

## End Times

**I believe the American evangelical church has misunderstood Biblical end times teaching to the detriment of society.**

Ideas have consequences. The majority of Americans identify as Christians but have very little impact on society, either 1) they misunderstand what it means to be Christian or 2) their insignificance is the direct result of their eschatology. I propose a third reason which causes our lack of impact, we are Biblically illiterate. We live in an age where we can get a verse a day on our smart phones but have no clue of the context. For example we've all heard the following to get us psyched about heaven:

***But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9, NKJV+)***

People that quote this verse say "see, we can't even imagine what heaven will be like" I think there was even a song written using that idea. But how many can quote the verse that follows it?

***But God has revealed to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10, NKJV+)***

"God has revealed", goes against this being used to get us psyched about heaven. The whole chapter is pointing us to Christ, Christ is the thing that never entered into the heart of man, Christ is the one prepared for those who love Him. He's trying to get us psyched about Christ. Now, I don't think we can imagine what Heaven will be like, but I think it is wrong to twist a verse to say that. I think it is dangerous to go against the intention of the Author and take it out of context.

So we know what people say about the Bible but we don't know what the Bible says, and we don't know how to read or understand it. We are told that society will get worse and worse until finally God says alright that's it, I'm done fooling around with you, I coming down there. So, like a self-fulfilling prophecy we don't try to work against evil trends. We shrug our shoulders at each new abomination and say "see, it's getting worse". Advocates of a life style that represents less than 1% of the population can dictate what is acceptable to the rest of America. And we sit back and say "see, it's getting worse, so it must be the last days".

I don't believe when Christ gave us the Great Commission he meant for us to fail. He claimed the "gates of hell shall not prevail". I don't believe Daniel's vision of the kingdom of God expanding to fill the whole earth was in error. I don't believe Christ was mistaken when He gave us the parable of the mustard seed growing to fill the earth. I do believe ideas have consequences and we are being hogtied by our faulty eschatology.

## **Starting Point**

To properly understand the Bible we must first lay a solid foundation.

The first brick in our foundation is; Scripture is the inspired Word of the Creator. If it was not inspired by God then it is the product of man's imagination and we are wasting our time studying it.

The second brick is; each book was written to a specific people at a specific time. This point is misunderstood or missed by many people. Whatever our interpretation is, it must have made sense to the people it was written to. I believe the lack of this brick has caused much of our problems today. We are reading someone else's mail, we can use the knowledge imparted to them but we have to understand it in a way that made sense to them. When Paul writes to the Corinthians that someone is sleeping with his father's wife, that doesn't mean every church has someone sleeping with his father's wife. That is an extreme example to make a point. We rightly use that example to know how to deal with sin in the church whatever form that sin may take. When John writes: *"every spirit that does not confess that*

*Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” (1 John 4:3, NKJV+)* We must understand that the Antichrist was already in the world at the time that letter was written, and we look in vain for one in our time.

The third brick is; the clear must define or anchor the unclear. The clear statements are our anchor points that must not be discarded in order to interpret an unclear statement. For example the 70 weeks prophecy in Daniel 9 is unclear, theologians have discussed its meaning since it was written. But Christ's statement in the Olivette discourse *“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place”.* (Matthew 24:34, NKJV+) is clear. It is wrong to reinterpret the word “this” in order to allow a faulty interpretation of the 70 weeks passage.

The fourth brick is; Scripture should interpret Scripture. Where symbolism is used in the Old Testament we should use the same meaning in the New Testament. For example in Joseph's dream he sees the sun, moon and stars bowing down to him. Joseph's family had no trouble discerning the sun, moon and stars were referring to themselves. So when we read in Matthew 24 about the sun being darkened, the moon will not give its light and the stars falling from heaven, we should not think of celestial bodies. Using Joseph's dream we can surmise the sun and moon in Matthew 24 is symbolical of the ruling party, and the stars are the citizens.

## **The Methods of Interpretation.**

**First method is spiritual.**

This is very similar to a metaphor but I feel it is a little different. This is where the text illustrates a spiritual truth. I feel this permeates the Scripture, to me it is the default. For example, the first communication the Creator had with His creation.

