

A Humble Plea to the Sleeping Bride of Christ

The Roadmap of Redemptive History

By Steve Layfield

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. [Rom 13:11-12]

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil. [Heb 6:19]

Introduction

A series of providential occurrences prompted me to set out as plainly as I am able the burden of my heart for the welfare and challenge of the wider Church of Jesus Christ in these early years of the 21st Century. I am no great scholar, nor am I formally trained in ecclesiology, missiology nor theology in general; but I am profoundly constrained by God's own Spirit within my heart to state in straightforward and unequivocal terms how the visible Church of Christ ought to be engaged within the theatre of the world today. Although my thesis is at odds with what today passes as 'mainstream' evangelicalism, I reckon that the substance of what I write resonates with what 'reformed' Churches historically have generally believed. Joe Bootⁱ has identified the same 'Theonomic' perspective as a throwback to 17th century national Protestantism, designating it 'New Puritanism'. I like rather his label; the cap fits and so I recommend we wear it proudly & unapologetically!

I have read twice, and warmly commend, the treatise by Jonathan Edwards concerning the History of Redemption. I believe he was right to anticipate a yet future age of blessedness and victory for the visible Church in accordance with Christ's promise in Matt 16:18 '*...I will build My Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail...*'

Very loudly and forcibly do the OT Scriptures collectively declare that every nation, every tongue and all the kings of the earth shall in due course come up to Zion to honour her Prince as king of kings and Lord of lords in fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that in him, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Most scholars today seem to comprehend the fulfilment of such promises as merely that a few international Christians will be gathered in over the course of time before Christ returns. Either that, or else they seem to reckon that such far-reaching victory will only be attained by Christ after He first returns to inflict a sort of cosmological knock-out blow!

The NT authors wrote in such a way as if to take for granted their readership would be thoroughly familiar with OT history. Their every proof-text was lifted from the OT and in all that they exhort they show deference to their OT forbears and God's redemptive work as it was providentially unfolded among them. Hence we read in the 10th chapter of Paul's letter to Corinth:

*1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and **they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.***

In these verses, Paul more than hints at the TYPOLOGY of OT redemptive history as it foreshadowed the plight of the NT Christian Church. I have thought about the correspondence of those OT types & shadows and their NT counterparts – i.e. anti-types. I believe that as we dare to do so a picture emerges of the present plight of Christ's Church and of its need to (i) wake up, (ii) re-affirm the Law of God; (iii) recognise its comprehensive (culture-wide)

application, (iv) answer the Call of God to subdue godlessness in nations of the world, etc. In brief, the Church needs to ‘Renew Covenant with God’. What has displaced this ‘full-orbed’ Mission is a diluted & truncated version of ‘the gospel’ which is peddled to ‘individual persons’ only urging them to think existentially about ‘personal forgiveness of sin’? Why do we focus now, almost exclusively and endlessly on the ‘free grace of God’ while adopting an ethically ambivalent ‘life-style’ that celebrates a withdrawal from cultural politics? Why must we await the future arrival of Christ to finally overturn all social-injustice & usher faithful ‘believing’ Christians into ‘heaven’ – a realm in some ‘other-world’ - far away from this earth, which we are assured is destined to melt & burn beneath fervent heart?

Below then, is the general framework of my thought. I’ll flesh out the details by referencing various OT Books, but in particular Deuteronomy and Joshua in later essays.

