KeyNote 2025—The Hinge of History

by David Orton

http://lifemessenger.org/keynote-2025-the-hinge-of-history/

The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem AD 70 by David Roberts 1850

This teaching article will consider how a *covenantal* and *preterist* interpretation (hermeneutic) of the New Testament (NT) and its prophetic content relate to how the people of God either recognize or resist their day of visitation. It will show how Israel stumbled over a *covenantal-spiritual* hermeneutic and consequently over Christ and the transitional period of AD 30–70. The result was the cataclysmic judgment of AD 70 in the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple—"they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time [*kairos*] of your visitation" (Luke 19:44 NASB). (While *chronos* signifies the general flow of time, *kairos* signifies a limited window of time designed for a special purpose, hence an appointed-time.) It will then apply these principles and the example of Israel to the present hinge of history. And consequently, demonstrate how the covenantal-preterist interpretation of Scripture is the key to recognizing our day of visitation.

When I wrote my book *Snakes in the Temple: Unmasking Idolatry in Today's Church (2004)* I made the statement that the period ***1950–2025 serves as a hinge of history*** on which swings a door into the greatest advance of the kingdom of God since the first advent.

Signaled by the Trump presidency

This hinge into a new era is being heralded in no uncertain terms by the new Trump presidency of 2025, but not in the way many conservatives are imagining. As a transactional politician Trump has hit the hot buttons of the Christian and populist right and is giving them their policy morsels from the table, which is good and appropriate. Nevertheless, the real political agenda behind this presidency that is surging ahead is that of *technocracy*, government by the technocratic elite, which is nothing less than the recrudescence of Plato's political doctrine of government by philosopher-kings. This is indicated by Trump's enlistment of technocrats. For example, Elon Musk (whose grandfather was head of the Canadian technocracy movement in the 1930s), Mark Zuckerberg, and JD Vance, with the latter's intimate association with Peter Thiel, founder of Palantir, provider of bio-tech surveillance expertise to the US government and its intelligence agencies. This new generation technology is already being deployed by the US and Western governments for the control of their own people. All this suggests that the messianic-state will continue to flourish under a Trump presidency. For the first time in human history the technology is available to track-and-trace the entire planet, not only sentient beings (humans and animals) but also every inanimate object! Furthermore, segueing with this are two other shifts of 2025: a move of the international bankers for complete global control and America's withdrawal from the post-war international order.

Nonetheless, despite the machinations of men the Sovereign Ruler of the Nations is preparing the stage of history for a significant advance of his kingdom. The primary principle of the kingdom of God being one of *increase*:

> Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
>
> Isaiah 9:7

Yet this hinge will not be understood without first fully understanding the greatest hinge of history, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in his work of redemption both *accomplished* and *applied* in the period AD 30–70, the transition from the old covenant order to the new.

The Hope of Israel and the Nations: New Testament Eschatology Accomplished and Applied

To that end I want to commend to you the recent work of Gary DeMar and Kim Burgess in The Hope of Israel and the Nations:

New Testament Eschatology Accomplished and Applied, a podcast series, now transcribed into a two-volume work. It represents the mature fruit of Burgess's work of 40 years study.

The approach taught in this 25-episode series is a game-changer for the church of Jesus Christ. However, it is not new, with elements centuries old, but provides a more consistent development of those elements. It is an interpretive approach to the Scriptures that approaches them on their own terms. There is no systematic-theological or creedal approach imposed upon them. This is not to say that DeMar, Burgess, or myself, do not espouse creeds nor systematics. But it is to say that they can exert deleterious constraints or biases on the exegetical process. These can especially come from precommitments to a creed or a theological system. *Exegesis* is the discipline of reading the meaning *out of the text* itself, in contrast to *eisegesis* which is reading the meaning *into the text*. The former is governed by the principles of interpretation (the primary principle being *context*) and the latter is governed by the interpreter's own preferences and presuppositions. Hence, the aphorism that "Reading the text out of context becomes a pretext for the text to say what the interpreter wants it to say." One either stands *under* the word of God letting it speak for itself or stands *over* the word of God autonomously determining what it says. The issue is one of authority and whether the interpreter will stand under God's authority in the text itself.

