

KINGDOM SPIRIT



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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 903

The GOSPELS

By the time of Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem prior to the Passover and His crucifixion, the scribes, Pharisees and chief priests were in a panic. **“The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.”** (John 12:19)

The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together in council to determine what to do about Jesus for they said, **“If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.”** (John 11:48) Caiaphas, the high priest that year, came up with the answer. He said unto the council, **“Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”** (vs. 49-50) He really did not know what he had prophesied. From that day forth, however, they took counsel together to put Him to death and gave a commandment that, if any man knew where He was, he should show it, that they might take Him.

However, though Jesus did not stay the nights in Jerusalem, He spent the next five days in the temple following His triumphant entrance into the city. He first drove out those who sold oxen, sheep and doves in the temple and the money changers and overthrew their tables and poured out their money.

The chief priest and Pharisees sought something for which they might accuse Jesus, but were afraid of the people as the people were spell bound by Jesus' teaching. Though they tried several ways and times to trick Jesus into saying something that would either cause Him to be brought before the governor, or to enrage the people, He always out-smarted them. He silenced them before the people which made the animosity between them and Himself even worse.

Finally, the night before the preparation day for the Passover Feast, the Pharisees and chief priests incited enough people to go along with them that they dared to go out to Gethsemane where Jesus and His apostles were and arrested Him, having paid Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' apostles, to betray Him to them that they might be sure to get the right man. At His trial before the high priest, they presented many witnesses against Jesus, but they were all false witnesses and as a result, their testimonies were not consistent.

His “sin,” or crime, that they charged Him with, was blasphemy. Though the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests had accused Jesus of this in the past, the only real evidence they had occurred at the trial. Caiaphas, the high priest, in questioning Jesus asked Him point blank, **“Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”** (Mark 14:61-62) Had this not been true, then Jesus would have been guilty of blasphemy, the penalty for which would have been being stoned to death.

Each detail of His crucifixion was foretold by the prophets, even to the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas betrayed Jesus and the dividing of and casting lots for His garments. The fulfillment of all of these details of prophecy again establishes the authority of Jesus as the Christ.

Most of us are familiar with the story of Jesus being taken before Caiaphas, and being found guilty of blasphemy in spite of a lack of any consistency by His accusers and their false witnesses brought against Him; then their binding of Jesus and leading Him to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate could find nothing that Jesus had done wrong and he attempted to give Him back to the chief priests. However, when they presented Jesus before Pilate they changed their accusation to that of misleading the people, forbidding them to pay taxes unto Caesar and claiming to be a king. Still Pilate could find nothing criminal. When He heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he determined that Jesus was from the jurisdiction of Herod, the Tetrarch, (one of the four sons of King Herod, who ruled when Jesus was born) and since Herod was in Jerusalem at that time, he sent Him to Herod. Though Herod questioned Jesus, Jesus refused to recognize that Herod had jurisdiction over Him and refused to answer Herod at all. Finally Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate. Pilate, in an effort to get clear of the matter, offered to release Him as the prisoner that is was his custom to release at the Passover. The Jews would not have it, but instead asked for the release of Barabbas, a robber and a murderer. Fearing a riot, Pilate finally washed his hands of the matter before the multitude saying, **“I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.”** (Matt. 27:24) The multitude of people took on the responsibility of His death in answering Pilate, **“His blood be on us, and on our children.”** (Matt. 27:24-25)

Jesus was taken outside Jerusalem to a hill called Golgotha (the place of the skull) and there they crucified Him. An important point to remember is Jesus gave up His own life. (Matt.

27:50) Being God in the flesh, it would have been impossible to kill Him had He not voluntarily given up His own life.

He was then put into a new tomb by Joseph of Arimathaea, a kinsman of Jesus who was a senator by rank and up to now, a secret disciple of Jesus. He was assisted by Nicodemus, a Pharisee who secretly came to Jesus by night at first and to whom Jesus had told, **“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** (John 3:3) Thus Jesus was crucified and buried on the preparation day in accordance with the time the Passover lamb was killed in preparation of the Passover.

He then arose from the dead on the first day of the week. After arising, He appeared first unto Mary Magdalene, then to other women as they went to tell His disciples of the empty tomb, then to Peter, then to the other apostles and afterwards to many people. He spent forty days appearing to various people, especially His apostles, and then He ascended to heaven in the presence of His disciples.