OT Event (Type)	NT Christian Anti-type (Fulfilment)
Call of Abraham	Election in Christ
Enslavement by Pharaoh in Egypt	Enslavement by Satan in Sin
Exodus – Relief & Rescue by Moses	Salvation – Justification & Redemption by Christ
Red Sea Crossing	Baptism
40 Years of Wilderness Wandering	Discipline, Growth & Sanctification in the Christian Life
Conquest of Canaan	Theonomy - Subjugation of the World by Christ
The establishment of God’s Kingdom in Israel	REST: The establishment of Christ’s rule throughout the World – Postmillennial consummation

This schema takes for granted the essential validity of Covenant Theology – i.e. that God has always had ONE elect people comprising ‘saints’ some of whom lived under the relative darkness of the OT economy & most of whom lived under the relative brightness & clarity of the NT economy. As a body, the universal, INVISIBLE ‘Church’ of Christ comprises faithful, OT believing Jews, a few OT believing Gentiles (e.g. Naaman, Rahab, Ruth, etc), NT believing Jews & NT believing Gentiles. As such, collectively, they represent the Children of Abraham, as numerous as the grains of sand & the stars in the sky! God’s promise to Abraham was always international in character & scope.

1. Call of Abraham

Just as Abraham was called of God to leave his father & mother & go to a distant land, so the Christian is called to relinquish his own pagan & idolatrous heritage & to follow on after God. It is noteworthy that Abraham was chosen to become a great nation, to possess a great inheritance and a great name and be the means by which all the earth was to be blessed:

*“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.
I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” [Gen 12:1-3]*

This ‘choosing of Abraham’ corresponds to the Christian (& the Church) being ELECTED according to the eternal decree & foreknowledge of God:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. [Eph 1:3-6]

2. Enslavement by Pharaoh in Egypt

Just as Abraham's descendants (Jacob & 12 sons) were, over time, enslaved by Pharaoh in Egypt, even so the Christian discovers that he is a slave to sin under the tyranny of Satan in the world. The hard bondage & oppression that Israel experienced in Goshen corresponds to the savage & brutal nature of sin in the soul of man. The true Christian cries out to God for help & relief. In due course, by degrees, God sends His deliverance. The metaphor of enslavement is one used extensively by Paul to depict sin's tyrannical oppression in the heart:

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Rom 6:15-23]

3. Exodus – Relief & Rescue by Moses

Moses was a type of Christ. The OT explicitly anticipates that God would raise up a Saviour for Israel even as Moses was the great leader who came from among his own people to rescue the children of Israel from Egypt.

15 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' 17 "And the Lord said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. 18 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. [Deuteronomy 18]

Psalms 78 rehearses extensively the history of God's redemption of His Ancient People. There we read:

*...They did not remember His power:
The day when He redeemed them from the enemy,
43 When He worked His signs in Egypt,
And His wonders in the field of Zoan;
44 Turned their rivers into blood,
And their streams, that they could not drink.
45 He sent swarms of flies among them, which devoured them,
And frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He also gave their crops to the caterpillar,
And their labour to the locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycamore trees with frost.
48 He also gave up their cattle to the hail,
And their flocks to fiery lightning.
49 He cast on them the fierceness of His anger,
Wrath, indignation, and trouble,
By sending angels of destruction among them.
50 He made a path for His anger;
He did not spare their soul from death,
But gave their life over to the plague,
51 And destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt,
The first of their strength in the tents of Ham.*

*52 But He made His own people go forth like sheep,
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;
53 And He led them on safely, so that they did not fear;
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
54 And He brought them to His holy border,
This mountain which His right hand had acquired.*

The psalmist depicts God here as a pastoral Shepherd, leading out His flock & providing them with shelter and protection from the fierce judgement meted out upon His enemies. Even so, the Christian Church, identifies with this 'Exodus'. Bunyan depicts the situation well in his description of Pilgrim's flight & rescue from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. The Apostle Paul summarises succinctly the salvation wrought by Christ in his letter to Titus:

3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. [Titus 3]

4. Red Sea Crossing

We need not speculate at all about the significance of this historical event. The Red Sea crossing we are explicitly told was a picture of 'Baptism':

*1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were **baptized into Moses** in the cloud and in the sea.... [1Cor 10]*

That they were 'baptised into Moses' ought not to induce concern or doubt into our thesis, for we have already seen that Moses himself was a type of Christ. Baptism then, serving as it does to mark off those who have given public testimony to their allegiance to Christ is identified in the NT as the sacrament of initiation identifying its subject(s) with the salvation of Christ:

