



## BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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### SERIES : "THE LAST THINGS"

## Study 3 "The Kingdom Of God 1 - The People of God" August 20, 2006

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### INTRODUCTION : to the series

The "Last Things" is a Series on God's ultimate purposes for his people and his creation. The Series will pick up on the main themes through the Scriptures; themes which find their ultimate fulfilment when Jesus returns to the world. Then the whole of creation is renewed, his people are "clothed with immortality," and God reigns supreme.

### INTRODUCTION : to Study 3

What has the identity of the "People of God" to do with the Last Things?

John Nelson Darby, a lawyer and Priest in the Irish branch of the Anglican Church. Became disillusioned (with good reason) with the organised Church as he knew it. Helped lead the new Brethren Assemblies - rejecting the rituals, authority (and politics) of the established Church.

Traditional Christian belief is that all of the promises of God were fulfilled in Christ; that OT Offices, law, rituals and festival days were the shadow of which Jesus, the Gospel and the Church was the reality, and that Faithful Israel continued as the Church - comprised of Jew and Gentile, on equal footing, with both confessing Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

In 1830, Darby rejected this belief - Israel & the Church were separate in God's purposes. Israel was "on hold" until the Church was removed from earth. God would then fulfil the "unfulfilled" promises of an earthly Kingdom centred, in Jerusalem, with Jesus reigning on David's throne.

Darby travelled widely in England and Europe in the 1830's and 40's and went to Canada and the USA at least 5 times between 1862 and 1877. Cyrus Scofield, a lawyer & Congregational minister - mentored by James Brooks, a Presbyterian Minister who had met Darby and adopted his teachings. In 1909 Scofield published the first ever "Study Bible" - The notes were his, based on the new teachings of Darby via Brooks.

Darby's theology, with its host of associated ideas, took hold in the US among the more conservative Baptists, most "Independent" Bible Churches &, more recently, Pentecostal Churches. All recent popular books on prophecy, and the "Left Behind" novels, are based on Darby's theology.

Time doesn't allow a more detailed listing of Darby's "full system" (We will meet it again - but it is not the focus of the series.) As touching our topic, suffice to say that Darby taught:

The Church: God's "Plan B," formed when Israel supposedly rejected Jesus' offer of the Kingdom.

The Church ends in apostasy and failure and must be removed before God can deal with his people, Israel, again. (At the Rapture - the first "invisible" stage of Jesus' Return)

Israel, "refined" by a 7 year "Great Tribulation," is rescued from her foes by Jesus (2nd "visible" stage of his Return) who then reigns as King over Israel voluntarily, & over the nations by force.

After 1000 years as King, rebellion breaks out and is finally put down. Eternity is ushered in.

The differences between Darby's and the traditional (and still majority) view is not a dry argument of little import. At stake is our understanding of (and confidence in) the Church, the nature of the Gospel, and the validity of serving a needy world in Christ's name.

And basic to all of this is the question, "Who are the People of God?"

### A. IS THE CHURCH : PLAN "B?"

*"The Church is not known in the Old Testament; it is a 'Mystery' revealed to Paul."*

For this to be valid, something drastic has to take place to alter God's plan. That "something drastic," supposedly, is that Jesus offered Israel the Kingdom. Because the offer was rejected, Jesus went to the cross and God instituted a 'new thing' known as the Church - an interim measure until his purposes with Israel could take centre stage again. But the record of Scripture is .....

## 1. REJECTION ..... YES. BUT BY JESUS!

After the people saw the miraculous signs that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. **Jn6:14-15** Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." **Jn18:33-37**

... many will come from the east and the west, taking their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside. **Mt8:11-12**

Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. **Mt21:43**

Rather than being "Plan B," the Church is Plan "A!" :

His intent was that ... through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known ... according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ. **Eph3:11-12**

## 2. THE CHURCH IS NOT KNOWN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Most of the first English Bibles used "Congregation" to translate the Gk "Ekklesia"

King James required the translators of the Bible in his name (The 1611 King James Version) to use the word "church" for "ekklesia" so that people would not as easily see authority residing in individual "congregations" but in the collective / State Church of which he was Head and Protector.

The word "church" comes from the Gk "Kuriakos" which means "Belong to the Lord." (used in 1Cor11:10 & Rev1:10 - these verses have nothing to do with the idea of "congregation")

"Ekklesia" means "CALLED OUT," implying a resulting ASSEMBLY : "a called out people"

The Hebrew "Qahal" used nearly 150 times in the OT (Eg. Ex12:3,16, Lev8:5) and is translated into English as "congregation," "community" or "assembly" with reference to Israel. Another Hebrew term is "mikra kodesh" meaning "set apart gathering" (Eg. Lev23:2) Both these Hebrew words are most often translated by the Gk "ekklesia" when the OT was translated into the Greek language around 175BC. This was the OT that was familiar to the Greek-speaking world at the time of Jesus.

The idea that "the Church" was not seen in the OT is semantic nonsense. Of course an English word not in use for some 2000 years after the OT was written was not in the OT! But the meaning is CENTRAL to both Testaments : God is calling out a people who belong to him

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. **Dt7:6** also **Ex19:3-6**

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness .... **1Ptr2:9** also **Titus2:14**

## 3. AND EXACTLY WHAT IS THE MYSTERY?

The FACT of the Church is not a Mystery, only its makeup - Jew and Gentile TOGETHER.

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. **Eph3:6**

## B. A PLAIN STATEMENT

you who are Gentiles by birth ... were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. .... now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. .... and in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. **from Eph2:12-22**

## C. A SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION

For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. **Rom9:6** ... some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root **Rom 11:17**

## D. A COMMON FAITH

Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. **Gal 3:6-7**