

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

3. "If the house be worthy let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you."
4. "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
5. "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come."
6. "For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."
7. "... rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
8. "I came not to send peace, but a sword."
9. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher. . . ."
10. "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."
11. "He that receiveth you receiveth me. . . ."

SPECIAL STUDY

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

Cryptic statements keep cropping up in the Gospels, which speak of a coming of Jesus in His glory during the lifetime of that generation in which the Apostles lived. At first reading, one would think, however, that such notices would be interpreted with primary reference to the second coming of Christ at the end of this age of the world. In fact, some commentators have accused the early Christians, notably Paul, of "mistakenly expecting the imminent return of Christ in his own era, whereas that event has not yet taken place."

On the other hand, there are intriguing coincidences and factors that present quite another picture of Christian eschatology in the first century. Some of the points to be noticed are the following:

1. It is generally presumed that Paul died around 67 or 68 A.D., thus prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the virtual end of the Jewish state. Thus, his references to the coming glorification of Christ during his own lifetime might be affected in part by this fact. This same observation would be generally true of most of the other writing Apostles or Evangelists, except John, if our present state of information (or ignorance) be any indication. In the cases where we have no definite dates for the death of the NT writers, it becomes necessary to depend upon their last message which expresses their views. For this reason we must found our under-

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standing of their doctrine on the best information available to us regarding the date of their writings that have come down to us. While there is by no means unanimity of opinion among scholars about the dating of each NT book, there is reasonably general agreement that all but the Johannine books were written prior to 70 A.D. (See critical introductions to individual books in encyclopedic articles, e.g. *ISBE*, as well as the formal critical introductions to the NT and its books, for delineation of the traditional datings as well as the problems and arguments for dates after 70 A.D.)

2. While the coming of Christ back to earth in the person of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:16-28) was to be an event with world-shaking consequences, yet the actual narrations of the activity of the Holy Spirit, that was witnessed from the day of pentecost onward until the conclusion of the history included in the NT, do not exhaust all the meaning of those passages which speak of a glorious appearing of the Lord in the lifetime of the Twelve. Nor yet do the strictly Pentecostal manifestations of the coming of the Spirit exhaust the prophecy of Joel (2:28-32) cited by Peter (Ac. 2:16-21; see below on this text.) Those texts which seem to describe a first-century "coming of the Son of man" seem to be picturing an event which is to occur following, but not immediately connected with, the glorious establishment of Christ's Kingdom in its visible manifestation as the Church. Nor yet are these passages especially connected with the final appearance of the Lord at the end of this age. (See below on Mt. 16:28.)
3. A third suggestion is here offered, but not adequately defined, with respect to the Apocalypse of John. It cannot be dealt with adequately here, and must be offered only as a suggestive comment to stimulate further research, since it is not the purpose of this article to deal with all the problems that arise in the interpretation of that book. However, the thorough treatment of this important subject would demand that this exegesis of John's Revelation be made, before any certain conclusions can be drawn regarding the coming of the Son of man. This is true especially if the apocalyptic methodology of Revelation in any way touches that period covering the lifetime of the Apostles. (See below on VI, VII.)

The visions of the Revelation are specifically called "apocalyptic," (from *apokalypsis*, Rev. 1:1). It would there-

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fore be expected that THIS Apocalypse share something of the nature of apocalyptic literature, with the single exception that this Apocalypse, as opposed to all others, is inspired by Jesus' direct revelation of the visions John saw. J.E.H. Thompson (*ISBE*, 161-178) describes the character of apocalypses as a literary method, contrasting this with the method of prophetic books.

Both in matter and form apocalyptic literature and the writings associated with it differ from the prophetic writings of the preceding periods . . . while the predictive element is present in Apocalypses, as in Prophecy, it is more prominent and relates to longer periods and involves a wider grasp of the state of the world at large. Apocalypse could only have been possible under the domination of the great empires. Alike in Prophecy and in Apocalypse there is reference to the coming of the Messiah, but in the latter not only is the Messianic hope more defined, it has a wider reference. In the Prophets and Psalmists the Messiah had mainly to do with Israel. . . . In the Apocalypses the imperial outlook is prominent, beginning with Daniel in which we find the Messianic kingdom represented by a "son of man" over against the bestial empires that had preceded (Dnl. 7:13) and reaching the acme of Apocalypse, if not its conclusion in the Revelation of St. John: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15). While the prophet was primarily a preacher of righteousness and used prediction either as a guarantee, by its fulfilment of his Divine mission, or as an exhibition of the natural result of rebellion against God's righteous laws, to the Apocalypticist prediction was the thing of most importance, and in the more typical Apocalypse there is no moral exhortation whatever. . . . In the literary form employed there are marked differences between Apocalyptic and Prophecy. Both make use of vision, but in Prophecy, in the more restricted sense of the word, these visions are as a rule implied, rather than being described. . . . In the case of the Apocalypses the vision is the vehicle

by which the prediction is conveyed. . . . In (Prophecy) the symbols used are natural, not, as always in Apocalypses, arbitrary . . . (In Apocalypses) there is no natural reason for the changes that take place, only a symbolical one. . . . The apocalyptists always used pure prose, without the elaborate parallelism or cadenced diction of Hebrew poetry. The weird, the gorgeous, or the terrible features of the vision described are thrown into all the higher relief by the baldness of the narrative. . . . (Of the works entitled Apocalyptic) they all claim to be revelations of the future—a future which begins, however, from the days of some ancient saint—and then, passing over the time of its actual composition, ends with the coming of the Messiah, the setting up of the Messianic kingdom and the end of the world. There are others . . . in which the revelation avowedly looks back, and which thus contain an amount of legendary matter.

While the Revelation is both epistolary with regard to its readers and prophecy in its essential spirit and message, it is an apocalypse with respect to its contents. "The Revelation honors apocalyptic methodology but makes it subserve genuine prophecy." (Harrison, *Introductions*, 431)

Thus, while this use of John's Revelation to discuss events prior to its actual composition during the reign of Domitian during John's exile to Patmos (c. 96 A.D.) would perhaps raise objections, since the book is also confessedly a prophecy (cf. Rev. 1:3; 22:6, 7, 18, 19) regarding things that "must soon take place," i.e. after the writing of the book itself (cf. Rev. 1:1, 19; 4:1; 22:6, 7), yet if it be assumed that John's Revelation partook of the literary form of other apocalyptic books, a form which enclosed within its cosmic sweep the writing of history to show some purpose of God seen in the sequence of events, as well as to predict the future, then this objection would have less force. The Revelation could conceivably describe some events prior to, during, and after, the beginning of the Church, the early evangelization, the persecutions, the Jewish War, the destruction of Jerusalem and proceed right on to picture those elements signalling the beginning of the fall of the Roman empire and look out into the distant future to the end of

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time. It remains then, a matter of careful exegesis both of the relative Bible texts involved, as well as a careful reading of history, to determine whether or not this is, in fact, the case.

