

**An Examination of Dispensational Teaching: With Attention Paid to the  
Pre-wrath Position within Dispensationalism**

**Dr. Stanford E. Murrell**

*“Here is a doctrine that was not known  
or taught until the beginning of this century  
and it is already causing splits in churches.”*

~\*~

A. W. Tozer

### Three Basic Presuppositions of Dispensationalism

- Dispensationalism believes that the present generation is “*living on the threshold of the end of this age as many competent Bible teachers believe*”. The problem with this belief is that there is no evidence for it. Moreover, every generation has viewed itself as the terminal generation to some degree or another.
- Dispensationalism teaches that an ethnic and racial Israel remains God’s “*glory*” without a distinction between the racial and the regenerate Israel (Rom. 9:6). In addition, a radical cleavage is made between Israel and the Church despite Galatians 3:7, “*Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*”
- A certain camp within the Dispensational school of thought is now teaching that a distinction can be made between “*the Great Tribulation*” which begins at the middle of the seventieth week, and “*the Day of the Lord,*” which is supposed to begin with the opening of the seventh seal of Revelation (p. 27).

### Thesis Statement

Thesis Statement: “*The Rapture of the Church will occur immediately prior to the Day of the Lord, and the Day of the Lord begins with the opening of the seventh seal*” (Rev. 8:1, p. 18).

### Disrespect for the Church

While it may not be the intention of Dispensationalism, a fundamental disrespect for the Church does flourish throughout the System. An example of this disrespect flashes in certain writings. One author speaks of “*a lethargic, lukewarm, **materialistic** church in the tenth decade of the twentieth century*” which needs to “*come back to God*”. The irony is that it is this “*lethargic, lukewarm, **materialistic** church in the tenth decade of the twentieth century*” which has allowed the author of that statement to build a \$6, 500,000 complex with an additional \$18,000.00 per day to cover operating costs.

### No Place for Pain

It would not be unfair to say that Dispensationalism, as a System, does not prepare people to endure severe persecution. Whenever the concept of suffering arises it is always mingled with the concept that when the greatest periods of sorrow come upon the earth the Christian will escape. God’s people are taught to be **willing** to “*suffer and die for Christ, if necessary, under the persecution of the Anti-christ—always, however, with the blessed hope of rapture before God’s wrath is poured out during the Day of the Lord*” (p. 34). This type of logic is absolutely foreign to the Word of God. Far better is it to listen to the words of Peter who taught the Christian community how to face suffering and death.

- *1 Peter 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*
- *1 Peter 3:14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;*

- *1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*
- *1 Peter 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*
- *1 Peter 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*
- *1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

It would be helpful if there were support in *Scripture* for the novel position that Christians facing persecution for righteousness sake and are dying for the cause of Christ should have in their hearts a hope of escaping what they are experiencing. God is not so cruel as this theology which counsels a false expectation of divine deliverance by disappearing against reality.

### **In the Fullness of Time**

The Bible teaches that when Christ came it was in “*the fulness of the time.*” (Gal. 4:4).

- It was the fullness of the time because of the Roman roads which made travel in the Empire easy. The gospel could go to “*all the world*” –and it did (Col. 1:6).

*Colossians 1:6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:*

- It was the fullness of the time because of the *Pax Romana* (the peace of Rome).
- It was the fullness of the time because of the common Greek language, which was a universal language.
- It was the fullness of the time because of the religious expectancy in the hearts of men.

### **Prophecy Cannot Be Broken**

Part of the religious expectancy of the first advent of Christ was rooted in knowledge of Hebrew Scripture. The prophet Daniel had given to the world a prophetic clock that was being fulfilled right on time (Dan. 9:24-27) as all prophecy must be fulfilled within the period given. Tragically, Dispensationalism does not believe the totality of Daniel’s prophecy was literally fulfilled on time. Such a view of prophecy undermines the boundaries placed on predictive utterances in the name of the Lord by God Himself. Deuteronomy 18:21-22 “*And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? 22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing*

*which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”*

A good argument can be made that what Daniel predicted did come to pass on time with the 70<sup>th</sup> week following the 69<sup>th</sup> just as all the other weeks followed on time. Moreover, what Daniel predicted *had* to come to pass or Daniel is a discredited prophet. To take the last week of Daniel’s prophecy and suspend it in time with the promise of a future fulfillment is something that is *not* clearly taught in Scripture nor authorized. Jesus said that the *Scriptures* cannot be broken (John 10:35).

### **Why Jesus Must Come Again**

There are several reasons why Jesus must come again.

- Jesus is coming again because nature awaits redemption. Romans 8:22 “*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*” (cf. Gen. 3:17-18; Isa. 11:35).

**Note.** While quoting Hebrews 9:28 which speaks of the Second Coming, Dispensationalism embraces various positions on the timing of this “Second” Coming. Some teach that the Lord shall return 7 years earlier in a “Rapture” while others teach Jesus shall return 3 and ½ years *prior to* His “Second” Coming as He takes His Bride from tribulational wrath. It is interesting that Dispensationalism denies what it affirms (a third coming of Christ) and then affirms what is denied. That the Scriptures teach a Second Coming of Christ is revealed in John 14:3, Acts 1:11, and Hebrews 9:28.

- Jesus is coming again because legal justice demands it for moral corruption requires divine judgment (cf. Job 39:27-30; Rev. 19:17-18).

### **An Unworthy Assumption Concerning Old Testament Saints**

Dispensationalism contends that the ancient prophets could not comprehend the relation of the intense suffering and death of the Messiah with the great exaltation and glory of the same. Now that is an interesting concept.

- Dispensationalism would have the Church believe the prophets could predict the sufferings of the Messiah as Isaiah did (chapter 53) but not comprehend that the Messiah would suffer.
- Dispensationalism would have us believe that the prophets could predict the glories of Christ as David did in Psalm 16:8-11 and not comprehend what he wrote—though Peter says David did understand what he wrote (Acts 2:31). Peter says plainly that David saw *this* and so he “*spake of the resurrection of Christ.*”

Rather than assume that the Old Testament saints had no clue of the greatest of spiritual realities why not assume they did, especially when Christ Himself teaches us that Abraham rejoiced to see His day (John 8:56).

- Undergirding Dispensational thought is a belief in the low spiritual condition of the Old Testament saints. As there is an unwholesome view of the Church so there is an unworthy view of the saints of the Old Testament era.

### **The Church is an Aberration**

In Dispensational thought the teaching is set forth that the ancient prophets “*looked down the corridor of time and saw two prophetic mountain peaks. The first was the suffering Messiah, the second the glorious Messiah who would follow. For them, the width of the valley between the two peaks was undiscernible. They had no concept of the church age, which spanned the two peaks and has already lasted almost two millennia*”. The concept of a “*church age*” is introduced into the text with the assumption that the reader will know what is meant. However, for the uninformed, what is not known is that the phrase “*church age*” in the mind of a Dispensationalist refers to an aberration of time injected into the flow of human history after the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah. The “*church age*” is an intercalated period that will end at the Rapture so that God can conclude His dealings with ethnic Israel. Apart from the whole issue of the “*church age*” being an aberration, where in scripture is there warrant for the concept of the prophets looking upon human history from some “*mountain top*” and missing the “*church age*”?

### **Revelation 20**

As Dispensationalism assumes there will be a Rapture of the Church so it is assumed there will be a millennium reign of a specific nature. This millennium reign is still in the future. One day when Jesus comes again Israel will be exalted above the nations of the earth, the Davidic throne will be re-established, the Temple will be rebuilt, the sacrifices will be re-instituted, and Christ will rule and reign over a literal political empire. True, there will be death in this millennium reign of Christ not to mention disease and crime and sin. But that does not matter for justice will be swift and people will live longer. Turning to Revelation 20 it is pointed out correctly the term millennium (thousand years) is used six times.

- *Revelation 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him **a thousand years**,*
- *Revelation 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till **the thousand years** should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*
- *Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ **a thousand years**.*
- *Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the **thousand years** were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

- *Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a **thousand years**.*
- *Revelation 20:7 And when the **thousand years** are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,*

### **What is Not Found in Revelation 20**

What is not admitted by Dispensationalism as Revelation 20 is quoted, is the absence of so much that is assumed.

- In Revelation 20 there is no earthly Israel.
- In Revelation 20 there is no earthly king.
- In Revelation 20 there is no Davidic throne.
- In Revelation 20 there is no rebuilt temple.
- In Revelation 20 there are no sacrificial offerings.
- In Revelation 20 there is no quotation of Isaiah 2:2-4 or any OT passage

and yet all of these elements are assumed to be in view here and so passages such as Isaiah 2:2-4 are quoted as if they belong in the context.

### **The Biblical Reality**

Here is the Biblical reality. When the New Testament does quote the Old Testament passages referring in any way to the Messiah and His kingdom it applies them as being fulfilled at the First Advent. It is this very simple point that Dispensationalism fails to grasp. Therefore, the System's teachers can quote passages said in Scripture to be fulfilled in Christ at His First Advent as if they were *not* fulfilled but *shall be* in the future. Two examples of this are found on page 48.

Isaiah 9:6-7 and Acts 15:14-17 are presented as if they refer to a future kingdom. However, when we actually go to the Bible we find these passages are used in the New Testament in the context of prophecy *being* fulfilled *at that moment*. Luke 2:11 refers to Isaiah 9:6-7 as being fulfilled while James in Acts 15 quotes Amos 9:11,12 to prove that God was at that moment fulfilling prophecy. Nevertheless, these same passages in the hands of a Dispensationalist are taken, along with many other texts, and presented as *not* being fulfilled. The question arises, "*Who should the Christian student believe? Those who teach that Scripture is not being fulfilled? Or men such as Matthew and James who teach that Scripture was being fulfilled during their day?*"

## **Two Simple Truths**

There are two simple principles of interpreting the *Scriptures* that could solve a lot of problems of interpretation.

- First, let the New Testament interpret the Old Testament.
- Second, when the New Testament interprets the Old Testament believe it and seek no further interpretation.

There is no need for Dispensationalism to introduce a concept foreign to Scripture such as there being a "*partial fulfillment of prophecy*" or prophecy having a "*duel fulfillment.*" These thoughts are unworthy of the Word of God nor are they necessary. All that is necessary is to allow the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament and accept what is being said.

## **The System vs. the Scriptures**

One of the clearest examples of not allowing prophecy to be fulfilled as the New Testament defines fulfillment is found in Acts 2:16. Peter plainly states that the events unfolding on the day of Pentecost "*is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*" (cf. Joel 2:28-32). It is not uncommon to find Dispensationalism asserting that "*Peter does not say that Pentecost is the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy concerning the last days*" (Thomas Nelson's Study Bible, p. 1662).

## **Some Questions for Dispensationalism**

- If Israel is to be exalted above the nations why does the New Testament not plainly say so?
- If there is to be a Rapture of the saints in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period why does the New Testament not plainly say so?
- If there is a seven-year tribulation period why is there no verse in the New Testament that teaches such a concept in plain words?

## **The Kingdom Has Come**

While Dispensationalism only looks for a future kingdom the Bible speaks of the kingdom's present reality.

- *Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
- *Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
- *Matthew 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*
- *20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.*

- *Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*
- *Luke 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*
- *Luke 22:30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*
- *Luke 23:42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*
- *John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*
- *Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*
- *Colossians 4:11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*
- *1 Thessalonians 2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*
- *2 Thessalonians 1:5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:*

### **Come to the Kingdom**

While Dispensationalism looks for a future King and kingdom the *Scriptures* invite men to come to the kingdom and the King of the kingdom, Jesus Christ.

- Come to the kingdom ruled over by the Son of man. *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*
- Come to the kingdom and to the King of the kingdom to whom has been given “*dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.*”
- Come to the kingdom which “*is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*” *Daniel 7:13-14.*



## Some Surprising Observations

In recent years some Dispensationalism have begun to admit that Dispensationalism, as a System is “*relatively new in origin*”. While this does not bother most End Time students of the Bible it should. Did God really withhold a clear understanding of His Word from the Church until 1830? There are other admissions that should be made.

- Dispensationalism as a System of theology keeps changing.
- Dispensationalism as a System of theology is confusing. As one author admits his novel ideals “*certainly cannot cause any more confusion than that which already exists*”.
- Dispensationalism is bold enough to say that the Church can know at least the generation when Jesus is coming again and some are bold enough to tell the Church exactly when the Rapture will take place.

## The Time of the Rapture and the Second Advent

- The Rapture of the Church will occur immediately before the beginning of the Day of the Lord.
- The Day of the Lord commences sometime within the second half of the seventieth week.
- The cosmic disturbances associated with the sixth seal will signal the approach of the Day of the Lord.
- The Day of the Lord will begin with the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1).
- Everything else will be presented as confirmation of those things.

