

Focus on the Kingdom

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Daniel 11 and 12: Final Rebellion and Ultimate Solution

In Daniel, chapters 11 and 12, we find a report of Daniel's great last vision, which summarizes and amplifies the astonishing prophetic forecasts given him earlier in Daniel 2, 7, 8 and 9. This vision has prompted a host of conflicting interpretations — a surprising fact, since the vision is written in simple narrative style without the symbols of beasts, heads and horns found in the earlier revelations.

The reason for the many differing views of the final vision of Daniel can be traced to the assumptions held by commentators before they arrive at chapters 11 and 12. With a clear idea of what we are looking for, it is all too easy for us to read into the text what we think ought to be there. This is the very opposite of sound method. We must make every effort to ask the question: What does the text actually say, according to the ordinary rules of language? Applying this criterion of simple attention to the grammatical sense of the passage before us, we may be surprised that it has caused expositors so much difficulty.

(It is worth noting that sometimes the “plain” grammatical sense *in English* does not get you to the truth. There are ways of using language in Hebrew and Greek which are *not* the same as English. Even among English speakers a complete breakdown of communication can occur. Test yourself. What did I just say if I tell you, as a British English speaker, “I am mad about my flat”? The lesson is that sometimes one needs to understand Hebrew and Greek ways of thinking to make good sense of a passage of Scripture. If one does not have these skills then one should proceed with caution. It is easy to overestimate one's ability in language and communication and *Strong's Concordance* is not the final tool either. God has blessed us with some marvelous resources for Bible study in modern times. A classic example of misunderstanding occurs when English speakers hear Jesus say, “Glorify me with the glory which I had with you before the foundation of the world.” “Having something with someone” is not a normal English way of speaking. But in the Hebrew wisdom tradition it means having a reward promised and stored up with someone (God). It does not mean that you were actually alive at the time the promise was made.)

Back to Daniel: First we should note that in the introduction to the vision of Daniel 11 and 12 the angel

declares that the content of the revelation has to do with the “last days” (10:14), an expression which elsewhere in the Bible describes the times just before and just after the establishment of the Kingdom of God worldwide at Jesus' return to the earth. In Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 the “last days” are those in which the government or Kingdom of God will be established in Jerusalem and the nations “learn war no more” (Isa. 2:4), a state of affairs which evidently has not yet come to pass! In Deuteronomy 4:30 the latter days are the times of a final calamity upon Israel leading to their repentance. This evidence ought to prevent us from imagining that Daniel 11 ends with a description of Antiochus Epiphanes (2nd century BC) or with events in AD 70. The resurrection of the dead obviously did not occur when Antiochus Epiphanes died, nor did it happen in AD 70! Proof of this fact is that the living Christians were not caught up together with the resurrected believers to meet the descending Jesus in AD 70. Paul taught that, at the resurrection, those alive in Christ “will be caught up to meet him in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17). If one thinks this event is over and finished, one has misunderstood the substance of the Christian Gospel.

The Range of the Vision

Very clearly, what Daniel saw stretched into the far future. He was writing in the 6th century BC, yet he predicts the resurrection of the dead: “Many of those who are sleeping in the dust of the ground [literally ‘dust-land’] shall awake, some to eternal life [literally ‘life in the coming age’]...” (Dan. 12:2).

When they awake, the righteous “shine like the sun in its strength” (12:3) — a prediction which Jesus, as the great interpreter of Daniel, places at the end of the age (see Matt. 13:43). This resurrection, of course, is the resurrection to occur at the second coming of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:23, 51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:13ff; Luke 14:14; Rev. 11:18; 20:1-4).

Just prior to this resurrection Daniel foresaw a “time of trouble such as never was” (12:1). This period of unparalleled distress features prominently in Jesus' own prediction of the events leading up to the end of the age: “For then shall be a time of trouble such as never was...” (Matt. 24:21).