Besides the foregoing, there are a number of Matthean texts, which seem to picture the coming of the Son of man in judgment upon the Jewish nation during the lifetime of the Apostles.

- I. **"When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes."** (Mt. 10:23)

At first glance, it would seem that Jesus is speaking here of His following up the advance preparation for His coming made by the disciples. In this case, they would merely have gone ahead of Him as an advance advertising committee, in order to assure Him a large interest and popularity in the cities of Israel. Then the point of this exhortation would be haste, since it would be impossible to cover all the Jewish cities before Jesus Himself arrived. But the very context of this solemn admonition demands a graver explanation, more harmonious with the immediate context itself and with the subsequent events. The assumption here is that Jesus' discourse in Matthew 10 is one entire message delivered on the same occasion. (See arguments in the Introduction to chapter 10.)

1. The context, as well as the verse itself, describes fearful persecutions and harrassment by both religious and political rulers, incomprehension within the families of His disciples, universal hatred of Jesus' followers, leadership of the Holy Spirit, betrayals to death and, finally, the necessity to flee, faithful endurance and open confession of allegiance to Jesus in face of certain death.
2. Further, the paragraph in which this admonition is found (Mt. 10:16-23) is itself repeated in the great discourse concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). Interestingly, though Mark and Luke both record without significant variations these words contained in Matthew 10:16-23, Matthew himself, while recording the prophetic discourse in his 24th chapter, does not repeat this paragraph. Instead, he limits himself to a couple of summary sentences that are necessary for the connection of thought. Though some would give another explanation to this phenomenon, we believe that Matthew deliberately omitted to

repeat this particular material (even though he does repeat some other obviously repeated events and sayings of Jesus elsewhere), not only because he had recorded this sermon in chapter 10. He probably omitted the repetition of this material (10:16-23) because he intended to develop the theme of moral preparation required for the great cataclysmic events. This is a hypothesis developed, of course, from what he actually did. (Cf. Mt. 24:37—25:46) By contrast, Mark and Luke, who neither one had recorded this complete discourse in one place (however, see Luke 12:2-12), give their testimony regarding Jesus' great prophetic discourse and omit, or greatly abbreviate, the material Matthew includes on watchful preparation. The point is, of course, that Jesus intended for this material (i.e. Mt. 10:16-23) to be understood primarily in the framework of that period following His ascension into heaven and not in connection with the early efforts at evangelization by the Apostles or the Seventy.

3. Subsequent events in the ministry of the Apostles themselves as they labored under the limited commission (Mt. 10:5-15) until they were reassembled (Mt. 6:30; Lk. 9:10), indicate no such difficulties as are here pictured. This indication is based solely on the information about the Apostles transmitted to us in the four Gospels. If they did in fact encounter persecutions prior to Jesus' crucifixion, we cannot know about it.

But lest Jesus be accused of exaggerating the trials to which the Apostles would be subjected, let it be remembered that Jesus is fully justified in preparing His men in exactly this fashion, since they must face, from the very first of their own ministry, the stubborn reality of opposition to the truth they must preach. Whether this opposition began soon or later should make no difference to them: they must steel themselves for its eventual arrival. The appropriateness of Jesus' warnings during His first commission is seen in the fact that He sends them out fully prepared for whatever may come, even if the worst does not appear until much later when intransigent opposition to Jesus Himself will have hardened and expressed itself in His crucifixion. Psychologically, His men will have already been inured to trouble by His many previous warnings and by their own personal

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experiences in the field when not under His direct supervision.

While the Apostles did not have to face the pictured trials during their early missions, they certainly did have to meet them later. And to deflate any tendency to overconfidence based upon the seemingly overwhelming successes of their first missions, Jesus repeated these warnings in His great prophetic discourse (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21) just two months before He sent them out to evangelize the entire world. At THAT time they would begin to grasp the significance behind those cryptic words uttered earlier (Mt.10:23).

It is obvious, therefore, that the "coming of the Son of man" must have a direct relationship to the ministry of the Apostles AT SUCH TIME AS THEY ACTUALLY FACED THE PERSECUTIONS AND CONSEQUENT NECESSITY TO FLEE pictured in this text. Since they apparently faced the trials and difficulties, that Jesus describes, only after Pentecost and before their own deaths, which, in the case of most of them, occurred before 70 A.D., if tradition may be relied upon to furnish the dates, "the coming of the Son of man" must have some reference to that period. This "coming of the Son of man" must have relationship also to the "cities of Israel," and not to the world in general. The beginning of the end of those "cities of Israel" as a corporate, national entity, can be dated about the same time as the disastrous Jewish War (66-70 A.D.), even though the final, bitter end did not come until the devastations by the Romans after the uprising of Bar-Cochba (132-135 A.D.) Morgan (*Matthew*, 106) poses the intriguing query:

Who shall say that in His Personal Form He did not guide the Roman legions as they took Jerusalem? It is quite certain that there can be no explanation of the coming of the Son of Man in this case except in the sense of judgment. His coming at the fall of Jerusalem, ended the cities of Israel, and this accounted for His urgency and haste in driving His apostles out to tell the story of the King and the Kingdom.

While it is somewhat inexact to say that the "cities of Israel," meaning the existing villages and towns, came to an end with the fall of Jerusalem, yet "the national identity of Judaism was completely and forever lost. The last two institutions of their distinctly national life, the Sanhedrin and the sacrifice, were abolished, never to reappear." (Dana, *NT World*, 105) "Judaism persisted as a religion, but dis-

associated from any political organization or state." (Tenney, *NT Times*, 307)

The above considerations strongly suggest that Jesus intended to intimate to His Apostles that His coming would take place during that period of their ministry in which (1) they faced terrible persecutions; (2) while there were yet in existence the "cities of Israel;" and (3), in some connection with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the state of Israel.

II. **"Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom."** (Mt. 16:28)

Needless to say, this verse and its parallels must be considered apart from the verses preceding (i.e. Mt. 16:27; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26), which describe the second coming of Jesus in judgment of the whole world, an event which none of the Apostles lived to see, since this has not yet occurred. Therefore, what Jesus intends by the declaration in question has nothing to do with His return to earth at the end of this age: there are two specific events clearly before His mind.