For those who embrace the Pre-wrath Rapture position a clearer indication of when the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ is offered for obviously, Christians will know if they are in the midst of the Great Tribulation since the Anti-Christ will be marking people for identification. Once the Anti-Christ is known, the date of the Rapture can be pin pointed and the date for the Second Coming as well for it is only 3 ½ years later. Perhaps the kindest thing that can be said of this new development in understanding End Time prophecy is this: “*When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him*” Deuteronomy 18:22.

## **The Truth of Total Depravity**

With eloquence and passion Dispensationalism does teach the doctrine of total depravity of humanity. Sin has come into the world to make the conflict between Christ and Evil at Calvary a divine necessity. However, for some Dispensationalist, in order to make the argument for God's judgment upon sin a necessity, an strange belief is introduced that there was a satanic infiltration of the human race before the Great Flood. It is believed that Genesis 6 (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4-6; Jude 1:6) teaches that Fallen Angels co-habitated with women to corrupt the human race. Only Noah and his family escaped the judgment of God that came because of this angelic corruption. While the theory is interesting and finds support in antiquity there are serious problems that cannot be overlooked such as the fact that Genesis 6 may not refer to angels (*see The Sons of God of Genesis 6: Demons? Degenerates? Despots?*). What the Bible does plainly teach is that Satan tempted man, there was a Fall from a state of grace, sin became pervasive to the point that God wiped out the human race with the exception of eight souls and started all over again.

## **Will Rome be Revived?**

Dispensationalism is constantly giving itself to fanciful speculation and sensationalism. One novel concept is that of a Revived Roman Empire. *"At the end time, out of a revived Roman Empire or Western European confederation of nations, will come her (Rome's) most diabolical progeny, the Anti-Christ"*. No scriptures are given for this assertion and rightly so for none exist. What does exist is confusion in the Dispensational system whether or not there will be a Revived Roman Empire or merely a Western European confederation of nations with economic power as might be found today in the European Common Market. The two entities are not the same. It is not unfair nor unkind to point out that it is this smooth but loose usage of phrases and words and concepts that characterizes The System known as Dispensationalism. This would not be of too much concern except for the fact that The System purports to be faithful to five fundamental hermeneutical principles.

- Accept the meaning of Scripture in its most normal, natural, customary sense.
- Take Scripture in context.
- Compare Scripture with Scripture.
- Before truth is realized, all seeming scriptural contradictions must be harmonized.
- Watch for near/far prophetic applications in Scripture.

## **Between the Rhetoric and the Reality**

Dispensationalism is to be commended for knowing about these principles of interpretation and setting them forth to be followed. The only question is whether or not The System honors its own rules of interpretation? The simple answer is, not always. The reason for this in part, is a measure of spiritual pride, in my opinion, reflected in such statements as this: *"Our understanding of the end times will increase as history continues to unfold and verify biblical prophecy.... Since Israel gained possession and control of her homeland in 1948, for instance, we have a perspective on prophecy that could only have been understood after that momentous event occurred"* (*The Sign*, pp. 9,10).

A humble Bible student can search from Genesis to Revelation and not find one single passage in the Bible that teaches the present generation of Jewish people was to regain land in 1948 and thus fulfill biblical prophecy. The System, however, believes that it can discern the signs of the time—which assumes there are signs of the time to discern. The tragedy is that this approach to prophesy has failed 100% of the time it has been “applied” since the death of the apostles.

- Jerome looked at the signs of the time of his day and thought the world was coming to an end when he heard of the burning of Rome.
- Martin Luther thought there were no more prophecies to be fulfilled in his day and that the pope was the anti-Christ. The pope of course thought Luther was the anti-Christ.
- In 1831 William Miller (1782-1849) published his views that the Second Coming of Christ would take place sometime between March 21, 1843 t March 21, 1844.

Mr. Miller had devoted six long years to studying prophecy in order to arrive at this date. Despite his failure to establish his generation as the terminal generation, despite his own certainties, despite the popularity of his position, he was just wrong. Now, other modern day prophets continue to perpetuate the very same error of William Miller by assuming that we are living in the end times, we can see what others have never seen. Somehow, it is all so “crystal clear” that there is amazement God’s people are so “blind and dull of heart” they cannot see what the “prophets” today see so clearly.

### **The Great Disconnect**

It is true that *“Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it”*. That is what is happening in the field of eschatology. Between the rhetoric of honoring fixed principles of hermeneutics there is a blatant violation of the same. Despite the claims of holding to a *“literal”* approach to prophesy The System finds more in Scripture than words warrant. To offer but one example, in Revelation 1:1 John is told that he will be shown things that will shortly come to pass. *Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which **must shortly** come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:* At the end of the Revelation the same promise is made. What John saw was to come to pass shortly. *Revelation 22:6 “And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which **must shortly** be done.”* According to modern day prophets two thousand and one years have passed since the Revelation given to John and the things told to the apostle have **not** come to pass! Then, amazingly enough, this is said about those who do believe that what was promised to come to pass did come to pass soon after it was revealed. *“...this view (of the Amillennialist) does not understand prophecy in its most normal, natural, customary (literal) sense, this view of the end time is considerably different than that of those who do” (The Sign, p. 13).* Between the rhetoric and the reality of The System there is a great disconnect and there is something else.

### **Not an Accurate Presentation**

There is a terrible mis-representation of the position of Amillennialism. On page 13 of *The Sign* the author contends it is the Amillennialist who is teaching God's people will not suffer persecution in end times. Nothing could be further from the truth. What is true is that it is the position of classical Dispensational Pre-millennialism that teaches the Church will be raptured and then great suffering will be poured out on the earth (p. 16, *The Sign*). The mid trib rapture position is not much better, except that it allows for suffering for some of God's people then escape for the worst of God's judgment—unless one comes to faith during the latter part of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week then those saints will have to endure the wrath as well (*The Pre-wrath Rapture Position*).

### **Antiochus Epiphanes**

The madness of the man Antiochus Epiphanes who ruled Syria from 175-164 BC should become familiar to the Church and for good reason. The desecration of the Temple by Antiochus for religious and political purposes sparked the Maccabean revolt leading to a Jewish military victory and the opportunity to sanctify the Temple. The celebration of this activity continues to be honored today in the Feast of Hanukkah or "*the Feast of Dedication*" (John 10:22). Judas Maccabaeus (Judah the Hammer) and his sons are honored for the guerrilla-style resistance they led for three years until Antiochus and his Syrian army were driven out of Israel.

### **Secular Humanism**

As Christians should know history and how it relates to the Scriptures so Christians should be familiar with modern modes of opposition to the Christian faith. Of particular concern is humanistic philosophy, which rests on four main pillars of faith.

- **There is no God, no Sovereign, and no Creator.**

*Psalms 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*

*Psalms 53:1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.*

- **All of humanity is the product of time + space + chance.** The theory of evolution is challenged by the Scriptures.

*Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

*Psalms 100:3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

- **All morality is relative.** According to humanistic theory there is no right, there is no wrong, and there are no absolutes. But then, the humanist cannot be absolutely sure there are no absolutes can they?

- **Amorality must reign.** There should be no praise or blame. Slogans replace rational thought.
  - *“I did it my way.”*
  - *“Do your own thing.”*
  - *“If it feels good, do it.”*
  - *“It’s my body, I will do with what I want.”*
  - *“Pro-choice.”*
  - *“I can’t tell you what to do.”*

### **The Amazing Anti-christ**

Among the many sensational teachings of Dispensationalism is the rise of an Anti-christ. A number of “*facts*” are often given about the Anti-Christ.

- **The Anti-Christ will arise out of the revived Roman Empire** (sometimes referred to as a ten-nation confederation in Europe). **Note.** It is modern day prophets and not the Bible that refers to this ten-nation confederation. Once the European Common Market was considered to be the Revived Roman Empire. There is no plain reference in Scripture to a Revived Roman Empire. There is a historical moment when it was thought that Nero had been resurrected from the dead and the people of the first century had to deal with the concept of *Nero Redivivus* but the notion of the whole Roman Empire coming back onto the stage of human history is something that is not found in the Bible as a whole or the New Testament in particular.
- **The Anti-Christ will embrace and then personify the attitude and philosophy (spirit) of the unregenerate world system toward God.**

*1 John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

*1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*

- **The Anti-Christ will oppose God and stand in the place of God.**

*2 Thessalonians 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

- **The Anti-Christ will be a magnificent being.** In the words of Clarence Larkin, “*He will be a ‘composite’ man. One who embraces in his character the abilities and powers of Nebuchadnezzar [of Babylon], Xerxes [of Persia], Alexander the Great [of Greece], and Caesar Augustus [of Rome]. He will have the marvelous gift of*

*attracting unregenerate men, and the irresistible fascination of his personality, his versatile attainments, superhuman wisdom, great administrative and executive ability, along with his powers as a consummate flatterer, a brilliant diplomatist, a superb strategist, will make him the most conspicuous and prominent of men. All these gifts will be conferred on him by Satan, whose tool he will be.”*

- **The Anti-Christ will enthrone himself in a temple in Jerusalem that has been built for God alone.** Note. Since the Temple was destroyed in AD 70 it is *assumed* that there will be a reconstruction of Solomon’s Temple. The reason for this assumption is based on a reference to the temple in 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

*2 Thessalonians 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

The term *naos* (*nah’os*) refers to the shrine itself rather than to the entire building complex as would be indicated by the word *ieron*. The reference in context would better be applied to the Church for it is in the Church that the Man of Sin shall stand where he ought not and publicly declare himself to be God.

*1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

*1 Corinthians 6:19 What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

*2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

**Note.** It is instructive to observe that earlier generations have believed that a particular Man of Sin would live on earth at the close of history and would be destroyed by Christ at His return. But no reference has ever been made to a Jewish Temple rebuilt or a Revived Roman Empire.

### **The Didache (“Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”)**

*“...As lawlessness increases they shall hate each other and shall persecute and betray, and then shall appear the deceiver of the world as a Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders...And then shall appear the signs...first, the sign spread out in heaven, then the sign of the trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead” (XVI. Iv-vi).*

**Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho***

*“What brainless men! For they have failed to understand what has been proved by all these passages, namely, that two advents of Christ have been announced, the first, in which he is shown as suffering, without glory, without honor, subject to crucifixion, and the second, in which he shall come from the heavens in glory, when the man of apostasy who utters arrogant things against the Most High, will boldly attempt to perpetrate unlawful deeds against us Christians” (CX).*

**Augustine, *De Civitate De* (“Concerning the City of God”)**

*“There can be no doubt that what is here said refers to Anti-Christ and the day of judgment, or as Paul calls it, the day of the Lord...” Commenting on 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11*

- **The Anti-Christ will assimilate the Jewish people through the religion of secular humanism.** As a result of this assimilation the Jews will be allowed to believe the Satanic lie that man can be God.

*2 Thessalonians 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:*

- **Christ will destroy the Anti-Christ at His Second Coming.**

*2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does His successive journeys run,  
His kingdom spread from shore to shore  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

~\*~

Isaac Watts

It is a minor thought perhaps but when Dispensationalism teaches about the royal reign of Christ it always in the *future* tense. When Isaac Watts wrote his hymn he believed in the *present* reign of Christ which shall continue ‘*Till moons shall wax and wane no more*’ to which we would say, Amen and Amen.

It is April of AD 30 in the city of Jerusalem. Hundreds of thousands of devout Jews have converged upon the Holy City for social and religious reasons. Of particular concern is the observance of the Passover. Into a teeming sea of humanity Jesus rides on the back of a donkey five days before His arrest. While people prepare to spread their garments and palm branches before Christ, in a sudden spasm of Messianic passion He weeps. The Lord of Glory begins to cry. There are tears in the midst of a tumultuous welcome for Jesus knows the people shouting the words of Psalm 118 do not understand who He is or why He has come. Nevertheless, the people shout

- *Matthew 21:8-9 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. 9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*

and prophecy is fulfilled.

- *Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

Because His reception was not according to gospel terms, because the people did not repent, Christ must manifest zeal for His Father's house. He did do this by cleansing the temple (Matt. 21:12-13) and by meeting the challenges of the major religious groups who wanted to ask Him some specific questions.

### **The Question of the Sadducees**

- *Matthew 22:15-18 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. 16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. 17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?*

### **The Response of the Savior**

- *Matthew 22:18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19-42 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. 22 When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.*



### **The Question of the Sadducees**

- *Matthew 22:23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.*

### **The Response of the Savior**

- *Matthew 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. 31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. 33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine. 34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.*

### **The Question of the Pharisees**

- *Matthew 22:35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, 36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

### **The Response of the Savior**

- *37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

### **A Just Judgment upon the Jewish Nation**

With each response of the Lord the religious leaders grew angrier and more desperate for they could not trap Christ. They could not discredit Jesus but what they could do was to ensure the departure of the glory of God from the nation and seal their own certain judgment which had already been passed.

