

**THE PRIMARY AUDIENCE OF
THE JEWISH APOSTLES,
JOHN, JAMES and PETER**

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Long ago, God revealed a portion of His Word through Moses. Via the wonder of divine revelation Moses perfectly recorded the words which God had stated, including those spoken to the serpent. In Genesis 3:15 God mentions a conflict which occurs between the "Seed" of the woman ["her"] and the seed of the deceiving serpent. We know that these words were spoken long before Moses was moved to record them—for the sake of argument 5,000 B. C. is suggested, and Moses wrote them in about 1,400 B.C..¹ As one reads the account a future sense is noted, the Hebrew verbs are in the Qal imperfect, which shows an incomplete action. Though a "habitual aspect" can be seen in some imperfect Hebrew verbs, there are several specifics in this passage which point to a specific event. Wounds would occur, one on the heel, another on the head. Still, as one continues to read Genesis, this conflict does not occur. Nor is it seen in the Pentateuch, nor in the prophets. In the New Testament (NT), circa 51 - 98 A. D., we encounter a woman's "seed"—Jesus the Christ. And in the final book of the NT we read of one of the seven heads of the "beast" [Revelation 13], recovering from a severe wound. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the wounding of this "beast" seem to fit the brief prophecy of Genesis 3:15. At least they fit better than any other scenario in the word of God. Though Adam and Eve heard these words, they experienced not their fulfillment. Please keep this fact in mind as we progress.

In Isaiah chapter 11, circa 750 B.C., we read of a changed world; lions eating no flesh, human babies and vipers safely playing together, and the earth being full of the knowledge of the Lord. Isaiah spoke these words to the Israelites of his day. They have not yet been fulfilled.

Isaiah mentions a king named "Cyrus" (44:28, 45:1) to the same Israelites of his era of about 750 B. C.. Yet none of the hearers saw or met this Persian king. Cyrus was not even born then, it was several centuries before Isaiah's revelation would be fully appreciated. To the people to whom he spoke, the words had no direct interpretation—though applications could be derived.

In Ezekiel chapters 40 - 44, circa about 590 B. C., we read of the detailed descriptions of a temple of Jehovah. It is located in Israel, (40:2). Prior to this vision, in chapter 11, Ezekiel records the Spirit of God leaving the doomed temple in Jerusalem. It was later destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Since that time God has not dwelt in any man-made building in Israel! Herod's temple does not fit the description of a temple which Ezekiel describes in chapters 40 - 44, it has the "glory of God" returning to it, 43:5. The exiles who heard Ezekiel speak this did not experience this, nor did Ezra and company. This too is yet to be fulfilled.

Many more illustrations could be produced to illustrate a point. God often speaks words which are not then fully applicable to the present audience, they apply to a later audience. When Cyrus did emerge, the Jews acknowledged Isaiah as a sure prophet, though the Jews may not have accepted Isaiah's revelations when uttered. The virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth surely brought a portion of Genesis 3:15 into the minds of biblical readers of 4 B. C.. In the NT we find many more texts which though written in the early-late first century, have not yet met their primary audience(s).

The NT books of James, I, II Peter, I, II, III John, and portions of John's gospel, and all of Revelation, are addressed to a yet future people, genetic Israelites and proselytes. Readers of this age can feed upon the texts and grow thereby, illumination and encouragement can occur, and truths will be manifest, but this does not alter their future intended audience(s). This brief paper shall verify this observation. Once grasped, contradictions, and many exegetical difficulties plaguing many religions and scholars are clarified. The joy of Bible study dynamically increases. This is the author's hope. Consider the "rest of the story", then reject, modify or agree.

In about A.D. 30-33, Jesus of Nazareth commissioned His chosen followers. One of the "commands" of Matthew 28:20 is seen in Matthew 10:6:

but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel - NASB

Another injunction is noted at Luke 24:47:

**and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name
to all the nations - beginning from Jerusalem. NASB**

The commission in Acts 1:8 is part of the same complex, and it displays the sequence of action. The Jewish apostles were to first begin with their own nation, and when and only when the nation of Israel accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah, were they to then be as light to the world. This fits well with the prophecy of Isaiah 60:3a:

and nations will come to your light - NASB

Note who Isaiah is speaking to, (Isaiah 1:1). And note who Jesus is addressing this to:

You are the light of [or, for] the cosmos. Matthew 5:14a

Jesus is addressing multitudes from: Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, from beyond the Jordan; but primarily to His disciples. Matthew 4:25, and 5:1. Note that "Gentiles" are apparently excluded -Matthew 5:47, 6:32, thus it appears that He taught Jews and proselytes which were of, or were the multitude - Matthew 7:28, 29.

