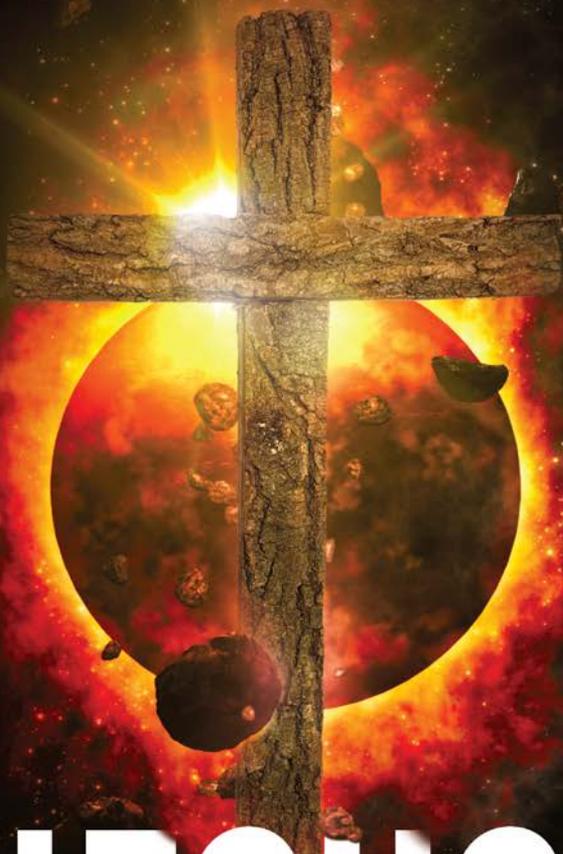


**KEITH GILES**

**FOREWORD BY C. BAXTER KRUGER**



# **JESUS** **UNEXPECTED**

**ENDING THE END TIMES TO BECOME THE SECOND COMING**

PRAISE FOR

## JESUS UNEXPECTED

“One of the most difficult aspects of my own faith journey was the slow (ten years) and painfully arduous work of walking away from the Dispensational, *Left Behind* end-times views in which I was raised. [In *Jesus Unexpected*,] Keith Giles has crafted a deeply helpful and valuable gift that would have saved me years. As you read, question everything, be open and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you.”

— WM. PAUL YOUNG, AUTHOR OF *THE SHACK*

“Keith Giles’ *Jesus Unexpected* is a welcome addition to his helpfully provocative series. As usual, he saturates his arguments with scriptural investigation, this time emphasizing the ways in which Christ has already ‘come again.’

His takedown of Dispensational misapprehensions is medicine for those of us who experienced the agony of *Left Behind* trauma, meeting and refuting that popular, colossal mistake on its own terms. His preterist read of the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation is careful and convincing. But what I most appreciated was that Giles was able to walk us out of our lust for mechanical certitude and into a humble (and ancient)

recognition of the Mystery of Resurrection, rather than repeating the modern hubris of eschatological presumption. Nicely done.”

— BRAD JERSAK, DEAN OF THEOLOGY & CULTURE, ST. STEPHEN'S UNIVERSITY (NB, CANADA), AUTHOR OF *IN: INCARNATION & INCLUSION, ABBA & LAMB*

“Though most evangelicals don't realize it, the Dispensational understanding of 'the end times' that most contemporary evangelicals espouse—including the belief in 'the rapture,' 'the Tribulation,' and the ultimate restoration of Israel—is a very recent theological innovation. Moreover, as Keith demonstrates throughout *Jesus Unexpected*, it's a theological innovation that is rooted in a seriously distorted reading of Scripture and that has harmed a lot of people and that continues to seriously hinder the credibility of the Gospel. Sticking close to Scripture at every point, Keith masterfully exposes the errors of Dispensational Theology while offering readers an alternative preterist interpretation of the New Testament's eschatology that liberates readers from fear and that calls on them to participate in what God is doing *now* to reconcile all things to himself. Anyone who cares what the New Testament says about 'the end times' owes it to themselves to read this insightful work.”

— GREG BOYD, AUTHOR OF *THE MYTH OF A CHRISTIAN NATION*

"What we foresee for the future can energize us or paralyze us. One of the most paralyzing visions of the future is one that has captured modern imagination with addictive fear, and is supported by a secret code in a holy text, understood only by a select few. Dispensationalism is a world view that has kept many

Christians blind to the beauty that is present, keeping them preoccupied with dread about the horror to come. Nothing frees us from this irrational fear as effectively as a clear understanding of how and where these twisted ideas were developed. In *Jesus Unexpected*, Keith Giles not only does that, but also draws our attention to something more captivatingly beautiful—the presence of Christ within us inviting us to participate in an adventure that is already happening."

— ANDRE RABE, AUTHOR, PUBLIC SPEAKER, PHILOSOPHER, AND  
RADICAL THEOLOGIAN

"Jesus-followers who have stayed awake at night fearful of the second coming of Jesus need to read this book by Keith Giles! You'll be astounded with the idea of the 'Apocalyptic Hyperbole' and quickly come to see that there really is nothing to fear after all. In fact, the seeds of Jesus' divine presence live within you. The radical idea that the second coming has already occurred is a tremendous comfort to those who have been afflicted with fear and trembling about the rapture since their early days. I highly recommend this book to Christians who are ready to embrace a new truth about their faith journey so that you can live knowing the surprising reality of the second coming."

— REV. DR. KATY E. VALENTINE, AUTHOR OF *FOR YOU WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: SEX, SLAVERY, AND SELF-CONTROL IN A PAULINE COMMUNITY* AND CO-HOST OF THE HERETIC HAPPY HOUR PODCAST

"All I can say is, wow! [*Jesus Unexpected*] packs quite a punch. The only issue I take is that the author didn't write it in the late 80s or early 90s, when I needed it most. It would have spared me from all the sleepless nights I had as a kid, worried that my

parents would be raptured while I was ‘left behind’. But I can forgive Giles for that because I know there are countless others still trapped in Dispensationalism, and it's better to find freedom late than to never find it at all.”

– MATTHEW J. DISTEFANO, AUTHOR OF *HERETIC!* AND CO-HOST OF THE HERETIC HAPPY HOUR PODCAST

“In *Jesus Unexpected*, Keith unpacks the ideas of rapture theology, kingdom eventualities, and our place in all of it. Questions surrounding the biblical theories have been around for millennium and Keith jumps right in to share his take on the subject matter. As this topic was a source of existential crisis for me as a child, it is with great relief that I read of differing ideas as to the reality of this supposed event. I wanted to find those areas in which Keith had not done enough homework to disavow me of my preconceived ideas, but I was unable to identify an area in which he failed. As such, I found myself deeply interested and impressed with Keith’s obvious attention to detail and his usual care in stating his standpoint.”

– MICHELLE COLLINS, AUTHOR OF *INTO THE GRAY* AND HOST OF THE BOOK-ISH PODCAST

“Luther saw grave things wrong with the Church of his day. He posted his *96 Theses* calling out these atrocities and was branded a heretic and forced to live in exile. Had Keith Giles lived 500 years ago, he would also have been ostracized as a heretic and forced to live in exile. Let us be grateful that Keith is here now and that is not the case. Keith is a courageous modern-day Luther. He systematically takes us through the fallacies of the Church in his writings. In *Jesus Unexpected*, Keith does what he

does best, exposing the modern-day myths about the End Times. He gives us this information in simple language, so that anyone of any age could read it and learn from it. When I read Keith's books, I feel like I am seated in a living room, relaxed, sipping coffee, and having an intelligent conversation with a friend. This friend is not out to prove everyone is wrong and he is right. He only desires for the reader to reconsider what they have been taught and seek truth and greater knowledge. I have needed this book for many years and I devoured every page of it!"

— TODD R. VICK, AUTHOR OF *THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND* AND  
HOST OF THE RECONSTRUCTION REBEL PODCAST

"The subtitle of Keith Giles' new book says it all, *Jesus Unexpected: Ending the End Times to Become the Second Coming*. As is usual in his *Jesus Un* series, Keith keeps his author's eye on the ball—which in this case is a very present, pulsating, and palpable Jesus; a Christ who has already returned here in fullness to indwell all humanity. If true, and I think it largely is, this puts all futurist eschatology out of business. Keith's vibrant message to us is to look both 'within' ourselves and 'between' ourselves to find the unexpected Jesus—a Jesus whose eschatological timetable is always today, here, and now."

— RICHARD MURRAY, AUTHOR OF *GOD VERSUS EVIL: SCULPTING  
AN EPIC THEOLOGY OF GOD'S HEROIC GOODNESS*

"Those of us who were theologically formed in the era of the *Left Behind* series have been far more impacted than we realize by various end times conspiracy theories that many have come to view as Biblical truth. In *Jesus Unexpected*, Keith Giles masterfully dismantles these apocalyptic myths one by one. After

laying waste to limiting false doctrines of the last days, Giles makes a compelling case for a far more hopeful view of the current state of the church and, in fact, the whole world.

Could it be that the climax of history is to be found not in our future but in the past? Could we be living in an era when all prophecies and hopes have already been fulfilled? How should we live in the days after ‘the last days’?

[*Jesus Unexpected* is] Giles’ most scholarly (yet completely approachable) work to date. His appendix on the dating of the book of Revelation is worth the price of the book all by itself.”

– JASON ELAM, HOST OF THE MESSY SPIRITUALITY PODCAST

## OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

- *Jesus Undefeated: Condemning the False Doctrine of Eternal Torment*
- *Jesus Unveiled: Forsaking Church as We Know It for Ekklesia as God Intended*
- *Jesus Unbound: Liberating the Word of God from the Bible*
- *Jesus Untangled: Crucifying Our Politics to Pledge Allegiance to the Lamb*
- *The Power of Weakness: How God Loves to Do Extraordinary Things Through Ordinary People*
- *The Gospel: For Here or to Go?*
- *The Top 10 Things Every Christian Should Know (But Probably Doesn't)*
- *Nobody Follows Jesus (So Why Should You?)*
- *[Subversive Interviews] Volume 1*
- *War Is Not Christian*
- *How To Start A Ministry To The Poor In Your Own Community*

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## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Rafael Polendo, Bram Watkins, Brad Jersak, Wm. Paul Young, Greg Boyd, Richard Murray, Dr. Katy Valentine, Matthew Distefano, Michelle Collins, Todd Vick, David Bentley Hart, Steve Gregg, Ken Gentry, and Greg Bahnsen.

