

Focus on the Kingdom

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A Curious Theo-illogical Wonderland

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“‘Curiouser and curiouser!’ cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English)” (from *Alice in Wonderland*).

Poor Alice, so surprised at what she saw — she was looking at her feet through the wrong end of a telescope at the time — that the proper word “curious” was inadequate to express it.

Dr. Cyrus Scofield, of the revered Scofield Reference Bible, must have felt the word “Lord” was inadequate when he translated the Greek word *kurios* in John 20:28 as “LORD.” The translators of both the Geneva Study Bible and the American King James Bible made the same mistake. This curious use of upper-case letters would have led many readers of these translations to believe that Thomas, when speaking to the resurrected Jesus, twice addressed Jesus as God.

This despite the fact that *kurios*, addressed to Jesus, is properly translated “Lord” or “lord” (= Sir or Master, based on the second lord in Ps. 110:1) and should be printed in lower-case letters. As scholars the translators would have known that the Greek word for God is *theos*. Then of course, there’s the question as to why Thomas would twice address Jesus as God in such a short statement anyway.

Now many would say that the disciple was, indeed, identifying Jesus as his God. But only eight days earlier Jesus had sent Mary to tell the disciples, “I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). Nothing in his words would have made them think that their Lord and their God was really two Persons! As W.E. Vine helpfully points out, “the Jews belonged to the only monotheistic race in the world.” This confirms that “my Lord [or better, lord] and my God” is the correct translation (and I should add that most versions quote the Greek correctly).

As Trinitarians, Dr. Scofield and others interpreted the words of Jesus as a revelation that he was God the Son, an eternally existing Person. But Thomas was a monotheist, and so would not have accepted that Christ was God in that sense. What he did recognize was the invisible God in His human and therefore visible Son. The difference between the two is that the first is an incorrect interpretation based on a concept that God is

three, and the second is an accurate translation based on the fact that God is one.

Peter had perceived that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” but Thomas saw an equally profound truth: he saw the Father in the Son. He saw that Jesus was, as the Apostle Paul would later put it, “the image of the invisible God” — and this insight caused him to utter the unforgettable words, “My Lord and my God.”

Jesus had invited the doubting disciple to feel his wounds and to be not faithless but believing. It was then that Thomas had a revelation. Not that Jesus was alive — the evidence of the wounds in his Lord’s hands made that perfectly obvious. In a moment of truth, Thomas saw the Father in the Son! We know this, because he said, “My Lord *and* my God” (John 20:28).

Scholars of ancient Greek inform us that Thomas’ words are not an exclamation but rather “a copulative and cumulative statement.” They are copulative, in that the conjunctive “and” links “my Lord” with “my God”; and cumulative in that the short sentence gains in strength as it proceeds. “*Ho kurios mou kai ho theos mou*” literally means “The lord of me, and the God of me.”

Alice in Wonderland is a fantasy, of course, but there exists a theological wonderland, as can be seen in this excerpt from the Athanasian Creed:

“For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreate, the Son Uncreate, and the Holy Ghost Uncreate. The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal, and yet they are *not* Three Eternals but One Eternal. As also there are not Three Uncreated, nor Three Incomprehensibles, but One Uncreated, and One Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are *not* Three Almighties but One Almighty.”

Unlike the theologians that came up with this barely comprehensible masterpiece, the fictional Alice realized the absurdity of her words and returned to her senses.

“Oh dear, what nonsense I’m talking!”

“I quite agree with you,” said the Duchess; “and the moral of that is — Be what you would seem to be — or if you’d like it put more simply — Never imagine yourself

not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.”

“I think I should understand that better,” Alice said very politely, “if I had it written down: but I can’t quite follow it as you say it.”

“That’s nothing to what I could say if I chose,” the Duchess replied, in a pleased tone.

