

WHAT IS PREMILLENNIALISM?

It would be next to impossible to give a definition of this term which all millennial teachers would accept. There are various approaches made by different ones, and each group professing to believe it will have some peculiar twist to it that others would repudiate. In spite of this, there are some common ideas among millennialists that give us a general definition. It is fundamentally the idea that there will be a literal one thousand year period during which Jesus Christ shall occupy this earth and reign in Jerusalem on David's throne; the Jews will return to Palestine and Christ will rule over them in a material kingdom; this thousand years stands between the second coming of Christ and the final judgment of all. The prefix "pre" means that His reign will be before the end of time. The theory is thus a complex one with many ramifications. It is not a single error, but a vast maze of errors.

Nearly every major denomination or sect claiming fundamental faith in the Bible, holds to some form of millennialism. It is found in its rankest form among such materialistic groups as the Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. It made inroads into the Lord's church in the 1920's and by the early 30's was deeply entrenched and given respectability. The strength of the movement was confined to Kentucky, Indiana, Missouri and a few other points. Most of the south and southwest stood firm against it. There seems to be a general attitude among some brethren that premillennialism is now a dead issue. It is far from that. The premillennial brethren have a college in Kentucky where they are training young men to go out and teach this heresy. They print and circulate a vast amount of literature. They have a paper published in Louisiana called "The Exhorter" which purports to be a "bulletin of Churches of Christ." It is published every two weeks.

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISES

Beginning in Genesis Chapter 12, God made a series of three distinct promises to Abraham. The fulfillment of these promises occupies the rest of the Bible and they have a profound bearing on our hopes for the world to come. God promised (1) that He would make a great nation of Abraham's seed; (2) that He would give to the nation a land; and (3) that in Abraham's seed all nations of the earth would be blessed. The first promise concerned the nation of Israel, the second involved the land of Canaan, and the third was spiritual, pointing to the coming of Jesus Christ. A study of these promises and their fulfillment is essential to any proper review of the theory of premillennialism. Since their theory concerns the Jews, Canaan and Christ, they have a warped picture of the Abrahamic promises and their fulfillment.

The National Promise

God said "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing." Genesis 12:2. This promise was made at a time when Abraham and Sarah had no heir. The promise was renewed to Isaac (Genesis 28:13,14). Then to Isaac and Rebekah,

Jacob and Esau were born. God chose Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom was Joseph. What at the time seemed a great personal tragedy, when Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, proved to be the providential means through which the national promise was fulfilled. It was not until Jacob and all his family went down into Egypt that the great nation was formed. It was 430 years from the time of the promise until this nation, newly delivered, and formed through the watchful providence of God, stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai to receive the law of Moses. In Exodus 19:6 the Lord said they were a holy nation unto Him. The national promise was fulfilled.

The Land Promise

“For all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.” (Genesis 13:15). "On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.” (Genesis 15:18). It is the general contention of premillennial teachers that the land promise has never been fulfilled and they connect that with the millennium and the return of the Jews to Palestine. What they fail to see is that every land promise concerning Israel has been fulfilled. Not one has failed.

After the nation wandered forty years in the wilderness, Joshua led them into the promised land. At the end of his life he made this speech. “14 “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed. 15 “Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the Lord your God promised you, so the Lord will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the Lord your God has given you.16 “When you have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you.” (Joshua 23:14-16). Joshua said not one thing had failed which God had promised, and twice identified the land as part of that. But their retaining of the land was conditioned on obedience to God. Millennialists object that the "Larger" land promise has never been fulfilled, the land from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. But they are wrong again. “26 So he reigned over all the kings from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt.” (2 Chronicles 9:26 see also 1 Kings 4:21) Solomon's kingdom covered the exact dimensions of the land promised. One of the great errors of premillennialists is that they look for the fulfillment of things which have already come to pass. Then premillennialists turn to the promises made during the captivity and say that God never has fulfilled His promise to bring them again into their own land. First, God never promised to fully restore the land after they went into captivity. He did promise to bring a remnant into the land again and this was