Obviously Jesus took this last vision of Daniel with the utmost seriousness, seeing in it an inspired forecast of the calamitous events destined to occur on earth just prior to his return. There is much more to the vision besides the announcement of the great tribulation and the following

resurrection of the faithful. The remaining material is most instructive, because it tells of the difficult times associated with the period of final tribulation immediately prior to the resurrection and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

A Simple Narrative

For those not familiar with the account of the future given in Daniel 11 and 12, it will be helpful to take a Bible and read straight through the entire revelation, noting particularly 11:21-12:13. It is important to observe that the resurrection (12:1-2) follows immediately upon the death of the tyrant whose career is described in 11:21-45. We emphasize again: The wicked ruler in question obviously cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes who died in 164 BC! He did not die just before the resurrection. Nor can it be Nero, whose death, in the first century AD, was also not followed by the resurrection of the dead.

A very basic law of language dictates that a pronoun — “he” in our passage — describes a single individual unless there are very clear reasons in the context to show otherwise. We have no difficulty in discerning that a new personage appears on the prophetic screen in Daniel 11:21. He replaces his predecessor who dies in the previous verse (11:20). Once on the stage, the “vile person” forms the subject of a long passage extending to his death in 11:45. “He comes to **his end**” in the holy land.

Unfortunately many commentators have disregarded the normal laws of language and proposed that we are dealing in these verses (11:21-45) with a long span of time far beyond the lifetime of a single individual. Fortunately the data we are given allows us to be absolutely sure that the climax of the career of the “vile person” (11:21) occurs just 1290 days before the end of the age (12:11). This limits the events of 11:31 onwards to a period of about 3½ years.

In order to get our bearings we must note carefully the critically important time information supplied by the revealing angel in Daniel 12:7, 11. Remember that chapters 11 and 12 contain a single vision. Daniel 12:5-13 forms a postscript to the vision. Daniel is allowed to ask some important follow-up questions about the length of time allotted to the activities of the “vile person” presented to him in 11:21-45.

The answer to Daniel’s question about the duration of the awful events of chapter 11 is most enlightening. The information is simple and clear: “From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away and the Abomination of Desolation is set up there will be 1290 days” (12:11).

In order to grasp the point we naturally look back at the events of the vision to see where in the account the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation took place. We find this crucial event in 11:31 at the height of the

career of the “vile person” who came on the scene in verse 21.

1290 days is a little over 3½ years. We can be sure, then, that from the moment the Abomination of Desolation is set up there will be a final time of trouble, at the end of which “all these things” (12:7), including, of course, the resurrection (12:2), will be accomplished. The fixed terminus for this marvelous vision is the future resurrection of the faithful dead (as later clarified in the NT).

The Vile Person

The single individual described as the “vile person” (11:21) is seen in conflict with another ruler — the King of the South. The “vile person” is designated throughout the vision as the King of the North. These two rulers struggle for power in the area of Israel and even sit at a conference table and lie to each other! (11:27). Ships from the West have recently troubled the northern king and this stirs him into a rage. He then receives cooperation from some who forsake the faith (11:30). This in turn leads to his causing the interruption of sacrifices and the placing of the Abomination of Desolation (11:31). This King of the North then harasses “those who have understanding,” marches southwards, and following a final battle with the King of the South, comes to his end in Israel between the Mediterranean sea and the holy mountain, Jerusalem (11:32-45). (Again, this is not a description of Nero!)

This relatively simple account of the evil King of the North (11:21-45) has received strange treatment at the hands of expositors. Frequently the invaluable time information given in Daniel 12:7, 11 has simply been ignored. This has allowed commentators the “liberty” of placing centuries of time between what they think was the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation and the end of the age. However, careful attention to the remarks of the angel reveals that from the arrival of the Abomination to the end of “all these things” (12:7) there are 1290 days (12:11). This fact naturally proves that the events described from Daniel 11:31 (where the Abomination appears) still lie in the future.