With the same assurance, it would seem, as those Bible translators who live in a theo-illogical wonderland, forced on them by post-biblical creeds in which three Almightyies are really one Almighty. ✧

“There’s no use trying,” said Alice. “One can’t believe impossible things.”

“I dare say you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen...“Why sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

From *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll

The Future as Jesus Saw It in Matthew 24, Mark 13

Many people are rightly concerned with the future, theirs and that of society. The internet is teeming with attempts to tell us what Jesus foretells for the future of our world. Matthew 24, the long Olivet Discourse, is properly the center of attention, since in that marvelous, if alarming, chapter the Lord Messiah answered the crucial question posed by his devoted students. Supposing you, the reader, to be one such dedicated student of Jesus, you will want to present at that momentous teaching session. We can all chime in with their initial inquiry:

“When will these things be and what will be the **sign** of your coming and **the end of the age**?” The disciples were not fools! They had been well instructed, and they asked the right question. Jesus had just spoken of desolation in the temple building. Because the disciples and Jesus knew the book of Daniel well, they assume that trouble in the temple will be connected directly with the “coming” (*Parousia*) of the Messiah and “**the end of the age**” (misleadingly mistranslated in the KJV as “end of the world”).

The disciples’ assumption was not wrong. Jesus did not correct it. That assumption is based on Dan. 7, 8, 9 and 11, 12 and, if one is looking for a *precise* verbal parallel, Dan 12:11 —“the abomination of desolation.”

Let’s get oriented to Jesus’ discourse. The wise Bible student looks first at the other occurrences of the definite phrase “**end of the age**.” It cannot possibly mean AD 70! Look at the four other occurrences in Matthew and burn these into your understanding. We find Jesus speaking of

the end of the age (same expression) firstly in Matthew 13. Here Jesus gives us an exact definition: “The harvest is **the end of the age**.” This is the time when the righteous will shine forth like the sun in their Father’s Kingdom (taken from Dan 12:3). It could not possibly refer to AD 70!

Jesus goes on: “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire so shall it be at **the end of the age**. The Son of Man will send forth his angels and they will gather out of his Kingdom everything that offends and those who practice lawlessness. And they will cast them into a furnace of fire and there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” Jesus concludes these stupendous words with a characteristic cry: “Whoever has ears to hear [and understand] let him hear.” In v. 49 he repeats: “So shall it be at **the end of the age**: the angels will go forth and separate the wicked from among the righteous.”

Are we listening and learning? Jesus is not describing AD 70.

It is remarkable that in Jesus’ mind Christian destiny is firmly attached, **not** to “going to heaven” when we die but to the future **end of this era of world society** and to the return of Jesus to the earth to bring in his Kingdom. The first correction necessary in our thinking is therefore to adjust our thinking with rabbi Jesus to his future arrival in glory **at the end of the age**. There is no ultimate Christian future until then. This means naturally that the faithful dead are *not yet* in the Kingdom, and no one has yet been thrown into a lake of fire. All systems which promote a continuing life *now* for the dead, faithful or otherwise (i.e. “so and so has gone home to heaven and is looking down on me,” or “I am praying to a departed saint to help me”) are out of harmony with the mind of Jesus. It is only at the *future* “**end of the age**” that decisions are made as between the good and the bad. Until then dead, good and bad, are without consciousness in the “sleep of the dead.” They are awaiting resurrection at the return of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:23; Dan 12:2; Ecc. 9:5, 10). Those presently unsaved await resurrection and judgment at the end of the future millennium (see Rev 20:5).

Is it really so hard for readers to grasp: “The dead know nothing at all... There is no activity in Sheol, the place of all the dead, good and bad. (Ecc. 9:5, 10 and read it often to your family). Yes, of course the life energy, the spirit, goes back to God when we die (Ecc. 12:9). We “expire,” breathe out our last., but WE go to the grave. “Lazarus is dead and sleeping,” Jesus said (John 14:11, 14). It is tragic to rewrite the text to read “Lazarus’ *body* is asleep, but he himself is alive and well in heaven.” That idea simply writes pagan philosophical ideas about an “immortal soul” into the Bible.

