

# Notes on Systematic Prophecy

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## Introduction: On Dogmatism - Laying a Foundation

It is often said that we ought not to be dogmatic about prophecy. There are at least three common reasons for this view:

- (a) Many brethren have only a tenuous grasp of the subject - to the point that further reading or discussion only confuses and unsettles them.
- (b) It is rare for any two expositions to reach the same conclusion and this only adds to the confusion.
- (c) Sometimes, firm conclusions about prophecy lead to conflict. Some brethren would rather put aside a search for truth than risk vigorous debate, which they find distressing. They believe that arguing about prophecy (or anything, really) is inconsistent with the spirit of Christ.

Holders of such views have a point. Our world is full of every kind of voice stridently pontificating about things to come. The effect is most unseemly. And it may be presumptuous to add to the babble. In the end it really doesn't matter what we think is going to happen. God is not bound by our understanding of His word. He will do exactly as He pleases. What we think about future events may even turn out to be profoundly irrelevant.

Yet the Bible is full of prophecy, and disciples have always wished to know, at least in outline, what is to happen. A little prior knowledge should turn out to be immensely helpful. For example, there are very few who can sail through a searching university examination without at least some idea of what they are likely to face in the exam room. Even an elementary understanding of the framework of prophecy should somewhat prepare us for the return of the Lord.

And there are several Biblical examples that validate prophetic enquiry. The Olivet prophecy arose out of the disciples' need to understand Jesus' prediction about the destruction of the temple;<sup>1</sup> Paul wrote to the Thessalonians implying that they knew at least a little about "the times and seasons";<sup>2</sup> Jesus gave us the book of Revelation so as "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass",<sup>3</sup> etc. So we have every reason to look into the subject.

Yet we must guard against dogmatism. One dictionary<sup>4</sup> defines it as "unwarranted stubbornness of opinion" or "a viewpoint based on insufficiently examined premises".

Most of our difficulties with prophecy arise out of the subjective nature of our thinking, a problem of which we mostly seem to be blissfully unaware. Although he doesn't realise that his methodology is questionable, a student proposes what he thinks is a solid and reasonable interpretation and, naturally, he strongly commits to it. But his notions usually turn out to be impossible to reconcile with the views of others - who are just as strongly committed to *their* ways of looking at things. Difficulties arise when strong views lead to conflict. Regrettably, *stubbornness of opinion* is usually associated with *insufficiently examined premises*. We must lay a foundation that helps us to at least recognise subjective elements in our arguments, even if we cannot entirely eliminate them from the discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 24:1-3, etc.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:1.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 1:1.

<sup>4</sup> Merriam-Webster.

## What is Truth?

As a first step it is enormously helpful to understand a little about the philosophy of truth. If we have a little insight into why we accept some ideas as true and reject others as false then we should be better equipped to properly appraise various notions - on any subject, not just prophecy.

Belief is based on one or more of four criteria:

(a) We believe things because they have been told us by a voice of authority.

For example, we believe many things that the Bible says just because the Bible says them. We've first used other methods (mostly (c), below) to convince ourselves that the Bible is the word of God; we then believe what it says because we're convinced it is the self-consistent voice of God. Or, to take a different example, most people (in the world) believe in a theory of evolution - basically because the scientists speak with an authority that the average person cannot challenge. Of course, it's a bit more complicated than that; nevertheless the underlying reason for belief in evolution is the scientists' authority.

Again, we use a dictionary to adjudicate when it comes to a question of spelling. We don't question its authority and invariably believe what it says.

So the voice of authority can be good, bad or neutral; but at least some people are apt to believe it just because it's authoritative, or because its message is constantly repeated and "hammered in".

The scriptures are *our* ultimate authority. While we don't doubt this authority, our scriptural beliefs are likely to be faulty if we misunderstand what scripture says. So we must go further: we must identify reliable methods for interpreting the scriptures and we need to know just how reliable these methods are, an idea that we will pursue in our first session.

(b) We believe things that can be logically deduced.

It is by no means self-evident that the sum of the internal angles in *any* triangle is *always* equal to two right-angles, yet it is possible to prove this to be true - along with a great many other theorems of Euclidean geometry. The process uses strict logic and is an entirely mental exercise. While it is easy enough to show empirically (as in (c), below) that the sum of the internal angles of any number of given triangles is equal to two right-angles, one can postulate an infinite number of triangles - all different - and life is too short to test every one by empirical means. Very few of us care about the sum of the internal angles of a triangle, but the illustration makes an important point. There are many truths that can only be deduced. We can usually go on to demonstrate that they are true in particular cases, yet even if this is not possible we will still accept them as sound; we will be convinced by the power of the logic.

As we shall see in due course, deduction, sometimes nearly as elegant as Euclidean geometry, is a highly valuable method for searching out the real meaning of prophecy.

(c) We believe things that can be demonstrated experimentally.

For example, much of medical science, ancient and modern, is based on empirical knowledge. That is, we don't necessarily understand how it works, but we believe in it because we have seen that it *does* work. There are probably millions of people who cheerfully climb on aeroplanes without the least understanding of the aerodynamics by which they fly. Yet they firmly believe that there is a very strong probability that they'll safely reach their destinations. An engineer confidently builds structures upon which peoples' lives depend because someone, somewhere, tested the strength of the

materials that he proposes to use. As long as no part of his structure exceeds an empirically discovered maximum stress value then the engineer stakes his reputation, and the lives of his clients, on his work. Most of us never give the matter even a passing thought as we blithely drive our cars out onto a huge bridge - such as San Francisco's Golden Gate or the Humber Bridge, near Hull. Yet if engineers had not correctly measured the strengths of materials then driving over a bridge would be a profoundly foolhardy enterprise.

Many students use quasi-empirical methods in relation to prophecy - particularly the time prophecies. They *assume* a system of interpretation such as "a day for a year" and then search for a suitable starting-point, testing for a fulfilment at their predicted end-point. If they find a "match" they feel confident that they have correctly understood the prophecy. This process is not as incontrovertible as it might at first sight appear because the reasoning is somewhat circular: If a good fit is found, then this is taken to be evidence for the validity of the assumptions upon which it is based.

(d) We believe things because we feel comfortable about them.

There is a huge body of myth, legend and folk-lore in the world - stuff such as Paul dismissed, calling it "old wives' fables".<sup>5</sup> To illustrate: consider two chairs, one metallic, the other wooden, in a cool room where the temperature has been constant for several hours. Everyone knows that the metallic chair will usually *feel* colder to the touch. On the basis of this observation most people believe that the metal chair *is* colder than the wooden one - that it is at a lower temperature. This "common-sense" conclusion is so strong that, without direct measurement, it is impossible to persuade most observers that when the experiment began both chairs were at exactly the same temperature. The metal one only *felt* colder because it's a much better conductor and drained heat more quickly from our warm hand (or seat!). The world of physics abounds with such examples.

The point is, an idea is not in the least credible just because we feel comfortable with it and have "always believed" it. If we are *really* interested in the truth of scripture then we must be willing to set aside ideas that we accept merely because we "feel in our bones" that they are true.

With these ideas in mind it becomes a little clearer as to why we argue about prophecy. Some ideas are better founded than others and we need to know the difference. In our first session we'll examine the specific methods by which scripture speaks to us - as a preliminary to actually opening the word on the subject of prophecy. If we can tidy up our methodology then we should be able to identify a large body of material about which we may be able to have much fruitful discussion, but about which we will not fight - because we will understand the strengths and weaknesses of the points of discussion. In other words, we won't be dogmatic, though we'll be able to draw some firm conclusions and defend them - vigorously, if necessary.

And if, when all is said and done, we find that there are brethren who simply cannot help themselves, but are so strongly committed to ideas that have been passed to them from the writings of those they deem to impart authority, or ideas that they simply feel in their bones to be true, then we will know how to "walk away" from unseemly controversy, refusing to demean the Word of God - which must be honoured and upheld in all our counsels.

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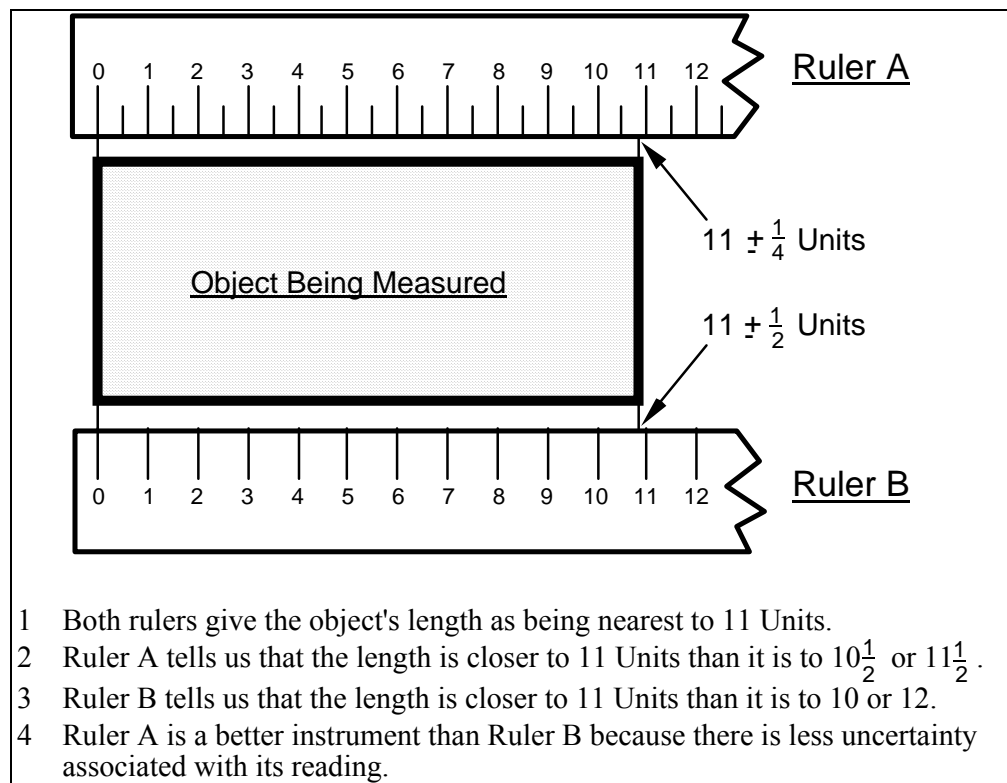
<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim 4:7.

## Session 1: Learning From The Word

Deciding whether a Bible teaching is a “fundamental” is not always easy. Sometimes subjective elements creep into our discussions. What appears absolutely vital to one may be less so to another. Settling these differences can be a vexing business.

It is helpful to have tools for deciding the significance of a particular idea being considered. One such tool is to know how a conclusion has been reached. Then the importance of the conclusion can be assessed in terms of the strength - or weakness - of the method used in arriving at it. In this discussion we’ll review the methods used to arrive at conclusions from scripture and then attempt to rate them according to their “reliability”.

To most of us, the “reliability” of an idea drawn from scripture is beyond question. But while scripture itself has an exact meaning, our ability correctly to understand that meaning is sometimes faulty. Hence the need to assess the limits of validity of a conclusion. To illustrate:



The reader may wonder what this has to do with the Bible. The answer is that learning anything from the Bible, even fundamentals, involves a process that is somewhat like taking measurements. If we use an “accurate ruler” we are entitled to draw conclusions that carry a correspondingly small range of uncertainty. If we can only use a “rough guide” our result will be more uncertain. In the first case our conclusions will demand greater respect as “fundamental” than in the second.

There seem to be only four methods used in learning from the Bible. Each will be discussed in turn, with examples; and then an attempt will be made to assess the uncertainty associated with conclusions drawn by use of each.

## 1 Direct Statements

“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

“To him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward ...” (Eccl. 9:4, 5).

Both of these examples state in precise, unambiguous language exactly what they intend to convey, and any figurative language (eg “living dogs” and “dead lions”) is explained in terms of the direct statement.

Direct statements clearly confer the highest level of “reliability” to conclusions drawn from the Bible. In this connection it is interesting to look through the supporting scripture given for each proposition in the Statement of Faith. Each is based on direct statements. Because of this, we have found it possible to agree that the statements are fundamentals.

At first sight we might think it self evident that a direct statement gives total precision to any conclusion drawn from it. This is not quite so. It is necessary first to be sure that it is a direct statement - and not a figure; or is not qualified elsewhere in scripture. For example,

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his (Jesus’) voice and shall come forth ...” (John 5:28, 29).

If this were the only statement on the subject we would conclude that all who had ever lived would be subject to resurrection. In fact, however, we know that this quite explicit direct statement is qualified by an earlier verse. The “all” who will hear the voice of Jesus and come forth from the graves is limited to those who had previously heeded the preaching of Jesus:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” (John 5:24, 25).

Qualifying the first statement (vss 28, 29) in terms of the second (vss 24, 25) makes its teaching consistent with the rest of scripture. For example,

“... at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, *some* to everlasting life, and *some* to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:1, 2).

Words like, “all” and “never” probably require more careful scrutiny in this connection than most others. There is a temptation to seize on all-inclusive statements because they are convenient. Their validity must be tested against the rest of scripture.

There is need, too, to recognise figurative language when it occurs. Some figurative passages appear remarkably like direct statements. Think, for example, of some of the figures found in the book of Revelation. These must be handled by one of the other methods - to be discussed.

Direct statements, then, are our most reliable source of information. But we need to take care that they really are direct statements and that we have gathered all relevant scripture to bear on the subject.



## 2 Inference

Moses did not teach resurrection by direct statement. But his record implies it:

“Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him” (Luke 20:37, 38).

In this wonderful deduction, based on Sadducee premises, Jesus confuted their stilted views about the power of God.

There are many inferences within the scripture record. The writer to the Hebrews inferred Abraham’s belief in Isaac’s resurrection (Heb. 11:19 - probably from Gen. 22:5). Eli never literally kicked at God’s sacrifices, although his actions implied as much (1 Sam. 2:29). Aaron’s subservience to Melchisedec is inferred from Abraham’s paying tithes to Melchisedec (Heb. 7:1-10). Most of the spiritual teaching behind the Law of Moses is implied; as, for example, Paul’s inference that God will reward our efforts and sacrifices - from the law about muzzling oxen (1 Cor. 9:9). The list is very long. Inspiration has elevated such inferences to the level of reliability of direct statements.

We may use the same process, but our conclusions will be more cautious. A deduction may never be more reliable than its premises, nor more sound than the logic by which it is formed. We are at risk, sometimes, of overlooking shaky premises because of the elegance of the logic. Although correct logic is true whether or not it is perceived in the human mind, the mind must enter the process whenever logic is used. To that extent, then, the logic is questionable - inconsistencies may go undetected.

So, although we may infer what scripture implies, we must look behind the deduction - testing the soundness of the premises and of the logic that links them to the conclusion.

## 3 Parallel Passages

This is a peculiarly scriptural method, and we use it automatically. When faced with a passage the meaning of which is unclear, we identify some characteristic subject matter, language or figure, and use it to align the passage with another showing the same peculiarity, but whose meaning is less obscure. The second passage is then used to explain the first on the assumption that both are saying the same thing.

Evidently we are intended to do this. None would attempt a study of the life of the Lord from, say, Matthew, without also referring to Mark, Luke, John and comments elsewhere. And who would study the kings of Judah without reference to Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah and many others of the prophets?

Even when confronted with a direct statement, we “instinctively” (actually, we’ve *learned* to do this) turn to parallel passages to throw more light on the subject, if possible. And - with good reason - few of us are truly comfortable with an idea that is supported by only one or two contexts. Fundamental teachings are frequent themes in scripture - they rarely rely on isolated texts.

Some Bible themes are of enormous breadth and complexity. For example, Latter Day Prophecy. Yet even here - indeed, especially here - a systematic approach, assessing the reliability of each step, can pay handsomely. We may decide, say, that Ezekiel 38 is a direct statement about Russia’s invasion of the land, and use that as a reference against which to explore other similar passages such as Joel’s prophecy, Zechariah 14, Daniel 11 and 12, 2 Thessalonians 2, the Olivet prophecy and so forth - by identifying parallel events and figures of speech. Arranging parallel passages “alongside” each other, “vertically”, so to speak, and then drawing “horizontal” links through their similarities or identities enables a more complete view to be gained without recourse to guesswork.

Somewhere in a group of parallel passages there should be at least one direct statement, the meaning of which is generally clear. Then, as long as the passages really are parallel, each may expand on the others.

But doubts about parallelism may introduce uncertainty. For example, there were two different occasions on which a woman anointed Jesus (Luke 7:36 ff and John 12:3). Although there are several similarities between these two occasions, there are more differences. The parallels are superficial.

Again, we are familiar with the passages in Ezekiel 38 (verses 8, 11 and 14) that say Israel will dwell “safely”, or confidently, *before* the invasion of Gog and his host.

The Hebrew word for “safely” appears in at least 41 verses of the Bible and some of these describe Israel’s condition in the kingdom - *after* Jesus’ return. For example,

“When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the LORD their God” (Ezekiel 28:25, 26).