Breaking the Thread of the Story

For various reasons expositors have been unhappy with the straightforward narrative presented by Daniel 11 and 12. It may come as a surprise to readers that the pronoun “he” referring to the King of the North (11:21-45) has been made to apply to a completely new subject, namely a third power in addition to the Kings of the North and South. Some thought they had discovered Julius Caesar in verse 18! Once slipped into the narrative Julius Caesar’s career was found also in 11:19. The same commentators then maintained that in verse 20 Augustus Caesar is in view. The one who replaces him in verse 21,

the “vile person,” on that theory, would then have to be Tiberius Caesar.

Other students of this prophecy were not satisfied with what seemed to be an entirely arbitrary insertion of Julius Caesar at Daniel 11:18. Moreover the story which develops in verses 23-30 appeared to have no connection at all with the successors of Tiberius who according to the theory was to be found in 11:21. A second school of interpreters, therefore, thought they had detected a third power in verse 31. Sir Isaac Newton, amongst others, suggested that this new power appearing, as he thought, in verse 31, was the Roman Empire of the first century BC. But the King of the North is still the “operator” in Daniel 11:31. The problem was the foregone conclusion that the Roman Empire must be the final evil power. Even Sir Isaac Newton could not see that he was inserting a Roman in 11:31, where there was no Roman!

The Maccabean theory, which applied the Abomination of Desolation (Dan. 11:31) exclusively to the Syrian leader Antiochus Epiphanes (ruled 175-164 BC), ran into the obvious difficulty that Jesus himself spoke of the Abomination of Desolation as future to his own time! This view “virtually challenges the authority of the Master.”¹ It was a failure to note how Jesus understood the prophecy. Jesus referred this Abomination to a time still in the future (Matt. 24:15). We are here at a crucial point in our discussion. Why, when Jesus says that Daniel prophesied the arrival of the Abomination of Desolation just before the Second Coming, do some commentators insist that Daniel did not see beyond the career of Antiochus Epiphanes? The fundamental question revolves around the acceptance or non-acceptance of the truth of Jesus’ words.

What Does Jesus Say?

The application of Daniel 11:31 to a Syrian ruler in BC times does indeed challenge the authority of Jesus himself. Commentators have not apparently trembled at the idea of challenging Jesus. Speaking around 30 AD Jesus declared that those living in Judea were to flee “when you see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel standing in the holy place” (Matt. 24:15). This authoritative understanding of the prophecy of Daniel is the only one that should have been allowed by expositors. Strangely, this has not been the case. Jesus’ very simple directed link between Matthew 24:15 (the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation) and its appearance in the vision of Daniel (11:31, 12:11) has been almost entirely disregarded.

Furthermore the information supplied by the angel in Daniel 12:7, 11 should have prevented all attempts to stretch the contents of Daniel 11:21ff over centuries of time. The angel expressly says (12:11) that 1290 days

will be the length of the persecution inflicted by the wicked tyrant who sets up the Abomination of Desolation in Daniel 11:31. Then “all these things will be accomplished” (12:7). This plain information should have warned expositors against treating the pronoun “he” (11:31-45) as a piece of elastic and stretching it over hundreds of years! The result was dissolving the prophecy and emptying it of its meaning.

Jesus places the Abomination of Desolation of Daniel 11:31 at a time in the future. He connects it with the fall of Jerusalem immediately preceding his return (see Matt. 24:15, 21, 29-31). A final fulfillment in AD 70 is therefore ruled out, because Jesus did not return immediately after the events of that year. The angel places the Abomination 1290 days from the end (Dan. 12:11). Even apart from this data we could have known that the Abomination was a feature of the very close of this age, because the pronoun “he” — the King of the North, 11:21-45 — very obviously refers to a single individual, as a repeated pronoun always does in a narrative passage.