John, Peter, and James were amongst the disciples when all of the aspects of the commission were given. (For purposes of this essay, the author of the NT book - James, is one of the original 12 apostles.). They are sent to Jerusalem, and that is where they begin as Acts makes clear. In fact they generally remain there even when others flee - Acts 8:1. Note who Peter

addresses in his speech during a special Pentecost, which filled Jerusalem with Jews and proselytes, and perhaps the curious:

Men of Judea and all those dwelling in Jerusalem... Acts 2:14

Men of Israel... Acts 2:22

let all the house of Israel know... Acts 2:36

Acts 3:12-26 is relevant also. Obviously the apostles understood the commands of Jesus literally, they are seeking to win the nation of Israel, first. As Acts shows, they fail, and God raises up another apostle, one who goes [indeed! who is *sent* out] out of Israel.

The point is, nowhere does God change His commission to the 12 apostles (which includes Matthias as number 12). Their commission still stands. Israel is still in unbelief. Israel is not now the light of the world, there is no temple of Jehovah in Israel, and the name of Christ is generally detested—tolerated only as it profits various businessmen. Israel has been temporarily rejected, Romans 11:25. After the rapture [αρπαζω] God will again begin to work with His earthly nation of Israel. He is not now. (Though He is graciously watching them). The elect coming out of Judaism cease to remain Jews, they become members of the heavenly portion of the Body of Christ. [Ephesians 2]. James, John and Peter still are apostles (which means - "ones sent with authority") to Israel! Earthly Israel.

As far as the nation of Israel is concerned, their next event as per God's relationship with them is a period of tribulation. The "time of Jacob's trouble"—Jeremiah 30:7, Isaiah 10:3, *et cetera*. The book of Revelation describes this coming age quite well. It is also described in many of the OT Jewish prophets—Joel, Zechariah, Ezekiel. The prophecy of John (Revelation

1:3) is directed to Israelites; comparing Revelation 1:6 with Exodus 19:6 makes this apparent:

REVELATION 1:6a

**and He made us [a] kingdom, priests
to His God and Father.**

EXODUS 19:6

**and you shall be to Me a kingdom
of priests and a holy nation.
These are the words that you will
speak unto the children of Israel.**

The wonderful book of Revelation is inspiring for us to read as well (in this "age"), we learn of the fate of those left upon the earth after the rapture, we read of justice, we see past prophecies fulfilled, we read of God's mercy, we are thus comforted with the future of the planet and the tremendous changes which will occur. But, for just a moment, imagine that you remain upon the planet after the heavenly body-part is removed. You are not yet a believer, you find a New Testament and begin reading Revelation as you read you see the numbers being given upon the hands and foreheads, you see the nations rise up against regathered Israel. You see the hordes coming from the extreme north [Russia?, however many suspect that this battle occurs after the Millennium] to attack Israel, you witness the false παρουσία [coming] of the antichrist, you see many antichrists spreading perversions, you actually see Revelation unfolding before your very eyes! This realization will hopefully lead some to accept Jesus as Messiah during this tribulation period. This is the blessing contained within the text of Revelation, this is when the book really blooms. John still witnesses to his people, to a future Israel as well!

Many religions teach that Revelation concerns the future, and it is obviously directed primarily to the future readers. Most religions, however, do not yet recognize the primary audience of the other works of the Jewish apostles, perhaps because so much of their texts are applicable to us now. Certainly not all of what they teach is to us today. As per Galatians 2:7-9, these Jewish apostles are still seeking Israelites and proselytes for the earthly

kingdom. Many of their truths are trans-dispensational but this does not alter their intended primary audience. The following observations should verify this.

The catholic epistles are not generally regarded as equivalent to true texts of prophecy such as Daniel or Revelation. They are more personal. In fact Revelation describes the events and scenes of the future tribulation period and supplies this type of information. The catholic epistles provide for the personal encouragement which will be greatly needed during that frightening time. In this sense they share some common features with the Mosaic Laws which were given in the wilderness. These laws provided for the then future life of the Jews and proselytes in the "land of promise", in Israel. Interestingly, we also note many commands and legal requests within the catholic epistles! Because when God is working with the earthly nation of Israel, He usually requires obedience to "laws" as a manifestation of their faith. That is why "works" are always associated with earthly Israelites.