The above interpretative project combines the redemptive-historical reading of Scripture (per Geerhardus Vos and Herman Ridderbos) with a covenantal hermeneutic and a preterist (Latin: *praeter*–past) interpretation of the NT and its prophetic content (i.e. NT prophecy-fulfilment while in the immediate future of the original audience is in the past to us). All of this entails the interpretative principle of scripture interpreting scripture.

While this may sound highfaluting, these sessions are accessible and absorbing for allcomers. We will post the episodes weekly to our list during 2025.

In the late 1980s, through my undergraduate studies, I independently came to the *preterist* position in interpreting NT prophecy (The Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 and Luke 21 and the book of Revelation in particular), despite previously being taught the *futurist* perspective. This change of conviction occurred solely on the basis that the preterist interpretation is the soundest hermeneutically based on its use of the law of context. At that time my preterist convictions were assessed and affirmed by my eschatology examiner, an Australian Baptist pastor-scholar of repute, Rev Dr George Lazenby. I say this because with the arrival of the internet the preterist school of interpretation has, in the USA at least, devolved into a hotbed of diverse views. Some have erroneously made preterism, which is merely a principle of interpretation, into a total theology and hence into a cult. Nonetheless many modern scholars are preterists, including RC Sproul, Greg Bahnsen, David Chilton, and Kenneth Gentry among many others. Even so, there are differences and debates even among these scholars as to the finer points of preterist interpretation. See my brief article explaining preterist interpretation: Four Main Approaches to Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Studies in Eschatology

Why is all this so important? —AD 30–70 *the fulness of the times*

Why is all this so important? Because, if handled correctly, the preterist interpretation of the NT combined with a covenant hermeneutic place the NT burden not on a future *second coming* (and for premillennial futurists its preceding "end time" events) but rather on the *first coming* of Christ as the consummation of history, as the *eschaton*—the end (Rev 1:11 KJV, 17; 2:8; 22:13). In him, therefore, "an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of *all things* in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth" was instituted in the period AD 30–70 (Eph 1:10; cf. Gal 4:4; Mt 11:27; Jn 3:35; 13:3; 16:15, 30; 19:28; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; 15:28; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 1:11, 22; 3:9; 4:10; Phil 3:21; Col 1:16, 17, 18, 20; Heb 1:2, 3; 2:8). In other words, AD 30–70 was "the fulness of the times [*kairon*–pl., appointed-times]" in which all the promises to the fathers were fulfilled, realizing the transition to the new covenant kingdom order (Lk 18:31; 21:22; 24:44). If this is correct, it lays bare the fallacy of Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism—that, based on the premillennial futurist interpretation of prophecy, the restored state of Israel and the Jews are central to God's "end time" purpose.

The covenantal-preterist interpretation demonstrates that every past and future *kairos* (appointed-time) is summed up in Christ in his redemptive work of AD 30–70. This period is not only the consummation of redemptive history, of all previous appointed-times, but also the fountainhead of all future ones. Every visitation of God under the old economy foreshadowed this unique day of redemption of AD 30–70 from which now radiate "the times [*kairoi* pl.] of the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24)—days of fulfilment in the new covenant kingdom.

> 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

> 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to **His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is,* the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.** In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 **to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory**.
>
> Ephesians 1:7–12 NASB

Sealed for the *day of redemption*—AD 70

But here's the point. Christ's "administration" of "all things" in heaven and earth was an accomplished redemptive fact for the first generation of believers but not yet applied. The preterist interpretation of the NT therefore hones the *definitive*nature of the work of Christ from AD 30–70 with laser precision. It highlights and underscores the fact that Christ's work of redemption — his death, resurrection, ascension and judgment of apostate Judaism — has once-for-all conquered sin and death and *definitively* instituted the new covenant kingdom of God in AD 30–70. Even so, without the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in AD 70 Christ's work was *accomplished* but not yet *applied*. The first-century believers had been sealed by the Holy Spirit merely as a guarantee and downpayment of their inheritance until its full possession on the "day of redemption". Based on the hermeneutical *law of context* and *audience relevance,* this day was in *their* immediate future but our past (i.e. in AD 70). As Paul explained to the Ephesians, the "administration suitable to the fulness of the times" was "to the end that *we* [first-generation believers] who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory" (1:12); that is to say, "the administration suitable to the fulness of the times" was being instituted in *their* time not ours. This is reinforced in the next verses when Paul explains:

> 13 **In him *you* [first-generation believers]** also, when *you* [ditto] heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, **were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, 14 who is **the guarantee** [downpayment] **of our inheritance until we acquire** [*apolutrosis*, redeem] **possession of it**, to the praise of his glory. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom **you were sealed for the day of redemption** [*apolutrosis*].
>
> Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30 ESV

Because "redemption" had already been *accomplished* (v 7; Lk 1:68 NASB), the first-generation believers were sealed with the Holy Spirit (v 13). But this was merely as a guarantee or downpayment *until* "the day of redemption" when it would be *applied,* and they acquire full inheritance (v 14, 30). There was a transition occurring in their generation from redemption *accomplished* to redemption *applied*. On Mount Olivet Jesus explained that as they saw the looming judgment of Jerusalem, so too their *redemption* drew near: "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because ***your redemption is drawing near***." (Lk 21:28). On one hand destruction for the unbeliever but on the other redemption, deliverance from Judaism's persecution. In other words, the "day of redemption" was in *their* future but in our past. See confirming parallel passages Romans 8:18-24 (NB, v 23 should read "our body of redemption" i.e. a corporate body) and 1 Peter 1:1-7. Only with the Temple's destruction and cessation of sacrifice and offering had the day of redemption fully come. And only then was the new covenant order fully and definitively instituted.

The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple would not only vindicate every true believer but also deliver them from persecution and suffering at the hand of unbelieving Jewry, which had already crucified Jesus, and killed Stephen and James. Keep in mind that the cataclysm about to occur in Jerusalem would reverberate around the Mediterranean world; due not only to the mobility of travel but also to the fact that most of the churches emerged from a believing Jewish remnant and Gentile proselytes, forming part of the larger Jewish world. Furthermore, Paul's footsteps around the Mediterranean were constantly dogged by Judaizers sent from Jerusalem to disturb the churches. The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple were, as Jesus explained in his Olivet Discourse, "days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled" (Lk 21:22). A double-edged covenantal sword of judgment fell in AD 70. On one hand it severed the unbelieving Jews from the olive tree

(a curse) but on the other it engrafted the Gentiles (a blessing); the former being scattered and the latter gathered (Rom 11). The covenant sanctions — both positive and negative — were fulfilled. Accordingly, the judgment of the Jews manifested the true sons of God (Rom 8:19), the "body of redemption" (Rom 8:23)—those who were of the faith of Abraham (Rom 4:16). But by contrast exposed the unbelieving Jews as being of their father the devil (Jn 8:44). And so, as Paul explained to the Romans: "But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel" (Rom 9:6; also 2:28, 29). The covenant promises are therefore fulfilled not in the *natural* Israel but in the *spiritual*.

All the covenant promises — curses and blessings — were now accomplished and applied. This was the consummation of the ages as anticipated by the apostles in the NT. The old Adamic creation, including the old Jewish economy, was terminated, and sacrifice and offering ceased (Dan 9:27; Rom 5:12-21; Gal 3:23–4:7; Heb 8, 9, 10). Peter picks this up in 2 Peter 3 where, using prophetic language, he is not discussing the dissolution of the physical universe but rather that of the OT Jewish economy (see John Owen and J Stuart Russell for their commentary). Without the preterist interpretation as the fulcrum of the Christian gospel an undue reliance is placed on the second coming to accomplish what the first seemingly cannot, that is, to fully realize the kingdom of God. This reliance on the second coming then robs the first of its full application in history, AD 30–70 and beyond. This then conveniently excuses the believer and the Christian church from the cultural mandate—from fulfilling the command to disciple the nations, to not only evangelize but also Christianize them, bringing them under Christ's dominion (Gen 1:26-28; Mt 28:18-20). However, for too many, there is no need for this because in their reckoning the second coming is meant to usher in the kingdom and its political implications in a future Millennium or New Creation.

