

PROGRESSIVE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISES IN SALVATION HISTORY NOTES, 6 pgs

(1) how the meaning of passages is disguised or used to point to Christ and his work

¹ *The revelation^a of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show^a His slaves the things that must take place quickly, and He signified^b, having sent forth through His angel to His slave John, ² who testified to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ— to all that he saw.^c ³ Blessed is the one reading, and the one hearing the words of this prophecy and keeping the things having been written in it, for the time is near, **Rev.1:***

^a **Revelation, Gk. *Apocalypse***, refers to the removal of a veil or covering. The purpose is “to show” (1:1) so what had been concealed and hidden is no longer secret as in unseen or unknown, though it may remain a mystery as in puzzling or unexplained.

^b **Signify means to communicate by using symbols** – to symbolize in a stylized manner, ie, made to conform to a particular style or format – that style being the fantastic images, scenes, beasts, and battles of **apocalyptic literature**. In Revelation and many other places in the Bible **things are not what they seem**. The true character of events, individuals, and forces, are quite different than they appear on the observable physical plane. **Symbols** such as the harlot Babylon (**Rev.17**) **represent the true nature of the subject**. Revelation’s symbols make things **appear as they really are**. God portrays them to emphasize their wickedness and his way of defeating it. **Smyrna** appears poor but is rich; **Sardis** has a reputation for life but is dead; **it appeared** that nothing could prevent **the red dragon** from devouring the woman’s child (**Rev.12**), *but the child was caught up to God and to his throne*.

A symbol is a visual metaphor [word substituted for what is actually being spoken of]. One common metaphor in the NT is the word **blood** used in referring to Christ’s **death** to connect it to the sprinkling of the blood for cleansing required by OT animal sacrifices (**Heb.9:11-14; 1 Jn.1:7**). A **halo or rays of light** emanating from the head representing holiness, deity, and the divine is a common symbol in paintings. **Many of the symbols in Revelation are dynamic with moving pictures like changing scenes in a movie**. Sometimes the symbols are explained - *the seven lampstands represent the seven churches, Rev.1:12, 20*

^c **The visual mode of the message** “to show” (1:1) or “he saw” (1:2) is used 52 times of John in Revelation combined with what “he heard” (1:10; 22:8) **represents first-hand knowledge**. So **Rev. 1:1** actually says that Jesus disclosed the deep realities of many of the very things the NT had already clarified (*made known*, **Eph.1:7-9** see below) by communicating them on a visceral level in the form of apocalyptic images and scenes. In other words, **Jesus both revealed truth by giving John visions and kept it secret by encoding it in symbolic form**. It’s like a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma or an autostereogram - a single-image stereogram is designed to create the visual illusion of a three-dimensional scene from a two-dimensional image (aka Magic Eye). The illusion is one of depth perception arising from the different perspective each eye has of a three-dimensional scene. Not everyone can see the 3-D image.

⁷ In *Jesus Christ* we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He caused to abound to us, in all wisdom and understanding ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself. (**Eph.1:**)

Most translators don't recognize a difference between the Gk word translated "signify" (1:1) and the common word for imparting knowledge, "make known" (**Eph.1:9**). Some translations that do make this distinction are DLNT, YLT, NTE, WYC, ASV, KJV, NKJV (biblegateway.com). **EHV** has *Christ expressed this revelation by means of symbols* .

(2) Is this type of revelation new or unusual?

¹⁰... why do you [*Jesus*] speak to the crowds in **parables**? ...¹¹ Because it has been given to you [disciples] to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given ...

³⁴All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables ... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by *Isaiah*, saying: *I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world, excerpts from Mt.13:10-17, 34-35* Jesus was revealing truth, but it is intentionally in a story form that people in general did not understand. He tells his disciples that they have been particularly blessed with knowledge that *many prophets and righteous people longed for (v.16-17)* but were denied because [my guess] it was not yet time, but once the kingdom of heaven began to descend upon the land, the time was right, **Lk.3:6**

The Bible has much to say about **mysteries**. The disciples themselves seemed to understand little of what Jesus said and taught. The author of Hebrews speaks of a continuing lack of understanding as a sign of immaturity and relates it to failure to develop morally. ¹¹ *About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.* ¹² *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,* ¹³ *for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.* ¹⁴ *But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil , Heb.5: 11-14*

There was another reason for the Jews' lack of understanding, that was judicially imposed - ¹⁴ The minds of the Israelites in Moses day *were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.* ¹⁵ *Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.* ¹⁶ *But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed,* **2 Cor.3:14-16**

As far as salvation goes, we know that even children can believe in Jesus. Their trust in him is real even though their understanding is limited. People progress at different rates in their comprehension depending on their education, self-discipline, mental acuity, and obedience to the truth they have been given. Regardless of abilities and circumstances, we know that *God is good and rewards those who earnestly seek him, Heb.11:6* That having been said, the bottom line is that being born again is a supernatural function.

(3) What does the NT say the OT reveals about Christ and His work?

[Christocentric Theology is built around promise-fulfillment rather than dispensations or covenants.]

