

Chapter Twenty-one (21:1-38)

THE SON OF MAN PREDICTING THE END OF THE JEWISH NATION

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Is there any connection between Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees (Lk. 20:45-47 and Mt. 23:1-39) and His observation of those casting offerings into the Temple treasury (Lk. 21:1-4 and Mk. 12:41-44) and His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24; Lk. 21; Mk. 13)?
2. Why did some speak to Jesus of the temple's noble stones and offerings (21:5)?
3. Who would come and what time would they say was at hand (21:8)?
4. What earthquakes and famines would precede the destruction of Jerusalem (21:10-11)?
5. How would armies surrounding Jerusalem "fulfill all that is written" (21:20-24)?
6. When would the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (21:24)?
7. Are verses 21:25-28 referring to the destruction of Jerusalem only?
8. What generation would not pass away (21:32)?
9. What "day" is referred to in 21:34?

SECTION 1

Presentment of Sion's Default (21:1-4)

21 He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury; ²and he saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. ³And he said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; ⁴for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had."

21:1-2 Appearances: After His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees (Lk. 20:45-47 and Mt. 23:1-39) probably within the Court of Israel (where men only were allowed), Jesus walked down about 15 steps to the spacious Court of the Women and sat down near the place of the Treasury. The Greek word is *gazophylakion*, a combination of *gaza*, "thing stored," and *phulake*, "guarded." The Greek may be a translation of an Aramaic or Hebrew word *ginzaya* which also means, "treasure house." Solomon's temple treasuries were closely connected to the "porches" (cf. I Chron. 28:11). The Second temple also had treasuries (cf. Neh. 13:4ff.). In Herod's temple (the one of Jesus' day) the Women's Court was called the "treasury" because that is where the 13 bronze, trumpet-shaped boxes were placed

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for the reception of the offerings of the worshippers. The boxes or chests were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, with their contents clearly marked on them; trumpets 1 and 2 were for the half-shekel Temple-tax for the current year and the year immediately past; trumpets 3 and 4 received the sin-offering money for the purchase of turtledoves by women who needed this particular sacrifice—the money was daily taken out and a corresponding number of turtledoves were offered; trumpet 5 contained offerings for the purchase of wood used in the temple altars, etc.; trumpet 6, offerings for the purchase of incense; trumpet 7, offerings for the golden vessels; if a man put aside a certain sum for a sin-offering, and any money was left over after its purchase, such money was to be cast into trumpet 8; and trumpets 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 were to receive any money of a worshipper left over from trespass-offerings, offerings of birds, the offering of the Nazarite, of the cleansed leper, and voluntary offerings. These chests were out in the open, accessible spaces of the Women's Court, but there was also a special treasury-chamber into which, at certain times, they carried the contents of the thirteen chests for safe-keeping. Mark's record of this incident says Jesus "watched" the multitude putting money into the treasury. Mark uses the Greek word *etheorei* (Mk. 12:41) which means His observation was not an accidental one but deliberate. He sat down purposely to observe the worshippers. What Jesus saw was a representation of the cancer of rebellion which was destroying the Jewish nation. He saw many rich putting in much—but their much was only a facade. He saw a poor, probably oppressed, widow putting in *all her living*. The many rich were only giving for appearances sake. Probably the reason the rich gave much was that the many coins would make a louder and longer sound sliding down the narrow openings of the bronze boxes and clanging into the flaring, trumpet-like bottoms. The widow put in two small copper coins. The Greek word for her coins is *lepta*; the word literally means, "peeled, fine, thin, small, light." It came to be used to designate a small copper coin, often mentioned in the Mishna as the smallest Jewish coin. Its value was about one-eighth of the Roman money, *as*, or about one-one hundred twenty-eighth of a *denarius*; one *denarii* constituted a day's wages in buying power for the common laborer then. Two "mites" or *lepta* would be worth about 60¢ in American coin today. What would 60¢ be compared to probably hundreds of dollars being cast into the treasury by the rich?

21:3-4 Actualities: If a "contributors-list" had been published in the "Temple News-letter" these two "mites" would probably be hidden in the "Miscellaneous Gifts" section, if listed at all! Yet out of the midst of all the *large* gifts by "important" people, the Son of God selected these two "mites" and held them up for all the world to see and for centuries of believers to marvel at and use to examine themselves. Contrasted with all the powerful and great people and over against all their hostility and

unbelief is this nameless widow and her insignificant coins. As God saw it, it was the most important thing that happened there on that Tuesday. The Lord's standard of values are out of this world! What Jesus said was "more" is exactly opposite from what the world says is "great." And why?—because of the motive, because of the attitude. Any amount given grudgingly, of necessity or out of coercion is an abomination before God (cf. II Cor. 9:5-8). On the other hand, "if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not," (II Cor. 8:12). These many rich people cast into the treasury boxes out of their abundance. The Greek word translated *abundance* is *perisseuontos* and may be translated superfluity, or, sometimes, *left-over* (see Mark 8:8). What these rich gave was what they had *left over* after they made sure their own needs and wants were secured (probably with a goodly portion also socked away in savings for "a rainy day"). It was an out and out manifestation of greed, selfishness, and, worst of all, mistrust in God's promises to supply every need. What these rich gave represented no sacrifice of self at all! There was nothing spiritual in their giving at all—it was all ritual and pretense. In giving only left-overs, even though it was *much*, they revealed their blatant disrespect for God's Law. This is the way Christ saw their offerings!

The widow put into the offering box, "more than all of them" because she gave when she was suffering privation and poverty herself. Not only did she give, she gave all she had to live on. The Greek word translated "living" is *bios* which is the word for physical life. Those two "mites" represented all that was between her and starvation! It is almost incredible that anyone would do such a thing as this widow did. If it were not in the Bible we could not believe it! This widow follows in the train of that godly widow in Elijah's day who had only a handful of meal and a little oil between starvation for herself and her son but by faith in God willingly shared it with the prophet, (I Kings 17:12-16).

What this widow did was probably scorned by the rich, but for Jesus it manifested her complete trust in the Father's word. Such a deed is evidence of belief in God like nothing else. This is the way the Macedonians gave (II Cor. 8:1-7)—"in their extreme poverty." Such faith "proves" our love (II Cor. 8:8, 24) and our obedience (II Cor. 9:13). Giving like this is "doing the work of God" (II Cor. 8:7). The widow's offering was sacrificial. Sacrifice means literally, "to slay and offer." This widow put self to death and offered self to God, totally. She gave all her living. God measures sacrifices and offerings not so much by what one gives as by what one keeps! He evaluates offerings not in terms of amount but in terms of devotion (II Cor. 8:12; 9:5, 7, 8). Her deed was altogether spiritual. She would not accept the philosophy that life consists in the things one possesses—that there is no life after death and that we live only in the realm

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of the material existence. She put the glorification of God before her own physical life. She did so, right where she was, with what she had at that moment—not waiting until something more exciting and applaudable came along. She would never know what her last coin would accomplish—she would never be acknowledged by men or receive applause. But that was not her concern. She loved God and was grateful to God with *all* her being. She believed and trusted the First Commandment. The widow's offering shows the superficiality of the saying: "nine-tenths with God's blessing, equals more," and all those other pragmatic, materialistic motivations for tithing.

While Jesus waited and watched to see some fruit of godliness and respect for God's Law in the religious leaders of Israel in that dark and desolate hour, He saw in them only hypocrisy and contempt for God. But He did see one godly widow living in poverty, come to show there was still a small remnant of faith, real faith, in Israel. If Jesus were to write down what He sees in the church today, would it approximate what He saw in the Treasury (cf. Rev. 2:9 and 3:17)? What He saw in the Treasury indicated to Him that God's Zion, His redemptive nation, had defaulted on its call and covenant. Time was fast approaching when the terrible judgment of Jehovah must fall. They had rejected Him—He will reject them.

SECTION 2

Preliminary Signs of Destruction (21:5-19)

⁵And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, ⁶"As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." ⁷And they asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?" ⁸And he said, "Take heed that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. ⁹And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified; for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once."

¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹²But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³This will be a time for you to bear testimony. ¹⁴Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; ¹⁵for

I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to death; ¹⁷you will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your lives.

21:5-7 Predicted Catastrophe: The complexity of this text makes it imperative that the reader avail himself of a harmony of the gospel accounts as an aid to understanding it. First, it is important to know that immediately preceding Jesus' watching the widow's offering He uttered the following two eschatologically startling statements:

- a. He condemned the Pharisees, denouncing them as "sons of hell" (Mt. 23:15) and pronouncing upon them "all the blood" of the righteous shed upon the earth (Mt. 23:31-35). These were the "keepers" of the Hebrew system. Most Jews would consider their fall the end of the Jewish "world."
- b. He declared the "house" of Judaism *desolate* and *forsaken* (Mt. 23:36-39). This is terminology Jeremiah and Ezekiel used to warn their contemporaries of the Babylonian captivity and destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 19:8; Lam. 1:4; see Ezek. ch. 8-11).

After observing the widow's offering, Jesus preached the alarming sermon on Death and Life (John 12:20-50). He agonized over His own impending death (Jn. 12:27); He warned, "Now is the judgment (Gr. *crisis*) of this world (Gr. *cosmos*)"; He said the ruler of this world would be cast out (John 12:31); and He referred to the "last day" (Jn. 12:48). The statement, "Now is the *crisis* of this *cosmos*," was enough to precipitate the questions of the apostles about the destruction of Jerusalem. The word *cosmos* means "order, system, establishment." It was very plain to the apostles Jesus was predicting the destruction of the present Jewish order, involving the desolation and forsakenness of the Temple and the nation in that generation (Mt. 23:36). Matthew records that as Jesus left the temple His disciples came "to point out to him the buildings of the temple," (Mt. 24:1). Mark and Luke tell us they spoke to Him about how beautifully and wonderfully the Temple and the city was adorned with "noble stones and offerings." The inference is that the apostles were filled with incredulity and excitement in response to all these startling predictions. Some of the great stones of Herod's Temple were, according to Josephus, 25 cubits long, 8 cubits high and 12 cubits wide. Using 18 inches to a cubit one stone would be 38 ft. long, 12 ft. high and 18 ft. wide. Eight large-sized American automobiles (Ford, LTD) could be stacked

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into those dimensions. The "offerings" were probably gold-plating on columns and the golden grape-vine decorating the huge doors of the Temple. When Jesus predicted "not one stone would be left upon another" it is not surprising that the apostles asked Him, "Tell us, when will this be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" (cf. Mt. 24:3; Mk. 13:4). The Greek word *sunteleias* is translated *close* (of the age) in Matthew 24:3—the word is more often translated, "consummation." The apostles were persuaded Jesus was talking about "the consummation of the age."

It is now necessary to comment briefly on rabbinical eschatology apparently current in Jesus' day. Jewish scribes and rabbis had divided their eschatology into three eras (more or less): (a) *Olam hazzeh*, the order then existing; (b) *Athid labho*, the age to come after that existing order; and (c) *Olam habba*, the world to come. In some rabbinic tradition, the age to come and the world to come blended into one. The *existing order* was to be succeeded by the "days of the Messiah" which would stretch into the *coming age* and end with the *world to come*. According to the rabbis, the birth of the Messiah would be unknown by his contemporaries; he would appear, carry on his work, then disappear—probably for 45 days; reappear, destroy the hostile powers of the world (notably "Edom"—symbolizing Rome, the fourth and last world empire listed by the prophet Daniel). Israelites would be brought back to Palestine from all over the world through miraculous deliverances and, according to the Midrash, all circumcised Israelites would then be released from Gehenna, and the dead Jews raised (according to some, by the Messiah). This resurrection would take place in Palestine so that those who had been buried elsewhere would have to roll underground—in great pain—until they reached the holy land of Palestine.

In the coming age, *athid labho*, the rabbis wrote that all resistance to God would be concentrated in the great war of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel, ch. 38-39), and there would be an intensification and focusing of all wickedness upon Israel in her land. Israel's implacable enemies would three times assault the Holy City to destroy it, but each time be repelled. The city would suffer some destruction, but not complete. When Israel's enemy was destroyed completely, the Holy City would be gloriously rebuilt and inhabited. The new city would be lifted to a height of some nine miles—some said it would even reach as high as the throne of God—and extend from Joppa to the gates of Damascus. The new Temple, the Messiah was to erect, would contain every glorious item which had been absent in Herod's Temple; the golden candelabra, the ark, the heaven-lit fire on the altar, the Shekinah, and the cherubim. Some rabbis insisted that the whole of the ancient ceremonies of Moses' Law plus rabbinic traditions would be practiced. More liberal ones believed that only the Day of Atonement and

the Feast of Esther (Purim), or Feast of Tabernacles, would be observed and only the thank-offerings made. Some insisted that the many stipulations concerning lawful and unlawful foods would be abolished.

The end of that age would blend right into the world to come, *olam habba*, a glorious period of holiness, forgiveness and peace. In this vast new land and Holy City (not heaven, but literal Palestine), angels would cut gems 45 ft. long and 45 ft. broad and place them in the City's gates. The walls of the City would be of silver, gold and precious gems, and precious jewels would be scattered all over the land which every Israelite was at liberty to take. Jerusalem would be as large as all Palestine and Palestine as large as the world. Every event and miracle in the history of Israel would be repeated, only on a much more magnificent scale, in the Messianic days. Wheat would grow as high as the mountains and the wind would miraculously convert the grain into flour and blow it into the valleys of the land. Every woman was to bear a child, daily, so that ultimately every Israelite family would number as many as all Israel at the time of the Exodus. All sickness and disease would pass away; Israelites would not die; some Gentiles would live hundreds of years. The Messiah was to rule the entire world from Jerusalem; Jerusalem would be the capital of the world and take the place of the fourth world empire (Rome). The time of this was among the seven things, according to the rabbis, unknown to man.