A distinguished professor of the Old Testament wisely said of Daniel 11: “It is contrary to all sound principles of exegesis to suppose that, in a continuous description, with no indication whatever of a change of subject, part should refer to one person and part to another, and ‘the king’ (Dan. 11:36) should be a different king from the one whose doings are described in verses 21-35.”²

Henry Cowles, D.D., who taught the book of Daniel for 25 years to young men preparing for ministry, expressed his conviction that Daniel 11:21-45 describes the career of a single King of the North: “The bonds of philological connection are of the strongest kind. It would seem to be simply impossible for one accustomed to study, observe and obey the laws of philology, and to interpret language in view of what it is, to have even the least doubt on this point.”³

The professor’s remarks are a pointed and much needed corrective to much exposition of Daniel 11 and remind us that we are first and foremost bound by the normal rules of language when we read the Bible. We are also bound, if we claim to be Christians, to accept the interpretation which Jesus puts on a given passage. Fortunately his express reference (Matt. 24:15) to the Abomination of Desolation found in Daniel 11:31, 12:11 (as well as 9:27) removes all doubt as to how Daniel’s words are to be applied. Certainly they cannot refer to

² S.R. Driver, *Commentary on Daniel, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, p. 193.

³ *Daniel, with Notes Critical, Explanatory and Practical*, p. 448.

¹ Clarence Hewitt, *The Seer of Babylon*, p. 340.

Antiochus Epiphanes (except, perhaps, as a “type” or foreshadowing) when Jesus refers them to the future!

Space does not permit a demonstration of the various other attempts which have been made to insert a third power into the narrative of Daniel 11:21-45. A straightforward reading of the passage leads us to believe that the future will reveal an end-time struggle between the tyrannical King of the North (i.e., from a Middle Eastern area such as Syria or Iraq, the northern division of the ancient Kingdom of Greece; see Dan. 11:4-6 and **Note** below) and the King of the South (presumably Egypt). Inserting into the narrative powers from other geographical regions breaks the thread of the story which formed Daniel’s crowning vision. Surely this ultimate revelation given to Daniel and the church, as recipients of Holy Scripture, must inspire us to vigorous evangelism before the dark days of the final enemy of God arrive.

Since this article was written in 1988, events in the Middle East have focused attention on the area of ancient Assyria (Iraq). It is precisely from this part of the world (and not the European Common Market, not specifically mentioned in the Bible) that the Bible expects the evil and oppressive tyrant of the latter days to arise. See my article “The Assyrian in Messianic Prophecy” at focusonthe kingdom.org. However, nothing in the Bible known to this writer tells us when the end-time events will begin. Hence the need for watchfulness.

Note: It is interesting that the distinguished premillennialist, Theodore Zahn, states (c. 1900) that the final evil ruler in Revelation (much of which is based on Daniel) is “without question” derived from “the Graeco-Macedonian [kingdom] and its ‘typical’ pre-Christian antichrist, Antiochus Epiphanes.”⁴ In Daniel 11 and 12 it seems clear that Antiochus is a “type” of the yet future tyrant. Antiochus was a Syrian king.

A Latin church father, Lactantius (c. 250-330 AD), clearly expected the Beast (Antichrist) to arise in Syria: “Another king shall arise out of Syria, born from an evil spirit...and he will constitute and call himself God, and will order himself to be worshipped as the Son of God, and power will be given him to do signs and wonders. Then he will attempt to destroy **the temple of God** and persecute the righteous people; and there will be distress and tribulation such as there never has been since the beginning of the world.”⁵ Lactantius speaks of the tyrant arising “from the extreme boundaries of the northern region” (ch. 16). Another ante-Nicene father, Victorinus (c. 280 AD), refers Micah 5:5 to the antichrist: “There shall be peace for our land...and they shall encircle Assur

[Assyria], that is antichrist, in the trench of Nimrod.”⁶ Assyria is the approximate equivalent of modern Iraq. (Victorinus also speaks of Babylon as the Roman state, since that was the enemy of his day.)