We have already quoted Matt. 5:17 in which Jesus said He came not to destroy the law or the prophets, **“I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”** This statement has several meanings but probably none greater than the very reasons Christ died on the cross to fulfill both the law and the prophets. This is a study in itself, but let us look very briefly at some of these reasons. The most important was the redemption of Israel. God set up the need to do this when He made the covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai, that through their redemption, which required His death, He might accomplish a number of other things as well. The law required that when someone could not pay their debt, they could sell themselves or be sold into servitude. However, a kinsman could purchase (redeem) them back out of servitude by paying the price that remained of the selling price until the Jubilee. In this case we were told in Isa. 50:1, **“Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you.” Behold, for your iniquities**

have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.” There are numerous references to the fact that God was going to redeem Israel, but He says in Isa. 52:3, **“For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money.”** The redemption price was Jesus’ own life. In redeeming Israel in accordance with God’s overall plan, He provided salvation to the world. **“I say then, Have they (Israel) stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles (nations), for to provoke them to jealousy.”** (Rom. 11:11) By offering the perfect sacrifice for sin, salvation was opened to all men, **“Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (Jesus) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”** (Rom. 5:18)

Jesus also fulfilled all the provisions of the Passover law that His death might cause the passing over for us of the ultimate (or second) death as the blood of the lamb of the original Passover signaled the death angel to pass over the homes of the Israelites in Egypt. As we have already mentioned, He was chosen to die by the high priest and men who have studied this in detail, say this happened on the tenth day of the month. He was crucified the day the Passover lamb was to be killed, His blood was spilt by the soldier who pierced His side with the spear, yet none of His bones were broken.

His death released Israel from the law of divorce that she might again marry God as prophesied by Hosea. It also released Jesus from the curse on Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin that He might become King of Israel. To understand this we need to look ahead at Rom. 7:1. Paul says, **“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?”** He then provides an example to show us that once a man dies, he is no longer bound by the law that bound him when he was alive, i.e. he is released from it through death. In the case of Jesus, He

was resurrected free from the law of divorce and the curse.

His death and resurrection clearly established His authority over all as well. There may be other reasons, as well, but I think this much tells us the importance and necessity of Christ’s death and resurrection cannot be over-emphasized.

One other note we might want to make. According to the law, the penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning. This is what the Jews wanted to do to Him. But He died hanging on the tree, the death that was reserved for the very worst of criminals in the Law. Why? Jesus took all the sin of the world upon Himself, thus in effect He was the worst of all criminals, though He never committed a sin Himself. John the Baptist recognized what Jesus was going to do when he said, **“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”** (John 1:29)

We are now reasonably prepared to see what the apostles and disciples do with this gospel of the kingdom that Jesus has given them. We’ll begin looking at the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul and other apostles and disciples that resulted from these Acts of the apostles next issue. JRL

Failures are divided into two classes—Those who thought and never did, and those who did and never thought.

There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us that it behooves all of us not to talk about the rest of us.

Years teach us that knowledge becomes wisdom only after it has been put to practical use.

Hardening of the heart ages people more quickly than hardening of the arteries.

Some people are like a callus; they always show up when the work is finished.

ECONOMIC CRISES CAUSE AND CURE

When Daniel interpreted the dream of the metal image for King Nebuchadnezzar, the king promoted Daniel to great prominence within the government of Babylon. Though considered a prophet, Daniel's primary job the rest of his life was a governmental administrator, an extremely capable one I might add. Because of his governmental responsibilities, Daniel views things a little differently than other prophets in that he seems to have a better world view than other prophets. God continued to give Daniel visions, dreams, and interpretations that foretold how nations and kingdoms would come and go and activities that these nations and kingdoms would engage in. Though his visions culminate at the same time as the visions of John in the book of Revelation culminate, Daniel primarily provides us with pre-written history of the world from the time of Babylon until the time of Christ, whereas John primarily gives us pre-written history from the time of Christ until the end of the age and a little into the next age. It is important to have the foundation laid by Daniel in mind in studying Revelation as the both talk of the same entities.