Acts 2:25-31 *David said concerning Christ ... he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to Hades nor did His body decay in the grave.*

Jn.5:39, 45-47 *Jesus said you search the Scriptures because you think that you have eternal life in them, and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me ... Moses wrote of Me.*

Acts 8:35 *Philip ... heard the Ethiopian reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, How can I unless someone guides me? ... Philip ... beginning with this Scripture (**Isa.53:7-8**) told him the good news about Jesus [explained to him that this passage (and others) referred to Jesus].*

Acts 10:42-43 *Jesus is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the Prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.*

Rom.3:21-22 *the law and the prophets bear witness to **the righteousness of God** through faith in Jesus Christ.*

Acts 26:22-23 *I am saying what the Prophets [representing the Old Testament revelation] and Moses [representing the Old Covenant law] said.*

Acts 26:6 *I am on trial today because of my hope in what God has **promised** our forefathers [Abra-ham, etc].*

Lk.24:44-47 *everything that is written about Jesus in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms [whole OT] must be fulfilled ... Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations.*

I Cor.15:3-4 *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, He was buried, He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.*

*We can draw the conclusion then, that Christ and his work represent **the focal point of the OT**. The OT provides the background and points us to the revelation of the NT. **The heart of the NT is Christ and his work, and these verses say the same is true of the OT.***

(4) When the promises, prophecies, and images are fulfilled in the NT, we see them mature into reality - they are upgraded as they are transformed – spoken of as better, superior, stronger, more glorious (**Heb.6:9; 7:19, 8:6, 22; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24**)

Heb.9:8-9 *[speaking of the covenant with Israel, the tabernacle, its accouterments and services] the Holy Spirit was indicating that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. **It was symbolic for** [what would be clarified in] **the present time**. Accordingly, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of [forgive] the worshiper.*

Col.2:16-17 ... questions of food and drink or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths [Old Covenant regulations] are a shadow of things to come, but **the substance is of Christ**.

Heb.8:1b-2 ... We have a high priest [Jesus] seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent [not the mere "copy and shadow" representing it that the priests on earth serve, v.4-5a].

The Old Testament hid spiritual realities in the shadow form of its language, hence the adage Christ is in the Old Testament **concealed** and in the New **revealed**. Hebrews presses several arguments as to the superiority of Christ, his position, and accomplishments over other bearers of God's word (angels; Moses) in order to contrast the many Old Covenant [referring to the law] forms, figures, shadows, and representative copies with the actual reality.

So concerning the furnishings of the tabernacle, God said *see that you [Moses] make them after the pattern ... shown you [on mount Sinai where he received the law] Ex.25:40. Our forefathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness just as God directed Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen. (Acts 7:44)*

Christ is seated with God in the heavens ... ministering in the true sanctuary of the actual tabernacle (Heb.8:1-2);

Priests serve a shadow and copy of the heavenly things (8:5); Christ has entered into heaven itself - the true, not the OT copy (9:24); the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form [icon, picture, image] of these realities. (10:1) The physical structure of the earthly sanctuary and the furnishings, ordinances, and services of the first (Old) Covenant (**Heb.9:1-7**) were temporary and symbolic (**v.9**) *until the time of reformation. (v.10) The true way into God's presence was not made known (v.8)* until the New Covenant was established (**v.15**). **Old Covenant sacrifices were a pattern or illustration of what Christ was to do IN FACT, Heb.9:23-24; 10:1**

The Old Covenant describes the relationship between God and his people - **Israelites**. The New Covenant in Christ's blood describes the new relationship between Christ and his people - **Christians**. The Old Testament includes the OC Law, prophecies, historic accounts, and other writings before the Gospels. **The New Testament begins with a transition period in the Gospels** during which the OC law and OT prophecies were fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Christ. **So what are we to conclude from all this? With the exception of certain Gospel passages and the bulk of the NT, most of the Bible is engaged in both revealing and hiding God's mysteries that focus on Christ and his work.**

Scripture is dynamic in the various categories [promise; judgment; blessing; prophecy; law; construction, fabrication, and decoration details (ie tabernacle; priests garments); procedural directions (ie order of march, assembly and disassembly of the tabernacle; sequence of events governing special days and occasions (ie Day of Atonement); etc]. **There is a movement or progression toward a goal or fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.** There are a number of books that touch on various aspects of this. It is a movement from shadow or type to reality. This has been called **Propheesied & Fulfilled Theology**, and most recently has come to be expressed as **New Covenant Theology**. [See

under **What Is New Covenant Theology? Part Three** John G. Reisinger
[http://www.soundofgrace.com/jgr/ Baptists and Their Doctrines](http://www.soundofgrace.com/jgr/Baptists%20and%20Their%20Doctrines) chap.1, **Distinctive Baptist principles** by B.H. Carroll, edited (1913)]