Back to our key phrase “**end of the age.**” Jesus used it in the Great Commission. Here he promised to be “with you” **until the end of the age** (Matt. 28:20). This of course means that Jesus anticipated that there would be faithful believers right up to his Second Coming at **the end of the age.**

In Matthew 24 the question of the disciples, as recorded directly by Matthew 24:3, and implied equally in Mark’s and Luke’s parallel account of the same discourse, was about the “your Coming and the **end of the age.**” These are one event, as shown by the closest connection of the two subjects, coming and **end of the age,** in the original Greek. The *Word Biblical Commentary* is right: “**Jesus’ teaching about the end of the age is closely related to the fate of Jerusalem and her temple**” (*Mark*, p. 305). Of course: And exactly the same fact is found in Mark and Luke’s account, although a bit hidden in the English translations. In Mark we read: “What will be **the sign** when all these things will be fulfilled?” The word for fulfilled here is a verbal form of the word for “end” i.e. of the age, in Matthew’s account (24:3). Luke likewise reports the same question about the **sign** of the promised events.

Read on in these marvelous words of Jesus and you will find **no possible way of separating trouble in the temple from the second coming.** The attempts of commentators to split up Jesus’ answer to cover events separated by millennia must be pronounced a failure. There is total disagreement as to where to insert a break. There is no break.

How did Jesus reply to the question? We note first that Jesus had just spoken of desolation and destruction in the temple buildings lying there in full view. Jesus proceeds to take up the assumption of the disciples, and his, that temple buildings would be involved in the ruin predicted also for his future coming, which as we know did not happen in AD 70. (Some have gone far from the words of Jesus by thinking that Jesus must have actually returned and raised the dead in AD 70! This theory is known as preterism = “past-ism.” Anyone who believes that Jesus returned to raise the dead in AD 70 has been severely misled. We invite a complete rethinking. Jesus did not return in AD 70 any more than he did in 1914. But millions have been persuaded to believe falsehoods of this type. If the resurrection has happened then the Kingdom of God has arrived. You can go to Jerusalem and see that the Messiah is not sitting on the throne of Israel and the world. Paul warned in no uncertain terms that believing that the resurrection is in the past is a dangerous cancer (

Jesus began very appropriately by warning against deception and the deceptive claims of those claiming either to be the Messiah or his agents. The majority would be victims of deception. Wars, famines,

pestilences and earthquakes (Luke reports “great earthquakes,” 21:11) would be the beginning of the birth pangs which would eventually lead to the birth of the New Age of the coming Kingdom (see what happens then in Matt. 29:28; Acts 1:6; 3:21). The same period of birth pangs would be marked by severe persecution of true believers, and further false preachers and deception (24:11).

But these events are “not yet the end.” (Matt. 24:5) That is: the end of the age will not follow immediately. Other more definite events are in store. It would be a major failure of commonsense to try to alter the word “end” in Matt. 24:5 and give it a different meaning than in the question in v. 3!

Jesus is going to tell us more about the one end, starting in verse 14. The “end” which is not yet is of course the “end of the present world order.” Daniel 12:13 has the same expression, marking the end as the time when Daniel was to expect to rise from the dead. (see note in *Schonfield Authentic New Testament*, p. 76)

In v. 14 Jesus becomes much more specific. In verse 14 he stated that the Christian Gospel — “this Gospel about the Kingdom of God” would be made known as a witness internationally — and Jesus adds, “and *then* the end will come.” The word “therefore” rivets, with logic, vv. 14 and 15 together. The end is now in view. “When you therefore [i.e. as the real marker of the end] see the Abomination of Desolation standing in a holy place...” We might say “Accordingly, when you see...” Mark’s account provides a fascinating and instructive piece of valuable information about the Abomination of Desolation. He tells us that it is a person, “standing where **HE** ought not to.” (For this data please consult, Arndt and Gingrich Lexicon under “abomination” p. 138, no. 3. Or look online at translations such as Revised English Bible, RV (1881, correcting the KJV of 1611), New Living Translation, Weymouth and the New American Bible, or the *Word Biblical Commentary*.)