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Likewise, from 1 Corinthians 12 we read,

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

5. Forty Years of Wilderness Wandering

This season of Israel's history presents itself to us, quite consistently in Scripture, as a period during which the Children of Israel stumbled & forsook the Lord, suffering various trials & temptations, etc. Their plight is again depicted in the 78th Psalm as follows:

*In the daytime, also He led them with the cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
15 He split the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave them drink in abundance like the depths.
16 He also brought streams out of the rock,*

*And caused waters to run down like rivers.
17 But they sinned even more against Him
By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.
18 And they tested God in their heart
By asking for the food of their fancy.
19 Yes, they spoke against God:
They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
20 Behold, He struck the rock,
So that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed.
Can He give bread also?
Can He provide meat for His people?"
21 Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious;
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel,
22 Because they did not believe in God,
And did not trust in His salvation.
23 Yet He had commanded the clouds above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
24 Had rained down manna on them to eat,
And given them of the bread of heaven.
25 Men ate angels' food;
He sent them food to the full.
26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens;
And by His power He brought in the south wind.
27 He also rained meat on them like the dust,
Feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;
28 And He let them fall in the midst of their camp,
All around their dwellings.
29 So they ate and were well filled,
For He gave them their own desire.
30 They were not deprived of their craving;
But while their food was still in their mouths,
31 The wrath of God came against them,
And slew the stoutest of them,
And struck down the choice men of Israel.
32 In spite of this they still sinned,
And did not believe in His wondrous works.
33 Therefore their days He consumed in futility,
And their years in fear.
34 When He slew them, then they sought Him;
And they returned and sought earnestly for God.
35 Then they remembered that God was their rock,
And the Most High God their Redeemer.
36 Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth,
And they lied to Him with their tongue;
37 For their heart was not steadfast with Him,
Nor were they faithful in His covenant.
38 But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity,
And did not destroy them.
Yes, many a time He turned His anger away,
And did not stir up all His wrath;
39 For He remembered that they were but flesh,*

*A breath that passes away and does not come again.
40 How often they provoked Him in the wilderness,
And grieved Him in the desert!
41 Yes, again and again they tempted God,
And limited the Holy One of Israel.*

These verses are very sobering indeed. Do they not describe very accurately, very fairly, the course of life of so many pilgrim Christians who make a good start and who thereafter spend a lifetime in compromise and or cold-hearted indifference to the things of God? The whole epoch and God's own commentary upon it represents an indictment upon the great majority of 'Christians' who sign up for Christian service only to discover, during the course of their lives, that although 'His way is perfect', they are too easily ensnared by sin & turned back by Satan unto worldliness & unbelief.

I want to suggest that the goal of Christian probationary sanctification is to grow us into fine soldiers of Jesus Christ, careful to keep faith with God our Father and humbly dependent upon His promises even when outwardly, the situation is hard and the going is tough. I want to suggest that the goal of Christian discipline and sanctification is 'absolute obedience to & zeal for the Law of God'. In the following passage, somehow(?) even Jesus matriculates through the school of suffering:

*7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet **He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.***

But for what ULTIMATE purpose are we trained & disciplined by Christ? What is the ultimate goal of redemption that will bring glory to God? Is it not the reversal of Eden's curse? Is it not the redemption & restoration of ALL things? Is it not the fulfilment of God's original Creation Mandate – to subdue the earth, to have dominion over it & to bring all of Creation to final perfection & subjection to Christ? This culture-wide dominion mandate was once more clearly rehearsed by Christ in the Great Commission. There we read,

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This comports with the petitions of the Lord's Prayer,

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.
10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us this day our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
13 And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

