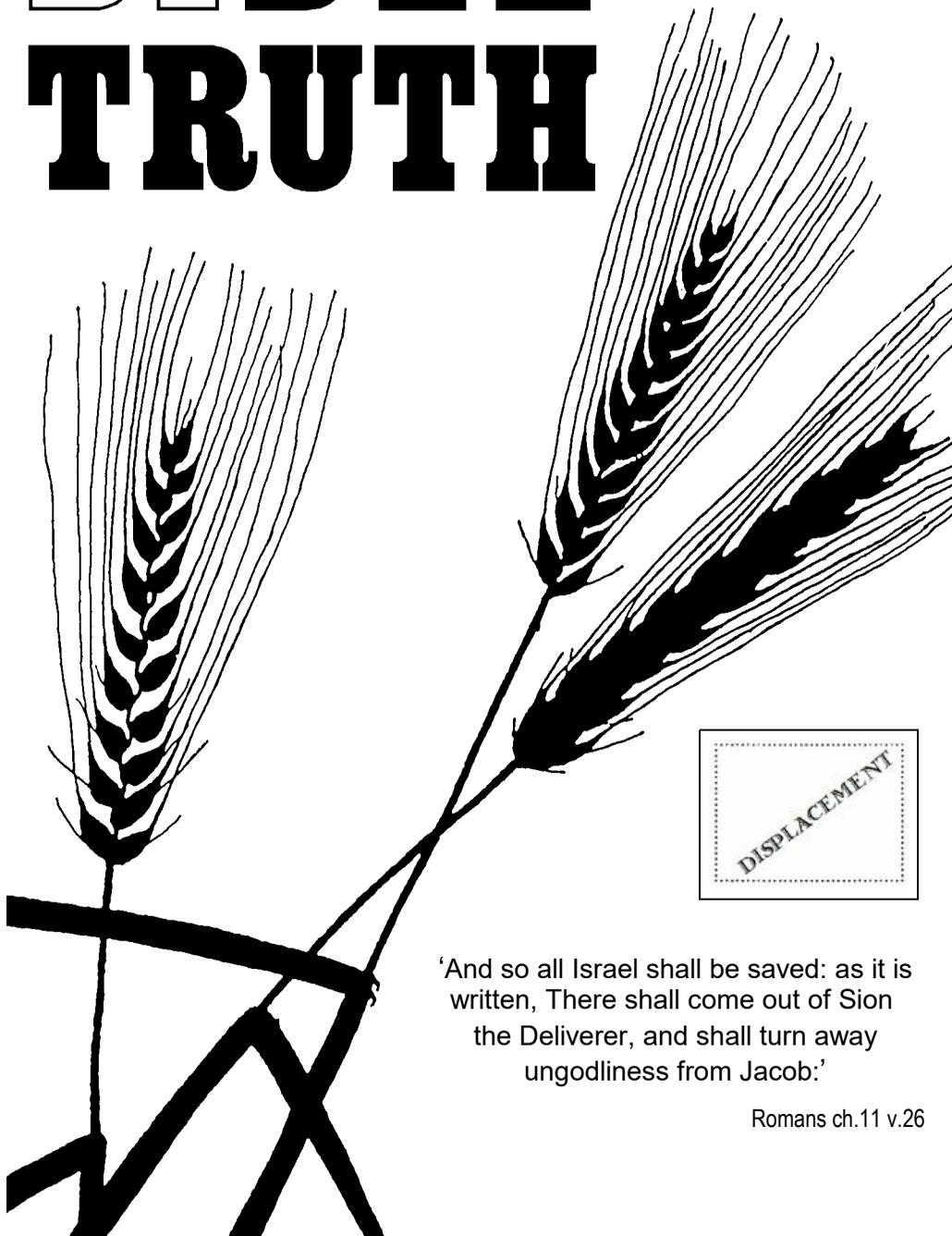


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:'

Romans ch.11 v.26

# THE HARVEST CLEANSING!

by Pastor Dr Jory Brooks

There are those today who wonder why the Lord allows wickedness to prevail upon the earth. Some, indeed, wanting perhaps to help the Lord's programme along, seek to take matters into their own hands and bring about the defeat of the wicked before the Divine appointed time of judgement has arrived. We are instead expressly told to wait upon the Lord's timing in everything. We get impatient to see the wicked overthrown and righteousness prevail, and may wonder, as the Apostles did, if we are to be the Lord's instruments in such judgement. Christ answered this question in the Gospel of Matthew.

'Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.'

Matthew ch.13 vv 24-30

An alternative translation of verses 28-29 states,

'The servants asked him, Then do you want us to go and pull them up?' But he said, No, because if you pull up the weeds, you might uproot some of the wheat at the same time.'

Concerning this, the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* states, '... for removing the weeds early would result in destroying the wheat. Therefore they must grow together until the harvest when the weeds would first be gathered out and destroyed. Then the wheat would be gathered into the barn'.

The word 'barn' is translated from the Greek 'apotheke', meaning a storehouse, repository, or granary - a place for storing wheat. The

wheat symbolises Christians, and our future 'storehouse' is the millennial kingdom of God on earth.

'And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.'

Revelation ch. 5 v.10

The respected 18th century Baptist theologian, John Gill, explained it as,

'meaning the kingdom of heaven, which is as a garner or repository, in which none but wheat is put, and where it is safe, and lies together: so none but righteous, pure, and undefiled persons, are admitted ... and being there, they are safe, and out of the reach of all enemies'.

There is a dispute among Christian denominations as to the order of events during the cleansing time. The dispensationalists follow Cyrus Scofield, who stated, 'The gathering of the tares into bundles for burning does not imply immediate judgement. At the end of this age (Matthew ch.13 v.40) the tares are set apart for burning, but first the wheat is gathered into the barn'. Since the 'barn' symbolises the millennial kingdom itself, Scofield claimed that the righteous will be 'raptured' into Christ's presence and kingdom prior to God's judgement upon the earth and its sinners. This gives basis to the dispensationalist idea of a pre tribulation rapture of the church.

Scofield gives two Scripture texts to support his contention that the tares, or wicked, are not gathered until after the wheat. The first, tells us only that God has prepared a place for us; it says nothing about whether the wicked have any precedence.

'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'

John ch.14 v.3

The second proof text Scofield gives deals with whether those alive at Christ's coming have precedence over those who are predeceased. Again, these verses give no proof to Scofield's pre tribulation assertion.

'For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we

which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.'

1 Thessalonians ch.4 vv 14-17

In contrast to this, the *Preacher's Commentary* observes, 'The gathering out of the tares first, then the wheat, does not sound like a 'rapture' of the righteous'. Indeed, quite the opposite is true: there is first a 'rapture' or removing of the wicked!

The *Jamieson, Faucett, and Brown Commentary* agrees in saying, 'It will be observed that the tares are burned before the wheat is housed; in the exposition of the parable (Matthew ch.13 v.41) the same order is observed: and the same in Matthew ch.25 v.46'.

The verses referenced in Matthew do indeed support a prior removal of the wicked.

'As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

Matthew ch.13 vv 40-43

Why do some teach instead, a prior rapture or removal of Christians from the earth? Perhaps it is because the normal function of a 'reaper' is to gather the grain or corn. We do not picture farmers as harvesting tares! Yet it is certainly true that when the tares are full-grown they are easier to identify, for they often tower over the wheat at harvest time. This facilitates their removal.

The Biblical term, 'time of harvest' (see Matthew ch.13 v.30) indicates that end-time events would occur over a space of time. How long is that period? We are not told the length, but we are informed that there will be momentous events occurring during this cleansing period leading to the final establishment of the millennial kingdom.

As we look to the return of our Saviour to establish His kingdom of righteousness, we may even have entered already the time of tribulation and judgement upon the earth for its iniquity. May we remain faithful to Christ and strong in the courage of our convictions through the momentous days ahead. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Amen.

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