## **DEDICATION**

To my sons, Dylan and David. I pray you never doubt that you are dearly loved more than you could possibly imagine.

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## FOREWORD

*“And though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators.”*

— G. K. CHESTERTON

To be perfectly honest, I have never been interested in studying “the end times” or “the second coming of Christ,” what scholars call “eschatology.” I have read my fair share of the views offered, of course, and listened to hours and hours of discussions, sometimes very heated discussions, about “what the Bible is saying.” But, with few exceptions, the views espoused all made the same catastrophic mistake. They assumed the real absence of Jesus *now*. They assumed that the human race is separated from Jesus Christ. They assumed that his kingdom was out there, over there, or up there and soon to come, maybe. But what if we assumed—with the apostles—that Jesus is really here now, with us, in us and us in him? What would happen to our eschatology if we believed that the Son who is one with his Father, full of the Holy Spirit, the Creator and sustainer of all things, the victorious Lamb, the great High Priest who was dead but now everlastingly alive, is fully and personally present now and forever? Apart from the giant flush we would hear across the eschatological cosmos all the questions would dramatically change. Perhaps

new questions would emerge, with new insights flashing like lightning across our minds, which quickened us with unearthly assurance. And perhaps we would begin to see God, ourselves, our enemies with Jesus' eyes, and feel with his heart.

Is Jesus worried right now that the dragon and the beasts or the great whore of Babylon may after all win the day? Does he bite his fingernails in anxiety as to how things will turn out on planet earth? The apostles declare to the world that Jesus Christ sits face to face with the Father, above all rule and authority in this age and in all ages to come. John portrays Jesus as a little lamb, alive as if slain in the middle of the throne of all thrones. Do you think Jesus is overwhelmed with angst right now? Is his

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soul baptized in fear? Looking into the eyes of His Father, baptized with the unlimited joy of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is aflame with hope. What if this Jesus is with us, in us, and we with and in him? What if Immanuel is not a theory, but an abiding reality? What if we are in him now as he is seated above all rule and authority

in the sea of shalom? That gives a new context to Jesus' command, "abide in Me," does it not? And does it not give a new framework to eschatology, which may not be new at all?

The disaster of bad eschatology is not only what it teaches, but what it keeps us from seeing, from seeing that which is too beautiful for words, the Lamb upon his throne now, and us in him now. Without such a breathtaking vision we end up not full of hope, but forced to pretend, to entertain ourselves with dazzling worship, or doomed to strike a pose where we appear to be relevant. But isn't this simply playing church? Is this not creating a make believe kingdom out of our own resources? Does

such a loss of light do anything to deliver us from fear, or the presumptuous pride that we indeed are “in” and most others are “out.” Without the vision of the Lamb in the midst of the throne of all thrones—and us in him—are we not consigning ourselves to become bored with our own rhetoric, or, as Lewis said, to becoming “half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased” (*The Weight of Glory*, p. 2).

In *Jesus Unexpected: Ending the End Times to Become the Second Coming*, Keith Giles takes a look at the questions of eschatology from the perspective that Jesus is fully and really present now.

“Jesus has returned. He is alive within you. Living and breathing inside your skin. You are His hands. You are His feet. You are what all creation has been rooting for. Not later. Now. Not one day. Today. What is the hope of glory? It is Christ in you!” (p.189).

If this is true, if the gospel of Paul—Christ in you—is true, then how did we get so far off base? How did we so misinterpret John as to transform the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ into such a grotesque monster that most Christians simply avoid in fear?

I for one would love to read answers to these questions. And what about Jesus’ famous Olivet Discourse? And the 70 weeks of Daniel’s prophecy, the Abomination of Desolation, the mark of the beast, the anti-Christ, the day of the Lord, and the so-called “second coming of Jesus?” Thankfully, Giles takes on these questions and topics with uncomplicated simplicity. If we adjust our assumptions, assumptions about Jesus’ presence, things line up beautifully. If not, we plunge ourselves into endless squabble not

only with others but with our own hearts, and we know not the divine peace that comes from seeing ourselves in the little lamb in the center of the throne. Giles takes the road less traveled, at least in these “modern” times, and he helps us see Jesus with us and in us, and us with and in him. This is eschatology at its best.

– **C. Baxter Kruger, Ph.D.**

Author of the international bestsellers *The Shack Revisited*, and *Patmos*.

# INTRODUCTION

*“The information in the book you’re about to read is more up-to-date than tomorrow’s newspaper. I can say this with confidence because the facts and predictions in the next few pages are all taken from the greatest sourcebook of current events in the world.”*

– HAL LINDSEY<sup>1</sup>, *THERE’S A NEW WORLD COMING* (1973)

Daniel sat up in his bed. It was a little after 3 AM on a Tuesday. There was rain pattering against his window. The wind outside was rustling the tree leaves in the front yard. He could hear the clock ticking in the hallway outside his bedroom door. The silence between those spaces was terrifying.

What frightened him most is what he *couldn’t* hear. Were his parents still in the house? What if they had been taken in the night? What if he had been left behind? The fear of being alone in this world, abandoned by God, and his parents, slowly began to swell within his little chest and made his blood run cold.

He knew he wasn’t always a good Christian boy. Sometimes he told dirty jokes to his friends at school to make them laugh. Other times he had used bad words to impress his classmates. He once stole a *Playboy* magazine from underneath his uncle’s bed when they were visiting one Thanksgiving weekend and nearly got caught trying to hide it from his mother. *What if Jesus*

*came back last night? What if his parents were raptured and his sins weren't covered in the blood of Christ? How would he survive the Tribulation? What horrors would he have to face without the comfort and protection of his parents?*

Daniel had seen those movies about the End Times at an all-night youth lock-in a few years ago. He remembered the scenes where 100-pound hailstones fell out of the sky and crushed people to death. He remembered these fearsome creatures that crawled out of the Abyss to torment people day and night. The soldiers who came to round up the ones who wouldn't bow down to the Anti-Christ would probably find him eventually, he thought.

But, maybe everything was ok? Maybe he was just being paranoid? Daniel took a deep breath and found enough courage to slip out of bed, one foot at a time. He slowly inched his way out of his bedroom and into the hallway where he stopped and stood very still. The only sounds were of the clock, the rain on the window, and the pounding of his own heart inside his chest.

After a moment, he crept down the hallway towards his parent's bedroom. His bare feet were silent on the carpeted floor. With every step he paused to listen for a sign but heard nothing.

Finally, Daniel was right up to his parent's bedroom door. He leaned forward and placed his ear against it. At first, he heard nothing, but then, at last, he heard his father snoring softly. One of them—he couldn't tell if it was his mom or his dad—shifted their weight and the bed gently creaked. That sound was like music to his ears. His heart flooded with relief. The tension and fear in his body began to subside. He took another breath to savor the comfort of knowing he wasn't alone in the house, and slowly turned to walk back to the comfort of his bed.

Scenes like this one played out in Daniel's house several times a month. Constantly unsure of his standing with God, he would

often awoken in the middle of the night, listen for signs of his parents sleeping, become flooded with fearful images of an End Times nightmare, and have to venture out of bed to reassure himself that the Rapture hadn't taken his parents away in the night.

But Daniel isn't the only young person who has lived with this constant fear of being left behind. Thousands of other children have also struggled with these fears. I was one of them. Maybe you were too?

The fact is these same fears have paralyzed both young and old alike for over a hundred years now. Especially in America where the Dispensational doctrine of the End Times Rapture has taken a strong hold over the hearts and minds of Evangelical Christians.

But it hasn't always been this way. Many Christians have no idea that this last days scenario of a coming Anti-Christ who forces everyone to take the Mark of the Beast and rebuilds the Temple in Jerusalem so he can declare himself God and persecutes Christians until Jesus returns

to rescue them in a battle so fierce that the blood rises to the bridles of the war horses in the valley of Armageddon is something no Christian ever believed until roughly 1830.

That's why I'm writing this book: to explain where we got these ideas from, why they're not anything we need to lose sleep over, and how this teaching actually distracts us from following God's plan for His Church in these last days.

To accomplish this, I'll be breaking things down into sections. First, we will look at where these ideas about the End

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Times originate from and how they became synonymous with American Christianity over the last 180 years. Next, we will examine each of the major prophecies found in both the Old and the New Testament scriptures to determine what they're actually pointing to, whether they have been fulfilled or not, and if so, how, and if not, what remains unfulfilled today. Finally, once we've cleared away all the confusion and hype, we'll take a look at what the Bible really *does* tell us about the Second Coming of Christ, the New Jerusalem, the End Times temple, and the future of mankind according to the prophecy of Jesus and the revelation of the New Testament.

This will not be an easy topic for us to explore. There are numerous concepts we'll need to examine from various angles. Some of our preconceptions about what the Scriptures have to say about the Second Coming of Christ and the End Times will need to be scrutinized and re-considered critically. Our fears about the Apocalypse may be challenged. Our hopes for a future Millennial Reign may be shattered. Our assumptions about what the Bible says will happen at the end of time may be radically shifted by the time we're through. I hope you're up for this.