A quick comparison of the parallel texts of this same saying reveals all Jesus said at that moment:

Mt. 16:28

Mk. 9:1

Lk. 9:27

<p>And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some stand- ing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."</p>	<p>And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some stand- ing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."</p>	<p>"But I tell you truly, there are some stand- ing here who will not taste of death before they see the kingdom of God."</p>
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This glorious coming of the Son of man, within the lifetime of the Apostles, which is seen as a manifestation of the Kingdom of Christ and God, is susceptible of application to those events later described as the coming of Christ's Kingdom with power. It is important to remember the larger context of this declaration is the promise that Jesus would establish His Church, an event for which He promised Peter the keys of "the Kingdom." This event obviously began to occur on Pentecost 30 A.D. But this latter fact by no means signifies that the complete fulfilment of Jesus' promise, that the Apostles would live to see His coming in His kingdom, occurred only on that

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day and did not also find fulfilment in events even after that date which continued to establish the obvious rule of Christ.

The coming of the Kingdom of God with power from God certainly took place and visibly on the first Pentecost after Jesus' ascension into heaven. (Lk. 24:49; Ac. 1:3, 8; 2:1-47) But despite the marvellous manifestation of God's power by means of the visible and audible demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's presence, obvious to all then present in Jerusalem, this did not signal the public, definitive and final repudiation of the Jewish nation by God nor the end of the theocracy. The Jewish nation and religion continued on a "business-as-usual" basis at least for another forty years, during which time even the Jewish Christians maintained relatively close relations with the Temple and its rites. (Cf. Ac. 21:20b-26) While the Church actually came into existence and preached its message, yet the full vindication of Christ's claims and the tangible evidence of God's rule (Kingdom) were not so clearly seen until the permanent destruction of Jerusalem as the effective center of Judaism and the total collapse of the Temple and its ministry took place.

But if Jesus' promise (Mt. 16:28) be thought to refer to Pentecost, the spread of Christianity or the internal development of the Gospel in the life of the Church, it is necessary to point out that Jesus does not comfort all of His Apostles by affirming that they would *all* live to see these glorious expressions of God's Kingdom. Rather, "there are some standing here." (*eisin times*: all Synoptics) This limitation, as Plummer (*Luke*, 250) notes, "implies the exceptional privilege of some, as distinct from the common experience of all," and provides a test regarding the time meant, a test that excludes Pentecost, the spread of Christianity, at least, as the first or primary reference of this prophecy. This, because all the Apostles and most of Jesus' disciples lived to see those great events, while that to which Jesus now makes reference was to be the exceptional privilege of only John and perhaps a few others of those present who lived to witness the destruction of Jerusalem, an event which signalled the end of the old dispensation and left the Church of Christ fully vindicated and identified as the only bearer of the divine oracles.

It is revealing in this connection to recall that Jesus promised that the very generation of which He was a part would live to see the fulfilment of His prophecy would be desecrated after a disastrous war. The things which took place at that time Jesus describes as the nearing of "the kingdom of God." (Lk. 21:31, 32; cf. Mt. 24:33, 34; Mk. 13:29, 30) But this latter prophecy cannot in any sense refer

to the beginnings of the Church but has reference to the destruction of Jerusalem.

In order, therefore, to concede as much as possible to those who view Jesus' prophecies that His death would not hinder the establishment of the Church and that, rather, some of those then present would live to see Him come in His Kingdom with power, as having some reference to the establishment of the Church, let us admit that the fulfilment of Jesus' words may have included that. But it is urgent that we recall that the Kingdom of God and Christ is always greater than the Church and includes it. It is never exact to say that the Kingdom equals the Church and vice versa. It is better to define the Kingdom as "the Government of God, the dominion of His laws." The Church is that group of people who willingly submit themselves to God's Kingdom. But there are millions of people who still fall under the rule of God who neither accept that dominion nor are members of the Church. Therefore God's Kingdom includes within its sphere of influence all the wicked, and any time God wants to make His powerful rule felt, by bringing swift punishment upon them, He can and He does. This He did in the lifetime of the Apostles and in that generation of Jews by giving sudden, shocking but deserved punishment to those who had rejected Jesus. While this was not specifically a revelation of His Church (although the Church was revealed as the authentic bearer of the divine oracles of God and finally freed from the vestigial shackles of Judaism), it was a definitive revelation of God's Government, or, the Kingdom of God.

If we have correctly understood Jesus' meaning in this text, then, according to the exact wording of Mt. 16:28, this entire revelation of the Kingdom of God is to be spoken of as "the coming of the Son of man."

III. "Therefore I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it." (Mt. 21:43)

While this passage does not speak directly of a coming of the Son of man during the generation of His earthly sojourn, its reference to the transfer of the Kingdom of God is most appropriate and interesting. Coming as it does at the conclusion of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, and specifically stated as its outcome, it clarifies the entire point of the parable and sheds light on some of its terms. The historical moment suggested within the parable itself, when the Kingdom of God would be conspicuously taken from the Jews who had rejected Jesus and the messages of all the prophets,

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and turned over to another group that would produce the results God intended, is precisely when the Lord of the vineyard comes to His vineyard to put those wretches to a miserable death. At that historical juncture, the Kingdom of God will manifestly become the sole responsibility of a separate group of people. At exactly this point in the narrative (Mt. 21:44; Lk. 20:18) the Lord summarizes two prophecies that describe the menace to the wicked represented by the Messiah Himself. (Cf. Psa. 118:22, 23; Isa. 8:14, 15; Dan. 2:34, 35, 44) He Himself is such a menace, for He is the Stone upon which those, who do not see Him for what He is, break themselves; He it is who will fall upon Israel to crush that wicked nation.

Should it be objected that the coming of the Lord of the Vineyard, to be true to the figure of the parable, refers to God, not to the Son who was cast out of the vineyard dead, it must be recalled that (1) the parable could go only so far in describing the reality without inserting the specific information that "the Son then arose from the dead and reentered the vineyard, destroyed those wicked husbandmen, etc. . ." It was Jesus' purpose, obvious from what He actually did say, to evoke a moral judgment from His hearers' sense of right. It was not His purpose to shock their minds with the resurrection, a point actually unnecessary to carry His meaning. (2) The identification of the Lord of the vineyard with His Son is certainly possible, once we understand the unique character of Jesus' relationship to the Father.