There are several passages like this, each clearly to find its fulfilment *after* Jesus’ return and the establishment of God’s kingdom.<sup>6</sup> Similarity of language between passages such as these and Ezekiel 38:8, 11 and 14, has led some to conclude that Gog’s invasion will take place *after* Christ’s return and *after* the kingdom’s establishment. But this idea is inconsistent with the context. One purpose of the Gogian invasion is to prove the power of God: to the nations *and to Israel*:

“... thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that *the heathen* may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes” (Ezekiel 38:16).<sup>7</sup>

“So *the house of Israel* shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward” (Ezekiel 39:22).<sup>8</sup>

Are we seriously to suppose that the kingdom will be set up over Israel without the nation knowing their divine King? Ezekiel 39:22 makes it obvious that the Gogian invasion must occur *before* the kingdom is established.

Even more to the point, commenting at the end of the prophecy on Israel’s ultimate triumph, Ezekiel said:

“... thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid” (Ezekiel 39:25, 26).

This passage makes it clear that part of the reason for the Gogian invasion will be to punish Israel for trespasses committed “*when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them*

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Jeremiah 23:6, 32:37, 33:16; Ezekiel 34:25, 27, 28, etc.

<sup>7</sup> See also Ezekiel 38:19, 20, 23; 39:7, 21, 23.

<sup>8</sup> See also Ezekiel 39:7, 28, 29.

*afraid*” - clearly a description of Israel’s condition *before* the Lord’s return and therefore *before* the establishment of God’s kingdom.

Incidentally, speaking of the time that is to follow their deliverance from Gog, God says he will never again hide his face from his people (Ezekiel 39:29) and that they will never again be permitted to pollute God’s Holy Name (Ezekiel 39:7). This implies (notice the deduction) that the Gogian invasion is the last time that Israel will ever be punished for their sins by an invading army. And this invasion takes place *before* the return of Christ (to deliver them and then set up the kingdom).

So parallel passages are an important way to converge on scripture teaching. But their reliability is limited to the level of confidence associated with their underlying direct statement(s), and we need to take great care that the parallelism is not merely superficial - or is otherwise contradicted by the respective contexts of the passages being compared.

By the way, scriptural types, and parables, may be regarded as a particular kind of parallelism.

#### 4 The Scientific, or Hypothetical, Method

In this case, when confronted by an obscure passage, we guess at its meaning, and then assemble corroborative facts in support of our guess. This is the way that scientists proceed if the objects of their investigations are beyond direct observation. Of course they don’t call their hypothesis a “guess”. The usual word is “model”. Nevertheless it is still a guess.

There is nothing wrong with this method - as long as we are aware of its limitations. We constantly use it and it is very helpful; particularly when making exhortational points. For example: we may suppose (notice the hypothesis?) that the centurion whose servant Jesus healed (Luke 7:1-10) is Cornelius of Acts 10. There is not the least direct evidence for this in scripture; nor can we deduce it from the record. But by applying principles of parallelism, we may be able to support the hypothesis to the extent that it becomes sufficiently probable (read, “believable”). In this particular case, examination of the records reveals these common facts:

- (a) Both men were centurions.
- (b) They both had faithful, devout servants who were dear to them.
- (c) They were both lovers of Israel.
- (d) They were both benefactors of the Jewish people.
- (e) They were both God-fearing men.
- (f) They were both aware of the work of Jesus.

Perhaps further points of similarity might be added, but these may be sufficient to support the notion that the two individuals are the same man. A single point of similarity would not cause us to pay much further attention to the hypothesis. Two would make us wonder. Three or more will progressively rivet our attention.

It should be realised that making the list of corroborative facts longer merely reduces the probability of error in the hypothesis; but not to zero - it cannot produce certainty. Even if we could add to the list that both men were left handed, enjoyed driving fast chariots and wore a particular brand of sandal, we would still be faced, at bottom, with a guess. It would be a good guess, to be sure, but could not be insisted upon with absolute decision. Unless there are grounds for believing that the list of corroborative facts allows of only one possible interpretation (and usually this is highly improbable), even the best-supported hypotheses are uncertain to a degree. Generally, each new supporting fact contributes progressively less to the total probability. But even the most thorough collection of supportive facts cannot

impart total certainty to an hypothesis. As in science, where an assemblage of many facts on a particular subject is sometimes capable of supporting two or more entirely different models, so in scripture; brethren who are equally conversant with and agree about the facts concerning a question, may differ widely over their meaning. Such questions cannot be fundamental.

### The Fundamental Weakness of the Hypothetical Method

The hypothetical method has a striking vulnerability: Even a single “contrary” fact can completely destroy the best hypothesis.

For example, suppose our list of evidence persuades us to accept, to a probability of 99%, that Luke’s centurion was indeed Cornelius. Statistically, we would take that as meaning they were very probably the same man. Then suppose new evidence came to light showing that Luke’s centurion was killed in a riot 6 months after Jesus healed his servant. No matter how persuasive the evidence in favour of the hypothesis, that one fact alone would totally destroy any notion that he might have been Cornelius. So the hypothetical method is relatively insensitive to an increasing quantity of supportive evidence, while being extraordinarily sensitive to the least amount of counter-evidence. Indeed, the only satisfactory way to test an hypothesis is to constantly search for a counter-fact that would destroy it, or require its modification.

And even if we cannot find such counter-evidence, the hypothesis never attains total certainty. For example it cannot be said with absolute certainty that an archaeologist will never turn up evidence that Luke’s centurion died 6 months after Jesus healed his servant.

So when using the hypothetical method, it turns out to be more important to assemble points of difference - and explain them - than it is to assemble supportive points. In our “centurion” example, the principal point of difference is readily explicable. The centurion of Luke 7 was in Capernaum, Cornelius in Caesarea. Well, army officers have been known to be posted to different bases, there was a substantial time difference between the recorded events and, to the best of our knowledge, Luke’s centurion was not killed in a riot in Capernaum!

There are many “Christadelphian” notions based on hypothesis; mostly in the realm of prophetic interpretation. When unable to find direct statements about, draw inferences concerning, or find parallels to such passages, we have traditionally pressed ahead on the assumption of a handful of hypotheses. In this discussion, citing cases is not intended to imply criticism of the views expressed. The intention is to make clear the basic difference between doctrines such as are rightly upheld in the Statement of Faith, and other matters which should never be regarded as fundamental. These latter questions ought to be discussed and differences accepted as a matter of course. They should not be allowed to divide us. For example, it is probable that one of the earliest “Christadelphian” records of a link between Paul’s “Man of Sin” (2 Thess. 2:3) and the Papacy is found in these words:

The presence of the Man of Sin in Rome for upwards of twelve centuries past may be determined by Paul’s description of him. If we find an order of men there answering to the character recorded against them, we may know that the Man of Sin has been revealed. He describes him as one “who opposes and exalts himself above every one called a god, or an object of veneration; so that he sits in the temple of the god as a god, exhibiting himself that he is a god.” This in few words is highly descriptive of the Popes. ... The “temple of the god” is St. Peter’s at Rome. Now, the history of the papacy shows the applicability of the description to the Popes, and to them exclusively. They have systematically opposed and exalted themselves above every ruler, whether emperors or kings, and above all bishops and priests; so that they have sat in St. Peter’s as gods, exhibiting themselves thus, because they claim to be gods upon earth (Elpis Israel, pages 105, 106).

This passage is interesting because of the two hypotheses that it proposes (that the Pope is the Man of Sin, and that St. Peter's is his temple); for the corroborative evidence that is offered in support of these hypotheses; and for the claim that the principal hypothesis is supported by a singularity - that Paul's description of the Man of Sin applies exclusively to the Papacy ("Now, the history of the papacy shows the applicability of the description to the Popes, and to them exclusively"). The claim of singularity for the supporting evidence is repeated in the sentence following the above quotation:

The incarnate devilism of these blasphemers of God's name, and of His people, and murderers of His saints, cannot be surpassed by any power that could *possibly* arise (Ibid, emphasis not in original).

With due respect, such singularity is debatable, to say the least; and the conclusion, based as it is on hypothesis, is therefore open to individual appraisal. Such a question is therefore not a fundamental of the faith - because of the intrinsic limitations associated with the way the essential idea has been proposed alongside, but not from, the Word. Further examples could be multiplied at great length.

# Overheads for Session 1 (Learning From the Word)

## OHP 1: Concerning Latter-day Prophecy: We Have Never Entirely Agreed About ...

- The precise order of events
- The number of invasions
- The identity of the invader(s)
- The importance of our views:
  - ⌘ Some few make prophecy an actual, or de facto, test of fellowship
  - ⌘ Most regard the subject as more or less speculative and therefore open to free discussion
  - ⌘ All agree that there is to be some kind of invasion of Israel before Jesus' return and the kingdom's establishment
- However:
  - ⌘ God does whatever He chooses. Whatever our views of prophecy, they may turn out to be profoundly irrelevant, even presumptuous

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## OHP 2: Learning From the Word

- There are four methods:
  - ⌘ Direct Statements
  - ⌘ Inference
  - ⌘ Parallel Passages
  - ⌘ Hypothesis

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## OHP 3: Direct Statements

- Literal, non-figurative texts
- They mean exactly what they say
  - ⌘ For example: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11, RSV)

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## OHP 4: Inference

- Some things are not explicitly stated, but may be inferred. For example:
  - ⌘ Jesus used inference when discussing resurrection with the Sadducees (Matthew 22:31, 32)
  - ⌘ Hebrews (11:19) implies that Abraham knew God would raise Isaac. This, in turn, may have been inferred from Gen 22:5
  - ⌘ The subservience of Aaron's ministry to Melchisedek's is inferred from Abraham's paying tithes to Melchisedek (Heb 7:1-10)

- ⌘ Much of the spiritual teaching of the Law of Moses is implied. eg, Care for threshing oxen implies reward for our service (1 Cor 9:9)

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OHP 5: Parallel Passages

- We generally suspect that passages are parallel if:
  - ⌘ Scripture says they are parallel or
  - ⌘ They are certainly dealing with the same subject, or
  - ⌘ They share peculiar figures of speech or language, or
  - ⌘ The two events certainly occurred at the same time, or
  - ⌘ The two events are logically connected (eg Matthew 24:21, Daniel 12:1, Joel 2:2, etc)

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OHP 6: Scientific Method - or Hypothesis

- In this case we guess a passage's meaning and then assemble supporting corroborative evidence
  - ⌘ For example: Was Cornelius (Acts 10) the centurion whose servant Jesus healed (Luke 7)? Both men -
    - ❑ Were Centurions
    - ❑ Were God-fearing men
    - ❑ Had faithful, devout servants
    - ❑ Loved their servants
    - ❑ Were lovers of Israel
    - ❑ Were benefactors of Israel
    - ❑ Were aware of the life and work of the Lord Jesus

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OHP 7: Limitations:

- No amount of corroborative evidence can make an hypothesis certainly true
  - ⌘ Corroborative evidence reduces the probability of error - but not to zero
- It only takes a single counter-fact to destroy the most elegant hypothesis - or require its modification

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OHP 8: Example of Hypothesis

- Was the Siloam Tunnel Built by Hezekiah?
  - ⌘ Rogerson, J. & Davies, P. R.
  - ⌘ Biblical Archaeologist 59, 138-149 (1996)
- Conclusion: "We have argued that "Hezekiah's Tunnel" is a misnomer. The archaeological data strongly suggest a Hasmonean date, the biblical data show no awareness of a tunnel built by Hezekiah, and the paleography permits no decisive conclusion. The possibility that Hezekiah was responsible for Warren's Shaft remains."

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OHP 9: And its Vulnerability

- “Radiometric dating of the Siloam Tunnel, Jerusalem”
  - ⌘ Amos Frumkin, Aryeh Shimron & Jeff Rosenbaum
  - ⌘ Letters to Nature Vol 425, 169-171 (2003)
- “... we report radiocarbon and U-Th dating of the Siloam Tunnel, proving its Iron Age II date; we conclude that the Biblical text presents an accurate historic record of the Siloam Tunnel’s construction... (This) dating (within a few years of BC 700) also refutes a claim that the tunnel was constructed in the second century BC.”

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OHP 10: Another Hypothesis

- The presence of the Man of Sin in Rome for upwards of twelve centuries past may be determined by Paul’s description of him. If we find an order of men there answering to the character recorded against them, we may know that the Man of Sin has been revealed. He describes him as one “who opposes and exalts himself above every one called a god, or an object of veneration; so that he sits in the temple of the god as a god, exhibiting himself that he is a god.” This in few words is highly descriptive of the Popes. ... The “temple of the god” is St. Peter’s at Rome. Now, the history of the papacy shows the applicability of the description to the Popes, and to them exclusively. They have systematically opposed and exalted themselves above every ruler, whether emperors or kings, and above all bishops and priests; so that they have sat in St. Peter’s as gods, exhibiting themselves thus, because they claim to be gods upon earth (Elpis Israel, pages 105, 106).

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OHP 11: And Its Vulnerability (2 Thess 2)

- The man of sin is a sign of the end (vss 3, 8). A 2000-year sign is not much of a sign!
- It asserts that the (*singular*) “man of sin” *is* the pope
- The man of sin is atheistic. No pope ever exalted “himself above all that is *called* God, *or that is worshipped.*”
- We must decide what we mean by the temple of God ...
  - ⌘ If it’s St Peter’s then Catholics are lapsed brethren
  - ⌘ If Catholicism is rejected then St Peter’s isn’t the temple of God
  - ⌘ In scripture the temple of God is usually literal
- The mystery of iniquity has worked since Adam (Eph 2:2)
- Vs 4 alludes to Dan 11:36 - about the “king of the north”

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Session 2: Parallelism in Prophecy

Part 1 - A (True!) Fable

Once upon a time there was a series of three Rugby Football matches played between New Zealand and Australia. Rugby is the national sport of at least one of these countries and is followed in each with something like religious fervour.



Australia won the first match, New Zealand the second and the scores were equal right down to the last minute of the third. The park was packed with thousands of spectators. The tension was electric. In the last few seconds of the game, the New Zealand half-back snatched the ball out of the scrum and dived over the line, giving New Zealand the edge needed to win the match - and the series. It was a great moment.

At the precise instant when the winning “try” was scored, several hundred cameras recorded the event - all from different points of view. The next day, one of New Zealand’s national daily papers – The Dominion - devoted a double page spread to a selection of perhaps 12 or 15 of these photos. There were no captions; only the headline: “That Moment!”

The effect was interesting and instructive. There was a general similarity between the pictures - they were obviously about some aspect of sport, probably rugby. But at a casual glance it was by no means obvious that they were all taken of the same event and at the same time. One showed the event from a point which was very close to the critical action - a great deal of detail could be seen of a very limited part of the whole scene. Another showed the view from the top of the grandstand - much of the action could be seen, but not much detail. Another was taken from the sideline. It showed the disposition of the teams, together with a glimpse of the real action. A fourth photo was taken from a helicopter hovering high over the park. In this shot the whole of the park could be seen; the action was visible as a collection of small black dots in one corner of the field, with other black dots scattered here and there over the field. And so on. No two photos seemed to be of the same event, until they were carefully studied and mentally reorientated so that common factors could be recognised.

This is the way that Bible parallelism works, especially in the field of prophecy. There are many “snapshots” of the quite limited field of prophetic interest. The student has to recognise that they really are of the same relatively restricted period of time. He can do this by identifying the common features shared by each and by recognising the underlying structural elements (see Session 4). Then each prophecy adds to the developing picture of the total theme. One treatment gives a detailed, “close-up view” of a very limited part of the overall structure, another, as though taken from a helicopter, gives a broad over-view with practically no detail. Others show events which are taking place “on the side-lines” so to speak. Taken together, they all give the total of what may be known of what the Lord intends to do.

## Part 2 - Parallels

- 1 We will try to avoid hypotheses in our study of the main features of prophecy. One of the principal tools will be parallelism.
- 2 Prophetic Parallelism is, in principle, similar to the rugby photos in the Dominion (fable, above).
- 3 Start with the Olivet Prophecy:
  - (a) To us it is not unnatural to divide the disciples' questions (Mark 13:4, Matthew 24:3):
    - (i) Herod's temple *was* destroyed in AD 70.
    - (ii) Jesus' return was certainly not to be until after 2000.
    - (iii) These imply that maybe the questions were addressing two different events in two different eras.
  - (b) But:
    - (i) The disciples had no idea that Jesus was going away.

### OHP 1: Latter-Day Agendas.

- The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and ... he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him (Mark 9:30-32; see also Luke 9:44, 45, 18:31-34, etc)
- The disciples, like other first-century Jews, expected the Messiah to come immediately (Luke 3:15, 19:11, John 10:24, Acts 1:6, etc); Jesus' departure was simply not on their "latter-day" agenda.
- So Jesus' "coming" in Matt 24:3 must mean his "coming to power" - as in Luke 23:42 - and there is really only one question in Matt 24:3.
- Like them, we have trouble adjusting to Bible teaching that is not on *our* agenda. There is a warning here!

- (ii) "Thy coming" must have meant "coming to reign" as in the thief's request (Luke 23:42). So disciples would not have any idea of dividing Jesus' answer - the Olivet prophecy - into parts. To them the answer was one. Therefore the question is one.
    - (iii) Mark has two questions (Mark 13:4) yet only one subject ("these things").
  - (c) The Olivet Prophecy has 97 verses; yet it only answers the disciples' question with three specific prophetic statements contained in 5 verses (Matt 24:15, 21, 29-31). 61 verses (24:37 - 25:46) are lessons for disciples so that they will be prepared - Jesus' real concern.
  - (d) The prophetic outline begins from the desecration of a temple and ends with the Lord's triumphant return from heaven.
    - (i) The question is, which temple does he mean?
    - (ii) We usually think of the obvious - Herod's temple, Israel's second (Herod's temple had simply taken over Zerubbabel's without any hiatus and so is called the second temple).