The 3rd chapter of Daniel tells us that Nebuchadnezzar had an image of gold cast in the plains of Dura. This image was about 90 ft. high and 9 ft. in diameter and was made of solid gold. He then required that all the princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs and all the rulers of the provinces of Babylon come to the dedication of this image. Once they were all gathered together at the site of the image, they were commanded that when they heard music that was to be played on a variety of instruments, they were all to fall down and worship this image.

Then follows the story of Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to worship this image. They were then thrown into the fiery furnace that had been used to

melt the gold for this image, but they were protected by God and came out of the furnace totally unharmed though the men who threw them in were burned up in doing so.

The point we want to understand in our study from this story of casting of this image of gold, is that this was the introduction of the "gold standard," i.e. gold **became** something to be worshipped. In worshipping it, gold became symbolic of wealth. Notice that this was not a religious ceremony in which religious priests directed and participated in it. Rather, this was the civic rulers and business people that participated. I don't think we need to stretch our imaginations very far to see how worshipping this gold image has led to the worship of gold and/or wealth today and because it is worshipped, money, that represents gold today, has itself, through the charging of interest, become a producer of further wealth. This is contrary to God's laws. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew it was wrong to worship this image and were willing to give their lives before they would do so. Ex. 23:25 tells us, "**If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.**" Deut. 23:19 says, "**Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury.**" Money, or wealth, is not itself to be a creator of additional wealth.

The king had yet another dream we're told in Daniel 4. This time he saw a tree whose height was very great and it had beautiful leaves and much fruit. As he watched, a watcher came down from heaven and ordered that the tree be cut down, but the stump was to be left and a band of brass and iron was to be put around it. However, the watcher went on to say that the stump was to be wet with the dew and that his portion was to be with the beasts in the grass of the earth, his heart was to be changed from a man's heart to a beast's heart and seven times were to pass over him.

Again Daniel was brought in to interpret the dream. Daniel told the king that the tree he saw represented himself the king. He was going

to be driven from before men and would have his dwelling with the beasts of the field. He was to eat grass as the oxen do until seven times, or seven years, passed over him, **“till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”** (Dan. 4:25) However, since the stump was to be left according to the king’s dream, Daniel told the king **“thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.”** (Dan. 4:26)

Twelve months later, the king was speaking in the palace bragging about how he had built the might and kingdom of Babylon by his own power. As he was speaking, a voice from heaven spoke telling the king that all that had been predicted in the dream was going to take place. That same hour he was driven from the palace and all that had been predicted happened.

After 7 years Nebuchadnezzar said he lifted up his eyes toward heaven and his understanding returned to him and he acknowledged the great sovereignty and power of God and God restored him to his kingdom with more majesty than he had had the first time. In Dan. 4:37, Nebuchadnezzar tells us, **“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”**

I have included this story in our study to illustrate God’s sovereignty, something we must know to understand what is happening today. In the interpretation of the metal image, Daniel told the king in Dan. 2:37-38, **“Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.”**

God gave Nebuchadnezzar this power and authority and this power and authority then passed to the other metal kingdoms to succeed Babylon. The concept of God giving a man and men that were to follow him, who obviously were not

righteous men, rulership over the world is repugnant to many people. They want to think of God only as a loving God and then only if they can define love.

If we consider God to be the creator of all things, I think we need to think that He has a purpose, or a reason, for doing this. Also, if He is creator of all things, nothing is beyond His power to control. This story of Nebuchadnezzar shows this and shows Nebuchadnezzar came to recognize this fact. God says in Isa. 45:7, **“I form the light, and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.”** Why would God create something opposed to Himself? To see the answer to this question, one has to see the whole picture, or the complete plan and purpose of God, of which this study is but a part. In Acts 3:21, Peter, speaking of Jesus Christ, says, **“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”** God created man in a paradise. Because man, or Adam, sinned, he was driven from that paradise. God’s plan is to restore man (all men) to that paradise which will then glorify God. We have a partial understanding of how He will do this in that we have seen how He sent His Son to die on the cross for the redemption of Israel and salvation of all mankind. There is still much for us to see and understand, but knowing the ultimate goal helps us to know that even in His use of evil men, as He did in the crucifixion of Christ, and these kings and rulers of this Babylonian succession of empires to accomplish His plan, is for man’s good. Here we need only accept that God did indeed give power and authority to man to rule the world.