IV. "The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."

(Mt. 22:7)

The parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (Mt. 22:1-14) covers exactly the same ground as the preceding one (Mt. 21:33-46), with but one major advance in thought. The two parables have two common sections:

<i>The Wicked Husbandmen</i>	<i>The Marriage of the King's Son</i>
1. God's dealing with Israel (Mt. 21:33-41a)	1. God's dealings with Israel (Mt. 22:2-7)
2. God's dealings with the Gentiles (21:41b-43)	2. God's dealings with the Gentiles (22:8-10)
	3. God's dealings with individual Christians (22:11-14)

Notice that the turning point between the first and second sections of both parables is the same and significant for our purpose here: after

God had sent many messengers to those who had a covenant with Him, i.e. those who were His subjects, and after these had rejected His longsuffering mercy, He visited judgment upon them, taking away their rights, their privileged position as His subjects. What He had intended for their blessing, He immediately turned over to others who would appreciate His bounty. A closer look at the key verse, which marks the transfer, shows that in this latter parable Jesus bares the method by which God would put those ungrateful wretches to a miserable death: He would use troops to destroy those murderers and burn their city. While it may be fairly objected that this detail is but part of the scenery of the parable, necessary to its comprehension but not to be taken literally, it is worthy of note that the literal interpretation of this detail does find an exact fulfilment of Jesus' words when in 70 A.D. the Roman Tenth Legion under Titus battered and burned Jerusalem to the ground.

Further, after the removal of those murderers who spurned God's grace, God throws open the invitation to enjoy His blessings to "just any and everybody," in contrast to those who thought they had most right to them, since they had been invited and should have been prepared. At a particular point in Jewish history this great transfer took place: God's army shattered Jewish nationalism for centuries to come, releasing the Church from any further relationship to Judaism, permitting the world to see the universal character of the Church made up of believing Jews and Gentiles.

In light of these two parables, it is not surprising to hear the Master finish describing the true signs, which precede the destruction of Jerusalem, by mentioning the disastrous war in which "this people 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." (Lk. 21:23, 24) In literal language He predicts the character of the age to follow that of Jewish opportunity: it shall be a Gentile age. Not only would God use Gentiles to initiate the period by punishing the Jews, but the period would be one of gracious opportunity for the conversion of the Gentiles.

V. **"Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed be He who comes in the name of the Lord.'"**
(Mt. 23:38, 39)

These heart-broken words of the rejected Messiah were spoken at a point in Jesus' last week in Jerusalem that is important to note

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and probably surprising to some: they were pronounced AFTER the Triumphal Entry (Mt. 21:1-11). Notwithstanding the certainty that He had already pronounced the same lament regarding Jerusalem the killer of prophets (see Lk. 13:31-35), since it is uttered here at the conclusion of Jesus' exposure of the true character of the corrupt leaders of Judaism whose sins defied Divine Justice, this dark warning becomes the sad farewell of Israel's truest Patriot as well as the solemn sentence pronounced by Israel's true Judge. The obvious import of His words announces the desolation and abandonment of "your house." Whether this "house" is to be understood with reference to the Temple, to the city of Jerusalem (see Plummer, *Matthew*, 325), or to the people of Israel ("the house of Israel"), makes no fundamental difference, since they were to be desolated together. Should it be asked when this national disaster would occur, the context of this lament provides the general time-period: "Upon you (will) come all the righteous blood shed on earth . . . all this will come upon this generation." (Mt. 23:35, 36) That the expression "Generation" is to be taken in its literal, usual sense, and not broadly defined to mean "this race or nation," will be noted later on Mt. 24:34, where the meaning is the same.

The point to notice in this warning is Jesus' cryptic prediction that that generation of wicked, unbelieving Jews would certainly live to see the day when He would appear to them under quite other circumstances than those under which they had brutally rejected Him Who was God's last offer of mercy. But such an appearance does not necessitate a personal visible coming, such as He will make visible to all at the end of the world (cf. Mt. 24:27; Rev. 1:7), but rather a coming in judgment upon Palestine. Should it be objected that "You will not *see* me until . . ." signifies "You will *see* me after . . ." i.e. that this coming to Israel must be visible to the naked eye, we would respond that it was not a visible personal coming to which Jesus referred when He promised His disciples that they too would live to "see the Son of man coming in His Kingdom." (Mt. 16:28)

Further, Jesus would be hidden, from the then living generation, in a certain sense and for a certain period of time which He describes as "not . . . until you say, 'Blessed be He . . .'" Some feel that this pictures a future conversion of the Jews. If so, this suggestion, in effect, becomes equivalent to saying: "You will truly see me for what I am: your Messiah, when you can join your voices to those who recently acclaimed me their Christ during the Triumphal Entry three days ago." That is, when the Jews were individually converted to

Him, they would be able to take up this welcome. However, rather than promising any future wholesale conversion of Israel, according to some millennial theories, this is a threat! "I hereby leave your house desolate. You must preserve as best you can this city and Temple which have been under Divine protection until now. You will never see me again as your Messiah, until you yourselves can take up the joyous welcome to me. My mission to you as your Savior is finished. What I have said and done for you should have been enough to convert you. From now on I personally will not disturb you. If you wish to be taught and saved by me, the initiative must come from you." This interpretation is possible, but there is another emphasis that can also be harmonized with the judgment Jesus pronounced upon the Hebrew nation: "You will not see me again until that moment when I bring devastating punishment upon the house and nation of Israel. In that horrible moment from you will be wrung that cry, that confession, now willingly owned by others, for which you would even this week crucify me! I will come again in judgment and this generation will see it and acknowledge that I was truly the Messiah, but then it will be too late." Jesus has nothing to say about the willingness of those who thus make the cry He predicts. (Cf. similar cases; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5:13; 6:12-27; Ro. 14:11)

Since the day of grace was not yet completely over for Jerusalem and since Pentecost was yet future, some Jews actually did repent and see Jesus as Messiah, as witnessed in the book of Acts, but by no means all of them did so. This simple decision separated the obdurate from the obedient.

If we have understood this text correctly, Jesus is predicting a moment when He Himself would return during that generation, a time when Judaism would behold and acknowledge as vindicated Him Whom they had rejected. It would be a moment of Divine Justice, resulting in the permanent desertion and desolation of Israel's famous "house."