It is not always recognized that the **seventieth week** of Daniel 9:24-27 is taken by Jesus to be a period just before his return. Jesus places the Abomination shortly before his Second Coming (Matt. 24:15ff). Matthew 24:29 says that “immediately after” the tribulation initiated by the Abomination, Jesus will come back in power and glory. This fact is crucial to a fair reading of prophecy. Daniel expects the Abomination to appear in the seventieth “week” (Dan. 9:27). Jesus expects the Abomination (and therefore the seventieth week) just before his return.

That the seventieth “week” was future and close to the end of the age was understood in 243 AD by Hippolytus (*De Pascha Computus*). This fact is noted in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*: “The one ‘week’ is taken off as belonging to the eschatological period in the future” (Vol. 3, p. 606). Irenaeus also expected a 3½-year tribulation and a rebuilt temple: “For three and a half years, during which time, when he [antichrist] comes, he will reign over the earth.”⁷ Irenaeus sees the antichrist, not just Antiochus, in the eighth chapter of Daniel and quotes Daniel 9:27 as a prophecy of the final reign of the antichrist “for three years and six months.”

The seventieth week of Daniel 9 was seen as future and close up to the Second Coming by the earliest church fathers who wrote in detail on prophecy. Montgomery notes that this “apocalyptic” (i.e. futurist) reading of the last period of seven years is the one found in the gospels, and it is adopted by Irenaeus and Hippolytus.⁸ Commodianus refers to a future and final antichrist in these words: “Isaiah said, ‘This is the man who moves the world and so many kings and under whom the land will become a desert’...Then doubtless the world will be finished when he appears. He himself will divide the globe into three ruling powers, when however Nero will be raised up from hell, Elijah will first come to seal the beloved ones; at which things the region of Africa [King of the South?] and the northern nations [King of the North?], the whole earth on all sides will tremble for seven years. But Elijah will occupy half of the time and Nero the other half. Then the whole Babylon, being reduced to ashes, its embers will then advance to Jerusalem; and the Latin conqueror will then say, ‘I am Christ whom you always pray to.’ And indeed the original ones who were deceived combine to praise him.

⁴ *Introduction to the New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 441.

⁵ *Divine Institutes*, Book 7, ch. 17.

⁶ *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, ch. 7.

⁷ *Against Heresies*, Book 5, chs. 25, 26.

⁸ *International Critical Commentary on Daniel*, p. 394.

He does many wonders since he is the false prophet. Especially that they may believe him his image will speak. The Almighty has given it power to appear such. The Jews, recapitulating Scriptures from him, exclaim at the same time to the Highest that they have been deceived...Moreover, when the tyrant will dash himself against the army of God, his soldiery are overthrown by the celestial terror; the false prophet himself is seized with the wicked one, by the decree of the Lord. They are handed over alive to Gehenna.”⁹ ✧

When Jesus Is Discarded and Tradition Takes Over

I trust our readers will be suitably shocked and scandalized, raising an appropriate objection in their various church settings to the astonishing comment in the *Word Biblical Commentary* on the Shema (“Hear O Israel”) affirmed by Jesus.

In Mark 12:28-34 a Jewish scribe was determined to search out Jesus’ thinking on the most important of all questions (for every one of us). The question was, “Which commandment is first of all?” The unambiguous reply of Jesus begins with the Bible’s famous declaration of monotheism: “Hear, Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” Jesus goes on of course to urge us all to love that One God with all our energy, heart, life, mind and strength. And now for the shocking and revealing words of the *Word Biblical Commentary* on this passage: **“It is difficult to understand how and why Jesus’ affirmation of the Shema, which is neither remarkable nor explicitly Christian,”** would be included by Mark. “If the exchange is thoroughly Jewish in perspective and advanced nothing of the early church’s distinctive claims, why was the tradition preserved?”