## CHAPTER 1

# THE ORIGIN OF THE END TIMES HYPE

*“I imagine the later Gentile [Church] Fathers were at a disadvantage in understanding Hebrew idioms. This probably adversely affected their grasp of some prophecies, just as the same deficiency has afflicted modern interpreters. However, modern scholarship has shed a lot of light on these matters, and we are in a pretty good position to exegete the passages.”*

— STEVE GREGG<sup>1</sup>

We all sat around on the floor in my friend’s living room. Everyone had a Bible open in their lap. Our teacher, only a few years older than the rest of us, sat cross-legged on the carpet. He was wearing a black Harley-Davidson t-shirt and brown cut-off shorts. His feet were bare. A scruff of beard stubble graced his chin. In one hand he held a copy of a brand-new book about the End Times. I could read the title in giant red bold print across the front, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be In 1988* by Edgar C. Whisenant.

Over the next hour and a half, our teacher breathlessly expounded on each of those 88 reasons and hammered each of them home with a pointed finger that pierced the air between us. Everyone in the room was riveted by what we were hearing.

How could we not be enthralled? Jesus was returning in just a few more months! The very idea was electrifying and sobering all at once. Many of us were trying to wrap our brains around the fact that we would never get married, have children, grow old, or live our lives the way we had hoped.

To be honest, most of us left that meeting feeling fearful and sad rather than encouraged or hopeful. Our lives were over before they had really begun. At least, they were if this prophecy was true.

But, of course, it wasn't true. 1988 came and went and Jesus did not part the sky and come riding down from heaven on a white stallion with a sword in his mouth as we had been told. This was yet another failed prophecy in a very, very long line of failed prophecies about the Second Coming of Christ that had made a mockery of the scriptures and fools of everyone who had taken them seriously.

In 1989 the very same author we had studied published a follow-up book with the un-ironic title: *89 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be In 1989*. As you might suspect, this new edition didn't sell nearly as well, even though it produced exactly the same results:

**IN FACT, THIS BRAND OF  
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IT RIGHT. ALL OF THEM.  
EVERY SINGLE TIME.**

total and complete failure to understand what the Bible had to say about the End Times, the Second Coming of Christ and the End of the World.

In fact, this brand of teaching has one thing in common, regardless of who the author or teacher happens to be: They all fail to get it right. All of them. Every single time. And yet, in spite of this unbroken series of failures, there has been no end to the books, conferences or teaching on this topic over the last hundred years or so. As we begin to examine *Failed End Times Biblical Prophecies* throughout history, we'll see a very disturbing pattern beginning to emerge:<sup>2</sup>

## THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT: OCTOBER 22, 1844

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, William Miller began preaching that the Rapture was going to take place on October 22, 1844. An estimated 100,000 Americans gathered around the country on this date in anticipation of Christ's return and this failed prophecy became widely known as "The Great Disappointment." Miller died five years later having renounced his Biblical Prophecy studies, but people continued to meet together in spite of the obvious failure of his teachings and one of those religious groups became known as the Seventh Day Adventist denomination.

## THE WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY: 1925

In 1918, Jehovah's Witnesses president, J.F. Rutherford predicted the return of Jesus and the end of the world would come in 1925, saying,

"...We may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old, particularly those named by the Apostle in Hebrews 11, to the condition of human perfection."

This failed prophecy did little to hinder the growth or popularity of the movement which continued to set dates for the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world for several years afterwards.

## HAROLD CAMPING: 1994 AND 2011

As the President of Family Radio, Harold Camping said that he was "99.9% certain" that Jesus was returning in 1994. This prophecy was based on a very random and convoluted series of mathematical calculations using various numbers found in the

Bible. When this first prophecy about 1994 didn't come to pass, Camping repeated his error by predicting the return of Jesus on May 21, 2011. When this also failed to occur, Camping responded by saying,

“We must listen to Jesus when he says that we must always be prepared for the end because it might happen at any moment—though it could also take place in the distant future.”

## DAVID MEADE: OCTOBER 15, 2017 AND APRIL 23, 2018

David Meade, a self-professed Christian Numerologist, made several predictions for the return of Christ and the end of the world using astronomy, Bible verses and creative exegesis. First, he predicted that the end would come on October 15, 2017 saying,

When the birth of Jupiter from Virgo occurs, we also see the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 12:4 when great and fearful signs in the heavens are given... This birthing occurs according to the latest astronomical data available on October 15, 2017. This is when the King Planet—Jupiter, crosses the womb region of Virgo.”

When this prediction failed, Meade went on to claim that April 23 of 2018 was the date of the end, and then backpedaled from that a few days later saying that the end was still “*coming soon*.”<sup>3</sup>

These are only a handful of failed End Times prophecies over the last hundred years. The sad truth is that there are so many examples of these false prophecies about the end times and the return of Christ that one could quite easily write an entire book about this topic alone.

These sorts of predictions pop up with such regularity that we've become indifferent to them. We roll our eyes, marvel that so many people seem to fall for it and shake our heads in disgust

when those dates come and go. But perhaps we have had seasons in our life when we *did* believe it. We listened to those preachers and we absorbed their theories with absolute confidence. Maybe we became so obsessed with these predictions that we even did something radical like quit our jobs, sell our houses, or move to the mountains to await the End of the World.

Even if we didn't do such drastic things, there are hundreds of Christians who have taken such life-altering steps in anticipation of the Second Coming. When the dates came and went, they were left feeling disillusioned and ripped off. Many lost their faith in God entirely and walked away from anything having to do with Christ or Christianity.

The destructive nature of these endless failed prophecies is difficult to measure, but real nonetheless. Yet, none of this seems to prevent the next person from writing their book about the signs of the Second Coming. Nor does it seem to negatively impact the popularity of such practices.

Apparently, one can be quite successful writing books and setting dates that continually fail to produce any accurate results when it comes to predicting the future or connecting Biblical prophecies to current events. Just ask people like John Hagee, Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, and dozens more who continually publish books about Biblical Prophecy that eventually end up in the sale bins after the dates they have predicted fail to materialize; books that are merely replaced by a new title a few years later, promising even greater revelation about the return of Christ than ever before.

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Why is this? Why don't people wise up and stop handing over their money to these failed prophets of the End Times? Maybe it's because our appetite for knowing the future is greater than our capacity to think critically or use common sense. At any rate, many Christians seem to be addicted to knowing exactly how close we are to the second coming of Jesus and are totally convinced that we are living in the last days.

But how did we become so easily convinced? Has it always been this way? No, it hasn't. In fact, this end times hype and futurist vision of Biblical prophecy is relatively new.

Most Christians are unaware that for the majority of Church history, most Christians did not believe that there were specific events in the Middle East that needed to take place before Christ would physically return to rapture his followers and judge the world. This teaching only became popularized in 1830—the same year that Joseph Smith introduced Mormonism—and was promoted by a man named John Nelson Darby in England as Dispensational Theology.

So, what is Dispensational Theology? Where did Darby's ideas come from? What specific concepts were introduced into Christianity as the result of his new ideas? And how did those ideas so quickly become incorporated into American Christianity and eventually come to be accepted as normal Christian Theology? Let's examine those questions and look a bit closer at Dispensationalism and how it has come to shape our modern ideas about the End Times, the return of Christ and the End of the World.

## CHAPTER 2

# DARBY AND THE DISPENSATIONAL FUTURISTS

*“The decade of the 80’s may be the last generation of our era.”*

— HAL LINDSEY<sup>1</sup>

As we have already mentioned, Dispensationalism was formulated by a man named John Nelson Darby in 1829.

John Nelson Darby was born in Westminster, London, March 3, 1801. He was the youngest of six sons and was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Dublin. While he embraced Christianity during his studies, there is no evidence that he formally studied theology, although he was tutored by the future Bishop of Meath and evangelical pastor named Joseph Singer while he was at Trinity College.

In 1826, he was ordained in the Church of Ireland as a priest, although he resigned in protest when converts were required to pledge an oath to King George IV. Soon afterwards, in October 1827, Darby fell from his horse and was seriously injured. According to Darby, it was during this time that he began to believe that the kingdom described in the Book of Isaiah and elsewhere in the Old Testament was entirely different from the

Christian church. This teaching about the separation between Israel and the Church is one of the earmarks of what would eventually become Dispensationalism. We'll explore this in detail later.

Over the next five years, Darby developed the principles of his Dispensational theology and began meeting with others who shared his particular views. By 1832, this group had grown and began to identify itself as a distinct Christian assembly, founding other groups across Ireland and England. This eventually became known as the Plymouth Brethren.

Darby left the Church of Ireland in 1831 and began to participate in an annual Bible Conference organized by his friend, Lady Powerscourt, a wealthy widow. At these conferences Darby began to publicly describe his unique eschatological views which included teachings about the pretribulation rapture. Because of this, Darby has been credited with originating the pretribulation rapture theory which teaches that Christ will suddenly appear and remove the Church from the earth into heaven immediately before the end times judgments of sinners known as the Tribulation. This teaching, which underpins Christian Zionism, assumes that God's prophetic plan involves the ethnic Jewish nation of Israel and presupposes that there are unfulfilled prophecies concerning the Jewish people that must take place in the future, prior to the second coming of Jesus.

According to Dispensational Theology, "...while the ways of God may change, His purposes to bless Israel will never be forgotten, just as He has shown unmerited favour to the Church, He will do so to a remnant of Israel to fulfill all the promises made to the genetic seed of Abraham." <sup>2</sup>

But whereas Darby may have formulated these views and packaged them as "Dispensationalism," he wasn't exactly the originator. Instead, it turns out that much of it was inspired by

the fever dream of a dying woman named Margaret McDonald in Scotland.<sup>3</sup>

A decade prior to Darby's formal invention of Dispensationalism, there was a Presbyterian minister from London in 1820 named Edward Irving who essentially gave rise to modern-day Pentecostalism. Two years prior to being kicked out of the Presbyterian denomination, Irving was preaching and promoting the practice of spiritual gifts at a revival in Scotland. During one of those services, a woman named Margaret McDonald, who was deathly ill, came under the power of the Holy Spirit and gave them a "mingled prophecy and vision" about how the End Times were soon going to unfold.<sup>4</sup>

**LATER, AS DARBY BEGAN PREACHING THIS NEWLY-FORMED DOOMSDAY THEOLOGY, THERE WAS ONE NOTABLE YOUNG PERSON IN HIS CONGREGATION WHO WAS GREATLY IMPACTED BY THIS TEACHING. HIS NAME WAS ALEISTER CROWLEY.**

According to Margaret's prophetic word, the return of Jesus would be in two stages—not one. The first would be a secret rapture for true believers, and then after a period of great tribulation, Jesus would return a second time for all to see.

