

Bristol Conference 1964 (Apostasy) - Part 3

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald discusses apostasy, the significance of biblical prophecy, and the assurance of Christ's glorious return.

Duration: 1:06:16

Scripture: John 14:2-3, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Corinthians 15:55, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Revelation 21:4, Revelation 22:20

Topics: "Apostasy"

Description

The video is a recording of a sermon where the congregation is singing a song called 'Oh, What a Day You Are.' The song praises God and expresses excitement for the day when Jesus, the King, will come and bring all believers to their eternal home. The congregation sings the song multiple times, with the ladies and gentlemen taking turns. The sermon also reminds the congregation about a meeting in the morning and emphasizes the importance of trusting in Jesus for everlasting life.

Transcript

Man of sorrow for the day, for the son of God who came, who went in a to be praised, and is heard of for all day long. There in shame and sorrow, in my place on death he stood, still my pardon with his blood hath e'er done. This is John A. T. Robertson in the book *Honest to God*.

In the last century, a painful but decisive step forward was taken in the recognition that the Bible does contain this, and that this is an important form of religious truth. It was gradually acknowledged by all except extreme fundamentalists that the Genesis stories of the creation and fall were representations of the deepest truths about man and the universe in the form of myth rather than history, and were nonetheless valid for that. Indeed, it was essential to the defense of Christian truth to recognize and assert that these stories were not history, and not, therefore, in competition with the alternative accounts of anthropology or cosmology.

Those who did not make this distinction were, we can now see, playing straight into the hands of Thomas Huxley and his friends. Now, what he's saying in that quotation is this. It's been a great day for the Church that we've come to acknowledge that the Bible does contain this.

Mind you, these myths are very valuable. They contain deep representations of spiritual truth, but we're not able to argue successfully with atheists like Huxley unless we're willing to admit that the Bible does

contain this. Now Peter said that in the last day false teachers would arise, and that this was the type of thing they would be teaching.

Where do you think we are tonight in God's program? That's the question that faces us as we come to this portion of the Word of God. We have not followed cunningly devised myths when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The power and coming.

That's another way of saying the coming in power. This is a coming accompanied by power. Mind you, the Lord Jesus' first coming, you'd never speak of that as the power and coming of the Lord Jesus.

You'd speak of it as the humiliation and coming of the Lord Jesus. That was his coming in lowly birth in Bethlehem's stable. But Peter says we weren't following myths when we told you that that same one who came to Bethlehem's manger is coming again in power and great glory.

Now just let me give you a little summary of Peter's arguments in this passage of the Word of God. He speaks here of the prophecies of the Old Testament scripture. He goes back to the Old Testament and reminds the people who incidentally were well familiar with the Old Testament that the prophets in the Old Testament looked forward to a golden era of peace and prosperity when the Messiah would come back to the earth, when war would be abolished, when poverty and disease would be a thing of the past, when a king would reign in righteousness and all graft and corruption would be put down, and when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

This was one of the great burdens of Old Testament prophetic scriptures, the fact that the Messiah would come, that he'd come back to this very earth in a personal coming, that his feet would touch the Mount of Olives in that day as prophesied by Zechariah. Now, something happened in the New Testament in connection with that glorious prophecy. One day the Lord Jesus Christ took Peter, James, and John up onto a mount, and when they were there on that mount, he was transfigured before them.

They saw Christ in the glory of his coming kingdom. They had a preview of the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let's just pause there and turn back to Luke chapter 9, verse 27, so that we can see this for ourselves.

This is right after his experience at Caesarea Philippi, when Peter made that wonderful confession of him as the Christ of God. The Lord Jesus said in verse 26, "...for whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his father's, and of the holy angels." Here's the coming, the Lord Jesus coming in his own glory, and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. And then he said, the Lord Jesus said, "...but I tell you of a truth.

There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God." Now, all those fellows that were standing there with the Lord that day, they've all died, and yet the Lord Jesus said to them, "...there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God." Did they see the kingdom of God? Yes. The next verses tell you how they saw the kingdom of God. "...came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and James and John and went up into a mountain to pray.