done under Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel (2 Chronicles 36:20-23). Second, Moses warned them that if they forsook God, their days would not be prolonged upon the land, and begged them to choose life that they might continue to dwell in the land which God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deuteronomy 30:17-20). Third, Joshua told them they would be destroyed from off the land if they broke the covenant God made with them (Joshua 23:15-16). Forth, Jeremiah promised destruction upon them and to dramatize it, took a potter's vessel and broke it before the ancients of the people and said "Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Even so I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury them in Tophet till there is no place to bury." (Jeremiah 19:11). Complete restoration was not promised, and moreover, such was not possible. The remnant did go back. The lineage of Judah was kept intact and the promise lived on looking toward the seed to bless all nations. There is not one land promise to Israel that has not been fulfilled and premillennialists are wrong when they seek to inspire false hope in the Jews and cause them to glory in their flesh.

The Spiritual Promise

Some premillennialists, though not all, insist that this promise to bless all nations through Christ must await the thousand year reign for fulfillment. If this contention were true, we would be robbed of the spiritual blessings we presently enjoy in Christ. In Acts 3:25-26 Peter reminded the Jews then present of the promise to Abraham to bless all nations in his seed. The blessing of the nations through Christ comes as people in those nations are turned from sin unto God. That which counts is not Abrahamic flesh, but Abrahamic faith. Paul said that now "he is a Jew who is one inwardly" (Romans 2:29)

The gospel of Christ is to be preached to all nations for the obedience of faith. In this is fulfilled the promise to bless all nations through the seed of Abraham. To misunderstand these promises and their fulfillment is to misunderstand most of the Bible, and that is exactly what premillennialists do. The gospel, the church, its work, and the salvation of our souls are all involved in these promises. Further, there was a proper sequence to them that must not be destroyed. The formation of the nation and the giving of the land were preparatory to the spiritual promise. A nation had to be kept distinct. Lineages had to be recorded and kept to assure the rightful heir to bless all nations. Unto that nation the sacred oracles were committed (Romans 3:2); from them the prophets arose. All of this combined to create an indisputable array of evidence to establish the claims of Jesus Christ and to assure our salvation through him. Premillennialists have been so preoccupied with the material aspects of these promises that they have overlooked the eternal purpose of God to use these means in effecting the salvation of the world.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. List the three promises God made to Abraham that bear on premillennial doctrines:

2. What was the “national promise,” and how do we know that it has already been fulfilled?

3. What was the “land promise,” and how do we know that it has already been fulfilled? ____

4. What was the “spiritual promise,” and how do we know that it has already been fulfilled? _

5. Explain the implications of the teaching that the fulfillment of the “spiritual promise” to Abraham has to wait until Christ reigns on earth for a thousand years. _____

The Kingdom of God Revealed Through Prophecy

Premillennialists teach that God intended to fulfill the kingdom prophecies at the first coming of Christ, but that the plan was delayed until the second coming because the Jews as a whole rejected Christ. This makes the church an alternate arrangement. But consider Ephesians 3:8-11 “8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The Design of Prophecy

One error of premillennialists is a failure to view prophecy in its proper perspective. (1) They either say certain prophecies are Messianic when they are not, or (2) they take those which are Messianic and misapply them in respect to the time of fulfillment.

SOME BASICS:

Matthew 5:17 “17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

John 17:4 “4 “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”

Jesus Either did what He Came to do, or He Failed

In Antioch of Pisidia Paul preached a sermon recorded in Acts Chapter 13. Verse 25 says John "finished" or "fulfilled his course." Verse 26 claims that the rulers at Jerusalem fulfilled the prophets in condemning Christ. Verse 29 says they "fulfilled all that was written of him." You can't get any clearer than Verses 32,33.

VS. 38 says though these fulfillments, forgiveness of sins is now preached. This passage leaves no doubt that the Messianic prophecies pointed to the first coming of Christ with all its blessings, and not to the second.