Looking at the texts of the catholic epistles, one should begin to note many indications as to who, and when their primary audience consists of. For instance, in the Greek a word is found to occur only three times in the entire NT, it is διασπορα [diaspora, dispersion], the location of its three occurrences are:

Is He not planning to go into [amongst] the dispersion of the Greeks [or, the Hellenistic dispersion] and teach the Greeks? John 7:35b

James, [a] servant of God and [or, even] Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who [are] in the dispersion, greetings. James 1:1

Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ to the elect refugees of [the] dispersion of [geographic genitives follow] Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynias. I Peter 1:1

This technical term for the scattered Jews and proselytes is found in the texts of the Jewish apostles. Paul was not sent to Israel, hence he has no use for

this term. John and Peter and James are warning the future readers of coming events, events of the tribulation. During the period at the beginning of the tribulation period, most of "Israel" is still scattered over the face of the world. They have been ever since the "times of the Gentiles" has been in effect. [i.e. since the Roman invasion - Luke 21:24]. If one seeks to know who Peter and James are addressing their epistles to, the above quoted passages are as clear as can be; any other understanding probably results from needless external conjecture.

But the evidence is just beginning to mount. Consider the following:

- (1) **...if any man comes into your synagogue [συναγωγην]...(a term never used by Paul). James 2:2**
- (2) **...heirs of the kingdom... James 2:5 (a typical Jewish hope)**
- (3) **...whoever keeps the whole Law... (a reference to a known code) James 2:10**
- (4) **.. .was not Abraham our father... James 2:21**
- (5) **note the typical Jewish union of faith and works - James 2:20, 24 etcetera**
- (6) **...the coming of the Lord is at hand... James 5:8 (He does return at the end of the seven year tribulation, verse 7 requests patience.)**
- (7) **...during the revelation of Jesus Christ. (an event the readers seem to anticipate and experience) I Peter 1:7**
- (8) **...conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay as aliens... (meaning scattered Israelites) I Peter 1:17**
- (9) **...you are being built [as a] spiritual house for a holy priesthood... I Peter 2:5 (the elect nation serves as priests during the millennium, note Isaiah 56:7.)**
- (10) **I Peter 2:9, can only be applied to earthly Israelites!**
- (11) **...keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles [nations]... I Peter 2:12a NASB (note the preceding verse too!).**

(12)...baptism now saves you... I Peter 3:21 (this reference to water baptism accords with Israel's historical use of this ritual. To enter the "kingdom" a Jew/proselyte must first be ceremoniously cleansed - hence John the Baptist and his preparatory ministry, and Acts 2:38.)

(13) live not like the nations [Gentiles] I Peter 4:3

(14)...but if as [a] Christian..do not be ashamed (disciples of Paul and Barnabas were first called "Christians". During the tribulation this "foul" term may be mistakenly applied to the surviving Jews in a condemning way.)

(15)...when the Chief Shepherd appears..NASB. (This terminology is never used by Paul, and these people are being prepared to actually meet Him!). I Peter 5:4.

(16) Satan (the devil) appears to be on the earth. I Peter 5:8

(17) protection for the righteous during the time of judgment is presented. II Peter 2:9

(18) audience is encouraged to know the Lord is near, and that they seem to participate in the "day of the Lord" a common Jewish prophetic phrase. II Peter 3:9-18.

(19) Children it is the last hour; and just as you heard that Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. I John 2:18 (compare with Matthew 24:24, and #22 below).

(20)...now little children, remain in Him so that He is revealed we might have boldness and not be put to shame before Him at His coming. (The "if" in some English translations is ignorance - note the NRSV.). I John 2:28

(21) Hatred from the world is typical (and a hallmark) of the oppressed believers during the tribulation period. I John 3:13

(22) present tense - many false prophets in world. I John 4:1 (see Rev. 6:13).

(23) note repeated emphasis on Jesus as the Christ - the Messiah I John 5:1 and I Peter 3:15, 4:1, I John 2:22, II John 1:9, Revelation 11:15.

(24)...and the whole cosmos is lying in the evil... I John 5:19 (true of this present age, and certainly true of the tribulation era!)