- *Mark 12:1-12 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. 2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of*

*the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. 6 Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. 10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.*

### **Never to be Restored**

This taking away of the essential gospel privileges from national Israel and giving it to “others” (i.e., the spiritual remnant plus the remnant of spiritual Gentiles who were to come to faith) is never suggested in the New Testament to be given back to national Israel.

### **Covenant Conditions Unmet**

The restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Palestine on May 14, 1948 might indicate the “others” of Mark 12:9. However, this restoration of modern “Jews” to the land cannot be a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and for this reason—the basis for the prophecy to be fulfilled has not been met.

Long ago a condition was placed upon the Jews getting the land and being able to stay in it. That condition was repentance and gospel obedience. Notice the language of Deut. Deut. 4:27-28, 30-31.

- *Deuteronomy 4:27-28 And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. 28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.*
- *Deuteronomy 4:30-31 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, **if thou turn** to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; 31 (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.*

## **Ancient Prophecies for the People of God Today**

Even the most ardent Dispensationalist would not say that the modern nation of Israel has repented and turned to the Lord God and obeyed His voice to receive His Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Nevertheless, in book after book Deuteronomy 4 is quoted as scriptural proof that God has returned the Jews to their land in fulfillment of Biblical promise and prophecy. It is simply not the case.

If it argued that God is gathering His “*chosen*” people (Israel) so that He might convert them en mass and give them a New Covenant (Jer. 31:31), that may or may not be the case for the promise of the New Covenant is said to be fulfilled in the Church.

Hebrews 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

*Hebrews 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

If this passage teaches anything it teaches that the New Covenant is now in effect.

If it is said that God has two New Covenants, one with the Church and one with Israel, then the response is that such a thing is never taught in Scripture and is merely speculative thinking or deductive conclusions—like so much else in The System.

## **A Practical Problem**

If the Ethnic Theology of Dispensationalism is correct and God does have a plan to exalt a racial people, on a practical level, and we say it with respect, there will have to be a blood cleansing. The reason is that the majority of eastern Jews—and thus of world Jewry, is not of Semitic origin but of Khazar. The story of the Khazar Empire upon world history is a story that is not well known but it has profound implications when trying to define a racial Jew. The ancestors of modern Jews who have survived the holocaust have ancestors, not from Jordan, but from the Volga, not from Canaan but from the Caucasus, once believed to be the cradle of the Aryan race. Genetically, modern Jews are more closely related to the Hun, Uigur and Magyar tribes than to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In 1975 *Time Magazine* reported that American Jews “*tend to marry outside their faith at a high rate; almost one-third of all marriages are mixed*”.

## **The Importance of this Practical Problem**

The importance of determining what is a racial Jew is important for there is a practical if tragic paradox, which is this. The Jewish religion - unlike Christianity, Buddhism or Islam - implies membership of a historical nation, a chosen race. All Jewish festivals commemorate events in national history:

- the Exodus from Egypt,
- the Maccabean revolt,
- the death of the oppressor Haman,

- the destruction of the Temple.

The Old Testament is first and foremost the narrative of a nation's history. It gave monotheism to the world, yet its credo is *tribal* rather than universal. Every prayer and ritual observance proclaims membership of an ancient race, which automatically separates the Jew from the racial and historic past of the people in whose midst he lives.

The Jewish faith, as shown by 2000 years of tragic history, is nationally and socially self-segregating. It sets the Jew apart and invites his being set apart. It automatically creates physical and cultural barriers.

Today, the Jewish people have been transformed. The transformation began at the Diaspora in AD 70. Today the Jewish people are a *pseudo-nation* (racially, not legally) without any of the attributes and privileges of *true* nationhood. Modern Israel is held together loosely by a system of traditional beliefs based on racial and historical premises which turn out to be illusory. Orthodox Jewry is a vanishing minority.

### **Who Really Knows the Most?**

Perhaps one reason why Dispensational thinking cannot accept the concept of a judged Israel never to be recognized again in Christ according to racial lines (as per Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14, Rev. 14:6) is because of a mistaken idea that people closer to the “end times” know more than believers in the first century. Humility might suggest that people closest to the Lord and to the apostles knew much more than we do now.

- What Christian today has had the resurrected Lord personally take the Old Testament Scriptures and beginning with Moses and the prophets teach all things concerning Himself? (Luke 24:13-27).
- What Christian today has been able to linger after the Olivet discourse and ask for clarification?
- What Church congregation has received letters from the apostles (some of which are now lost to history)?

And there is something else. In 2 Thessalonians 2:5 Paul is distressed that the doctrines concerning the end times was being forgotten or misinterpreted by others. “*Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*” Paul taught the believers in detail about the things he had to remind them of in his letter, but teach them he did. It would be nice to be able to have heard what the saints originally heard but the point is established. The early Christians knew at least what we know today if not more. I would suggest they knew more.

## **The Doctrine of the Sign by Marvin Rosenthal (with modifications by Stanford E. Murrell)**

1. The word *sign* is used 119 times in the Bible.
2. The first usage occurs in Genesis in the context of God's creative acts and the beginning of human history. The sun, moon, and stars were, in the divine scheme of things, intended to be "for signs" and for seasons (Gen. 1:14).
3. The final usage is in Revelation, the last Book of the Bible, in the context of God's judgment on the earth. *Revelation 15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.*
4. Signs are for seeing. Men are called upon to see, look, behold signs. Signs are intended to be conspicuous, not hidden.
5. The Bible speaks of signs in a variety of ways.

- **Signs appear.**

*Matthew 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

- **Signs are shown.**

*Matthew 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

- **Signs are accomplished before the people.**

*John 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:*

- **Signs are accomplished in the midst of people.**

*Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*

*2 Corinthians 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*

6. Signs are by nature miraculous.

- *Exodus 7:9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.*
- *Numbers 14:22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;*
- *Deuteronomy 11:3 And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land;*
- *John 2:11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.*
- *John 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.*
- *John 12:37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:*

7. The words *signs*, and *miracles*, occur in tandem.

- *Exodus 7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.*
- *Deuteronomy 4:34 Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?*
- *Deuteronomy 6:22 And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes:*
- *Deuteronomy 34:11 In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,*
- *Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*
- *Acts 8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.*

8. God placed signs, as it were, at crucial forks in the road of redemptive history to say to men and women of faith, *This is the way, walk ye in it.*

9. Signs were to confirm, identify, or mark out someone or something as genuine and authentic.

10. Satan imitates God's signs.

- *Matthew 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*
- *2 Corinthians 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

11. The Jewish people were always looking for signs.

*1 Corinthians 1:22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:*

*Matthew 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.*

*Mark 8:11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.*

*Luke 11:29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.*

12. Such sign seeking did not please the Lord.

*Matthew 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:*

*Matthew 16:4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.*

13. If Jesus condemned the seeking of signs by the Jews so long ago, can He be pleased with pervasive pastime of seeking signs among His professing Church today?

14. Signs are more directional in nature than chronological. They tell the men which way rather than what time—unless a particular sign was given to indicate the timing of an event such as the signs given to indicate the end of the Jewish age with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

- *Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

15. The miracles of Christ were designed to be a sign to God's people that Jesus was whom He claimed to be.

*John 20:30-31 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

16. The birth of Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of the promise made to King Ahaz in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC..

*Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

17. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the great sign that He was whom He claimed to be—the Son of the living God.

*Matthew 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

*Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

### **A Weak Position Disguised**

It is hard to follow Dispensational teaching at times due to all the twists and turns of what is being said for it appears that a verbal “slight of hand” takes place on many a critical point. For example, concerning the great tribulation, the author admits that the passages cited in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 describe events related to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem but without warning there is often a shifting of the timing of the destruction of the temple from AD 70, when it really did take place, to a far distant event in the future where there is no temple nor clear statement in the Bible of a REBUILT temple. It seems as if what happened in AD 70 is of no major significance. The only basis for this sudden shifting of meaning from the present AD 70 generation of whom Jesus was speaking to *and* of (Matt. 24:34) is this statement:

*“The desecration of the temple, it is widely agreed, occurs in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 12:6,14), specifically, three and one-half years into it” (page 104).*

The tossing around of sentences like this is characteristic of the style of writing found in Dispensationalism—as if most Biblical scholars agree with a Dispensational interpretation. I would suggest that it would be more honest if Dispensational authors noted from time to time that it is *more widely agreed* that that the desecration of the temple does *not* take place in the Middle of Daniel’s seventieth week for that week was fulfilled 2,000 years ago.

### **There Will be Tribulation**

In an attempt to force the meaning of the word tribulation into a Dispensational scheme of events one author makes this astonishing statement:

*“In each instance where the Great Tribulation is used in a prophetic setting, it always refers to the persecution of God’s elect by wicked men, never to the wrath of God being*



*directed toward mankind. Prophetically, therefore, the Great Tribulation speaks of man's wrath against man, not God's wrath against man".*

In light of Luke 21:22, which speaks of the great tribulation upon Israel that, was predicted by Christ and confirmed by eyewitness accounts in history, God's **wrath** against man was being poured out because of the nation's murder of Christ. The people of Palestine had begged Pilate to let the blood of Christ be upon them and their children (Matt. 27:25). Heaven heard and the dark transaction was agreed upon so we read

*Luke 21:22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*

### **Divine Vengeance is in View**

Matthew Henry writes, *"Having given them an idea of the times for about thirty-eight years next ensuing, he here comes to show them what all those things would issue in at last, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter dispersion of the Jewish nation, which would be a little day of judgment, a type and figure of Christ's second coming, which was not so fully spoken of here as in the parallel place (Matt 24), yet glanced at; for the destruction of Jerusalem would be as it were the destruction of the world to those whose hearts were bound up in it.*

- 1. He tells them that they should see Jerusalem besieged, compassed with armies (v. 20), the Roman armies; and, when they saw this, they might conclude that its desolation was nigh, for in this the siege would infallibly end, though it might be a long siege. Note, As in mercy, so in judgment, when God begins, he will make an end.*
- 2. He warns them, upon this signal given, to shift for their own safety (v. 21): "Then let them that are in Judea quit the country and flee to the mountains; let them that are in the midst of it" (Of Jerusalem) "depart out, before the city be closely shut up, and" (as we say now) "before the trenches be opened; and let not them that are in the countries and villages about enter into the city, thinking to be safe there. Do you abandon a city and country which you see God has abandoned and given up to ruin. Come out of her, my people."*
- 3. He foretels the terrible havoc that should be made of the Jewish nation (v. 22): Those are the days of vengeance so often spoken of by the Old-Testament prophets, which would complete the ruin of that provoking people. All their predictions must now be fulfilled, and the blood of all the Old-Testament martyrs must now be required. All things that are written must be fulfilled at length. After days of patience long abused, there will come days of vengeance; for reprieves are not pardons. The greatness of that destruction is set forth,*

*By the inflicting cause of it. **It is wrath upon this people, the wrath of God, that will kindle this devouring consuming fire.***

### **Another Astonishing Statement**

Still trying to promote a novel understanding of the great tribulation as being fulfilled and not fulfilled historically a Dispensational author dismisses the eschatological impact of the destruction of Jerusalem by saying it is not called what Jesus himself calls it. Here is the statement.

*“During the Roman siege of Jerusalem between AD 68-70, tens of thousands of Jews were killed or enslaved, and multitudes more fled for their lives. It was a time of intense trouble and persecution, but that is not called the Tribulation period.”*

Many Dispensational authors would argue that the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was *not* the period of great tribulation Jesus foretold but was merely a time of intense trouble and persecution. Nevertheless, consider the words of Christ in Matthew 24:22. After describing the rise of false prophets, the rumors of wars, famines and pestilence, and earthquakes in strange places, after speaking of the abomination of desolation (which is said in Scripture to be the armies of Rome, cf. Mark 13:20 cf. Luke 21:14), after telling people to pray that their flight be not in winter (which would be meaningless today in a nuclear age) the Lord said, *“For then shall be great tribulation.”*

### **The System and the Scriptures**

Personally, I find it frightening that what Jesus said something is, another person can say it is not. But the System is bold in providing alternatives to its followers. Every Dispensational Study Bible I have seen declares that what Peter says was the fulfillment of Joel on the day of Pentecost was not a true fulfillment nor a complete fulfillment of that great event. And every other passage in the Scripture which is just as plain is reworked to fit the presuppositions of the System.