This study is a short example of the way I expect the other lines of thought from these categories will work out. **What we are looking for when a promise is given, instruction, or reason is a physical fulfillment that portends a later spiritual fulfillment and concludes in an ultimate complete fulfillment resulting in a permanent spiritual condition.** When considering the theme of salvation, there are several terms or phrases that help keep us on track: **rest; peace; restoring your fortunes; the idea of gathering; and the continual contrasting the wicked from the righteous.**

While working on this project, I have come to believe that **throughout the centuries after Christ many Christians have believed and understood much of this Christocentric plan of God, this Unfolding Drama of Redemption.** As the 2 major theologies, first **covenantalism** (CT, aka reformed theology) & later **dispensationalism** (DT), were developed and systematized, Christian scholars tended to gravitate toward one or the other. They did their best to fit those truths into their theological systems, but both laymen and scholars noticed and embraced many truths of **NCT**. The following quote from **The City of God** exemplifies this. It existed alongside these other systems in pieces and was not recognized or organized into a systematic expression until recently. Nevertheless the truths of **PFT** kept surfacing in their thinking. **It is common for ordinary people to recognize that promises designated for Israel were meant for them** – that Christians rather than ethnic Jews or national Israel are the heirs. CT & DT have adjusted their theologies according to the inconsistencies and criticisms brought against them. Modern forms of DT are collectively known as Progressive DT.

This following quote from Augustine's *The City of God* follows his quotation of Paul in **Gal.4:21-31** about Sarah and Hagar. ***This interpretation of the passage, handed down to us with apostolic authority, shows us how ought to understand the Scriptures of the two covenants - the old and the new. One portion of the earthly city became an image of the heavenly city, not having a significance of its own, but signifying another city, and therefore serving, or "being in bondage." For it was founded not for its own sake, but to prefigure another city; and this shadow of a city was itself foreshadowed by another preceding figure*** **Bk.15, Sec.2**

This house of God is more glorious than that first one which was constructed of wood and stone, metals and other precious things. Therefore the prophecy of Haggai was not fulfilled in the rebuilding of that temple. For it can never be shown to have had so much glory after it was rebuilt as it had in the time of Solomon; yea, rather, the glory of that house is shown to have been diminished, first by the ceasing of prophecy, and then by the nation itself suffering so great calamities, even to the final destruction made by the Romans, as the things above-mentioned prove. But this house which pertains to the new testament is just as much more glorious as the living stones, even believing, renewed men, of which it is constructed are better. But it was typified by the rebuilding of that temple for this reason, because the very renovation of that edifice typifies in the prophetic oracle another testament which is called the NEW. When, therefore, God said by the prophet just named, And I will give peace in this place, Hag.2:9. He is to be understood who is typified by that typical place; for since by that rebuilt place is typified the Church

which was to be built by Christ, nothing else can be accepted as the meaning of the saying, I will give peace in this place, except I will give peace in the place which that place signifies. For all typical things seem in some way to personate those whom they typify, as it is said by the apostle, That Rock was Christ.

Therefore the glory of this new testament house is greater than the glory of the old testament house; and it will show itself as greater when it shall be dedicated. For then shall come the desired of all nations, Hag.2:7 as we read in the Hebrew. For before His advent He had not yet been desired by all nations. For they knew not Him whom they ought to desire, in whom they had not believed. Then, also, according to the Septuagint interpretation (for it also is a prophetic meaning), shall come those who are elected of the Lord out of all nations. For then indeed there shall come only those who are elected, whereof the apostle says, According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, Eph.1:4 For the Master Builder who said, Many are called, but few are chosen, Mt.22:11-14 did not say this of those who, on being called, came in such a way as to be cast out from the feast, but would point out the house built up of the elect, which henceforth shall dread no ruin. Yet because the churches are also full of those who shall be separated by the winnowing as in the threshing-floor, the glory of this house is not so apparent now as it shall be when every one who is there shall be there always, Bk.18, sec.48

TRUTH, HONESTY & OTHER COMPETING MOTIVES

None of us starts off with the certainty that we know or were taught 100% correctly. Institutions that we find ourselves in, or a part of, must have a way for us to work these things out together. Some people are threatened by a view that differs from their own. Through the years I have noticed that **the search for truth has been made secondary by personal issues**. Here are some examples. I mentioned to a friend who worked for a certain missions group that I had a good book on Revelation that had a perspective different from his. He wasn't interested in reading it because *he liked the people he worked with and the organization*.

In other words he felt that seeking the truth and arriving at a different conclusion would jeopardize his job and friendships. He taught Bible classes for that organization as part of his job. I knew another man who was committed to a certain doctrinal position by virtue of his church membership and is a Christian college professor. He always gave me the impression that **he would not consider anything that jeopardized that status**. These things bother me because there is no room to seek the truth together – no way to work through the difficulty together. This attitude rests on the assumption that our [organization's] view is correct in all aspects and dissension must be removed for the sake of the maintaining our theological distinctions. It also means that if you find yourself changing your mind (my wife and I have a couple times) you feel the need to hide that fact. **Your motivation becomes fear and your method of dealing with it is concealment and/or refusal to entertain the notion that you might be wrong** which is dishonest.