*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; “but of the tree of the knowledge*

*of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17, NKJV+)*

Notice what He says, "in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die". Did they die that day? Satan claimed they wouldn't, was he right? They didn't die literally or physically, but they did die spiritually. They were severed from communion with their Creator. Another example is the conversation with Nicodemus:

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.  
"Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"  
(John 3:3-4, NKJV+)*

Born again is not literal, Nicodemus didn't understand Christ was talking spiritually. We have a hard time thinking outside our own experience. God is Spirit and must be worshiped in Spirit and I believe His normal communication will be from the spiritual viewpoint.

**Second method is metaphor.**

The dictionary defines a metaphor as a figure of speech which makes an implicit, implied or hidden comparison between two things or objects that are poles apart from each other but have some characteristics common between them. It could be called symbolism. Here are some examples:

*Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, because we have taken no bread." (Matthew 16:6-7, NKJV+)*

Here Leaven is the metaphor for false teaching, we don't need to worry if the bread we buy is from a pharisee.

***"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces. (Matthew 7:6, NKJV+)***

Here dogs and swine refer to people that don't know Christ or don't care to know Him.

Some of the metaphors were obvious but some people took them literally, John 6 is an example of people taking a spiritual truth and applying it literally to the point of no longer being a disciple of Christ. The blood and flesh is a metaphor for believing in Christ. It could also be thought of teaching a spiritual truth. The woman at the well asking Christ to her give some of that living water so she didn't have to make the trek to the well every day. Similes are also used but typically they don't cause any problems because the use of "like" and "as" make it obvious they are not to be taken literally. The exception is the verse where Peter says "***with the Lord one day as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day***". (2 Peter 3:8, NKJV+) I've had people tell me this verse is why the time texts can be disregarded, but He doesn't say He **calls** one day a thousand years. The point of the verse is that time to the Lord is not like time is to us.

**Third method is literal.**

This one is obvious, the text means exactly what it says. For example:

***"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (Matthew 24:34-35, NKJV+)***

Christ is pretty emphatic here, first He says "assuredly" then He adds the sentence after to punctuate it further. Almost as if He knew it would be twisted. This is a clear statement that I would call an anchor statement. If our interpretation of other passages forces us to twist this verse to mean anything other than what it says, something is wrong. Another example might illustrate the opposite is in Psalms He says He owns "the cattle on a thousand hills", a thousand

was huge to them, now we would say a billion hills. We can't take this literally, the point was He owns all the cattle, not just the ones on a thousand hills. This is also an example of the second brick in our foundation, we have to remember the people it was written to and how they would have understood it.

#### **Fourth method is apocalyptic.**

Apocalyptic come from the Greek word meaning revealing, it is revealing things that are hidden. This is a harder method to explain to our way of thinking. I think of it as exaggerating to make a point, it should not be taken literally. The web has this description of apocalyptic method; "a prominent characteristic of apocalyptic literature is its love of images, symbols, and symbolic numbers. Fire, ice, smoke, light, darkness, precious stones, wind, the sea, clouds, mountains, trees, and countless other "props" laden with symbolic meaning form the surrealistic landscape of the narrative".<sup>1</sup> The ancient mind was different to ours, we tend to be more literal, where they weren't. The verses where they talk of the sky rolling up like a scroll, or the elements burning up, is apocalyptic language. Sometimes apocalyptic language is a combination of exaggeration and symbolism used to illustrate a spiritual truth.

#### **Fifth method is logic.**

We were created with a mind and a capacity to think, so we should use it. I think everyone would agree, God is logical. The problem with this method is sometimes we are not. The further people get from the Creator the more illogical they become, that is the lesson of Romans 1. The first chapter of John could be translated this way:

*In the beginning was Logic, and Logic was with God, and Logic was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/asbury-bible-commentary/Apocalyptic-Literature>

*shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.  
(John 1:1-5, NKJV+)*

The Greek word translated Word in our Bibles is logos, which is where we get the word logic from. This method should direct our understanding but it shouldn't be the strongest method. For example; we have two differing views of the tribulation, one in our future, and one at the destruction of the Israeli nation in 70 AD. Does it make logical sense that God would allow the very society that chose Barabbas over Christ to rest in peace, or that He would punish a society that had nothing to do with His Crucifixion since they lived thousands of years after the fact? Or does it make logical sense that He would inspire a book that was of no use until a few years before the end of history? Another example is does it make logical sense that God would die for our sins? This is why logic should be considered, but not be the strongest method, because God is logical but we don't always understand His logic. The first two examples the Scripture is not perfectly clear, so logic can be used. The last example we don't need logic because Scripture leaves no doubt. Christ is God and He died in our place.