A war, a revival of that of Gog and Magog, would close the Messianic era. The nations, which had to this point given tribute to the Messiah, would rebel against him, and he would destroy them by the breath of his mouth, so that Israel alone would be left on the face of the earth. That period of Gentile rebellion was to last seven years. Then the final Judgment would commence. There seems to be no resurrection for Gentiles at all, except to immediately die again at Judgment. Gehenna, where all Jews but the perfectly righteous Jews were kept, served as a Jewish purgatory, from which they were all ultimately delivered by Abraham, to go to heaven. No such deliverance was ever considered for the heathen, or apostate Jews—they would suffer eternal torments. The final Judgment would be held in the Valley of Jehoshaphat by God, leading the Heavenly Sanhedrin, composed of the elders of Israel. After the final Judgment there would be a renewal of heaven and earth and the full implementation of *olam habba*, the world to come. Now when Jesus spoke of the judgment of the Jewish hierarchy, the desolation of Jerusalem, and the "crisis of the cosmos," the apostles concluded that such catastrophic events would be signalling the end of the existing order, *olam hazzeh*, and the ushering in of *athid labho*, the coming age, and perhaps, *olam habba*, the world to come. The apostles asked three questions which indicates how influential the rabbinic interpretations had been on them, and how confused they were trying to reconcile that with Jesus' statements. While the apostles apparently did

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not hear the Lord's prediction earlier (Lk. 19:41-44), or it did not register on their minds due to the excitement of those moments, they were hearing Him now. We must refer to a harmonization of the Synoptists to find the three distinct questions. Their first question was: *When* will all this destruction be? (Mt. 24:3a; Mk. 13:4a; Lk. 21:7a); second, *What* will be the *sign* that *You* are coming? (Mt. 24:3b; Mk. 13:4b; Lk. 21:7b). Matthew alone mentions a third part to their questioning: *What* will be the *sign* of the *consummation* of the age (Gr. *sunteleias tou aionos*)? (Mt. 24:3c).

Recognizing the dangers inherent in their confusion, Jesus sets out immediately to reveal a number of future events and to specify that they are *not* signs of the rabbinic theories coming to pass, *nor* are they signs of the consummation of the ages. At the end of His discourse, He tells them what they are *not* to know (signs of the end of the world). But for the immediate future of these apostles and those of their generation who would become followers of the Way, He gives some very practical instructions so they would not be led astray. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish commonwealth would not take place for more than 30 years after Jesus died, was raised from the tomb and ascended to heaven (beginning in 66 A.D. and coming to a climax in 70 A.D.). The apostles have not yet understood that Jesus must "go away." When He did return to His heavenly throne, they would long to have Him back (cf. Lk. 17:22). Great persecutions were to come upon them. They must live in daily expectation of His return. They would be vulnerable to false expectations of a coming messianic age as portrayed by the rabbis, because the circumstances preceding the destruction of Jerusalem were to be similar to rabbinic messianic eschatology. So Jesus spoke His warnings.

21:8 Pseudo-Christ: Jesus warned the apostles that their generation would experience the rise and fall of many who would come in His name, saying they were the Messiah (Anointed One, Christ) (cf. Mt. 24:4-5; Mk. 13:5-6). But the first century Christians were not to be led astray by these claims—for in spite of all the excitement and troubles attending these pretenders, He was not then returning, nor was "the time at hand." Pseudo-Christ coming to proclaim the new age would precede the desolation of Jerusalem Jesus predicted. There were many such imposters who deluded multitudes of first century Jews into following them claiming they would prove they were the Christ by exhibiting wonders and signs by the power of God (see *Antiquities*, XX, VIII, 5, by Flavious Josephus). About 44 A.D. (during the rule of Palestine by Fadus, Roman procurator) one Theudas (*not* the Theudas of Acts 5:36) gathered a large band of followers claiming he was a miracle working deliverer. And about 54 A.D. (during the reign of Felix) an Egyptian claimed to be a deliverer with prophetic powers. Such pseudo-Messiahs were plentiful. All these came to a climax 62 years *after* the destruction of Jerusalem in the great rebellion against Rome under the false Messiah, Bar Kokhba, A.D. 132-135.

21:9-11 Presaging Crises: The Greek word *polemous*, "war," is the word from which we get the English word, "polemics." It means "to fight." Rome was having increasing difficulty with civil war among Roman emperors and army generals. There was also an ever recurring necessity for Rome to defend her empire against foreign invaders. Jesus is probably predicting the increasing rebellious attitude of the Jews against Rome when He predicts "wars and rumors of wars." Herod Agrippa, given his uncle Philip's territory by Caligula, set out to revenge his uncle Philip against Herod Antipas who had stolen Philip's wife, Herodias. Agrippa spread the *rumor* to Rome that Antipas was conspiring with the Parthians against Rome and would make war, rumoring that Antipas had in his arsenal at Tiberias enough armor to equip 70,000 men. Riots broke out in Alexandria, Egypt, between the Egyptians and the Jews of that city (37-38 A.D.). A riot broke out in Jamnia (western Judea) (39 A.D.) when some Gentiles erected an altar to the Roman emperor and Jews tore it down. The emperor sent two Roman legions (12,000 men) to Jerusalem to set up his statue in the Jewish Temple. Jews vowed to resist to the last Jewish death. Some Jewish Christians in Palestine thought this impending blood-bath was a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy here. Caligula was assassinated before this could be enforced. Claudius was forced to put down another riot in Alexandria with bloodshed (A.D. 53). We have already mentioned the Jewish rebellion under Theudas in the days of the Roman procurator Fadus. After the death of Herod Agrippa I (44 A.D.) the Roman emperor again imposed a rule of procurators upon Judea which deeply agitated the Jews. In the days of the procurator Cumanus (48 A.D.), a Roman soldier from the garrison in The Tower of Antonia, exposed his genitals to the Passover crowds which infuriated them. The Jews rioted and Roman soldiers killed hundreds of Jews in suppressing the rioting (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX, V, 3). There were continuing frontier disputes between Jews and Samaritans—Jews and Gentiles rioted in Caesarea (cf. *Israel and The Nations*, by F. F. Bruce, pub. Eerdmans, pgs. 197-225). Wars and tumults (Gr. *akatastasia*, "confusion, instability" or literally, "falling down away from") were predicted to precede the destruction of Jerusalem. Although nations rise against one another and the world society seems to be unstable, Jesus warned His disciples they should not be "terrified" (Gr. *ptoeo*, "frightened, intimidated."). Luke records Jesus' statement, ". . . for this must first take place but the end will not be at once" (Lk. 21:9). Why the exhortation against being alarmed? Because Jesus is giving a very plain prediction of the holocaust coming upon Jerusalem and Israel. But Jesus has a work for them to do in Jerusalem and Palestine (Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8) which will take years to accomplish. He does not want them to be terrified when wars and instability come so that they will "flee" Jerusalem before the real holocaust comes. When the actual, final destruction of Jerusalem

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comes He will want all who are able to escape (cf. Mt. 24:15-22; Mk. 13:14-20; Lk. 21:20-24). Jesus warns them not to be alarmed when great earthquakes in various places and famines and pestilences and terrors and great signs from heaven occur because these, too, would not necessitate their fleeing Jerusalem. Even when these great disasters were "headlined" throughout the Roman empire, they were not signalling the immediate holocaust He was predicting. One famine, recorded in the New Testament (Acts 11:29ff.) occurred about 45-46 A.D. and was very severe in Palestine. Luke tells how the church at Antioch sent relief to their Jewish brethren in Palestine. Josephus tells how Queen Helena, an Adiabene convert to Judaism, also sent relief to the Jews in Palestine for the same famine (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX, II, 5) (Adiabene is a territory east of the Tigris River).

Many destructive earthquakes have been recorded in the history of Syria (the land bordering Palestine on the north). The *Hauran* beyond the Jordan is covered with signs of violent earth-shocks, and the cities on the coast of Palestine have suffered many quakes. The New Testament documents a great earthquake in Palestine at the death of Christ (Mt. 27:51-54); one at Christ's resurrection (Mt. 28:2); one at Philippi in Macedonia (Acts 16:26). Josephus mentions one in the reign of Herod "such as had not happened at any other time, which was very destructive to men and cattle" (*Antiquities*, IV, V, 2). The records of many such earthquakes in Palestine could have been recorded by the Jews and destroyed when Rome burned the city of Jerusalem. Roman historians document numerous earthquakes which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem: (a) one occurring in A.D. 46; (b) one in Rome on the day Nero assumed the toga, A.D. 51; (c) one at Apamea in Phrygia; (d) one at Laodicea in Phrygia, A.D. 60; (e) one in Amporia, A.D. 62. Seneca and Tacitus both mention earthquakes in places like Asia, Achaia, Syria, Macedonia, Cyprus, Paphos, Crete, Italy and places already mentioned. The records of great plagues and pestilences may have been practically destroyed also. But there is at least one pestilence, mentioned by Josephus, in Babylonia (40 A.D.) which killed some 30,000 people (*Antiquities*, XVII, IX, 8), and one in Italy (66 A.D.) recorded by Tacitus.

What Jesus probably meant by "great signs from heaven" were the catastrophes of "nature" such as volcanic eruptions, cyclones, meteors or other great storms from the "heavens" which often terrify men. Josephus records the following "signs" which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem: (a) a star resembling a sword stood over the city; (b) a comet that lasted a whole year; (c) at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, during the night, a bright light shone around the altar and the Temple, so that it seemed to be broad daylight; (d) the eastern gate of the Temple, of solid brass, fastened with strong bolts and bars, which required 20 men to shut, opened in the night of its own accord; (e) chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were

seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding certain cities; (f) a great noise of a multitude, was heard in the temple, saying, "Let us remove hence"; (g) four years before the war began, Jesus, the son of Ananus, a farmer, came to the feast of Tabernacles when the city was in peace and prosperity, and began to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegroom and the bride, and a voice against this whole people!"—he was scourged and at every stroke of the whip he cried, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!"—this cry was continued every day for more than seven years, until he was killed in the siege of the city, shouting, "Woe, woe to myself also!" (Josephus, *Wars*, VI, V, 3). Some of these "signs" were probably the product of rumor and since we have no corroborating eyewitnesses to substantiate Josephus, we must be skeptical about some of them. But the very fact that Josephus records them indicates they were being rumored around Jerusalem. And that is the whole point of Jesus' warning here—to keep His disciples from being terrified at such rumored signs so that they might not desert their work of evangelism. Jesus counsels them that should they see unusually frightening natural phenomena or even hear rumors of such, Jerusalem's destruction is still not imminent.

21:12-19 Persecuting Countrymen: Jesus now warns the apostles that even severe persecutions to come upon His followers will not be signalling any imminent eschatological end. Up to the time of Jesus' death, there were no severe persecutions against those who followed Him. The authorities had determined to kill Jesus, but His followers were still free of such malice. But immediately after His death, their tribulation would begin. Even this should not cause them to expect the imminent destruction of the Jewish commonwealth. Even this should not terrify them into fleeing Jerusalem and neglecting to fulfill their commission to preach the gospel there first. As a matter of fact, being brought to trial in Jewish synagogues and prisons, and before Jewish rulers, would be an opportune "time for them to bear testimony" (21:13).

Jesus told the disciples they were not to "meditate beforehand" how to answer when hailed before persecutors. Luke uses the Greek words *me promeletan* which mean primarily, "have no concern prior to." The better way to translate the word is "be not anxious beforehand." In other words, Jesus exhorts those who anticipate being called to questioning before tribunals they need not distress themselves beforehand that they will not be able to endure the questioning or not have sufficient knowledge to give the testimony that should be given. What Jesus wants them to say will be given them between His prophecy here and the coming persecutions. This is *not* a promise of Jesus that they will need no preparation between these times. They will indeed be given many things to say from their own eyewitnessed experiences (primarily, Jesus' death and resurrection—which is

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essentially what they testified to before their persecutors). Jesus did not want the apostles to let His predictions of the coming persecutions fill them with anxiety ahead of time so they might hastily decide to flee from Palestine immediately upon His death. He desired to warn them here, at this moment, they would have a testimony of historical facts which none of their adversaries would be able to contradict. They need not be afraid they would have nothing to say.

Matthew and Mark add that Jesus predicted apostasy (Mt. 24:10), false teaching (Mt. 24:11), lawlessness and indifference (Mt. 24:12) would all characterize the Jewish society in which the apostles would live preceding the holocaust upon the Jewish nation. Furthermore, the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations—then the end of Jerusalem and the nation would come (Mt. 24:14; Mk. 13:10). The hatred and persecution of Christians and Jews is abundantly confirmed by pagan historians (between 34-70 A.D.) as well as in sacred history (Acts of the Apostles), in the Pauline epistles, and in John's Revelation. The rise of false teaching and apostasy within Judaism and within the Christian Church as well as the betrayal of Christians by their own brethren is well documented in the epistles of the New Testament and in the book of Revelation (cf. Gal. 1:7; 2:4; II Cor. 11:13-15; I Tim. 1:3-7, 1:19-20; II Tim. 3:8-9; Titus 1:10-11; Jude; II Pet. 2; Rev. 1:3; Acts 15:1, etc.). Neither do we have to speculate as to what Jesus meant when He prophesied that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached to "the whole world" before Jerusalem was destroyed. We have the documentation of the fulfillment of that from the pen of the inspired apostle Paul (cf. Rom. 1:5, 8; 10:18; 16:26; Col. 1:6; 1:23). The same apostle made it abundantly clear in his epistle to the Hebrews that Judaism was doomed and "near to passing away" (cf. Heb. 8:13; 10:25; 12:25-29; 13:14).