“The exact words of Jesus, ‘abomination of desolation’ derive from the LXX of Daniel 12:11” (*Word Biblical Commentary*, p. 317). Few observations could be more important. They provide Jesus’ comment on those important words of Daniel in 12:11 showing that he did not think they were fulfilled in the events of Antiochus in the second century BC! Jesus is reading Dan 12:11 as a prophecy of the (then) far future, as the final events of the final vision granted to Daniel. That very vision ended with the future resurrection of the dead in Dan. 12:2. We know that the resurrection of the dead has not happened. We know that Jesus has not come back.

This fact about the Abomination in Daniel 12:11, among others, shows that the Abomination of Desolation which triggers the final time of great tribulation is not yet history. It lies in the future as the climax of the birth

pangs leading to the birth of the New Age, which will be the Kingdom of God in a renewed earth.

Again, the state of the art in evangelical scholarship, the *Word Biblical Commentary* translates properly: “When you see the Abomination of Desolation standing where HE must not” (Mark 13:14). The commentary notes that none of the various suggestions of fulfillment in the first century fits the facts. Pontius Pilate has been suggested. So has Caligula who in AD 40 attempted to place his image in the temple, but failed. Another candidate was Phanni, a high priest appointed by Jewish zealots. Finally Titus who in AD 70 entered the temple in the summer of AD 70. “None of these events fits well the context of Jesus’ warning in Mark 13:14, Pilate’s attempted sacrilege did not take place. Caligula’s order to erect his statue was never carried out. Phanni was not regarded as an “abomination.” Finally, Titus’ stroll through the sanctuary occurred *after* the temple had already been seriously damaged and was in fact in flames, and after Jewish sacrifices had ceased. Moreover the “abomination of desolation” of which Daniel speaks and to which Jesus alludes envisioned the cessation of sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple, not its destruction... The crisis of long ago [under Antiochus] threatened to bring Judaism and Israel’s national life to an end and will once again threaten Israel and Jesus’ followers.” Jesus warns us by saying that the abomination will be standing where HE ought not. *WBC* again: “the masculine gender of the participle *estekota*, in contrast to the neuter ‘abomination’ may suggest that the abomination is a statue of image of a pagan deity or deified man. Probably related to this tradition is the Pauline prediction in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: “That day will not come unless the man of lawlessness is revealed, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God proclaiming to be God.” Neither Caligula nor Titus fulfilled the prophecy.

For Paul the appearance of this evil figure was a necessary sign of the Parousia. Paul warned his people in 2 Thessalonians 2 against any teaching which said that the Parousia could come without a final appearing of the Man of Sin. The appearance of a false church leader in the 3rd century did not provide such a sign! Nor did such a leader place an abomination in “a holy place.” Again the *Word Biblical Commentary* helps us: “The parenthetic comment ‘let the one who is reading understand’... may be intended to alert readers to Daniel 12:5-13, a passage in which Daniel asks the angel ‘how long will it be to **the end** of these wonders?’ just as the disciples had asked Jesus ‘when will these things be?’ (Mark 13:4, which in Matthew’s explanatory parallel is a question about the Parousia, Second Coming and the end of the age). To understand what is happening, the evangelist Mark advises his readers, one must read Daniel.” How marvelously true this is!

“The answer provided in Daniel entails, among other things, the appearance of the Abomination that will leave the temple desolate (Dan. 12:11. cp. 12:10, where it is promised that ‘those with insight will understand.’ Thus the parallel with Mark is structurally and thematically quite close.”