It amazes me that multitudes of Christians can pray this prayer, recognising it to be the very heart of Christ's commission for the Church, whilst at the same time denying the cultural mandate to 'Christianise the world'. Does not the desire for God's Name to be hallowed (honoured) in the world imply the progressive acknowledgement of God's rightful reign in this, His world? [See Ps 24] Is not the petition requesting that God's will displace man's will plainly imply the progressive redemption & sanctification of all cultures of the earth? Does not deliverance from evil correspond to the eradication of all manner of social ills (abortion, pornography, inflation, corporate globalism, euthanasia, hedonism, universalism, etc.) as well as personal sinful corruption? Is not NOW, the kingdom, the power and the glory properly the sole and exclusive right of the risen and ascended Christ? [See Ps 2; Ps 110]

We have been bewitched by those who would have us believe that this world is utterly given over to Satan and shall forever belong to him on account of this single verse:

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." [John 18:36]

So powerful & corrupting has the conditioning been to convert Bible Christians into pseudo-Gnostics or neo-Manichaeists who effectively prize a spirituality separated from the created world of culture and politics and which largely ignores the overwhelming centrality & importance of God's Law as revealed plainly and comprehensively in the Old Testament. They wrongly equate 'the world' in this verse with 'the cosmos'. But Jesus' connotation was rather 'the spirit of the world' – i.e. worldliness!! It would have been a carnal, fleshly, sinful response to simply reach for the sword in all circumstances of conflict. Greater care and thoughtful consideration was to be required. Jesus (and therefore His followers) was not contrary to properly constituted civic authority. After all, St Paul reassures us that the civil authority – as God's minister - '*does not wield the sword in vain.*' [Rom 13:1] The honourable duty of a true saint was to stand firm and testify to the ultimate authority of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, as did generations of faithful Christian martyrs under ten successive brutal roman emperors prior to Constantine. Christ had promised, '*I will build My Church & the gates of Hell would not prevail*'. St John summarises beautifully the Christian's general task in the face of all carnal/worldly opposition in Revelation 12:

*10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 **And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.** 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, **who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.***

In passing, the saints here are given much encouragement to wait patiently the passage of time – designated 1260 days = time (360 days), times (2x360 days) & half a time (180 days). We need not comprehend this season, as do most historicists, as an exact equivalent number of 'years', but rather we may comprehend it to signify an extended period of time (i.e. beyond a thousand years!) the end of which is known & constrained by God.

6. Conquest of Canaan

At last, we arrive at the great soul-ennobling goal of Christ and His Church. This is the true, full-orbed Mission of God here and now. My purpose in writing these few words is to wake up the sleeping Bride of Christ (the visible Church) from its cultural inactivity to the task at hand – the subjugation of the kingdoms of this world to Jesus Christ. They are His crown rights!

I must postpone un-packing much of the detail. Suffice it for now to demonstrate how the Scriptures and the NT in particular teaches this correspondence. Psalm 95:8-11 is the key,

Today, if you will hear His voice:

8 "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness,

9 When your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work.

10 For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said,

'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.'

11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

The conquest of Canaan was the great hope of rest from pilgrimage & warfare held forth to the ancient People of God. They were 'marching to Zion' God would establish His city there forever (see Ps 48:8). There, the kings of the

earth would come (or be drawn) in breathless wonder to perceive righteousness & justice in a particular earthly location from which God's Law would shine forth in great glory & splendour. Psalm 57 celebrates all of this too:

His foundation is in the holy mountains. 2 The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. 3 Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God! Selah. 4 "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: 'This one was born there.'" 5 And of Zion it will be said, "This one and that one were born in her; and the Most High Himself shall establish her." 6 The Lord will record, when He registers the peoples: "This one was born there." Selah. 7 Both the singers and the players on instruments say, "All my springs are in you."