There is evidence that Darby heard of this and, although not in favor of the spiritual gifts aspect of this movement, he actually visited Margaret McDonald's home to hear firsthand about this brand new prophecy of the end of the world.<sup>5</sup>

After listening to her story, Darby was able to formulate a version of this revelation that made all of Margaret's new ideas seemingly fit together scripturally.

## THE CROWLEY-DARBY CONNECTION

Later, as Darby began preaching this newly-formed doomsday theology, there was one notable young person in his congregation

who was greatly impacted by this teaching. His name was Aleister Crowley.

In case you're not aware, Crowley is a very famous occultist and is considered by many to be "one of the *wickedest men in the world*."

According to a pro-Crowley website, Darby's theology had a negative effect on the young boy. Here's a bit of detail taken from a pro-Crowley website that sheds some light on this Darby-Crowley connection:

"When other children attended the Presbyterian church to listen and fantasize about angels with halos, or Moses parting the Red Sea destroying the armies of Egypt, Crowley sat there transfixed listening to Darby... tell the faithful attendees of the rewards of heaven and the magical rapture. Of the evil and terrible day when those that did not put their trust in Jesus were left behind. Left behind to suffer in the hands of the Antichrist and the Beast; beheading or torture their only way to salvation.

As a boy, Crowley was given a dose of the message that millions of evangelical Christians would listen to in the future. During Crowley's childhood, The Rapture was not widespread. The End-Time scenario, Rapture, Antichrist and his horrible tribulation, and the gnashing of teeth was not your run of the mill evangelical doctrine but something exclusive to a handful of churches, one which little Aleister Crowley happened to attend.

Crowley rebelled against this absurd doomsday scenario. He was one of the first to do so. He rebelled in an age where this doomsday scenario was not a widespread phenomenon like it is today. I can only imagine what being part of a doomsday cult was like during his boyhood.

The thing is... we know how Crowley turned out after listening to Darby's interpretation of the fate of mankind in his early years. Now that the great majority of Protestants believe in the Rapture myth and every doomsday death wish that this entitles them to, I wonder... how many Crowley's is the modern

Protestant movement—basically millions of clones of Darby’s church—creating? Time will tell. I think Crowley was just the first fruit.”<sup>6</sup>

So, thanks to John Nelson Darby, we not only inherited an end times theology that regularly spawns date-setting “end of the world” predictions—which always fail, of course—and an entire cottage industry for those who claim to know the identity of the anti-Christ, or how some future events will bring us tantalizingly closer to the return of Christ, we also have Darby to thank for the twisted ideas of someone like Aleister Crowley.

Who knows how many others like him—who heard a version of the Gospel that was built on fear and conjecture, and that chases signs of the end of the world—are turned away from the true message of Christ?

## DISPENSATIONALISM IN AMERICA

At any rate, after Darby’s teaching began to find a home in Ireland and England, he travelled extensively to establish assemblies across Europe between 1830 and 1840. Eventually, Darby made his way to America between 1862 and 1877 and worked primarily in New England and the Great Lakes area of the United States, establishing assemblies and followers along the way.

Darby’s eschatology and views about Israel and the End Times were widely popularized in America by

Cyrus Scofield’s *Scofield Reference Bible* published by Oxford University Press in 1909, a few years before World War I.

**DARBY’S ESCHATOLOGY AND VIEWS ABOUT ISRAEL AND THE END TIMES WERE WIDELY POPULARIZED IN AMERICA BY CYRUS SCOFIELD’S *SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE* PUBLISHED BY OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS IN 1909, A FEW YEARS BEFORE WORLD WAR I.**

In fact, it was the inclusion of Darby's ideas in this Bible which seems to have single-handedly seared the American Christian conscience with the doctrine of Dispensationalism.

As some historians have put it, "Historically speaking, the *Scofield Reference Bible* was to dispensationalism what Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* was to Lutheranism, or what Calvin's *Institutes* was to Calvinism."<sup>7</sup>

## EARLY CRITICS

While many eventually embraced Darby's ideas in America, there were several notable Christian teachers who did not. Most famously, noted pastor and author Charles H. Spurgeon was one of Darby's most passionate detractors. Spurgeon's greatest concern was for how Darby's new theology "rejected the vicarious purpose of Christ's obedience as well as imputed righteousness."<sup>8</sup> Spurgeon viewed these doctrines as being of such importance and so central to the Gospel that it led him to publish a much longer statement about the entirety of Darby's theology in which he accused him of "laboring to seduce the members of our churches to the subversion of the truth and the overthrow of the needful order and discipline of our Zion," and referred to the teaching as "among the darkest signs of the times."<sup>9</sup>

And James Grant, whose detailed rebuttal of Darby's theology was published by Spurgeon's own *Sword and Trowel* periodical in 1860 said in his summary of Dispensationalism:

"With the deadly heresies entertained and taught by the Plymouth Brethren [Darbyites], in relation to some of the most momentous of all the doctrines of the Gospel, and to which I have adverted at some length, I feel assured that my readers will not be surprised at any other views, however unscriptural and pernicious they may be, which the Darbyites have embraced and zealously seek to propagate."

However, in spite of such notable opponents to Darby's Dispensationalism at the time, the concepts introduced by Darby were eventually embraced on a much wider scale, especially due to the popularity of the *Scofield Reference Bible* and the notes containing Darby's theology contained in the margins.

As these concepts continued to permeate through the American Christian Church, there were several Christian Seminaries and Bible Colleges that openly embraced and promoted Darby's views. This led to several hundred thousand pastors (and counting) being indoctrinated into Dispensational teachings concerning the End Times and Pretribulation Rapture Theory.

Because of this, Dispensationalism's grip on the American Christian Church has become so pervasive that many average Christians totally embrace the theology without ever knowing who Darby was or that much of their theology originated in the 1830's.

## SPECIFIC CONCEPTS

While Darby's entire theology is indeed complicated and convoluted at times, what we are most specifically concerned with in this book involves two main concepts that drive our modern-day preoccupation with the Second Coming of Christ. So, we're not going to spend any time explaining any of the other nuances of Dispensationalism which looks at Scripture through various lenses and divides events into dispensations, or any of the other theological particulars of this view. Our focus here will be narrowly confined to teachings that have influenced modern Christian ideas about the End Times.

The two teachings of Dispensationalism we want to take time to explore here are: *The Identity of Israel* (according to the New

Testament), and the *End Times Narrative* (according to a specific reading of certain prophetic passages in both the Old and the New Testament scriptures).

These are the primary concepts introduced and popularized by Darby in 1830 that have come to shape Christian Eschatology in the American Church today. So, let's take a look at each one in turn and try to understand why they're significant, and how exactly they have shaped the way we understand scriptures in our Bibles that speak about the End Times.

## CHAPTER 3

# ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

*“Assemblies that worship God in spirit and in truth, are the Israel of God”*

– MATTHEW HENRY

## WHO IS ISRAEL?

Before we get too deep into this topic, I do need to say a few things up front. First of all, there are numerous examples throughout church history of Christians persecuting Jewish people in horrific ways. Many of those who did so justified such violence by pointing to New Testament passages that say the Jews were the ones who killed Jesus, or by referencing scriptures that speak of God’s judgement being poured out on the Jewish people for rejecting the Gospel. This is unacceptable. No one who follows Jesus should ever oppress or violently attack anyone at any time, for any reason.

Second of all, we must understand that as we look at the passages that draw a distinction between Jews and Christians, or between Israel and the Church, we are not falling into agreement or alignment with any of those who seek to exercise their hatred against the Jewish people.

Simply put, Christians love Jewish people and I love the Jewish people. I do not approve of anyone who wants to attack, oppress or disparage the Jewish faith, or Jewish people, in any way, shape or form. So, please do not take what we are about to explore as an attack on Jewish people. In fact, please try to keep in mind that Jesus was Jewish, and that the Apostle Paul

**SO, PLEASE DO NOT TAKE WHAT WE ARE ABOUT TO EXPLORE AS AN ATTACK ON JEWISH PEOPLE. IN FACT, PLEASE TRY TO KEEP IN MIND THAT JESUS WAS JEWISH, AND THAT THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS JEWISH, AND SO WERE THE TWELVE DISCIPLES, AND THE MAJORITY OF THE ORIGINAL CHRISTIANS ALL THROUGHOUT THE EARLIEST DAYS OF CHRISTIANITY.**

was Jewish, and so were the Twelve Disciples, and the majority of the original Christians all throughout the earliest days of Christianity. Therefore, whenever we read something that Jesus or Paul or one of the other Apostles says about Israel or about the Jewish people, we are listening to an in-house conversation where members of one family talk about others within their own ethnic and religious family. They are not attempting to create walls of

division between people as much as they are attempting to make sense of God's prophetic fulfillment of promises made to the nation of Israel long ago. This is where we should do our best to try to see things purely from a prophetic perspective and not from a personal one.

Having said this, the identity of Israel is an especially significant question we need to explore if we hope to understand prophetic scriptures in both the Old and the New Testament. Paul thought so, too. This is why he spent a lot of time in the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans explaining this concept in great detail.

Here's why it matters who Israel is: Because God made some specific promises to Israel, and until we know to whom those

promises were made, we can't know whether or not those promises were fulfilled. For example, if Israel refers to ethnic Jews, then we'll need to determine whether the promises were fulfilled for them. But, if Israel is defined using some other criteria, we need to know what that might be and then we can see if those promises were fulfilled for those who meet those conditions.