Concerning The Kingly Lineage:

To David God said in 2 Samuel 7:12-17 “12 “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.13 “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.14 “I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.15 “But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.16 “And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” ’ ’17 According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.” Peter said in Acts 2:29-32 “29 “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.30 “Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,31 “he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.32 “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”

Prophecy Concerning the Time of the Establishment of the Kingdom

READ Daniel 2:24-45. The image stood for four great world empires: the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian and the Roman. It was to be in the time of the fourth empire (Roman) that God would set up His kingdom. Luke 2:1 states that Jesus was born in "the days of Caesar Augustus," one of the Roman rulers. Daniel further Prophesied in Daniel 7:13,14 “13 “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of

heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. 14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.” This was fulfilled in Acts 1:9 “9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What does the premillennial doctrine that God’s plan to fulfill the kingdom prophecies at the first coming of Christ had to be delayed until the second coming say about God, and why does this cry “error?” _____

2. What are the two basic errors found among the premillennialists with regard to prophecy?

3. How do we know that Jesus did *not* fail in the work which He was sent to do? _____

4. Show how the prophecies concerning the lineage of the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. _____

5. Enumerate the four kingdoms pictured in Daniel 2:24-45. _____

6. Show the relationship between the prophecy in Daniel 7:13,14 and the record in Acts 1:9.

Christ and David's Throne

Some passages promised that the Messiah would sit upon David's throne. Just what was "David's throne?" This term was not used with reference to the physical chair he occupied, but rather described the exercise of his kingly power.

Solomon sat upon the throne of his father, David, and that throne was also called "God's throne" (1 Chronicles 29:23).

It was "God's throne" in that He appointed them to rule. Christ would sit upon David's

throne in the sense that as David ruled over God's people (Israel) by divine appointment, Christ was appointed to rule over God's spiritual people (the church).

On the day of Pentecost Peter said God raised up Christ to sit on David's throne and proceeded to show that Christ was seated at the "right hand of God". This, of course, is in Heaven.

Christ could not reign on David's throne on earth. God prophesied in Jeremiah 22:28-30 "28 'Is this man **Coniah** a despised, broken idol— A vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, And cast into a land which they do not know? 29 O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the Lord! 30 Thus says the Lord: 'Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For **none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah.**' Then look at Matthew 1:11 where in the lineage of Jesus Christ we find: "11 Josiah begot Jeconiah {also called Coniah} and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon." Therefore Jesus could not reign on David's throne on earth.

But since Christ was to Reign on David's throne, and Peter said God had raised him up to sit on it, and since he could not fulfill this on earth, then David's throne is now in heaven and the reign of Christ is spiritual.

Consequences of Denying the Present Existence of the Kingdom

(1) John 3:5 teaches that the new birth puts one into the kingdom. But if the kingdom is not in existence, then none are in it, and if none are in it, then none are "born again."

(2) Matthew 18:3 teaches that conversion puts one into the kingdom. But if the kingdom is not yet in existence, then none are in it, and if none are in it, then none are now converted, nor can they be. Thus there is no purpose in teaching!

(3) Colossians 1:13 teaches that those outside the kingdom are under the "Power of Darkness" and therefore lost. If the kingdom is not in existence, then all the world is lost and under the power of darkness (including every premillennialist).

The Nature of the Kingdom

One of the basic errors of premillennialism is a misunderstanding of the true nature of the kingdom. This was the same mistake made by the Jews who rejected Christ. They looked for a Messiah who would lead them nationally and who would establish an earthly kingdom. The Bible teaches that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual.

It is generally taught by millennialists that the kingdom of Christ is to be the kingdom of Israel restored, the old kingdom of Saul, David and Solomon. When Israel demanded a king instead of the judges, God said to Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:7 "7 And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.'" Their sin is further seen in the statement in Hosea 13:10,11 "10 I will

be your King; Where is any other, That he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'? 11 I gave you a king in My anger, And took him away in My wrath." It is not logical to speak of the reign of Jesus Christ as a restoration of a system which angered God in its inception, and tried His patience to such a degree that He destroyed it.