VI. "So also when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place." (Mt. 24:33, 34)

Before dealing with this text it must be observed that there is no masculine pronoun ("he") in the Greek text, as represented here by the RSV text; the "he" may well be substituted with "it" or any indefinite subject, since there is no subject expressed in Greek either in this verse or in the text of Mk. 13:29. Something is very near,

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even at the very gates, about to take place or become visible, of which the signs Jesus had just mentioned are indications (Mt. 24:14-22 and perhaps also vv. 23-31). It is Luke (21:29-32) who, in recording the same material, fills in the blank and identifies the "it" left unspecified by Matthew and Mark: "So also when you see these things taking place, you know that THE KINGDOM OF GOD is near." The very things the disciples will have seen taking place are easily identified. They are the many false alarms preceding the universal proclamation of the Gospel for a testimony to the nations, the specific sign of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies and Jerusalem's fall which included the crushing end of classic Judaism. This, says Luke's narrative, is but a herald of the exceeding nearness of the Kingdom of God. The important Lucan text to remember in this connection is Luke 9:27 (see under point II above) which recorded Jesus' exciting promise: "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste of death before they see the KINGDOM OF GOD." Out of this similarity we detect two tempting conclusions:

1. That the expression "this generation" (Mt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30; Lk. 21:32) is to be taken in its natural sense, referring to the people living in Jesus' time. This phrase is not to be applied to the entire race of the Jews living down through the centuries to the present time, however tempting it might be to see their continued existence, despite the terrible judgments just mentioned, as a real wonder, or sign. This definition is sound since Jesus is talking about the same manifestation of the Kingdom of God during the lifetime of the Apostles. So "this generation" means "the people living right now, in these times," i.e. the generation in which Jesus was on earth.
2. That a significant manifestation of God's Kingdom would take place in Jesus' own generation, long after the beginning of the Church and somehow connected with the destruction of Jerusalem is also deduced from this information.

If the identification of this manifestation of the Kingdom of God with "the Son of man coming in His Kingdom with power," be valid (Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27), then that generation of Jewish people would live to see Jesus coming in punitive judgment upon those very people who would have murdered Him. Even if they did not see Him personally coming from heaven in triumphant glory in that era, they would certainly be forced to recognize that their own divine punish-

ment was just, that the Rule of God has passed out of their hands, that the Kingdom of God is now of another people. We who have accepted Jesus recognize that His prophetic words were true and that there is a new people of God, a new holy and royal priesthood, elect out of every nation.

Should it be objected either that "all these things" must include Jesus' prophecies concerning what may be taken to be the events surrounding His own Second Coming (i.e. Mt. 24:23-31; Mk. 13:21-27; Lk. 21:25-28) and therefore Jesus erroneously thought that His own return must occur within that generation, or that "all these things" must include the Second Coming and therefore "this generation" must include all the generations of Jews down to Christ's Second Coming, we respond that all the facts may be otherwise harmonized, rendering both these conclusions incorrect.

J. Marcellus Kik (*Matthew XXIV*) has shown in his excellent exposition of that critical chapter in Christian eschatology that ALL the information in the first section (Mt. 24:4-35) can be interpreted in connection either with the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish nation or with the theological significance of those events. He considers Mt. 24:34 to be the key to the understanding of the times and seasons involved in Jesus' discourse, since he places all that follows that verse within the unknown time limits within which Jesus will return the second time. In the section that most assume has reference to Christ's second coming (Mt. 24:23-31; Mk. 13:21-27; Lk. 21:25-28), Kik believes Jesus is using standardized apocalyptic language for completely earthly events. He feels that this "apocalyptic dialect," created by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel and others, was used by Jesus to convey the fundamentally theological notion that universal dominion, glory and a kingdom has been given to Him as "the Son of man" *par excellence*. (Cf. Dan. 7:13, 14) Kik's contention is that Jesus' "coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:30), as well as all the other concomitant phenomena in this section (Mt. 24:27-31), may be so interpreted in light of the apocalyptic language of the OT that even this coming of Jesus, seen by the Jews of that generation, found its fulfilment in the judgment of the Jews and the vindication of Christ's rule in the Church.

While Kik's thesis regarding this section (Mt. 24:23-

31) demands further study, it is certainly undeniable that anyone who deals with prophecies given in a Jewish context must also deal with the problem of apocalyptic language which cannot, repeat, must not, be taken literally without doing violence to the meaning intended by the author. This is true whether one is interpreting Matthew 24, the prophecies of Ezekiel or Daniel or the book of Revelation which calls itself "the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ." (See above on apocalypses.) Kik has shown us a consistent interpretation of the sentences (Mt. 24:33, 34) which includes all the information that precedes them (Mt. 24:4-32). Before we can refute his thesis we must see whether it is reasonable to suppose that Jesus would have inserted a full paragraph of "apocalyptic dialect" into a discourse made up of normal prophetic language (to be taken more or less literally). But before passing on, it is worthy of notice that this thesis posits a "coming of the Son of man" at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the nation.

VII. Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Mt. 26:64)

Under oath before the whole council of the Jews, Jesus not only confessed to being the Christ, the Son of God. He added, without its being required, that a time would come when those seated there before Him, those who were almost entirely and immediately responsible for His judicial murder, would, in a certain sense, behold Him fully vindicated for the magnificent claims He had just made. These tremendous and magnificent claims are stated before the highest court in the Jewish nation. They are stated, therefore, in the most public way, not only as Jesus' self-incrimination in the eyes of that court, but most especially are these words Jesus' highest revelation of Himself, given in the most formal, public way. But what did He mean?

It is no little temptation to regard these claims literally, i.e. with reference to Jesus' Second Coming, especially since John repeats the latter figure in the Revelation (1:7), a book believed to have been written long after the destruction of Jerusalem. But even John's use of these figures in that place cannot be considered definitive, since he may be citing the OT expressions in regard to Jesus, even as Jesus Himself is apparently doing here. The point of both passages

(i.e. Mt. 26:64 and Rev. 1:7) will have to be sought in the use each makes of those expressions.

In the claim itself we have two separate Messianic references:

1. "Seated at the right hand," as an application of Psa. 110:1 becomes a high claim to messiahship, since this passage was held to be messianic. (Cf. Mt. 22:43-45; Edersheim, *Life*, II, 720, 721) Taken also in connection with the formulation of the oath by which the high priest held Jesus obligated to commit Himself ("Tell us of you are the Christ, the Son of God." Mt. 26:63), this phrase might also call to mind the great Anointed Son of God who as King would rule the nations (Psa. 2; Cf. Jn. 1:49; Edersheim, *Life*, II, 716, 717).
2. "Son of man . . . coming on the clouds of heaven," is a phrase which the high priest would have recognized as a reference to Dan. 7:13, 14. (Cf. Edersheim, *Life*, II, 733, 734)

While it may be possible to view these two references as two separate eschatological events or phases of Christ's ultimate divine majesty and coming to judgment in divine glory at the conclusion of the world, yet it would harmonize better with Jesus' immediate situation to interpret His admittedly apocalyptic language in literal language thus: "I admit to being the Christ, the Son of God. Though you consider this blasphemy, nevertheless I can tell you that you will live to see my most daring claims vindicated! You will see my messianic majesty and greatness and dominion as spoken of by the Psalmist and Daniel." Rather than quote the entire passages in each case, Jesus chose key phrases that rapidly summarized the messianic impact of His sovereignty. Lenski (*Matthew*, 1066) is probably right in deciding that

Jesus adds this statement in order to bring his judges to a realization of just whom they are about to condemn to death. He is defining for them who "the Messiah, the Son of God" is: he whom they themselves will see in his divine power, rule and majesty.