### **Clarification of Terms**

According to traditional Dispensational teaching the Tribulation Period lasts seven years but is broken down into two parts. In the first part there is general tribulation upon the earth but in the middle of this 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel there is Great Tribulation that lasts for another 3 ½ years. It is interesting that this classical Dispensational understanding is being challenged by a new mid tribulational pre-wrath position as being incorrect and for this reason. The Great Tribulation of the latter part of the 70<sup>th</sup> week does not last for the full 3-½ years. The seven-year span will be literally fulfilled but the Great Tribulation proper will be shortened. Matthew 24:22 is quoted as text to support this new Dispensational insight. *“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”*

### **A Dismissal of History**

What is ignored, once more, is the historical fulfillment of this prophecy of Christ as it relates to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 for the elect were saved. *“The ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, early in the fourth century, tells us that the Christians fled to Pella, at the northern extremity of Perea, being "prophetically directed"-perhaps by some prophetic intimation more explicit than this, which would be their chart-and that thus they escaped the predicted calamities by which the nation was overwhelmed”* (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary).

## Turning out the Lights

One of the more interesting and entertaining parts of some Dispensational thinking is the concept that the day will come when the Lord will turn out the natural lights of heaven before His Second Advent as the Sign that He is coming again. Appealing to passages dealing with cosmic disturbances it is argued that “*the sun will be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven*”. Except for the last this could have been a description of life in Pittsburgh, PA at the turn of the century when the smog was so heavy from factory work that the light of the sun was darkened and the moon could not be seen. There are some fascinating time period photos of those days.

## Before Jerusalem Fell

It is instructive to observe that historically, before the fall of Jerusalem there were cosmic disturbances just as Jesus predicted (*Great Tribulation, Part I*, pp. 36,37). Beyond that, it was apocalyptic language that Christ used. This language was also used for the downfall of Edom, Moab, and Ammon not to mention Babylon and Egypt.

- *Isaiah 13:9-13 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and **the moon shall not cause her light to shine**. 11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13 Therefore **I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.***
- *Isaiah 34:1-2 Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. 2 For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: **he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.***
- *Isaiah 34:4 And **all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.***
- *Isaiah 34:8-10 For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. 9 And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and **the land thereof shall become burning pitch**. 10 It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.*
- *Ezekiel 32:7-8 And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; **I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her***

*light. 8 All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD.*

- *Psalms 18:7-15 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. 8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. 10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. 11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. 12 At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. 14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. 15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.*
- *Isaiah 24:1 Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof... 17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. 18 And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. 19 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.*
- *Joel 2:10-11 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: 11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?*

### **A Process, not A Single Event**

In order to deal with the limitations of Hebrews 9:28 and Acts 1:11 which places the return of Christ to a second time and not to a third coming as Dispensationalism teaches, the Second Coming of Christ is being presented as a process and not a single event. One author explains. “*First, the Rapture of the church will occur; that will then be followed by the Lord’s judgment of the wicked as He **begins** His physical return to the earth.*” While the concept is very clever of claiming the event of the Rapture to be part of the Second Coming despite a time gap of 7 years (for some) or 3 ½ (for other Dispensationalists) the simplicity of the Scriptures is far better to embrace.

### **The Doctrine of “the day of the Lord”**

The System of theology known as Dispensationalism is very fond of taking biblical words and giving them new meaning that divorces the language of Scripture from any historical context. One example is what is done with the phrase, “*the day of the Lord.*” Therefore, consider the Doctrine of the Day of the Lord.

## ***The Day of the Lord in the Old Testament***

1. The Day of the Lord is an expression used seventeen times in the Old Testament by eight authors over a period of at least seven centuries.

<b>The Prophet</b>	<b>The Years of Public Ministry</b>
• Isaiah	740-680 BC
• Jeremiah	627-580 BC
• Ezekiel	592- 570 BC
• Joel	cannot be dated with certainty, c. 835 BC
• Amos	c. 755 BC
• Obadiah	8 <sup>th</sup> century prophet
• Zephaniah	640-612 BC
• Zechariah	520 BC

2. If the expression in the Old Testament is isolated from its usage in historical context and is catapulted into the future then it may very well refer to one specific end time moment.
3. However, it is not unreasonable to consider the expression in association with the various judgments that God sent Israel for idolatry and rebellion. These judgments are verified by history so that it can be said that the ***day of the Lord*** predicted came each time it was foretold. In other words, “***the day of the Lord***”, in the Old Testament, referred to any “day” the Lord came to discipline His people in righteousness.

## **Men of Prophecy and their Message**

### **1. The Message of Isaiah.**

- *Isaiah 2:12 For **the day of the LORD** of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:*
- *Isaiah 13:6 Howl ye; for **the day of the LORD** is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.*
- *Isaiah 13:9 Behold, **the day of the LORD** cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.*

**Commentary.** All that Isaiah predicted came to pass in 722 BC when the Northern Kingdom fell. The proud rulers of Israel were brought low; the Assyrians were an instrument of destruction from the Almighty; the lay was desolate and many sinners were destroyed. Once Israel was destroyed the prophet warned Judah of judgment, not by the Assyrians but by the Babylonians, even though this empire had not yet risen to power.

## 2. The Message of Jeremiah.

- *Jeremiah 46:10 For this is **the day of the LORD** GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.*

**Commentary.** In Jeremiah, God is presented as being very patient. He has delayed His judgment in order to appeal to the people to repent. But the people defiled God's words, refused to listen to His prophets, and so the day of vengeance came in 586 BC.

## 3. The Message of Ezekiel

- *Ezekiel 13:5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in **the day of the LORD**.*
- *Ezekiel 30:3 For the day is near, even **the day of the LORD** is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen.*

**Commentary.** Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem in three stages. In 605 BC he forced the surrender of Jehoiakim and took key hostages of leading families including Daniel and his friends. Then, in 597 BC Nebuchadnezzar returned to put down the rebellion against his rule. Ten thousand hostages were carried off into captivity including Jehoiachin and Ezekiel (b. 622 BC, deported 597 BC; died 560 BC). Finally, in 586 BC, after a long siege, the Holy City was destroyed. Ezekiel prophesied among the Jewish exiles in Babylon during the last days of Judah's decline and fall. All that he predicted came to pass. The house of Israel could not stand in the day of Battle. Life was one dark and cloudy day. It was the time of the heathen.

## 4. The Message of Joel.

According to Joel, *the day of the Lord* should be associated with a plague of locust on the land. Moses had warned that God would send plagues of this nature (Deut. 28:38, 42).

- *Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! For **the day of the LORD** is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.*
- *Joel 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for **the day of the LORD** cometh, for it is nigh at hand;*
- *Joel 2:11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for **the day of the LORD** is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?*
- *Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for **the day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision.*

## 5. The Message of Amos.

- *Amos 5:18 Woe unto you that desire **the day of the LORD!** to what end is it for you? **the day of the LORD** is darkness, and not light.*
- *Amos 5:18 Woe unto you that desire **the day of the LORD!** to what end is it for you? **the day of the LORD** is darkness, and not light.*
- *Amos 5:20 Shall not **the day of the LORD** be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?*

**Commentary.** Amos prophesied in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah (reigned, 767-739 BC), and in the days of Jeroboam II (reigned, 782-753 BC) the son of Joash, king of Israel. Amos anticipated the 722 BC Assyrian captivity of Israel (Amos 7:11) and the fact that the sins of the people were so great they “desired” as it were, the day of the Lord or the day of divine visitation in judgment. And *the day of the Lord* came. Because Amos ministered in a time of economic prosperity and military security, his prophetic voice was ignored.

## 6. The Message of Obadiah.

- *Obadiah 15 For **the day of the LORD** is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.*

**Commentary.** The message of Obadiah was a message of destruction against Edom for its cruelty to Judah. What Obadiah predicted came to pass for “**the day of the Lord**” drew *near* and then arrived. Edom was made small among the nations and was cut off. During the rule of the Maccabees the Edomites were completely subdued and even forced to conform to Jewish laws and rites and submit to the government of Jewish prefects. The Edomites were then incorporated into the Jewish nation, and the whole province was often termed by Greek and Roman writers "Idumaea." Immediately before the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, twenty thousand Idumaeans were admitted to the Holy City, which they filled with robbery and bloodshed. From this time the Edomites, as a separate people, disappear from the pages of history. Scriptural indications that they were idolaters (2 Chron 25:14-15,20) are amply confirmed and illuminated by discoveries at Petra. (*The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*).

## 7. The Message of Zephaniah.

- *Zephaniah 1:7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for **the day of the LORD** is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.*
- *Zephaniah 1:14 The great **day of the LORD** is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of **the day of the LORD**: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.*

**Commentary.** Zephaniah describes the coming day of judgment upon Judah. The holiness of God was not going to allow Judah to go unpunished. That day came though a righteous remnant did survive, also according to prophecy (Zeph. 3:9-20) to call upon the Lord with a remnant of righteous Gentiles admist much rejoicing. That remnant is called the Church today.

## 8. The Message of Zechariah.

- *Zechariah 14:1 Behold, **the day of the LORD** cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.*

**Commentary.** In the Zech 14:1 passage *the day of the Lord* refers to the coming of judgment upon Judah by vindicating His justice, by punishing the wicked, and then saving His elect people (Joel 2:31; 3:14; Mal 4:1,5). And, once more, this happened.

### Only A Few Options

To dismiss the “*day of the Lord*” from its historical usage as a warning of judgment and to deny its historical fulfillment means:

- God *kept* His word and the “*day of the Lord*” came as predicted with each divine visitation. Believing in a literal fulfillment of the predictive message resolves all the questions that are posed by those who either deny the historical narrative or look for future fulfillment on some level.
- God did *not* keep his word and whatever happened historically to the nations is not part of predictive prophecy.
- God *will* yet keep His word. These severe warnings, directly delivered to specific people in time will have to be brought forth again on the earth for a literal fulfillment.
- There is a *dual* fulfillment of these Old Testament predictions.

Apart from clear New Testament statements that the “*day of our Lord Jesus*” is the same as the “*day of the Lord*” of the Old Testament it would seem to be best to consider that what God said would happen to those people He spoke to, did happen in a literal manner. The “*day of the Lord*” came and came again and again.

### The “*day of the Lord*” in the New Testament

1. The Old Testament expression “*day of the Lord*” is adopted by New Testament writers to refer to the Second Advent of Christ.
  - *1 Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in **the day of the Lord Jesus.***



- *2 Corinthians 1:14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in **the day of the Lord Jesus**.*
- *1 Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord** so cometh as a thief in the night.*
- *2 Peter 3:10 But **the day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

2. At the Second Advent of Christ specific events will occur.

- Individuals will be saved in their totality and that means that bodies will be re-united with their immortal spirits. *1 Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in **the day of the Lord Jesus**.*
- There will be great rejoicing among the believers for one another. *2 Corinthians 1:14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in **the day of the Lord Jesus**.*
- The Second Coming of Christ will come in an unexpected time which might indicate that the fascination with end time prophecy will cease and the Church will be careless on this matter or it could mean that the Lord will come suddenly and with great power whether or not there is anyone “home”. *1 Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord** so cometh as a thief in the night.*
- When Jesus comes there will be a renovation of heaven and earth. *2 Peter 3:10 But **the day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*
- On that “**day of the Lord Jesus**”, which is the day of His Second Advent, the saints will rise to greet the Lord in the air in order to escort the coming King to the place where He has promised to return in the same manner in which He went away (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16ff).

3. When the Old Testament prophets are quoted in the New Testament the message is that of practical application or that of prophecy being fulfilled. For example, Amos is quoted in Matthew, Acts, and Romans.

- *Amos 4:11 I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.*

### **Application**

*Romans 9:29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.*

- *Amos 5:25-27 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? 26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. 27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.*

### **Application**

*Acts 7:42-43 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? 43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*

- *Amos 8:9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:*

### **Application**

*Matthew 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:*

- *Amos 9:11-12 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: 12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.*

### **Interpretation**

*Acts 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 **And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,** 16-18 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

4. Historically the Old Testament prophecies find fulfillment in the generations to which they applied. When the New Testament takes the Old Testament prophecies and provides an interpretation and/or an application, then that is legitimate for the writers of the New Testament were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

5. What believers cannot do is to take Old Testament passages and thrust them into the future apart from their historical fulfillment as if those today who make the application and/or interpretation are under divine influence. In other words, there is no right to go beyond what the Scriptures teach. That this freedom to find application/interpretation of Old Testament passages takes place is unfortunate.

### **How Many Resurrections are There?**

Of the many questions of concern Dispensationalism should be made to answer is this: “*Why does the System teach multiple resurrections?*” That the System teaches multiple resurrections is evident by clear statements, inference, and various charts. If the System is understood (and depending on who is doing the teaching) the following resurrections have to take place.