Recognizing this fact, we can see then how that, even though man has used this power and authority to develop an economic system through the centuries that is opposed to God’s economic system, it will ultimately be for our good. With this in mind, we need to look at one more scripture in the book of Daniel. Daniel 7 relates a dream that Daniel had. He tells us in verse 3 that he saw four great beasts that were

very different from each other and that he saw them come up from the sea. "Sea" is often used in scripture to represent people, so these beasts came up from the people. Verse 4 tells us, **"The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it."** Vs. 17 tells us that these beasts are four great kings, or the rulers of four great kingdoms. These beasts did not represent the kingdoms themselves, but rather the man made systems (political, religious, and economic) within these kingdoms. Note that in the metal image, each kingdom was inferior to the kingdom preceding it. With these four beasts, we'll see that each one becomes stronger than the one before it.

I think we can safely say from what we have read thus far, that this first beast represents the kings, or systems or government developed in Babylon. Babylon itself fell to the Medes and Persians during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar.

Dan. 7:5 says, **"And behold another beast, a second, like a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, arise, devour much flesh."** Some translations render "ribs" as "tusks." If we again consider the three systems of government, Persia did devour much flesh through their development of each of these systems.

Dan. 7:6 says, **"After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl: the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it."** This confirms to us chronologically that this is referring to the rulership of the brass kingdom, Greece. Alexander the Great, after conquering the Persian Empire, died a young man and his empire was divided among four of his generals. Adding the cunning of the leopard to the strength of the lion and the rending power of the bear, the systems of government becomes more destructive as this kingdom takes the world stage.

The fourth beast was beyond Daniel's imagination. He doesn't have anything to gauge it by. He can't name it like he has the previous three. Verses 7 & 8 tell us **"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things."**

There were ten subdivisions of the Roman Empire, thus the ten horns. The little horn represents Justinian, the head of the Eastern Roman Empire at Constantinople. He subdued three of the ten subdivisions, or kingdoms, that were established in the Roman Empire after the fall of Imperial Rome. They were the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, and the Alemanians. It was under Justinian's rule that the church and state united and became the power that extended the Roman Empire under Papal Rome, or the Holy Roman Empire several hundred years longer.

As each of these empires flourished, the political systems became even more progressively oppressive, the religious systems became more domineering and superstitious, and money became enthroned in the economic systems with greed exerting an ever increasing influence.

We'll continue our study next issue by looking at the book of Revelation and how the entities that Daniel is dealing with continued into the history that John deals with in the book of Revelation. JRL

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra.

THE GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES

“It was late in the afternoon of July 4, 1776, after the members of the Continental Congress had signed the “Declaration of Independence” that a resolution was passed: *Resolved, that Dr. Franklin, Mr. J. Adams and Mr. Jefferson be a committee to prepare a device for a seal of the United States of America.* The committee was the same as had drawn up the Declaration of Independence, except for the omission of Robert Livingston and Rodger Sherman.” Thus is the beginning paragraph of a book titled “Our Great Seal—The Symbols of Our Heritage & Our Destiny” by E. Raymond Capt. The book is available from Artisan Publishers, P.O. Box 1529, Muskogee, OK 74402. Because few people are familiar with the Biblical significance of our Great Seal, I would like to briefly review this small book to hopefully entice you, our readers to study the seal out in more detail to see how the Divine Hand of the Holy Spirit has worked in the history of our great nation.

Mr. Capt states that the purpose of wanting a seal was to complete the evidence of the act of Independence, by formally adopting an official Sign of Sovereignty and a National Coat of Arms. Today, most businesses and corporations have their own seal that they affix or stamp on a business document to affirm its authenticity. Likewise with most levels of government, so it is fitting that the United States have its own seal. By act of Congress, the U.S. State Department acts as custodian for the seal.

The Great Seal is an extension of a very old tradition dating back thousands of years. A man sending a letter, or a scroll, to someone else would seal it with a wafer of wax. He would then press his signet into the wax to authenticate that it was he who was sending the letter. The signet may have been on a ring or may have just been carried for this purpose. It would have a design carved into the face of it that would be exclusive to him only. Eventually this grew to a larger seal

that when pressed into wax or a paper itself leaves the imprint of the seal in the wax or paper. Some seals have only one side, but as with the Great Seal, some have two sides. The principal design is on the “obverse” side and the secondary design is on the “reverse” side.