## **Anchor Points**

Anchor points are passages or ideas that provide an outline or reference point for interpreting Scripture. The Scripture is the Word of God and is infallible would be an anchor point. Without this reference point the Bible is the word of man and holds no power or significance. We can think of anchor points as waypoints or stops along the way to make sure we stay on track. For example I can take a trip to Houston knowing I have to go through Kansas City, if I end up in Chicago I know I'm off the track. So in my journey to understand eschatology these are the points I have to go through to reach the destination of proper Biblical understanding. I can't twist or redefine these points without getting hopelessly lost.

## **Seals**

One anchor point for me is the contrast between what is told to Daniel when the angel was done talking to him and what was told to John at the end of Revelation.

Here is what was told to Daniel: ***"And he said, "Go [your way,] Daniel, for the words [are] closed up and sealed till the time of the end". (Daniel 12:9, NKJV+)*** In verse 13 the angel repeats the instruction for Daniel to go, and tells him he shall rest. The meaning is Daniel will not see these things come to pass. Many people say Revelation is the New Testaments version of Daniel because there are so many parallels. Here is what is told to John: ***And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. (Revelation 22:10, NKJV+)*** The similarity makes the contrast more striking. Almost the same terminology, but John is told **not** to seal the book because the time is at hand. So the clear intent is to inform the readers that the events will take place in John's lifetime.

### **This Generation**

Another anchor point I have already talked about is in Matthew where Christ says this: ***"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (Matthew 24:34-35, NKJV+)*** Now if we confess Christ is Divine then we will grant that He understands language. If He understands language then He knows the difference between the word this and the word that. He uses the phrase "this generation" five times in Matthew, each time the context is the people He is talking to. He doesn't use the phrase "that generation" if He had used "that generation" we could make the assumption He was talking to us and our generation, but He doesn't, therefore we can't. Unless we want to be in the position of claiming we know better than the Lord of Creation.

### **Land Promises**

The next anchor point is the land promises are fulfilled. The Lord plainly tells us:

***"So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into***

*their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass." (Joshua 21:43-45, NKJV+)*

The Creator does not have to do anything for Israel, His land promises have been fulfilled.

## **Israel**

Israel is an anchor point so we must understand its part. The following verses should shed some light on the subject:

*But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they [are] not all Israel who [are] of Israel, nor [are they] all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called. "That is, those who [are] the children of the flesh, these [are] not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. (Romans 9:6-8, NKJV+)*

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you [are] Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29, NKJV+)*

*Therefore know that those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. (Galatians 3:7, NKJV+)*

*"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder. "Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the*

*multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet. (Matthew 21:43-46, NKJV+)*

The meaning in these verses is clear, the children of promise are spiritual children, not physical descendants of Abraham. Christ prophesied that "the kingdom of God will be taken from you", this happened in 70AD, within that very generation. The spiritual kingdom was established at the resurrection and the physical kingdom of Israel was destroyed with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Israel consists of all believers in Christ, to separate them into regular believers and super-believers goes against the clear teaching of Scripture. To reinstitute the temple sacrifices is to blaspheme Christ's once-for-all time sacrifice on the cross. There will be no temple sacrifices that denigrate the cross.

### **The Final Kingdom**

The last anchor point is the prophecy of the kingdom that comes during the Roman Empire. The Creator gives Nebuchadnezzar a vision that Daniel interprets to be four great physical empires, and a fifth empire setup by "the God of heaven". This kingdom is described in the following words:

*"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. "Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold-the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure." (Daniel 2:44-45, NKJV+)*

A kingdom that "shall never be destroyed", and "shall stand forever" this is the kingdom that Christ setup. It is the kingdom that "is not of this world" but will "consume all these kingdoms".

