

Sunday, December 11, 2011—Grace Life School of Theology—*Church History: A Tale of Two Churches*—Lesson 49 The Consolidation, Refinement, and Advancement of Truth in the Mind of JND, 1827-1840

### **Consolidation, Refinement, and Advancement 1827**

- “There are seven printed volumes of notes taken from the notebook of J.N. Darby: *Notes and Comments*. In Vol. 7 there are extensive notes on “The Gospel of John.” About 70% of the way through these notes there is a clear date: April 8/27. “ (Huebner, 35)
- The contents of these notes bear two important points:
  - “The character of these notes shows that JND had experienced “deliverance” before these notes were written. In these notes, he referred to the believer’s life as “resurrection-life” and in these notes we see that he understood his union with Christ. Thus, these notes show that his deliverance occurred before April 1827.
  - We learn much about JND’s thoughts in the early part of 1827:
    - He understood that the Church is heavenly.
    - He understood the character of the life of the believer as “resurrection life,” and understood union with Christ.
    - He saw the ruin of the church.
    - He understood that the Bride is above during the judgments on the apostate church. (I disagree with JND as to the identification of the bride.)
    - He had the heavenly hope.
    - He sharply distinguished the Church and Israel.
    - He saw a Jewish remnant in the times of Jacob’s trouble.
    - He understood that there would be a personal Antichrist over the apostate Jews.
    - He distinguished the Church’s and Israel’s glory in the millennium.” (Huebner, 35)
- “The range of things that he understood at this point in time is astonishing, though it would be improper to look for certain phrases, used subsequently, to designate some of these things. For example, it would be perverseness to demand that he use the phrase “pre-Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week rapture”); or even the expression, “pre-tribulation rapture” meaning a rapture preceding God’s taking up with the Jews in Daniels’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, i.e., a pre-Rev. 4 rapture.” (Huebner, 35)
- Regarding the date of April 8/27, Huebner states the following, “I do not know that JND did not add to these notes at later dates. However, I doubt that he wrote the main body of the notes appearing before p. 261 at a later time and then inserted a note on p. 261 dating the notes “Lord’s Day, April 8/27.” If one holds that JND’s accident occurred during Dec. 1827 he will have to claim that the notes were written later to explain away the date on page 261. On the other hand, we have seen that the accident occurred in Dec. 1826 and that deliverance, the elements of dispensational truth, the Lord’s coming without intermediate events, etc. were understood by him during that period of convalescence. These notes on John are compatible with that understanding.” (Huebner, 37)

- Time and space will not permit a complete review of all the truths to be gleaned from JND's notes on John's gospel; however, please consider the following high points:
  - *JND Distinguished More Than One Sphere of Christ's Glory*—"...and if I have told you the earthly part of the kingdom, and ye believe not, how will ye believe if I tell you of the heavenly things that are the crown and glory of it? It is not merely "earthly things" but "the earthly things," definitely, I think, pointing out the two associated portions of the millennial glory, the earthly and heavenly. "Earthly things" and "heavenly things" are doubtless contrasted in their knowableness, but also in fact, as in Ephesians." (*Notes and Comments Vol. 7, 28*)
  - *JND Understood Christ's Earthly Glory Is Postponed Until a Future Millennium*—"The tabernacles was the type of the manifestation of the Lord to the world, the gathering in of the saints to His resurrection glory, and the Jewish rest. Hence the force of this passage. Jesus went not up to it, therefore, to keep it in its fulness, though in duty afterwards He went up. *His* time was not yet full come. He states afterwards what was to be expected, as now in respect of this; that is, the Spirit who was to show the things to come. Now, I look on that eighth day, the day of solemn assembly, as typical of the first day, the glory of the Lord's resurrection; as the seventh of the Jewish millennial rest." (96) "Christ was to be hid, hid in God (see Col. 3) till the time of the restoration, the true Feast of Tabernacles; He was to be with the Father, sitting there till, etc." (102) "And so they will be delivered. The power of that will be to the Jews in that day, as well as the power of the Kingship," (191) "Chapter 7. His glory, still as Son of Man; or, rather, postponement of glory, as connected with the Feast of Tabernacles and giving of the Spirit as ascended, the witness of the glory meanwhile; this specially including Gentiles:" (363) (*Notes and Comments, Vol. 7*)
  - *JND Understood That a New Position Was Now Being Brought Out*—"a totally new thing and system was coming in; the old thing, or outward testimony, of no avail, gone, and the new thing announced; man wholly born *again*, anew; the Son of Man crucified, the Son of God given; eternal life; and on this ground, such in Israel would finally have the promises; but, as grace and power on God's part, it could go out to the Gentiles, and associated with heaven, through the cross; the moral condemnation of the world, where Christ had been as light. . . We are quickened into the new place with Christ raised from the dead, He having in that work, which gave us a title to be in glory, by glorifying God, having put away our sins by bearing them, and going down to death. He hath quickened us together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses. We are in Christ, or in the Spirit (not in flesh). That is our new place. So we are born of the Spirit." (*Notes and Comments, Vol. 7, 41-43*)
  - *JND Understood that the Church Is not Under the Law and is a Pauline Revelation*—"The Church is united to Him, as in heaven, by the Holy Ghost, and the universe itself is to be put under the risen and now heavenly ascended Man, with the Church associated with Him as His body and bride. Hence all that takes Christians back to the world, to the law, to all that flesh has its part in, takes them back to the system they were redeemed out of. That they do not, and as in Christ,