Here we learn again how the various nation states, tribes & tongues will all, in due course, yield to the sovereign rule of Christ in fulfilment of God's injunction in Psalm 2, (*"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."*) Isaiah underscores just the same expectation, *'The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.'* [Is 60:3]

Zion then represented the 'REST' of Canaan. Zion was the great hope of the nations. The Gospel as presented to us in Hebrews explicitly lays this out in the climactic twelfth chapter. There, a contrast is made with the probationary and disciplinary tutelage of Israel (represented by Mount Sinai) and its ultimate goal and fulfilment in Mount Zion. Thus, we read:

18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

And before you, my reader, presume to suppose that this 'heavenly' Jerusalem suggests something 'other-worldly' let me urge you to consider that the goal of the gospel, as Paul expounds it in Ephesians 1:10, was to UNITE heaven and earth – i.e. to clothe earth with the character of heaven!

that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

Principal Concern....

Returning now to our key passage, let us consider how the writer of Hebrews expounds Ps 95 and its significance for us today.

Today, if you will hear His voice:

*8 "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness,
9 When your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work.
10 For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said,
'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.'
11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"*

In verses 16-18 he asks rhetorically,

'For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?'

The writer of Hebrews identifies the faithless, unbelieving Israelites of the OT who came out of Egypt and who were sustained in the desert for forty years as a type of the contemporary visible Church. Moreover, he identifies THEIR prohibition from 'entering in' to the (Promised Land of rest) as their failure to BELIEVE!

Who did they not believe? Historically, the answer is straightforward: they did not believe the testimonies of Joshua & Caleb (see Josh 14:1-10). What happened? Having left Egypt (recall a picture of escape, rescue & deliverance from Satan/sin's tyranny) and having wandered through the wilderness for forty years (a picture of probation, testing & sanctification – learning to trust God, etc.) they came to the brink of the Jordan – the border of the Promised Land.

Now crucially, what is symbolised by each of the following?

- The Promised Land
- The inhabitants of Canaan – including the giants!
- The Conquest

(i) The Land of Canaan was part of God's great promise to Abraham, Isaac & Jacob (Gen 13:15,17, 15:8, 17:8, 35:12, Ex 6:8, Deut 1:8, etc.). It was to serve as a light to all the surrounding nations to show to them what God-honouring, upright & just civilisation looked like. It was to serve as a beacon of excellence in terms of civic authority & social and religious righteousness. It was to be a real, geographical and earth-bound society of saintliness with real water (Deut 6:10-11), farming (Ex 33:3), husbandry (Lev 19:9-10, 23:10), technology (Deut 8:7-9), free enterprise and family responsibility (Prov 31), etc. Visitors to the newly established Heavenly-Commonwealth were to be overwhelmed by their experience & struck by the integrity everywhere apparent. This was Moses' explicit intent:

*"Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore, be careful to observe them; **for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'** "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? [Deut 4:5-8]*

Thus, the Promised Land was not a type of an 'other-worldish' spiritual sanctuary, but rather a 'here and now' kingdom in which righteousness, holiness and justice would prevail by the grace and Spirit of God!

The great difficulty contemporary Christianity has with such a perspective is the obvious implication that regeneration & true spirituality actually existed before the NT era. Covenant Theology is key. Properly comprehending the framework of Covenant Theology is very much like the crossing of the Jordan river! It is something which all true followers of Christ rejoice in and celebrate. Comprehending it opens up the whole OT Scriptures as 'Christian'! Augustine's dictum holds firm:

*'The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed.
What is Latent in the Old is Patent in the New. The Old is the Root; the New is the Fruit.'*

The Promised Land then represents Christianised Culture – a sanctified society of men and women, families, living out their lives in every sphere to the glory of God with Christ as their Banner and holiness as their emblem. There they would show the world what God was like, how rich, comprehensive and very practical in every sphere His word is (Deut 8:3).

(ii) The inhabitants of Canaan collectively (Hivites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Jebusites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, etc.) were all the foreign CULTURES with their associated pagan deities, humanistic idolatry & superstitious practices, etc. They represent in 'modern-speak' Humanism, Multiculturalism, Post-modernism, Existentialism, Monism, Islam, Materialism, Naturalism, Political Correctness and so many more 'isms'. The giants [the Anakim & the Rephaim] to me represent Darwinism, the BBC (Mainstream Media), subtle Marxist globalism & geo-political Liberalism which have such a stranglehold on popular culture (via 'Face-Book, Google, Twitter', etc.) they effectively bewitch the masses into believing the lie hinted at by St Paul in 2Thess 2:11, 'And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.'