And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and blistering. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory and spake of his deceit which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with him

were heavy with sleep, and when they were awake, they saw his glory and the two men that stood with him.

And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias, not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved son, hear him.

And when the voice was passed, Jesus was found alone, and they kept it close, and told no man of those days any of those things which they had seen. Jesus said, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God. He took them up on the Mount of Transfiguration, and Peter, James, and John were, as it were, carried forward to the thousand-year reign of Christ.

They saw Christ there in all the glory of his coming kingdom, and they heard a voice from heaven saying, All right, other men have held sway in the earth up until now, but the time has come when my beloved son is going to have the preeminence. I have decreed to set my son upon the holy hill of Zion, and the earth is about to see it. And so Peter is saying in this passage of Scripture that we have before us tonight that were all those prophecies in the Old Testament pointing forward to the glorious reign of Christ.

We had an experience, Peter, myself, James, and John. We had an experience of the Holy Mount, and we saw the prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures concern. And I want you to know we're not following cunningly devised myths when we speak to you of the powerful coming of the Lord Jesus.

He says in verse 16, We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. What does it mean? It means they saw the glory of the Lord. During most of the Lord's earthly lifetime, his glory was veiled in a body of flesh.

Sometimes it shone out. Sometimes his glory as the Creator shone out when he gave sight to a man who was blind from birth. Sometimes his glory as the master of the elements shone out when he rebuked the wind and the waves of the Sea of Galilee became apparent.

But for the most part, during his earthly life, his glory was veiled. But there on the Mount of Transfiguration, the splendor and moral excellence of the Lord Jesus Christ shone out. Peter, James, and John were eyewitnesses, three of them, and the mouths of two or three witnesses shall everything be established.

And Peter takes special note in verse 16 of the fact that the Lord Jesus received from God the Father honor and glory when that voice came to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And Peter saw in that a preview, a pre-picture of what it was going to be like in the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice what he says in verse 18, And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount.

Mind you, it was a wonderful experience, wasn't it? A wonderful experience to be there with the Lord Jesus and Moses and Elias. Moses, I suppose, speaks to us of those who reached the millennial kingdom of Christ by the way of death. Moses died.

He was buried by the hand of God on Mount Nebo. No man knows his sepulcher. Elijah, no doubt, speaks of those who reached the millennial glory by way of translation.

The Lord took him without passing through the article of death. Peter, James and John, no doubt, speak to us of those who will be alive when the millennial kingdom is set up, those who will pass from the tribulation

period into the kingdom. Then perhaps those waiting down at the bottom of the mountain would speak of the nations that will participate in the glory and splendor of the wonderful reign of the Lord Jesus.

I'd like to just spend a moment in verse 19, because it's very important. It says in verse 19, We have also a more sure word of prophecy, For unto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise in your heart. The first part of the verse, We have also a more sure word of prophecy.

I'd like to suggest another translation of this. It's suggested by Mr. F. W. Grant. Perhaps you'd like to write it down in the margin of your Bible.

We have the word of prophecy confirmed, and then I'll explain to you why the change. We have the word of prophecy confirmed. Why do I mention that? Well, for this reason, the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming reign of Christ were inspired of God, and for that reason, nothing could ever be more sure.

Nothing could ever be more sure. If Zechariah said it, God said it. If Isaiah said it, God said it.

It was the very word of God, and nothing in the New Testament could ever be any more sure than anything in the Old Testament. It's one book, the word of God. It stands or falls together.

Incidentally, that's one of the weaknesses of what we call a red-letter edition of the Bible. You know, you can go to the bookstore and you can buy Bibles where the words of the Lord Jesus are printed in red, and I don't know what kind of an impression that creates in people's minds, but it's apt to create the impression that those words of the Lord Jesus are more sacred than any of the rest of the book. Of course, that isn't so.

The Bible is the word of God, and the thing that I'd like to emphasize here in connection with this verse is that nothing could be more sure than the prophecies of the Old Testament with regard to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, did the experience of Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, when they had a preview of the coming King, did that make the prophecies of the Old Testament more sure? It couldn't, but it confirmed them, do you see? It confirmed those prophecies. Those men in the Old Testament said, it's coming, that great period of peace and splendor for the earth when all the marks of the curse will be largely set aside, when wild, ravenous animals will no longer be carnivorous, but will eat hay and vegetables and the like.