The Nature of the Kingdom as Viewed From the New Testament

Lk.17:20-21

Jesus disclaimed any ideas of an earthly kingdom (John18:36,37). So, it is a kingdom not of this world, which exists not within certain geographical boundaries, but within the hearts of men.

The borders of the kingdom of Christ are not to be spread by physical conquest. The sword used in the invasion of the world is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) It is that sword which pricks the hearts of men, captures their minds and brings every thought into captivity unto the will of God. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

The Church is the Kingdom of Prophecy.

The church and kingdom have Christ as their head. Both have the same territory, the same subjects. The terms of admission into the kingdom are the same as those necessary to enter the church. Both have the Lord's Supper.

Questions For Discussion:

1. List the different terms used to describe "David's throne" and the Scriptures where these references are found. _____

2. Why could Jesus **NOT** sit on the literal throne of David in Jerusalem of Judea? _____

3. List the consequences of taking the position that the kingdom of Christ is not yet in existence. _____

4. How did God feel about giving Israel in the flesh a King, and how does this relate to the false doctrines of premillennialism? _____

5. How does the kingdom of Christ differ from the kingdoms of earth? _____

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6. Relate Scriptures that show the kingdom of Christ and the church of which Christ is the head are one and the same. _____
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The Second Coming of Christ

The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus will come again. (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11) But while the fact of His coming is clear, the time of it is not revealed.

The premillennialists tell us that the New Testament taught the imminent coming of Christ. The word "imminent" means impending, as ripened fruit ready to fall at any time. Rather, the New Testament revealed that certain things would take place after the apostolic period. Peter knew the kind of death he would experience in his old age (John 21:18,19). By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul said that the "man of sin" would be revealed before that time. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

Many premillennialists teach that Christ will come in the clouds, catch up the righteous with Him in what they call "the rapture" and that while they are in that state, the great tribulation will take place down here on earth. Some of them associate this with the "battle of Armageddon," the regathering of the Jews to Palestine, the conquering of the nations and such like. Then, after all the conflict is over and the earth has been cleansed, Jesus will come with the righteous back to the earth, set up His headquarters in Jerusalem and the millennium will begin. Then at the end of that time, the rest of the dead shall be raised, the general judgment shall take place and the wicked and righteous shall be assigned their respective eternal abodes.

The Events of the Second Coming:

1. That will be the end of preparation. (Matthew 25:1-13) There is no room left for a thousand years between the time He returns from the far country and the accounting.

2. That will be the end of the world. (2 Peter 3:10) It is the day when all that pertains to this earth will be destroyed. This is sufficient evidence to show that Jesus will not set foot on this earth again.

3. All the dead shall be raised at His coming. Premillennialists think there will be a thousand years between the raising of the righteous and the wicked. (John 5:28,29) Note that Jesus said "the hour is coming" when this would be done. That denoted a single time. In that hour all are going to be raised. There is no room here for a thousand years between the raising of the righteous and the wicked.

4. Then He shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father. (1 Corinthians 15:23,24) Rather than taking up power and rule at His coming, He will deliver it up to the Father.

It is the goal of every faithful child of God to so live that whether His coming be soon or long delayed, he may be ready for it. This life is the only time we have to make our preparation. When He comes, the door will be shut, we shall be judged and ushered into an eternal state of either joy or misery.

Matthew Chapter 24

No passage in the Bible has been the object of greater abuse than Matthew Chapter 24. This is obviously a difficult passage. We will examine it in the light of its context.

Throughout the personal ministry of Jesus the conflict mounted with the leaders of the Jews. The parables of Matthew Chapter 21 stressed the fact that the Jews would be cast away from God's favor and that others would go in to the kingdom. In Matthew Chapter 22 there is a series of debates with the Pharisees and Sadducees which resulted in Jesus putting them to silence. They could not answer, yet were too stubborn to accept the truth. This led to stern rebukes in Matthew Chapter 23.