- There is to be a resurrection at the Rapture (1 Thess 4:16ff)
- There is to be a resurrection prior to the Millennial Kingdom beginning (Rev. 20:1-6)
- There is to be a resurrection at the end of the Millennial Kingdom since people do die during this period

In contrast to the complexity of the System and in the absence of any clear texts for multiple resurrections is the simplicity of the Savior who said in John 5:28-29 *Marvel not at this: for **the hour** is coming, in the which **all** that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

### **Something Hard to Believe**

Sometimes it is difficult to believe that Dispensationalism actually makes certain statements. One author says,

*“To tell the church it will **not** be present during a significant part of the seventieth week of Daniel is to court disaster.”*

Once more there seems to be in Dispensational thinking a disconnect between the rhetoric and the reality because this is the exact position of the author himself! Holding to a pre-wrath rapture position the same author teaches on another page “*the church will not be present during a significant part of the seventieth week of Daniel.*” There is no essential difference between the pre-tribulation and pre-wrath position on the point of God’s people escaping cataclysmic events. Both positions in the Dispensational camp teach the same.

### **No Comfort for Christians**

Another incredible thought is presented for consideration.

*“How comforting for believers is the realization that when going through the period of man’s greatest inhumanity to man, when the Anti-Christ is demanding that men bow to him or perish-the Son, who is opening the seals, is in complete, sovereign control; nothing can happen to the child of God, even during the Great Tribulation, except that which his sovereign Lord permits.”*

The problem is not that much of this statement is biblically correct but that it is not believed and is not consistent with the System that is being proposed. Because God is sovereign, because God can preserve His own and does, even in the midst of great tribulation, why is there the presentation of a rapture to rescue the saints so that they do not go through the wrath that is to come upon the earth? This question is very pertinent because it is also taught that souls will come to faith during the Great Tribulation Period and will be protected and preserved – unless the Lord allows *them* to be martyred! Dispensationalism offers no consistent comfort, and certainly no clear message to Christians, only confusion.

- **Question.**

*Will the Church be raptured before the wrath?*

**Dispensational Answer.**

*Yes.*

- **Question.**

*Will people come to faith after the Rapture?*

**Dispensational Answer.**

*Yes.*

- **Question**

*Are these not people of faith “in Christ”?*

**Dispensational Answer.**

*Yes.*

- **Question.**

*Are those who come to faith in Christ in the midst of the Great Tribulation Period, are they not part of the Church?*

**Dispensational Answer.**

*No, for the Church is taken out of the world and only lasted from Pentecost to the Rapture. (But logically the answer should be YES for there is only one name under heaven by which men are saved).*

- **Question.**

*Will those converted during the Great Tribulation be Raptured?*

**Dispensational Answer.**

*No.*

- **Question.**

*Will those who come to faith during the Great Tribulation be delivered from the wrath?*

## **Dispensational Answer.**

*No.*

I say again, there is no comfort for *all* of God's people in such a System.

## **Humanity Can only Hurt Humanity so Much**

Concerning the Dispensational concept of *the future* holding “*man's greatest inhumanity to man*”— well, is almost too much. Even a casual acquaintance with the Russian pogroms, the Jewish holocaust and the horrors of any world war reveals that man's inhumanity to man cannot get any greater than it has been in times past or is now in certain parts of the world. If only a Dispensationalist could actually watch a city be vaporized in the blink of an eye it would be helpful to their theological view whether or not future acts of inhumanity are greater than when they are presently endured. If it is sincerely believed that man's greatest inhumanity to man is in the future “*when the Anti-Christ is demanding that men bow to him or perish*— “ then there is, once more, a dismissal of all of human history for many an emperor has demanded this as did Stalin and Hitler. Every dictator that ever ruled a country and discovered someone saying something against him has made men bow or be killed.

## **It is All in the Future**

The idea that “*Christ will literally return to assume His kingdom at the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15-17)*” continues to undergird the System's fixation with the future while denying the present rule and reign of Christ. The Bible states that Christ HAS assumed His royal reigning rights and is exercising them today as King of kings and Lord of lords.

- *Matthew 28:19-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen*
- *Acts 2:32-33 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*

## **The Sifting Sands of the System**

Since the purpose of this chapter is to provide evidence that the Day of the Lord starts with the opening of the seventh seal (p. 147) there is not much else to comment on since no evidence has been forthcoming. What the chapter does reveal is that the proponents of the System devour one another in an attempt to posture for their own position. The constantly shifting position of the founders of the System is also recognized (p. 138-139). True truth does not change.

### **Doomed to Repeat the Past**

There is an old maxim, which says, *“Those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it.”* I would suggest that those who dismiss the past, such as Dispensationalism does, are desperate to repeat it. Forgetting what the day of the Lord meant historically, forgetting the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, Dispensationalism views the future as a repetition of the past.

### **The Third Coming of Elijah?**

One of the more interesting teachings of Dispensational theology is that Elijah the prophet will yet appear in the flesh on planet earth during the tribulation period. In light of the words of Christ it is difficult to imagine how this teaching thrives, but thrive it does. Not much needs to be said beyond the words of Christ.

- *Matthew 11:13-14 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*
- *Matthew 17:10-13 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? 11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. 12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. 13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.*

If the New Testament were allowed to interpret the Old Testament, and if when it did, the New Testament were believed, then a lot of the more fanciful teachings associated with Dispensationalism would die a natural death.

### **When Theory Becomes Truth**

The System often starts out with a concept as a suggestion or a *“possibility.”* However, it is not long before a theory is presented as a fact. For example, one Dispensational author says, *“Moses and Elijah are premier personalities of the Old Testament Scriptures. Dispensational pre-millennialists have frequently equated these two men with the two witnesses who will appear during the Tribulation period (Rev. 11:3-19).”* Though some pre-millennialist do equate the two witnesses as Moses and Elijah, not all do and not all are dogmatic. It is only a possibility that Moses and Elijah will be re-incarnated to die and then be resurrected after three days. But what is presented as a theory becomes an absolute! *“In either case,”* says the same writer *“Elijah is seen to be ministering inside and during the seventieth week.”* What is conspicuously absent from most Dispensational doctrine when dealing with the return of Elijah are direct quotations from Jesus and an examination of the Lord’s clear teaching that Elijah has already come. Not only is history dismissed, so is the teaching of the Savior. The boldness of Dispensationalism really is breathtaking.

## The Day of His Wrath

*For the great day of his wrath is come;  
and who shall be able to stand?*

~\*~

Revelation 6:17

### The Timing of the Sixth Seal

Another main argument of Dispensationalism is that “*The final wrath of God (against man’s ungodliness and unrighteousness) will result in divine judgment during the Day of the Lord*”). It is the position of pre-wrath mid tribulational Dispensationalism that this special day does not begin at the beginning of the Tribulation period as pre-tribulationalist hold, but is restricted to that time following the opening of the sixth seal. One author says that he consulted forty commentaries on the book of *Revelation* and “*Not one suggested that the sixth seal was retroactive and encompassed the events of the first five seals. Attempts to suggest otherwise are new in origin...*”

### The Wrath of God

The only point that can be made about the concept of God not pouring out His wrath until the opening of the seventh seal in Revelation 7 is that it seems nonsensical when judgment after judgment has been poured out under the direct supervision of the Sovereign of the universe apart from whom nothing happens. It is **the Lamb** who opens all the seals (Rev. 6:1). Only after **He** opens them does War ride forth to conquer followed by Death, Famine, and Hell. To say that the wrath of God does not start until the seventh seal borders on the incredulous. Revelation 6:17 is simply a summary statement of the seal events. Else where in Scripture the same events found in the second, third, and fourth seals are used to describe the wrath of God. Even Robert Van Kampen admits this much in his work *The Sign* (p. 194)— and then proceeds to dismiss the significance of letting Scripture interpret Scripture (and when it does accepting it).

While a cloud of scholarly verbiage can cloud the meaning of the aorist tense, a normal reading of the text would indicate that the events on the mind of the holy author is that of a summary statement for the next verse says, “*And **after** these things (Rev. 7:1).*” The seal judgments have taken place (aorist tense) and now something *else* is about to happen—the good news of the protection of the people of God, not by removal but by Divine faithfulness and sealing.

**Note.** Rev 6:17 Is come, *eelthen* (NT: 2064). Literally, “*came.*” (Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament) “*For the great day of his wrath is come (Gk. came); and who shall be able to stand?*”

**Note.** Rev 6:17 The fall of Babylon, Idumea, Judah, Egypt, and Jerusalem, has been described by the prophets in language that was equally majestic, figurative, and strong. See Isa 13:10; 34:4, concerning Babylon and Idumea; Jer 4:23-24, concerning Judah; Ezek 32:7, concerning Egypt; Joel 2:10,31, concerning Jerusalem; and our Lord himself, Matt 24:29, concerning the same city

**Note.** Rev. 6:17 Rev 6:17 *"Now, it is certain that the fall of any of these cities or kingdoms was not of greater concern or consequence to the world, nor more deserving to be described in pompous figures, than the fall of the pagan Roman empire, when the great lights of the pagan world, the sun, moon, and stars, the powers civil and ecclesiastical, were all eclipsed and obscured, the pagan emperors and Caesars were slain, the pagan priests and augurs were extirpated, the pagan officers and magistrates were removed, the temples were demolished, and their revenues were devoted to better uses.*

*It is customary with the prophets, after they have described a thing in the most symbolical and figurative manner, to represent the same again in plainer language; and the same method is observed here, verse 15, 16, 17: And the kings of the earth, etc. That is, Maximin, Galerius, Maxentius, Licinius, etc., with all their adherents and followers, were so routed and dispersed that they hid themselves in dens, etc.; expressions used to denote the utmost terror and confusion. This is, therefore, a triumph of Christ over his pagan enemies, and a triumph after a severe persecution; so that the time and all the circumstances, as well as the series and order of the prophecy, agree perfectly with this interpretation. Galerius, Maximin, and Licinius, made even a public confession of their guilt, recalled their decrees and edicts against the Christians, and acknowledged the just judgments of God and of Christ in their own destruction." (from Adam Clarke's Commentary quoting Dr. Dodd)*

### **A Seal for the Saved**

*"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev 7:1-2).*

What is interesting is that while much ado is made by students of prophecy about the mark the beast (Anti-christ) places in the foreheads of his followers, nothing sensational and dramatic is ever said about the mark God places on the foreheads of his own. In fact, it seems to be taken in a *non-literal* manner and "spiritualized". "Commenting on the sealing of believers in Ephesians 1:13, Ryrie wrote, 'A seal indicates possession and security.' Here in Revelation 7 the 144,000 are sealed in their foreheads as an indication that they belong to God (possession) and will experience His security (protection).

### **How Near is "Near"**

The question that Dispensationalism should address at some point in the discussion is "How near is 'near'?" When the prophet Zephaniah says "The great day of the LORD is near," (Zeph. 1:7,14-15) and is speaking to the people of his generation in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, why is it being quoted as if it is futuristic? One of the great principles that Dispensationalism professes to embrace is the "Golden Rule of Interpretation" offered by David Cooper (p. 176):

*"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in light of related passage and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."*



In as far as the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC was being predicted, and it happened within a generation of the prophecy given, it was literally fulfilled. Why then is prophecy of Zephaniah being quoted as being futuristic and is speaking to end time matters? The question is raised for once more there is a constant choice offered the student of God's Word between the Scriptures and the teachers of the System.

- Zephaniah says that the things of which he spoke were “*near*” but Dispensationalism teaches that what Zephaniah was 2601+ years in the future and have yet to draw “*near.*”
- Isaiah spoke of the day of the Lord's vengeance to his generation as being near but Dispensationalism teaches that what Isaiah said would happen and history confirms did happen has *not* happened after 2701 + years.
- Peter says that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost but Dispensationalism teaches that what Peter says was fulfilled is not fulfilled.
- In Revelation 1:1 John was told he would be shown things that were to shortly come to pass. “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must **shortly** come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*” The system of Dispensationalism assures the Church that John was not shown things that must shortly come to pass but was really shown things 2001 plus years into the future. How near is “near” how short is “shortly”?

### **Two Groups of People**

To illustrate that Dispensationalism is not as consistently “literal” as it declare itself to be, attention is turned to Revelation 7. In chapter seven two groups of people are referred to. The first group consists of a 144,000 celibate male Jews (Rev. 7:4; 14:4), 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:1-8). The second group consists of a great multitude that no man can number. The question arises, “*Who are these two distinct groups? What do they represent?*” In trying to answer this question Dispensationalism tries to have it both ways, a literal understanding and a spiritual one. “*This number may be taken literally, or figuratively of a national conversion.*” “*That the 144,000 were virgins and not defiled with women may indicate either (literally) celibacy and sexual purity (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25-28) or (figuratively) moral and religious purity (refusal to submit to the false religious system of the False Prophet).*” (*The King James Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers, pp. 1992, 2003*).