Very alarming words had fallen from the lips of Jesus. The apostles, combining with these words their undoubted knowledge of popular rabbinical traditions of the "coming age" were startled. Jesus recognized the need to allay their anxieties lest the events which would *precede* the judgment of God upon the Jewish nation might terrify them into fleeing from Palestine before they could accomplish His purposes there. Jesus revealed to the apostles these events of history *before* they came to pass in order that they might believe and trust Him and carry out their mission (cf. Mt. 24:25; Mk. 13:23; Jn. 13:19; 14:29). These are events preliminary to the destruction of the Jewish nation.

SECTION 3

Precise Signs of Destruction (21:20-32)

20^a"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹Then let those who are in Judea

flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it; ²²for these are days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written. ²³Alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people; ²⁴they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹ And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the kingdom of God is near. ³¹So also when you see these things taking place, you know that the Kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all has taken place.

21:20-21 Pagan Profanation: Jesus now lists a number of things that will be plainly observable to the generation then living. He prophesies there will be immediate signs that Judaism is "forsaken" and "desolated" and that the end has come for Jerusalem (cf. Mt. 24:15-34; Mk. 13:14-30). The first of these "immediate" signs will be when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies. Matthew and Mark call it the "desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (cf. Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11, see our comments there in *Daniel*, College Press). Daniel predicted the desecration of the Temple and the city by Romans armies as the consequence of the Jew's rejecting their "Anointed Prince" 490 years after the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth in 457 B.C. (Dan. 9:24-27). After a series of Jewish uprisings and riots, the city of Jerusalem was first besieged in November A.D. 66 by the Roman legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus. He had marched to Judea in November, 66 A.D., with the Twelfth Legion and surrounded the city on orders from the emperor, Nero. Gallus occupied the northern edge of Jerusalem, called Bezetha, but concluded his forces were too small to take the rest of the city so he withdrew. The Jews, assuming Divine providence had intervened to spare the city, took no advantage of the opportunity to flee. In fact, many Jews living in the immediate environs outside the city fled into the city for what they thought would be protection. Meanwhile, on the way back to Syria Gallus and his forces were ambushed by Jewish insurgents in the pass at Beth-horon and the Romans suffered great losses. Christians, remembering Jesus' prophecy, fled to Pella when

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Cestius Gallus returned to Syria. Eusebius writes in his *History*, 111:5:3, “. . . the people of the church in Jerusalem, being commanded to leave and dwell in a city of Perea, called Pella, in accordance with a certain oracle which was uttered before the war to the approved men there by way of revelation. . . .”

Nero sent his general, Vespasian, with 60,000 men to Judea in the Spring of 67 A.D. Vespasian conquered all of Judea and was about to besiege Jerusalem, when he was called back to Rome after Nero's suicide. Vespasian became emperor and sent his son, Titus, to Judea to put down the Jewish revolt. July 24, 70 A.D., Titus recaptured the Tower of Antonia at the northern edge of the Temple courts. August 5, he caused the daily sacrifices of the Jewish priests to cease. August 27, the Temple gates were burned. August 29, (the anniversary of Babylonian destruction of Solomon's temple in 587 B.C.), the sanctuary itself was set on fire. While the sanctuary was burning, Roman soldiers brought their legionary standards into the Temple area and offered sacrifices to the Roman emperor there! On September 26, A.D. 70, the whole city was in Titus' hands. All during the siege and assaults on the city by the Romans, the Jews within the city had been reduced to such desperation there were atrocities the Jews perpetrated upon one another almost too horrible and gruesome to recount.

21:22-24 Terrible Tribulations and Deceiving Deliverers: Jesus specifically and categorically says of this terrible holocaust, “. . . for *these are* days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. . . .” Moses wrote that this would happen should the Jews reject The Prophet (cf. Deut. 18:15-18; 28:15-68); Daniel prophesied these things would come to pass because the Jews would “cut off” their “Anointed One,” (cf. Dan. 9:24-27); Jesus proclaimed they would “Fill up the measure of their fathers . . . that upon them would come all the righteous blood shed on earth. . . .” (Mt. 23:31-36) because they were going to kill the Son of God. Luke records Jesus as saying: “For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people.” Matthew and Mark record that Jesus said further: “For then will be great tribulation, *such as* has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will be.” This is one of the points of the Olivet Discourse which causes major confusion. Many readers insist that such language cannot be referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, even though that event was certainly terrible in its time. First, there have been many “tribulations” since the destruction of Jerusalem much worse in statistics than that one. For example, two world wars caused more death and destruction than that. Nazi Germany killed approximately 8,000,000 Jews during World War II—that is certainly more than the estimated 1,500,000 slain and captured in 70 A.D. Then there is Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the prisons of Russian Siberia and Chinese Mongolia.

But the term, *such as*, in the description of Jesus, really does not refer to the statistical magnitude of the tribulation—it refers rather to the *kind* of tribulation. Jesus is anticipating the uniqueness of the cause and effect of the suffering and affliction—not the quantity or number who suffered. It is hardly possible for any tribulation to exceed in magnitude that of the flood of Noah's day when there were only eight survivors! We must explain what Jesus said, then, by quality or uniqueness. Perhaps these suggestions will help us understand why Jesus intended this "great tribulation" to be applied to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism:

- a. This tribulation involved the final destruction of what once had been God's holy nation. This had never happened before. God rescued a remnant from captivity and restored their nationality. It will never happen again, since the Church of Christ is now God's holy nation (I Pet. 2:9) and it will never be destroyed (Mt. 16:18; Dan. 2:44).
- b. The circumstances of the Jews trapped in Jerusalem was unique in all of history. God had withdrawn His presence. They were abandoned to their own evil. The residents turned on one another in hatred and panic, and inflicted on themselves atrocities more horrible than even the Romans could invent!
- c. It was a tribulation suffered only by those Jews who had rejected Christ. Those who believed Jesus (especially this prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction), were saved from the disaster of 70 A.D.

Still, how can we accept this statement that there was never such tribulation before or after 70 A.D.? Consider the following possibilities:

- a. The Bible was written for all time—the "atomic age" as well as that of bows and arrows. For Jesus to try to compare the tribulation of Roman warfare with Hiroshima would mean nothing to the apostles. So, Jesus is simply saying, "In the frame-of-reference of what you apostles know and can visualize, Jerusalem's suffering is going to be the greatest." This is no contradiction of Jesus' omniscience. He is, in fact, condescending to the human limitations of the apostles. He did this at other times. He told them a few hours later, "I have many things to say to you which you are not presently able to bear" (Jn. 16:12f.).
- b. The holocaust of 70 A.D. was unique in the way Jews tortured, murdered, and despised their fellow Jews. Jerusalem was really self-destroyed. Titus, the Roman general, made every effort to spare the people, the city and the Temple; but the Jews were implacable in their intentions to never surrender to the Romans again. Titus eventually could wait no longer and went into Jerusalem, killing and burning.

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- c. It may be that this great tribulation which began with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., has continued with more or less intensity up to the present time! The Jews, since 70 A.D., have, in many lands and many centuries suffered great tribulation.

Matthew and Mark add, "And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, those days will be shortened" (Mt. 24:22; Mk. 13:20). Titus first thought to build a siege wall and starve the Jews all to death or let them all die of disease. But then, with pressing business back in Rome beckoning, he stormed the city, killed, burned and took thousands of Jews captive. Thus many thousands of Jews were saved alive who would have otherwise perished (cf. Josephus, *Wars*, I:12:1).

Luke records that Jesus specifically predicted the great tribulation would involve the death of many Jews, but many would also be "led captive among all the nations." Jesus then makes a statement, recorded by Luke alone, which has been the focus of much confusing comment by alleged students of eschatology. Jesus said, ". . . and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24b). By the word "until" Jesus is indicating that the desolation of Jerusalem would continue as long as God sees fit. That is the question—how long will that be? There is a passage in Romans 11:25-26 which should provide a clue. That passage says, ". . . a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved. . . ." This passage makes it clear that at the time all Israel has been saved, the full number of the Gentiles ("the times of the Gentiles . . . fulfilled") will have come in. So the question really focuses on *all Israel's salvation*. It is plain from the New Testament that "Israel" is the church of Jesus Christ. Paul says in Romans 9:8 ". . . it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants. . . ." Paul writes in Galatians 3:29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." The "until" then points to a time when God will have "grafted" into true *spiritual Israel*, all that through faith in Christ and obedience of that faith shall be saved. That is the end of time. Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the end of the world. The Jews had their time. They were allotted 490 years from the reestablishment of the Jewish commonwealth (457 B.C. to fulfill their messianic destiny and bring the Messiah into the world and complete God's redemptive program (34 A.D.) (cf. Dan. 9:24-27, see our comments there in *Daniel*, College Press). They rejected the Messiah and crucified Him. So the kingdom was taken from the Jews and given to others (cf. Mt. 21:43). God gave His kingdom to a mixture of all races and tribes and languages which would produce the fruits of repentance. In this kingdom neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but a new creation. Those who walk by this rule *are the Israel* of God

(cf. Gal. 6:15-16). God has not absolutely rejected the Jews, neither have the Jews totally rejected Christ—a hardening has taken place only in part. There are still Jews coming to God through Christ today. But that is the *only* way God will accept anyone (cf. Jn. 5:23; 14:6; Heb. 10:10; 10:12-14, etc.), from now until the end of time. Genetic Jewishness counts nothing with God—never did, never shall (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9ff.; 9:22-26; Gal. 3:6-9, etc.); it has always been faith that made anyone a child of God. When the Jews were given their allotted time and when the apostles had completed the first part of Jesus' Great Commission and had taken the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1:8), and they had, for the most part, rejected it, then the gospel of the kingdom was delivered to the Gentiles (see Acts 13:46). The time allotted for the Gentiles (and any Jews who will now believe in Christ, for they are no longer His chosen but are as the Gentiles) is until Christ delivers up the kingdom to God after destroying every authority and power (cf. I Cor. 15:23-28), and that is the end of time.

Until the end of time Jerusalem will be "trodden down by the Gentiles." Geographical Jerusalem and national Israel will be characterized as "Gentile" so long as the present world exists. So long as a Jew will not come to Jehovah by faith in Jesus Christ, he is a heathen, an unbeliever, one who crucifies Christ afresh and for him there is no possibility of repentance before God unless through Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 6:1-8; 10:1-31). There is no grace of God for anyone outside of Christ, not even in Judaism (cf. Gal. 5:2-6). Jews in Jerusalem today, outside of Christ, are as Gentile as any unbeliever practicing any form of idolatry, because God's covenant is *in Christ!*

At this point in the discourse Jesus warned that another of the signs indicating the imminent destruction of Jerusalem would be false Christ's and false prophets showing signs and wonders attempting to lead many astray, even the elect. These pseudo-Christ's would try to convince many to follow them into different places of alleged safety. But Jesus exhorts His listeners to "take heed, I have told you all things beforehand" (cf. Mt. 24:23-27; Mk. 13:21-23). Then Jesus adds, "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man" (Mt. 24:27). What Jesus is saying is this: "Do not follow the pseudo-Christ's; their signs will be obscure, deceitful and false. When the Son of man comes in His judgment upon this city, the signs will be unmistakable. The signs which I have told you will be as clearly visible as the lightning!" This interpretation of the Son of man's "coming" in Mt. 24:27 is in harmony with Jesus' next statement, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles (Gr. *aetoi*, "vultures") will be gathered together" (Mt. 24:28). Vultures easily ascertain where deadness is and hasten to devour them. The Romans pounced on the rotting carcass of Judaism. The Jews expected a Messiah to appear from out of nowhere and deliver them from the Romans. Those Jews besieged within the walls of Jerusalem were

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especially vulnerable to false prophets and false Christs. Jesus said this would be a sign that Jerusalem was about to be wiped out. The real Messiah did "come" in 70 A.D. with His army to destroy (not deliver) Jerusalem. The reader is referred to Matthew 22:7 where Jesus is plainly parabolizing the destruction of the Jewish nation at the hands of the "King's troops" who destroyed and burned their city (see also, Isa. 10:5-10; Jer. 27:5-7). This reference to the destruction of Jerusalem as a "coming" of the Son of man is imperative for the proper understanding of the next section of Jesus' discourse.

Before continuing with the narrative, however, it is necessary at this point to include a few brief notes from Josephus' account of the destruction of Jerusalem in his, *Wars*, Books V and VI:

1. Three different political parties of the Jews were within the city fighting one another for the three years of siege.
2. They fought one another with such malice and abandon that thousands of innocent Jews were slain in their "cross-fire." Even priests and worshipers in the Temple courts were slain in the very act of offering sacrifices.
3. These factions burned storehouses filled with food, polluted water reservoirs to keep others from having them, and thus caused the starvation of thousands of their countrymen.
4. Anyone who sought to escape the city, if caught by the Jews, was slain by having his throat cut.
5. Burial of dead bodies within the city was impossible so they simply let the cadavers rot, tramped over them, or threw them over the walls.
6. Some Jews tried to swallow their gold and escape the city, hoping to pass it after escape. Both their own countrymen, and later the Romans, caught on to their ruse. When such people were captured trying to escape, they were thrown to the ground and disemboweled alive and their gold taken from their intestines while they writhed in death throes.
7. Robbers plundered stores, homes, government buildings, torturing anyone found inside for food or other articles of value.
8. Children pulled the very morsels of food out of the mouths of their aged parents, and parents did the same to children.
9. Many Jews sold their homes, their children, anything they possessed, for *one* measure of wheat or barley.
10. One method of Jews torturing Jews was to drive wooden spikes up their "private parts" and this for no reason at all except they wished to express some anger.