The important question is this: Was all this fulfilled in AD 70? The answer is no, because the facts of history do not fit either Daniel or Jesus’ discourse which is based on it. Again, the *Word Biblical Commentary* is insightful: “‘Let him who is on the house top not come down, nor enter to take anything out of his house.’ Again, this detail does not square well with the events of the 60s and 70s. Jesus’ point is that one must flee immediately and in great haste. The Jewish war [of the first century] had been waged for three years before Jerusalem was besieged. The approach of the Roman army was slow, the opportunity to escape prolonged. No, Jesus’ warning means that when the abomination of desolation is set up where HE must not stand, ‘the end is now at hand [exactly as stated by Matt. 24:14, 15], the danger is great; the city must be abandoned without a moment’s delay.”

Jesus goes on to describe the greatest of all tribulations: “Woe to those women who are pregnant or are nursing in those days.” “An expectant women or a woman nursing an infant cannot drop her burden and run, as implied in the instructions in vv. 15-16. She will face an awful dilemma and therefore a greater danger” (p. 321).

Further description of this time of trouble follows: Mark 13:19: “For those days will be such a tribulation as has never happened from the beginning of creation, which God created, until now, nor ever will be.” In other words it will eclipse all crises of biblical history, which as *WBC* says “is quite a claim when we remember the flood, the Babylonian captivity and the war with Antiochus.” The language of course echoes Dan. 12:1 (Jesus had just told us to read Daniel!). There is an interesting reference also in extra-biblical Jewish literature: “And there will come upon them punishment and wrath such as has never happened to them from the creation till that time when He stirs up against them a king of the kings of the earth” (Testament of Moses, 8:1).

In summarizing this amazing prediction, the *Word Bible Commentary* has this to say: “The warning that the great tribulation will be so severe that unless shortened it will extinguish all human life argues that the prophecy portends more than the Jewish war. To be sure this war threatened all Jewish lives in Jerusalem (though as it turned out many thousands survived) but the fate of the whole of humanity did not hang in the balance” (p. 322).

The point I want to make quite clear is that this Great Tribulation, days in which it is perilous to be pregnant

(see “those days,” in Mark 13:17,19, 20), could not by any stretch of language refer to a period of 2000 years ongoing since AD 70! As we turn again to Matthew 24 we are going to find that the Great Tribulation is to be followed, *immediately* (24:29) —without interval — by the signs which introduce the Return of Jesus, the greatest of all events.

Matthew 24 and the Great Tribulation

Matthew 24 is a long and logical discourse in answer to the important question. “What will be the sign of your Coming and the end of the age?” That end of the age is connected to trouble in the temple. That is why the disciples ask the question uniting the two subjects and that is why in Jesus answer, there is absolutely no disconnect between the elements of the question. Jesus did not correct the disciples. Both he and they had an assumed basis in the end-time data provided by Daniel. Daniel had asked the interpreting angel about how long it would be to the end of the wonders of the final vision. The question concerned the length of time from the appearing of the Abomination of Desolation to the end.

The answer was given as 1290 days, with a further 45 days added. This is the datum which many throw away. It is impossible to imagine the angel as giving data about an event in BC times at this point! That would be a colossal anticlimax. The end of the wonders of the vision Daniel had just had was the resurrection of the dead (Dan. 12:2). No one should imagine that some other end was in mind! Jesus and the disciples work out of this fixed point: There will be 1290 days left after the appearing of the Abomination.

Jesus expounds on this in Matthew 24. Having been asked about “the end of the age” he replies accordingly.

“The end [of the age] is not yet,” v. 6 and in v. 14, after the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached to all nations, “then the end [of the age] will come.”

Jesus continues, “when you *therefore* see...” The “therefore” connects this sentence to the preceding one about the end —“then the end will come.” The visible sign that the end is really close is this: “When you see the Abomination of Desolation standing in a holy place” as predicted by Daniel. This has not happened yet.