Concerning Rev. 14:4 it is said, “*This reference to their being virgins **may** mean that they never married or perhaps that they purposely remained celibate in their separation unto God (2 Cor. 11:2)*” “*What most Dispensational authors are certain about is that “144,000 [literal] Jews must be sealed before the Day of the Lord wrath begins”*. Those who are saved will be sealed.

## **The Forehead: A Place of Public Notice**

Several times in the *Revelation* the concept of a public marking of the forehead is mentioned.

- **Individuals who follow the Beast receive his mark in their foreheads and on their right hand.**

*Revelation 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:*

*Revelation 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*

*Revelation 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,*

*Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

*Revelation 15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*

*Revelation 16:2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.*

*Revelation 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

*Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

- **Individuals who follow the Lamb receive a distinct mark in their forehead. The mark is the name of the Father, Yahweh (Rev. 14:1) and later that of the Son (Rev. 22:4).**

*Revelation 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

*Revelation 9:4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*

*Revelation 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, **having his Father's name written in their foreheads.***

*Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

*Revelation 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.*

- **The Great Harlot of Revelation 17:5 is clearly identified on her forehead as such.**

*Revelation 17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

### **The Great Tribulation: A Time of Great Revival?**

One of the most amazing teachings of Dispensationalism is the idea that following the removal of the Church and thus the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit souls shall come to faith en masse. In less than 3 ½ years one must “postulate” that there will be such a great magnitude of souls saved that no man can number them. But how is this possible? The Bible teaches that God sends ministers to proclaim His Word so that men might hear and live. But “*how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*” (Rom. 10:15). If all the ministers of the gospel are gone, if all true Christians are suddenly and completely removed from the earth, and if the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, how can souls come to faith? It is a perplexing problem for apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit no man can be saved.

### **Raptured Saints and Revelation 8:1**

Concerning the presence of the great multitude in white robes before the throne the Christian reader of such Dispensational works as *The Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church* is assured that this body of believers is the church that has been raptured out. But there is nothing in the entire *Revelation* about a raptured church. Not one word, not one clear passage in *Revelation* teaches that the church has been forcefully, suddenly, bodily, and physically removed from the earth. But the teaching is that the Rapture “*occurs immediately prior to the opening of the seventh seal and the outpouring of the Day of the Lord wrath*”. Revelation 8:1 is cited as a proof text of this major doctrinal position. However, when Revelation 8:1 is consulted it says

nothing like this. All that Revelation 8:1 teaches is that when the seventh seal was opened there was silence in the heavens. Revelation 8:1 *“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”* It is this constant *alluding* to Scriptures to support incredible blanket statements of which Dispensationalism should be most ashamed.

### **Not Appointed to Wrath**

It is true that the Bible teaches God has not appointed His people to wrath in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 but the wrath is that of eternal damnation in the Pauline epistle. Salvation is contrasted with damnation in this passage. Salvation is not being contrasted with temporal tribulational judgment on earth. A watchful state of salvation is distinct from the careless living of individuals who do not know Jesus will appear the second time and when He comes there will be eternal judgment rendered. *“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”* (1 Thess. 5:6-11).

### **Proposition:**

*The last trump will be nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different than the final, climatic, eschatological outpouring of the wrath of God (p. 193).*

### **Observation.**

This proposition is not consistent with Scriptural revelation. The term *“last trump”* is used only once in scripture and when it is used it is associated with resurrection and hope for the hearts of the Christian and not an *“eschatological outpouring of the wrath of God.”*

*1 Corinthians 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

### **Doctrine of a Mystery**

1. A biblical mystery has three components.
  - A biblical mystery is part of God’s eternal plan
  - A biblical mystery is something God did not reveal to the Old Testament saints
  - A biblical mystery is known only by divine revelation
2. There are a number of significant biblical mysteries.
  - The mysteries of the kingdom

*Matthew 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*

- The mystery concerning the blindness of Israel

*Romans 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

- The mystery concerning Christ and the church

*Ephesians 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

- The mystery of iniquity

*2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

- The mystery of godliness

*1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

- The mystery of the Church comprising of Jew and Gentile

*Ephesians 3:3-6 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*

## **Israel and the Church**

Christian theology has always maintained the essential continuity of Israel and the church. The elect of all the ages are seen as one people, with one Savior, one destiny. This continuity can be shown by examining a few Old Testament prophecies with their fulfillment. Dispensationalists admit that if the church can be shown to be fulfilling promises made to Israel their system is doomed. If the church is fulfilling Israel's promises as contained in the new covenant or anywhere in the Scriptures, then [dispensational] premillennialism is condemned. In light of the challenge that Israel and the church are radically distinct in Scripture consider the following.

- **Promise to Israel -**

*"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.' -Hosea 1:10*

### **Fulfillment in the church -**

*What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." -Romans :22-26*

- **Promise to Israel -**

*Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'" -Hosea 2:23*

### **Fulfillment in the church -**

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. -1 Peter 2:9-10*

- **Promise to Israel -**

*"On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; -Amos 9:11*

### **Fulfillment in the church -**

*Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.' "Known to God from eternity are all His works. -Acts 15:14-18*

**In the same manner there are many Old Testament passages referring to Israel that are in the New Testament applied directly to the church.**

- **Spoken to Israel -**

*"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in*

*Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls. -Joel 2:28-32*

**Applied to the church -**

*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place..."But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'* -Acts 2:1,16-21

- **Spoken to Israel -**

*'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." -Exodus 19:6

**Applied to the church -**

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; -1 Peter 2:9*

- **Spoken to Israel -**

*"My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. -Ezekiel 37:27*

**Applied to the church -**

*And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." -2 Cor 6:16*

- **Spoken to Israel -**

*"Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. -Lev 19:2*

**Applied to the church -**

*but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." -1 Peter 1:15-16*

- **Spoken to Israel -**

*"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- -Jer 31:31*

### **Applied to the church -**

*Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. -Luke 22:20*

### **The Problem of the New Covenant**

The New Covenant is particularly problematic for Dispensationalism, as Jeremiah 31 is undeniably addressed to Israel. The New Covenant is the very heart of the Gospel, yet if the church is fulfilling the promise given to Israel under the New Covenant, Dispensationalism is dead. [Charles] Ryrie, in his early writings, makes this significant statement:

If the church does not have a new covenant, then she is fulfilling Israel's promises, for it has been clearly shown that the Old Testament teaching on the new covenant is that it is for Israel. If the church is fulfilling Israel's promises as contained in the new covenant or anywhere else in the Scriptures, then [Dispensational] Premillennialism is condemned. One might well ask why there are not two aspects to the one new covenant. This is the position held by many premillennialists, but we agree that the amillennialist has every right to say of this view that it is a practical admission that the new covenant is fulfilled in and to the church. Dispensationalism has used various arguments to get around this insurmountable problem. Perhaps the boldest was the concept of two New Covenants. Lewis Sperry Chafer appears to be the originator of the idea:

There remains to be recognized a heavenly covenant for the heavenly people, which is also styled like the preceding one for Israel a "*new covenant.*" It is made in the blood of Christ (cf. Mark 14:24) and continues in effect throughout this age, whereas the new covenant made with Israel happens to be future in its application. To suppose that these two covenants -- one for Israel and one for the Church -- are the same is to assume that there is a latitude of common interest between God's purpose for Israel and His purpose for the Church.

Consistent Dispensationalists have long recognized the problem. E.W. Bullinger noted that the cup of the Lord's Supper was indeed the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-33, directed to Israel and not the church, and for that very reason the "mystery" church should not administer it. Moderate (inconsistent) Dispensationalists, not understanding the Sacrament, but still desiring to preserve their "memorial" sought to maneuver out of this predicament. John F. Walvoord, who became the president of Dallas Theological Seminary, and who appears to be the leading contemporary champion of the second new covenant, writes:

The point of view that holds to two covenants in the present age has certain advantages. It provides a sensible reason for establishing the Lord's supper for believers in this age in commemoration of the blood of the new covenant. The language of I Corinthians 11:25 seems to require it: "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do as often as ye drink it in remembrance of me.*" It hardly seems reasonable to expect Christians to distinguish between the cup and the new covenant when these appear to be identified in this passage. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, Paul speaking of himself states: "*Our sufficiency is of God: who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant.*" It would be difficult to adjust the ministry of Paul as a minister of the new covenant if, in fact, there is no new covenant for the present age. Walvoord, discussing the Epistle to the Hebrews, contrasts the Mosaic (old) Covenant, the New Covenant, and his novel "Better" Covenant. The identification of the New Covenant which replaces the Old Covenant would seem to be certain by the lengthy quotation from Jeremiah 31 which the Epistle contains, and thus it is with some astonishment that one reads Walvoord's denial:



The Epistle to the Hebrews by its title is addressed to the Jewish people. The epistle is planned to show that Christ and Christian doctrine supersedes Moses and the Mosaic covenant. The argument in Hebrews eight proceeds on the revelation that Christ is mediator of a better covenant than Moses, established on better promises. At this point, the writer shows that the Mosaic covenant was never intended to be eternal (in contrast to other Jewish covenants) and that the Old Testament itself anticipated the day of its passing. To prove this point, the passage from Jeremiah on the new covenant is quoted (Heb. 8:8-12)...There is no appeal at all to the content of the new covenant with Israel as being identical with the better covenant of which Hebrews speaks. The very absence of such an appeal is as strong as any argument from silence can be. Dispensationalists, determined to cling to their false distinction between Israel and the church are forced to abandon the New Covenant's application in any real sense to the church.

- The mystery of a generation not dying but being changed at the Second Coming of Christ

*1 Corinthians 15:51-58 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

## **The Last Trump**

1. The timing of the mystery of the last generation being transformed is revealed to be at “*the last trump.*”

*1 Corinthians 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

2. It would not be wrong to inquire, “*When is last trumpet?*” Since the Book of the Revelation was not written prior to the letter to Corinth it is reasonable to believe the meaning of the last trump can be understood apart from the trumpet sounds of the Revelation.
3. Historically, the trumpet was used to call the Jews for a solemn assembly, for holy worship, or to announce a call to war (cf. Num. 10; Neh. 4:19-20).
4. When Jesus comes the Second Time for all who believe His arrival will be announced by the sound of a trump.

*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

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

5. The last trump is associated with the last day of human history when all is changed at the coming of Christ.

### **The Last Day**

1. On the Last day Jesus will return and at His return bodies will be resurrected from the dead.
  - *John 6:39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*
  - *John 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*
2. Christians take great hope in the promise of a resurrection on the last day.
  - *John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*
  - *John 6:54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*
  - *John 11:24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*
3. As there is a resurrection unto life, so there is a resurrection unto judgment on the last day.
  - *John 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

### **An Unworthy View of the Church**

Dispensationalism believes that the Church is an intrinsically corrupt organization that is full of apostate people who will be united under the Anti-christ. What is tragic is that this view of the Church is not only accepted but large sums of money are given by the Church to ministries that continue to denounce it. Once more there is a disconnect between the rhetoric and reality. It is a perverse form of self-flagellation.

### **What Dispensationalism Should Not Teach**

In the New Testament the purpose of the epistles was to correct any abuses that were found in the local assembly. That sin was in the sanctuary is without dispute. Christ said that the Evil One would come and sow tares among the wheat. Paul wept because he knew wolves would come to devour the flock of God. Nevertheless, the Church remains in the sight of God the most glorious institution. Its members are elected by the Father, redeemed by the blood, sanctified by

the Spirit, seated in the heavenly, and will be presented as a bride without spot or blemish. It is this view of the church that should be promoted in the minds of men for it is biblical. What should not be articulated from one end of the earth to the others is the Dispensational view that the church is corrupt, apostate, doomed for failure, and needs to be removed so that real evangelism can take place during the Great Tribulation period (so called).

### **Will the Church Apostatize?**

One of the foundational doctrines of Dispensationalism is that before the return of Christ the Church will apostasy and the man of sin shall be revealed. A critical passage is 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5. Until these major events occur the Christian community is not to be afraid or concerned.

- *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come **a falling away** [Gk. apostasy] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*

It would not be wrong to ask this question: “*Is Paul teaching that the reason why Christ has not returned, contrary to rumors in the early Church, was because the Church was not yet thoroughly corrupted?*” Did Paul teach that the Church was not bad enough for Christ to come again and to be gather unto Him? That would be an unusual way to teach an important doctrine. The normal way for Christ to deal with the Church was and is to discipline it.