I trust our readers will not miss the point, and will share their indignation with friends and relatives at every opportunity. Did you notice how Jesus was dismissed as un-Christian? Did you grasp the amazing fact that Jesus’ own emphatic affirmation of the totally non-Trinitarian Shema of Israel was ruled out of court? Indeed, today if one says, “I believe as Jesus did in the unitary monotheistic creed of Israel,” one is liable to immediate persecution and rejection by almost every body of believers gathering ostensibly as a group of claimants to belief in Jesus as Savior. What if in fact that situation is more horribly distorted than we imagine? What if Jesus were to show up one day at any “Bible-believing church” worldwide and affirm the most important command of all, that we are to believe in no other God but the single-Person God of Scripture, the Father? What would be the reaction in the average Sunday School? Would Jesus be summoned to the pastor’s office for some serious

counseling as he had questioned the “Deity of Jesus,” that Jesus is in every sense YHVH as much as his Father is YHVH? (How many YHVHs does that add up to?)

These are issues well-worth some prolonged and extensive pondering and public airing. The “status quo” in theology is crippling and stifling to healthy critical thinking, the very critical thinking which educated people everywhere recognize to be the mark of enlightenment and intellectual honesty. Can our best brains in theology not move beyond the patent falsehood that Jesus’ affirmation of the creed of Israel is “neither remarkable nor explicitly Christian”? A revolution is certainly called for, lest we be found rejecting Jesus while claiming to accept him. ✧

The PRE-Tribulation “Any Moment,” “Secret” Coming of Jesus Is a Myth

A very persistent correspondent is unhappy with my reference in the May 2011 *Focus on the Kingdom* to the Second Coming in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. This is the famous passage where Paul comforts the believers whose brothers and sisters in Christ have fallen asleep and remain asleep in the sleep of death (cp. Ps. 13:3; Dan. 12:2). How will they get into the future Kingdom? It is a good question. Paul calls his discussion in 1 Thessalonians 4 a discussion about the Second Coming (Parousia). In 4:15 he names his topic. It is all about the Parousia (Second Coming). He expects his audience to know what that second coming event (the Greek word *Parousia*) is like.

Today, however, there is a massive confusion about the Second Coming (*Parousia*). Many have been lulled into the false idea that there are *two* second comings, one secret to snatch believers away to heaven and a later one, after seven years, which is public and visible.

That assumption is false. To understand the Parousia correctly, one *starts* with Jesus. This is precisely what many evangelicals have never learned to do! They have been misled into thinking that perhaps the teaching of Jesus is not for them but for Jews in the future! That is a grand mistake and responsible for all kinds of errors. Start with the teaching of Jesus, the Christian rabbi and lord (John 13:13), and only then proceed to Paul. Salvation is all about obeying Jesus, and Hebrews 5:9 should never be far out of sight. Salvation is for those who obey Jesus. This is a fine summary statement of Christianity. The words of Jesus are the all-important gold standard for all claiming to follow Jesus.

If you begin with Jesus and his instructions to the apostles, and thus, through them, to believers of all the ages, you will find that in Matthew 24 (repeated in Mark 13 and Luke 21) there is **a single Parousia event** —

⁹ *The Instructions of Commodianus*, chs. 41, 42.

definitely not two second comings! Jesus was asked about the sign of his Parousia (Second Coming) and the end of the age (Matt. 24:3). The Second Coming of Jesus will bring this present evil worldwide system to its end.

Being an expert teacher, Jesus replied to this excellent question about the sign of his reappearing by saying, “When you see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel standing where **he** ought not to” (Mark 13:14), then flee at once to the mountains. A moment’s thought will inform us that Jesus knew nothing of a “lift-off” to heaven. On the contrary the Great Tribulation (referencing of course Dan. 12:1), triggered by the appearance of the Abomination, would be the sign for Christians to escape to the mountains. Not a single word about any Parousia of Jesus into the sky to take them to heaven for seven years! It is amazing that the teaching of Jesus has been so terribly disregarded in this important matter of the *sequence* of events at the end of the age.