This of course means that the task of all believers now is to get busy with the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Only when this is complete can the final events unfold. The appearance of the Abomination is a certain and definite signal. Then, Jesus says, if you are in Israel, run away immediately. This of course proves that there is no pre-tribulation rapture in the mind of Jesus (or Paul!). You do not instruct people to escape the oncoming Great Tribulation by running for the mountains, if in fact they are to be lifted off the earth at that time! This is just plain common-sense.

Following the appearance of the Danielic Abomination standing where HE (Mark 13:14) ought not to, “in a holy place” (Matt 24:15) there will be a time of unprecedented tribulation, the greatest ever period of time, and if that time had not been cut short, no one would be left alive. This suggests effects beyond the immediately land of Israel.

Then in Matthew 24:29 the verse which has (unnecessarily, if people had believed the discourse) caused problems. Jesus stated that “immediately following,” “Immediately after [POST] the tribulation of those days,” cosmic signs would produce his Arrival. And the elect will be gathered from the four points of the compass.

It is important to see that Jesus spoke of his coming as “immediately” *post* (after) the time of extreme trouble.

Luke refers to the same period (his account runs directly parallel to Matthew and Mark) as “great tribulation” that is, “great distress” (Luke 21:23). The meaning is the same. In Luke we must supply the chronological marker given by Matthew 24:29 “immediately after.” It is “immediately after” the great tribulation or time of great distress, that the cosmic signs of Jesus impending arrival will be visible.

It should be clear that this event has never happened. Certainly not in the 1800’s as Jehovah’s Witnesses once predicted, and absolutely certainly not in AD 70 nor in 1914 (again a failed guess by Jehovah’s Witnesses). These bungled attempts to assign dates are testimony to the mishandling of Jesus’ precious words.

The *Word Biblical Commentary*, alas, understands what Matthew meant and then tries to say that Matthew *made a mistake* with his “immediately after” (v. 29)! The author says: “Matthew means immediately (not simply very soon) after the destruction and desolation of the temple, the Parousia [Second Coming] is to be expected” (p. 712). The commentary adds very fairly: “the inserted ‘immediately’ necessitate seeing the tribulation as a yet future one.” He then says that Matthew wrongly edited in the word “immediately.”

I do not believe Matthew got it wrong. Taking the text as Scripture we are committed to the great tribulation as lying in the future just before the Second Coming. All attempts to avoid this may point to a desire to put the future in the past! This could be a form of wishful thinking.

Other commentators who do not like the idea of a future Great Tribulation try a different evasion. They say that verses 23-28 speak of a time future to us, but verses 15-22 speak of AD 70 only. When they get to verse 29 (“immediately”) they return to the future. The *Word Biblical Commentary* rightly shows how unnatural such a skipping method is. “It is very difficult to believe [this is ‘scholarese’ for ‘it is nonsense’] that the words

'immediately after the tribulation of those days' refers only to something [i.e. tribulation] *general* in the indeterminate future. Rather than something vague, the words ['immediately after the tribulation of those days'] seem to require a specific antecedent. This is shown by the definite article "the" and the demonstrative pronoun in "those days." The only specific item in the preceding verses that could correspond to *the* suffering of *those* days is the desecration of the temple referred to in v. 15"

This of course is absolutely true. Jesus knows of one desecration of the temple, one final and great tribulation and one Second Coming which will follow on the heels of the Abomination of Desolation which desecrates the temple.

The history book shows us that the temple was desecrated in AD 70, immediately after which Jesus did not come back! This forced some readers to say Jesus was wrong, or equally unfortunately, that he did come back with his Kingdom in AD 70 (This, as we said, is called Preterism, and it destroys the Gospel of the Kingdom, making the Kingdom an event beginning in AD 70!).