Unfortunately, this first committee was not able to come up with a seal that Congress would accept. However, they did set the tone that would eventually lead to a seal that was accepted. Since none of the men on the committee were artists, they engaged an artist and writer by the name of Eugene Pierre Du Simitiere, who lived in Philadelphia, to help them. After consulting with him, his design for the obverse was to include a shield with the coat of arms of several nations who had peopled this new nation, such as the English, Scotch, Irish, Dutch, Germans, etc. On one side of the arms was Liberty with her pileus (cap) and on the other side, a rifler in his uniform, with his rifled-gun in one hand and his tomahawk in the other.

The committee members then suggested design for the reverse. It is significant that their suggestions bore Israelitish symbols. Dr. Franklin suggested Moses lifting up his hand dividing the Red Sea and Pharaoh in his chariot overwhelmed with the waters. The motto that he proposed was “Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.” Mr. Jefferson proposed the children of Israel in the Wilderness, led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night while on the other side he proposed Hengist and Horsa, the Saxon chiefs whose political principles and form of government we have assumed. These original ideas were worked over several times and finally presented to Congress on “August 20, 1776. The only record of what happened is that it was tabled.

On March 25, 1780, still without a seal, a second committee was selected with the charge to come up with a seal. This committee selected an artist by the name of Francis Hopkinson, a former member of the Continental Congress. He had designed the U.S. flag that Congress adopted in 1777.

Hopkinson prepared two sets of designs,

both of which used some of the ideas of the first committee. However, like the first committee's report, his proposals were also tabled.

A third committee was selected in May of 1782 and this committee consulted with a William Barton, an authority on Heraldry and the son of Rev. Thomas Barton, Rector of St. James Episcopal Church of Philadelphia. Barton prepared two designs also, again retaining some of the ideas of his predecessors. The use of the number 13 becomes more prominent with each succeeding design. Barton's primary contribution on the obverse seal was the addition of an eagle. His design of the reverse consisted of an unfinished pyramid of 13 courses of stones with the "Eye of Providence" over the pyramid surrounded by a circle of rays and the motto "Deo Favente" above the pyramid and the motto "Perrennis" below it.

The reverse seal appeared to be acceptable to Congress but they weren't satisfied with the obverse. So Congress ordered the Secretary of Congress, Charles Thomson, to make the final decision on a modification of all previous designs. Thomson set out on a design of his own, but with a number of the ideas of the previous committees. Thomson did not draw the design, but rather took his suggestions to Mr. Barton, who had worked for the last committee, and had Mr. Barton redraw the seal with Thomson's suggested changes. Thomson then submitted this design to Congress on June 20, 1782 and it was adopted the same day. The portion of the report by Thomson describing the seal as adopted by Congress is as follows (parenthetical explanations mine):

Arms

Paleways (bands placed vertically on the face of a shield) of thirteen pieces Argent (silver or white) and Gules (red): a Chief (upper part of a shield, occupying one third thereof), Azure (blue). The Escutcheon (shield) on the breast of the American bald Eagle displayed (applied to any bird of prey with its wings expanded), proper (applicable to all animals, trees, vegetables, etc., when borne of their natural color), holding in his dexter (right hand side of the design [not of the observer]) talon an Olive branch, and in his sinister (left hand side of the design [not of the observer]) a bundle of thirteen arrows, all proper, & in his beak a scroll (one of the ornaments which may accompany the shield, usually bearing a motto), inscribed with this Motto, "E. Pluribus unum." —

For the Crest

Over the head of the Eagle which appears above the Escutcheon, A Glory (a series of rays surrounding or issuing from a charge or ordinary [a common bearing bounded by straight lines]), Or, breaking through a cloud, proper, & surrounding thirteen stars forming a Constellation, Argent, on an Azure field.—

Reverse

A pyramid unfinished. In the Zenith an Eye in a triangle surrounded with a glory proper. Over the Eye these words "Annuit Coeptis." On the base of the pyramid the numerical letters MDCCLXXVI & underneath the following motto: "Novus Ordo Seclorum."

Minor changes were yet to be made that we will discuss next issue along with the Biblical significance of several of the entities on the seal. In the meantime, you can study both sides of the seal by looking at a dollar bill. JRL