Paul customarily taught his recently founded congregations the details of how antichrist would precede the Second Coming (2 Thess. 2:5). Today many have been mis-taught at a basic level. Believing truth and not falsehood is the essence of true faith (2 Thess. 2:10).

Jesus calls his Parousia a single, splendid, public, visible event, like lightning flashing across the sky (Matt. 24:27). It is as unexpected (for the heedless) as was the flood. But it is visible. 7 million Jehovah’s Witnesses at your door have been told that the Second Coming is invisible and happened in 1914. Such is the capacity of huge masses of Bible readers to be taken in. A future secret coming is no less imaginary and fictional. There is only one Parousia in the New Testament, not two! There is no secret “before-the-Great-Tribulation” Parousia, followed by another one.

The first mistake then of my correspondent is to ignore the teaching of Jesus in regard to end-time events. Once he does this he is liable to misunderstand Paul. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul’s subject is the Parousia (Second Coming) (v. 15). It will be the event at which the faithful dead will be resurrected to life from the sleep of death. That data is provided by the greatest of all death and resurrection texts, Daniel 12:2. This great event brings the sleeping dead back to life, via resurrection (the only biblical way of coming back to life).

Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 assumes that the Parousia is known to be the single, public and spectacular event by which Jesus returns to the earth (as he said in Matt. 24, etc.). In 1 Thessalonians Paul *adds* to the information previously given by Jesus. The dead and the surviving Christians will be caught up (raptured) to meet the Lord Jesus at his Parousia, which Jesus has defined as his spectacular return to the earth in Matthew 24.

As Jesus appears in the clouds the dead and living believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, escort the royal visitor to the earth, and so be with him forever. Jesus is coming *back*, since the event in 1 Thessalonians 4 is called the Parousia, Second Coming, and it has been clearly defined by Jesus in Matthew 24 (which my friend failed to take note of). The Parousia is the return of Jesus to this planet, not a “drive-by” event at which he never in fact actually comes back!

The same Parousia is given further important details in 2 Thessalonians 1. Paul warns (against the very trap so many have fallen for) that the Parousia *cannot* happen until certain other events have taken place. First the man of sin (Antichrist) must appear, and then and only then, following the reign of this Man of Sin (the personal Abomination of Desolation of Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:14), will Jesus come back. Once again Paul is discussing the one and only Parousia. He expressly warns, just as Jesus had when he spoke of the sign of the appearing of the Abomination (Mark 13:14), that the Man of Sin must have his time of supremacy *before* the Second Coming can happen. This is precisely the opposite of the scheme given by Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in their famous books.

Paul is quite lucidly clear. He warns believers, you and me included, that we cannot expect an end to affliction at the hands of the wicked, until “the revelation of Jesus in flaming fire taking vengeance on his enemies” and killing the Antichrist “with the breath of his lips” (2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2:8). Once again the topic is the single Parousia, and far from being a secret event, it is a mighty public spectacle at which Jesus both raises the dead and raptures them into the air and then kills the Man of Sin. Jesus is headed towards the earth and the point of the “rapture” is to allow the faithful to escort the King as he comes to the earth. There are other biblical examples of a body of people going out to meet and escort a distinguished arriving dignitary (Acts 28:15-16; Matt. 25:6).

A serious deception has been wrought on those who have invented a secret preliminary “Second Coming” 7 years earlier than the one and only biblical Parousia (Second Coming) announced by Jesus and Paul. There is no coming of Jesus 7 years before his one and only future Parousia in glory. Our faith is to be built on biblical fact and not on an imaginary, invented “any moment” arrival of Jesus to remove saints from the earth.