11. Romans crucified Jews who escaped at the rate of 500 per day. They ran out of wood with which to make crosses so many were crucified.
12. Tens of thousands died of rampant disease and pestilences.
13. Some Jews leaped from the tops of the walls of Jerusalem, broke bones, mangled bodies, and many died. If they did survive and escape, they ate food, when they could find any, so much and so rapidly, they died.
14. Dead bodies were stacked in great heaps as high as houses.
15. Blood ran down the gutters and narrow streets of Jerusalem ankle deep.
16. Some ate from public sewers, cattle and pigeon dung, wood, leather shields, hay, clothing, and things even scavenger animals would not eat.
17. Book VI:3:4, documents the incident of a woman roasting her own infant son and eating his flesh to stay alive (cf. Deut. 28:53).
18. Many false prophets went throughout the city telling people to take refuge in the Temple. As a result, 10,000 were slain and burned when Titus burned the Temple.
19. After the woman (mentioned above) ate the flesh of her own child, "the whole city was full of this horrid action immediately" Josephus says.
20. The Romans, upon capturing the entire city, slew every living person they came into contact with—"they obstructed the very streets with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree that the fire of many houses was quenched with these men's blood."
21. Josephus records that 1,100,000 perished and 97,000 were taken captive at this destruction of Jerusalem. Some estimates go as high as a total of 2,000,000.
22. Josephus concludes, ". . . thus the city was thoroughly laid even with the ground. . . ." Only three towers and a little part of one wall was left by Titus to "memorialize" his victory over the Jews.

21:25-28 Potentates Plummeting: Luke says, "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars. . . . etc." Matthew says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days. . . ." (Mt. 24:29) and Mark says, "But in those days, after that tribulation. . . ." (Mk. 13:24). The very strong indication that this text (Lk. 21:25-28 parallels Mt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-27) is a continuation of the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism may be seen from: (a) "Immediately" does not usually make room for much of a time gap—certainly not a gap of over 2000 years; (b) "When

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these things begin to take place. . . ." (Lk. 21:28) surely is not referring to the Second Coming for there will be no signs pointing to its nearness—it will be instantaneous; (c) and the further statement, ". . . this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" (Lk. 21:32; Mt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30) undoubtedly includes the sun and moon being darkened, stars falling from heaven, perplexity and distress of nations and the powers of the heavens being shaken.

Now this section is difficult for the Occidental mind, but not for the Oriental. The careful Bible student will find much help in understanding this simply by giving attention to context, comparable passages from the Old Testament and Biblical word usage. This section is plainly couched in what is called "apocalyptic" language, similar to that of the Old Testament prophets and Revelation when predicting the "coming" of God in judgment upon pagan nations (and even upon the Jewish nation). Apocalyptic language is characterized by its figurativeness, symbolism and drama. The apocalyptic language of Jesus here should be interpreted in light of the following considerations:

- a. Sun, moon, and stars darkened or falling from heaven is often stated symbolically in the Old Testament to picture any inexpressible calamity such as an overturning of kingdoms or cities or kings or religious potentates thought otherwise to be invincible. It is clear that Isaiah 13:10; 14:12ff.; 24:23; 34:1-4; Jer. 4:23-28; 15:9; Joel 2:10; 2:30—3:21; Amos 4:9; Micah 3:6; Hab. 3:11, and others, refer to the fall of kingdoms and kings in such terms. This kind of imagery goes back at least as far as Joseph and his brothers (cf. Gen. 37:9ff.). They understood it then.
- b. Luke says, "distress of nations . . . in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves. . . ." This is picturing the distress of the wicked as these calamities of the destruction of Jerusalem roll over them like waves of the sea. Isaiah 57:20-21 uses the same symbolism. It may also refer to the overwhelming flood of the Roman army to come upon Jerusalem (see Jer. 6:23ff. describing the flood of Babylonians about to come upon Jerusalem in 606 B.C.).
- c. "The powers of the heavens being shaken. . . ." is apparently a figurative prophecy of the "shaking down" of the system of Judaism and the obsolete priesthood (cf. Heb. 8:13; 12:25-29; 13:13-14 with Isa. 14:12ff.; 24:21-23).
- d. Then will "appear the signs of the Son of man. . . ." or as Luke puts it, "And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. . . ." Jesus plainly told His apostles some of them would not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power and before they saw the Son of man coming in

His kingdom (cf. Mk. 9:1; Mt. 16:28). He is saying here that when the destruction of Jerusalem occurs it will be unmistakable evidence to His followers, at least, that the Son of man has "come" to keep His word about taking the kingdom from the Jews.

- e. Luke says "men will be fainting with fear and with foreboding. . . ." Matthew says, "then all the tribes of the earth will mourn." Jews had been scattered all over the world ever since the Babylonian captivity. These would certainly mourn and faint with fear when they learned of Jerusalem's obliteration by the Romans because they would fear the same treatment. This probably refers also to the prediction of Zechariah (12:10). There the Jews are predicted as mourning over the crucifixion of their Messiah. John refers to this prophecy at the crucifixion (cf. Jn. 19:37). The destruction of Jerusalem was God's wrath upon the nation for crucifying ("cutting off") the Messiah (cf. Dan. 9:24-27).
- f. This is probably what Jesus meant when He said the same thing to the High Priest warning him of the consequences of crucifying the Messiah (cf. Mt. 26:64)—the destruction of Judaism.
- g. Matthew and Mark add the words: "And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," (Mt. 24:31; Mk. 13:27). Luke says it this way, "When these things (the signs that could be determined about the fall of Jerusalem and the release of the Jewish strangle-hold on the kingdom) begin to take place . . . your redemption *is drawing* near." Luke does not say, ". . . your redemption *is here*" in the twinkling of an eye! When the fall of Judaism is accomplished, the fruitless fig tree will have been withered, and a great obstacle standing in the way of the gospel unto the whole world will be removed (cf. Mt. 21:18-22; Mk. 11:12-14; Mk. 11:20-25). From that time God will signally build up His kingdom. It shall be fully and exclusively established and recognized when the Jewish system comes to an end. This note of Luke in 21:28, ". . . now when these things begin to take place. . . ." *is parallel* to his note in 21:31, "So also, when you see these things taking place. . . ." and both of them refer to the visible destruction of Jerusalem. Isaiah predicted that God would create a new "land" or "nation" with "one stroke . . . in one day" before the old nation had passed away (Isa. 66:7-9). But Isaiah also predicted that this new nation (the church) would "go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me. . . ." (Isa. 66:24).

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These prophecies, we believe, refer to the establishment of the New Israel, the church, on the day of Pentecost—and the subsequent destruction of the old order, Judaism, (see our comments, *Isaiah*, Vol. III, College Press).

21:29-32 Readily Recognizable: With the parable of the fig tree, Jesus was using an illustration his disciples, as outdoors men, could readily understand. As Russell Boatman says, in *What The Bible Says About The End Time*, College Press, "A budding tree, whatever its specie, is a sign that 'spring has sprung' and 'summer is nigh.' Thus He was telling His disciples that when they should see the things He had enumerated, they should know the fall of Jerusalem was at hand." The signs of Jerusalem's destruction and God's judgment of the Jewish establishment (the rule of Herod and the rule of the High Priest and the Pharisees) will be as easily recognizable as the signs that summer is drawing near. Matthew records it, ". . . when you see all these things you know that he is near, at the very gates" (Mt. 24:33)—Luke's parallel verse says, ". . . when you see these things take place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. . . ." (Lk. 21:31). When the signs were seen, Jesus' followers would know that the Son of man was at the gates of Jerusalem with His "army" for judgment. They would know that the kingdom of God had come in its power and destroyed the usurpation of the wicked husbandmen who tried to take the kingdom ("vineyard") for themselves. Paul wrote to encourage Hebrew Christians not to go back to Judaism (in the book of Hebrews), but to hold fast to Christianity, "and so much more as they were seeing the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). What "Day" could Jewish Christians see approaching? The answer is, of course, the approaching destruction of Judaism and Jerusalem—certainly not the Second Coming of Christ. Their "redemption" would be the breaking of the strangle-hold of Judaism from the throat of the infant Church, allowing it to survive the Judaizers.

"This generation shall not pass away till all these things take place," writes Matthew. Luke says, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all has taken place." The first thing the careful student will do is compare the same usage of the word generation in Mt. 11:16; 12:41; 23:35-36; cf. Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27. "Generation" does not mean "race" as some have thought. It plainly means a life-span of some 35-40 years. "All these things. . . ." refers back to all the tribulations predicted from Mt. 24:4 through Mt. 24:34, from Mk. 13:5 through Mk. 13:30 and from Luke 21:8 through Luke 21:32. Notice the significant and continued use of "these" (contemporary things) all the way through the afore mentioned sections. But after Mt. 24:34 and Mk. 13:30 and Lk. 21:32 Jesus begins using "that" to refer to His Second Coming when *heaven and earth* is to "pass away."

Summarizing, it is clear that all Jesus has predicted in His Olivet Discourse up to this point applies strictly to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism. Note the following points:

- a. "All these things. . . ." indicates *all* which He has said *prior* is said of the destruction of Jerusalem.
- b. Up to this point in the discourse, Jesus says everything that is to happen is to happen in those "days" (*plural*). Everything after this point (after Mt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30; Lk. 21:32) is in that "day" (*singular*). The phrase, "that day" (*singular*) is a widely used phrase in the New Testament to speak of the end of the world and judgment.
- c. The conjunction "But" in Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32; Lk. 21:34 is a definite word separating that which has been predicted earlier and able to be known, from that which follows the conjunction which cannot be known by signs.

SECTION 4

Portends the Second Coming (21:33-38)

³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 "But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; ³⁵for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. ³⁶But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man."

37 And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. ³⁸And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

21:33-36 World's End Heralded: Jesus makes a transitional statement by saying, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (21:33). The terrible destruction predicted of Jerusalem and Judaism shocked their Jewish mentality. It was as if the world was coming to an end! So Jesus is saying, "Indeed, the world *is* going to come to an end (Heaven and earth *will* pass away)—however, the destruction of Jerusalem is *not* the end of the world" Jesus is emphasizing that His words concerning the destruction of Jerusalem will not pass away—they will be fulfilled. Every promise He made, every prediction He made came to pass no matter how incredible it may have seemed to the Jewish mentality.

Then, as Matthew and Mark record, He said, "But of that day (passing away of heaven and earth) and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32).

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From that statement onward Jesus gave one illustration after another to re-enforce His warning that *no one* would be able to know when He would return to destroy both heaven and earth. If this knowledge is excluded from angels and the Incarnate Son, how do present-day eschatology experts presume to be able to figure it out from Scriptures which even Jesus and the Jews had in their day? Was Jesus, with all His wisdom, unable to interpret Daniel, chapters 7 through 12, while modern-day dispensationalists are? To say that Jesus simply did not know the year or day of the month and the exact minute, but that He did tell us certain signs to look for and then know that it is near, makes this whole context ridiculous! If Jesus knew the time of the end of the world but declared He would not (or could not) tell it, the temptation to read into His every statement some subtle prediction as to the exact time would be almost overwhelming. Not only does Jesus not predict the time of the end, He cannot because God did not reveal it to Him while He was on earth. There is no excuse for anyone trying to predict the time of the Second Coming when we understand that even Jesus Himself did not know. The most important thing about eschatology is the emphasis on the *certainty* of the end of this world and of judgment (cf. Acts 17:30-31). There are some times and seasons which God has reserved for only Himself to know (cf. Acts 1:7). *Where* and *when* the rotten universe needs dealing with, there the Lord will come and deal with it. Where it needs dealing with is all over! When it needs dealing with, only He knows. Jesus never spoke of His final coming in terms of *time* or specific *place*, but in terms of *condition*. Men will try to exploit the Word of God and the faith of believers for their own greedy ends by telling everyone they know when the time of His coming will be. For emphasis we insert here a brief résumé of the remainder of Jesus' discourse on the end of the world as recorded by Matthew and Mark:

- a. It is as if Jesus had said, "Let me illustrate. . . ." for the remainder of this entire discourse (from Mt. 24:37 through Mt. 25:46; including Mk. 13:34-37) is a series of parables to repeat the *unexpectedness* of the end of the world. Note the following emphasis:
 - (1) Mt. 24:36 ". . . of that day and hour, *no one knows*. . . ."
 - (2) Mt. 24:37-39 "... as the days of Noah... *they did not know*. . . ."
 - (3) Mt. 24:42 ". . . watch . . . for *you do not know*. . . ."
 - (4) Mk. 13:35 ". . . watch . . . for *you do not know*. . . ."
 - (5) Mt. 24:44 ". . . at an hour *you do not expect*. . . ."
 - (6) Mt. 24:50 ". . . when *not expected* . . . when *not known*. . . ."
 - (7) Mt. 25:13 ". . . you *know neither* the day nor the hour. . . ."
 - (8) Mt. 25:19 ". . . after a *long time*. . . ."
 - (9) Mt. 25:31 ". . . *when* the Son of man comes. . . ."
 - (10) Lk. 21:34 ". . . and that day come *upon you suddenly* like a snare. . . ."

Jesus summarizes all the warnings and exhortations to faithfulness and "watchfulness" before He gives all the parabolic illustrations. Luke records that summarization and omits the parables. Jesus said the day the world ends will "spring shut" on mankind like a trap. So He warns those who believe Him to keep themselves from excessive attention to this world as if it is all the world there is ever going to be. Let no one be "weighed down" with worldiness or they shall be caught in the trap when it is suddenly "tripped." The Greek word *kraipale* is translated, "dissipation" and means literally, "headache" or the "stupor and hangover which comes from drunkenness." The word "drunkenness" is the Greek word *methe* which in English is combined with certain suffixes and becomes, "methanol, methane, methyl, methylene," all having to do with a form of alcohol. The word "cares" is the Greek word *merimnais*. It is the same word Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:25-34), translated "anxious" and means "divided in mind." Jesus is saying that worry and divided loyalty is as unbecoming as revelling and drunkenness in light of the unexpectedness of the end of the world. An attitude of prayer (total dependence on God), resistance toward sin, and faithful stewardship in doing the Lord's work is the "watchfulness" Jesus says prepares the believer to "stand before the Son of man" when He finally returns. The parables of Jesus in Matthew and Mark clearly indicate the following conditions when the end comes suddenly:

- a. "As the days of Noah" illustrates the end will come at a time of normalcy, Mt. 24:37-42.
- b. Parable of the Householder illustrates God expects each human being to be doing His work, but many will be "asleep," Mk. 13:34-37.
- c. Parable of the Thief at Night illustrates God is not going to signal the world ahead of time when He is coming, Mt. 24:43-44.
- d. The Parable of the Wise and Wicked Servants illustrates that some will be ready for the Master's return because they are *always* ready, while others will believe He is delayed and continue to exploit their fellow servants, Mt. 24:45-51.
- e. The Parable of The Ten Virgins illustrates that some are always prepared for the Bridegroom's coming, while others give no concern to prepare to meet Him, Mt. 25:1-13.
- f. The Parable of the Talents illustrates the need for faithful use of the blessings God has given in proper preparedness for the end of the world, Mt. 25:14-30.
- g. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats illustrates the way to prepare for His coming and the Judgment is to be found practicing love for the needy in the affairs of every-day living, Mt. 25:31-46.