And what happened to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration? That didn't add an iota more surety to the prophecy of the Old Testament, but it certainly did confirm it, because Peter, James, and John on the Mount saw a glimpse of the glory of what the prophets in the Old Testament had been talking about. And incidentally, I couldn't help thinking of this. We mentioned before about the poise and the calm of this man as he was facing death.

How he could say, well, I'm about to die, my death is coming soon, my thoughts are with you, I'm going to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, and I'm going to make provision that after I die, you'll still have these things to be reminded of. How did he have such poise? I can't help thinking that it was linked with this whole truth of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't know anything that gives stability to the Christian.

Isn't this the helmet of salvation? It's really the helmet of the hope of salvation. The ultimate salvation, the consummation of all the promises of God. And so he says here, we have also a more sure word of prophecy, for unto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.

Well, I want to tell you the world in which we live is a dark place. You don't believe it, read your newspapers. It's a dark place.

And I wonder tonight if we realize what a privilege it is for us to have the word of God, and to have God, and I say this reverently, to have the Lord, as it were, put his arms around us and say, look, my dear, my dear child, I'm going to take you into my counsel. I'm going to, I'm going to share with you my secrets concerning the future. I'm going to tell you, for instance, that in a dispensation of the fullness of times, I have decreed, and I have determined, and I have proposed that I'm going to head up all things in my beloved son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's what God does.

That's what God does in the word. He takes us into his counsel. The secret of the Lord is of them that fear him, and my, he gives us his wonderful panorama of what's ahead.

Think if you were unsaved tonight, think if you were out in the world, in the darkness of the world tonight, what it would be. No home, no hope beyond, no harbor waiting where your storm-tossed vessel you might steer. And so he said, the prophetic word is like a light shining in a dark place.

May the Lord enable us to appreciate it. You know, prophecy is being downgraded these days. Prophecy is being downgraded, and you'll be shocked to know that the assemblies in England have largely abandoned the hope of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, why do you say that? I say that so that as we read these things, we'll never have the thought in our mind, it can't happen to me, this book was written to us, and we must be on the alert. It says, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawns and the day star arrives. Now, there's another change in this verse I'd like to suggest, and I believe there's good manuscript authority for doing it, and that is this, add those words in your heart after take heed.

I believe that Mr. Darby's translation does this, although I'm not positive, I should have looked it up. So that the verse would read like this, where unto you do well that ye take heed in your heart, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arrives. It isn't so much that the day star arises in your heart, but it's that you take heed in your heart.

Now, what does that mean? Well, it means that the prophecy is a lamp that lightens the darkness of the world for the child of God, and will continue to do so, I believe, I would suggest anyway, until the millennial day dawns, until all of those wonderful prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled, the millennial day dawns and Christ appears, the day star rises in power and great glory. And then he says in the last verse, knowing this first that no prophecy of the scriptures of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And here we have one of the most wonderful statements in all the word of God concerning the inspiration of the scripture.

Now, first, let me say a word about verse 20. It says, knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. What does that mean? Well, the Roman Catholic people would sometimes use it to mean this.

You don't have the right to interpret the scriptures. Only the church has the right to interpret the scriptures. The scriptures should not be interpreted by any private individual.

We have the monopoly on that, and so the people are not encouraged to read or especially to interpret the scripture. Well, it's true that no individual has the right to interpret the scriptures. The Holy Spirit is the interpreter of the scriptures, but he can do it through individuals.

But it's certainly blasphemous and false to suggest that that church has the exclusive right or any church for that matter. And it doesn't mean that, well, we commonly take this first to mean that no prophecy of the scriptures of any private interpretation. You can't take a verse and interpret it by itself.

This is the common explanation. Every verse must be considered in the light of the whole word of God. You can't build a doctrine in a single verse of scripture.