Christ's work of redemption—*the true climax of history*

Christ's work of redemption, accomplished and applied from AD 30–70, is the true climax of redemptive history. God's covenant promises from Adam to Abraham, Moses, and David are consummated in Christ and his messianic work. Through which the new covenant kingdom of God is fully realized and manifested in real-time history in AD 30–70. It is in Christ's obedient life and death, and his resurrection and ascension, that God's covenant promises are fulfilled. This then settles the true nature of the kingdom of God and the present status of Jewry under God's covenant judgment. The kingdom of God and the true *Israel of God* are therefore not of the *flesh* but of the *Spirit* (Rom 2:28, 29; 9:6; 2 Cor 3; Gal 4:21-31; 6:16; Phil 3:3-11). It underscores God's covenant promise to Abraham and his *spiritual* seed to be heir of the world (Rom 4:12). The covenant transition of AD 30–70 was hence a transition from old to new, from the natural to the spiritual, from type to antitype, from shadow to substance, and from promise and prophecy to fulfilment (Lk 24:25-32; Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 10:6, 11; Heb 8:5; 10:1; 12:18-29; Col 2:17). Therefore, the sign of Christ's "coming [*parousia*–presence]" and "the end of the age" posed in the Olivet Discourse is not the second coming nor the end of history, but rather his coming in judgment to end the Jewish age of type, symbol and shadow (Mt 24:3; cf. 1 Cor 10:11; Rom 13:11; Heb 9:26). Of this the destruction of the Temple and the fall of Jerusalem are proof positive, which is the topic of the discourse. Undeniably, the fulfilment of Jesus' Olivet predictions in the Jewish wars of AD 66–70 is the final and climactic proof that he is truly Messiah.

The hermeneutic of the *appointed-time*

So, how does all this work in our interpretation of Scripture? It means that the Bible is one organic whole, revealing one covenant purpose and people. The default setting therefore is one of covenant continuity—one covenant but various administrations. There is no conflict between the OT and NT, between Moses and Christ. OT Israel's eschatology is, indeed, NT eschatology. As Paul explained to the Ephesians, flowing out of chs 2–3 dealing with the inclusion of the Gentiles: "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4–6). The one God and Father, who is over all, prosecutes his one covenant purpose progressively through various administrations culminating in Christ and the new covenant people of God as the climax of history.

The hermeneutical (interpretive) principle of the AD 30–70 kairos is: "first the *natural* and then the *spiritual*" (1 Cor 15:46). First the type, shadow, promise, and prophecy. Then the antitype, substance and fulfilment. Christ's redemptive work, having been *accomplished* through his death, resurrection and ascension, is *applied* in the terminal judgment of the Jewish economy of land, people, mountain, city and temple in AD 70—all types and shadows. These are now *spiritually*fulfilled in the new covenant kingdom of God. Through Christ and his new covenant people, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal 3:28). This represents a covenantal shift from the *flesh* to the *Spirit* (Phil 3:1-6; Gal 4:21-32), and from the *letter* to the *Spirit* (2 Cor 3:5-6; Rom 7:6)—a hermeneutic that both Nicodemus (Jn 3) and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4) stumbled over, as did Israel in its day of visitation. One like Moses, flowing in covenant continuity, has been raised up to whom the elect will listen (Dt 18:15,

18; Jn 5:46). Even so, the OT temple and economy, the old creation, is now obsolete, and must give way to a new creation and a living temple of the Spirit (Eph 2:18-22; Mt 24:35; 1 Cor 7:31; 2 Cor 5:17; 2 Pet 3:10, 13; Heb 8:13; 12:18-24; Jn 2:8, 17; Isa 65:17; 66:22; Rev 21:1). This was the transition occurring in the 40 years from AD 30 and finalized in AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple. The new creation order of the new covenant kingdom — the new heavens and the new earth — had definitively come.