The right way to understand and believe Jesus is to take him at his word. He was asked about the end of the age in connection with trouble in the temple. He answered by unpacking that scheme of the future. He warned that the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation would signal the beginning of the final events. "Immediately after" that one specific Great Tribulation, cosmic signs would introduce his great Arrival to resurrect the dead saints, catch up the living ones to meet him and escort him to the earth, destroy the antichrist and set up the Kingdom of God on earth.

The answer of Jesus is not so hard. The story is as follows: "What will be the sign of the end of the age? "The end is not yet." "Then the end will come — when therefore you see the Abomination of desolation standing where HE ought not to, in a holy place (Mark 13:14; Matt. 24:15) flee to the hills. Then there will a great tribulation or time of great distress (Luke 21:23). "immediately after" (Matt. 24:29) those days of that great tribulation, "cosmic signs will appear in the sky and Jesus will return."

Jesus added that this evil society, "generation," will not come to an end before all these things happen. "He who is ashamed of me and my words in this evil generation (society, until the Parousia), the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes." Note how this "generation," evil brood, present evil society is contrasted with the time when Jesus will come, which will introduce the new age and new society of the coming Kingdom. Jesus said also: The children of this age are wiser in their financial dealings with others of the same type

("generation") than the children of light [i.e. of the Kingdom].

Do not be misled by the very Hebrew way of thinking which we may explain as follows: The Hebrew mind is able to take in "a totality." We are not used to this. Did you know that in Matt 10:23 Jesus addressed the 12 disciples standing in his presence and predicted that "YOU" will not have successfully completed and evangelistic mission in Israel before I come back."

How can that be? The answer is that the disciples of the future will fulfill the prophecy. They are "one" with the 12 and addressed as "you." Did you know that Jesus spoke to unbelieving religious leaders in his time and said that "they" would not see him again until they welcomed him as Messiah in the future at his Return. But those men are long dead! Did you know that Jesus accused the wicked rulers of his time of having murdered Abel and the prophets and Zechariah (found in 2 Chronicles). In other words they had murdered the spiritual heroes of the Bible from Genesis to Malachi. (in the case of Jesus' Bible, the last book was 2Chronicles, though all the same books as you have were there, only in a different order, Luke 24:44.).

Did you know that Jesus said that the disciples who asked the question about the Second Coming would see "all these things" described in the discourse? But they did not. They died, of course. The point is that a non-existing person or thing can be included in these forecasts as "you." They are seen as incorporated in the one pronoun "you." So then Jesus looks out on the temple buildings and as it turns out describes the desolation not of that building (though we know it was destroyed in AD 70) but of a building involved in a final great tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21, 19).

The future is bright with hope for the truth-seeking Christians who submit to baptism following the model of Acts 8:12 and persist in the faith. However Jesus' astonishing account of the future needs to be food for our serious meditation, very often. Perhaps you can use this article as tool, with others, for thinking about the precious words of Jesus and also, very importantly, sharing them with others. The words of Jesus will never pass away and they are spirit and life to those who grasp their meaning (John 6:63).

Finally, a contrast between Christ and Antichrist. Jesus comes from above, meaning that his origin is in God (Luke 1:35), comes in his Father's name as agent, humbled himself and became obedient, was despised and rejected, came to do his Father's will, which was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. He glorified God on earth, as the Good Shepherd (Pastor) who gives his life for the sheep. God exalts him and gives him a name (office) above every name so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow. He will appear in the clouds of

heaven with great power and glory. He will reign with the saints on earth forever. He is the heir of all things.

Now his opposite the Antichrist: “comes from below, comes in his own name, exalts himself above all. All the world stands in admiration of him, acts according to his own will. He blasphemes the name of God. An evil shepherd who tears the flesh. He exalts himself above the heights of the clouds, yet is brought down to Sheol (“gravedom”). Of him they will say “is this the man who made the earth tremble and made kingdoms shake?” They will take away his kingdom and destroy to the uttermost. He is the Son of Perdition whom Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth at his Coming.

