Awaiting the Return of Christ: A Re-examination of 1 Thessalonians 4.13–5.11 from a Pentecostal Perspective

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Introduction

In a recent article in this journal Steven J. Land stated: 'It is evident that there was and is a distinct apocalyptic Pentecostal spirituality, but it is equally clear that it needs some fresh attention'. This same conviction prompted me, as a Pentecostal NT exegete, to turn my attention anew to the question of apocalyptic in the NT and reflect on its implication for today. Encouragement to pursue the investigation of this subject came from two different directions: the central role of apocalyptic in primitive Christianity as reaffirmed by E. Käsemann,
and the affirmation of a close interrelation between an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and a lively expectation of the return of Christ as reported by non-Pentecostal exegetes and historians. The thesis of a relation between the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and an apocalyptic spirituality seems to hold much promise.

Numerous NT passages bear traces of an 'apocalyptic spirituality' within primitive Christianity. Whereas mainstream Christianity has often shied away from it because one of the major tasks of theology from the second century on has been to eliminate apocalyptic from the church's dogma, Pentecostalism instead drew part of its dynamic from it. Yet the enthusiastic expectation of the return of Christ sometimes