- (iii) I shall point out that prophecy as a whole indicates a third temple - to be set in operation before the Lord's return.

On that basis, Ezekiel's temple of the kingdom will be the fourth.

OHP 2: Matthew 24: Christ's Coming

- 4-13: Conditions to be expected and endured as disciples in all ages wait for the Lord to come.
- 14: Preliminary sign that the end is near.
- 15: Only specific sign of the end - a defiled holy place.
- 16-20: How Judean disciples must react to the sign of vs 15
- 21, 22: A never-to-be-repeated time of trouble – greater than any before it since the beginning of the world
- 23-28: How disciples should think and act during the time of trouble
- 29-31: Christ returns *immediately* after the tribulation

OHP 3: Olivet's Three Main Statements

- So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Matthew 24:15, NIV)
- For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. (Matthew 24:21, NIV)
- Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' [Isaiah 13:10; 34:4] At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth (or land - Zechariah 12:12) will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:29, 30, NIV)

- 4 Events associated with the Abomination of Desolation - See OHP 4: *The Abomination of Desolation*. (NEXT PAGE)

#### OHP 4: The Abomination of Desolation

- “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; also Luke 21:20 - which relates it to armies).
- Daniel 11:31 (RSV) - “Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.” Also Daniel 8:13. Continued next page.
- Daniel 12:11 (RSV) - “And from the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”
- Daniel 9:27 (NIV) - “He will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him (or it).”

- (a) Desecration of the temple (Daniel 11:31).
- (b) Removal of the daily sacrifice (Daniel 11:31, 12:11)
- (c) The beginning of a “countdown” (Daniel 12:11).
- (d) A time of trouble such as never was (Matt 24:21, Dan 12:1).
- (e) The abomination will be set up by an autocratic, blasphemous, atheistic individual (Daniel 11:36).

#### 5 A Time of Trouble Such as Never Was.

##### OHP 5: The Great Tribulation

- Matthew 24:21 - “... then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” Also Mark 13:19.
- Luke 21:22 - “These be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.”
- Daniel 12:1 (RSV) - “... there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered ...”
- Joel 2:2 - “... the day of the LORD cometh ... a day of darkness ... a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it.” Compare this with Zephaniah 1:15.
- Jeremiah 30:7 - “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”

- (a) The tribulation begins with the desecration of the temple.
- (b) It is directed against the Jews in their land.
- (c) The tribulation is to be “cut short” before all Jews should be destroyed (Matt 24:22).

- (d) The idea of the tribulation, like the abomination of desolation, is drawn from Daniel's last prophecy (Daniel 12:1)
  - (e) Context of Daniel 12:1 is latter-day - see Daniel 12:2.
  - (f) **Therefore the fundamental significance of the Olivet prophecy is latter-day too.**
- 6 Christ returns "immediately after" the tribulation (Matt 24:29-31) - in fact, to "cut short" those days of tribulation (Matt 24:22).
- 7 Summary:
- (a) An atheistic autocrat is to desecrate a Jewish temple, remove the daily sacrifice and oppress God's people.
  - (b) Christ returns to save His people, before they are entirely wiped out.
- 8 The King of the North. See OHP 6: *The Man of Sin*. Implies that Paul's man of sin is the same character as Daniel's king of the north.

OHP 6: The Man of Sin: One Man; Blasphemous; Atheistic; Autocratic; Time-Limited

- 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 8 (NIV) - "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness (mg: Some manuscripts sin) is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God ... whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming."
- Daniel 11:36, 37 (NIV) - "The king (of the north - vs 15) will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all."<sup>10</sup> A mouth speaking great things, removal of the daily sacrifice and persecution of Israel - three identifying characteristics of the Autocrat.

- (a) See OHP 7: *Daniel's "Little Horns"*. NEXT PAGE
- (b) Little horn of Daniel 7 has a blasphemous mouth and persecutes the Jews.

## OHP 7: Daniel's "Little Horns"

- Daniel 7:25 says of the "Roman" little horn:
  - ⌘ He speaks great words against the most High
  - ⌘ He thinks to change times and laws
  - ⌘ He "wears out" the saints of the most High
  - ⌘ The saints are in his hands for 3 1/2 times
- Daniel 8:9-14 says of the "Greek" little horn:
  - ⌘ He aspires to the highest position - even to the host of heaven (vss 10, 11)
  - ⌘ He casts down God's sanctuary; and takes away the daily sacrifice (vs 11)
  - ⌘ He will prosper against *both* God's people *and* God's sanctuary (vss 13, 14)
  - ⌘ The *sanctuary* will be restored after 2300 days (vs 14)
- The king of the north removes the daily sacrifice and desecrates God's temple (Daniel 11:31). So Daniel 7, 8, 11, 12; 2 Thessalonians 2 and the Olivet prophecy are all parallel!

- (c) The little horn of Daniel 8 aspires to the highest place (Daniel 8:9, 25) and cuts off the daily sacrifice (Daniel 8:11, 12).
- (d) Parallelism between these suggests that the Olivet prophecy, Daniel 11, 12, 2 Thessalonians 2, Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 are all parallel prophecies, ultimately dealing with the same single event.

## 9 The Beast.

### OHP 8: Beasts of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13

- Both come from the sea (Dan 7:3; Rev 13:1).
- Both are like lion, leopard, bear and "dragon" (Dan 7:4-7; Rev 13:2).
- Both have a total of seven heads and ten horns (Dan 7:4-7; Rev 13:1).
- Both speak "great things" (Dan 7:8, 25; Rev 13:5).
- Both make war against God's people (Dan 7:21, 23, 25; Rev 13:7).
- Both prevail for 1260 days (Dan 7:25; Rev 13:5).

## 10 Summary. We have used Biblical Parallelism to link a few basic prophecies.

- (a) Began in the Olivet prophecy.
- (b) Traced its roots in Daniel 11.
- (c) Branched to 2 Thessalonians 2, Daniel 7 and 8.

- (d) Followed Daniel 7 into Revelation 13.
- (e) In the process, glanced at Joel, Zephaniah and Jeremiah 30.
- (f) Linked a few well-known villains: the king of the north, the little horns, the man of sin and the Beast.

11 See OHP 9: Is This a Valid Process?

OHP 9: Is This a Valid Process?

- Apparently so - the end result of each context (Matt 24:29-31; Dan 12:1; Dan 7:21, 22, 25-27; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 13, etc) is the return of Christ.
- “Multiple Applications” apply - none of these prophecies has been entirely fulfilled in the past.

Reading: Matt 24:1-31

Hymns 124, 216 (1964 Book) 184, 281 (2002 Book)

## Session 3: Multiple Applications

- 1 In pursuing Bible parallels, we have linked passages that have no historical connection.
  - (a) On what basis can we do this?
  - (b) On the basis of multiple applications.
  - (c) Many prophecies that have no immediate historic connection contain overtones connecting them with shared future events.
- 2 Today's task:
  - (a) To look at a few prophecies that apply to more than one historic situation - to illustrate multiple applications. The process suggests that prophecy has a broader application than might be suspected.
  - (b) Tomorrow, as part of our discussion of prophetic structure, we'll look at a couple of examples of a related process - layering – or “snapshots” - occurring within a given prophecy. This suggests that prophecy has a simpler structure than might be suspected.
  - (c) These processes are quite generally used in prophecy; when we are reading we should look for broader applications and simpler structures than appear on the face of the page.
- 3 First example: The Abomination of Desolation (Matt 24:15, Mark 13:14, Luke 21:20).
  - (a) Jesus alluded to Daniel 11:31, 12:11, 8:13 and 9:27 - See OHP 1: *The Abomination of Desolation* (This is Slide 4 of Session 2).

### OHP 1: The Abomination of Desolation

- “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; also Luke 21:20 - which relates it to armies).
- Daniel 11:31 (RSV) - “Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.” Also Daniel 8:13.
- Daniel 12:11 (RSV) - “And from the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”
- Daniel 9:27 (NIV) - “He will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him (or it).”

- (b) These prophecies about temple desecration by the king of the north (in Daniel 11) are parallel to the prophecy about the little horn in Daniel 8:9-14.
- (c) These prophecies were all fulfilled by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) in BC 167 - 164 – in the days of the Maccabees (1 Maccabees 1:44 ff; 4:36 ff; Josephus Antiq. 12:5:4; 12:7:6).



- (i) Alexander's four generals divided the Greek Empire after Alexander's death: Ptolemy (south - Egypt); Seleucus (north - Syria); Lysimachus (east - Thrace); Cassander (west - Macedonia).
- (d) See OHPs 2 and 3: *The Abomination of Antiochus and Judas Maccabæus Restores the Temple*.

OHP 2: The Abomination of Antiochus

- The king ... issued a decree: Ways and customs foreign to the country were to be introduced. Burnt offerings, sacrifices, and libations in the temple were forbidden; sabbaths and feast-days were to be profaned; the temple and its ministers to be defiled. Altars, idols and sacred precincts were to be established; swine and other unclean beasts to be offered in sacrifice. ... The penalty for disobedience was death.
- On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev in the (Seleucid) year 145 (Wednesday, December 3, BC 167), 'the abomination of desolation' was set up on the altar. Pagan altars were built throughout the towns of Judæa; incense was offered at the doors of houses and in the streets. All scrolls of the law which were found were torn up and burnt. Anyone discovered in possession of a Book of the Covenant, or conforming to the law, was put to death by the king's sentence.
- On the twenty fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the pagan altar which was on top of the altar of the Lord ...” (1 Maccabees 1:44-59 NEB).

OHP 3: Judas Maccabæus Restores the Temple

- Judas and his brothers said: ... 'let us go up to Jerusalem to cleanse the temple and rededicate it.' So the whole army ... went up to Mount Zion. There they found the temple laid waste, the altar profaned, the gates burnt down, the courts overgrown ... and the priest's rooms in ruin.
- Then Judas ... selected priests ... and they purified the temple, removing to an unclean place the stones which defiled it. They discussed what to do with the altar of burnt offering ... and rightly decided to demolish it ... They therefore pulled down the altar, and stored the stones in a fitting place on the temple hill, until a prophet should arise who could be consulted about them ... and built a new altar on the model of the previous one ...
- Then, early on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, the month Kislev, in the year 148 (Sunday, December 10, BC 164), sacrifice was offered as the law commands on the newly made altar of burnt offering” (1 Maccabees 4:36-53).

- (i) The Maccabees cleansed the temple 1103 days after its desolation.
- (e) We would have said that these prophecies in Daniel were completely fulfilled:
  - (i) Daniel 8:20-25.

- (ii) The details given in 1 Maccabees and in Josephus fit the prophecies so well that the critics cannot accept that Daniel wrote some 350 years before the event.
- (f) Yet there are indications within the prophecies themselves that show they have more than one historic target zone.

OHP 4: Antiochus Did Not Entirely Fulfil Daniel 8 and 11

- Daniel 8:25 - Judas Maccabæus was not the Prince of princes.
  - ⌘ The phrase can really only be applied to Jesus.
- Daniel 8:23 - Antiochus was evil, but transgressors did not reach “their full measure” (RSV) in his days. (cp Dan 9:24)
- Daniel 8:13, 14 - 2300 days were to elapse between the temple’s desecration and its cleansing. However, the Maccabees rededicated it in 3 (Jewish) years and 10 days - 1103 days.
- Daniel 11:45 - 12:2 - The king of the north will only be destroyed when Jesus comes to reign.
- Both Daniel 8 and Daniel 11 apply to the time of the end (Daniel 12:4 - cp 11:40, 12:9, 10:1, 8:17).

- (g) And Jesus’ specific allusion to the same theme, applying it to an event that was still future when he spoke, clinches this notion; his use of Daniel *proves* that the prophecy had another application.
  - (h) We must not suppose that Daniel 11 did not apply to Antiochus; rather, we learn that the same prophecy has at least two different, perfectly legitimate fulfilments.
  - (i) To what later event, then, did Jesus’ allusion refer? Usual answer: AD70.
- 4 The Abomination of Desolation and AD 70
- (a) Most Christadelphians believe that the Olivet prophecy was fulfilled in the events of AD70.
  - (b) This hypothesis is based on apparently convincing corroborative evidence derived from Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, books 5 and 6.
  - (c) But AD70 was not the final fulfilment of the abomination.
    - (i) See OHPs 5 and 6: Titus Did Not Entirely Fulfil the Olivet Prophecy and More About AD 70. NEXT PAGE.
    - (ii) See also the attached essay, AD 70 and the Fulfilment of Prophecy;
    - (iii) Compare, too, the attached calendar for AD 70, notes on the calendar and the numbered list, *Titus’ War Against Jerusalem*.

#### OHP 5: Titus Did Not Entirely Fulfill the Olivet Prophecy

- The Olivet discourse is an integrated sequence culminating in Christ's coming
  - ⌘ Only a subjectively chosen part of the prophecy can be applied to AD 70.
- The "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21, etc. is historically unique: "such as was not since the beginning of the world ... no, nor ever shall be."
  - ⌘ This phrase logically aligns it with its original in Daniel 12:1.
  - ⌘ All agree that Daniel 12:1 applies to the time of Christ's return.
  - ⌘ Therefore Olivet's great tribulation *must* apply to the last days.
- The "great tribulation" is to last for 1260 days (Daniel 12:7, etc – see Session 5).
  - ⌘ Titus' siege took 140 days from first to last - many fewer than 1260 days.
  - ⌘ Titus' entire Judean campaign took 4½ years - much more than 1260 days.
- Jesus will return "immediately after the tribulation" (Matt 24:29-31).
  - ⌘ He hasn't come yet, so the tribulation must still be future!

#### OHP 6: More About AD 70

- Jesus says that "the abomination of desolation" is that of which Daniel speaks (Matthew 21:15).
  - ⌘ It is to stand in the holy place - a temple - as in the days of the Maccabees.
  - ⌘ Its appearance marks the beginning of the time of trouble (Matt 24:15-21).
  - ⌘ It is set up on the day that the daily sacrifice is cut off (Daniel 12:11, etc).
- From the setting up of the abomination to the cleansing of the temple is 2300 days (Daniel 8:14). The temple was never restored after AD 70.
- The Romans offered sacrifices to their army ensigns, but -
  - ⌘ Not in the holy place. They offered only in the outer court of the temple.
  - ⌘ The *Jews* destroyed the holy place before the Romans entered it.
- The disciples asked Jesus when he was coming to reign. The Olivet prophecy is the answer. Jesus' return is still future. Therefore the Olivet prophecy applies to the future too.

- 5 Other examples:
- (a) Daniel 2 (cp vss 28, 35, 45)
  - (b) Daniel 7:2-8.
    - (i) Has a legitimate continuous historic interpretation - like Daniel 2.
    - (ii) But the little horn confronts Christ just before the kingdom is established (Daniel 7:8, 9; 17, 18; 21, 22; 25, 26). Therefore the prophecy as a whole has another application than the “surface” application.
    - (iii) Jesus used the same material again, conflated, in Rev 13.
      - Note that it is a single beast now.
      - Note its seven heads and ten horns.
- 6 End-Time by definition: Prophecies which state that Israel is never again to be subject to oppression etc.
- (a) Examples from well-known scriptures:
    - (i) Gen 9:15 - “the waters shall *no more* become a flood to destroy all flesh”.
    - (ii) 2 Sam 7:10 - “I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move *no more*; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them *any more*, as beforetime”.
    - (iii) Ezek 21:27 - “I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be *no more*, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him”.
  - (b) A few examples from prophecy:
    - (i) Jer 30:7, 8 - “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall *no more* serve themselves of him”.
    - (ii) Isa 10:20 - “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall *no more* again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth”.
    - (iii) Isa 62:4, 8 - “Thou shalt *no more* be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land *any more* be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. ... The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will *no more* give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger *shall not* drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured ...”
    - (iv) Isa 30:18, **19**, **20**, 21.
    - (v) Ezek 34:22, 28, 29.
    - (vi) Psa 10:18; Isa 10:20; 30:19; 32:5; 51:22; 52:1; 54:9; 60:18, 20; 62:4, 8, 65:19, 20; Jer 16:14; 23:4; 30:8; 31:34; Lam 4:22; Ezek 14:11; 16:41, 42; 20:39; 21:27; 28:24; 29:16; 34:22, 28, 29; 36:12, 14, 30; 37:22; 43:7; 45:8; Joel 2:19, 26, 27; 3:17; Amos 9:15; Nah 1:12, 15; Zech 9:8; 13:2; 14:11, 21. (44 references listed here).

- (vii) These kinds of statements are found in prophecies that otherwise might not be thought to be latter-day. Their presence should encourage us to seek a multiple application.

7 Summary.

OHP 7: Multiple Applications

- Many prophecies have more than one application. For example, the Olivet prophecy was “fulfilled” when Jerusalem fell to Titus in AD 70. Yet several details make it clear that those events fall short of a complete fulfilment. The prophecy is primarily “latter-day”.
- Again, Daniel’s “abomination of desolation” certainly applied to Antiochus IV (BC 167 ff). It may also have applied to Titus (AD 70). But Jesus’ citing it as a sign of His coming (Matthew 24:15) proves that it has a third application.
- A related idea is the fact that some prophecies may be legitimately interpreted on different principles. For example, Daniel 2 is correctly interpreted according to the familiar continuous historic scheme. But the chapter contains at least three verses which imply that it also has a single, stand-alone, latter-day meaning (Daniel 2:28, 35, 45).