Probably about a quarter of the Bible is devoted to prophecy and God’s detailed program for the future. This is part of the “whole counsel of God” which must be gradually absorbed by believers for their growth in grace and knowledge. To learn is to equip oneself to teach others, in what capacity. Knowledge and talents are not to be hoarded, but used to bless others. Jesus set the pattern for this as the great rabbi who taught for hours every day in the temple and outside. “Those who have insight are to instruct the many in the last days.” If they do, they will shine like the stars in their Father’s Kingdom. Jesus loved that text (Matt. 13:43, quoting Dan. 12:3).

The Great Tribulation or time of Jacob’s trouble is not history yet, but lies in the future. God will shorten those days of extreme affliction for the sake of the saints. Bishop Newton who wrote extensively on the prophecies is worth quoting on this point:

“Nothing so violent can be of long continuance. These calamities (AD 70) were so severe, that like fire they must in time have consumed all, and have left nothing for themselves to prey on; ‘and unless those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved.’ If these wars and desolations were to continue, none of the Jews would have escaped destruction; they would all be cut off root and branch. I think Josephus speaks of 1 million, one hundred thousand slain, besides others slain in other places...Providentially those days were shortened. Titus himself was desirous of putting a speedy end to the siege” (*Newton on the Prophecies*, p. 349-50).

Gundry’s warning must not be overlooked: “We are not to ignore the distinction between tribulation in general and the time of unprecedented tribulation at the end of the age.” (*Church and Tribulation*, p. 49).

The awful events of AD 70 were precursors of a final brief tribulation to be followed immediately by the cosmic signs and the return of Jesus (Matt. 24:29). What a day that will be!✧

Comments

“Sorry to take up your valuable time reading mail from a complete stranger. But having read a couple of your books you are no stranger to me. What’s more I know that we have certain things in common, besides trusting and following Jesus. First we were both born in England and in Surrey. So I think of you as a sort of neighbour. I want to give you my thanks which are due to you for being the one of the bearers of enlightenment regarding the traditions of men which have invaded the visible church and have sought to make the commandment of God of no effect. I have gladly repented of believing error and I have asked my Father God for his forgiveness. I believe that I have it. Searching for a book on Amazon about two years ago I came across a book whose title intrigued me. It was called *They Never Told Me This in Church*. I bought and read the book, together with your introduction. Later I read several of the books referred to in what I have come to call in letters to my friends TNTMTIC. Thank you for sending me copies of *Focus on the Kingdom*. I am grateful for them as I have left my former fellowship, for ‘How can two walk together unless they be agreed?’” — *England*

“Thank you for such a great publication. It seems to answer the questions that have been floating around my brain in recent months.” — *Arizona*

“I do want to thank you and others who contribute to the articles in *Focus on the Kingdom*. Being one of those who are scattered, we look forward to each issue.” — *Idaho*

“I want to thank you for all of your excellent work. I have thoroughly enjoyed reading and listening to the many fine publications and audio presentations you have created. I have been searching for quite some time for someone who has an accurate grasp on the truth that could be a teacher to me. In my journey so far nearly every path has ended in a ‘dead end’ of false doctrine and this road to truth seeking truly has been a lonely one. I am reaching out to you today to ask if there maybe anyone in Oregon that would be willing to fellowship with my family and I. My belief is that good associations are a key to spiritual vitality and we would like to find some brethren of like mind and heart. We would also like to increase in our spiritual maturity with the aim of better worshipping God in spirit and truth. I often think of the parable of the sower and ask myself critically and honestly where I am in those four classes. I eagerly want to bear fruit to include having the proper faith and works.” — *Oregon*

One God Conference – Europe

Fri. Oct. 29 – Sun. Oct. 31, 2010

Warmroth, near Frankfurt, Germany

Contact: Wolfgang Schneider, editor@bibelcenter.de