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On the one hand there will be some who scoff at the very promise of His return and the end of the world (II Pet. 3:8-10). On the other hand there will be some who will be constantly saying they know when it will be, saying, "Lo, here, or Lo, there," (Lk. 17:23). But the true disciple of Christ will not be seduced by either miscalculation because he pays attention to what the Bible really says—no one knows, therefore, be constantly "watchful."

21:37-38 Worshipers Eagerly Hearing: Luke now summarizes the public part of the last week. Every day Jesus came to the temple to teach, great crowds of eager people came early each morning to hear Him. He taught on Monday and Tuesday, and went out every night and lodged "on the mount called Olivet" which probably means in Bethany at the home of friends (Martha, Mary and Lazarus, or, Simon the Leper). After Tuesday evening when He went out to the Mount of Olives and delivered the discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, He probably never entered the temple as a public teacher again. Matthew 26:1-2 indicates the discourse on Jerusalem's destruction ended Tuesday evening, "two days" prior to the Passover supper. Mark 15:42 clearly says that Jesus was crucified on Friday ("the day of Preparation"), so Passover was on Thursday that week. We have no record of what took place on Wednesday. No doubt the Jewish rulers were making final arrangements with Judas to betray Jesus when they came to arrest Him. Jesus had probably retired to some place away from the busy Jerusalem—probably even away from Bethany—where He and His disciples could be completely alone. He may have taught them some of the "things not written" (Jn. 20:30-31) in the gospel records. There were probably crowds of eager worshipers sadly disappointed that Wednesday morning when Jesus did not appear.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why do you give to the Lord's work? Why should you give?
2. If giving only what is "left over" is not pleasing to God, what should one give?
3. Do you believe this widow gave everything she had between her and starvation? If God wanted you to do that, could you? Does He?
4. After reading the statements of Jesus prior to the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, and after reading the Jewish traditions about the Messianic age, what do you think your reaction would have been about "not one stone left upon another"?
5. If Jesus' warning about not being frightened at "wars and rumors of wars" was concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., what about all the "tribulation and rapture" literature being published today?

6. Was the gospel preached to the whole world before the destruction of Jerusalem?
7. When was the "time allotted to the Jews"? When will the times "of the Gentiles" be fulfilled? When will "all Israel be saved"? Are you an Israelite?
8. Have you read the Old Testament passages using phrases about "sun and moon" being darkened in connection with the fall of empires? Do you think this is legitimate literary vehicle? Do you think Jesus might use them about Jerusalem's fall?
9. What are the signs preceding the Second Coming and the End of the World? When is it going to happen?
10. How should the believer prepare himself for the end of the world?

ESCHATOLOGY

Non-Biblical and Biblical—A Brief

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Convention, 1977

INTRODUCTION

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Eschatology is from Greek, *eschatos*, last, and *logia*, knowledge or study. Eschatology is: a study of last things, i.e., studying what the Bible says about the end of this world and the 2nd Advent of Christ, judgment, etc.
- B. There are many differing eschatological theories in the religious world today. Postmillennialism; Premillennialism; Dispensationalism; Amillennialism; each one of these having different theories.
- C. We are going to deal with the general subject rather than with any specific theory.

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT

- A. A man's eschatology inevitably affects his:
 1. Hermeneutics
 2. Politics
 3. Evangelism
 4. Fellowship (Unity)
 5. And, as a result of the above, his Ethics
 6. We shall amplify this later in the study.
- B. The Bible says a great deal about eschatology.
 1. The eschatology of the Old Testament ("last things") refers mainly to the last of the Old Testament dispensation and the coming of Christ and the church.
 2. The eschatology of the New Testament refers mainly to the Second Coming of Christ.
 3. Most New Testament books have references to His Second Coming/Judgment.

DISCUSSION

I. ERRONEOUS ESCHATOLOGY

- A. The Late Great Planet Earth
 1. "The nation of Israel cannot be ignored; we see the Jews as a miracle of history . . . have survived as a distinct race . . . can trace their continuous unity back nearly 4000 years" pg. 45, etc.
Answer: Who is a Jew? (Rom. 2:28-29). Who is Israel? (Gal. 6:15-16). Jacob Gartenhaus, president of International Board of Jewish Missions, born in Austria and educated in rabbinical schools there, says: "No Jew today can trace his ancestry back beyond two or three hundred years" *Christianity Today*, 3-13-70.

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There are only 3 million people in Israel today and 12% of those are Arabs; 3% are Christians. There are more Jews in New York city than in Israel.

The government of Israel today cannot even decide who a legal Jew is. Is Sammy Davis, Jr. a Jew? Will Jerry Lewis take up residence in Israel? Unlikely they will do so willingly!

2. Hal Lindsey predicts the return of the Messiah in 1988. “. . . within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place . . .” pg. 54. He says in his booklet *Homo Sapiens, Extinction or Evacuation*, pg. 20, “You are the generation seeing these things; you are the generation which is not going to see physical death. I expect one day in my life to be physically called to see the Lord in the air, without seeing death.”

Answer: I would like to have that assurance but I hesitate to jeopardize my credibility with such absolute predictions in view of so many other absolute predictions missed.

3. By 1988 the Jewish Temple and reinstitution of Jewish sacrifices will have to be accomplished (pgs. 54-57).

Answer: This contradicts the teachings of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews as to the abrogation of the Jewish system of sacrifices and the finality of the Christian system.

4. In his attempt to make Russia and Egypt the object of Daniel 11 (kings of north and kings of south) he says Cush means “black man” in Hebrew (pg. 13-14 of *Homo Sapiens*). One Hebrew lexicon (Young’s) out of scores of others gives “black” as a meaning of the Hebrew word Cush. All other lexicons give another Hebrew word as the word used for “black.”

Answer: Daniel 11 very evidently refers to the history of the Seleucids prior to the First Coming of the Messiah.

5. On page 112 Lindsey talks of the False Prophet he says is predicted in Rev. 13:11-18 and thinks the False Prophet will be from the tribe of Dan.

Answer: The 12 tribes of Jews in Revelation 7 which so many think apply to the restored Jews in Israel do not even include the tribe of Dan!

6. On page 139 Lindsey says I Cor. 15:50 teaches that Christians cannot inherit the Kingdom of God in the type of bodies we now have—flesh and blood. However, he says, the gospels and the Old Testament teach there will be certain people who *will* inherit for a time the Kingdom of God in bodies of flesh and blood. And this is going to be the millennial kingdom ruled over by Christ here on earth!

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Answer: Does God contradict Himself? Is His Spirit the author of a confusing revelation?

7. There are *many* more exegetical and hermeneutical errors in this book and his other books. We cannot deal with them all in this study.

B. Seventh-Day Adventists (*Signs of the Times*)

1. Following Ussher's chronology William Miller interpreted the 2300 days of Daniel as 2300 years and predicted Christ would return to earth in 1843. That didn't happen so they set Oct. 22, 1844. That didn't happen, so they said Christ passed from one section of heaven to another in 1844 to perform a work known as the "investigative judgment."
2. Their view of the 1000 years of Rev. 20: "During the one thousand years the earth lies desolate; Satan and his angels are confined here; and the saints, with Christ, sit in judgment on the wicked preparatory to their final punishment."

C. Jehovah's Witnesses (*Watchtower*)

1. "There is another way that helps confirm the fact that we are living in the final few years of this 'time of the end.'" (Dan. 12:9). The Bible shows that we are nearing the end of a full 6000 years of human history. . . . According to reliable Bible chronology, Adam and Eve were created in 4026 B.C.E.

4026 B.C.E. to 1 B.C.E.....	4025 years
1 B.C.E. to 1 C.E.	1 year
1 C.E. to 1968 C.E.....	<u>1967 years</u>

Total to autumn 1968 5993 years

2. "This would leave only seven more years from the autumn of 1968 to complete 6000 full years of human history. That seven-year period will evidently finish in the autumn of the year 1975." Quoted from *Awake* dated Oct. 1968.
 3. They predicted Christ came to earth in 1914, *invisibly!*
- ### C. Oswald J. Smith, in his book, *Is the Antichrist at Hand?* said:
1. "I have been studying with interest . . . the prophetic writings of . . . diligent students of the Bible. . . . Of all . . . those who have undertaken to work out the chronological forecast, there is not one who sets any date beyond 1934. The earliest suggested by these writers is 1928."
 2. "If our chronology is correct, it means that all these things, including the Great Tribulation, the revival of the Roman Empire, the reign of the Antichrist and the Battle of Armageddon, must take place before the year 1933."

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D. Some Other Date setters:

1. Augustine calculated the end of human history would be about 650 A.D.
2. Then eschatology buffs focused on the year 1000 A.D.
3. Then the Second Coming was predicted for 1044, 1065, and other dates.
4. I. M. Holdeman, pastor First Baptist Church of New York, said in 1911, “. . . the hour is ripe for the moment when the Lord shall descend and gather His Church to Himself.”
5. W. E. Blackstone, in his book, *Jesus Is Coming*, printed in 1898, said, “. . . His coming, the rapture, is near.”
6. In January, 1963, a well-known Bible teacher in So. California entitled an article “Jesus Will Come in 1968!”
7. On April 17, 1971, the Minneapolis Star carried a review of a book, *God, History and the End of the World*, in which Kenneth Aune, the author, claims that in March, 1990, will come the battle of Jerusalem, the return of Jesus Christ, and the battle of Armageddon.
8. May 10, 1974—an Israeli tour guide (see *Christian Standard*, Ed. 8-18-74)

II. EFFECT OF ERRONEOUS ESCHATOLOGY

A. Confusion and Ridicule

1. The non-christian world looks at the multitude of different predictions.
 - a. It scorns and ridicules Christianity and the Bible and the Church because every date set in the past (set by apparently sincerely convinced prophecy scholars) has been wrong!
 - b. It asks, Is there any truth to the Bible at all; if so, which religious group has the truth—they all differ on one of the most important doctrines of the Bibles, the end of time.
2. Even Christians are prompted to become disillusioned and suspicious of their Bible teachers when faced with the errors and confusion.

B. Erroneous Hermeneutics and Wresting the Scriptures

1. The theory of Premillennialism and Dispensationalism asserts that Christ came to earth for the purpose of setting up His kingdom. Quite by surprise, He was rejected by the Jews, however, and established the church instead. When He returns, He will allegedly raise only the righteous dead, after which He will restore national Israel, sit upon David's literal throne in Jerusalem and subsequently reign for 1000 years. After this, the resurrection of the wicked dead and the final judgment are supposed to occur.

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2. This violates proper hermeneutics because:
 - a. It reflects upon the integrity of Bible prophecy by implying that the Jewish rejection of Christ was a miscarriage in God's plan. However, the Old Testament clearly foretold that rejection (Isa. 53:1ff.; Jn. 12:37-38; Psa. 118:22-23; Mt. 21:46, etc.).
 - b. It denies plain Bible teaching concerning the establishment of the kingdom in the first century (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-4; Acts 2:16-17; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:4, 6, 9).
 - c. It suggests that the church was not a part of God's eternal purpose, but only an interim (parenthesis) emergency measure (Eph. 3:10; Rev. 13:8; Acts 20:28).
 - d. It denies that Christ is now seated on David's throne (Zech. 6:12-13; Heb. 8:1; Lk. 1:32-33; Acts 2:30; Rev. 3:21).
 - e. It denies that we are in the last days (Acts 2:16-17), and that Christ's next coming will end this world . . . (I Cor. 15:24; Lk. 17:26-30).
 - f. It teaches, contrary to the Bible, that Christ will come again to deal with sin through a Jewish economy (Heb. 9:28).
 - g. It affirms, contrary to Scripture, that there will be two literal resurrections from the dead, 1000 years apart (Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
 - h. It denies the *expressed* symbolic nature of the book of Revelation by literalizing its figures (Rev. 1:1; 20:1-6).
 - i. It denies that through the redemptive work of the First Coming of Christ *only*, must Jew and Gentile become "one" (Gal. 3:1ff.; Eph. 2:11-22, etc.).
 - j. It denies that "Zion" of the Old Testament Prophets had its fulfillment in the New Testament church (cf. Heb. 12:22).

C. Unjust Politics

1. Oswald T. Allis in an article in *Christianity Today*, entitled, "Israel's Transgression in Palestine," Dec. 24, 1956, made an ethical evaluation of the Zionist/U.N. partitioning of Palestine.
2. The Zionists appeal to Gen. 18:18 to prove the Jews should claim sovereignty of Palestine. BUT DOES THIS SCRIPTURE GIVE THE ISRAELI A CLEAR TITLE TO PALESTINE? *NO!*
 - a. This promise was conditioned upon obedience. The Jews have disobeyed God from the days of Moses even to the rejection of the Messiah.
 - b. Any restoration of the Jews was conditioned upon repentance (Deut. 30:1-10).

Any return to a Jewish economy to seek the Lord would place them in a position "impossible to repent" (cf. Heb. 6 & 10).