No, those Sanhedrists were not to be through with Jesus when they had crucified Him, for just four days later God would designate Him "Son of God in power . . . by His resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:5). Not long thereafter this same Sanhedrin had to deal with the rapidly spreading Gospel of the risen Christ preached by a handful of disciples. The chief point of the Apostles' preaching was "let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God had

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designated both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified!" (Ac. 2:33, 36; 4:10-12; 5:29-32) God's mercy with these Jewish leaders lasted yet 36 years longer (30-66 A.D.), until the Jewish War began. It was then that the storm broke over Palestine that lashed the nation economically, politically and religiously reducing it to a smoking shambles of its former glory. It was then that Jesus came in judgment upon that people, and the Sanhedrists lived to see it.

There are several problems involved in this interpretation of this text:

1. Jesus does not here in the trial scene predict the fall of Jerusalem and His coming in judgment, as He had done earlier on many other public and private occasions. (Cf. Lk. 13:35; 19:41-44; Mt. 23:29-39) It would have been so much more convenient for the theory of His coming in judgment upon Jerusalem and Judaism, had He done so. But He did not clearly speak of this, so, so much the worse for the theory if it fails to explain the language He used.
2. If we believe that Jesus were using "apocalyptic language" derived from the Psalms and Daniel to express His meaning, then, when this same "apocalyptic jargon" is reduced to literal language by expressing the literal meaning of the figures used—by Daniel especially—then there is left no literal "Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven," (itself part of the vision). What is left is Jesus' claim to be vindicated as the reigning, glorious Messiah in the near future in a manner observable by His jurors. One cannot "translate" figurative language into literal, and still hope to make direct use of some part of that figure in his literal interpretation. This is "having one's cake and eating it too!" This observation is not fatal to the theory sustained here, because it is not argued that Jesus appeared over Jerusalem in a manner visible to the Jews, when He punished that city and nation. So the "coming (of the Son of man) on the clouds of heaven" harmonizes perfectly as a concept, with the "coming of the Son of man" described elsewhere.

Answers to these problems may be the following: Jesus meant more than His vindication upon the Jews in the destruction of their Temple and nation, so He did not limit this appearance to the Sanhedrists to merely that single event. He meant His resurrection, the establishment of His Church, the victory of His Gospel, the validation of His claims in the Apostles' ministry and finally, in the generation, the total

collapse of all that those Sanhedrists stood for: the Temple, its ministry, their nation and the place that these Sanhedrists held dear. (Cf. Jn. 11:48) There is no doubting the obvious reference to Dan. 7:13, 14, because of the special rage, scorn and incredulity of the high priest that Jesus would commit Himself so far, incriminate Himself so completely. What is sure is that these Jewish rulers were not to see a personal and visible coming in their generation. Rather, as Kik (*Matthew XXIV*, 84) puts it:

This high priest was to see Christ sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. Can this possibly refer to Christ's second coming when the description "sitting on the right hand of power" precludes such interpretation? It means rather that after the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus would ascend into heaven and take his place on the right hand of God, the Father, as described in Daniel 7:13, 14. . . . When Christ ascended into heaven he was seated upon his Messianic throne. This is in full accord with the declaration of Christ as he was about to ascend into heaven: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." One of the first manifestations of the power and the glory of the Messiah was the destruction of the city that refused to accept him as King and Savior. This act of judgment gave evidence that all power had indeed been given unto him. He did come in the clouds of heaven and rained destruction upon those who had rejected and crucified him. This caused the tribes of the earth to mourn. The sign of the reigning Christ was seen in the destruction of Jerusalem. And the contemporary generation, indicated in verse 34 (i.e., Mt. 24:34), witnessed fulfilment of these things as Christ had prophesied.

Outside of Matthew, let us notice some other texts that suggest the same sort of a coming of Christ in judgment.

VIII. "The coming of the Lord is at hand." (Jas. 5:8)

This verse has particular force, inasmuch as James, if he be identified with James the Just, is remembered by tradition as spending most of his labors in Palestine and particularly in Jerusalem. Accordingly, his death in that city prior to its destruction would lend particular force to the admonitions to patient, uncomplaining endurance, since within a few short years, historically speaking, the Lord would actually come in judgment upon Judaism, snatching away from the

unbelievers among the Jews the power to persecute Christians. Objections to this view come from the text itself where the actual wording used by James may be much more technically intended than this interpretation permits. In verses 7 and 8 he adopts the expression *parousia tou kurion*, a phrase almost if not always used with reference to Christ's Second Coming.

IX. "Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." (Heb. 10:25)

While this verse has no direct reference to a coming of the Son of man in the lifetime of the Apostles, it does make use of another technical term usually thought of as having reference to the great day of the Lord's wrath and judgment, especially that to be witnessed at the end of the world. But in the same context the writer cites Habakkuk 2:3, 4 with specific reference to the Messiah (Heb. 10:37, *ho erchomenos hēxei*) On this unusual rendering of the Hebrew text, Keil (*Minor Prophets*, II, 71) comments:

The LXX have rendered *chi boh jaboh: hōti erchōmenos hēxei*, which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. x. 37) has still further defined by adding the article, and, connecting it with *mikrōn hōson hōson* of Isa. xxvi. 20 (LXX), has taken it as Messianic, and applied to the speedy coming of the Messiah to judgment; not, however, according to the exact meaning of the words, but according to the fundamental idea of the prophetic announcement. For the vision, the certain fulfilment of which is proclaimed by Habakkuk, predicts the judgment upon the power of the world, which the Messiah will bring to completion.

The notes of Milligan (*Hebrews*, 284, 292ff) may be of help here:

To what day does our author here refer? To the day of judgment, say Delitzsch, Alford, Moll and others; when Christ will come in person to raise the dead and reward every man according to his works. But this interpretation is manifestly erroneous. To me at least it seems perfectly obvious that the Apostle refers here to a day which both he and his brethren were looking for as a day that was very near at hand: a day that was about to come on that generation, and try the faith of many. And hence I am constrained to think that Macknight, Scott, Stuart, and others, that the reference is

most likely to the day of Jerusalem's overthrow. Christ himself had foretold the near approach of that event (Matt. 24:34); he had also spoken of the signs of its coming and of the great calamities that would accompany it (Matt. 24:4-41 sic: 29-31?). No doubt, therefore, the Christians in Palestine were all looking forward with much anxiety to the time when this prophecy would be fulfilled. They would naturally speak of it as "the day," the day of trial; the day when seeing Jerusalem encompassed with armies, they would themselves have to flee to the mountains (Luke 21:20-22). . . . But to refer to it exclusively to the day when Christ will come in person to judge the world is clearly inadmissible. See notes on vers. 37. . . .

