other prophet pinpointed the **fulfillment** as the hope of history as did Daniel, right down to the year. “Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon they holy city, to finish transgressions and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy” (Dan. 9:24).

Jesus perfectly fulfilled each of these prophecies:

1. He “finished transgression” when He took upon Himself all sin and paid its full penalty (Isa. 53:2–5; II Cor. 5:21).
2. He made “an end to sin” and sanctified forever all that are in the covenant (Heb. 9:22, 26, 10:10–14).
3. He made “reconciliation” by His death (II Cor. 5:29, Heb. 2:17, Col. 1:20–22).
4. He brought in “everlasting righteousness” for every child of God by establishing His own righteousness for them (II Cor. 5:21, Rom. 3:21–30, Heb. 9:12).
5. He sealed up vision and prophecy by fulfilling the Old Testament prophets (Luke 24:27; Rom. 16:25–26; Acts 13:32–33; Matt. 11:13).
6. he Himself was the “most holy” as the heavenly sanctuary, and the anointing was taking place when Jesus ascended, having shed His blood for sacrifice. In either case, He fulfilled the prophecy.

Futhermore, Daniel spoke of the ultimate result of the Gospel: “...many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life...” (Dan. 12:2). The resurrection of the dead to immortality is called God’s “eternal purpose” (II Tim. 1:9–10); and is accomplished only through the Gospel of Christ. So Daniel’s overview of history pivots upon the events surrounding Christ’s coming, His death and resurrection the ultimate result, the resurrection of saints to eternal life.

Prophecy in our day has degenerated to sensational interpretations of modern events and the attempt to attach them to ancient predictions which have already been

fulfilled in Christ. Prophecies are dangled before the uninitiated as soon-to-happen events — the rapture, Armageddon, antichrist, millennial reign — and so on. They have little or no relationship to the central point of the Bible, the Gospel. They are based upon a “Premillennial” interpretation of the kingdom, that is, that the Kingdom of Christ is something yet to be established. It looks to the future for fulfillment of O. T. prophecies, claiming that the only thing fulfilled was Christ’s coming in the flesh, but that He failed to establish His Kingdom because the Jews rejected Him. This view tears asunder the prophecies concerning Christ, separating the King from the Kingdom by at least 2,000 years now lapsed. Furthermore this popular concept denies the foreknowledge of God in Christ, for he claimed that He came to establish a Kingdom, that the Kingdom was at hand (Mark 1:14–15) and that people within the sound of His voice would live to see it established. The apostles understood that Christ was the fulfillment of prophecy from Moses down to their time (Acts 10:43, 3:24) and all future events related to his rule as King over the universe. Paul writes that God’s plan is to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10).

Old Testament prophecies were not merely concerned with the nation of Israel. They projected a time when all nations would be blessed through Christ, when only a remnant of physical Israel would be saved, and they would be included in the wider universal body of God’s people to be known by a new name, the name Christian. The promises of God are summed up in Christ, not in a piece of real estate in Palestine. It is Christ that is called the “desire of all nations” (Hag. 2:7) and all God’s people make up the one flock under the one Shepherd (John 10:16).

Gigantic political organizations, while grasping for power to establish their own Kingdom to control the world, readily use (or misuse) Scripture to deceive the people into thinking that such a world kingdom is inevitable and desirable. The Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderbergers, the World Bankers, the International Zionists, all make use of man’s false hope of a Utopian Kingdom. They see history as man’s experience in establishing freedom, and think that by their own power they may cast off the bondage that has gripped the world since Adam’s sin. The religious organizations such as the Anglo-Israel and British-Israel cults, Armstrong’s “World Tomorrow” and many post-millennial organizers, such as Bill Bright, of Campus Crusade, use the same futuristic hope as a lever for their support. To all these, Christ did not fulfill the prophets, does not now reign, and history does not hinge upon the gospel, but upon some future earthly phenomenon.

Nevertheless, Christ has established His throne and rules over the kingdoms of men in history (Dan. 2:21, 4:17). Christians already have been delivered from the power of darkness and Satan’s kingdom, and have been translated into the “kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13). Every man’s destiny hangs upon the Gospel, as Moses prophesied: “A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your own brethren, like unto me; to him shall you listen to in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be that every person that shall not listen to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days” (Acts 3:22–23). Peter names Christ as the prophet. “These days” are the days of salvation. The alternative to Christ is destruction, and this applies to all people of all nations.

Political freedom has never lasted long for any people due to the fact that even when politically free, men generally remain in bondage to sin. True freedom is not created by man nor given by man. It is given by God through the means of the Gospel.

*“And if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed”* (John 8:36).

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