The patience of God was running out. And yet, while justice demanded the destruction of Jerusalem and all that pertained unto official Judaism, Jesus wept over the fate which awaited them.

The key to understanding Matthew Chapter 24 is the question raised by the disciples in vs. 3 and in the time referred to in verse 34.

In order for anyone to come to a proper understanding of God's Word, they must learn to study each passage of Scripture with consideration for its context. Taking verses *OUT* of context can [and does!] lead to *MIS*-understandings, and can be the basis of many false doctrines.

While our denominational friends very often take verses out of context to prove *FALSE* doctrines, we can be just as guilty when we take verses out of context to prove something that is *TRUE!* It is my studied conclusion that this has been the problem for many generations with regard to Matthew Chapter 24.

In order for a study such as this to be beneficial, we must all be willing to dismiss any preconceived ideas we may have on this subject, and try to come to an understanding of the text that is consistent with the context and with all other passages of Scripture on this subject.

Before we give all of our attention to Matthew 24, we must note that the Parallel accounts are found in Mark 13:1-37 and Luke 21:5-38. We will be referring to these throughout the lesson.

The subject of this chapter is determined by the setting and the statement of the Lord concerning the destruction of the temple. Matthew 24:1,2 - The setting was the Temple grounds, and the disciples were concerned about what the Lord said about the Temple!

What we have the apostles asking the Lord here is *one question* with *three parts* [or aspects].

If you will take the time to compare the account in Mark 13 and in Luke 21 with Matthew 24, you will see that while the wording of the disciples' question may be different, the same concerns emerge!

First, *WHEN SHALL THIS BE?* [or as in the NKJV "When will these things be?"]. All accounts are virtually the same on this point. What is *THIS*, as in the KJV or *THESE THINGS* of the NKJV? Look back in the context, and find that Jesus was talking about the Temple being *TOTALLY* destroyed! What they were concerned about was, "In what time frame will this happen to Jerusalem?" Jesus went on to answer this for them.

FALSE TEACHERS and even *FALSE CHRISTS WOULD ARISE!* (v.5) This is virtually the same in all accounts. In the time of Paul's writing to the churches, there were *MANY* false teachers trying to lead men away from the Gospel of Christ. Even Gamaliel, speaking to the counsel in Acts 5:36,37 said that some had already come claiming to be somebody, and led many after them! So it is not hard to imagine that *THIS* has *ALREADY COME TO PASS!*

THERE WOULD BE WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS (v.6) Mark's account is essentially the same, but Luke adds "commotions." Josephus, a contemporary historian of the first century, said that the time preceding the destruction of Jerusalem was one of turmoil and *WAR* everywhere! Just as Jesus *SAID* it would be!

THERE WOULD BE FAMINES AND EARTHQUAKES and Pestilence.(v.7) All accounts are essentially the same. This was to be "one of the things signaling the beginning of *TRAVAIL* or *SORROW!* Again, we can find secular testimony that proves these things came to pass around 70 A.D..

THEY WOULD KILL THE APOSTLES - the other accounts *ONLY* have the part about being brought before Kings and counsels, but it is implied that this might result in death. (V.9) James, we know, was killed, later Peter and Paul and many others who were put to death for the cause of Christ! As far as we know, only John died a natural death!

AFTER THE GOSPEL HAD BEEN PREACHED TO THE WHOLE INHABITED WORLD! (v.14) Many today are thinking that this *STILL* has not been done! In fact, this is one of the driving forces behind such things as Trinity Broadcasting and others. They think that *IF* the gospel is finally preached to *ALL* the world, the *LORD* will *HAVE* to *COME BACK* to set up His kingdom! *BUT--* dear ones, *LOOK* at Colossians 1:23 with me: ".....and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard, which **was preached to every creature under heaven**, of which I, Paul, became a minister." That is *PAST TENSE!* The gospel had been preached to "every creature under heaven" before Paul *DIED!* And the Lord did *NOT COME AGAIN!* These are *IMPORTANT* thoughts for us to remember when we talk to our religious neighbors!