(iii) The Conquest then plainly corresponds to that movement among true Bible-believing Christians that are awake to the Call of God upon them to *'put on the whole armour of God'* and gird up their swords for war! This is not (principally) a war of metal (bullets, missiles & guns, etc.) but rather it's a 'War of World-views' – a clash of ideologies. The faithful & principled Christian fights presuppositionally in true Van Tillian style! Apologetics is his enterprise and he knows the secret weapons bequeathed to him by God in Scripture. He knows,

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, [2Cor 10:3-4]

Cornelius Van Til's chief heir was Dr Greg Bahnsen. A careful study of apologetics as taught & practiced by Bahnsen effectively arms youthful Davids to take on any proud Goliath!

7. The establishment of God's Kingdom in Israel

Finally, we come to the terminus of our enquiry. It seems interesting and significant to me that Canaan was not conquered and defeated suddenly & comprehensively. Rather, although the decisive first blow was the crushing defeat of Jericho, ultimate conquest was to take place gradually over generations. When did the Land enjoy REST? When were the enemies of God maximally defeated? When was the rule & reign of God's kingdom (Zion) most strongly established? Was it not under the reign & rule of Solomon?

I submit then that OT history shines forth with light for the Christian Church today by providing us with a framework for our private and collective pilgrimage over the course of our own lives and especially over the course of post-Pentecost history down through 2000 years or so of the progressive advancement of God's Kingdom. The correspondence isn't exact but neither is it strained!

Christians must re-condition their minds according to God's Law (Theonomy) in order to see that they are called to overthrow and ultimately banish Man's Law (Autonomy). Theonomy & Autonomy are the only alternative cities under construction. Either we labour for the one by casting down the other or else we seek to sit on the fence in some supposed 'neutral zone'. But there is no neutrality with Christ. Full blown Christian Reconstruction of God's good creation is warranted. Because it is warranted it is required! Because it is required, those who seek to frustrate & undermine its advancement put themselves under God's ban as His enemies.

Returning to Hebrews 4 and the 'Promise of Rest'. It appears then that the epithet of 'Work & Rest' employed here signifies not so much the yielding of human effort to the free Grace of Christ in the gospel – as is commonly taught – but rather to the actual unfolding of God's Master-plan of the redemption of the whole earth in accordance with His two-fold (stars & sand) promise to Abraham that the earth would be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, etc.

Notice further: *Therefore, there remains a promise of entering His Rest* (v1). It is yet future and though perhaps a long way off still, we live by faith & not by sight, for *'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'* [11:1] Therefore, together Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, we *'dwell in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'* [11:9-10]

Most urgently then, 'Do you my reader truly believe?' Are you NOW seeing & believing that since Christ's resurrection, ascension & enthronement as King of Heaven and Earth, ALL the earth is His? ALL authority in Heaven & ON EARTH has been given to Him (Matt 28:18) He is now subduing all His enemies & bringing them to heel under His feet (Ps 110).

Heb 4:6-9 stands as a solemn warning to those who would refuse to heed the full-orbed scope of the Gospel as the universal rule & reign of God in all the earth here and now!

Verse 11 must be our modus operandi = *'Let us therefore be diligent to enter that REST, lest anyone fall according to that same example of disobedience.'*

Verses 12 and 13 stand together as twin sentinels watching over our every move. They warn us that God is holding us to account for how we hear & how faithfully we engage with His high commission to us. They reveal the challenging characteristic of the Word of God, identifying it as, *'sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'* They warn us against hesitation and/or compromise. As Rousas Rushdoony used to comment, "Resistance is futile; God's ultimate victory is certain & assured. The only the question is, 'Whose side are you on?'"

¹ Joe Boot – The Mission of God [March 2016]