For John Nelson Darby, Israel is defined very simply as anyone who was born into an ethnically Jewish family. In other words, any Jewish person is automatically included in the group known as Israel. The two are synonymous. So, taking that as the starting point, any promise made to Israel in the Old Testament is only truly fulfilled if we can see that it was something experienced by the Jewish people at some point in history. If not, then according to Darby and to those who embrace Dispensational Theology, the promise is not yet fulfilled.

However, if Israel is defined for us in another way, then perhaps we might want to consider how this is applied when it comes to the promises and prophecies about Israel in the Old Testament.

Fair enough? Ok, here's where we need to pay attention to how the Apostle Paul defines "Israel" in his epistles, and then look at how he applies those promises and prophecies to those who fit his specific definition.

To start things off, Paul actually begins by defining who Israel is *not*. As we read in Romans 2:28

"For he is not a Jew [Israel] who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that of the flesh."

Here we see that being considered a Jew requires more than outward appearance, or even privately in terms of being circumcised. As notable scholar A.W. Pink says:

“What could be plainer than that? In the light of such a Scripture, is it not passing strange that there are today those-boasting loudly of their orthodoxy and bitterly condemning all who differ—who insist that the name ‘Jew’ belongs only to the natural descendants of Jacob...?”<sup>1</sup>

Again, what is in view here is merely prophetic fulfillment. Obviously, anyone who is naturally born into the Jewish ethnicity is a Jew. That’s not what Paul means to suggest here. Keeping in mind that Paul was a Jew himself, we need to take a step

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back and understand that the goal here is to understand *to whom* those Old Testament promises applied to? Paul wants us to understand that they were made not merely to those who were outwardly Jewish, but that God had something much more specific in mind.

To further clarify his point, Paul went on to explain in Romans 9:6-8 who was, and was not, Israel:

“For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants... That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.”

As Dr. Charles Hodge says in his commentary on this passage:

“...the promise was not addressed to the mere natural descendants of Abraham. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel, i.e. all the natural descendants of the patriarch are not the true people of God... All descendants from the patriarch Jacob called Israel, are not the true people of God; [in the same way] all who are in the visible church [who are members of a local congregation] do not belong to the true invisible church.”<sup>2</sup>

So, the identity of “Israel” is not defined by one’s ethnicity or race. This seems to be an important point that the Apostle Paul wants us to understand before moving on to explain who Israel actually refers to in terms of these prophetic promises.

One Biblical scholar, Gregory Bahnsen, wrote about this distinction made by Paul in Romans and admitted it was challenging for some to grasp, but also pointed out that Jesus made a similar distinction:

“This may be the hardest section for some to swallow. [But] Jesus stated something vitally important to the Jews of his day in their dialogue with Him found in the eighth chapter of John, verses 33-44.

“Starting at verse 33, the Jews declared they were the seed of Abraham. Jesus responded by saying that He knew they were the (natural) seed of Abraham and then stated, ‘but ye seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you’. He then adds why His word has no place with them, ‘I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and you do that which ye have seen with your father’. Then, again, the Jews declared, ‘Abraham is our father’. Jesus rebuked their false view of what it means to be a child of Abraham by stating, ‘*If* ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham’, and proceeds to state that Abraham would not seek to kill Him. In fact, he stated that Abraham rejoiced to see His [Christ’s] day (John 8:56). Jesus explained “*if*” you were the children of Abraham, you would rejoice to see my day, henceforth, since you do not rejoice to see my day, you are *not* the Children of Abraham.”<sup>3</sup>

So, both Paul and Jesus make a distinction between those who are merely born into the lineage of Abraham, and those who are spiritually Abraham’s children based on what was in their heart.

Therefore, one could be born into a Jewish family and still fail to meet the criteria for “A Child of Abraham” in God’s eyes. And one could be born into a Gentile family and still qualify

as “A Child of Abraham,” based on one’s heart. What makes the difference is the heart and the spirit of that person. In other words, “man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.”<sup>4</sup>

This means it’s not the physical DNA of a person that matters, but the spiritual identity of a person who has been transformed by the love of Christ.

## WHO IS TRUE ISRAEL?

Paul defines Israel for us in Romans 2:29:

“But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but God.”

Jewish males defined themselves, in large part, by the physical act of circumcision which was a sign for them. Here, Paul makes the distinction between physical circumcision, performed in the flesh, and a circumcision of the heart that is performed by the Holy Spirit on a spiritual level. Therefore, a Jew (meaning the person to whom those promises may apply) is defined inwardly, not outwardly; spiritually, not physically.

Other Biblical commentators and scholars affirm this distinction, including Matthew Henry who said: “Assemblies that worship God in spirit and in truth, are the Israel of God,”<sup>5</sup> and Matthew Poole who affirmed that “...he is a right and true Jew, an Israelite indeed...that worships God in Spirit, rejoices in Christ Jesus...Such are the [true] circumcision and Jew.”<sup>6</sup>

The Apostle Paul further argued his point in the epistle to the Galatians, one of his earliest letters, and quite possibly the first one he wrote after his conversion to the Christian faith. In this letter he explicitly refers to the original promise made to

Abraham by God in Genesis 15:5-6 and applies it to anyone who is in Christ.

“Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ so, you see, *those who believe are the descendants of Abraham.*” (Gal. 3:6-7) [emphasis mine]

“*Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his seed;* it does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many; but it says, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, to one person, *who is Christ.*” (Gal. 3:16) [emphasis mine]

“*As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. *And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” (Gal. 3:27-29) [emphasis mine]

Hopefully you can follow Paul’s train of thought here. He begins by quoting from the original promise made to Abraham by God in Genesis 15:5-6, (mentioned in Gal. 3:6), and then says that those who believe or have faith in Christ “are the descendants of Abraham.” This is a pretty radical statement. But, he’s not finished yet.

In Galatians 3:16 he goes on to say that “the promises were made to Abraham and his seed”, which up until now most assumed only meant those who were ethnically Jewish. But Paul corrects this by pointing out that the promise was not made to a plural “seeds” but to a singular “seed” and this is none other than Christ.

Finally, Paul wraps up his argument by saying that anyone “baptized into Christ” has “clothed [themselves] with Christ”, and then drops the final bomb by asserting that “...if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” This is a mic drop moment that we cannot afford

to miss. Here, as in the epistle to the Romans, Paul develops his idea that those promises made to Abraham were *not* made to the Jews as a race or a people. Rather, those promises were made to Christ, and anyone who is in Christ qualifies as an heir who also shares in those same promises.

So, going back to what Paul said in Romans 9:6–8, we see that:

“...they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants... That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.”

The significance for Christians here is phenomenal. It means that because Christ is the fulfillment of those promises made to

**HERE, AS IN THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, PAUL DEVELOPS HIS IDEA THAT THOSE PROMISES MADE TO ABRAHAM WERE *NOT* MADE TO THE JEWS AS A RACE OR A PEOPLE. RATHER, THOSE PROMISES WERE MADE TO CHRIST, AND ANYONE WHO IS IN CHRIST QUALIFIES AS AN HEIR WHO ALSO SHARES IN THOSE SAME PROMISES.**

Abraham, we are now considered the children of God, and the children of Abraham, and therefore the children of the promises made to Israel. Or, to put it another way, anyone who is in Christ is considered Israel.

As we said earlier, it really does matter how we define Israel. If we really hope to understand what’s going on in the New Testament in terms of fulfillment of promises and Biblical prophecy, we really need to

be clear on this one thing: Israel does not refer to the average Jewish individual. It refers specifically and uniquely to anyone who is in Christ.

What John Nelson Darby did, after his fall from the horse all those years ago, was to forget (or overlook) everything Paul said about the identity of Israel and the definition of a Jew, in the spiritual sense. By reverting things back to a pre-Christian

definition of Israel and Jew, Darby started to believe that there were dozens of promises made to the Jews and the nation of Israel that were never fulfilled. This, he assumed, must mean that there are still unfulfilled prophecies about the Jewish people and the nation of Israel that must still need to come to pass before the Second Coming of Christ can take place.

As tragic as this misunderstanding may be in terms of understanding Biblical prophecy and End Times theology, it is even more disturbing to consider the implications that follow such reasoning. Why? Because the bulk of Christian theology developed by the Apostles throughout the New Testament is based on how Christ is the fulfillment of all of those Old Testament promises made to Israel. So, if we now take a step backwards and deny this has happened, we are essentially replacing Christ with an ethnic people group that ultimately rejects Jesus as their Messiah and denies the resurrection.

Ironically, one of the names used by Dispensationalists to describe non-Dispensational theology is “Replacement Theology”, because they say we are replacing Israel with the Church. However, an even greater tragedy occurs whenever someone dares to replace Christ and all that he has done with anything or anyone else.

Again, it’s not that the Church has “replaced” Israel at all. Rather, as the Apostle Paul and Jesus both affirm, Israel is and always has been defined as those who are inwardly born of God. So, the promises made to Abraham were always intended to refer to Christ, and now that Christ has come and fulfilled those promises, we who are in Christ are now also identified with him, and with the essence of what it means to be Israel. So, if anything, one might call this “Fulfillment Theology” since it hinges on the fact that Jesus has fulfilled those promises and now everyone who is in Christ has become the Israel of God.

## FURTHER STUDY

One of the pillars of Dispensationalism is the idea that Israel and the Church are two separate and distinct groups of people. But, is that what the New Testament affirms? Let's take a look.

According to Charles C. Ryrie, "A dispensationalist keeps Israel and the church distinct", adding "...this is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a person is a dispensationalist."<sup>7</sup>

So, for Dispensational Theology to be taken seriously, we must establish whether or not the Scriptures affirm the distinction between Israel and the Church. As we've already seen, Paul goes out of his way to establish the identity of Israel as all who are in Christ. But, is there any evidence to suggest that Israel and the Church are somehow distinct in the eyes of God? Are the Dispensationalists on to something we seem to have overlooked? Or are they the ones who have misread the scriptures?