never belonged to at all; the law being the measure of responsibility in it, the intermediate system antecedent to which the Church had its place with God, before the very sphere in which mortal man has had being existed; the Church which God has now set up actually in the heavenly place into which Christ has entered, when the man or Adam sphere, the world, has rejected Him, not knowing the Father.

- Under this Man and the Church the world will be. But we are not of it, as Christ was not of it, but of the Father, and now gone to Him, Man with Him, and we in Him. Of this the Holy Ghost is the revealer and the power, uniting us with the Head. But the law as a true measure, fleshly religion and its ordinances, the attempt to regulate the world, all belong to the Adam system, though the first be God's rule for it, not the Christian; it is going back to it, the beggarly elements. This it is that Paul insists on, the Church's place connected with redemption, the divine place of the Son before the world, with which (as now made good and returned into) the Church is connected with the Holy Ghost. It is true of life, life and incorruptibility being brought to light by the gospel; only this life *existed*, before the world was, in Christ; hence has in itself been true all through; whereas the heavenly Man, Man in heaven, and the Church raised up, and in Him there, did not and could not exist in fact; for He was not there as Man.
- But in what a place this puts the sticklers for law, and those who insist on influence in the world for the Christian! No doubt the law is perfect; but they are putting man back, out of Christ on high, into the system of the world and Adam responsibility. **John is just as clear as Paul as to eternal life and Christ's place, but he does not treat the question of the Church. Paul was made the minister of that.** Hence Paul would not know Christ after the flesh; that is, Christ as connected with the world, come to it in connection with men's Adam existence, in which Judaism was the testing form, and hence in His Jewish connection, to which He had offered Himself, and had been rejected. Hence, while fully owning Him as the fulfilment of promise (even as to this only in resurrection) he would only know Him as He had been revealed to him, the glorious Christ who had taken His place, really His own, but as Man, according to the eternal thoughts of God before the world in which man, as responsible creation, was tested. Hence our conversation is to be in heaven, and our life the display of that of Christ. This is the mystery (Ephesians 1 as a whole) of Christ; as to its form down here, Ephesians 3. So Christ hope of glory in Gentiles (Col. 1).
- I fear I have given this confusedly and feebly; but the subject is of first-rate practical importance; it alters the *whole* nature and character of Christianity, and enters into every detail of life. Am I a living man, a child of Adam? or have I died and risen, so as to belong to a heavenly Christ, drawing life from Him, and having to display that, not take the law for my guide, as still alive in the flesh? This put down flesh; dropped Judaism, which was in it; revealed the Father; shows we are in Christ (who is in heaven), and He in us. This shows the Church now wholly heavenly, as suited to the heavenly Man, the fulfiller in fact and object of pre-worldly desires, thoughts, with which the world can have nothing to do. It did not exist when they were in God's mind, and so the Church cannot belong to it; yea, exists as composed of those redeemed out of it, and connected wholly with the rejected and ascended heavenly Christ. The world is "this present

evil world." The two great points are eternal life and the Church; connected with Christ as Son and as Man set far above all principalities, etc., in heavenly places." (*Notes and Comments, Vol. 7, 329-331*)