Now, the next two aspects are connected in Matthew 24, and stated as *ONE* in Mark and

Luke: *WHAT SHALL BE THE SIGN OF YOUR COMING AND [BY INFERENCE THE SIGN OF] THE END OF THE AGE?* Notice that we have here used the word *AGE* instead of the word *WORLD*. We will explore the reason for this in just a moment, but first: Notice how Mark and Luke record this- Mark "What sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" & Luke "What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" See how their *QUESTION* was centered around what Jesus said about the Temple!

One sign would be *THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION* (v.15). Mark is the same, but Luke 21:20 points directly to the Roman Armies! In A.D.68, Vespasian was about to siege Jerusalem when Nero died. Vespasian returned to Rome to take control of the Empire. Before this, he and his army had been going from town to town destroying Jewish synagogues! They were working their way to Jerusalem! When the Jewish Christians saw this happening, they were warned of the impending destruction of the city by the Roman armies! Finally, in A.D.70, the Roman army under Titus, the son of Vespasian, came to finish what his father had started! Under his direction, Jerusalem was sieged, and *UTTERLY DESTROYED!* Again, all of this can be substantiated by reading from Josephus' *WARS OF THE JEWS*, books 3 and 4.

Jesus went on to say that *GREAT TRIBULATION WOULD COME*. (vs.19-28) Other accounts are virtually the same. Josephus says that the Zealots had taken over the temple in this time, and they were profaning the temple - even to the point of *murdering* there!

THE CARCASS referred to in verse 28 and in Luke 17:37 is that of *NATIONAL ISRAEL* as the people of God! Incidentally, if you will check the word "eagle" which appears here, you will find that it more properly refers to *VULTURES* which are attracted to *DEAD BODIES!*

Jesus says that *THE SUN AND MOON WOULD BE DARKENED AND THE STARS WOULD FALL* (vs.29,30) To this Mark and Luke agree. Since there is no record of this *literally* happening *yet*, some conclude that this is in *our future!* BUT--- if you will consider such O.T. passages as: Isaiah 13:1-13: v.1 "Oracle concerning Babylon"; v.10 "stars not give light...sun darkened..moon not shine"; v.11 "punish the world"; v.13 "earth shaken out of its place"[as a manifestation of the]"wrath of Jehovah...day of His fierce anger"; and *ALL* of this pertained to Babylon, and *ALL* of this is *PAST!* Also in Isaiah 19:1 "oracle concerning Egypt".."Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud" is used to signal JUDGEMENT or DESTRUCTION on Egypt! Also, Ezekiel 32:1-10 v.2 "lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt"; v.10 "day of thy FALL!"; v.7 "extinguish & *THEE* ... stars darkened...cover the sun with a cloud...moon will not give light"; v.8 "darkness upon the land". Considering how God used such terminology through O.T. prophets, it is not hard to understand how Jesus used it of the downfall of Jerusalem!

Many have a problem here with *COMING* with respect to Jesus. The literal translation of this

is "**be present**" (V.30) Keep in mind the fact that the apostles didn't **really** expect Him to leave them, and nothing in this context could rightfully be understood to cause them to ask about his **Coming again!** What we have here is the question, "**WHEN WILL YOU BE PRESENT TO DO THIS TO THE TEMPLE?**" IF you have any question about this, look at Luke 21:7 "...when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass?" To surmise that somehow, Jesus mystically injected His coming at the end of the World into the answer to their questions about the destruction of Jerusalem, is to infer **MORE** than Jesus implied!

They were admonished to **FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS, NOT EVEN TO GO BACK FOR ANYTHING** when this came to pass!(vs.16-20) This same thought is expressed in verse 31 "**THE ANGELS GATHERING THE ELECT FROM THE FOUR WINDS..**" Same in Mark, but not in Luke. Same context, same thought! When what Jesus describes in Luke 21:22 as "the days of vengeance" came upon Israel, it would be like the angels gathering up God's **TRUE** people from wherever they were found!