- **When Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit they were punished.** *Acts 5:1-11 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.*

- **When the saints in Corinth took part of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner they were punished.** *1 Corinthians 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*
- **When immorality was manifested in the congregation to the point that it became a public scandal the person was openly rebuked and judged.** *1 Corinthians 5:1-5 1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

If the immoral man was so wicked that he had to be disciplined in order to be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, is it reasonable to think that *the day of the Lord Jesus* can only come when the Church is thoroughly corrupted?

- **The warning to the seven churches in the book of the Revelation is that if they are not faithful the Lord will remove them** from their place of privilege, not by a glorious rapture but by a stern rebuke (Rev. 1-3).

The Lord has not brought the Church into existence so that it might fall away, become corrupt, go into apostasy and in the end, be led by the Anti-christ. All through the New Testament the Church remains faithful though there are blemishes that have to be dealt with and they always are. A number of methods were used to purify the Church from corruption.

- **Public exposure.** *Matthew 18:15-18 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*
- **Premature Death.**
- **Shunning.** *Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

- **Pastoral oversight.** *Titus 1:4-5 Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. 5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*

### **Comfort Found Apart from a Falling away of the Church**

There is another thought. Why would Paul have in mind the apostasy of *the church*, if what he was correcting was a form of apostasy in a false teaching that Christ had already come? If Paul's intent was to "*comfort*" the Christians by teaching an apostasy of *the church* then he ought to excite them by pointing out that the very false teaching they had been hearing is a sign of being gathered together with Christ! I would argue that whatever the apostasy was Paul had in mind, it was something distinct from the Church.

### **Identifying the Time and Place of the Apostasy**

The only other time the Greek word for apostasy is used in the New Testament besides 2 Thessalonians is in Acts 21.

- *Acts 21:15-19 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. 16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. 17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: 21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.*

In context, Paul was speaking to Jewish elders in Jerusalem who wanted to embrace Christ but keep the old forms of Judaism. They accused Paul of teaching Jews to forsake [*forsake* is the translation of *apostasias*—*to fall away or utterly abandon*] Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, When Paul uses the word apostasy in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 he uses the term the way Luke did. Paul speaks of Jews who will abandon the God of their fathers and their messianic hope. Some see this Jewish apostasy in the future.

However, it is possible to find a historical fulfillment of this in AD 70 at the fall of Jerusalem when John of Gadara led many people into believing that he was the Messiah. To add to the Jewish apostasy, during the final days of Jerusalem the Jewish priestly hierarchy defied God's revelation of the gospel in Christ and undertook to stifle God's Word and enforce its own traditions on all Jews. Support that the reference is to a now *historical* apostasy finds support in Paul's statement in 2:7 that this "*mystery of iniquity*" was already at work.

- *2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

- *Note.* Nero as the “*man of sin*” cannot be dismissed. This could be a reference to Nero who "deified" himself and had incense burned before his image in the temples. In the fifth year of his reign Nero murdered the famous Roman teacher and philosopher Seneca who was his tutor and chief adviser and a restraining influence in his life (2 Thess 2:7). Nero became a severe persecutor of Christians putting to death Paul and Peter.

### **A Literal Reading of Revelation 12 with Rational Conclusions**

In quoting Revelation 12 with appropriate observations two basic presuppositions have been followed. They are here honestly confessed.

- **First, the events described in chapter 12 are future and not historical.** This point is proven by the fact that the Book of Revelation was written c. AD 90 as a prophetic work and also by the fact that nothing like what is described has ever been documented in the annals of time.
- **Second, since the plain sense of the Scripture is set forth in a very simple and common sense manner, there is no other sense to be sought.** There is nothing in Revelation 12 that cannot literally take place. In fact, stranger events than what is described have already taken place in history according to eye-witness testimony. Therefore, do not question what Revelation 12 really teaches. What is contended for here may be disputed but it cannot be discredited for it is the literal Scripture.

If what is taken literally stretches the imagination then let it be said that what is now believed with absolute certainty and is set forth authoritatively is no more incredulous than believing that one day the moon shall be turned to liquid blood (as per Acts 2:20) or that an Anti-Christ who once ruled one of the world’s great empires (p. 208) shall be resurrected from the dead to win the confidence of the world in the near future (p. 208). In fact, many believe the Anti-Christ now lives on planet earth and is poised to make his presence known. Therefore, in that same spirit consider these coming world events that will shock and amaze many. [*Note.* That no one has ever known about these events despite 2001 years of church history is of no consequence—what follows is the **literal** future for mankind to witness beginning with....]

### **The Return of Mary**

There can be no doubt that the woman in view here refers to Mary. It is not a nation that is spoken of but a woman. Many competent Bible scholars agree that Mary is the woman of this passage. It is an amazing thought perhaps but Mary shall one day appear in heaven before making her descent to earth. Heads will turn upward to watch Mary as she returns for she is clothed with the sun and the moon is under her feet. There is a crown of twelve stars that shall encircle her head. These cosmic changes will astonish the world and be a witness of incredible things to come.

- *Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:*

What a thrilling moment that will be when Mary returns! While Protestants might be amazed at the return of Mary to endure persecution, many within the Catholic faith will have no problem accepting her descent for it is an ancient belief of the Church that she never died. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, when bishops from throughout the Mediterranean world gathered in Constantinople, Emperor Marcian asked the Patriarch of Jerusalem to bring the relics of Mary to Constantinople to be enshrined in the capitol. The patriarch explained to the emperor that there were no relics of Mary in Jerusalem, that *"Mary had died in the presence of the apostles; but her tomb, when opened later . . . was found empty and so the apostles concluded that the body was taken up into heaven."*

In the eighth century, St. John Damascene was known for giving sermons at the holy places in Jerusalem. At the Tomb of Mary, he expressed the belief of the Church on the meaning of the feast: *"Although the body was duly buried, it did not remain in the state of death, neither was it dissolved by decay. . . . You were transferred to your heavenly home, O Lady, Queen and Mother of God in truth."*

In 1950, in the Apostolic Constitution (*Munificentissimus Deus*), Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Assumption of Mary a dogma of the Catholic Church in these words: *"The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heaven."* With that, an ancient belief became Catholic doctrine and the Assumption was declared a truth revealed by God.

### **The Second Birth of the Savior**

Since there is no record of the birth of a child by Mary *after* she has manifested herself to the world clothed with the sun, moon, and stars it must be concluded that Jesus must literally be brought forth again.

- *Revelation 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

Though the first birth of Mary's child brought much sorrow and suffering there will be no suffering associated with this second birth other than an initial attempt to kill the baby as soon as it is born (12:4). Apart from that singular fact all the details of the Man-Child's life are obscured except for His second ascension (Rapture?) into heaven.

### **The Second Ascension of Christ**

- *Revelation 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.*

### **The Feeding of Mary for 1230 Days**

Once the Man-Child is safe in heaven attention is returned to Mary who, for whatever reason finds herself the object of a Satanic pursuit. Before, Mary was entrusted to the care of the apostle John but now there seems to be no one to protect her and so, like Hagar of old, she flees into the desert.

- *Revelation 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

### **A True Sight of Satan**

A specific description is given of Mary's archenemy. Satan, the Devil, the Dragon who is a hideous looking creature. He literally has a red epidermis. From his neck rises seven heads and from his seven heads spring forth ten horns. To match his awesome appearance Satan has incredible power over a portion of the cosmos. With his tail he will one day sweep across the sky and take billions and billions of stars, a third part of the heaven, and throw the stars onto the earth. It will be a heavenly disturbance unknown to mankind.

- *Revelation 12:3-4 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

### **The Coming Cosmic War**

One reason for the casting of the stars to earth is because he has been defeated in heaven. In eternity past Satan wanted to be like God (Isa. 14:13ff). He has never lost that longing. One day Satan will make a final attempt to unseat God. But his revolt against God's sovereign authority will end in defeat. Michael, who has disputed with Satan over other matters (Jude 1: 9) shall have the victory.

*Revelation 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

Though Michael and a host of elect angels will defeat the Dragon he is not doomed nor confined though he no longer has a place in heaven. Seeking to exact his revenge Satan turns to persecute Mary who has been hiding in the dessert for 3 ½ years.

### **The Satanic Pursuit of Mary**

- *Revelation 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the Man-Child.*

### **On Eagle Wings of Mercy**

Before Mary can be devoured by the anger of Satan she will be given two literal wings of eagles to lift her up and help her fly into the dessert to hide for another extended period of time (probably another 3 ½ years).

- *Revelation 12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*



## **A Flood from the Face of Satan**

Mary's miraculous escape on Eagle wings shall be none too soon for Satan has it within his power to cause a flood of water to wash over Mary in her flight. Just as the water is about to drown Mary the earth shall suddenly open to drink in the floodwaters and Mary shall rise to land again in safety in the desert.

- *Revelation 12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

## **War on Jewish Saints**

With Mary's miraculous escape and with her Son safely seated in heaven, Satan is more furious than ever. Since he can hurt no one else he will turn his fury to hurting Jewish Christians for only they are the true remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Like they did during WW II, Gentile Christians shall watch the holocaust unfold but shall once more be either unable or unwilling to help. If there is a difference, it is that whereas men (i.e., the Nazis) once persecuted the Jew indiscriminately, this persecution is performed by Satan and his demons personally. Another difference is that this persecution is limited to converted Jews who have embraced the Messiah.

- *Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

## **Angelic Infiltration of the Human Race**

One expression of the spiritual warfare that is coming upon Jewish believers might be sexual in nature. Jesus indicated what the conditions on earth would be like during this special period of human history known as the Great Tribulation. "*But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:37).*" Genesis 6:1-7 reveals what the days of Noah were like. In particular they were days of co-habitation between fallen angels (*the sons of God*) and women (*the daughters of men*). So serious was the angelic infiltration of the human race by demonic beings that God had to send a Flood to destroy humanity with the except of Noah and his family.

- *And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. 3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. 4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. 5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his*

*heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*

### **The Beginning of the End**

The pre-millennial concept of Christ coming *for* His saints and then *with* His saints is being surrendered by some within the Dispensational circles. No longer do all within The System make a dramatic distinction among Greek works to indicate a Rapture separate from the Second Advent. But then there is this statement by one author: “*The church will be raptured and then the end—God’s wrath—will fall upon an unrepentant world.*” For those embracing a pre-wrath rapture position, the end is not the end but only the beginning of the end. So much more follows the alleged mid tribulational rapture of the saints in the middle of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. .

- ❑ The administration of the trumpet judgments
- ❑ The great apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin
- ❑ The second advent proper after 3 ½ years
- ❑ The binding of Satan
- ❑ The millennial reign of Christ
- ❑ Multiple resurrections and judgments
- ❑ The release of Satan at the end of the millennial reign
- ❑ The passing of a little season
- ❑ The Great White throne judgment
- ❑ Creation of a new heaven and earth

The end is not the end.

### **A Clever Concept**

One of the great criticisms against Dispensationalism is the teaching of a *Third Coming* of Christ. The attempt is made to deflect that charge by teaching there is only one Second Coming but that it is a process. The Second Coming begins with the Rapture and moves on to the outpouring of the God’s wrath during the day of the Lord and Christ’s physical return in glory. What is not confessed by this clever rhetoric is that nothing has been conceded and nothing has been resolved. There is still a tremendous disconnect between the rhetoric and the reality.

- ❑ **Item.** If the Rapture takes place first for *some* of God’s people (the Church) who are promised not to go through the Great Tribulation period (for God has not appointed His own to wrath), and then in the same breath it is admitted that many come to faith during the Great Tribulation and must endure the same wrath that others were promised deliverance from, of what value is the doctrine? Why not teach that some of God’s people shall not have to go through great tribulation and some will. But then, how would that teaching be different from the last 2,000 years of Christian experience?

- **Item.** If the Rapture and the “*physical return in glory*” is separated by 3 ½ years in distinct phases then how can they be the same event? They are not. George Bush might go to Texas on the day of His inauguration but if he does not return for 3 ½ years it can hardly be the same “*coming*” even though he might be president the whole time. Either Jesus returns in the same manner in which He went away or He does not (Acts 1:11). Either Jesus lingers in the sky with the saints for 3 ½ years, returns to heaven for 3 ½ years, or comes on down to earth to touch the Mount of Olives—or He does not.