The entire NT a *preterist document*

Consequently, once it is settled that the entire NT (especially the book of Revelation) was written prior to AD 70 (see Kenneth Gentry's, *Before Jerusalem Fell*), grounded in the hermeneutical principles of *covenant* and *context*, the imminent destruction of the Temple flavors the *entire* NT corpus. Though, as an aside, it must be remembered that while covenant context (e.g. Old or New) is primary, passage and book context must also factor in exegeting a text. Nevertheless, the imminency of Christ's coming in judgment to Jerusalem reaches its crescendo just three days prior to the crucifixion in our Lord's Olivet Discourse (Mt 24) where he prophesies the impending destruction of the Temple within the lifetime of that generation (v 34). This imminent expectation of the Lord's "coming (*parousia*–presence) on the clouds of heaven" in judgment then informs the epistolary writings of the apostles; it is uppermost in their minds (v 30; Mt 26:64; Rev. 1:7; 14:14; Dan 7:9, 13; cf. 1 Thes 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thes 1:5-10). Keep in mind the use of symbol in the prophetic language of the Bible. His coming on the "clouds" is not literal but symbolic, signifying Christ's ascension glory and dominion as Ruler and Judge over kings and nations, especially the covenant nation, Israel (cf. Gen. 15:17; Ex. 13:21-22; 14:19-20, 24; 19:9, 16-19; Ps. 18:8-14; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; Ezek. 32:7-8; Nah 1:2-8; Mt. 24:30; Mk 14:62; Acts 2:19; Rev 1:7). His coming on the clouds was thus a cataclysm of epochal proportions that spelled destruction for the unbelieving Jews and deliverance for the true sons of the kingdom (whether Jew or Gentile). Hence, the multiplicity of texts that underscore the imminency of Christ's soon "coming" (*parousia*–presence) in judgment throughout the NT (Mt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thes 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thes 2:1, 8, 9; Jas 5:7, 8; 2 Pet 1:16; 2 Pet 3:4, 12; 1 Jn 2:28). For too long these texts have been misread futuristically, applied to the second coming, giving ground to unbelieving attacks on Christianity: *"The apostles got it wrong! They claimed that Christ's return was imminent for that generation. Centuries and millennia have passed and it still hasn't happened…the Bible is flawed and unreliable!"*

What is the solution? The hermeneutical *law of context* tells us that the writer cannot mean anything *other* than or *more*than what he sought to communicate to his *original* audience. So, when we read the gospels or the epistles, we must ask what the issues were that the first-century audience faced. It is about *them* not us! While these writings as the word of God apply to us, they are firstly *historical* documents and can only be understood in their original context and only then personally applied. So, what were the circumstances of the first-century audience? What the first-century audience faced was persecution from Jewry empowered by the civil authority, Rome; in prophetic language, the whore riding on the back of the beast (Rev 17). Hence, the emphasis of the NT writers on *suffering* leading to *glory* (Rom 8:18-23; 2 Thes 1:5-10). Suffering from Jerusalem and Rome but glory in the soon coming (*parousia*–presence) of Messiah in the clouds to judge Jerusalem (including Rome in its time) and the vindication (manifestation) of the true sons of God in AD 70 (Rom 8:18-23).

Summary—*a lens of audience relevance*

So, to summarize. The *futurist* interpretation views the NT and its prophetic content as fulfilled in the distant future in a "Tribulation" (Mt 24:21, 29; Rev 7:14) and "last days" (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:2; Jas 5:3; 1 Pet 1:5; 2 Pet 3:3; Jud 18) immediately prior to the second coming. Whereas a consistent *preterist* interpretation views the *entire* NT and its prophetic thrust as fulfilled in the first generation's immediate future; that is, future to them but past to us. Accordingly the "last days" and the "end of the age" signal the closure of the OT Jewish economy (Mt 24:3; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 4:7). The flaw of the futurist interpretation is that of *context* and hence falls short of *audience relevance*. In other words, what relevance are cataclysmic judgments in a far distant future (now 2,000 years!) to the first-century audience? None! This violates every law of communication and written language. *Authorial intent* must stand and hence the plain meaning of the text. To push these prophetically foreshadowed events beyond the first-century audience into the far distant future not only violates the interpretive parameters provided by the text itself (i.e. within *that* generation; Mt 24:34; 10:23; 16:28; 23:36; Mk 13:30; Lk 21:32) but also becomes guesswork as to the timing of their fulfilment. This leads to a plethora of prophetic predictions as to when the Tribulation, the Rapture and the Second Coming will occur. If nothing else these usually sensationalist claims sell books and promote ministries. But more strategically they undermine the integrity of Scripture and the Christian apology in an unbelieving culture.