### **Last Days**

There is a lot of talk of this being the last days, but what does the Bible say about the last days? Here are a couple passages that illuminate things:

*GOD, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by [His] Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:1-2, NKJV+)*

*But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is [only] the third hour of the day. "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. (Acts 2:14-17, NKJV+)*

From these two quotes we know the apostles believed they were in the last days. Obviously what they term last days and what we think of are different. They knew the 70 weeks prophecy and the words of condemnation that Christ had proclaimed against the nation of Israel. They knew they were in the last days of the Jewish nation. They also believed they were in the tribulation:

*I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 1:9, NKJV+)*

So these passages are pretty clear they were in the last days, and in the tribulation. So maybe we need to rethink our understanding of the end times.

## Now What?

Using the anchor points we can look at the current majority evangelical view of eschatology and decide if it follows what the Bible teaches. The current view uses several different names, pre-trib rapture, dispensationalism, left behinders, are the common descriptions. Their main points are Israel and the church are separate, the last 7 years of the 70 weeks are not consecutive and are a time of unprecedented trouble where a man called the anti-christ is in control, and society will get worse until there is no hope. They consider most of Revelation and other Old Testament passages refer to the future. As you can see the anchor points are not compatible with these ideas. Now I'll go through some passages and see what they say while following our anchor points.

### 70 Weeks Prophecy

The popular prophetic system hinges on their interpretation of the 70 weeks prophecy at the end of Daniel 9. This is what it says:

*"Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city,*

*To finish the transgression,*

*To make an end of sins,*

*To make reconciliation for iniquity,*

*To bring in everlasting righteousness,*

*To seal up vision and prophecy,*

*And to anoint the Most Holy.*

*"Know therefore and understand, [That] from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, [There shall be] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (69); The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome*

*times. "And after the sixty-two weeks (the start of the seventieth) Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it [shall be] with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate." (Daniel 9:24-27, NKJV+)*

I'll go through each passage in order.

The seventy weeks is for the Israelites and the city of Jerusalem.

The Greek word used for transgression literally means revolt, so it could be stated as; put an end to the revolt.

The Greek word used for sins here has the idea of both the offense and the penalty, so it could be stated as; to complete the trial.

Literally to cover perversity.

To bring in eternal right.

To seal something is to close it so nothing can be added.

The Greek translated Most Holy is the same Greek words stated twice, so anointing the Most Holy is to consecrate the Holy Holy or Holy of Holies.

The command to restore and rebuild was in Nehemiah's time. This started the clock which reached the end of the 69th week at the baptism of Christ. 3-1/2 years later we reach the Crucifixion, or when the Messiah was cut off, which was in the middle of the week which put an end to the need for the sacrifice and offering.

"Then He shall confirm a covenant with many" contrast that with the words in Matthew: *"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many*

*for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28, NKJV+)* We have similar terminology, "covenant made with many", I don't think it is a coincidence. A different interpretation has to make the man of sin bringing an end to sacrifice and offering but Christ accomplished that with His death and resurrection.

The ancients were not tied to logical progression like we are which I think is why we misinterpret this along with other passages. Here is how I would paraphrase it:

*"Seventy weeks are determined for Jews and for Jerusalem, to put an end to the revolt, to complete the trial, to cover perversity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to finish vision and prophecy, And to consecrate the Lord Christ."*

*"Know therefore and understand, That from the decree to restore and build Jerusalem until Christ, there shall be 49 years and 434 years; The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troubled times. And in the last seven years Christ shall be cut off, but not for Himself, in the middle of the last seven years He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering, and he shall confirm a covenant with many. Beyond the 490 years destruction is foreordained till the end of the war. The Romans shall destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and the end of it shall be with a deluge, and one will come who will destroy while performing abominations, even until the end, which is certain, is poured out on the abandoned." (Daniel 9:24-27, PZ)*

The left behinders insert a gap between the 69th and the 70th where there is no justification for it, it is required to make their view coherent. They require a distinction between Christians and Israelites. Their view has Israel being set aside and the Church being God's focus. The left behinders start with their interpretation of Daniel 9 and force other passages to fit.