(25) Many deceivers present - antichrist(s). II John 7

(26) The "chosen lady" of II John, is known by all who love the truth. This would appear to be a reference not to any one person but to a group, an elected group of believers. Here a "bride" may be inferred, Revelation 18:23, 22:17.

(27) "Gaius" is an extremely common name, similar to our "John Doe's". III John 1. Note "Gentiles" of III John 7, hence an obvious contrast!

(28) "Diotrephes" means "nourished by Zeus", and could be possibly applied to any people(s) who follow the teachings of the Greek humanists, or of those who recognize in Zeus (Jupiter) the ascension of man to the level of divinity. Hence, John may be using this name to indicate a future judgment upon those who are like a Diotrephes. III John 9.

(29) Notice the danger which was mentioned from "long ago" in Jude 4, the connection to verses 14 and 18 is clear, the "last times" are happening!

(30) Revelation 1:9 shows that the human co-author (John) participates in "the tribulation", who was then on the island of Patmos, he may be resurrected to share in the future tribulation - note John 21: 22, 23.

The above examples present a weighty suggestion that the intended audience of the catholic epistles is an elected group of non-Gentilic peoples who are upon the earth during the coming tribulation.

Much of the gospel of John can uniquely relate to the future group. The unity of the three epistles of John and his gospel is obvious. Westcott³ compares the three themes of the writings of John and shows their clear similarity and purpose: they are—I John 1:3, I John 5:13, compared with John 20:31. Jesus is presented as "God" and as the "Messiah" in John's writings. God in the flesh, He will return in the "flesh" - II John 7. This return to earth is visible, Matthew 24:30, Acts 1:11, I John 3:2, Revelation 19:11-16. The Jews need to know that Jesus IS the Messiah: their apostle John gives the strongest possible testimony to this fact. Hence, his gospel is so oriented. Its timeless truths provide today's readers with much insight and historical data as well.

THE MISSING CONTROVERSIES

In the catholic epistles we do not read of the tensions which were so prominent during the Acts period and early Christian era. The issue of

circumcision is missing, the commissions to go out to a lost world are absent, the gospel of the Kingdom prevails without competition from the "grace gospel". Separation from the world is encouraged, obedience to the former "apostles" (II Peter 3:2, Jude 1:17) is encouraged. Jewish traditions of water baptism, confession, separation, repentance, the necessity of works and keeping of the Mosaic Law (recall James 2:11), anticipation of earthly inheritances, anticipation of a new heavens and earth, are everywhere apparent. Words of comfort indicating that they will not experience tribulation are missing (as compared with I Thessalonians 1:10 and 4:18). The warning about "other gospel(s)" is lacking. These "missing" elements seem to suggest that only one group of believers is present upon the earth. Unlike the Acts and pre-seventy A. D. era in which the Messianic church of James, John and Peter also co-existed with the growing church of Christians. It would seem that "Christians" are gone and with them the above controversies. This supposition endorses a time period of post-rapture for the catholic epistles, a period when they expect to suffer and expect the visible return of the Messiah to the earth, (and not a secret meeting in the air). It may be said too, that nowhere in these epistles (nor in the gospels) are the readers told that they are going to become heavenly dwellers or citizens. The martyrs during the tribulation period only temporarily abide in heaven, awaiting their return to earth (note Revelation 5:10, 20:4, 22:20). The promise to Israel is of an earthly inheritance, not a heavenly one; Genesis 12:7 ("I will"), James 2:5, II Peter 3:13.

PREPARATIONS FOR SUFFERING AND PERSECUTIONS

This is a notable feature of the catholic epistles, especially James, I John, I, II Peter. Persecution against the saints has always occurred in the world and in the history of salvation. It is seen amongst the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, it is mentioned in the Thessalonian church, but it has special prominence in the catholic epistles. In fact it occupies much of the text. Note:

James 1:2, 1:12, 4:9, 5:1,3,5

I Peter 1:6,7, 2:21, 3:14,17, 4:1,12,13,17,19, 5:9,10,

II Peter 2:1, 3:3

I John 3:13, 4:17,18,

MATTHEW 24:4-11 NASB

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. "But all these are merely the beginning of birth pangs. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. "And at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.