8 Rare exceptions to the general rule that prophecies have more than a single application:

- (a) Ezekiel 38, 39, particularly Ezek 39:22, 28 (and 39:26 for an argument against the “second invasion” hypothesis).
- (b) Joel - to be dealt with under *Structure* - in the next session.

Reading: Daniel 11:31-45

Hymn 121 (1964 book); 179 (2002 book)

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## AD 70 and the Fulfilment of Prophecy

AD 70, and the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman general, Titus, is the usually-accepted target of a large part of the Olivet prophecy, and other prophecies that refer to an “abomination of desolation” and the desecration of a temple (eg Daniel 8, Daniel 11). There appears to be some justification for this notion:

- (a) The background to the prophecy had been the disciples’ admiration for Herod’s temple, Jesus’ observation that “there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” and the disciples’ subsequent question(s) which began, “Tell us, when shall these things be?” (Matthew 24:2, 3). So it’s not unreasonable to regard the prophecy as an answer to the question as to when Herod’s temple would be destroyed. It *was* destroyed in AD 70, so it would seem that those events were a fulfilment of the Olivet prophecy.
- (b) Matthew 24:15 speaks of an “abomination of desolation” standing “in the holy place”. Luke’s parallel record gives cause to interpret this as “Jerusalem compassed with armies” (Luke 21:20). Titus began his siege of Jerusalem on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Nisan in the second year of Vespasian (deduced from Josephus, *Wars* 5:7:2; 6:10:1). This corresponds to Sunday, April 20, AD 70 on a modern, Gregorian, calendar.
- (c) Jesus says that “the abomination of desolation” is that of which Daniel speaks (Matthew 24:15). In his ninth chapter, Daniel records the angel speaking of “the people of the prince that shall come” and says that they “shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” in a great battle. The record continues: “he (presumably the prince that shall come) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate” (Daniel 9:26, 27). With respect to these statements:
  - (i) Titus might have been “the prince that shall come”. For example, it is certainly true that Titus never intended to destroy the temple - it was an unruly soldier who set it on fire - justifying the prophecy that it was “*the people* of the prince that shall come” who would destroy “the city and the sanctuary”.
  - (ii) Josephus records that the daily sacrifice was caused to cease on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the month Tamuz (*Wars* 6:2:1). This corresponds to Saturday, July 12, AD 70.
  - (iii) Daniel (9:27) put the cessation of the daily sacrifice in the middle of a “week” during which the “prince that shall come” will confirm a covenant made with some of the people (of Israel). If the usual interpretation of “a day for a year” is placed on these words, then a period of 3½ years ended when the daily sacrifice was removed. (Furthermore, the same event marked the beginning of another period having the same duration.) In support of the first of these periods of 3½ years, Whiston’s Josephus has the following footnote to *Wars* 6:2:1. Speaking about the date when the sacrifice was caused to cease it says, “This was a very remarkable day indeed, the seventeenth of Panemus (Tamuz), AD 70, when, according to Daniel’s prediction, 606 years before, the Romans ‘in half a week caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease,’ Dan. 9:27; for from the month of February, AD 66, about which time Vespasian entered on this war, to this very time, was just three years and a half”.

Doubtless there are other arguments in support of the idea that AD 70 fulfilled at least part of the Olivet prophecy - and other prophecies too. The above will suffice for present purposes

as representative of such arguments. However, the hypothesis is poorly supported by the facts:

1 The Olivet prophecy (for example) is an integrated sequence that culminates in the coming of Christ to reign; only part of the prophecy can be applied to AD 70. The same is true of other prophecies that are often said to have been fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem. To apply part of the prophecy to AD 70, and the rest to the last days requires that *we* make an arbitrary decision as to where a line should be drawn between the historical part and the portion that has yet to be fulfilled. This is unsatisfactory since there is no indication in the prophecy itself as to where such a line should be drawn. Worse, there is nothing in the prophecy, apart from our predetermination of its meaning, that suggests a gap in its message. The placing of a line therefore depends on our personal judgement, which is another way of saying that *we* decide what the prophecy means rather than allow the Word to lead us. Furthermore, commentators disagree about the correct position of the arbitrary line. This highlights the unsatisfactory nature of the process.

2 Whiston's 3½ years (if it were he who wrote the footnote referred to above) is a critical problem for the hypothesis that the prophecies were fulfilled in AD 70:

The Lord's speaking of "great tribulation" to come on his people (Matthew 24:21) is an allusion to a specific prophecy in Daniel (Daniel 12:1). The duration of this tribulation is specified: 3½ times or 1260 days (Daniel 12:7). The purpose of the tribulation is to "scatter the power of the holy people". Those who appeal to AD 70 as the fulfilment of prophecy usually assume "a day for a year" in the interpretation of the time prophecies. For example, Whiston's footnote does so, when it claims that Daniel's 3½ times were fulfilled in AD 70. But the footnote is in error. It says that the interval from Vespasian's coming to punish the Jews, in about February AD 66, until the cessation of the daily sacrifice, on July 12, AD 70 is 3½ years. The dates are right, the arithmetic is wrong. The interval is actually a month or so less than 4½ years! And nobody seems to have noticed this glaring mistake! It's an example of both writer and readers being distracted from the facts by an elegant "solution".

3 The "time of trouble" of Matt 24:21 is drawn from Daniel 12:1 (as stated above). But Daniel 12:1 connects Israel's "time of trouble", their deliverance, *the resurrection* and the "standing up" of Michael *all* to the same era. Since Daniel 12:1 is obviously latter-day, so must Matthew 24:21 be latter-day. It doesn't apply to AD 70.

4 In the nature of things, in all of history, past, present and future, there can be only one "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt 24:21). Daniel's "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Dan 12:1) is, beyond dispute, set in the latter days. Simple logic requires that Jesus' statement must refer to the same time. It cannot refer to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

5 Jesus said that he'll come to reign "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (Matthew 24:29, 30). In its context this is an obvious reference to the "time of trouble such as was not since the beginning of the world" - in verse 21. The Lord did not return in, or soon after, AD 70; therefore he was not referring to AD 70, except, perhaps, in a general sense - as illustrating the turmoil to be expected at the time of his return. AD 70 *was* a time of trouble, but it wasn't *the* time of trouble. Once again, the time of trouble is seen to be latter-day.

6 The daily sacrifice and the abomination of desolation are connected with each other and with the last days:

- (a) We may deduce, from Daniel 12:11 (also Daniel 8:11, 13, 14; 11:31; 9:27), that the *start* of the count of “last days” (cp Dan. 12:13 “the end of the days”) will coincide with, and be indicated by, two *simultaneous* events: removal of the daily sacrifice; and the placing of the abomination of desolation. These are not the same thing, but they are obviously to occur within the space of a single day; for an unspecified event is timed to occur at the end of 1290 days from *both* the establishment of the abomination of desolation *and* the removal of the daily sacrifice.
- (b) Jesus says that the abomination of desolation will be placed “in the holy place”; once again making clear that there is a connection between the abomination and the place where the daily sacrifice is offered - the temple (Matt 24:15).
- (c) The Lord then proceeds to describe what *follows* the placing of the abomination: the time of unprecedented trouble. There is a sequence: first, the abomination is placed in the temple, disrupting its functions (cp the original “abomination” in 1 Maccabees 1:54); then, following on from this (according to Daniel), 3½ “times” of trouble - at the end of which (according to the Lord) Christ comes to reign. If Titus’ causing the daily sacrifice to cease was a fulfilment of Matthew 24:15 then we should have expected two things:
- (i) A period of 3½ years’ tribulation for Israel *beginning* from the time when the daily sacrifice ceased. In fact, there had been war between the Romans and the whole Jewish nation for nearly 4½ years *before* the siege of Jerusalem and only incidental “cleaning-up” followed its fall.
- (ii) The return of Christ 3½ years after the daily sacrifice was interrupted. Of course, this didn’t happen - showing that AD 70 had nothing substantial to do with the ultimate meaning of the prophecies that speak of the abomination of desolation.
- (d) Parallelism between Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20 leads some to suggest that the “abomination of desolation” is a reference to the Roman army besieging Jerusalem. But notice that the placing of the abomination and the cutting off of the daily sacrifice *are to occur at the same time* (item (a), above). In relation to this:
- (i) Titus arrived in Jerusalem on Saturday, April 12, AD 70. He began his siege of the city on Sunday, April 20, AD 70 (see “Gregorian/Hebrew Calendar for AD 70” and “Titus’ War Against Jerusalem” #1, 2). The daily sacrifice ceased (not because Titus directly *caused* it to cease, but because there was nobody left to offer it) on Saturday, July 12, AD 70. This is an interval of 11 weeks and 5 days (or 82 days) after the siege began. So the coming of the army (as a kind of “abomination of desolation”) and the cutting off of the daily sacrifice were nothing like coincident events. The temple was finally overcome and set ablaze on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Ab (Josephus, *Wars* 6:4:5), or Monday, August 4, AD 70. This was 15 weeks and one day after the city was besieged.
- (ii) Titus never intended that Herod’s temple be damaged, far less that it should be desecrated. He gave orders that the temple should be preserved, but his wishes were ignored in that the Jews set fire to part of the temple as it was falling to the Romans, and an enraged Roman soldier completed the destruction by setting fire to the rest. Apart from the Romans storming the temple because the rebellious Jews retreated to it as their last stronghold, and apart from the burning noted above, the Romans did not desecrate the



temple as had Antiochus Epiphanes: “On the twenty fifth day of the month (Kislev - Saturday, December 13, BC 167) they (Antiochus and his Seleucid invaders) offered sacrifice on the pagan altar which was on top of the altar of the Lord” (1 Maccabees 1:59, NEB). The most that the Romans did was to carry the ensigns of their army to the temple area, setting “them over against its eastern gate; and there they did offer sacrifices to them” (Josephus, *Wars* 6:6:1). This was the temple courtyard, not the holy place - which had been destroyed by the fire.

- (e) Daniel said that the time from the desolation of the temple and the cutting off of the daily sacrifice, until the temple’s restoration, would be 2300 days (Daniel 8:13, 14). Herod’s temple was never restored. So Daniel 8 was not fulfilled in AD 70. By the same token, Daniel 8 was not fulfilled in the time of the Maccabees - in whose days the temple was restored in 3 Jewish years and 10 days - 1103 days (1 Maccabees 1:41-64; 4:36-53).
- 7 The above comments demonstrate that the two major distinguishing features of the Olivet prophecy - the abomination of desolation in Matthew 24:15 and the time of unprecedented trouble in Matthew 24:21 - are both features of the latter days because they lead to the conditions that will bring the Lord’s return (Matthew 24:29-31). But the earlier, introductory verses refer to the latter days too. See how Jesus is concerned to talk about the “end” - verses 3, 6, 13 and 14 in their context. Furthermore, the prophetic part of the discourse ended with verse 31, but the Lord then went on to give lessons in preparation - to the end of chapter 25. Every one of those lessons has to do with preparedness for his coming. They have nothing to do with AD 70.
- 8 Psychology easily explains the disciples’ question, “Tell us, when shall these things be ...?”. Jesus had just told them that the temple would be destroyed. To a Jew, that would be the same thing as the end of the world, requiring the Messiah’s intervention. The disciples may have asked three questions, but there was really only one enquiry and it was, as usual, the important *intention* of the question that the Lord answered rather than the less important, distracting factor relating to the fall of Herod’s temple. Indeed, the allusion to Daniel with the close connection this implies between the return of the Lord and an operational temple *makes it clear that the ultimate fulfilment of the Olivet prophecy will be found in a temple which has still to be set up.*
- 9 The “70 week” prophecy of Daniel 9:24 is difficult to interpret, but several points may be noted:
- (a) At first sight the initial 69 “weeks” seem to terminate in the death of Christ. But close examination shows that there is only an approximate fulfilment if it is assumed that the interval is  $69 \times 7 (= 483)$  “times” of 360 days each. Permission to rebuild Jerusalem (Artaxerxes’ 20<sup>th</sup> year - Nehemiah 2:1) was given in BC 445. 483 “times” later (= 476 years) terminates in AD 32, not AD 30 when Jesus actually died. No other interpretation based on long time periods and various starting points comes close to an accurate fulfilment.
- (b) As a whole, the prophecy must be latter-day: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” (Daniel 9:24, KJV). Some of these things might be said to have been fulfilled in and around the death of Christ; but since it is a prophecy upon Daniel’s people and the holy city - and for them, at least, the transgression is not yet “finished”, etc. - then we still wait for the final fulfilment.

- (c) It is certainly hard (though it's not impossible!) for us to see how the first 69 weeks of the prophecy could be fulfilled other than in the death of Jesus (for who, apart from the Lord, is an "anointed one" who might be "cut off, but not for himself" and under what circumstances might we expect a commandment to go forth to "restore and to build Jerusalem"?; is Jerusalem yet to be destroyed and rebuilt before the final invasion that brings the Lord?). But our inability to see how it might work out is no reason to impose a meaning upon the prophecy - especially if our guesses clash with the facts. However we view these things it is clear that the prophecy was not fulfilled in the events of AD 70.
  - (d) Even if the first 69 weeks of the prophecy had been fulfilled in the death of Christ, invoking AD 70 as a fulfilment of the final week requires a gap of either 33 or 36 years between the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> week and the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup>. There is nothing in the prophecy to suggest that this is justifiable.
  - (e) Applying the first 69 weeks to the death of Christ and bringing the 70<sup>th</sup> week to the time of the end seems worse: it requires a gap of nearly 2000 years between the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> week and the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup>.
  - (f) If we suppose that the fall of the temple in AD 70 is a fulfilment of the 70<sup>th</sup> "week" of Daniel 9:27, then we must take account of, and explain, the fact that there was no covenant between any of the parties to the siege of Jerusalem. Israel's leaders were at war with each other as well as with the Romans, but were agreed that none should treat with the Romans - any attempt to do so was met with summary execution. This important aspect of Daniel 9:27 - a covenant between "the prince that shall come" and some of the people of Israel - was entirely absent from the events of AD 70.
- 10 Jesus said of Herod's temple that "there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down". In fact, of course, the stones of the western wall, retaining the site upon which the temple was built, are still standing today. This implies that the Olivet prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. Some object that the Lord's comments did not include this wall. However, without this great wall, Herod's temple would not have been possible. In a sense it was an essential part of the structure, put in place to support the temple.
- There is a similar prophecy in Luke 19, this time directed against the whole city of Jerusalem: "For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:43, 44, RSV). This certainly includes the western wall of the temple site. So there is yet to be an invasion of Jerusalem and it will finish what the Romans left undone. It is not unreasonable to expect that since this is to be a more thorough sacking than that of the Romans, then the Lord had this (greater) time of trouble in mind when he gave his disciples the Olivet prophecy.
- 11 It is usually asserted that prophecy must relate to events that are close to the time of the prophet, and be relevant to the problems of the prophet's times. Therefore, it is suggested, we should expect the Olivet prophecy to relate to the nearest "obvious" historic incident: AD 70. But these assertions are by no means always justified:
- (a) Some prophecies are specifically aimed at far-off times and do not relate to the times of the prophet. For example, 1 Peter 1:10-12; Ezek 38:8, 16, Joel 1 etc.

- (b) While, of course, we would not say this of the Lord Jesus, the prophets did not always fully understand the messages they were conveying.<sup>9</sup> For example, 1 Peter 1:12; Daniel 12:4, 8, 9, 13 (in spite of Dan 10:1, 14); Zechariah 4:4, 5; 12 - 14.

So it is not absolutely required that we must find a fulfilment of any prophecy in events close to the time when the prophecy was given. Instead we ought to look at the content of the prophecy, and use non-speculative methods to arrive at its real meaning.

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<sup>9</sup> Although, be it noted, that at the time of the Olivet prophecy, the Lord was not privy to *some* of his father's counsels: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32, KJV).