**70 AD**

The desolation determined in the 70 week prophecy of Daniel took place in 70 AD, within the generation of those who heard Christ. This is the tribulation Christ and the apostles talked about, it is not in our future. The Lord prophesied in Matthew 24 that "all these things will happen to this generation". The disciples in Jerusalem understood what He said and believed Him so much that they sold their goods, or liquidated their assets, and got ready to flee to the hills. We are told in Acts how only in Jerusalem did they sell their property, we are not told why, this where we need logic, probably trusting that with study we would know it was due to Christ's warning. The Romans marched to the city and inexplicably stopped within site of the walls. This gave Christians time to flee and the unbelieving Jews time to get into the city they believed God would protect. They did not believe Christ's repeated warnings in His parables.

It is said the Roman soldiers were given instructions not to touch the temple, but the Jews started a fire that melted the gold so that it ran between the stones. The soldiers overturned every stone to get at the precious prize, thus fulfilling Christ's prophecy that "not one stone will be left upon another". The siege lasted 3-1/2 years and is described as a time like no other, cannibalism was rampant. One story is people would go house to house looking for anything to eat, upon breaking to one house they found a mother boiling her child. It is estimated that over a million Jews were killed. Jewish slaves were so common after the siege that they had no value. It is said Titus would not accept a victory wreath stating that he was an instrument of God's wrath.

This put an end to the nation of Israel and the political class that had worked so hard to silence the Messiah.

## **Matthew 24**

*Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what [will be] the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. "And you will hear of wars and*

*rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet. "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. "All these [are] the beginning of sorrows. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. "But he who endures to the end shall be saved. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here [is] the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe [it.]"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. "See, I have told you beforehand. "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; [or] 'Look, [He is] in the inner rooms!' do not believe [it.]"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.*

*"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer [is] near. "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (Matthew 24:3-35, NKJV+)*

When we take a look at this the first thing to notice is the repetition of the personal pronoun "you", I count 14 times. That is in addition to Christ saying "this generation". So we should take Christ at His word and realize these things would happen to those alive and listening to His words.

So let's look at what He said and determine if the Bible is to be believed or if we should discard it.

"Many will come in my name", yep, we have a list from the Sanhedrin about the false messiahs who their followers dispersed when the leader died.

"Wars and rumors of wars", yep, historians record that pax romana, (Roman peace) was anything but peaceful but was full of rebellions and wars.

"There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places", yep, in Acts we have records of several earthquakes and at least one famine, history also bears witness of the truth of this statement.

They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you", yep, starting with Stephen, it is said the blood of the saints fed the growth of the Church. First the Jews

instigated the persecution, we have this in the record in Acts as Saul's first actions, and in Revelation with Christ's own words describing the synagogue of Satan. The Jews started the persecution but Nero continued it when he got the power of the state behind it. Nero's persecution was worse, thankfully it only lasted 3-1/2 years. Where has that number come up before?

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come". Yep, people will disagree on this one, but I'll believe the apostle Paul:

*you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as [it has] also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; (Colossians 1:5-6, NKJV+)*

Here I need to mention a problem with the KJV, there are three different Greek words that KJV translates world, oikoumene, kosmos, and aion. Oikoumene is where we get our word economy and should be translated region, this is the word Christ uses in Matthew 24:14. Kosmos is where we get our word cosmos, world is an ok translation but cosmos would be better. Paul uses kosmos in Colossians 1:6. Aion is where we get our word eon, and the newer translations translate it as age, for example; the end of the age. Christ uses aion in Matthew 24:3. So anyhow yep again.