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- c. The dispersion of the Jews and the taking of their place from them was a punishment from God (Mt. 21:43; 24:2; Lk. 21:24).
- d. Jesus and His apostles predicted the end of the Jewish economy and nationalism (Jn. 4:23; Lk. 4:23-29; Eph. 3:1-13, etc.).
- e. There is little spiritual difference between the Jews of America and the Jews of Palestine. A believing Jew is today as near heaven in the U.S., where 5 million of his fellow Israelites now live and apparently expect to continue to live, as if he were in Jerusalem. An unbelieving Jew is just as far from Heaven in Jerusalem as he would be in New York or London.
- e. The attempt to restore the Jews to Palestine has proved to be unjust in itself and highly dangerous to the peace of the world. Palestine did not belong to the British. It did not and does not belong to the U.N. The persecution of the Jews by the Nazis and now by the Russians is unjust. But allowing the Jews to take possession of a large part of Palestine and to force hundreds of thousands of Arabs out of it is an equally grievous wrong.

D. Division and Schism

1. Christians may have widely divergent views in regard to the Second Coming of Christ.
2. All views must be submitted to the crucible of proper hermeneutics.
3. But division comes when the particular view is overemphasized to such an extent that it becomes a "test of fellowship."
4. And this continues to be made such a test of fellowship by churches, colleges, and individuals.
5. It also becomes a heresy when it draws people away from the church (Armstrongism, J.W.s, etc.).

E. Evangelism

1. It tends to stifle evangelism because it majors in prophecy dates, charts, signs, etc., and minors in the plan of salvation given in the New Testament.
2. It tends to unethical, scare-tactic, pressure evangelism.
3. Many use the "signs of the times" (the phrase is used only once in the Bible, Mt. 16:3, and referred to His *first* coming, not His 2nd) *to bring believers into line, and convert hard-case unbelievers.*
4. This approach seems to say that what is really important is to be in good shape at that particular point in time when Christ appears about to return. It's the old I-don't-want-to-be-caught-in-there-when-Jesus-returns syndrome. It suggests in a veiled way

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that the mark we get on our ethical report card is the mark we happen to receive on the pop quiz given at the Parousia rather than the cumulative grade for the entire course.

Jesus said, “. . . occupy till I come” (Lk. 19:13). He did not say, “Only be found occupying when I come.”

F. Some very extreme views connected with eschatology:

1. “Russia with all of her current satellites and all she might acquire in the future, will not be able to successfully invade Israel. ISRAEL IS INVINCIBLE UNLESS GOD IS VULNERABLE,” *Maranatha Trumpet*.
2. “Christ will not come back to the earth until the Jewish people ask Him to come back. . . . This is the basis of the Second Coming of Christ. . . . Satan knows that once Christ returns his career will be finished. . . . He also understands that Christ will not come back until the Jews ask Him to come back. If Satan can succeed in destroying all the Jews before they have a chance to ask Christ to come back, Christ will not come back and Satan will be safe. That is why Satan is in an all-out campaign to destroy the Jews. . . . The power of the Second Coming of Christ is very much in the hands of Israel.” *The Chosen People*, May 1975.
3. “This false Messiah will fool the Jews by doing miracles through the devil who will have entered his body in the middle of the 7 years. At this point in time, the Jews will look in the Bible to see if this man comes out of the predicted blood line of David. The Jews will find that this line or family tree ends with Christ (since he was killed and had no children). The Jews will also discover that the prophecies about the true Messiah fit only Christ. When the Jews have finally repented of their misconception about Christ, the world will see the appearance of Jesus Christ in person who will come in power and force to establish a Kingdom of Peace to last 1000 years on this present earth. The Jews will finally have their promised kingdom which in the final analysis, fulfills Old Testament promises to the Jews.” An unsigned paper in the author’s files.

III. ESSENTIAL ESCHATOLOGY

A. Certainty of His Coming

1. The most important thing about biblical eschatology is its emphasis on the certainty of the end of this world order, the Coming of Christ, and judgment.
2. “The Coming Judge,” by Seth Wilson, pub. *Christian Standard*, 4-12-58: “He (Jesus) is far more than a prophet in the past.

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He is a power in the present. And He is the most certain and significant of all the prospects for the future!"

3. There is only one way to be certain Jesus is Coming Again—that is to take His word for it. He promised it and His promises are *authenticated* by His resurrection from the dead.

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given *assurance* to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

THE ONLY SIGN OR ASSURANCE WE NEED THAT HE IS COMING AGAIN IS HIS RESURRECTION. THAT ASSURANCE WILL CALL MEN TO REPENTANCE.

The eyewitnessed, empirically verified, historically authenticated resurrection is *all-sufficient* testimony to His Second Coming. Human predictions about "signs of the times" are subject to all the enigma and vagary of speculation.

4. Jesus promised His return: Matt. 16:27; 24:30b; 24:37-42; 24:43-51; 25:1-13; 25:14-31; 26:64; Lk. 17:26-30; 19:11-27.
5. The angels promised His Return: Acts 1:11.
6. The apostles promised His Return: I Thess. 4:16; Acts 3:20-21; I Pet. 1:7; 5:4; II Pet. 3:3-4; James 5:7; Heb. 9:28; I Jn. 2:28; Rev. 1:7; I Cor. 1:7; 4:5; 11:26; 15:23; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:4; I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-18; 5:1-4, 23; II Thess. 1:7-10; 2:1-8; I Tim. 6:14-15; II Tim. 4:1-8; Titus 2:13.

B. The Time of His Coming

1. "But of that day and hour *no one knows*, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32-33). THE TRUTH OF THAT STATEMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN VERIFIED BY THE SPECULATORS OF THE PAST WHO WERE SURE THEY KNEW FROM THE "SIGNS OF THEIR TIMES."
2. He will come "as a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2-3; Mt. 24:27-51; 25:1-13; II Pet. 3:8-10). There will be no preliminary announcements ahead of His coming! He will come unexpectedly—suddenly!
3. *No one will miss knowing* when He comes—there will be *no secret* coming or rapture. The next time Jesus comes it will be with a shout and trumpet blast to be heard by all the living and the dead—*every eye* shall see Him (cf. Rev. 1:7; Mt. 24:26-31; I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16).
4. THE EMPHASIS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THE NEED TO *BE READY AT ALL TIMES*! Setting dates; making lists of "signs of the end"; speculative and divisive dogmas devitalize and weaken this readiness!

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5. He is coming when people will be doing the normal things of life, "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (Mt. 24:37-38).
6. There will be no abnormal, extra-ordinary "signs" pointing to His "soon" coming. "The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt. 24:44).

C. Particulars Concerning His Coming

1. Seth Wilson, *ibid.*: "The Lord has revealed only a few particulars . . . of the great events which will take place when He comes. No doubt there are many things in store for us that we have not been told because we could not grasp and appreciate them now. Very likely some of the things predicted will not happen as we imagine them."
2. The dead will be raised (I Thess. 4:16; Jn. 5:28-29).
3. Those alive will be changed into bodies fitting them for their eternal destiny (Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 15:52-54; Rom. 8:23-25).
4. The redeemed will (the resurrected and changed—all together) be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:17).
5. The world and its carnal works will be burned up, melted, (II Pet. 3:11-13).
6. A crown of glory will be given to the faithful (II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 5:4).
7. Christ, with His angels, will execute judgment upon all men (II Tim. 4:1; Jude 14-15; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Jn. 5:22-29; II Cor. 5:10, etc.).
8. Many will be rejected who thought they were saved (Mt. 7:21-23; 22:13-14; Lk. 13:25-27, etc.).
9. The opportunity for salvation will be forever closed (Lk. 13:25-28).
10. There will be grief and terror in the hearts of many because they are unprepared to meet Him (Mt. 24:30, 50, 51; 25:30, etc.).

IV. EFFECT OF ESSENTIAL ESCHATOLOGY

A. Purity of Living

1. "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting . . . for the coming of the day of God . . ." (II Pet. 3:11-12).
2. ". . . we know that when he appears we shall be like him, . . . and every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (I Jn. 3:2-3).
3. MORE EMPHASIS ON THE CERTAINTY OF HIS COMING AND ON THE IMMINENT URGENCY OF IT (DAILY, HOURLY URGENCY) WOULD PROMOTE MORE GODLINESS THAN ALL THE PROMOTIONAL GIMMICKS AND ENTERTAINMENT SESSIONS OF ALL THE CHURCHES PUT TOGETHER!

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4. *More sermons are needed on Judgment, The End of the World, The Second Coming.*

B. Encouragement For Endurance of Trials and Tests

1. “. . . we who are alive . . . shall be caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. . . . Therefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thess. 4:17-18).
2. “But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” (I Pet. 4:13).
3. CHRISTIANS WHO TRUST THAT CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN TO RIGHT ALL WRONGS, TO VINDICATE ALL COMMITMENTS, TO JUDGE ALL SECRETS . . . TAKE COURAGE AND ENDURE, CONFIDENT THAT CHRIST WILL VINDICATE THEM *PERFECTLY!*

C. Evangelism

1. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men . . .” (II Cor. 5:10-11).

THE REMAINDER OF THAT CHAPTER SPEAKS OF BEING AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST.

2. “He has commanded all men everywhere to repent, in that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world . . .” (Acts 17:31).
3. JESUS MAY COME TODAY! WE MUST PREACH THE WORD WITH ALL URGENCY IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON.

EVERY MAN AND WOMAN MUST AT LEAST HEAR AND BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND!

4. “It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, *each with his work . . .*” (Mk. 13:34).

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master *when he comes shall find so doing*” (Mt. 24:45-46).

D. Contemporaneity

1. Michael Green in an article in *Christianity Today*, 1-1-65 says: “I believe that in this biblical doctrine of the Christian hope (the Second Coming) we have an intelligible answer to the modern quest for purpose in the world.”
2. Quest for Personal Identity: Man is in quest of personal identity. What is he worth? What does he matter? What is his destiny? That God is Coming Again in His Son to consummate His great redemptive work for *man* (the end of God’s whole cosmic

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scheme) in a *personal* appearance is a message that is relevant in our depersonalized age!

3. Quest for Realism: Man is skeptical in our age of any theory of regeneration or redemption of society or the cosmos which is unsupported by hard facts.

Is the Christian doctrine of a returning, redeeming Christ realistic in the 20th century? . . . Is the Christian optimism that "all will be well in the end" justifiable? Or is it a fantasy, a fairy tale like all the schemes of men?

4. The Christ who came and who will come, just because of this, IS COMING TO US DAY BY DAY, CHALLENGING US CONSTANTLY FOR AN ENTRANCE INTO OUR LIVES. . . . SEEKING OUR FELLOWSHIP!
5. God's purpose is to demonstrate NOW, in this world, this transitory world, the beauty, power, holiness, and permanence of the age to come. He who has called us out of this world is Holy. He who will come for us is Holy. In the meantime, He has given us His Holy Spirit to work out in our lives something of the character of the age to come.

CONCLUSION

- I. ERRONEOUS ESCHATOLOGY BRINGS REPROACH UPON GOD'S WORD AND HIS CHURCH: IT CREATES DIVISION: IT DISCOURAGES: IT HINDERS PRODUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY.
- II. ESSENTIAL ESCHATOLOGY DOES NOT CREATE DIVISION: PROMOTES PURITY OF LIVING: GIVES ENCOURAGEMENT: URGES EVANGELISM: FILLS THE NEEDS OF CONTEMPORARY MAN.
- III. THE LORD DOES WANT US TO KNOW SOME THINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE .

He wants us to know that Christ is coming personally to this world of time and space again just as certainly as He came forth from the the dead in a time-space event.

He wants us to know there is a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" beyond this world which will be destroyed completely.

Therefore let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord . . . for we know our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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A LIMITED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE AREA OF ESCHATOLOGY

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2. *The Time Is at Hand*, by Jay Adams, The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co. (a commentary on Revelation proposing "Realized Millennialism")
3. *Worthy Is The Lamb*, by Ray Summers, Broadman Pub. (a commentary on Revelation from amillennial viewpoint)
4. *The Meaning and Message of The Book of Revelation*, by E. A. McDowell, Broadman Pub. (a commentary on Revelation - amillennial)
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6. *Thinking Through Thessalonians*, by Wilbur Fields, College Press, pub. (see all the Special Studies in this book) (a commentary)
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8. *Prophecy & Premillennialism*, by James D. Bales, Bales, pub. (studies on New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies)
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2. "Signs Of Confusion," by Earl D. Radmacher, *Moody Monthly*, May 1974
3. "Why Eternity Must Follow the Second Advent," by Wick Broomall, *Christian News*, not dated
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7. "A Secret Rapture Considered," by Seth Wilson, *OBC Compass*, Oct. 1973

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(Acts 20:28-32)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Convention, 1978

INTRODUCTION

- I. There were both true and false prophets in the first century church.
 - A. The New Testament is replete with instructions and warnings about those who are to be listened to and not listened to.
 - B. The most frightening aspect of New Testament teaching on prophecy is that the false prophets will arise from *within the brotherhood of believers!*
- II. There was a special charismatic gift of prophecy given to some in the first century church.
 - A. That was given only by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (see lesson on Paul's Power to Give Charismatic Power).
 - B. This ceased (and was intended to cease) when the perfected church arrived (see lesson from last year's convention on Gifts, Miracles, by Butler), or when the apostles died.
- III. So, we will look at the phenomén of Modern Prophecy from these two conclusions.
 - A. Even when there were true prophets, not all who claimed to be prophets were to be followed . . . and
 - B. The New Testament indicates the miraculous gift of prophecy was to cease with the apostles deaths.