3. Jewish days begin at sunset and end at sunset 24 hours later. The Jewish days shown on the calendar began 6 hours *before* the midnight that began the Gregorian day with which they have been associated. They also ended 6 hours before the end of the corresponding Gregorian day.
4. Our calendar, including the duration of the months, is based on the Julian calendar - adopted by Julius Caesar in BC44. The original Julian calendar assumed that a year is 365 days, 6 hours (ie 365.25 days) and made the correction for the extra quarter of a day per year by adding one day to February, every fourth year - leap year.
5. However, the year actually has a mean duration of 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 48 seconds. This is 11 minutes and 12 seconds less than that assumed by the Julian calendar. So the Julian calendar made each year a little longer than it should - if it were to accurately keep track, relative to the stars, with the earth's orbit around the sun. By 1582 the error had accumulated to the extent of an extra 12.6 days (from BC44) so Pope Gregory decreed that October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1582 should become the 15<sup>th</sup>, thus eliminating 10 days from 1582. Furthermore, to prevent the problem recurring, it was decided that century years (all of which were leap years under the Julian system) should only be leap years if they are divisible by 400. This means that 1600 and 2000 were leap years, while 1700, 1800 and 1900 were not.
6. Britain only adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752. In doing so, two changes were made to the Julian calendar used to that date. The first involved the elimination of 11 days (the 10 days of Pope Gregory, plus the leap day of 1700 - required for the Julian calendar but disallowed by the Gregorian rules). The second change involved the moving of New Year's Day from March to January 1<sup>st</sup>. This means that although one year was shortened to 9 months, and excepting the 11-day correction mentioned above, the count of days and the duration of the months were not changed in any way. The British calendar then agreed with the Gregorian calendar.
7. Jewish months have always begun at the new moon. Modern accounting is from the astronomical new moon; in ancient times, the new moon was declared when it was first visible, about a day after the astronomical new moon.
8. We can track the new moons for any given year by counting lunations, realising that whole numbers of days are needed for the observation of the new moon.
9. The modern Jewish New Year (beginning of Tisri, the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the Sacred Calendar) is always found between September 6 and October 5. Some arrangement involving extra, thirteenth, months of the year must have been in place from the beginning, for 12 lunations are only 354.37 days and the year would rapidly get out of step with the seasons - which are determined by the 365.24-day solar year. Certainly, by the time of the fall of Jerusalem, we can confidently assert that the new moon of Tisri 1, AD70 would have been the new moon that was visible on or near September 23 for that year. The calendar has been annotated with the corresponding Jewish months, the first day of which is the new moon that begins the month.
10. The Jewish months shown on the calendar are numbered according to their position in the sacred year. The (commonly encountered) names of the months are (if a thirteenth month is needed it is called Ve-Adar):

1	Abib or Nisan	2	Yiar	3	Sivan	4	Tamuz
5	Ab	6	Elul	7	Tisri	8	(Marc)Hesvan
9	Kislev	10	Tebeth	11	Shebat	12	Adar

## Titus' War Against Jerusalem

1. Saturday, April 12, AD70 (Nisan 14 - Wars 5:3:1 and 5:13:7): Titus and his armies pitched their camp outside the city; the Jews were distracted by internal conflicts and warfare among themselves.
2. Sunday, April 20, AD70 (Nisan 22 - Wars 5:7:2): The siege of Jerusalem began. This is deduced from the fact that May 4<sup>th</sup> was the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the siege (see next item).
3. Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, AD70 (Yiar 7 - Wars 5:7:2): The Romans took the outer defences of Jerusalem on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the siege. The city had three walls except where its natural, geographical defences rendered one wall sufficient (See Josephus' comments in Wars 5:4:1). Perhaps the third wall was the temple itself.
4. Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, AD70 (Yiar 12 - Wars 5:8:1): The Romans broke through a narrow breach in the second wall. This was on the 5<sup>th</sup> day after their taking of the first wall (previous item). But they were repulsed by the Jews. The Romans immediately began to raise siege towers with which to more systematically take the second wall (Wars 5:11:4). Famine began to bite (Wars 5:10:2).
5. Monday, May 26, AD70 (Yiar 29 - Wars 5:11:4): The Romans, in 17 days, with difficulty succeeded in building siege towers against the second wall. But the Jews managed to overthrow these - partly by undermining them and partly by setting fire to what remained standing (Wars 5:11:4, 5). Titus retaliated by building, in three days, (!! ) a wall right round the city to completely seal it (Wars 5:12:1, 2). The famine began to become extreme (Wars 5:12:3).
6. The Romans scoured the countryside for materials to make four new siege towers to be used against the tower of Antonia (Wars 5:12:4, 6:1:1). They built them in 21 days (Wars 6:1:1).
7. Thursday June 26, AD70 (Tamuz 1 - Wars 5:13:7): By this date 115,880 dead bodies had been thrown out of the city from just one gate and 600 000 had died in the whole city. These numbers, suspiciously high,<sup>10</sup> are perhaps just barely possible: The city had been shut up for between 40 and 48 days, had run out of food and had been filled with pilgrims assembled for passover (see items 1 and 2).

On this same date the Jews made an ineffectual attack on the well-organised Roman position outside the wall (Wars 6:1:3). The Romans brought up their siege towers to

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<sup>10</sup> June 1, 2000 *Israel Line*: "According to a population census taken by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Research, 650,000 people currently reside in Jerusalem, 450,000 Jews and 200,000 Arabs, MA'ARIV reported. The census was made public on the 33rd anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. The rate of population growth in the Arab sector is three times higher than that of the Jewish sector. Thirty percent of the city's population is Ultra-Orthodox, although due to an increase in housing costs, more Ultra-Orthodox are leaving the city than moving to it."

the tower of Antonia and that night a section of the second wall fell where the Jews had undermined earlier Roman siege towers (see previous item).

8. Saturday, June 28, AD70 (Tamuz 3 - Wars 6:1:6): A Roman soldier led a valiant, though doomed, broad-daylight attack (6<sup>th</sup> hour of the day) upon a new Jewish wall erected behind the second wall, exposed when a portion of the second wall fell two nights before (see previous item). The soldier's name was Sabinus and he was followed by only 11 men - all volunteers and all of whom died.
9. Monday, June 30, AD70 (Tamuz 5 - Wars 6:1:7): Sixteen Roman soldiers succeeded in entering the tower of Antonia at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the night (3 am). They routed the Jewish guards and summoned the rest of the Roman army who forced the Jews back into the temple by ferocious hand-to-hand fighting that lasted until the 7<sup>th</sup> hour of the day. In the end the Romans were repulsed and pushed back into the tower of Antonia.
10. Saturday, July 12, AD70 (Tamuz 17 - Wars 6:2:1): The daily sacrifice was cut off. This was just 11 weeks and 5 days, or 82 days, after the siege was begun. The daily sacrifice was not cut off by the Romans, who were still laying siege outside the city, but because the Jews no longer had any men to offer it. One wonders, too, if they had the wherewithal to make the offering, considering the severity of the famine.
11. Thursday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, AD70 (Tamuz 22 - Wars 6:2:9): The Jews began to destroy the temple so as to hinder Roman progress. Two days later, the Romans set fire to a further portion so as to provide some clear space.
12. Tuesday, July 22, AD70 (Tamuz 27 - Wars 6:3:1): The Jews laid a fire-trap in the roof structure of a portion of the temple - and retreated. A number of Romans, pursuing the retreating Jews, lost their lives when the Jews set fire to the structure. The famine reached to the limits of extremity (Wars 6:3, 4).
13. Saturday, August 2, AD70 (Ab 8 - Wars 6:4:1): Titus brought battering rams to bear against the western wall of the inner temple. The rams had for six days without end been at work on other parts of the temple structure but without making any impression on it. The Romans had tried to undermine the foundations, but had found the stones too large and too well placed to make any effective impression against them. Frustrated, Titus eventually gave orders to burn the wooden gates of the temple.
14. Monday, August 4, AD70 (Ab 10 - Wars 6:4:5): The temple was set ablaze. This was 15 weeks and 1 day (or 106 days) after the siege was begun. The fire was set by the Jews; an enraged Roman soldier hastened the process, though Titus never intended to damage the temple and had acted with restraint throughout the siege.
15. Wednesday, August 13, AD70 (Ab 19 - a deduction from Wars 6:8:4): The Romans began to assemble their siege mounts against the last defences of the city.
16. Saturday, August 30, AD70 (Elul 7 - Wars 6:8:4): Battering-ram assault began on the city's last line of defence.
17. Sunday, August 31, AD70 (Elul 8 - Wars 6:10:1): Jerusalem was taken by Titus. Jewish rebellion that his father, Vespasian, had set out to put down (under Nero - about February, AD66) was at an end. From the time that the Romans encamped outside Jerusalem until this day was one day short of 20 weeks - 139 days. From the actual onset of the siege until the fall of the city was exactly 19 weeks - 133 days.

## Session 4: The Structure of Prophecy

### OHP 1: The Structure of The Prophetic Message

- Prophecy has a relatively simple structure. It is based on historic precedent and has the following main features:
- 1 Israel, negligent of God's ways, tests God's patience to the limit.
  - 2 When there is no remedy, God brings in an invincible invader - often from the north.
  - 3 There follows a period of cruel oppression for Israel - at the hands of the invader.
  - 4 In their extremity, Israel turns back to the Lord as their last resource, calling upon Him for salvation.
  - 5 The Lord raises a deliverer and there is a prodigious battle.
  - 6 The invader is defeated, punished and/or destroyed.
  - 7 Israel enjoys a period of peace and prosperity for as long as they continue to serve the Lord.

### OHP 2: Structure in Judges

1 Israel's Negligence	2 Invading Nation	3 Period of Oppression	4 Israel's Repentance	5 Name of Deliverer	6 The Battle	7 Period of Peace
3:7	M'potamia (Edom)	8 years 3:8	3:9	Othniel	3:10	40 years 3:11
3:12	Moab	18 years 3:14	3:15	Ehud	3:16-29	Eight(y?) years 3:30
4:1	Canaan	20 years 4:3	4:3	Deborah, Barak & Jael	4:10-22	40 years 5:31
6:1	Midian	7 years 6:1	6:6	Gideon	7:19-8:21	40 years 8:28
10:6	Ammon	18 years 10:8	10:10, 16	Jephthah	11:32, 33	6 years 12:7
13:1	Philistines	40 years 13:1	1 Sam 7:2-4	Samson, Samuel	Jdg14-16; 1 Sam 7:10-13	Not directly stated



OHP 3: Examples of Structure in Prophecy

1 Israel's Negligence	2 Invading Nation	3 Oppression	4 Israel's Repentance	5 Deliverance	6 Invader Destroyed	7 Peace
Isa 10:1-4	Assyria Isa 10:5	Isa 10:6		Isa 10:16-19, 26	Isa 10:12-15	Isa 10:20-25, 27
	Assyria Isa 10:28-32	Isa 10:33, 34		Isa 11:1, 14:24, 25	Isa 14:25-27	Isa 11:1-12:6
Isa 31:1-3, 32:6-8	Assyria Isa 31:8	Isa 32:9-14	Isa 31:6, 7	Isa 31:8	Isa 31:9	Isa 32:1-5, 32:15-20
Jer 31:21, 22	Babylon	Jer 30:4-7, 31:15-17	Jer 30:14-17, 31:18-21	Jer 30:8-12		Jer 30:9, 18-24, 31:1-14
	Northern-Joel Joel 1:1-6, 2:20	Joel 1:6-2:11	Joel 2:12-17	Joel 2:18, 19	Joel 2:20	Joel 2:21-29
	Joel 2:30	Joel 2:31	Joel 2:32	Joel 2:32		Joel 2:32
	Neighbours Joel 3:1, 2, 12	Joel 3:2, 3		Joel 3:4, 9-17	Joel 3:4-8	Joel 3:17-21
Zep 1:1-6, 3:1-4	Babylon Zep 1:7-9	Zep 1:10-18, 3:5-7	Zep 2:1-3, 3:8	Zep 3:8	Zep 3:8	Zep 3:9-20
		Zec 13:8-14:2		Zec 14:3-5	Zec 14:6, 7	Zec 14:8-21
Mic 1:1-3:11	Assyria Micah 3:12	Micah 3:12, 4:10		Micah 4:13		Micah 4:1-8
	Assyria Micah 5:5	Micah 5:1		Micah 5:2-5	Micah 5:6-9	Micah 5:10-15
Micah 6:1-8	Micah 6:9	Micah 6:10-7:6	Micah 7:7-10			Micah 7:11-20

OHP 4: Points to Note About Structure.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Each sequence is a slice of time -             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⌘ It is a “snapshot” contributing to the bigger picture</li> <li>⌘ A single prophecy may consist of several snapshots or “layers” - all covering the <i>same</i> time and events</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ A given snapshot doesn't necessarily describe every one of the seven steps in the sequence</li> <li>➤ The written description of a snapshot is not necessarily set down in the strict chronological order of the steps in the sequence</li> </ul>
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- (a) “Layering” is my name for the process by which a prophet “goes over” the same material more than once, giving a different view, or different emphasis to the same basic material. For example:
- (b) Daniel 2 and 7; 8 and 10-12.
- (c) The prophecy of Joel: three *parallel* prophecies each dealing with the same events, but giving different views of them.

- (i) Joel 1:1 - 2:29. Invasion, through to the kingdom, from the point of view of its impact on Israel.
  - (ii) Joel 2:30 - 2:32. A summary of the above and introduction to the third layer:
  - (iii) 3:1 - 3:21. Invasion through to the kingdom from the point of view of its impact on the invading nations.
- 5 Recognising both Structure and Layers is important to understanding prophecy - especially complicated material such as the book of Revelation. See OHP 5 and 6: *The Overall Structure of the Book of Revelation* and *The Structure of the Book of Revelation*. (NEXT PAGE)

OHP 5: The Overall Structure of the Book of Revelation.

- Chapter 1
  - ⌘ Introduction
- Chapters 2 and 3
  - ⌘ Seven letters to the Ecclesias of Asia
- Chapters 4:1 to 20:4
  - ⌘ Seven visions of the coming kingdom
- Chapters 20:5 to 22:21
  - ⌘ Beyond the Millennium - and closing remarks

- 6 The Structure of Prophecy establishes a basic sequence - which may lead to a time-frame.

Reading: Joel 1

Hymn: 233 (1964 book); 298 (2002 book)

OHP 6: Structure in the Book of Revelation

	Israel's Negligence	Invading Nation	Oppression	Israel's Repentance	The Deliverer	Invader Destroyed	Peace
<b>Vision 1</b> (Intro to Seals) Rev 4, 5			John weeps because the book is sealed 5:1-4		The Lamb is worthy & God chosen! 5:6-12	Judah's Lion prevails to open the seals 5:5	The glory of God and the Lord Jesus in the kingdom 4:1-11; 5:13, 14
<b>Vision 2</b> (7 Seals) Rev 6:1-8:1		Four horsemen are sent forth to afflict 6:1-8	The horsemen create terrible tribulation 6:2, 4, 6, 8	A righteous remnant cries for salvation 6:9-11		The oppressors are judged 6:12-17	The faithful are sealed & are given the kingdom 7:1-17; 8:1
<b>Vision 3</b> (7 Trumpets) Rev 8:2-11:19; Rev 12		200 000 000 horsemen are prepared to slay Rev 8, 9 (9:16)	A red dragon persecutes a pregnant woman 11:19; 12:1-5	Two witnesses testify and convert some of the people 11:1-14	Time runs out Rev 10 (10:6)	The woman: saved from the dragon; Michael casts out the dragon 12:6-17	God's kingdom is established 11:15-18
<b>Vision 4</b> Rev 13 to 14:5		The beast rises from the sea & ally from the earth 13:1-4, 11-18	The beast blasphemes; & oppresses God's people 13:5-10				The Lamb on Mt. Zion: the redeemed sing a new song 14:1-5
<b>Vision 5</b> Rev 14:6 to 15:4	Babylon worships the beast; arouses God's wrath 14:8, 9, 11		Men are warned against the beast & and to be patient 14:6-13		One like the Son of man & a cloud & with a sickle 14:14-18	The winepress is trodden; blood to the horses & bridles 14:19, 20	Moses' song is sung by the victors over the beast 15:1-4
<b>Vision 6</b> (7 Vials) 15:5-19:10; Rev 17, 18	God's wrath is contained in seven vials 15:5-8	7 Angels are sent to pour their vials on the earth 16:1-9	The beast's horns destroy Great Babylon Rev 17, 18 (17:16)	The beast is troubled: his servants are unrepentant 16:10-14	The Lord comes as a thief 16:15	Armageddon: cities of the nations fall; earthquake 16:16-21	The Lamb's robe is arrayed in white linen 19:1-10
<b>Vision 7</b> Rev 19:11 to 20:4					One on a white horse leads armies of heaven 19:11-16	The Word treads the winepress, destroys the beast, etc. 19:17-21	The dragon is bound 1000 years. They sit on thrones 20:4

## Session 5: Time, Times and a Half or The Time of Trouble Such As Never Was

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5.

### Introduction

In this session we'll review some of the principal time prophecies.

We will keep in mind Paul's message from 1 Thess 5. The intention is that we should be ready at any time. It is not a question of "second guessing" the Lord's purposes so that we can live our lives now and only prepare for the return of Christ just before it happens. Rather, we need to live each day as if it is our last. No matter how certain we may feel about the "more sure word of prophecy" (2 Pet. 1:19), we must never presume on the Lord's grace just because He has given us a little understanding of what He is going to do with the earth.

The discussion should be followed with the chart, "A Time of Trouble Such As Never Was" (NEXT PAGE) as a summary.

### 1 Daniel 12:7

The most thoroughly documented time prophecy (documented, that is, in scripture) is the duration of the time of trouble such as never was (Matt 24:21, Dan 12:1). There are no less than 7 prophecies that can be set alongside each other, "locking hands", so to speak; all give different emphases to the same time period.