This is why "brotherly love" is so encouraged in I John, why "perseverance" is stressed in I Peter, why detecting false prophets and apostles is stressed, why being separate from the world is stressed. The catholic epistles are to the saints who will die or survive this "time of Jacob's trouble". The events, the warnings and the very phrases are all closely connected to Matthew 24, the Book of Revelation, Zechariah 14, Joel and many other Jewish prophecies. The facts of the matter are plainly exposed, they can be ignored, but they cannot be denied.

THE DATING FACTOR

The dating of the writings of these epistles is important, especially the five books of John. If one asserts that John is writing to saints today (specifically) then a conflict would occur. John's good news of the coming kingdom would conflict with Paul's good news of a coming "rapture". Paul's words of our not fearing the coming wrath would conflict with the encouragement to endure the coming persecutions which John illuminates in

most of his writings. But most importantly, two groups would be vying for God's favor. John was not sent to the Gentiles! [Galatians 2:7 - 9]. The union of Ephesians 2 would not be occurring. The temporary rejection of Israel [Romans 11:25] would be a lie. The solution to the matter is that John wrote in the late first century. He wrote after the destruction of Israel's temple [post A.D. 70], after Judaism was temporarily outlawed, after Israel was rejected. Hence his words to Israel are not specifically in effect now as God is not dealing with the earthly nation of Israel now, his words must be for a later group. And this is precisely what the texts indicate! John, James and Peter are still obedient to their commission, they still seek to win their nation, their words will still bloom. However, it is Paul's teachings which are the blueprints for the church in this age - note:

...I am speaking [Paul] to you who are Gentiles, as I am apostle of the nations...
Romans 11:13

The things which you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, [Paul] practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. Philippians 4:9 NASB

...keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. II Thessalonians 3:6b NASB

Retain the standard of sound words which you [Timothy] have heard from me [Paul].
II Timothy 1:13

It is also instructive to note that Paul is the only person who calls a gospel "my gospel" - Romans 2:16, 16:25, II Timothy 2:8. Paul does not instruct his followers to follow the earthly teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, nor to prepare for the coming tribulation, nor how to be water baptized, nor to live via Mosaic Law, nor to seek an earthly kingdom, nor to look for the coming to earth of the fleshly Messiah, nor to meet in synagogues. Dispensationally, after the heavenly portion of the body of Christ [perhaps to be referred to as heavenly Israel] is raptured, then God begins to work with

the earthly nation of Jews, then the prophetic clock begins again, then the good news (gospel) of the coming kingdom—the Lord is at hand is appropriate, then baptism for remission of sins is proper.

This realization also helps us realize to whom, and when John's writings are meant. This applies to Peter and James too. Order is established, order which is often confused today because of old religious traditions and liturgy.

There are some scholars who still try to resurrect the notion that John wrote very early (before A.D. 70), or very late (second century). Briefly the weaknesses of both positions are:

AGAINST THE EARLY DATE

An overreaction by a few conservative scholars has, most likely, generated this position. Most use the present tense verb $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ [John 5:2] to declare that if this pool area was then in existence (when the author wrote John) then it must have been before A.D. 70, before the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. This is easily countered by the consideration that John may have employed a "historical present" here for emphasis. Many scholars and commentaries indicate the "historical present" here. Yet, Vardaman⁴ shows that this "pool of Bethesda" was still in existence, it had survived the destruction of A.D. 70. Other attempts to date John writings as pre-seventy A. D., are nicely portrayed in Morris's work⁵. He does mention that John does not refer to the followers of Jesus as "apostles" but as "disciples": I believe this is so because, John writes after the rejection of Israel is finalized (after A. D. 70), and thus Jewish missionary activity is postponed. A disciple is not necessarily an apostle—one sent with authority. The lack of a commission (which is seen in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and in early Acts) is a strong proof that John wrote after A.D. 70. The language and syntax of John's writings also form a strong witness against an early date. The leaders of the early date group seem to be Dan Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary, and J. A. T. Robinson; none of their theories are convincing.

AGAINST THE LATE DATE THEORY

The "unanimous tradition of the ancients (Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, &c.) that the fourth gospel was the last written."⁶, has led some to abnormally extend this period between the writing of John's gospel and that of the synoptics. From critics in England (via an Evanson) and then in Germany, the theory that it was penned in the second century [and therefore not by John the apostle] was propagated. Bultmann and others have pushed this theory of its late date: however, the discovery of papyrus P⁵² (Papyrus Rylands Greek 457) in Egypt has conclusively ended the attempts to date it in the second century. The papyrus is, unquestionably dated at about A.D. 110-125. It took time for this "copy" to appear in the sands of Egypt, over 1,000 miles from the supposed place where John wrote! [hence A.D. 90-98 looms large]. Equally damaging is the fact that the author claims to be an eyewitness to the events described, and the early church and bishops acknowledged this. For further reading on the subject of the "four gospels" I highly recommend the book *Is There A Synoptic Problem*, by Eta Linnemann⁷.