"Therefore when you see the '**abomination of desolation,**' spoken of by Daniel the prophet", yep, this is a quote from Daniel 9, the 70 weeks prophecy that was discussed earlier. This whole section refers to the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem. There are a few things to note here, first, "pray that it doesn't happen on the Sabbath". in those days the gates were closed on the Sabbath so people wouldn't be tempted to travel and break the law, currently it wouldn't matter. Second the terminology here is an example of apocalyptic language so we shouldn't take it too literally, it is conveying spiritual truth.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens will be shaken", yep, using our brick of Scripture interprets Scripture we know that sun, moon, and stars do not refer to celestial bodies but authority figures and citizens.

I have to admit I don't understand verse 30 and 31 about the sign of the Son of Man, but I have to hold on to my anchor points and trust that here again is apocalyptic language that if I knew more I could discern the spiritual truth. "Coming on the clouds of heaven" is common judgement language from the Old Testament, so again it probably refers to the 70AD judgement.

### **I Thessalonians 4:15-17**

This passage is used to prove the rapture but it is describing the second coming, there is no reason to read a secret rapture into the passage. If this could be describing the second coming then where is the proof of a secret rapture?

*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive [and] remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, NKJV+)*

There is nothing to make us think Paul is talking about a rapture and not the second coming.

### **What this means.**

Christ is coming back for us, the Bible is clear on that point. Our belief about the timing will not affect our standing. I believe it does affect our behavior.

Looking at these passages shows us that dispensationalists have to twist or put their own interpretation on clear passages to maintain their views. Many cling to

the hope of the rapture in our near future, but wishful thinking does not make it true. It can do great harm, I personally thought I could do what I pleased and if the rapture happened then I could profess Christ and get a second chance. There is nothing in dispensationalism that says I was wrong.

The Creator gave us His words for us to learn from Him. For us to force our own view is to elevate us above the Lord, we need to be humble and allow Him through the text to inform or reform our understanding.

Understanding that most of the Bible is about the past frees us to work to better our society and not assume it is just going to get worse. The apostles were very successful in Israel because Israel had a Biblical background, Paul had very few converts in Athens because he had to work against their biases. America is becoming like Athens. We have the answers to society's problems but we stay silent, many people believe lies about our Creator and His Word but instead of championing truth we huddle and wait for our rescue. We are created, we did not evolve, there is no evidence for evolution. In the future they will look back at our belief in blind chance like we look at flat earther's, but we allow lies because we feel that's the way it's got to be.

Knowing how accurate the Scripture is allows us to use the lessons of the past to help us today. As dark as the time of the early Church was they held fast and overcame the beast. They expanded and grew until every continent has heard the Gospel. Then during the dark ages when the Word was chained and the beast had control over all of Europe and could murder the disciples of Christ, the Walden's, the Huguenot's, etc. The Bible was brought forth in the peoples own language, and reformed the world. In our own time when the beast is gaining power, the Word of God alone will starve it back into its cave.

## **What to do:**

Our ultimate goal must be to glorify our Creator, we glorify Him by searching His Word for His meaning and not trusting on our own understanding. During the reformation the western world was turned right-side up by the Bible getting into

the hands of the people and being read by the people. We need to use the Berean example and not trust charlatans that tickle our ears, we need to know the Word for ourselves. Once again we need to get back to the foundations of the Bible, we need to know what it says so the Bible twisters will die a slow death of attrition. We need to value truth and loath innovations where the Word of God is concerned. We need to ask what was the Authors intent and not what does it mean to me. Our daily prayer should be, "show me where I misinterpret your Word, and show me the truth". The Lord is coming back, could be in our lifetime, or it could be 10,000 years from now, we don't know, but we glorify Him by rightly discerning His Word.

These are a few things that have convinced me the current pre-trib rapture view is not Biblical. I have read many theologians that explain in more detail the problems and other views that make more sense Biblically. You can find more information from American Vision, Gary DeMar has written many books on the subject, Last Days Madness is very complete. Ligonier Ministries with RC Sproul have some information, Sproul doesn't focus on eschatology but his book Last Days According to Christ is good. Hank Hanegraaff the Bible Answer Man at Christian Research Institute is pretty outspoken about the current problems with the popular end times view, his book The Apocalypse Code is excellent for understanding methods of interpretation and how it applies to the end times.

Paul Zakariasen

[pzak1520@yahoo.com](mailto:pzak1520@yahoo.com)