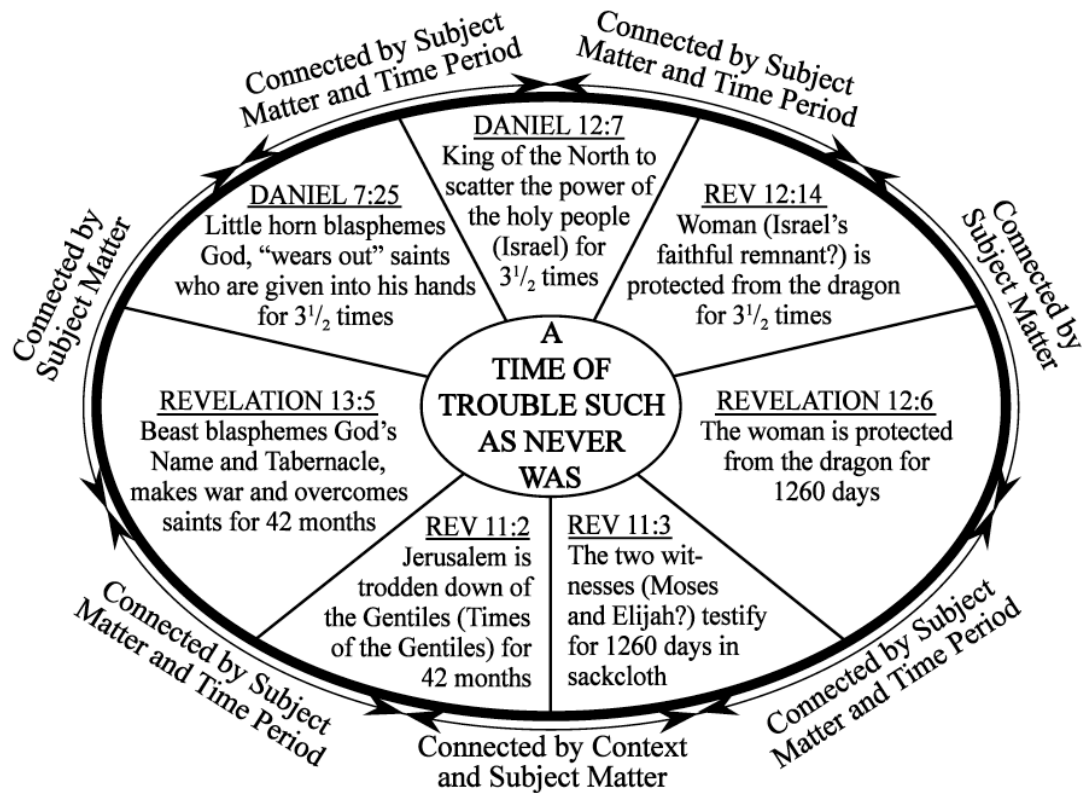
First, though, let's review the logic that ties this period specifically to the last days:

Daniel was told of "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time". The angel made it clear that Daniel's people will be delivered from this trouble, that the resurrection will take place and that the kingdom will be set up - all in a closely related sequence (Dan 12:1-3).

Jesus said that he would return immediately after a period of tribulation the like of which had never been known since the beginning of the world, *nor would ever after be known* (Matt 24:21, 29). Clearly, in all of history - past, present and future - there can be only one such time of trouble; Jesus' "time of trouble" *must* be the same as Daniel's.

Daniel is told the duration of the period of trouble in Daniel 12:7. It is to last just so long as is needed "to scatter the power of the holy people" (Dan 12:7), and this is said to take "a time, times, and an half" (Dan 12:7). The simplest way of viewing this is to regard it as two times, plus one time, plus half a time - a total of three and a half times. In any case, "times" is probably a Hebraism - called a "dual" - by which two (and only two) objects are denoted simply by use of the object's plural, without any qualifying (numeric) adjective. That is, to denote *two* times, it is sufficient simply to say, "times". If three or more had been intended, the number would have had to be stated.

The duration of a "time" is not specified, but in due course we'll use principles of parallelism to sort it out.



## 2 Daniel 7:25

Moving anticlockwise around the chart, from the uppermost segment (Dan 12:7), we next find that the little horn of Daniel 7 operates for the same 3<sup>1/2</sup> times; he also carries out substantially the same activities. But more information is added.

"He shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan 7:25).

In this place, 3<sup>1/2</sup> times is the period that the "saints of the most high" are given into the hand of the little horn, during which he "wears them out". This is the same idea as we found in Daniel 12:7, where the king of the north "scatters the power" of the holy people. So the passages are linked by their common duration and their subject matter.

### "Saints" - A Side Issue

Incidentally, the English word "saint(s)" translates four Hebrew and one Greek words which can refer to one of three things, depending on context. "Saints" can mean what we commonly take the word to mean: "those that have made a covenant with (God) by sacrifice" (Psa 50:5). But it can also apply to Israel, and, sometimes, to angels:

Here is an example of the word "saints" applied to Israel:

"O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the *flesh of thy saints* unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them" (Psa 79:1-3).

Here is an example of the word "saints" applied to angels:

"The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with *ten thousands of saints*: from his right hand went a

fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words" (Deut 33:2, 3).

### The Coming of the Lord at the Head of an Angelic Host

This passage in Deuteronomy 33 is both historic and prophetic. Its historic basis is in the manifestation of God to Israel through the angels at Sinai. It is prophetic of the coming of Christ, with thousands of angels, to save Israel. We have already noticed Isaiah 63, in which Christ is shown as coming, triumphant, from Seir, having trodden the winepress of the peoples. See also Isaiah 34:5 ff, Zechariah 14:5, Matthew 13:39-41, 16:27, 25:31, Mark 8:38, 1 Thess 4:16, 2 Thess 1:7-9, Jude 14.

Here is another example of the word "saints" applied to angels:

"Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice ...?" (Dan 8:13).

While this was a vision (Dan 9:21), the forms were very probably angelic - Gabriel is named in verse 16.

### Reverting to Daniel 7:25

In Daniel 7:25, "saints" means Israel - given into the hand of the little horn. We may be confident about this because of the passage's parallelism with Daniel 12:7 which speaks of the king of the north breaking the power of the holy people. The original word for "saints" in Daniel 7:25 is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew for "holy" (people) in Daniel 12:7. Daniel 12:7 cannot apply to *us* as the saints in question because we have no power to be broken. And the angels are not in contention. Therefore the prophecies relate to Israel.

The little horn in Daniel 7:24, 25 is the one with a mouth that speaks great things and who thinks to change times and laws (Dan 7:25)). But he only prevails for the specified 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times because, when they end,

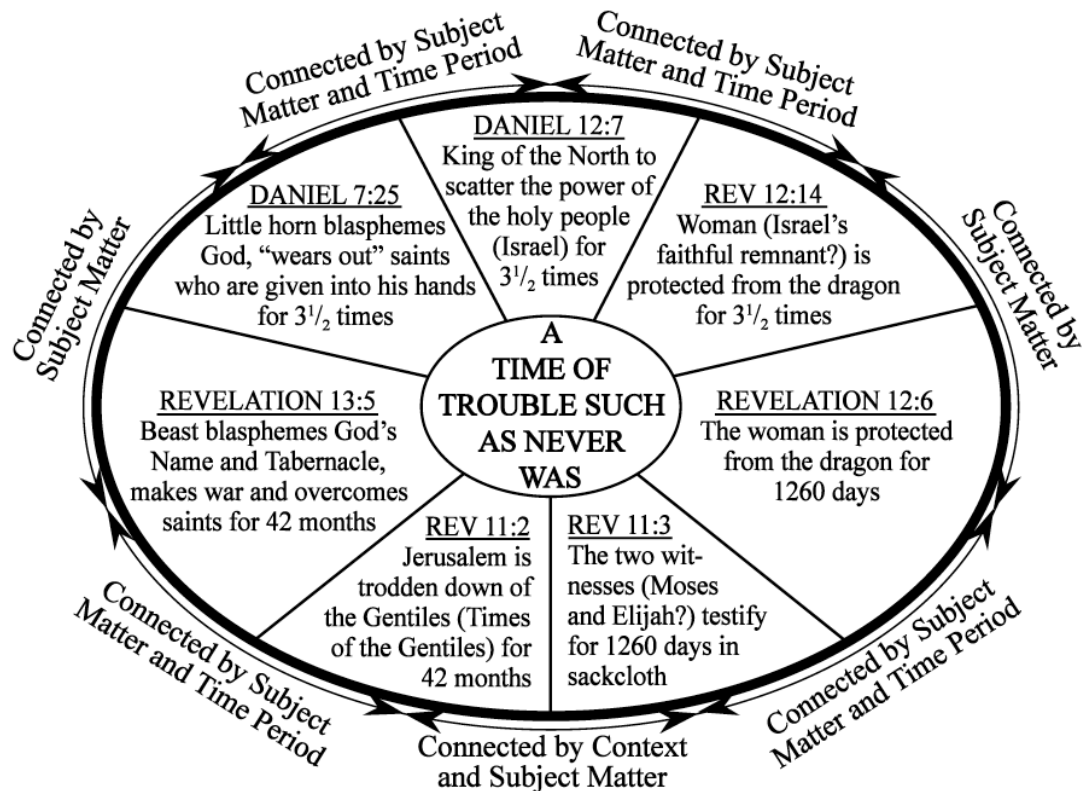
"... the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end" (Dan 7:26).

## 3 Revelation 13:5

We may remember from an earlier session (Session 2) that

- (a) The rise of the beast bearing the little horn in Daniel 7:2-8 is parallel to the rise of the beast in Rev 13:1-3. Daniel's beasts represented four developing kingdoms to come from his time. These had either passed, or were passing, by the time that Revelation was given; so they are conflated into one beast in Revelation. But look how it is described:
- (b) It has a "mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given to it to continue forty and two months" (Rev 13:5, 6). This blasphemous speech is a distinguishing feature of all of Daniel's representations of the man of sin. See Daniel 7:25, 8:9-12, 24, 25, 11:31, 36, Isa 37:21-23 etc.
- (c) To the beast "... it was given ... to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev 13:7).
- (d) "... and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations ... and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months" (Rev 13:7, 5).

The parallels between the subject matter dealt with in the contexts of Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:5 are so tight that we cannot reasonably doubt that the 42 months of Revelation 13:5 are identical in duration to the 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times of Daniel 7:25. The passages share common subject matter.



#### 4 Revelation 11:2

The 42 months during which the beast blasphemes God's Name and tabernacle, and overcomes the saints (remember, this must mean Israel, from the parallel contexts) appear in another account of tribulation for the Jews. In Revelation 11:2 it is said that "they", the gentiles, will tread down Jerusalem for 42 months. *Which* gentiles can be determined by following the parallels back via the beast of Revelation 13; to the little horn of Daniel 7; to the king of the north of Daniel 11; to Paul's man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2.

Since we started this chain, originally, in the Olivet prophecy, it certainly seems likely that this treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles - for 42 months - is the same as that to which Jesus referred in the Olivet prophecy:

"... they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until *the times of the Gentiles* be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

A couple of deductions are possible from the parallelism between these passages.

- (a) The times of the gentiles are 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times.
- (b) The times of the gentiles have not yet begun.

The times of the gentiles are "even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer 30:7).

#### 5 Revelation 11:3

The next link in the chain lies in the verse that follows the last link. In this case, however, the period is 1260 days, which *appears* to be a different time. But the *context* suggests that the period during which the two witnesses testify is the same as that during which Jerusalem is trodden down. And the two witnesses carry out their work "clothed in sackcloth" (Rev 11:3) – which implies distress – linking the period of their ministry with the "treading under

foot” of Jerusalem by the Gentiles (the subject of Revelation 11:2). So Revelation 11:2 and 3 are linked by subject matter as well as context.

### The Two Witnesses

Remember the reason for the treading down of Jerusalem. It is so that Israel might be brought to its senses; so that it might be forced to call on the Lord for salvation, in its final extremity. Naturally, a prophetic witness will be needed to point the nation in the right direction.

That this witness is undertaken during a period of distress is clear from several points:

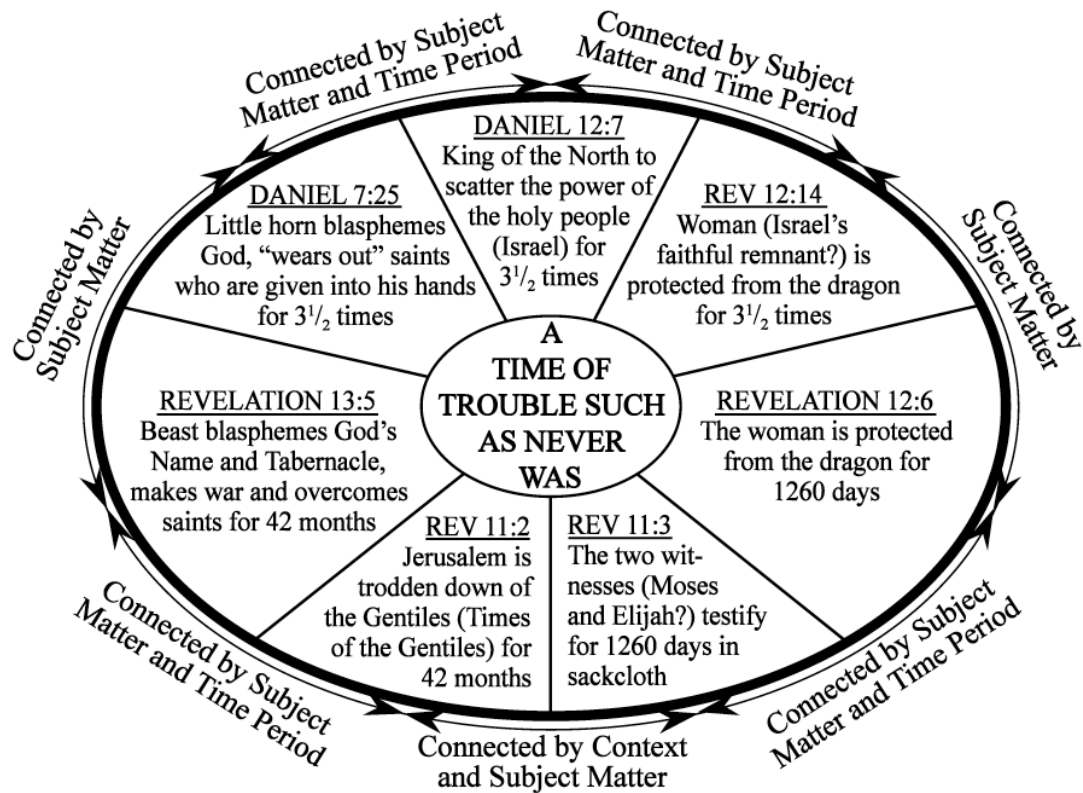
- (a) The two witnesses are clad in sackcloth - a sign of distress (as mentioned above).
- (b) They have power to bring sanctions to bear on those who are reluctant to hear their testimony:
  - (i) They "have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy" (Rev 11:6). This is the sign of Elijah, who caused a 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> year drought (Luke 4:25, James 5:17). Note that the activity of the two witnesses in connection with this sign is *prophesying*. Notice, too, that Ezekiel (22:24) says that withheld rain is a sign to Israel of God's indignation with their iniquity.
  - (ii) The two witnesses "have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will" (Rev 11:6). These are the signs of Moses, who performed these miracles in and against Egypt.
- (c) The beast brings the two witnesses to a violent end when their work is done (Rev 11:7), and for half a week they lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem. After this, they are raised to great power - at the very moment when God's judgments fall on those who have trodden down Jerusalem (Rev 11:8-13).

The identity of the two witnesses may be a problem, like many others in Revelation, that we'll not be able to solve until the time comes – when it'll be obvious who they are. John says they "are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth" (Rev 11:4).

This is certainly a reference to Zechariah 4:2 ff, a delightful prophecy that identifies the two witnesses of Zechariah's days. In that case the two witnesses were Zechariah himself and his colleague, Haggai. Together, they turned the heart of the fathers in Israel to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, causing the nation to rise up and build the temple of the Lord (Malachi 4:6, Ezra 5:1, 2).

This is the work of Elijah (Malachi 4:5, 6) who, in a way that does not seem to be clearly stated in scripture, is to come to his people and prepare them to recognize the Lord, and call on him to come and save them. It may be that the "two witnesses" (in Revelation 11) are an allusion to this work.





But it may also be that the two witnesses are not concrete personalities at all. It may be that the two witnesses are the law and the prophets, that is, the body of testimony which in every age has been both the basis of Israel's peculiar identity as the people of God and, at the same time, the testimony that has steadfastly demanded the nation's obedience to His ways. Several facts support this hypothesis:

- (a) The two witnesses perform the miracles that are most clearly identified with Moses and Elijah - the representatives of the law and the prophets (Rev 11:6).
- (b) The little horns, and king of the north set out to "change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25, 8:12, 11:36). And so does the beast (Rev 13:6). Here is evidence of the beast making "war" (Rev 11:7) against the law and the prophets.
- (c) The beast "makes war" against the two witnesses. This is a rather extreme way of describing action taken by a despot against one or two individuals. The phrase seems to imply a more systematic attack - such as a vigorous propaganda campaign against Jewish religion, together with extensive sanctions against those who refuse to obey. Something like Revelation 13:15-17 might be involved in this.
- (d) Those who rejoice over the downfall of the two witnesses are followers of the beast. They are "of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations" (Rev 11:9). Certainly, this is the way in which the beast's followers are described ("... kindreds, and tongues, and nations" - Revelation 13:7). This seems to be an example of Psalm 2:

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psa 2:2, 3).

Essentially, whether there is a human agency involved or not, those against which the atheistic beast must fight are the Jewish scriptures - the law and the prophets.

The evidence cited in this review is not particularly comprehensive, but will suffice for the present. The important conclusion being suggested is that the two time periods appearing in Revelation 11:2 and 3 (42 months and 1260 days) are one and the same.