### **The Bible and the Future (Dr. Wick Broomall)**

- Older premillennialism taught that the church was in the forevision of the Old Testament prophecy; Dispensationalism teaches that the church is hardly, if at all, in the Old Testament prophets.
- Older premillennialism taught that the great burden of Old Testament prophecy was the coming of Christ to die (at the First Advent) and the kingdom age (at the Second Advent). Dispensationalism says that the great burden of Old Testament prophecy is the kingdom of the Jews.
- Older premillennialism taught that the First Advent was the specific time for Christ to die for man's sin; Dispensationalism teaches that the kingdom (earthly) should have been set up at the First Advent for that was the predicted time of its coming.
- Older premillennialism taught that the present age of grace was designed by God and predicted in the Old Testament; Dispensationalism holds that the present age was unforeseen in the Old Testament and thus is a "great parenthesis" introduced because the Jews rejected the kingdom.
- Older premillennialism taught that one may divide time in any way desirable so long as one allows for a millennium after the Second Advent; Dispensationalism maintains that the only allowable way to divide time is in seven dispensations. The present age is the sixth such dispensation; the last one will be the millennial age after the Second Advent. It is from this division of time that Dispensationalism gets its name.
- Older premillennialism taught that the Second Advent was to be one event; Dispensationalism holds that the Second Advent will be in two sections - "the Rapture" and "the Revelation." Between these two events they put the (to them) unfulfilled seventieth week (seven years) of Daniel 9:23-27, which they call "the Great Tribulation."
- Older premillennialism taught that certain signs must precede the Second Advent; Dispensationalism teaches that no sign precedes the "rapture-stage" of the Second Advent, which may occur "at any moment." However, there are signs that precede the "revelation-stage" of the Second Advent. The "Rapture" could occur "at any moment," but the "Revelation" must take place after the seven years of the Great Tribulation. The first stage is undated and unannounced; the second stage is dated and announced.

- Older premillennialism had two resurrections—the righteous before the Millennium; the unrighteous after the Millennium. Dispensationalism has introduced a third resurrection - "tribulation-saints" at the "revelation-stage" of the Second Advent.
- Older premillennialism usually held what is called the "historical symbolic" view of the book of Revelation. This view makes Revelation a picture in symbolic form of the main events in the present age. Dispensationalism holds generally to the "futurist" view of the book of Revelation, which view makes almost the whole book (especially chapters 4 to 19) a literal description of events to take place during "the Great Tribulation" or Daniel's seventieth week, which Dispensationalism considers as yet unfulfilled.
- The general attitude of older premillennialism was on the whole mild and reverent in its approach to Scripture. There have been some outstanding scholars who have been persuaded that the premillennial is the correct view. In contrast, Dispensationalism has assumed a far more dogmatic attitude. It has introduced a number of novelties in prophetic interpretation that the church never heard of until about a century ago.

### **A Changing System of Theology**

Dispensationalism as a system has managed to survive as an alternative doctrine to historic Christianity by being willing to change on critical points. The observation is made by proponents of the pre-wrath mid tribulation position that no biblical evidence exists that Christ will come *for* His saints and then return to earth a second time seven years later *with* His church. This is a true observation. However, what is not true is the new twist given to this classical pre-tribulational, pre-millennial teaching. The new twist is that *"the Lord's coming (parousia) is a comprehensive whole. There is only one Second Coming. It includes the Rapture of the church, the outpouring of God's wrath during the Day of the Lord, and Christ's physical return in glory"*.

Actually it is hard to discern any fundamental difference between classical Dispensational teaching and what the Mid-tribulational position thinks it is advocating. The rhetoric has changed but there is no difference in substance. Whether it is 7 years or only 3 ½ years there is still a time element between the Rapture and the time Christ returns the Second Time as He went away. Call the whole process a "coming" if one will but that is not the intent of the Scriptures and makes meaningless words. If a verbal net is thrown wide enough it can be said that the ministry of Christ now in heaven is part of His Second Coming for that too is included in the process of Christ's return. John 14:3 *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

## The Coming of Christ Towards the Earth

Special attention by Mid-tribulationism to the word *parousia* which has a simple meaning, according to Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon:

- presence
- a coming, an arrival, an advent; the future visible return from heaven of Jesus to raise the dead, to hold the last judgment and set up formally and gloriously the kingdom of God [in a more visible manner]

While it is true that when Christ comes again to earth [not *towards* the earth] He will do all that He has promised to do but first He must return. To take the physical presence of Christ and place Him in the skies for 3 ½ years (or where ever the Mid-tribulation doctrine has Him) is to make language meaningless. The Mid-tribulation position does not have Christ coming to earth but towards the earth and *that* is called the Second Coming.

## The Date of the Lord's Return

The Mid-tribulation position argues that the day or hour of Christ's return cannot be known. However, one author declares, "*There will be precisely 1,260 days from the time the Anti-Christ sets up his image at the temple, and seven years from the day Israel signs the covenant with him.*" Surely then it is possible to pin point the date for Christ's Second Coming proper if this time the term is used not for the process but for the precise moment His feet will touch the Mount of Olives again (Acts 1:11).

The <i>Parousia</i> (not known) _____	3 ½ years later _____
Middle of Tribulation period Rapture	Christ touches down on Mt. Olives
The Day of the Lord (Wrath) begins	

If millions of people suddenly disappear from earth, there is a good chance that the event will be noticed in the media and the date of their disappearance not forgotten. The absence of millions will be remembered, especially since people have been receiving marks on their foreheads by the Anti-Christ (Rev. 13:6) or by God (Rev. 7:1-2) for 3 and ½ years prior to the *parousia*. Those without the mark of the Beast who disappear will be noticed. **Note.** It is God who first marks His own on their foreheads; it is the Beast who counterfeits what God has done.

## Recurring Violations of Dispensationalism

- Dispensationalism's *theory* of a seventieth week that did not **literally** follow the 69<sup>th</sup> week—despite the promise of God that it would (Daniel 9)—is assumed to find fulfillment in the future and thus the theory is superimposed on John's *Revelation* so that it can be boldly stated, "*John wrote again in the context of the middle of the seventieth week.*" Notwithstanding this assertion one searches *Revelation* in vain for a seven-year tribulation period.

- The prophetic words of Isaiah given to his own generation and fulfilled historically is “resurrected” and given to another generation. Really, the prophetic utterances of men like Isaiah are not “resurrected” as much as denied being literally fulfilled while history is dismissed so that the future can be molded according to creative insights.

### **Is the Church Found Throughout the *Revelation*?**

A critical point in Dispensational theology is that the Church is *not* found in Revelation chapters 4-21 (or chapters 8-21). Of all the erroneous and extreme doctrinal positions the System takes this one is among the easier to challenge. Consider the System once more against the Scriptures for the same terminology used for the church throughout the New Testament is found of the redeemed in the *Revelation*.

#### **1. We read of fellowservants**

- *Revelation 6:11* And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their **fellowservants** also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

*Colossians 1:7* As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear **fellowservant**, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

*Colossians 4:11* And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my **fellowworkers** unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

#### **2. We read of the brethren**

- *Revelation 6:11* And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their **brethren**, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

*1 Thessalonians 1:4* Knowing, **brethren** beloved, your election of God.

*Colossians 1:2* To the saints and faithful **brethren** in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **3. We read of people washed in the blood of the Lamb**

- *Revelation 7:14* And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and **have washed** their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

*1 Corinthians 6:11* And such were some of you: but ye **are washed**, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

#### **4. We read of the dead who die in the Lord**

- *Revelation 14:13* And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which **die in the Lord** from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

*1 Thessalonians 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also **which sleep in Jesus** will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

#### **5. We read of the saints**

- *Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the **saints**: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

*Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

#### **6. We read of the prophets**

- *Revelation 16:6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

*1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.*

#### **7. We read of those who have been called, chosen, and are found faithful**

- *Revelation 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

*2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

#### **8. We read of the people of Christ**

- *Revelation 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*
- *Revelation 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

*Hebrews 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

*Hebrews 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*

*1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

#### **9. We read of the servants of Jesus**

- *Revelation 19:2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*
- *Revelation 19:5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.*

*Ephesians 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*

*Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

#### **10. We read of those who suffer for Christ**

- *Revelation 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the **blood of the saints**, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

*2 Timothy 4:6-7 For I am now ready to be **offered**, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

Note. The word offered is *spendo* (*spen'-do*) and means to pour out as a libation, i.e. (figuratively) to devote (*one's life or blood, as a sacrifice*) ("*spend*").

#### **Not When but What**

Concerning the wrath of God, the heart of the issue is not whether or not God has appointed His people to "*wrath*"—for it is universally conceded that He has not—but what is the nature of the wrath of God. The classic passage that is appealed to for teaching that God has not appointed His people to wrath is 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Christians are to wait for the return of Christ from heaven [in the same manner in which He went away, Acts 1:11] for at that time the Lord will deliver His own "*from the wrath to come*", a reference to eternal judgment and not some tribulation wrath.

**Question.** *How can Christians be certain of this position as opposed to the Dispensational teaching?*

**Answer.** Because Christ has spoken on this topic Himself. In John 5:28-29 *Jesus said, Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*



The wrath that is spoken of in Revelation 6:17 does refer to tribulational wrath as a response for the great suffering that the Christian have already endured for righteousness sake. *For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? Revelation 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.*

### **Just Like Jesus**

The pattern in *Revelation* reflects what Christ endured in His own life. He suffered unjustly and in righteousness. Then came the days of vengeance upon those who hurt Him (Luke 21:22). So in the book of the Revelation the righteous suffer and then are avenged. Revelation 6:9 *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

### **A Hope that is not Blessed**

By far one of the cruelest doctrines of Dispensationalism is changing the blessed hope of Christ's return and making it a temporal hope of escaping suffering. *"The blessed hope is the certain prospect of deliverance from God's wrath and the Spiritual union between Christ and church, the Bridegroom and the bride, in spite of all possible obstacles"* (p. 247). Ten thousand times ten thousand let the historic faith of God's people rise up to shout "NO!" The blessed hope is not a spiritual union but a literal union of Christ and His people in a glorious return that includes an amazing greeting of the King of kings in literal, physical, glorified resurrected bodies. The reason why Christians are to live righteously is not to escape persecution but because it pleases the Lord as our heart look towards *"that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;"* (Titus 2:13). No where in the Bible is the blessed hope of Christ's Second Coming (Heb. 9:28) associated with expectation of deliverance from a world caught up in normal judicial judgment for *true* biblical doctrine teaches that suffering is part of the Christian experience. The *eternal* wrath of God of which Paul teaches Christians shall be delivered from is distinct from the *temporal* wrath of God of which John writes as being poured out upon an ungodly world.

### **Revival—After the Holy Spirit is Removed**

Another tragic position of Dispensational doctrine reiterated on page 255 is the idea that after the Holy Spirit is removed there will be a great revival that takes place as a large number of people come to faith during the dark days of the reign of Anti-Christ. *"At the Rapture, the church is removed from the earth and with it, the Holy Spirit of God"*. It is encouraging the author understands how dishonoring this position is but distressing that he would proceed to identify the restrainer as Michael—which is simply more speculative teaching in a system that has more than enough imagination to its credit. Less there be any doubt, consider the concept of Moses being reincarnated so that he can be executed! Moses is allowed to be executed because the restrainer Michael is *not* taken out of the world after all but *"simply ceases restraining"*. One

has to smile in sadness when the confession is made that the concept of Michael being the restainer finds historical support – in the Greek *magical papyri*. The giving of Israel thirty days for mourning and then forty-five days to cleanse a rebuilt temple is just more of the “magic” of Dispensationalism to press for details which God’s people have never seen. But here is the truth: there is not a single verse in the Bible that clearly teaches any of this. By resorting to “fuzzy math” special time periods might be found but not the average person who simply reads the Word of God.

### **Passages in the Bible Referring to 30 Days**

- *Leviticus 12:4 And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying **three and thirty days**; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.*
- *Numbers 20:29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron **thirty days**, even all the house of Israel.*
- *Deuteronomy 34:8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab **thirty days**: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.*
- *Esther 4:11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these **thirty days**.*
- *Daniel 6:7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for **thirty days**, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.*
- *Daniel 6:12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within **thirty days**, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.*
- *Daniel 12:12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and **five and thirty days**.*

### **Passages in the Bible Referring to 45 Days**

The only mention of forty-five in the Bible is found in 1 Kings 7:3 *And it was covered with cedar above upon the beams, that lay on forty-five pillars, fifteen in a row.*

### **A Personal and Final Note**

While it might be easy to become very impatient at Dispensational theology and how persistent it is to challenge every historic doctrine of the Church and every precious passage of *Scripture*, mostly one should tremble in fear for those who are misleading God's people with the System called Dispensationalism. Surely the words of Paul are applicable. "*Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*" (1 Tim. 1:7). I do not question the godliness of Dispensational teachers nor their sincerity, I do question whether they are teaching the *Scriptures* or a System of vain imagination.