DISCUSSION

- I. Who are the Modern prophets and what are they prophesying?
 - A. Ever since the end of the apostolic age self-appointed prophets have been predicting and revealing messages from God (so they say).
 1. No two of them seem to agree on interpreting events or times.
 2. Hardly any of them agree doctrinally (except on charismatic gifts for today).
 3. There are hundreds of them just in the Midwest—let alone the other hundreds all over the world.
 4. I will deal with just a few because they are basically all alike—false!
 - B. Salem Kirban, author of *Guide to Survival*, and other books and films
 1. Rapture must occur 7 years before 2000 A.D., but there is a 4-year error in our calendar, therefore the Rapture is to be

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in 1989 and the Millennium begins in 1996 (after 7 years tribulation).

2. Then Mr. Kirban states, "However, nowhere in God's word does He tell us the exact date . . . for the Rapture."

C. David Webber, Pastor of Southwest Radio Church, Oklahoma City, Okla. and publisher of *The Gospel Truth*.

1. Refers to Gorge Orwell's *1984* for the prediction that by that date a world dictator would control all nations; refers to Hal Lindsey's book and to movies with "apocalyptic warnings" like *The Birds*, *Earthquake*, *The Omen* which "testify to these things which are soon coming upon the earth."
2. Mr. Webber says, "Scripture indicts ministers and pastors who refuse to investigate the signs of the time leading to Christ's return, and warn the unsaved to prepare, as being ignorant, hypocrites, and false prophets (Mt. 16:3; II Pet. 3:3-5)."
3. Mr. Webber's time table is: 1974-78 Jewish temple rebuilt; 1981-85 Beginning of the Tribulation; Beginning of the Kingdom age 1997-2001.

D. Morris Cerullo, World Evangelism, San Diego, Calif. (produced T.V. program "Masada")

1. Ezekiel's prophecy of the "dry bones" predicted the Nazi slaughter of 6 million Jews, and the survival of modern Israel.
2. This is the "beginning" "the *exact* summer season."
3. This "generation" that sees the birth of the nation of Israel. . . . is in the "summer season" (he cites Lk. 21:29-33).
4. "I tell you, I would not trade places with Moses, with Elijah, with any of the apostles. I would rather be alive today. This is the greatest moment of history, when the trumpet of God will sound, and your Lord and mine will come. . . ."
5. "When I was only 15 years old . . . God dealt with me in a vision in which I was caught up into the heavens and I stood as close to the glory of God as when Moses spoke face to face with Him. . . . The brightness of his glory moved from the place where He had stood, there were two holes in the shape of footprints left in the heaven through which I could see countless thousands of people going to hell without Christ. . . . In the vision I moved to stand in these open footprints . . . and my feet fit exactly where His had been. . . . I knew that God had called me to go to the multitudes of this world with the message of salvation. . . ."

E. Dr. Charles Taylor, Redondo Beach, Calif., author of *Get All Excited, Jesus is Coming Soon*.

1. First predicted the Rapture in 1975

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2. Then changed, saying, 1948 Israel established
 3. Makes "this generation" (Mt. 24:34) point of reference; a generation in the Bible is 35 years acc. to Job 42:16
 4. Thus the Rapture will be Sept. 25, 1976 (Feast of Trumpets and a Sabbath day)
 5. Millennium is to begin in 1983
- F. Joel Darby, Book Fellowship Tract, (Tract entitled, *Why All the Vultures*)
1. A new breed of vultures has appeared in Israel, a breed never seen before.
 2. They are multiplying at 3 times the normal rate in Israel.
 3. This is a sign of the end time, writes a former Rabbi Michael Esses, in his new book, *Next Visitor to Planet Earth*, pub. Logos, Plainfield, N.J. 07060.
 4. Whereas these "buzzards" normally lay one egg at a time, they are now laying FOUR!
 5. According to Reuters News Agency, Russia has bought large quantities of powerful archery equipment from the British, also draught horses from all over the world.
 6. At any rate the amazing multiplication of the buzzard population right now should warn any careless Christian to get busy and work. . . . God would not be off on His timing. . . . He would not provide for the vastly increased buzzard population NOW if the need for them was 10 or 20 years hence!
- G. Christian church people
1. *Christian Standard*, March 15, 1969, art. entitled "Crisis in the Middle East."
 - a. Applies Daniel's prophecies in ch. 11 to the Second Coming of Christ, suggesting that Armageddon may be within "the near future."
 - b. Applies Ezekiel 38-39 to return of the Jews to Palestine now and the immediate future.
 2. At a widely attended men's clinic in the late 1950's a college professor's prediction of Communist terror "Within 4 years we'll all be dead or wish to God we were!" was proclaimed.
 3. *The Exhorter*, a publication of Churches of Christ, Hammond, La., "With the amazing acceleration of human history in the last few years, we would expect to see the fulfillment of these prophecies (Zech. 14; as applied to Israel's return to Palestine, etc.) in a very short space of time." date of paper, January 1969

This is just a drop in the bucket: Billy Graham, David Wilkerson, Oral Roberts, Richard DeHahn, Pastor Pack, Bill Bright, Rev. Moon, Armstrongites, J.W.s, 7th Day Adventists, Mormons, on and on they go,

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disagreeing both in prophecies and doctrines.

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GIVE MILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO PROMOTE PEOPLE WHOSE MAIN EFFORTS ARE SPENT PREACHING AND PRINTING SUCH USELESS VERBIAGE.

II. Why are they prophesying thus?

A. There are some who mistakenly think such a *literal* view of the Old Testament Prophets and Revelation is equal to a fundamentalism.

1. "If we believe the Bible as the infallible and inspired word of God, then we must also believe that God has set a day before the literal return of Christ to the earth in which everyone will have to worship the Antichrist as God in order to get their code and number." from *The Midnight Cry*, pub. by Dr. Wm. F. Beirnes, Shoals, Indiana
2. "Numerous passages in the Bible predict the return of Israel to the land. It is difficult to find any doctrines taught more clearly or emphatically in God's word. Yet, many people have failed to accept this truth. They have either ignored these passages, or said that they were fulfilled in the return of the Jewish captivity from Babylon, or that they were figuratively fulfilled in the church." from *The Exhorter*, already cited
3. "He (God) made a covenant with Abraham, promising a large portion of the Middle East . . . for him and his descendants. The covenant is unconditional. . . . and we, knowing Him who made the promise, totally support the people and land of Israel in their God-given, God-promised, God-ordained right to exist. Any person or group of nations opposed to this right isn't just fighting Israel, but God and time itself." in the New York Times over the name of the American Board of Mission to the Jews, supported by 48 named churches.

B. Fascination with and psychological need for knowing the unknown

1. This has been true of people ever since the garden of Eden.
2. It was a problem with the first century church (Thessalonians, Corinthians, etc.).
3. Martin Gardner, reviewer of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, says, "Long having lost faith in science and politics, millions of Americans are now longing for a mystical breakthrough from the skies which will usher in the Age of Aquarius."
4. Many people are looking for God to solve the problems of the Christian who has to face an ungodly world by supernatural intervention rather than through hard, faithful discipleship.
 - a. Fascination with all these details of so-called Bible prophecies relieves people from the hard things in Christianity.
 - b. If we can believe that the main thrust of God's redemptive

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program is going to deal with circumstances (land, armies, temples, etc.) we may hope in that as His ultimate program.

c. BUT THE MAIN THRUST OF GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PROGRAM IS THE CHANGING OF THE NATURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

5. The essential elements of all the dispensational, pre-millennial systems may be found in the Jewish Apocryphal writings.
6. The New Testament tells us we do not need to know times or seasons which God has set in His own authority (2nd Coming, etc.). We do not need to know what type of resurrection body we will have. There are many things we do not need to know. . . .
7. C. S. Lovett, *Personal Christianity*, Baldwin Park, Calif. "The Holy Spirit has given us a unique method for unlocking the deeper truths. If, for example, you were reading *Lovett's Lights on Thessalonians*, the books that offer Paul's comments on antichrist and the rapture of the church (which I strongly believe in), you'd find your imagination set on fire. . . ."

C. Instant Evangelism

1. "The signs of our time indicate the days of this age are winding down, and God does not want us to be ignorant when the day of Christ's return is at hand. . . . We must be about the Father's business, urging the lost to be saved . . . before that terrible day of darkness falls upon the earth." from the *Midnight Cry* already cited.
2. "Unlike other missions, Jewish missions is not merely evangelistic. The purpose of missions in general is to evangelize and disciple. But Jewish missions is more so. Not only does Jewish missions seek to evangelize . . . it is also a prophetic ministry. . . ." *The Chosen People*, already cited.
3. Hal Lindsey's books appeal for urgent evangelism because "the time is short. . . ."
4. In some way or another, these prophets seem to think they can by-pass the plain urgings of Jesus to insist that people count the cost, that Christian discipleship should be based on conviction, not emotion.

They think that all these "count-downs" and "horror pictures" will persuade people to repent.

Revelation 9:20ff. plainly says that all the terrible things symbolized by the Trumpets (judgments upon the Roman empire) did not cause the rest of mankind to repent!

5. I was in a Christian Service Camp a few years ago (Guadalupe, N.M.) and a preacher was showing his slides of the Holy Land and preaching on the Rapture, etc., and 5 or six kids got so

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upset they started crying and making long distance phone calls to make sure their parents were home.

D. Zionism is politically chic!

1. Some people consider it a test of your relationship to Christ that you believe the Jews have a biblical right to Palestine.
2. We have already cited the quotation in II. A. 4.
3. *Time* magazine continually prints editorials and articles on the Jews returning to Palestine "Thus Judaism . . . and Israel, have a commanding moral claim to Jerusalem . . ." *Time*, 12-27-71.
4. U. S. Presidents from Truman to the present have been forced by powerful Jewish opinion to politically support something that although politically expedient, was actually unethical!
5. What really upsets me is the fact that most of our U. S. congressmen blasted their own countrymen for trying to protect the sovereign land of S. Vietnam against invasion by N. Vietnam (agreed to by treaty), and on the other hand acclaimed the U. N. partitioning of Palestine in 1948 to the Jews, forcing Palestinians out, as right.

E. Ego-trip, fame, gather a following (III John 9).

1. The scriptures indicate this as a motive for false teachers and false prophets.
". . . from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. . . ." (Acts 20:30).
2. The indication in I Corinthians 12-14 is that people were even using *bona fide* gifts of tongues and prophecy for ego-trips.
3. There are thousands and thousands of "itching-eared" people who do not want to endure sound doctrine and accumulate to themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths (II Tim. 4:1-5). THERE ARE EGO-HUNGRY PREACHERS WILLING TO EXPLOIT THESE ITCHING EARED PEOPLE TO MAKE LUCRATIVE LIVINGS AT IT!
4. Even the *People of God*, led by Moses David, use modern prophetism to recruit and obtain members and money, Bi-centennial Issue of *Que Sera, Sera* (would you help us with a donation, please!).

F. Money

1. One example; many others might be cited
2. Rex Humbard's Archives of Faith for Sinners
In anticipation of the *soon* coming of Christ, the rapture

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and the 7 years of Great Tribulation (during which it will not be easy for those who are left).

After Humbard and all other saved Christians have been raptured only unrepentant sinners will remain on earth.

Mr. Humbard will be on video tapes to tell them how to reach salvation. Just push a button, and he'll be there. The right to record a personal testimony to a maximum length of four handwritten pages is now being offered to anyone for a donation of \$100. These microfilmed testimonies will represent a reservoir of faith for those left behind. At the archives there will be a film explaining what has happened with the rapture, etc. The first one to record a personal testimony will be Johnny Cash . . . he will not have to pay the \$100 because he has contributed liberally in the past.

The date of the rapture, according to Humbard, is uncertain, but all those who have been born again know we are on the verge of the Lord's return. While it is true that no one knows the day or the hour, there is something on the inside of each believer that tells him the Lord is soon to return.

Mr. Humbard emphasized that the inclusion of names or testimonies in the archives was not a guarantee of salvation. . . .

"We're just fixing to memorialize some people who help us do the job."

3. Of course, the recent expose of the Armstrong fortunes reminds us that they got it from majoring in this kind of modern-day prophetism.

Granted, not all those who think they are prophets today are charlatans or ego-maniacs. Some of them probably would not even claim to be prophets but merely interpreters of Bible prophecies. This may be another subject for study altogether—however, it is interesting that practically all those who have claimed to receive revelations and prophecy, and those who give literal dispensational-pre-millennial interpretations to Bible prophecies AGREE on current events of history!

"And God told me to tell my partners that the moment they hear me say \$77 or \$777 or multiples of 7's, to act upon it quickly" Oral Roberts, *Abundant Life*, January 1978.

III. What God Says about Prophets

A. Biblical tests of a True Prophet

1. They speak ONLY in the name of God or Christ (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20).
 - a. False prophets may predict the future or work signs (Deut. 13).
 - b. Satan can do signs (II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-15).

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- c. God may allow a prophet to be self-deceived and to deceive sinful peoples as punishment (Ezek. 14:9-11).
 - d. This is not the *only* test because a false prophet may pretend to speak in the name of the Lord (Jer. 29:8-9).
 - e. *In the name of*, means, *by the authority of*.
 - f. We have not only the right but the obligation to challenge every alleged prophecy or prophet with the proposition that the ONLY AUTHORITATIVE WORD FROM GOD FROM NOW UNTIL THE END OF TIME IS CONTAINED IN THE 66 BOOKS OF OUR BIBLE!
 - g. Even authentic prophets can be deceived! (1 Kings 13).
2. They speak ONLY by revelation or inspiration.
- a. If prophets of biblical times practiced augury, sorcery, divination, they were rejected as false (Deut. 18:9-14).
 - b. Heathen magical practices were not practiced by true prophets of God.
 - c. Deceivers who prophesy lie (Ezek. 12:24; 22:28; Jer. 14:14; Micah 3:7, 11); they speak their *own heart*, not God's revelation (Jer. 23:16, 26; Ezek. 13:2).
 - d. True prophets receive *direct* revelations from Jehovah (Num. 12:6).
 - e. False prophets may claim visions and dreams (Deut. 13:1-5; Ezek. 14:9-11).
 - f. Modern day prophets appeal to soothsayers like Jeanne Dixon; scientists; military prognosticators; even to *Reader's Digest* and current events to validate their prophecies.