37. *For yet a little while*, etc. More literally: for yet a little little while (that is, a very little while), He who is coming (*ho erchōmenos*) will come, and will not tarry. The coming One here spoken of is manifestly Christ himself. But what is meant by his coming? To what coming does our author here refer? Many say, "To His second personal coming." But this is plainly inconsistent with the scope of the Apostle's exhortation, as well as with the truth itself. His obvious design in the passage is to encourage the Hebrew brethren in their begun Christian course, on the ground that the coming of Christ was then very near at hand, when they would all be delivered from the snares, reproaches and violence of their persecutors. But how could he consistently and truthfully encourage them to do this, on the ground that the second personal advent of Christ was then very near at hand? It will not do to say with some that the Apostles themselves so believed and so taught. They did neither, but just the reverse. For when some of the Thessalonian brethren so understood Paul's teaching (I Thess. 4:15-17), he promptly addressed to them a second letter, in which he very emphatically corrected their mistake. . . . (2 Thess. 2:1-3). This, then is a clear and satisfactory refutation of the charge that the Apostles believed and taught that the second personal coming of Christ was near at hand in their own day. And so also is the book of Revelation a refutation of it. . . . The coming of Christ, as referred to in our text, must therefore mean, not his second personal coming but, his coming in providence most likely, to destroy Jerusalem, and so to

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deliver his elect from the violent persecutions to which they had long been subjected by the unbelieving Jews (Matt. 24:29-41 sic: 29-31?) To this Christ himself refers encouragingly in Luke 21:28, where, speaking of the signs of Jerusalem's approaching ruin, he says, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." . . .

This view of the matter is also further corroborated by the fact that our author finds in the prophecy of Habakkuk, concerning the overthrow of the Chaldean monarchy, language so appropriate to his purpose that he here takes and applies it to his own; thereby showing that the two cases are very analogous . . . it will be seen that our author does not quote the exact words of God's reply to the Prophet; but as is usual in such cases of accommodation (see Rom. 10:6-8), he so modifies the language as to adapt it to the case in hand. The main lesson is, however, the same in both Hebrews and Habakkuk; viz.: that God would certainly come and execute his purposes at the appointed time: and that while the proud and self-reliant would of necessity perish under the righteous judgments of God, the just man's faith, if it wavered not, would certainly support him under the severest trials.

This was all impressively illustrated in the fall of Jerusalem. The unbelieving Jews were all slain or taken captive; but not a Christian perished in the siege. . . .

X. "The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day." (Ac. 2:20)

Did the events prophetically described by Joel (2:28-32) and cited by Peter (Ac. 2:17-21) find exhaustive fulfilment on the day Pentecost, or were they not rather but the beginning of a series of events that began that day, but did not receive complete expression until the final fall of the judgment of God upon the Jewish nation, the destruction of Jerusalem and the conclusive end of the Jewish economy based upon its priesthood, sacrifices and Temple? One feature of Joel's prophecy, yet cited by Peter, that has no apparent fulfilment at all on Pentecost is the figure of the great astronomical portents: "And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned

to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." (Joel 2:30; Ac. 2:19, 20)

"The day of the Lord," as shown by Butler (*Minor Prophets*, 84ff), is a technical term used in the OT with four major significations, hence, having as many different kinds of realization in the history of God's dealings with men: (1) judgments upon the covenant people; (2) redemptions of the covenant people; (3) judgments upon the nations; (4) redemptions of the nations. Joel himself in this case describes the particular "day of the Lord" that must occur in his own time, using the same apocalyptic language of judgment. Several times in his description he speaks of astronomical cataclysms (Joel 2:1, 2, 10, 11; 3:15) This gives a specific flavor of "punitive judgment" to these symbols, so that when they are used by Peter, his audience could not but shiver at the awesome threat and divine warning implied in those figures.

If we have understood Mt. 24:4-32 correctly (see above under Mt. 24:34, point VI), it may be that the celestial phenomena, described in the section most often interpreted with reference to the Second Coming (i.e. Mt. 24:29-31), have nothing at all to do with those heavenly bodies. Instead, there, as here, we may see the standard apocalyptic vision of divine judgment. As has been repeated many times before, divine judgment did actually fall on Palestine many years after Pentecost. But is it possible to apply this prophecy just to the fall of the Jewish nation? What has been said earlier about the use of apocalyptic stereotyped language might be true here, inasmuch as we have a clear example of an OT prophet cited whose own contextual information leads us to view his language as highly figurative, hence NOT intending LITERAL celestial phenomena. (Cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1, 2, 10, 11; 3:14, 15 with Isa. 13:1-22 esp. 9, 10; 5:30; 24:21-23; 50:3) While it is true that the Christian writers can speak of the final judgment as "the great and notable day of the Lord," yet the use of this phrase in the OT makes it doubtful whether every appearance of this phrase in the NT must necessarily be applied exclusively and always to the great final judgment at the end of the world. Even the salvation of the believers here predicted (Ac. 2:21) proved to be two-fold salvation, not only of their souls, but also of their lives. They believed Jesus and so were saved from their sins; they believed Jesus' prophecies and so were not destroyed on the great day of the Lord when Jesus judged Jerusalem and the unbelieving Jews.

XI. "The end of all things is at hand; therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers." (I Pet. 4:7)

These words were addressed by Peter "to the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," (1 Pet. 1:1) probably prior to 70 A.D., since traditional dating of Peter's own martyrdom is placed prior to that date. But would this sentence have much point for the exiles of the Diaspora living in lands distant from Palestine, whose lives and security would not be materially affected by the vicissitudes in Judea? If these are primarily Jewish Christians, as the words of the inscription imply, Peter's admonition would take on particular strength and receive special fulfilment as the nerve center of world-wide Judaism would be torn to the ground, never to rise again for centuries, if ever. The value of this exhortation to these distant Christians would be obvious, since the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, God's chosen house, would probably be looked upon as almost, if not entirely incredible. It would probably be less incredible to these Christians than it was to the disciples who heard Jesus predict these events originally (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21), since the Apostles themselves could have repeated much of the Lord's prophetic discourse to their converts. Hence, just a word of reminder, such as this exhortation of Peter's, would suffice.