## 6 Revelation 12:6

In Revelation 12:6 a woman who had previously given birth to "a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (Rev 12:5), is caused to flee into the wilderness for fear of persecution by "a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns" (Rev 12:3). The duration of her protection is said to be 1260 days (Rev 12:6). There are a couple of questions:

### Who Is the Woman?

- (a) Whoever she is, the woman is being persecuted for the specified 1260 days. In the context of prophecy, this should cause us immediately to suspect that she is Israel in one manifestation or another.
- (b) Then we notice that she has given birth to a man child who is to rule over all the nations with a *rod of iron* (Rev 12:5). This is a direct reference to Psalm 2. He who exercises the iron rod is Christ:

"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a *rod of iron*; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psa 2:7-9).

This is taken up in Revelation 19:

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a *rod of iron*: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev 19:15).

Without doubt this is a right that the Lord Jesus Christ has received from His father, as the context makes abundantly clear (Rev 19:11-16).

But the figure is extended to His followers:

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Rev 2:26, 27).

So the man child to whom the woman in Revelation 12 gives birth is the Lord Jesus Christ, and also His disciples. The idea of the man child being caught up to heaven and the throne of God includes the saints - it is figurative of the exaltation to which they will ultimately rise.

We have been engendered by Israel. Jesus said that "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). But there is another sense in which we have been born of the "woman":

"Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal 4:26). These themes may be further developed. We should also take into account the many prophetic allusions to Israel as "the virgin daughter of Israel" in one form or another (Isa 1:8, 10:32, 22:4, 5, 37:22, 52:2, 62:11, Jer 4:31, 6:2, 23 etc).

- (c) And finally, the woman is clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1). This is as clear an allusion to the family of Jacob as could be found:

"... the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father... and his father rebuked him ... Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (Gen 37:9, 10)

The woman certainly seems to be Israel - at least that part of the nation that is faithful to God (because the woman is preserved from the dragon). It seems highly probable that she is the faithful remnant of Israel.

### Who Is the Dragon?

We have already seen, in an earlier session, that the dragon and the serpent are identical (Rev 12:13, 14 etc, Rev 12:9). Furthermore, the dragon seems to represent the "sin principle" that has permeated and driven the affairs of men in all generations. Revelation 12:9 defines the dragon and the serpent as being the same as the devil and satan.

Paul uses a different phrase for the same influence. He spoke of "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess 2:7), and recognised that it was operating in his days, although restrained (2 Thess 2:7). In fact, of course, this abstract spirit of perverse human nature has been operating ever since it was brought into the world by the sin of Adam and Eve. In every age there have been restraining influences that have prevented its full manifestation. But when the man of sin is revealed, sin personified will be let loose without restraint (2 Thess 2:6-10). Read this section and note:

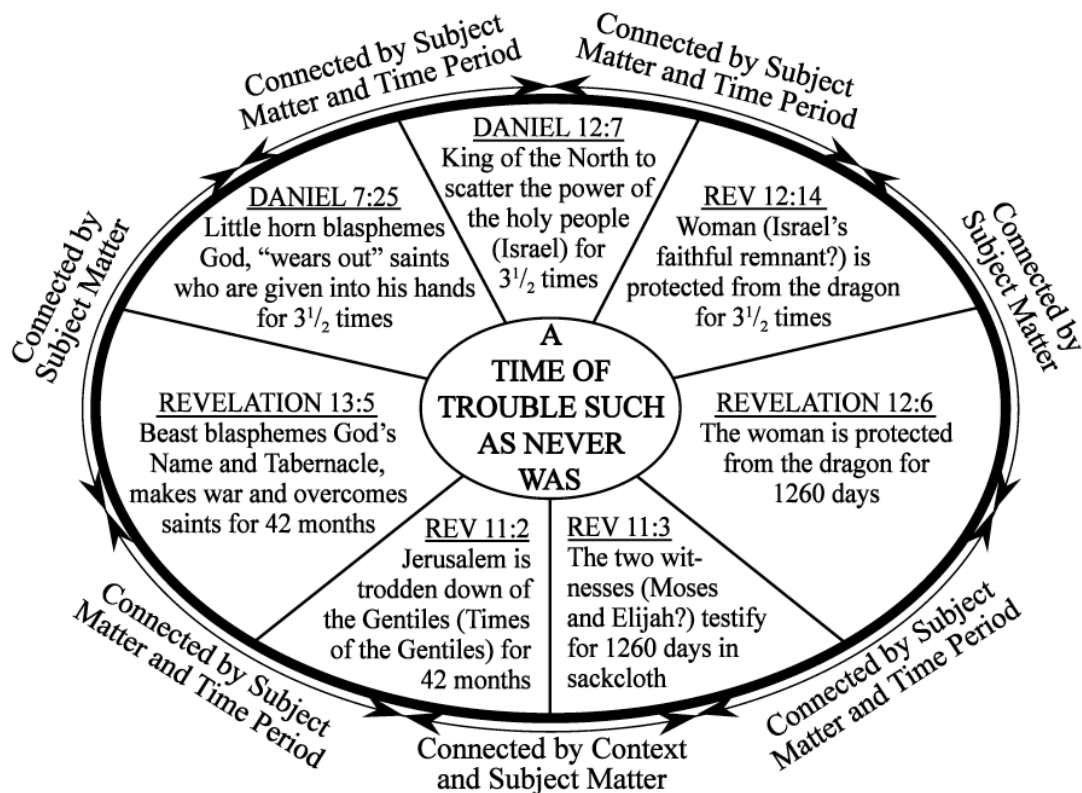
- (a) The restraining influence of some unspecified agency (2 Thess 2:7).
- (b) The man of sin is to be destroyed by the Lord at His coming (2 Thess 2:8).
- (c) The man of sin's coming is "after the working of Satan" (2 Thess 2:9).
- (d) The man of sin exercises "power, signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess 2:9).

We remember that the beast derives his power from the dragon (Rev 13:2) and that he and his agents perform wonders and signs to deceive (Rev 13:11-15). The parallels could be multiplied.

Another way that Paul describes the serpent/dragon-principle that will motivate the man of sin during Israel's tribulation is found in his phrase, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2). This is "the spirit that *now worketh* in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). Again, notice that this spirit has always characterised the affairs of men. But it will be brought out in its full manifestation when the little horn(s), or king of the north, or beast, or man of sin is revealed.

When that man comes to the fore, he will be motivated by pure, unmixed sin - the final climactic manifestation - whom the Lord will destroy at His coming. The dragon is not that man. The dragon is that which motivates and drives him. So when the woman is said to flee from the dragon, she is actually fleeing from the beast who is motivated to persecute her by the dragon.

Notice the time during which the persecuted woman is protected. It is 1260 days (Rev 12:6). This is the same interval as that during which the two witnesses minister in sackcloth (Rev 11:3). So the two passages are connected by a common time period. They're also connected by the common underlying theme of tribulation lasting for 1260 days.



## 7 Revelation 12:14

In Revelation 12:6 the woman fled into the wilderness from the effect of the dragon's influence over the beast and was given refuge from his persecution for 1260 days. We concluded that this is a reference to the time of Israel's trouble that immediately precedes the Lord's return.

Revelation 12:14 speaks of the same event when it says that the woman was given wings as of an eagle with which she was able to fly into the wilderness to her place - where she is to be sustained for 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times from the face of the serpent. Revelation 12:6 and 14 clearly are directly parallel. The messages are identical; so are the time periods.

Then, finally, the 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times of Revelation 12:14 link with the 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times of Daniel 12:7. And both of these passages are further linked by the time of trouble that they define for Israel.

### The Completed Circle and The Duration of a "Time"

So the cycle of seven parallel time prophecies is complete. All refer to the same time period - Israel's time of trouble such as never was. The parallelism between these prophecies allows us to draw certain conclusions. Look again at the chart and see that:

- (a) Revelation 12:6 and 14 imply that 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times equal 1260 days. Therefore 1 time is 360 days, or 12 months of 30 days.
- (b) Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:5 imply that 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times equal 42 months. Therefore 1 time is 12 months.
- (c) Revelation 11:2, 3 confirm these deductions: 42 months at 30 days per month equal a total of 1260 days.
- (d) The King of the North (Dan 12:7) is the same as The Little Horn (Dan 7:25); which is, in turn, the same as The Beast (Rev 13:5).

These 1260 days, 42 months or 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times begin from the simultaneous desecration of a Jewish temple and the placing of the "abomination of desolation" in a Jewish temple. They end in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Daniel mentions three other time periods which begin at the same time as the 1260 days, and include these 1260 days. We must take them into account. They are:

- (a) 1290 (1260 + 30) days (Dan 12:11).

It may be assumed that these extra 30 days will be used by the Lord to deal with the invading armies. It is the duration of judgement on the nations. This hypothesis closely follows from the notion of Structure (Session 4). Remember that the great tribulation (step 3 in the structural sequence) is to come upon Israel so that (step 4) they will be forced to acknowledge their God and cry out to Him for salvation. The prophetic message tells us that God will respond to this cry and (step 5) send them the promised saviour - the Lord Jesus, coming from heaven at the head of a great company of angels (Matt 25:31; 16:27; 13:41, 49; 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7, 8). The immediate task, step 6 in the structural sequence, is to destroy the oppressor (Zech 12:7; Isa 63, Ezek 38, 39, etc, etc). It's interesting that Daniel 12:11 tells us exactly when the 1290 days begin, but doesn't say anything about what the time period entails. It's evidently left to us to deduce what is to happen in these 30 days immediately following the Lord's return. Scripture, "common sense" and the demands of Structure all combine to make it clear that the first item on the returned Lord's agenda will be to fight and win the battle of Armageddon (or whatever else we may wish to call the last and greatest confrontation between flesh and spirit that is to occur before God's kingdom is established).

- (b) 1335 (1290 + 45) days (Dan 12:12).

It may be assumed that these extra 45 days will be used by the Lord to raise the dead, gather the living and judge the disciples. This is the duration of judgement for the saints. It is the time during which the dead saints will rise "first" (ie, before the living saints are gathered - 1 Thess 4:15-17), and be taken to the place of judgement - where those who are "alive and remain" will then be gathered to appear before the judgement seat of Christ (ibid; also Matt 24:31; 25:31-46; 2 Thess 2:1, etc).

Of the 1335 days, or, more specifically, of the last 45 of the 75 days immediately following the return of the Lord (1260 days after a Jewish temple is desecrated), Daniel 12:12 says, "Blessed is he that waiteth (or patiently endures), and cometh to" day 1335. It's obviously a day of blessing for those who persevere. Doubtless it's the day when this corruptible puts on incorruption (1 Cor 15:51-54). It's the day when, for us, the kingdom will really have come; when we will rejoice to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15:3). Perhaps it will be the day when Christ will sit down and "drink anew" (Matt 26:29) with his disciples at the marriage feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:7). The list of images is long.

The process has a precedent. After God's judgements fell on Egypt He led the people to Sinai where the kingdom was organized. The first thing on Moses' agenda was to get the law from the Lord. Similarly, when the Lord Jesus returns, he will deal with the immediate problem - the oppressors of his people. Then he'll set up the structure of the kingdom. Since it will fall to the faithful saints to help in the new administration then the first item on the agenda will be to declare who are worthy - to separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares.

- (c) 2300 days (Dan 8:14) - "the end of the days" (Dan 12:13) - to be examined in the final session.

## Session 6: A Time Frame for The Last Days

### Analysis of “Last Day” Terms

- 1 There are at least eight related “last days” phrases in the A.V. They are found in a total of about 40 verses. The following list is probably not quite complete:
  - (a) “Last Day(s)” - 3 references in the Old Testament, 11 in the New:
    - (i) Gen. 49:1; Isa 2:2; Mic. 4:1. (Hebrew - 'achariyth (last) yowm (day)).
    - (ii) John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; John 11:24; John 12:48; Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; Jam. 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:3. (Greek: eskátais enérais - plural except in John).
  - (b) “Latter Days” - 11 references, all in the Old Testament:  
Num. 24:14, Deut 4:30, Deut 31:29, Jer 23:20, Jer 30:24, Jer 48:47, Jer 49:39, Ezek 38:16, Dan 2:28 (Aramaic), Dan 10:14, Hos 3:5. (Hebrew identical to “Last Days”).
  - (c) “The Last Time(s)” - 3 references: 1 Peter 1:5 (Greek: kairo eskáto); Jude 18 (Greek: eskátou tou krónon); 1 Peter 1:20 (Greek: eskátou ton krónon).
  - (d) “Latter Time(s)” - 2 references:  
Dan 8:23; 1 Tim 4:1;
  - (e) “A (the) Last Hour” - 2 references: 1 John 2:18 (twice). (Greek: eskáto ‘ora).
  - (f) “The Time of the End” - 5 references, all in Daniel:  
Dan. 8:17; Dan 11:35; Dan. 11:40; Dan 12:4; Dan. 12:9. (Hebrew: `eth (time) qets (end)).
  - (g) “The End of the Days” - 1 reference only: Daniel 12:13 (Hebrew: qets (end) yowm (day)).
  - (h) “The Latter Years” - 1 reference only: Ezek 38:8 (Hebrew: 'achariyth (last) shaneh (year)).

### Application of the Various “Last Days” Terms

- 2 One cannot sustain a clear distinction between the various "last days" phrases. They are all more or less synonymous. In particular, the phrases used, in and of themselves, make no distinction between, and don't define “the last days of Judah's commonwealth” or “the last days of the Gentiles”. Such distinctions are entirely hypothetical and support for the hypothesis depends on a predetermined view of prophecy and a subjective choice of examples. Taking a broader view, the Last Days are the time when:
  - (a) By inference, the ultimate antichrist, the man of sin, will be revealed (1 John 2:18. Note that *the* last time (literally *hour*) is, in Nestle's Greek, *a* last hour. John was discussing neither *the* antichrist nor *the* last hour. See also vs 22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7.)
  - (b) There will be perilous times, characterised by scoffers (2 Tim 3:1, 1 Tim 4:1, 2 Pet 3:3).
  - (c) Gog will invade Israel (Ezek 38:8, 16).

- (d) Evil will fall on Israel for turning away from God (Deut 31:29).
  - (e) The anger of the Lord against Israel will be accomplished (Jer 23:20, 30:24).
  - (f) Israel will “return”, seek the Lord and “David their king” (Hosea 3:5).
  - (g) God will respond to Israel’s cry for help when in tribulation (Deut 4:30).
  - (h) Salvation will be revealed (1 Peter 1:5, Jude 18).
  - (i) Balaam’s blessings of Israel will be fulfilled (Num 24:14).
  - (j) Jacob’s blessings will be fulfilled (Gen 49:1).
  - (k) Daniel’s prophecies will be finally fulfilled (Dan 2:28, 8:17,23, 10:14, 11:35, 40, 12:4, 9).
  - (l) Jesus’ disciples will be raised from the dead (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54, 11:24).
  - (m) The day of judgement will be one of the last days (John 12:48, James 5:3).
  - (n) The faithful will be given the gift of the Spirit - eternal life (Acts 2:17, cp Joel 2:28).
  - (o) Daniel will receive his reward for faithfulness (Daniel 12:13).
  - (p) The fortunes of Moab and Elam will be restored (Jer 48:47, 49:39).
  - (q) The kingdom will be set up (Isa 2:2, Micah 4:1).
- 3 Only exceptions to the general application of these appearances to events connected with the return of Christ to reign: Heb 1:2, 1 Pet 1:20.
- (a) In Hebrews 1:2 the phrase is not *the* last days, it is *these* last days both in the Greek and in the various translations. It’s also *these* last times in the AV and NIV of 1 Pet 1:20 though the Greek just has, “last of the times”.
  - (b) In each of these two cases the phrase is intended to show that the event revealed in the “last days” or “last time” was the culmination of something that had been long established in God’s purpose and implied that the readers were privileged to witness that culmination. In Hebrews 1:2 the message of the Lord Jesus is put alongside and compared with that which had been spoken by prophets in “time past”. 1 Peter 1:20 is much the same. Jesus had been foreordained before the foundation of the world, but had been very recently manifested for the sakes of Peter’s readers.
  - (c) *These* last days are those in which Jesus spoke (Heb 1:2). In context, the phrase has the sense of “latterly”.
- 4 We have long used phrases such as, “Last Days”; “Latter Days” in a general sense.
- (a) We usually don’t think of the last days as having begun at any particular time. For the most part we apply such phrases, in a vague way, to an indeterminate number of years prior to Christ's return.
  - (b) In the overwhelming majority of cases, scripture uses such phrases of a specific number of literal days; they include the tribulation leading to Christ's return, his actual return, and the events immediately following His return.
  - (c) Strictly, then, "the last days" have not yet begun. When do they begin, how do they end, and what is their duration? (Daniel-like questions)

### The Last Days: Literal, 24-hour Days

- 5 Key prophecy: Daniel 8:9-14.