Subsequently, the preterist interpretation must view the *entirety* of the NT corpus through the lens of *context* and *audience*

relevance (i.e. the imminent judgment of AD 70) or by default be guilty of arbitrariness regarding which texts apply to the second coming and which to the destruction of Jerusalem. The burden therefore of the NT cannot but be seen as resting on the first coming of Christ. If we accept this, we will also need to accept that the fine details concerning the end of history are not revealed to us. This is not to deny the general resurrection (Job 19:25-27) and the final assize (Rom 2:16). Our movement forward is therefore based on what *is revealed*—that is, the NT revelation interpreted by audience relevance. Not on what *is not revealed*, that is, every detail of the end of history.

> "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.
>
> Deuteronomy 29:29 NASB

The things that *are* revealed are to one end: "that we may observe all the words of this law" (see also Eccl 12:13). If any doctrine is clouded in uncertain hermeneutics and exegesis, despite its theological pedigree and confessional lucidity, by the nature of the case it will be impossible to apply meaningfully in the Christian life, for growth in the knowledge and ways of God. It will be a teaching that is abstracted from *the* Teacher and hence from reality and fall under the rubric of "the traditions of men". It will thus inescapably result in some form of Pharisaism.

Clearly, as argued above, what counts for the establishing and growth of the gospel *in* history is the first coming of Christ. It was through his obedient life and death, through his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, from where he comes on the prophetic clouds of judgment to exercise vengeance on the wicked and redeem his people from persecution and tyranny. *Definitively* applied in AD 70 upon Jerusalem but *progressively* applied throughout history universally as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in outpourings of their triune glory and presence filling the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Not only in judgment on covenant-breakers but significantly in covenant favor on those who love and obey the Lord of the covenant with all their heart, mind and strength.

With the end of the Jewish age in AD 70 "the age to come" had definitively arrived (Heb 6:5; Eph 1:21)—the new Jerusalem and the new creation had come down out of heaven from God (Rev 21:1-11).

Conclusion—*recognizing our day of visitation*

In conclusion, if believers individually and the church corporately do not first discern the *kairos* of AD 30–70 and comprehend the covenant dealings of God with Israel in that transition they will not accurately "understand the times" (1 Chr 12:32) in their own generation. As explored above, that *kairos* is the sum and source of all others.

The wisdom-writer declares: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov 4:18 KJV). Because light and truth are revealed progressively, both its loss and its restoration are progressive. In this restoration process God is therefore shining further light on the very covenantal hermeneutic that Israel failed to see in their *kairos*. This was revealed to the apostles and is the backbone of their writings. With the Reformation a restoration of apostolic Christianity was born, including its hermeneutic. And so, God by his Spirit has been restoring various truths to the cognizance of his church, including a covenant hermeneutic. This restoration process, however, demands continual reformation and therefore humility and a love for the truth.

Paul referred to the first-generation of believers as living in "the present time [*kairos*]" (Rom 11:5), of the AD 30–70 covenantal transition. Therefore his words in Romans 11 are apropos to our present *kairos*. Quoting David's imprecatory prayer from Psalm 69:22, 23 he goes on to explain how Israel erred:

> And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."
>
> Romans 11:9–10

Under God's dealings Israel's bounteous "table" became "a snare and a trap, a stumbling block". By holding their God-given abundance — "the adoption, the glory and the covenant and the giving of the law and the temple service and the promises…the fathers" (Rom 9:4, 5) — in a spirit of pride and as a badge of superiority, of divine favor regardless of their inner-life and obedience, the privileges became the very thing that stumbled them. The eyes of their understanding were subsequently darkened. Reliance and pride in their religious pedigree robbed them of their inheritance — of the true spiritual riches — and consigned them to servitude. But now here's the rub, Paul warns the church in Rome:

> 17 **But if some of the branches were broken off**, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, **18 do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. 19 Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.** 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. **22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God**: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. **Otherwise you too will be cut off.**
>
> Romans 11:17–22