Once we accept the evidence that John wrote after the destruction of the temple, and after Israel was rejected, and after the coming promised King and "kingdom" was put on hold [note Acts 3:18 - 21, and 13:46], we can realize that he must be addressing a people of a later period. Once we can accept this, then we can so treat the other Jewish apostles' compositions as to the same people. Though the books of Peter, and James and Jude were written before John's—they appear to be addressed to scattered Jews/proselytes awaiting persecution, rejected by the world, and seeking a Messiah. Thus, we do not have two gospels being spread at the same time! There should then be no conflict with the Pauline gospel of grace, or heavenly hopes and the good news about uncircumcision, which message occurs in this age existing between Acts 9/13 and the "rapture". [Sadly, many today preach the "Kingdom Gospel", thus we do have two gospels being proclaimed!]

An example of the above, in which something is said or written now but is primarily directed to a future generation, may be the famous Sermon on the Mount text of Matthew chapters 5 - 7. In it Jesus teaches the listeners how to

behave in the coming kingdom. [note Micah 4:2]. Note Matthew 4:23 first, which displays the subject matter of the message(s) which the earthly Jesus proclaimed.

...and heralding [announcing] the good news of (or about) the kingdom...

Jesus is the Minister of [to] the circumcision - Romans 15:8, and was sent only to Israel -Matthew 15:24, and referred to them as "children of the kingdom" - Matthew 8:12. In the quoted text above [of Matthew 4:23] note: 5:3 "kingdom of - or from - heaven" a probable ablative. Note: verse 8, "they shall see God", probably because He is ruling in His visible form (Jesus Christ, the Messiah) *on* the earth. Note: their being referred to as a "light of the world", offerings at an altar, [which implies the presence of a temple], Jerusalem referred to as the "city of the Great King" (5:35), and the many commands and strict rules of conduct of this period. These rules will be enforced as the King Jesus Christ will rule with a "rod of iron".

I posit that here in Matthew we have words and rules for the future citizens of the kingdom from heaven *on* earth, the promised kingdom. (Ethelbert W. Bullinger first recognized these facts concerning this portion of Matthew; this, long before this present author observed these indications). This parallels the concepts and chronological peculiarities which we have noted in the catholic epistles! Trying to take these words as addressed to us (instead of being an application applied to us) is like trying to build an ark *today*, because it was commanded in Genesis 6:14! Application should not be confused with interpretation. Note who is being addressed! This will save many heart aches and confusion.

AUDIENCE INDICATED VIA LANGUAGE

The very words and syntax and phrases used by the authors of the catholic epistles would seem to indicate that they are primarily aimed at a Jewish audience. Though originally composed in Koine Greek, clues abound

as to the Semitic hints which should seem obvious to readers who are Jews in the dispersion, or who are knowledgeable of the situation of the scattered Jews prior to the coming tribulation period. Consider the following examples.

(1) the authors use "brethren" in identifying with their primary audience as per I Peter 1:22, II Peter 1:10, James 1:2, 5:12, I John 3:13. In I Peter 5:9 - the suffering seems to be worldwide!

(2) II Peter 2:9 incorporates words and phrases and thoughts from Exodus 19:5,6 Isaiah 43:20,21. γενος, εκλεκτον, περιποησιν, τας αρετας, translated as "chosen generation" and "for His own-possession" and that they might announce "the virtues" of Him: all stem from Isaiah and Exodus, texts particularly sensitive to Jewish sensitivities. Note the references to Hosea - in verse 10. Selwyn⁸, shows a chart exhibiting the similarities of these selected passages with deliverance from Babylon to the deliverance from the current oppressor (the antichrist and or governments!).

(3) Note in I Peter 1:1 - παρεπιδηροις a term meaning "aliens" or better "temporary residents", this connected with "dispersion". This word only occurs here and in I Peter 2:11 and Hebrews 11:13. It is also seen in the LXX at Genesis 23:4 (of Abraham) and Psalms 39:12, again two very popular texts. Paul never uses the precise term (Ephesians 2:19 is similar).