Examples:

The Midnight Cry (already cited): "The November 1976 *Reader's Digest* carries an interesting story related to our subject entitled 'Coming Soon; Electronic Money.' 'This (cashless society) is what both the Bible predicts and financial experts now affirm.'"

The Gospel Truth (already cited): "George Orwell in his book, 1984, predicted that by this date a world dictator would control all nations. Mr. Orwell may be proven to be a prophet with honor in this respect. . . .
"Financial experts predict that by 1980 . . . etc.
"A news release this past month stated . . . etc.
"President Valery Giscard D'Estaing of France said . . . etc.
"Henry Kissinger said . . . etc.
". . . it was the consensus of scientists who worked there (Kennedy Space Center) that if man did not destroy himself by the year 2000 . . . etc."

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Personal Christianity, VI. 17, No. 6, June 1977, C. S. Lovett

"Antichrist is in the world this moment! Who says so? Jeane Dixon, the well known Catholic soothsayer. She claims he will surface in the early 1980s. But do we consider her a true oracle of God? No way! Not all of her predictions come true. Nevertheless she has quite a record of accurate predictions when it comes to world rulers, such as . . ."

3. They were conscious of a definite call—they could not mistake it!

a. Moses (Ex. 4:10-12; Jer. 1:4-10; Amos 7:4-15).

b. Samuel (I Sam. 3:19-20).

c. Mrs. Oral Roberts, explaining God's calling her to:

" . . . Lord . . . I'd like to hear Your voice as Oral does. . . . So as I walked I prayed in the Spirit at length. I couldn't understand the prayer language coming over my tongue. It sounded Oriental to me . . . and the interpretation came back in my own language one line at a time. . . ."

'No, you will not hear My voice as others do. . . . I speak to him (Oral) in an audible voice but I will not speak to you audibly. . . . I will speak to you out of the everydayness of your life. . . .'" (*Abundant Life*, Jan. 1978)

d. Morris Cerullo: "Theresa (his wife) excused herself to tend to some sewing but was soon fast asleep on the couch. When I noticed that she had fallen asleep, I thought, Now that's strange! We just woke up from a good night's sleep!

I soon realized that God had placed that sleep upon her, . . . so that He might prepare the way for the supernatural visitation of His presence right there in my kitchen. . . ." Then God spoke to me. . . .

" . . . while I was in the back of a bus coming from a crusade . . . God had spoken to my heart . . . so forceful was God's visitation to me on that occasion, that I left the other members of the team and went to the very back of the bus and let God speak to my heart. . . ."

It is strange that all modern day prophets get their "calls" from God when no one else can verify it!

4. True prophets did not seek the office, they were chosen by God and spoke by divine compulsion.

a. Many of them resisted (Jer. 1:4-19; Ex. 3:10-12; Ezek. 3:12-15; Jonah 1:1-3).

b. Even when Paul told the Corinthians, "desire the spiritual gifts" he also told them that the Holy Spirit distributed His gifts (miraculous) according to His will . . . and not according to the wishes of men.

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5. The commission of the true prophet was authenticated by signs or miracles.
 - a. Ex. 4:1-21 . . . Moses
 - b. Joshua 3:7-13 . . . Joshua
 - c. I Sam. 12:16ff.
 - d. Miracles of Elijah and Elisha
 - e. Paul, Peter, and those upon whom they laid their hands,
 - f. signs and miracles may be copies or faked by false prophets
Deut. 13:1-5; Ex. 7:8-13; 7:20-22; 8:7; Mt. 24:24; Mk. 13:22; II Thess. 2:9.
6. The message of the True Prophet was always in harmony with the whole will of God which had been revealed up to that time.
 - a. Deut. 13:1-3 - could not contradict previous truth
 - b. I Kings 13 - true prophet would not have been deceived by old prophet if he had used this test.
 - c. Jer. 26 - leaders were going to kill Jeremiah because he predicted destruction of Jerusalem. Some elders remembered Micah years before predicted the same. . . . Jeremiah spared
 - d. I John 4:1-6
 - e. This harmony with revealed truth applies to all the doctrines of the Bible . . . not just predicted history.
 - f. Modern day prophets for the most part do not teach the full apostolic doctrine.

Billy Graham, for example, who interprets biblical prophecy and declares he is God's spokesman, said, "I used to believe that pagans in far-off countries were lost—were going to hell—if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that. . . . I believe that there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God—through nature, for instance—and plenty of other opportunities, therefore, of saying 'yes' to God."

"Graham once believed that Jews, too, were lost if they did not convert to Christianity. . . . Today Graham is willing to leave that up to God. . . ."

"I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics. . . . We only differ on some matters of later church tradition." *McCalls* magazine, January 1978

7. The message of the true prophet and the prophet himself was authenticated by historical fulfillments of his prophecies.
 - a. Deut. 18:21-22
 - b. Jer. 28:17
8. The moral character of the prophet and his prophecies must agree with God's full revelation.
 - a. False prophets tend to be ungodly and preach ungodly (both morally and theologically).

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b. Jer. 23:10-17

c. Matt. 7:15-20; II Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 1-23

B. We do not need modern day prophecies and prophets!

1. There is enough prophecy in the Bible, fulfilled in minute detail (Daniel, Isaiah, Revelation) to show that God is in control of history!

2. We do not need, beyond what is revealed in the Bible, to know future circumstances—because knowing the future of earthly history has nothing to do with our covenant relationship to God (I Jn. 3:1-3).

It is not circumstances that save or destroy, it is faith or lack of faith—regardless of circumstances.

3. The Bible is all sufficient.

a. "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

b. "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

C. Modern day prophets need to take warning from Jeremiah, ch. 23 and Ezekiel, ch. 13.

Excerpt from a Workshop on the Second Coming of Christ for the NACC, July 14, 1978, Oklahoma City, Okla., by Paul T. Butler.

ZIONISM (Restoration of a Jewish nation in the land of Palestine). Modern Zionism strictly political; never intended to exclude Palestinians (*Enc. Brit.* "Zionism").

A. Some little known historical facts about Zionism and modern Jews

1. Theodor Herzl, founder of political Zionism, was schizoid, given to frequent fits of melancholy and depression and threatened suicide several times. He spent vast sums of money bribing Turkish officials in order to gain the Sultan's approval of a Jewish settlement in Palestine.

Pauline, his first child, became a drug addict, had several men who left her, wound up overdosing and dying of drugs, at 40.

Hans, his son was manic depressive, treated by Freud who diagnosed an extreme Oedipus complex. Committed suicide on the day of Pauline's funeral.

Trude, married and became a mental case, her marriage broke down and she died after being an inmate of a number of mental institutions. . . . *The Hebrew Christian*, Winter, 1977, Vol. L, No. 4.

2. What about the Falashas? 50,000 black, East Central Africans who have practiced Judaism since 600 B.C., and who claim to be

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descendents of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. They observe all Jewish rites, sacrifices, and festivals except Hanukkah. . . . *Christianity Today*, 12-7-73, "Black Jews: A House Divided," pg. 52.

3. Most East-European "Jews" (Poles, Hungarian, Czech, etc.) are not really descendents of Israelites, but descendents of the Khazars, Caucasians who became converts or proselytes to Judaism about 900-1000A.D. The Khazars were "Gentiles" from south Russia! . . . *The Thirteenth Tribe*, by Arthur Koestler, Random House pub., (so well documented and important a book it was reviewed by Wall Street Journal)
4. No Jew today can trace his ancestry back beyond two or three hundred years. So how do we know for sure that they are really Jews (true Israelites according to the Old Testament and from the 12 tribes)? . . . *Christianity Today*, 3-13-70, Jacob Gartenhaus, "The Jewish Conception of the Messiah." (he was born in Austria and educated in rabbinical schools there).
5. CBS, "Sixty Minutes" program, 4-10-77:
 - a. As many people are leaving Israel to come to the U.S. as are going into Israel to live each day.
 - b. There are over 200,000 Jews in N.Y. City and many have come there recently from Israel.
 - c. Some Jews who have lived in Israel from its very beginning in 1948 have recently come to the U.S.
 - d. A taxi-driver in N.Y., who couldn't make a living in Israel, has made over \$100,000 in 3 years since coming to N.Y.
 - e. Why are they leaving? 30 years of war; no exemptions from army service; not enough space; inflation rate over 35%; strikes; bureaucracy; takes 5 year wait to get a telephone; corruption in government; income tax takes 65% of wage earner's living.
 - f. 1/10 of all Israeli citizens live outside the country.
6. The present Israeli government has made it unlawful to do Christian evangelism in that land. How will the millennium ever come about?

B. Zionism and the Bible

1. Repentance and obedience to God's commandments and prophecies was the *condition* upon which God promised to give the land of Palestine to the Jews in the Old Testament.

Significantly, God gave the Jews into the hands of their enemies a number of times when they disobeyed Him. They were taken *out* of Palestine and brought back a number of times.
2. The ultimate disobedience of the Jews was the rejection of God's Son, the Messiah (cf. Dan. 9:24 ". . . to finish transgression" and Mt. 23:29-39 ". . . may come all the righteous blood shed on earth . . . and your house is forsaken and desolate"; and Luke

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- 19:41-44 “. . . because you did not know the time of your visitation.”
3. Jesus predicted the dispossession of the Jews by God in His parables in Matt. 21 and 22.
 - a. King's marriage feast for his son . . . the king sent his troops (Rome's army, Mt. 24:15, “desolating sacrilege”) and destroyed those murderers.
 - b. The householder's vineyard. . . . “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.” This is the sentence the Jews pronounced upon themselves! (Mt. 21:33-41).
Then Jesus reinforced it, “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits thereof.”
 4. Jesus predicted the Jews would “. . . fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:24). The Old Testament era was the times of the Jews. The New Testament era is the times of the Gentiles. Judaism is a thing of the past!
 5. The apostle Paul, speaking of the Jews nationally, said that “God's wrath *came* (*ephtasen*, Gr. aor. past tense) upon them *to the end* (*eis telos*), or “*to completion*” (I Thess. 2:16). *Judaism cannot be revived*, although individual Jews may be saved if they accept the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). Dan. 9:27 calls the destruction of Jerusalem —the “*decreed end*.”
 6. Once the Messiah has come and completed His work, God has dispensed forever with a special *place* of worship (Jn. 4:21-24; Acts 17:24-25); any other *sacrifices* (Heb. 9:26; 10:12-14), etc.
 7. To populate Palestine with a theocracy of Judaism, reinstitute the Temple and its sacrifices, reconstitute a Jewish priesthood, would violate and contradict the very plain teaching of the New Testament that the church of Jesus Christ (composed of both Jew and Gentile on the same basis) is the primary object of God's redemptive work . . . and not the Jewish nation!
 8. The book of Galatians makes it plain that “in Christ” there are no more racial or social distinctions ever again (Gal. 3:26-29). If we are in Christ, we are Abraham's “offspring.” Or, to put it another way, a true “Jew” is one who is one inwardly, not genetically (Rom. 2:28-29). The true Israel of God is that which is a *new creation* (Gal. 6:15-16).
 9. True Zion is the church (Heb. 12:18-24).
 10. Judaism is the kingdom that was “shaken” and “removed” (Heb. 12:25-27).
 11. Christianity is the kingdom that “cannot be shaken” (Heb. 12:28).

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12. Judaism is "no lasting city" (Heb. 13:14) and to go to Christ it must be outside the camp (of Judaism) (Heb. 13:13).
13. The twelve tribes of Israel in Rev. 7:1-8 cannot refer to a literal return of Old Testament Israel to Palestine because that list leaves out the tribes of Dan and Ephraim, and inserts two tribes not originally given an inheritance—Levi and Joseph.
14. It is very significant that no New Testament writer mentions a future return of the Jews to the land of Palestine. Very obviously the return of the Jews to the land of which the Old Testament prophets spoke had already occurred in the restoration of the captivities, or, figuratively in the establishment of the church.
15. Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27) plainly teaches that *God would finish His work* for the redemption of the world *through the Jews* 490 years after the "going forth of the word to rebuild" Jerusalem. From 457 B.C. (see Ezra 7) to 34 A.D. (allowing for the 4-year mistake in our calendar) is 490 years. 34 A.D. was after the stoning of Stephen and when the gospel was initially taken to the Gentiles.
16. Isaiah predicts that God will establish a "new" nation before the "old" one passes away (Isa. 66:7ff.) and that the new will be established with one stroke (Heb. *pa'am*). A land and a nation was brought forth with one stroke before the old passed away on the Day of Pentecost, June, A.D. 30.

This does not mean, of course, that some who call themselves Jews today, will never go back to Palestine. They may even build a new Temple there some day. But it does mean that as any of them go back they do so entirely on their own, apart from any covenanted purpose to that end and entirely outside of Scripture prophecy. No Scripture blessing is promised for a project of that kind.

It may be that in years to come the Jews will possess a larger part, or even all, of Palestine. We do not know. But if they do they will secure it as other nations secure property, through negotiation, or purchase, or conquest, NOT BY VIRTUE OF ANY AS YET UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES OR BIBLICAL PROMISES. THERE ARE NO SUCH PROPHECIES OR PROMISES!

In the mean time, Zionism, premillennialism and dispensationalism must bear part of the responsibility for the evil and dangerous situation that has arisen in the Middle East, since it has encouraged Jews to believe they are rightful owners of that land and that it is divinely ordained that they are again to possess it.

The British had no ethical or political right to promise Palestine to the Jews at the end of World War I. The UN had no right to partition it. It should have legally been returned to the Palestinians. Ever since the partitioning, the Jews have extended their borders beyond those set by the UN.