- *JND Understood That There Would be a Future Jewish Remnant During the Time of Jacob's Trouble*—" . . . and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went, but not till Jesus was in the ship rejoining it in the midst of, and walking over, the difficulties and trials they were in; the time of Jacob's trouble; but when they shall be delivered out of it, when a King shall indeed be among them, and the troubled and isolated Remnant, the *yechidim*, find themselves in the rest they could not attain, and that immediately, troubled as they may have been, even as his brethren before Joseph at his approach." (*Notes and Comments, Vol. 7, 75*)
- *JND Recognized a Personal Antichrist That Would Oppress Apostate Israel*—"kept those who owned Him Son of God in the Father's name. When another comes (to wit, Antichrist) in his own name, him they will receive. It will suit their selfishness. Hence the desolation of the Jews in the latter day." (311) "The idol shepherd of Zechariah 11 is, I should think, however, the Antichrist as in his connection with the Jewish people. Compare that prophecy; it is most important. His object was to steal, etc., even as to the fold, which shows (though specifically resulting in the sheep) the generic character of the one there. He could not touch the sheep. He had no life to give. It was the contrast of the object and the existing state; not of the objects of application; though, if followed out, this was in result, as to the life, the sheep only. This would be most fully shown in Antichrist himself." (*Notes and Comments, Vol. 7, 157*)
- *JND Understood Israel's and Christ's Earthly Glory During the Millennium*—"Accordingly our Lord showed His royal power of feeding and sustaining His people unlimitedly (for this shall be His portion in gift in that day over the creature, as it is also in Colossians, but not thus). See also Psalms 132: 15, 68: 10. So see the time of Solomon's manifestation in the temple when the Feast of Tabernacles was kept; fully then. So of David before (partially); and it was now in power over the creature; for this is His personal inheritance as Son, Firstborn of every creature; but also exercised in unity of royalty, as not simply over the house of David (though so) but also as Melchisedec, the Priest upon His throne; for as over the house of Judah and Israel it is exercised actually in royalty." (*Notes and Comments, Vol. 7, 74*)
- Before we move on it is important to remember that JND repeatedly states that these truths were known to him in 1827.
  - "In that congress (at New York) as far as I know of it, the presence of the Holy Ghost was, says -, wholly left out. But these are the two truths brought out in these days, throwing much light on the truth of the first coming. They have been consciously my theme these fifty years and more. They started me in my path of service; the assurance of salvation came with them, and the Christian character as of the new creation, "like unto men that wait for their Lord." When man entered into the glory of God consequent on accomplished redemption, the Holy Ghost came down, till He comes to take us up. This connects the hope and the power of life and heavenly calling with accomplished redemption: Christ, Man at the right

hand of God, is the central point. What set me free in 1827 is still the theme on which my soul dwells, with, I trust, much deeper sense of its importance - something much nearer to me, but the same truths. And blessed truths they are; and the hope, what a hope!" (*Letters*, 2:498)

- "I believe at my deliverance from bondage in 1827-8, God opened up certain truths needed for the church. I believe that, though holding and seeking to help souls by them, for what was called peace and union I swamped them, had not faith to make them good in service." (*Letters*, 1:185)

### **Consolidation, Refinement, and Advancement 1828-1829**

- JND published his first paper *Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of God* in 1828 which covers the following subjects: 1) The reformation "was manifestly mixed with human agency." 2) "The true Church of God has no avowed communion at all." 3) The desire for unity. 4) The presence of the Spirit of God. 5) The Lord's Supper. 6) The Church's witness. 7) The conduct of Christians. 8) The unity of the Church. 9) Denominations 10) Practical unity 11) The use of worldly aids. (*Collected Writings*, 1:20)
- "This paper shows that in 1828 the Scripture teaching concerning the Church was basically understood." (Huebner, 59)
- JND's first published paper on the subject of prophecy titled, *Reflections Upon the Prophetic Inquiry and the Views Advanced in It*, was published at Dublin in 1829. In this paper JND referred to some "new views." Of course, he meant truths which had been lost. He did not refer to merely what he had learned but to numbers of prophetic truths which students of prophecy were seeing. His first paper on prophecy had much in it which, of course, was developed more fully as time went on. (Huebner, 62) On page 2, Darby speaks of the sanctifying effect of prophecy and that history is not the interpreter of prophecy. (*Collected Writings* 2:2) In addition, he stated the following:
  - "One remark I would make; and it is one which struck my own mind long before the detail of millennial views opened themselves to it. There is not an epistle in the New Testament in which the coming of the Lord Jesus is not made the prominent object of the faith and hope of believers, for which they were to wait; and, observe, which characterises distinctively those who should partake of His salvation. Now the expectation of it is put out of view and depreciated really as much as possible. It was a deliverance *here* that the church expected, so much so that the Thessalonians seemed to have considered those who died before it came to have failed in obtaining it." (*Collected Writings*, 2:25)
- "Note well the words, "struck my own mind long before the detail of millennial views opened themselves to it." Here again is an indication of his dual expectation of Christ—some time previously to 1829 (actually 1827, if not Dec. 1826) when this paper was published. Obviously, with such views he would have had to reject postmillennialism." (Huebner, 62)
  - "I would suggest, too, that the instrument by which the work is to be accomplished cannot mean the dispersion of scriptural truth. It is not the sword of the Spirit, but one proceeding out of the mouth of Christ, sitting on a triumphal