To answer this, I'd like to quote a lengthy response to this question from author and Bible scholar, Ken Gentry who says:

"In dispensationalism's two-peoples-of-God theology they must hold that God (1) distinguishes Jew and Gentile and (2) that he does so permanently (at least in history, though many carry the distinction into eternity). How are these observations fatal to the system? And in light of our study in Ephesians, how do we see that problem in Paul's epistle? We must first ask the question regarding the dispensationalist's assumption: Who makes up the people known as 'Israel'? The obvious answer is 'Jews,' the genetic offspring of Abraham. But then the question arises in the debate: Does God establish a new entity in redemptive-history which also includes Jews? The answer is: Yes. The church of Jesus Christ. In fact, it was established in the very context and on the foundation of Israel. *Indeed, Paul notes very clearly and forcefully that God merges Jew and Gentile into one body, which we now call the church.* He even encourages the Gentiles with the knowledge that they are now included among God's people

and are partakers of their blessings. They are not separate and distinct from Israel but are adopted into her.

“Note Ephesians 2:11–19: ‘Therefore remember, that *formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh*, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that *you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise*, having no hope and without God in the world. *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near* by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, *who made both groups into one*, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that *in Himself He might make the two into one new man*, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them *both in one body* to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household.’

“Note very carefully what Paul states and how it contradicts the notion of a distinction between Jew and Gentile, between Israel and the church.”<sup>8</sup> [emphasis mine]

As Gentry points out for us, the epistle from Paul to the Ephesians completely decimates the notion that God has drawn a distinction between Israel and the Church and goes out of his way to establish the fact that God has merged these two separate groups into one.

For example, Paul says that the Gentiles were “formerly... at that

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time... excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise”, (Eph.2:12). This was their prior condition. However, this has all changed, because “...now in Christ you who formerly were far off have been brought near” (Eph. 2:19). This indicates a change in condition that Paul further explains this way: “[Christ] has made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall” (Eph 2:14)

So, in Christ both groups—Israel and the Church—are now made into one. This should remind us of the passage in Galatians where Paul affirms:

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” (Gal. 3:26-27) [emphasis mine]

Therefore, what we see is that God not only does *not* draw any distinction between Israel and the Church, He has gone out of His way to unite both of these in Christ and make them into one new entity.

Some Dispensationalists might suggest that this passage in Ephesians speaks of a temporary peace between Israel and the Church, but such a notion is entirely impossible according to what Paul says here. As Gentry points out:

“If you read the passage carefully... you will note that the whole tenor of Paul’s theological observation is that: Jew and Gentile have been merged into one body forever. There is absolutely nothing in the passage that hints at or even will allow that this union into one new body is temporary. Everything about the passage demands that this merger be permanent. Read it again and try to find any intimation that this merger of Jew and Gentile is just temporary until the Rapture or the millennium or whatever. You will find nothing that leads to that conclusion and everything that militates against it.

“...Christ did not preach a temporary ‘truce’ between Jew and Gentile, but a permanent ‘peace.’ He did not suspend the enmity between Jew and Gentile for a while but ‘put to death the enmity.’ He did not bring the two peoples together for a time (nor even for a time, times, and half a time) but he permanently created a new man. Dispensationalism’s theology requires that ultimately we must separate what God has joined together. It allows the rebuilding of the dividing wall.”<sup>9</sup>

So, according to what we read in Ephesians, Romans and Galatians, the identity of Israel is defined as “those who are in Christ”, not merely those who are born into a Jewish household, or those who have been circumcised. Instead, the Body of Christ is where the Israel of God lives and breathes. The two are not separate or distinct, but have now—because of the work of Christ—become inseparable and synonymous in the eyes of God.

This means that Christ has fulfilled the promises made to Israel, and that the Body of Christ (the Church) is the ongoing reality and testimony of this fulfillment. It also means that there are no unfulfilled prophecies still waiting to be accomplished. Christ said he came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets at the very beginning of his ministry, (Matt. 5:17–18). Later, he affirmed that he had indeed accomplished this mission, both before the cross (John 17:4) and during the crucifixion itself (John 19:30).

Therefore, when Dispensationalists base their theology on the assumption that Israel and the Church are distinct and separate, the entire thing falls apart once we realize that this assumption has no foundation whatsoever to stand upon. It simply isn’t true.

There is one other pillar of Dispensationalism that we need to examine and that is the unique End Times Narrative developed by Darby and promoted by Futurist Bible teachers around the globe. This is probably the most relevant teaching we must

explore in this book, since it is the source for all of the Last Days hype and hoopla that we are forced to endure today.

## THE SIGNS OF THE END

One of the main outcomes of Darby's theology has been the tendency to apply current events to Biblical prophecies in the hopes of determining the date of the Second Coming of Christ and the End of the World. One clear example of this comes when we recognize that the earliest failed prophecy about the return of Christ came in 1844—just 14 years after Darby's theology had become known—and this trend has continued ever since.

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Prior to 1830, when John Nelson Darby first introduced his Dispensational Theology, the concept of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture was practically unheard of. Yes, there were some obscure references to this idea floating around, but none that were taken seriously until Darby popularized them.

For example, there are two early Church Fathers—Hippolytus and Irenaeus—who both made mention of a future end times scenario that sounds much like what Darby suggested in 1830. Hippolytus (170–235 AD) was one of the most important second century Christian theologians. He was a disciple of Irenaeus (130–202 AD), a Greek Bishop who helped to define Christian orthodoxy in his day. Both of them make statements about the End Times that are worth examination.

Irenaeus wrote that:

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Irenaeus wrote that:

“Once this Anti-Christ has devastated everything in the world, he will reign for 3 years and 6 months and sit in the Temple in

Jerusalem. And then the LORD will come from heaven in the clouds.”<sup>10</sup>

Hippolytus, who studied under Irenaeus, also taught something similar when he said:

“[The Anti-Christi will] rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and restore the sanctuary.”<sup>11</sup>

Adherents of Darby’s Dispensational Theology will often point to these two quotes as proof that their End Times scenario—involving the necessity for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the rise of an Anti-Christ figure who will sit in the Temple prior to the second coming of Christ—was embraced by the early Church.

So, while it is true that Hippolytus and Irenaeus both believed in the rise of a future Anti-Christ and the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple prior to the return of Christ, this view was not popular by any stretch of the imagination. Quite frankly, the view belongs primarily to Irenaeus himself and was merely passed along to his student, Hippolytus who repeated the teaching. What we see is that we have no other record of anyone else in the second century who held this view or affirmed it. None prior to this, nor afterwards, embraced such a view other than these two men. This should tell us something. Apparently, all the other Church Fathers rejected such notions as unfounded in Scripture.

It wasn’t until Jesuit writers Francisco Ribera (1537–1591) and Manuel Lacunza (1731–1801) proposed their Futurist views of the Second Coming of Christ over a thousand years later that these ideas came around again. It’s worth noting that the Catholic Church at the time banned these writings and condemned them as heretical. Why? Because these ideas were not embraced by the Christian Church. They were strange,

sensational and seen as against the grain of Christian theology to that point.

Still, it is interesting to note that there is some evidence that John Nelson Darby may have read at least some of the writings of Manuel Lacunza in his studies. Perhaps this is where at least some his ideas originally came from.

There were a handful of other pastors and theologians prior to Darby's eschatology who espoused ideas similar to his. People like John Owen (1616–1683)<sup>12</sup>, John Gill (1697–1771)<sup>13</sup>, and even Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)<sup>14</sup> published statements about their belief that the Jewish people would return to their homeland prior to the return of Christ. However, it wasn't until Darby solidified these ideas in 1830 that notions such as this took a deep hold on the Christian Church.

At any rate, such Futurist ideas of an Anti-Christ appearing and the rebuilding of a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem prior to the coming of Christ were quite rare before they became popularized by Darby. He may not have invented these ideas himself, but he certainly gave them a renewed credibility in the Christian Church when he began teaching them as part of his Dispensational Theology.

## END TIMES NARRATIVE

Darby's eschatology is what this book is written to explain and expose. His Futurist theology is marked by several key teachings which we will examine one at a time. These are:

- Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is a future event
- The Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24, Luke 21 Mark 13) is about future events

- The Abomination of Desolation hasn't happened
- The Jewish temple must be rebuilt before Christ returns
- The Jewish animal sacrifice must resume
- The Anti-Christ must appear before the rapture
- Revelation is about what will happen in the end times
- All prophetic Scriptures are literal (not spiritual)
- The day of the LORD is about the future return of Christ

Let's take these one by one and see if what Darby and the Dispensationalists teach about these things is indeed true, or if there have been some misunderstandings or confusion regarding the nature of these scriptures and the intention of these prophecies.

## CHAPTER 4

# SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

*“And thus Christ became King of the Jews, reigning in Jerusalem in the fulfillment of the seven weeks [of Daniel]... And Christ our Lord, ‘the Holy of Holies,’ having come and fulfilled the vision and the prophecy, was anointed in His flesh by the Holy Spirit of His Father. In those ‘sixty and two weeks,’ as the prophet said, and ‘in the one week,’ was He Lord.”*

— CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA<sup>1</sup>

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, there are several prophetic dreams and visions given to the prophet. Some of his final visions and dreams deal with the coming of the Messiah, the specific timing of when he would appear, and about when “the power of the holy people [the Jews] will be finally broken.” (Dan. 12:7)

Much of what Darby and other Dispensationalists get wrong is in how they read and interpret Daniel’s 70 Weeks prophecy found in chapter 9, starting in verse 20 and going through verse 27. Let’s look at the passage itself before we examine several key statements in this prophecy that need to be understood.

*“Seventy ‘sevens’ [or ‘weeks’] are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for*

*wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.”*

“Know and understand this: *from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One [Messiah], the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens’ [weeks], and sixty-two ‘sevens’ [weeks]. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens’ [weeks], the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing, [or, ‘cut off, but not for himself’].*

“The *people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He [The Messiah] will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’ [week]. In the middle of the ‘seven’ [week] 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 ‘on it’]. (Dan. 9:24-27) [emphasis mine]*

Before we get into how we should understand this passage, it’s probably a good idea to understand a little of how Dispensationalists interpret this section of the Bible.