But should it be objected that Peter says "The end of ALL things is at hand," it must be remembered that Jesus used similar language to describe the destruction of Jerusalem. (Cf. "all these things" Mt. 24:33, 34 and parallels) Or if it be objected that Peter's words, being indefinitely stated, are also capable of *double entendre*, this is true, but not fatal to the theory suggested here. If it be thought that Peter's words here should be interpreted in light of his later message (2 Pet. 3:8-13), then we respond that here the words are indefinitely aimed at some "end near at hand," whereas Peter in the other passage addressed himself to the scornful demand made by mockers: "Where is the promise of His coming (*parousia*)?" an obvious reference to the Second Coming.

PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THIS THEORY OR ITS PRESENTATION

1. One of the most painfully obvious weaknesses of this study is the fact that it does not take into adequate account the various differing views of each single passage. There are certainly other

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passages that should be presented here, just as there are more objections to some used here. As a necessary consequence, the presentation of the evidence is quite one-sided. The justification for this presentation lies therefore in the hope that the reader is already familiar with the other views to which this presentation is but an alternative. This collection of coincidences and single texts must be examined in their contexts in their entirety to appreciate the impact they represent.

2. Another weakness, more serious to the suggestion that the special "coming of the Son of man" refers to Jesus' coming in judgment upon the Jewish nation, is the fact that none of the inspired writers ever declares this interpretation to be the theological meaning of the demise of the Jewish city and nation. This is true, unless the figures of Revelation be so interpreted. (Cf. Rev. 11) Our present state of knowledge regarding the date of NT books gives no mathematical certainty regarding the relationship between the writing of the bulk of the NT books and the date of the Jewish War (66-70 A.D.) While the conservative scholars tend to place the dates of most of them before that tragedy, yet the enigma remains when the Johannine Scriptures are considered. If John wrote considerably after the fall of Jerusalem, why did he not once mention that fact, even though he talked all around the subject of Jerusalem itself in his Gospel and in his Apocalypse could have made reference to it?

There may be other weaknesses too, but let us ask ourselves:

WHAT IS TO BE GAINED IF THIS THEORY BE ACCEPTED AS TRUE?

1. This suggestion provides a possible harmonization for other passages of the NT that contained problems that had seemed insoluble under other schemes, rendering it more difficult to accept the Gospel at face value, for those who did not see this solution. It is not necessary, on the basis of Gospel studies, to conclude that "Jesus was mistaken, since He thought that His own second coming must take place shortly after the fall of the Jewish economy." Nor is it necessary to conclude that "the Apostles themselves and the early Christians erroneously presumed that they would live until the Second Coming." Worse yet, is the opinion that "the discourses in which the eschatological events are predicted are not factual recordings of anything Jesus ever actually said, but are the theological opinions of later ages put into the mouth of Jesus to give them greater credi-

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bility." Instead, if this solution here offered be valid, then the exegesis upon which these unbelieving conclusions were based, may need correction.

2. If this suggestion be true, that Jesus actually came in judgment upon the Jews, then, of course, many texts that were formerly considered as dealing exclusively with the Second Coming will now be subtracted from discussions of that subject. As a result, the texts that actually deal with the Second Coming will be seen much more clearly, since the confusion, created by trying to weigh texts on the destruction of Jerusalem into the conclusions about the Second Coming, would, presumably, no longer exist, since the texts about Jesus' judgment on Judaism would not have to be considered. Needless to say, such clarity made available for eschatological studies surrounding the Second Coming would be of great value. (Rev. 1:3) This clarity would help to place eschatological studies on a surer basis and give them respectability in the eyes of the average Christian who must throw up his hands in despair in face of the present state of confusion in the field.

3. Out of this last expression comes another conclusion. This suggestion that Jesus actually came in judgment upon the Jewish world in the first century would provide us one more reasonably clear evidence that Jesus intends to keep His Word about that future "great day of the Lord" when He will come personally and visibly to judge the nations. His promise would be enough for the average believer. But the certainty of His promise is driven home with redoubled force, when men realize that He has already clearly shown the greatness of His power and the dependability of His promises in the historically verifiable act of judgment upon Judaism in the events beginning with the unsuccessful Jewish Revolt and the disastrous fall of Jerusalem with all its religious consequences for all future ages of both Jerusalem and the Church. Jesus is a Gentleman who keeps His appointments! This, of course, poses an unveiled threat to every complacent person who frankly enjoys his sinful way of life. The eschatological hope of the Christians is not unfounded, wishful thinking, but rather a splendidly concrete reality already in motion, of which the smashing judgment of unbelieving Judaism and the glorious vindication of the Church's claims was but an earnest and evidence.

4. The historical importance of the destruction of Jerusalem and the blotting out of the Jewish theocracy is inestimable to Christianity in the following ways, listed by Newman (*Manual of Church History*,

I, 118, 119; see also Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, I, 402, 403):

- a. It marked in the most unmistakable way the end of the old dispensation and the complete emancipation of Christianity from the thralldom of Judaism. It was henceforth impossible for any one to observe the ceremonial law in its fullness. No doubt the Pauline type of Christianity would ultimately have become dominant apart from this fearful interposition of Divine Providence. Judaistic Christianity was to persist in the form of sects, but catholic Christianity could no longer be Judaizing.
- b. The destruction of the city was very commonly looked upon by Christians as a divine judgment on the Jewish people for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. It may safely be said that if the Jews as a body, or a large portion of them, had accepted Christ as their Saviour and had become partakers of the Spirit of Christ, the Jewish Zealots, who brought ruin upon their people, would not have arisen or would not have secured popular support.
- c. The great catastrophe may be regarded as a direct fulfilment of our Lord's predictions as recorded in Matt. 21:43 and 23:37-39 and in Luke 21:20-28.
- d. This great event is regarded by many as a fulfilment of our Lord's prophecies regarding his speedy coming in his kingdom (Matt. 10:23; 16:28; 24:34), and of such passages in the apostolic Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles as represent the Lord's advent as imminent. It seems harsh to associate so glorious an event as the Lord's coming with a catastrophe so terrible; yet there can be no question but that the destruction of the city and the theocracy gave a freedom and a universality to the gospel which mark an epoch in the history of Christianity and placed the gradually advancing kingdom of Christ on a firm basis.
- e. There is no reason to think that the Roman authorities at this time discriminated carefully between Christianity and Judaism in favor of the former; but the time had past when the accusations of Jews against Christians would be heeded by the civil courts. Henceforth the Jews were without political influence and were treated with contempt by the Roman officials.