horse, wherewith He should smite the nations. It is treading the vintage of God's wrath. It is a destruction which will give seven years' firing from the weapons cast away. It is an invitation of all the fowls of the air to feast upon the sacrifice which God Almighty was about to make; a taking to Him His great power and reigning; a time when, God's judgment being in the earth, the inhabitants of the world would learn righteousness: and it was by these judgments that the heathen were to be converted. We take the broadest points, because the others may be said to involve interpretation, though to us they are equally plain and perhaps more deeply interesting." (*Collected Writings*, 2:24)

### **Consolidation, Refinement, and Advancement 1830**

- In 1830 we see that JND held to a literal interpretation, "plain and direct testimony," for the period he designated as the "Gentiles parenthesis in their history." This phrase refers to the time from Nebuchadnezzar to the appearing of Christ in glory (the time of the Gentiles; Luke 21:34) and he allowed for the use of symbol during this period. Perhaps he held that there was an application to the historicist system of fulfillment. At any rate, in closing his paper he said:
  - "I rejoice, however, in the discussion, not merely in that it will throw light on Scripture by consequent research and inquiry, but that I am persuaded that this will lead more (for such I believe to be the truth) to the deep conviction that we are within the verge of the end of all, so as to be daily looking for the Lord, i.e., to be caught up to meet Him in the air in order to His judging of the nations. Amen. Amen." (*Collected Writings*, 2:40)
- The following statement was made by JND in 1850 regarding 2 Thess. 2:1-2:
  - That is, the apostle gives two reasons why they should not believe that the day of the Lord was come: first, the rapture of the saints is not yet; and secondly, the object of the judgment is not revealed. It is this passage which, twenty years ago, made me understand the rapture of the saints before - perhaps a considerable time before - the day of the Lord (that is, before the judgment of the living.)" (*Collected Writings*, 11:67)
- In light of what we have seen, 1830 marked the removal of some difficulties that had remained in his mind and that he had already previously held that the Lord might come at any time. In the following citation we can see that T. Tweedy was the one who first suggested 2 Thess. 2:1-2 as decisive proof of the pretribulation rapture.
  - "But I willingly bear my testimony to Mr. N. that he never to me thought of attributing the source of the so-called doctrine, the rapture of the saints, to that seducing spirit. It was new, however, to hear that Mr. Tweedy, who died full of blessed labours in Demerara, was the one who first suggested, as a decisive proof from scripture, 2 Thess. 2: 1, 2. I so implicitly believed in his telling me the truth as conveyed in Mr. D.'s letter to himself, that it did not occur to me to question Mr. D. about it. I knew the latter to be generous in acknowledging readily any debt of the kind he owed to other brethren, having experienced it in my own case and in that of Mr. Bellett, if not of more still. Indeed it was very touching to observe that one, to whose richly suggestive help so many were indebted, was himself so frank to own any fresh thought of value in another, and to manifest his

simple-hearted pleasure, not only in hailing the accession but in adding to the evidence of its truth, as he so well could and did, while pointing out its importance.” (Kelly, *The Rapture of the Saints*)

- “Apparently JND’s difficulty included the lack of a decisive text though he well understood the pretribulation rapture in connection with the Christian’s heavenly position and with the nature and unity of the Church. So before 1830, his understanding of the nature of the church and of the immediate coming led him to the truth of a pre-Rev. 4 coming. However, prior to T. Tweedy’s directing attention to 2 Thess. 2:1-2 during 1830, JND had not realized the bearing of that text on the issue. What he learned in 1827 through Isaiah 32 he says, “was brought to my mind from the word.” That was not through man’s agency. In the last quotation above there is an implication that he did not see the bearing of 2 Thess. 2:1-2 without someone else. And indeed, that was the case. The citation indicates that it was during 1830 that he saw the force of 2 Thess. 2:1-2; i.e., twenty years before he wrote the 1850 letter quoted above.” (Huebner, 65)