By extension, Rome, as the imperial city served as a strategic gateway to Europe and in time to the entire Western world, to us, and to the entire Gentile mission. Paul's prophetic warning consequently echoes down the corridors of history to our ears, and to this hinge of history, to our appointed-time — 1950–2025 — a period of transition when like the Roman believers we are weighed in the balance but in our case are found wanting. With nearly 2,000 years of historic Christian orthodoxy and 500 years of protestant-reformed orthodoxy behind us, our "table", like the Jewish establishment of AD 30–70, has become a snare and a stumbling. Our hearts too are arrogant, relying upon our religious pedigree, our exclusive shibboleths—subscribing to the right creeds, councils and theologies; boasting degrees from the right seminaries; and belonging to the right denominations, movements and institutions. As a result, our hearts have been lifted above our brethren and we have illegitimately divided Christ's body. Instead of defenders of the faith we have become schismatics. God has come to this generation in extraordinary outpourings of his Spirit but we have resisted him and stood in judgment over our brethren. In every appointed-time God divides between bone and marrow, soul and spirit—between flesh and Spirit. First personally and internally and secondly corporately and covenantally.

The owner of the vineyard has come reaching among the leaves for the fruit but there is none. All we have produced is leaves—ministry *results*. But where is the *fruit?* —the fruit of the Spirit, conformity to the heart and character of God in Christ. We have preached our sermons, built our churches, ministries and institutions but have not been moved by the apostolic burden that groans, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal 4:19 KJV). We have replaced the apostolic goal of ministry with numbers and statistics. Do we purposefully labor and strive, like Paul, to present every man mature in Christ? —"We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete [*telos*–mature] in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (Col 1:28–29 NASB).

Because of our religious pride, rebellion, and worship of created things — our ministries and institutions — we too in this present *kairos* are about to be "cut off". We have worshipped the Baals of our doctrines, theologies and organizations. Like Israel in Jeremiah's day, we too have trusted in deceptive words:

> 4 Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'
>
> 5 "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, 6 if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, 7 then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.
>
> 8 "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this

> house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD.
>
> Jeremiah 7:4–11

We have declared “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!” over the work of our own hands. But as Jeremiah’s and Jesus’ generations discovered it is not about institutions — even God-given ones — but about the knowledge and character of God and our love for the brethren. In defiance of the Lord, we cry “The temple of the Lord!” and that “We are delivered!”, but we are not. We are merely self-deceived, living a lie. Deliverance from judgment is an illusion without repentance.

To return to the fruitless vineyard. As with Israel we have rejected those whom God has sent to us. We too have resisted our day of visitation by refusing to recognize the *kairos*: “And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, **because you did not know the time** [*kairos*] **of your visitation.”** (Luke 19:44). The vineyard owner came to pass judgment:

> "When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."
>
> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: '"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'?
>
> Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will betaken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on any one, it will crush him."
>
> Matthew 21:40–44

Here is the problem. Jesus said that the kingdom of God is only given to those who produce its fruits. With the corollary that it will be taken from those who don’t. Subscribing to a theology of the kingdom or appropriating the term for our ministry nomenclature will not ensure any familiarity with the reality of the kingdom. Nor will denominating ourselves as a church ensure that we in fact are.

Unless we fall on the stone it will fall on us. But *what* is the stone? It is the one that the builders rejected (v 42)—that *one*piece of truth concerning the kingdom of God that I have resisted. It may be the ministry of the Holy Spirit today or it may be the hermeneutic of the Spirit presented above. Either way there are serious consequences. Paul taught that “The kingdom of God…is in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). To habitually quench and grieve the Holy Spirit is to be deprived of the kingdom of God. On the one hand the reformed stream bows the knee to rationalism and on the other the charismatic to existentialism. But for both, disobedience leads to dispossession.

May we fall on the stone in brokenness. If we refuse, it will fall on us.

Because Israel lost its savor it was “good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Mt 5:13). Because she had first “trodden under foot the Son of God…and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb 10:29), she would be “trodden under foot of men”—cast out, under the foot of Rome.

By rejecting the covenantal hermeneutic of the Spirit, she lost the cultural dominion to which she was called. So too the contemporary Western church and culture, worshipping at the altars of rationalism and existentialism, has forsaken the God of the covenant and has now been consigned to be trodden under foot of men — the secular-humanist state — until she repents.

The kingdom either works *for* us or *against* us!