(4) The Jewish method of parallelism - a method of presenting concepts and contrasts is exceedingly notable in the Greek text of the epistles of John. Westcott illustrates these nicely.⁹ Parallelism occurs infrequently in Paul's works (note Romans 11:21 - 23, as shown by Bullinger)¹⁰.

(5) The "Fatherhood" of God in I John 1:2,3 has strong OT references to the Israelites. [note Westcott]¹¹. Paul presents his readers as "adopted" Romans 8:23, Galatians 4:5, etcetera. Adoption is not seen in the catholic epistles.

(6) James presents the Mosaic Law as binding, 2:9 - 11, 4:11. It has never ever been so with non-Jews.

(7) James' style is similar to Jewish wisdom literature, such as Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon, per Robertson.¹² Though written in Greek it can be highly appreciated and recognized by Hebrew readers as showing affinity to their literatures and modes.

(8) The notable usages of the present tense in I John give the reader the distinct impression that the events are actually presently occurring! This does not accord with the occasional use of a historical present. During the tribulation era, it is the whole "world" which requires salvation, note I John 4:14. I John 4:1 starts with a present tense, a warning!

The above is just a sampling of various Greek words and phrases and styles which promote Semitic and other concerns. This is especially noticeable to those readers of the Greek texts who are familiar with the OT or who utilize ancient Semitic literatures.

The concept of the coming Messiah, the Christ, looms large for obvious reasons in the catholic epistles. In the Pauline corpus, the heavenly body rises to meet the Lord in the air, and then goes to heaven and not to the earth. In the catholic epistles an earthly return and institution of an earthly kingdom is anticipated. When the Savior appears, relief will fill the hearts of the oppressed, the King has come, and with Him the long awaited kingdom! (James 2:5 - Matthew 25:34, and I Peter 3:14, I Peter 1:5, Jude 25 "our Saviour").

Much more data can be shared to bolster my contention that the catholic epistles are specifically addressed to the Jews and proselytes who remain upon the planet after the rapture and who are elect or who then become aware of their election. Yet, without question a sufficient amount has been presented to cause students to seriously consider the import of this essay.

In closing, I wish to reassert the fact that within these epistles is much food for the saints of this present age. We learn more about the divinity of Jesus, we see other saints prepare to endure a frightful scenario, we feel the hope generated by the writers, we witness (or read) of the future salvation of these future saints and martyrs. We are comforted knowing that God, in His wonderful and caring love, has provided His Word for His people in every age. None are forgotten, His mercy is eternal. May these epistles, addressed to the scattered tribes of Israel, inspire us as well!



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- 1 Wood, Bryant G.. "Dating Jericho's Destruction: Bienkowski Is Wrong on All Counts" *Biblical Archaeology Review* September/October 1990: 45ff.
- 2 Many translations show "if" here for the Greek $\epsilon\alpha\upsilon$, but this construction also permits "when" as at John 12:32 - "when I am lifted up", and at 14:3 -when I go to prepare a place": also noted at Hebrews 3:7. Each context favors "when" which is permissible in the Greek before a subjunctive mood verb. Many manuscripts actually show a variant reading here at I John 2:28, having $\omicron\tau\alpha\upsilon$ an easier "when".
- 3 Westcott, Brooke Foss. *The Epistles of St John*. Cambridge: Macmillan and Co. Second edition, 1886. Page xxxviii.
- 4 Vardaman, E. Jerry. "The Pool of Bethesda": *The Bible Translator*, volume xiv, 1963. 27ff.
- 5 Morris, Leon. *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*. William B. Eerdmans, Michigan. 1969. Page 289.
- 6 Lange, John Peter. *John*. Zondervan, Michigan. n.d. *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*. Page 33.
- 7 Linnemann, Eta. *Is There A Synoptic Problem?* Baker Book House, Michigan. 1992.
- 8 Selwyn, Edward Gordon D.. *The First Epistle of St. Peter*. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd. 1955. Page 278f.. Note that Selwyn never does seem to recognize who the "scattered" recipients are!
- 9 Westcott, xl f.
- 10 Bullinger, E. W. . *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated*. Baker Book House: Michigan. 1968. Page 361.
- 11 Westcott, 27
- 12 Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *The Epistle of James*. Baker Book House, Michigan. 1960. Southern Baptist Convention. Volume VI of *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. page 7.