The real **clinch**er to this passage is found in vs. 33,34. **ALL OF THIS WAS TO HAPPEN IN THAT GENERATION!** Unless there are some **very old** people running around, whatever this was, must **ALREADY** have happened! Incidentally, Hal Lindsey says that this means Christ will come in the **GENERATION** which sees the signs! And, he teaches that **we are it!** But--this is **NOT** what Jesus said! He said in all three accounts: "Assuredly, I say to you, **THIS** generation will **BY NO MEANS** pass away till **ALL these things are fulfilled.**"

Jesus uses the **LIGHTENING ACROSS THE SKY** to show that this event will be as obvious as the lightening is to everyone, and **NOT** as some obscure happening! (v.27) This is only recorded in Matthew 24.

Many today, even among members of the Lord's church, have problems with **THAT DAY** in verse 36. Many try to divide the context here, and say that Jesus shifted over to the **END OF THE WORLD** and His **SECOND COMING** from verse 36 on. But, as we have seen, there is nothing in the text that would Point to such a conclusion. In fact, it all points **AWAY** from it! The **DAY** they were asking about had to do with **THE END OR CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE!**

What **AGE** was this? It was of course the **AGE** which came to an end when the Temple in Jerusalem was utterly destroyed! [Keep in mind that as long as this stood, there was at least a semblance of the Jewish system - but when God brought His wrath upon Israel, His covenant was brought to an end with them, **FOREVER!** No question about it!] Thus as Jesus said in Luke21:22 "that all things which are written may be fulfilled", the city met its final doom as the earthly headquarters of God's people, Israel!

Some will STILL try to inject the *JUDGEMENT DAY* into "*NO MAN KNOWS THE TIME*" in vs.36-39 and vs.42-44. But, there is NO PROBLEM with this in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem! Jesus was WARNING them to be watchful for the signs, and not to be caught OFF GUARD! No doubt, the PRINCIPLE is taught concerning the return of the Lord for Judgement, but that is NOT how He used it here!

One of the BIGGEST PROBLEMS THAT THOSE WHO TRY TO DIVIDE UP MATTHEW 24 FACE is ONE IS TAKEN AND ONE LEFT! (vs.40,41) IF Matthew 24 deals with the SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, and as some gospel preachers contend: "verse 36 starts talking about the second coming", WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? DOES IT, as the denominations teach, REFER TO THE RAPTURE? If you look at Luke 17:22-37, You will see Jesus talking about "one of the days of the Son of man" and using the destruction of the world in the days of Noah, and Sodom and Gomorrah to teach about the destruction of Jerusalem - and HERE He uses "one is taken, and one left.." If you look back to verses 16-18 of Matthew 24, you will see that this is so. They were to RUN, and some would be left behind! In fact, only Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians would know the signs and thus flee!

According to the secular writers of the day, NOT ONE CHRISTIAN DIED IN THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM! Because they HEEDED the signs and left those around them BEHIND!

Dear friends, there is NOT ONE REFERENCE TO THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST IN MATTHEW 24! And so, there cannot be any reference TO A SUPPOSED RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS! This does away with the speculators of our day who point to the mid-east situation, and the threat of nuclear war, and say THESE ARE THE SIGNS OF THE END! IS the return of Jesus IMMINENT? YES! Just as it was from the time He LEFT the earth! Thus we must be READY at ALL TIMES, and not rely on so-called SIGNS OF THE END!

Yes--Matthew 25 starts off with a discussion of the KINGDOM, and ENDS with the Judgement scene, ALL NATIONS gathered for judgement and final disposition! But let's handle aright the Word of Truth, and see Matthew 24 for what it IS, and not open the door to vain speculators who formulate false doctrines by misapplications of the Scriptures!