- (a) Describes the last time that Israel will be invaded by a blasphemous conqueror (vss 10, 11) who, in this case, desecrates a Jewish temple, removes the daily sacrifice because of transgression (vss 12, 13) and suppresses the worship of God (vs 12).
- (b) Note that this is certainly an end-time prophecy, in spite of Antiochus' historic model: Dan 8:17, 19, 23. See, also, Session 3 – Multiple Applications.
- (c) The last days will begin with a simultaneous invasion of Israel, subjugation of God's people **and** desecration of a Jewish temple (Matt. 24:15, 21; Dan. 11:31, 12:1, Joel 1:9, 13, 16, Psalm 79:1ff).
- (d) The whole process, from the placing of the abomination of desolation and suppression of the “host” of Israel (vss 13, 24) until the cleansing of the sanctuary is to take 2300 days (vss 13, 14).
- (e) These days are certainly literal:
  - (i) They refer to a period during which the daily sacrifice is suppressed - Daniel 8:11, 26; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.
  - (ii) The usual Hebrew word for “day” is “yom” (used 2008 times in the OT). Basically it means “day” as opposed to “night” (eg Gen 1:5); or a day of 24 hours (eg Gen 7:17; cp Gen 7:12). Otherwise it has quite a range of special or idiomatic meanings such as an era - as in Zechariah 4:10 – “the day of small things”. So it is impossible to be certain about the exact meaning of “yom” in any given context. On its own, it might even be “a day for a year”. (However, we’ll soon see that it certainly cannot mean that in Daniel.)
  - (iii) All of Daniel’s time prophecies use the word, “day”, “yom” – except for the one time prophecy that *includes all the others* – Daniel 8:14.
  - (iv) The word translated “days” in Dan 8:14 is a contraction of two words meaning, respectively, “evening” and “morning”. The special word is “ereb-boqer”. This is the only place in the Bible where this contraction is found. It refers to 2300 evening-morning periods - or 6 average solar years and 108 days (Dan. 8:9-14).
  - (v) “Ereb” occurs 137 times in all and means “evening”. It’s applied in many parts of the Old Testament in a very straight-forward way. What is of particular note in Daniel 8:14 (which is in a context of an interrupted daily sacrifice - Dan 8:11, 12, 13) is that “ereb” is the word used for “evening” in the law of the continual (daily) offering – Numbers 28:4, 8.
  - (vi) Similarly, “boqer” (occurring 204 times) just means “morning” or “daybreak”. Again, one of its applications is to the morning component of the daily sacrifice – Numbers 28:4, 8.
  - (vii) Thus it becomes absolutely certain that the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 are days of 24 hours, for Daniel has chosen a way of specifying the time unit that leaves no doubt that the period is an interval of 2300 evening-morning (interrupted daily-sacrifice) cycles.

### The Last Days: A Beginning, An End, And Three Major Events Between

- 6 This total period of 2300 "last" (24-hour) days has three intermediate, included intervals, for each of the 1260, 1290, 1335 and 2300 day intervals all begin from the same starting point – the desecration of a Jewish temple and the cutting off of the daily

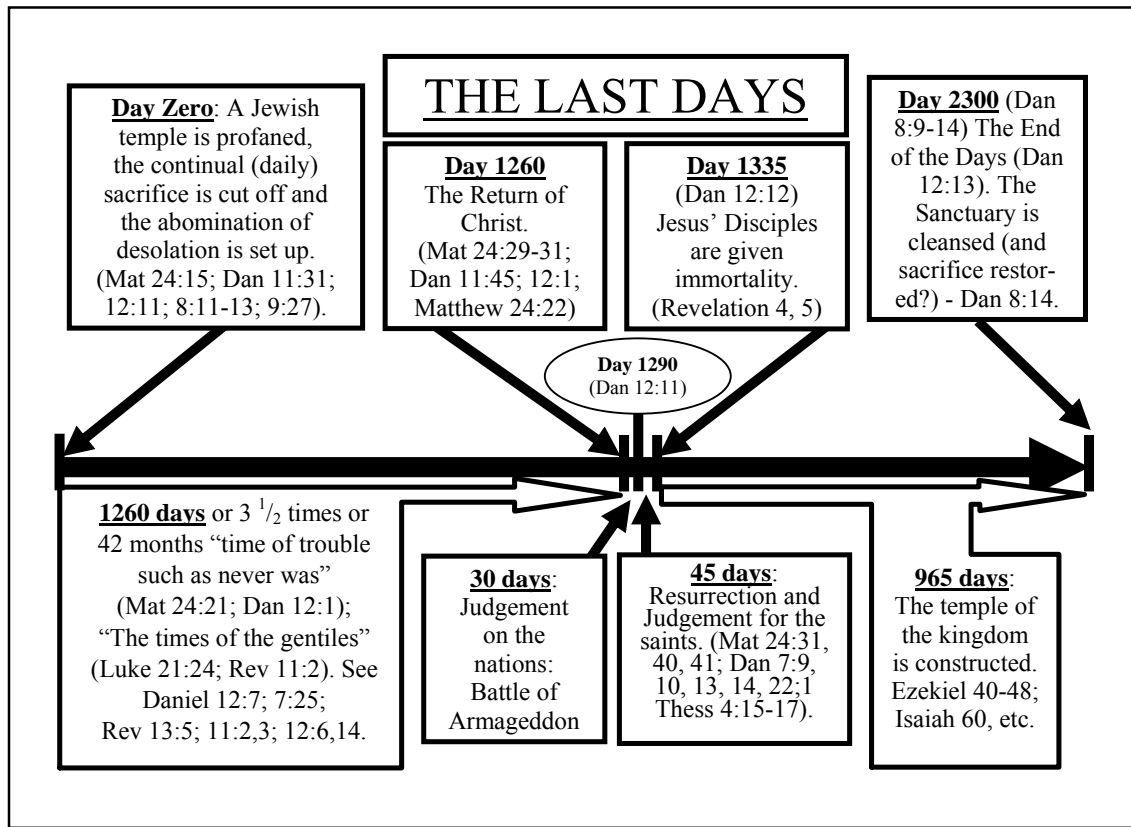


sacrifice. The time-periods form a single series with separate, specific “drop-off” points:

- (a) From the initial temple desecration, placing of the abomination of desolation and cutting off of the daily sacrifice there will be 1260 days "time of trouble such as never was" (Matt. 24:21, Dan. 12:1).
- (b) Christ will return to save the remnant of Israel, for "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:22). He returns "*immediately after* the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29).
- (c) There is an implied 30-day period following the 1260 days. Its purpose is not specified. We may infer that it is to be used by Jesus, commanding the angels who attend His return, to wreak judgement on the invaders of His land. This is the battle of Armageddon and takes the count to 1290 days from the initial invasion and desecration of the temple (Dan. 12:11).
- (d) After Armageddon, the dead are raised, the faithful are gathered and the judgement sits. Immortality is invested on the faithful on day number 1335 (Dan. 12:12). This implies that the judgement of the saints will occupy 45 days.
- (e) No direct statement is given about the activity taking place in the remaining 965 days until the temple of Ezekiel 40 ff is dedicated. Again, we may infer that in this interval the kingdom is established in Israel, the wealth of the Gentiles is gathered (Isaiah 60, etc) and the temple of Ezekiel's prophecy is built.
- (f) The temple is cleansed 2300 days after its immediate predecessor was desecrated. This is the time when, with all others of the faithful, Daniel will be enabled to "stand in (his) lot **at the end of the days**" (Dan. 12:13).

7 Summary: See Chart *The Last Days* (NEXT PAGE)

## The Last Days – Summary Chart



## Appendix 1: Objection to Systematic Prophecy

Several brethren have objected to Systematic Prophecy, or questioned it, because it seems to contradict what Jesus said in such places as Matthew 25:13, 32 -

“Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”

Similar statements are found in Matthew 24:36, 42, 44; Mark 13:32, 33, 35; Luke 12:40; Acts 1:7 (cp Zech 14:7); 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15. There may be others not listed here.

Between them, these passages teach several things:

- (a) We *do not* know when Jesus will return (Matt 24:36, 42; Mark 13:32, 33, 35).
- (b) He will come like a thief – at an unexpected moment (Matt 24:44; Luke 12:40; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15).
- (c) Only the Father knows the time of Jesus’ return (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7; cp Gal 4:2).

What they *don’t* teach is that disciples *cannot* know, beforehand, the time of the Lord’s coming. We’re not entitled to assume that a matter is unknowable just because it happens, for the moment, to be unknown. Consider:

- 1 Jesus' comments to the effect that we know neither the day nor the hour of his coming are all<sup>11</sup> found in the Olivet discourse and apply to the indeterminate period between his first advent and the first of the three great events set out earlier - in the prophetic part of the discourse. (In order, the three great events are: the temple desecration - Matt 24:15; the time of trouble - Matt 24:21; and the actual return of the Lord - Matt 24:29, 30.) There are only four verses specifying these three significant events. The record is terse because the Lord was much more concerned that the disciples be prepared - by having their lives in order - than that they should have their noses glued to a calendar. His words were for all who were living, or would live, in the phase of history during which it is necessary to "watch" for his coming. The message is simple. Since we know neither the day nor the hour of the Lord's return then we must remain focused. But while it's true that we *don't* know when the Lord is coming, it doesn't at all follow that the matter is unknowable.
- 2 Mark 13:32 is one of Jesus' comments: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father." The application of this statement must be limited to the circumstances applying at the time, for it is inconceivable that Jesus still "knows not the day nor the hour". The Lord's "need to know" must have changed when "all power was given him" (for otherwise, all power was not given him). And if we "watch" properly (and I believe this includes striving to understand the prophetic record), our currently limited knowledge will likewise change – when we see the sign that indicates the beginning of the last days.
- 3 Certainly, "the times and seasons" are in the hands of the Father. But just because the matter is *currently* sealed, there's no reason why the Father shouldn't reveal it if He chooses. And this is precisely what He has promised to do: Daniel 12:4, 9 ... "O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even to the time of the end*: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. ... Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed *until the time of the end*." So the seals will be removed at the time of the end (cp Rev 6 – the vision of the 7 seals). See also Daniel 8:6, 17, 19; 10:14; Isa 29:9-18). Habbakuk says (2:3); "... the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Far from teaching that the details of the Lord's coming are unknowable, these passages directly teach that they'll be revealed. But not until "the end" comes. And the beginning of that "end" will be signalled by the desecration of a Jewish temple.
- 4 Remember, too, the well-known comment in Amos 3:7 ("Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets"). In that case, sooner or later, it must be possible to work out the specifics of the prophetic message. In the meantime, the seals have been loosened to the extent that we are now able to understand the structure and duration of the important events in relation to each other. We simply don't know – yet – when the clock will begin ticking off the countdown.
- 5 It seems very evident to me that, having given us the key to unlock the prophetic record (Matthew 24:15-30), the Lord is not likely to immediately, and in the same context, tell

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<sup>11</sup> Luke 12:40 is in an earlier setting than the Olivet discourse. But it's in a passage that is so nearly identical to the corresponding passage in the later discourse (cp Luke 12:39-46 with Matt 24:43-51) that it's highly probable Luke inserted the later, Olivet, version between verses 38 and 47 of Luke 12 – as a parenthesis. No doubt he did this because of the great similarity of the teaching in each context. But having included the passage with the account of the earlier event, Luke then had no need to include it with his version of the Olivet discourse (Luke 21), from which it is missing.

us that the key can never be used. The extended context of the Lord's remarks might be loosely paraphrased as follows: "The time will be long; you must watch - for until the events come to pass that will inexorably culminate in my return, you will have no idea when that return will be. Furthermore you are warned that the great sign of my coming is almost certain to occur at a moment when you don't expect it, and most will dismiss it as irrelevant."

Furthermore, when Jesus says, "be ye also ready: for *in such an hour as ye think not* the Son of man cometh" (Matt 24:44), he's by no means telling us that it's impossible to know the time of his return. Rather, he's probably warning us that lack of understanding of his message will put us at serious risk of being unprepared. And if he comes at a time when we think he *won't* come, this can only mean that we've been looking in the wrong direction, or at the wrong "signs"! In other words, that we will have completely misunderstood the prophetic message. Of course, there are other possible reasons for unpreparedness. For instance, a disciple may be distracted by moral issues in his life, as in the parable: "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of ..." (Matt 24:48-50). Nevertheless, it's clear that we need to be aware of the signs if they are to serve any useful purpose to us.

- 6 In this connection, we must be aware that Jesus ought not to come on his household as a thief. As Paul says, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess 5:4).

Revelation 3:3 seems particularly important: "Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you" (RSV). We can draw a few important inferences from this verse:

- (a) Jesus will only come as a thief to those who "will not awake" (RSV) or "shalt not watch" (AV). This is precisely Paul's point in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6. He urges us to "keep awake" (RSV). Notice that Jesus said that he'll come as a thief to those who "*will not* awake". At first glance we may think this simply means that he'll come as a thief to those who are asleep. But these are not the same things. "*Will not* awake" implies an active and deliberate shutting of the mind to the Lord's message, whilst "are asleep" is mere passive oblivion. Of course, we ought not to just fall asleep – as did the disciples in Gethsemane. But it's interesting that when the cry came that the Lord was coming – in the parable of the virgins – all ten were asleep, foolish *and* wise (Matt 25:5). The point here is that they all awoke, even though only some had made adequate preparation. But woe to the "virgin" who simply rolls over when the sign appears, and "*will not* awake"!
- (b) Likewise, it's those who "*will not* awake" who "will not know at what hour (the Lord) will come upon" them (Rev 3:3, RSV). Sadly, very sadly, it must be recorded that there are brethren who have set their faces against the clear testimony of scripture and are leading others in their wake. We can only pray that the Lord will open the eyes of the brotherhood before the end comes – when it will almost certainly be too late. If we set ourselves to understand, and to be prepared for the Lord's coming, we will know what the temple desecration and tribulation mean. But those who are not prepared - inside the brotherhood and outside of it - will not recognise, understand, or believe in the significance of the sign given by the Lord and the prophets, even if one tries to persuade them about

events that are happening under their very noses. This may seem incredible, but the response of the Jews to the miracles of Jesus – at the very moment they were actually looking for their Messiah! - proves that prejudice and attachment to tradition are stronger than logic and the clear demonstration of the Word of God. I tremble for the brotherhood, and you will understand why.

- (c) But on a more positive note, if we *will* awake then not only will the Lord *not* come on us like a thief but, more importantly, we *will* know at what hour he will come upon us (look again at Revelation 3:3 to see how this inference has been drawn).

7 I think the links that tie the desecration of the temple to the return of the Lord are so strongly forged that one can say, in a sense, that his coming is upon us when the temple is desecrated. I know this is begging the question to some extent. Nevertheless I believe it is an important factor to be taken into account. And it's consistent with such lessons from Olivet as the parable of the foolish virgins for whom there came a moment *before* the Lord's coming at which they could clearly see that his arrival was indeed imminent and that they now had insufficient time to repair their negligence (Matt 25:1-13). What I am suggesting is that we'll be in an analogous situation when we see a Jewish temple being desecrated by an invader of God's holy land. Since the Lord's return is the important end of an inexorable sequence beginning from the desecration of a temple (thus signalling the start of the great tribulation which the Lord ends at his coming), then there's a pretty real sense in which we can say that the Lord has "come" when we see the first phase of this process.

Putting the matter differently: Once we see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place it will no longer be necessary to "watch" for the Lord's return because we'll then be in a position to know precisely when that return will be. Instead, it will be vital that we be not moved by the claims and counter-claims about the presence of Christ in the world. See Matthew 24:23-28 and then note particularly (from the preceding and following verses) that this instruction from the Lord, telling us to pay no attention to the turmoil, relates to the time of the great tribulation. Clearly the turbulence of that time will be such as to distract some who will be deceived by the things happening around them: "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25, 26, speaking of one effect of the great tribulation). Only those who have a good idea of what to expect and, especially, a good idea of the prophetic timetable, will have much chance of coming through this time unscathed. For the rest, it will be too late to purchase oil for the lamps.

So the final tribulation will effectively close the door on further preparation for the return. For those "shut out" by the turbulence of those (3 1/2) times, the Lord will already have "come" – in effect - even though the actual advent will still be future. In short, I think that the *sign* of the return will effectively be part of the "coming". Of this sign, at present, we know neither the day nor the hour; and we won't - until we see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place.

Brethren, let's be sure that we're awake!

## Appendix 2: Daniel's 70 "Week" Prophecy

Under extended consideration. Main points:

- 1 The word for "weeks" is "sevens"; the time period is not given but is most probably a "time" of 360 days.
- 2 No part of the prophecy was more than approximately fulfilled in the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This will be demonstrated by a careful analysis of the chronological possibilities.
- 3 There is no hiatus between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> "seven". Furthermore, the division of the first 69 "sevens" into "seven sevens and sixty-two sevens" will be explained.
- 4 Account will be taken of prophecies showing a near-the-end-time division of Israel into two parts: one religious, the other secular. These two parts are clearly visible in the nation right now.
- 5 It will be shown that the chief feature of the 70<sup>th</sup> "seven" is a covenant to be framed between "the prince that shall come" and the secular part of Israel – a covenant that will be violently set aside by the "prince that shall come", mid-way through the 70<sup>th</sup> "seven". In his fury, "the prince that shall come" will kill the leader of the religious part of the nation ("a prince, an anointed one"), desecrate the Jewish temple, cut off the daily sacrifice and thus allow the Arabs to achieve their dream of pushing Israel into the sea. This is the great tribulation – the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> "seven". The reason for this violent assault will be the disgust of the "prince who shall come" (aka Gog of the land of Magog, the little horn(s), the king of the north, the man of sin, the beast, the king of Assyria, the king of Babylon, etc) at the sabotage that the religious part of Israel will wreak on his, the prince's, plans for the nation. He will therefore set out systematically to destroy the religious life of the nation, reenacting the work of Antiochus Epiphanes – and so on.
- 6 In the desperation of their last extremity, Israel will call on the Lord for salvation, Christ will come, and the rest, as they say, is history.