“According to some of the most popular “prophecy teachers,” Dan 9:24–27 is the biblical prediction of the antichrist signing a seven-year covenant treaty with the newly established Israel, which initiates the tribulation depicted in Revelation 6–16. The biblical reference on which the signing of the treaty is based is found in Dan 9:27... But how can Dan 9:27 be used to explain the initiation of the tribulation as described in Revelation 6–16?

“Practitioners of premillennial dispensational hermeneutics pay little attention to the historical context from which a biblical book comes. In addition, they frequently pull individual verses out of context and weave them together with biblical verses from very different biblical contexts to create a new text, which they then interpret. Add to these methodological approaches the hermeneutics of the Israel—Church divide (one of the foundational beliefs of premillennial dispensationalism),

a literal reading of prophetic texts, as well as the belief that all prophecies point to the second coming of Jesus, and the end result is an historically flat and one-dimensional interpretation of the Bible.”<sup>2</sup>

So, our goal here is to take a fresh look at this passage, without viewing it through a Dispensational lens to see what the passage might actually be about.

Most Dispensationalists will agree that the first 69 “weeks” of this prophecy deal specifically with the timing of the coming of the Messiah. Let’s explain what these “weeks” are all about before we go any further.

The “seventy sevens” or “weeks” spoken of here are symbolic. Each “week” corresponds to seventy “weeks” of years, or 490 years. So, if we want to know when the Messiah will appear, we have to start counting “from the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem.” But this is where things get tricky. Because there are 3 different decrees we could start from:

**SO, IF WE WANT TO KNOW WHEN THE MESSIAH WILL APPEAR, WE HAVE TO START COUNTING “FROM THE ISSUING OF THE DECREE TO REBUILD JERUSALEM.” BUT THIS IS WHERE THINGS GET TRICKY. BECAUSE THERE ARE 3 DIFFERENT DECREES WE COULD START FROM.**

- King Artaxerxes gave a decree allowing Nehemiah to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 445 BC.
- King Artaxerxes gave another proclamation in 457 BC.
- King Cyrus gave a proclamation for the Jews to return and build the temple in 539 BC.

So, which decree do we start counting from? In some ways, I’m not sure it matters very much. I’ve seen Bible Scholars who start from either of these 3 decrees and end up either at the birth of Jesus, the triumphal entry of Jesus on Palm Sunday, or the

Crucifixion of Christ, or even the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:54.

What does matter is this: From either of those 3 decrees if we count forward 490 years we end up with the timeframe of the ministry of Jesus and several other events that Daniel mentions would take place at the end of the age. As noted earlier, Dispensationalists and non-Dispensationalists agree on this point. It's not something disputed by either perspective, so for the sake of our study let's move on to the sections where we do see things differently.

**THE REASON THIS DETAIL IS SIGNIFICANT IS BECAUSE DARBY AND OTHER DISPENSATIONALISTS TODAY TEND TO READ THE PORTION ABOUT PUTTING "AN END TO SACRIFICE AN OFFERING" AND CONFIRMING "A COVENANT WITH MANY" AS IF IT WERE REFERRING TO THE ANTI-CHRIST RATHER THAN TO JESUS.**

## **ANOINTED ONE CUT OFF**

Looking once more at the passage in Daniel 9, we see the prophecy about the Anointed One (the Messiah) being cut off:

"After the sixty-two 'sevens' [weeks], the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing, [or, 'cut off, but not for himself']" (v.26)

In what way was the Messiah "cut off"? Well, quite obviously when he was betrayed and crucified on a Roman cross. But more importantly, Daniel's prophecy also tells us when this will take place: "In the middle of the 'seven' [week] he will put an end to sacrifice and offering" and this is after the Messiah "[confirms] a covenant with many for one 'seven' [week]."

The reason this detail is significant is because Darby and other Dispensationalists today tend to read the portion about putting "an end to sacrifice and offering" and confirming "a covenant

with many” as if it were referring to the Anti-Christ rather than to Jesus.

First, let’s ask why they do this. Well, other than that this is how many of them have been trained to read this passage, the hiccup tends to be the fact that Daniel makes a reference to “*the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary*” just before this passage. This verse makes them think that everything that comes after it is about “the ruler who will come” and not the Messiah.

Perhaps this is an honest mistake, but if we look closely at the passage, we’ll notice a few things. First, that the reference is to “the *people* of the ruler”, not the ruler himself. See that? Daniel says that it will be the “people of the ruler who will come [to] destroy the city and the sanctuary”, not the Anti-Christ. Second, there is not one single reference to the Anti-Christ anywhere in this passage. Just look. I’ll wait. See? Nothing. The entire thing is about the Messiah who will come, not about the Anti-Christ.

So, while Daniel does make an aside about “the people of the ruler” destroying the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, the subject of this passage is still primarily talking about the Messiah to come.

## HOW JESUS FULFILLS DANIEL 9

Another important thing to note here is that Jesus actually *does* fulfill everything in the passage that Dispensationalists want to attribute to the unnamed Anti-Christ. For example, Jesus does indeed “confirm a covenant with many” in the upper room when he raises the cup and proclaims the New Covenant in his blood. (Luke 22:20) Jesus also “put an end to sacrifice and offering” in several ways: First, by literally ripping the veil in the Temple from top to bottom at his crucifixion (Matt. 27:51) which would have

made it impossible to continue the daily sacrifices, and second by fulfilling the shadow of animal sacrifice when he offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice upon the cross (Heb. 7:27).

Jesus also did these things when he was “cut off... in the middle of the week” because if a week equals seven years, then the middle of that time frame would be three and a half years, and Jesus’s ministry was ended after three and a half years when he was “cut off” by being arrested, beaten and crucified. How do we know this is how long the ministry of Jesus lasted? Because in Luke 3:23 we’re told that Jesus began his ministry just after John the Baptist showed up during the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, which was the year 26 AD. The crucifixion is said to have taken place in the spring of 30 AD. Furthermore, in John’s Gospel we’re told that Jesus attended three different Passover Festivals. (See John 2:13, 6:4 and 11:55–57) All of this indicates a ministry that spanned a three-year period, so the three-and-a-half-year time frame mentioned in Daniel fits this timeline.

Now, we should also admit that the daily sacrifice and offering was also ultimately brought to an end when the Romans surrounded Jerusalem and destroyed the city and the Temple in 70 AD. So, there is a double-fulfillment if you like: Jesus fulfills the requirement as far as God is concerned because Jesus was “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (See John 1:29; 36), and of course when the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD the ritual of animal sacrifices—which had continued after the crucifixion of Jesus—were finally ended for good. But, as far as the fulfillment of this prophecy is concerned, when Jesus offered himself upon the cross as the true lamb of God, this was the “end of sacrifices.”

As the author of Hebrews makes plain:

“...we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Heb. 10:10)

Because,

“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” (Heb. 10:11-14)

And now, after what Jesus suffered on the cross,

“...sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.” (Hebrews 10:18)

We might also take a moment at this time to point out that any future rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem at this point would not only be in complete violation of everything we read in Hebrews about what Jesus accomplished by fulfilling the shadow of sacrifice on the cross, it would also be completely superfluous since those shadows of the Old Temple system have now been fully realized in Christ. Today, the Church is now the Temple of God where we, as members of the Priesthood of All Believers offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God, forever. (See 1 Cor. 3:17; 6:19, Eph. 2:19–22, 1 Peter 2:4–5; 9–10)<sup>3</sup>

## SEVENTIETH WEEK POSTPONED?

Another strange quirk of the Dispensationalist view is that they insert a massive gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks of Daniel’s prophecy. Why do they do this? Because they need that final week of the prophecy to refer to some future event. Otherwise, the entire passage is about something that already happened in our past and it’s not actually about anything yet to come.

As author and Bible scholar LeAnne Snow Flesher explains:

“...the numbers do not add up perfectly for a premillennial dispensational interpretation of Daniel; [therefore] dispensationalists fill the gap by suggesting that the divine ‘counter’ stopped just before the death of Jesus, with seven years still left to go. The remaining seven-year period is what they call the tribulation... The only way one can make any kind of sense of this is through the hermeneutics of dispensationalism.

“Why in the world would the divine counter stop? Even worse, according to the full doctrine of premillennial dispensationalism, the dispensation of the church began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), which took place sometime after the death of Jesus. Why would the divine counter stop just before the death of Jesus? In order to fit it all in—the dispensation of the church, the dispensation following the rapture, and the seven-year tribulation—the clock must stop ticking. In essence, premillennial dispensationalism claims a special time for a special group, i.e., the true church. This special group will then be raptured before the tribulation to become the bride of Christ, after which the unfulfilled promises to Israel will finally be fulfilled in the new dispensation. Premillennial dispensationalists claim Dan 9:23–27 is a very important text because many of the events predicted by this group flow out of this moment; this moment when the divine clock stopped ticking.”<sup>4</sup>

So, in essence, Dispensationalists claim the prophetic clock has stopped because it has to stop if their theology is going to make any sense. As arbitrary as that may sound, it’s pretty much the only reasoning offered as to why we should assume that a prophecy like Daniel 9, built upon the premise of a specific number of weeks adding up to 490 years, should somehow have an additional insertion of a pause that takes over 2,000 years (and counting) to fulfill.

One might wonder, if the intention all along was to have this final week take place over 2,000 years later, then why not just say this? Why package the entire thing into a metaphorical Seventy Weeks but then fail to mention that the last part isn’t actually

going to take place in that specific time frame? What's more, if the prophecy includes events that will not be fulfilled until much, much later, then why not have that final week presented all by itself? Wouldn't that make much more sense? And, finally, if there is a gap of over 2,000 years, shouldn't there be some indication of this gap somewhere in the prophecy itself?