Revelation Chapter 20

What the passage does not teach:

It is argued that this passage teaches the return of Christ to the earth where he will set up his kingdom, reign in Jerusalem on David's throne for one thousand literal years. But notice that the passage:

- (1) does not mention the second coming of Christ,
- (2) does not mention a bodily resurrection,

- (3) does not mention a reign on earth,
- (4) does not mention a literal throne,
- (5) does not mention Jerusalem or Palestine,
- (6) does not mention us, and
- (7) does not mention Christ on earth.

The Context of Revelation

Again, the safest procedure in studying any hard chapter is to cast it against the background of the general context of the book where it is located. This book was addressed to the seven churches of Asia. (1:4). Because of the position of these Christians among pagan people and persecutors, the truths were largely set forth in symbolic language. (1:1) "To signify" means to reveal in signs or symbols. This manner of presentation served to instruct those addressed as they understood the symbols, while at the same time concealing from their pagan persecutors truths, which, if understood by them, would have resulted in intensified persecution against the church.

Literal or Figurative

Millennialists want to make the one thousand years of Revelation Chapter 20 literal. Yet they are forced to accept other terms in the passage as figurative or symbolic. The angel, the key, the bottomless pit and the great chain in his hand are obviously symbols to represent the exercise of divine power in restricting Satan and his forces. Even so the 1,000 years must be understood as a figure for the fulness or completeness. "The cattle on a thousand hills" are said to belong to the Lord. Does the Lord own the cattle only on one thousand literal hills, while the rest are not His?

There are at least 20 figures of speech in Revelation Chapters 19,20. Why single out the 1,000 years and literalize that while "spiritualizing" the rest of it?

The Binding of Satan

Jesus discussed entering Satan's palace, binding him and spoiling his goods in Matthew 12:29. This He said with reference to His own power over Satan in casting out demons. Christ was the seed of woman who came to bruise Satan's head (Genesis 3:15, 1 John 3:8). While Satan once held the power of death (Hebrews 2:14,15) Jesus now has the key of death and hades.

Questions For Review:

1. How did Jesus teach us that there would be no "thousand year" delay between the time He returns for His own, and time of accounting for the deeds done in the body? _____

2. How does Peter portray the events at the end of time in 2 Peter 3:10-12? _____

3. In John 5:28,29, how much time does Jesus say will be between the resurrection of life and the resurrection of condemnation? _____

4. Rather than reign over His kingdom on earth, what does Paul say that Jesus will do with the kingdom whenever He comes again? _____

5. Where do we turn in Matthew Chapter 24 to determine the subject of the Chapter, and what do these verses tell us? _____

6. The disciples asked Jesus, "When shall this be?" What were they asking about? _____

7. What did Gamaliel say that leads us to believe that the "false teachers" and "false christs" Jesus spoke of in verse 5 of Matthew Chapter 24 have already come and gone? _____

8. Many today talk about the "wars and rumors of wars" being the sign of the end of time. Where does Jesus place these signs? _____

9. Today we hear people saying that when the gospel has finally been preached to the who world, the Lord will come again in fulfillment of Matthew 24:14. Prove that this has nothing to do with the second coming of Jesus Christ. _____

10. How does the parallel account in Luke 21:20 help us to understand the meaning of "the abomination of desolation" in Matthew 24:15? _____

11. What is the meaning of Matthew 24:29,30 with respect to the sun, moon and stars? _____

12. What is the literal translation of “coming” here with respect to Jesus, and how does this help us to put the question they asked in harmony with the parallel accounts? _____

13. In what time frame was all that Jesus prophesied to come to pass? _____

14. What is the “end of the age” the disciples asked about? _____

15. Explain how “no man knows the time” relates to the subject of Matthew Chapter 24, and show how people constantly take this passage out of context. _____

16. If, as some contend, Matthew Chapter 24 from verse 36 to the conclusion refers to the second coming of Christ, what is meant by verses 40 & 41? _____

17. List the *seven things* not mentioned in Revelation Chapter 20, and explain what bearing this has on the meaning of the passage. _____

18. What did Jesus take away from Satan that binds him and spoils his goods? _____