Well, that's true, but that really isn't what this verse is teaching. This verse has to do with how the scriptures came to be written, not how they're to be interpreted after they're written. This verse has to do with the original writing of the scriptures, and what it's saying is that when Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel and Zechariah, when all of these men wrote in the Old Testament, they didn't write down their personal interpretation of current events.

They weren't current news commentators who were just all too glad to tell how they looked upon the picture. No, that isn't the way the scriptures came to us. No prophecy of the scriptures of any private interpretation.

Those men didn't give us their private ideas as to what was taking place and what would take place, and the next verse proves that that's the right meaning of that verse. It says, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men. It wasn't their own idea, it wasn't their own thought, it wasn't their own interpretation.

Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Wonderful, isn't it? How did you get your Bible? Wonderful. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

In the area of inspiration, the great battle is being fought today. It is not that men outside the church are attacking the inspiration of the scripture so much, but men inside the church are raising doubts concerning the inspiration and infallibility of the word of God. And I'd just like to go over one or two points at the close of the meeting tonight in connection with the inspiration of scriptures.

We believe in the inspiration of the Bible, the word of God. 2 Timothy 3.16, all scripture is given by inspiration of God. I believe with all my heart tonight as I stand here that every scripture in this blessed book is God-breathed, that I pay tribute tonight to men under whom I sat in the assembly back home, and I can still hear their voices crying out about the inspiration of the word of God, and I owe a debt to them that I can never repay.

Secondly, we believe in the verbal inspiration of the word of God. There are some who are quite sophisticated about the whole thing, and they'd be willing to admit that the ideas were inspired and the general thoughts were inspired, but they're not willing to admit that the very words of scripture are inspired of. I'd like you to turn to 1 Corinthians 2.13. This is the key verse, I believe, to show the verbal inspiration of the scriptures.

1 Corinthians 2.13, "...which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things." Now, if you read that right, you'll have to add the word, words, again after the but. I mean, that's the flow of thought. "...which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Isn't that what the verse says? Of course it is.

That teaches that the very words of God, the very words of the Bible, are inspired. The third thing I'd like to say is this, that we believe that the writers wrote the very words of God, but that in some wonderful way, God didn't overrule their personalities or their distinctive style. Now I don't understand that.

I don't profess to understand it, but it's so. Peter wrote. He wrote by inspiration of God.

The words he wrote were the very words of God, and yet Peter has a style of his own, a distinctive style that's Petrine. Paul wrote. He had a distinctive style of his own, and yet the very words he wrote were the words of God.

The fourth thing I'd like to say to this, especially for the young people here, is this. When we come to seeming contradictions in the Bible, we know the Bible can't be wrong. And I chalk it up to my own ignorance.

I know. That's the premise I start with. The Bible can't be wrong, and so if I come to things in the word that to me are inexplicable or hard to understand, I feel, well, when I get to know more about it, the difficulty will disappear.

And the fifth and last thing I want to say is this. When we come in the Bible to seeming contradictions between the Bible and science, and this is one of the great things in school today, we know, first of all, the Bible isn't wrong. We know the Bible is absolutely pure, and so any seeming contradictions could be, first of all, in my understanding of the Bible or in the supposed facts of science.

And we're going to have more to say about this as we come to the third chapter of this wonderful epistle. First of all, it might be in my understanding, for instance, I might think that the Bible says that the world is 4,000 years old, although the Bible doesn't say that. I mean, maybe that date at the top of page one says it, put in by Bishop Usher, but the Bible never says that Genesis 1-1 took place 4,000 years before Christ.

It doesn't say that. And so if a man comes to me and tells me that the earth is millions of years of age, I can't contradict that. The Bible doesn't contradict it, but if he tells me man's been here on the earth for millions of years, I've got something to say back to him.

But my general thesis is this, that no true fact of science contradicts the Bible. No true fact of science contradicts the Bible. But I also want to say this, and I've said it many times before, I don't want my Bible to agree with a changing fact of science.

The textbooks that were in use when I was in school are out of date today. The textbooks that are being used in science today will be out of date 20 years from today. Which are you going to take, the books of science or the Word of God? I'll take the Word of God, thank you.

We know that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. May the Lord help us to treasure this Word, and may it be to us a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns from the day's start. Can we close by singing 181?

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