### **Important Papers 1831-1839**

- It is important to note that the following is not an exhaustive listing of JND’s papers between 1831 and 1839. Only papers that discuss the development of dispensational thinking in the mind of JND are discussed.
- In 1832 Darby wrote two papers, *Review of Lectures on the Second Advent* and *The Apocalypse Unfulfilled*, both of which were reviews of books written by William Burgh. “In this paper JND spoke of the great parenthetical anomaly of the Gentile Dispensation (*Collected Writings*, 33:2) meaning I think, that the time of the Church has a parenthetical character. Some years previously, he had spoken of the “Gentile Dispensation,” (*Collected Writings*, 2:24—1829) meaning the Church period as distinct from the Gentile parenthesis in their history. Here he speaks of the Church as a parenthesis. In effect, this means a parenthesis within a parenthesis.” (Huebner, 67)
- “It is clear that JND firmly believed that Christians would have nothing to do with the Antichrist, except as the principles actuating him were already at work in the world and in the Church.” (Huebner, 67)
  - “For, after the withdrawing of the saints, and giving up of *all others* to the worshipping of the beast, and therefore to irremediable torment consequent upon the critical test of the everlasting gospel being put to them, we have, upon the judging of Antichrist, the nations converted by another and subsequent preaching of the gospel, as associated with the new dispensation.” (*Collected Writings*, 33:5)
- In 1834 JND wrote *The Distinct Character of the Several Writings of the New Testament*, in which he stated the following:
  - “The two (epistles) to the Thessalonians, are the building of the church in the great doctrine of the Lord’s second coming, as an immediate and protracted expectation and hope, and the result of this special apprehension of it in the very healthful state of the church.” (*Collected Writings*, 29:53)

- Also in 1834 Darby published *The Dispensation of the Kingdom of Heaven*, in which he distinguishes between the coming of Messiah when He appears in glory, from our expectation as Christians. This paper also explains the distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. He also pointed out that the Jews must take prophecy literally. (Huebner, 69 and *Collected Writings*, 2:55)
- In 1835 *The Covenants* was written in which JND shows that the new covenant is for Israel and not the church. *A Letter Addressed to-- Paronstown, in Reply to a Tract Entitled, Three Considerations Proving Unscriptural the Suppositions of the Personal Reign of Christ on Earth During the Millennium* was also published in 1835. In this work JND showed that Christ is not reigning now, but will do so in the future. He also discussed the offices of Christ from a dispensational viewpoint. (Huebner, 70)
- 1836 saw the publication of *The Apostasy of Successive Dispensations*, by JND. In this work Darby called attention to the fact that dispensations begin with Noah.
- In 1839 addresses were given and were subsequently printed under the title *Collectanea* which includes an address on Revelation 1-20. JND distinguished the coming **for** and the coming **with** His saints. (Huebner, 72)
  - “Prophecy is also the expression of the object of hope to the Church. “We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. The expression, “coming of the Lord,” is rather ambiguous, and involves two things. There is the coming of the Lord *for* His saints, and there is the coming of the Lord *with* His saints; and these two facts we get in the Epistles to the Thessalonians.” (*Collectanea*, 29)
  - “There is a clear difference between the Church of God caught up, and those suffering on earth during the time of antichrist, and caught up too. In Matt. 24, I do not see anything about the Church; it is entirely Jewish testimony. The gospel of the kingdom, that shall be preached to all nations for a witness, I see to be Jewish too. Their preaching was to be about that which was future; it was the gospel of the kingdom that was coming in power, that was to be established in righteousness. I believe the commission in Matthew 28, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations,” was Jewish, and has never yet had its accomplishment in its particular form; and Matthew assumes the Jewish position in the kingdom as their right, and therefore speaks of the going *out* to the Gentiles, and has never therefore yet been accomplished. Instead of the twelve apostles accomplishing this commission, that was expressly given to them, God raises up another apostle to go to the Gentiles; but the literal command, in its primary character, will be accomplished too.” (*Collectanea*, 31)
  - “Christ cannot be manifested without His body, and therefore the saints are caught up. After they are caught up, Satan, having lost heaven for ever, rages on earth for three and a half years.” (*Collectanea*, 31)
- “There were addresses by G.V. Wigram and J.G. Bellett at these meetings which also were recorded. G.V. Wigram remarked, “The Church cannot be in judgment; and until I saw the truth of the remnant, I thought otherwise.” J.G. Bellett stated, “I believe the



Church to be taken up at some undefined moment between chapters 3 and 4 (of Revelation).” (Huebner, 72)

- In JND’s *Notes on Revelation* written in 1839 there is a chart that shows the church in heaven starting with Revelation 4. ([\*Collected Writings\*](#), 264-265)

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