In spite of the fact that this theory creates more questions than it answers, Dispensational Futurists have no problem adding it into their story. And for some reason, Christians haven't had much problem with this practice since it was first proposed by Darby in 1830. There's a gap. Why? There just has to be. How long is the gap? Over 2,000 years long. How do you know that? We just know. Ok, then.

## THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION (PART 1)

One of the most misunderstood terms in Biblical prophecy is this reference to the "abomination that causes desolation" in Daniel 9:24-27. Here it is again for our reference:

"...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 'on it']"

This is where things may get a little tricky. Hopefully we can follow along without too much confusion.

There are several suggestions for what this verse could be speaking of. No doubt you've heard that this is a reference to when Antiochus desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar around 160 BC. The problem with his theory is that it occurs way before the Messiah shows up, so it's unlikely to be what the author had in mind here.

There is a reference as we mentioned earlier to "the people of the ruler who will come to destroy the city and the sanctuary"

(v.26), and this has to refer to the Romans who, in 70 AD actually did surround the city of Jerusalem and destroy the Jewish Temple. Therefore, the reference to the “abomination that causes desolation” can’t refer to Antiochus since he was the King of the Seleucid Empire, not the Roman Empire, and also because Antiochus came much too soon to have fulfilled something that should have taken place in the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel’s prophecy.

Another wrinkle in all of this has to do with the English translation of Daniel in our modern Bibles. As I’ve written about extensively and provided examples for in my book *Jesus Unbound: Liberating the Word of God from the Bible*, our version of the scriptures are often wildly different from what the actual Greek or Hebrew texts say. Sometimes these changes are accidental, but more often than not these changes are intentionally made to obscure the true meaning. Usually these altered passages deal with the role of women in the Church, or with Church hierarchy, or are translated in such a way as to make us believe the scriptures have something to say about homosexuality, even though the word “homosexual” never appeared in any English translation of the Bible until 1946.<sup>5</sup>

So, in this passage we’re unfortunately also at the mercy of a fairly poor English translation of this text. I’m not suggesting that the translation here is intentionally obscure, although given what we’ve seen in other examples, it wouldn’t surprise me. However, if we go to the King James Version of this passage in Daniel 9 the verse is slightly different:

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” (Dan. 9:27)

Perhaps we may find this translation isn't much clearer than the NIV version above it, but what it does help us to see is that it is not necessarily "he" who "will set up an abomination that causes desolation"—as if the Messiah is the one creating the abomination. Here, the action seems to be more that the Messiah will "*cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*"—something Jesus obviously did when he fulfilled the shadow of Temple sacrifice upon the cross—and the rest seems to be more of a natural outcome of all of this.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that neither the Septuagint nor the Hebrew Interlinear mention any "he" in relation to the abomination and simply state that "*an abomination of desolations will be...*" So, we may logically conclude that because the sacrifice has ended, the abominations and desolations that follow are merely the result of this fulfillment.

Keep in mind, Jesus came to warn his people of a coming destruction of Jerusalem. His intention was *not*

that they would be destroyed but that they would listen to him and escape this fate. It was because "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whoever placed their trust in him [the Messiah] would not perish but have life." (John 3:16) So, God's intention is that, through the testimony and ministry of Jesus, the Jewish people would *avoid* the destruction that was to come. Jesus offers them a new path that would lead them to life. However, since the majority of his people rejected him and his message, they continued moving in the direction they were already going in, and this led to the destruction that Jesus had warned them about.

**KEEP IN MIND, JESUS CAME TO WARN HIS PEOPLE OF A COMING DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM. HIS INTENTION WAS NOT THAT THEY WOULD BE DESTROYED BUT THAT THEY WOULD LISTEN TO HIM AND ESCAPE THIS FATE.**

Therefore, Jesus is vindicated and proven right when the things he predicted came to pass in 70 AD. We'll talk more about this later when we explore the words of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. But, for now let's agree that the abomination that causes desolation is the fruit that came from rejecting the words of Jesus and not something that Jesus personally made happen.

Another thing we notice from the King James version of this passage above is that we've lost the reference to "*...on the wing of the temple*" where this abomination is supposed to take place. Instead, that same section is translated as "*...and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...*" which is a pretty huge change. No mention of "wing" or "temple" at all. Instead, a mention of the time-frame being in the "midst of the week" which we know is at the end of three and a half years when Jesus is crucified.

So, what's going on here? Why do so many different English translations of this passage disagree about the terms and specific wording to use?

Well, we should probably make note of the fact that this text is especially difficult to parse because the Hebrew and Septuagint texts they were translated from aren't in agreement. For example, in the Hebrew Interlinear version, the term "Temple" doesn't appear, but the word "wing" does appear. In the Septuagint version of this passage, the word "wing" isn't there, but the word for "Temple" is.<sup>6</sup>

So, getting to the actual meaning of the text is more than challenging, especially when you're not even totally sure which version is accurate. Even in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) this text includes a notation that says the meaning for the Hebrew word "place" used in this verse is uncertain. Welcome to the exciting world of Biblical translation.

My friend Katy Valentine, who has a PhD in Biblical studies, says this about the passage in Daniel:

“Hebrew is such a supple language, and this is a long, long sentence and thought, hence convoluted with a lot of translations. [However], using ‘temple’ is strange and in my opinion incorrect. The most common way to say ‘temple’ in Hebrew is “house of the LORD” and that’s not in this verse. It’s the word for ‘wing’ that some translations render as ‘temple’.”<sup>7</sup>

So, different translations emphasize different aspects of this prophecy in Daniel 9:27, and they can’t seem to agree on whether the words “place”, “temple”, or “wing” should be there, or not, and if so, what they exactly mean.

In addition, the translation of this passage that say “*he will set up an abomination...*” can’t be correct because neither the Hebrew Interlinear nor the Septuagint include a reference to “he” and instead say “*an abomination of desolations will be...*”, without attributing it directly to either the Messiah or the Anti-Christ.

But the main things we need to recognize are simply that:

- Jesus made a covenant with us in the upper room
- Jesus put an end to the daily sacrifice by offering himself as the final sacrifice on the cross, and
- The abomination that causes desolation is the end result of everything that happens.

Still, we haven’t actually discovered what “*the abomination that causes desolation*” is talking about yet. What is it? How do we know it already happened if we’re not even sure what it’s referring to?

If we want a clue about what this phrase is in reference to, we actually need to turn to the Olivet Discourse—found in Matt.

24, Mark 13, and Luke 21—where Jesus not only makes reference to Daniel's prophecy but actually tells us *exactly* what it refers to.

# ENDNOTES

## INTRODUCTION

1. Hal Lindsey, *There's A New World Coming*, 1973, pg.15.

## CHAPTER 1

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2. Darby. Stow Hill Bible & Tract Depot. Kingston-On-Thames, 1829, *Prophetic No. 1 Vol. 2.*, pgs. 141-160.
3. From the Pro-Crowley website, Lashtal.com: <https://www.lashtal.com/forums/topic/john-nelson-darby/>.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. R. T. Magnum and Mark S. Sweetnam, *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church*, pp. 188-195.

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9. Ibid.

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2. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993, page 305.
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4. See 1 Samuel 16:7.
5. Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Royal Publishers, 1979, vol. 3, page 456.
6. Matthew Poole, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, vol. 3, pg. 486.
7. Charles C. Ryrie., *Dispensationalism*, pg. 39, 1995 .
8. From Ken Gentry’s series of articles, “The Ephesians Road Out Of Dispensationalism”, Part 3, “Separating What God Has Joined Together”.
9. Ibid.
10. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 25.
11. Hippolytus, *On Daniel*, II, 39.
12. Owen, John “Complete Works”, Vol.17. *Exercitation* 18, p. 560.
13. John Gill, “Exposition of the Old and New Testament, Deuteronomy 30 verse 5.
14. Stephen J. Stein, editor, “Introduction,” Jonathan Edwards, Works, *Apocalyptic Writings*, V. 8, pp.17–19.

## CHAPTER 4

1. As quoted in Clement of Alexandria's *Miscellanies*.
2. From *Daniel 9:24-27 and the Tribulation*, by LeAnne Snow Flesher, Review and Expositor, 109, Fall 2012.
3. For further study on this concept of the Church as Temple, Priesthood and Sacrifice, read my book *Jesus Unveiled: Forsaking Church As We Know It For Ekklesia As God Intended*", Quoir Publishing, 2019.
4. From *Daniel 9:24-27 and the Tribulation*, by LeAnne Snow Flesher, Review and Expositor, 109, Fall 2012.
5. See my book *Jesus Unbound: Liberating the Word of God from the Bible*, pps 157-178, Quoir Publishing, 2018.
6. Special thanks to author and Bible scholar Steve Gregg for his help answering this question.
7. From a personal email correspondence, April 6, 2020.

## CHAPTER 5

1. As quoted in the book *A Short History of the World* by H.G. Wells.
2. See Isaiah 20:1-6 for a description of how Isaiah 19:1 was fulfilled by the Assyrian army.
3. For more examples of God coming in the clouds, see also Psalms 104:1-3; Isaiah 19:1-3; Joel 2:1-2.
4. See *The Annals of Tacitus* for references "commotions" and "disturbances" throughout the Roman Empire in the time leading up to 70 AD.
5. See *Last Days Madness* by Gary Demar, pps. 80-81.
6. Ibid, pg. 79.
7. From the article, *Christian Zionism*, by Dr. Ninan Koshy: [https://www.globalministries.org/mee\\_resources\\_christian\\_zionism\\_koshy](https://www.globalministries.org/mee_resources_christian_zionism_koshy).
8. See "The Balfour Declaration: A Scrap of Paper that Changed History" found here: <https://fanack.com/palestine/history-past-to-present/balfour-declaration/>.

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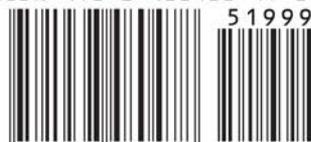
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