Let us summarize. If you begin with the falsehood that Jesus is coming back twice, which means two Parousias, then you will think you have found a secret Parousia in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. This can only happen if one turns a blind eye to the plain and obvious teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24 — that there is going to be ONE dramatic, visible and public Parousia of Jesus,

his return to the earth to rule in the Kingdom to be inaugurated by him at that time, worldwide (Rev. 11:15-18; Luke 21:31).

Once the all-important teaching of Jesus is accepted in Matthew 24 — and of course obedience to Jesus is the basis of salvation in Hebrews 5:9 — then one will not fall into the trap of inventing a secret Parousia in 1 Thessalonians 4. When one arrives at 1 Thessalonians 4 one is supposed to have learned about the sequence of events from the teaching of Jesus. Many churchgoers however are mesmerized by the idea that the teaching of Jesus is somehow unimportant. They then begin with Paul and misunderstand him, forgetting that Paul did not contradict Jesus.

It is a fatal, systematic error to dismiss the teaching of Jesus as relevant only for Jews. Jesus promises the faithful “meek” of all nations that they will inherit the land (Matt. 5:5). They will rule on the earth with Jesus (Rev. 5:10) over surviving mortal nations (Rev. 2:26; Isa. 19:21-25; Matt. 19:28; Acts 1:6).

It is a pleasant illusion to believe that Jesus is going to come back seven years before he comes bringing the Kingdom of God. But it is not based on Scripture, but on uncritically accepted, popular literature which has been successful in forming (or misinforming) the minds of millions. But then the extraordinary musings of Harold Camping, announcing a now failed Second Coming for May 2011, also raked in millions of dollars! What does this tell us about the judgment of millions of “sincere” members of churches? The dictum of Hosea about a tragic and destructive “lack of knowledge” could well apply to us today (Hos. 4:6).

The need for intelligent, informed study of the words of the Bible should be obvious in view of our present chaotic church community. Nothing is likely to change until Christians become earnest Bereans and work hard at believing what is true and not what is false. Paul warned against the crippling effects of “believing what is false” as opposed to “loving the truth in order to be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10-11). Paul declared that a person is unrighteous if he believes falsehood or in any way suppresses truth. Paul’s confidence resided in his assurance that he had given his converts “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). And he did not mean “whatever this or that congregation might approve as true.” He meant the truth as Jesus and the New Testament teaches it.

Denominational congregations easily delude their community into thinking that all is well, because “we all believe the same things.” This can lead to dangerous delusion and self-satisfaction. A thorough unbiased review would allow darkness to be dispelled and light to increase — the very light of truth which Paul makes a condition of salvation (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Jesus taught a single Parousia event and promised to keep the faithful from evil, but not by taking them out of the world: “I am not praying that You should take them out of the world but that You should protect them from the Evil One” (John 17:15). ✧

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Comments

“I recently watched ‘Jesus is still a Jew’ again, and I discovered something very handy. You practically wrote a book in small fragments in the comments section. I started reading through them tonight and was very encouraged. Thanks for posting.” — *South Dakota*

“Thank you for your talk entitled *John 1:1 and the Trinity* which I found a few weeks ago at **focusonthekingdom.org**. The talk was very provocative and had me stewing for a few days.” — *England*

“I look forward very much each month to receiving my little eight page magazine from you, packed with the most interesting and invaluable information that you could possibly imagine.” — *Canada*

“Thank you for the three books I received months ago. These really help me explain how I believe about our Father and His Son. It just did not make sense that Jesus existed before and was put into the womb of Mary. I know now this did not happen. Is there a study Bible out there which makes all this plain? I hope one day to come there and worship God with you all. I still have 12 years left to do. Done 24 years thus far. I converted my life over to Messiah in 1999. May all of you be blessed. Remember to follow the word and not the herd (traditions of men).” — *from prison*

There is no Study Bible with the view of God as one Person and Jesus as His human Son. There is a mass of literature from the past 500 years, mostly not known to the public. We are trying to process that information for our generation. It is a struggle to get people to take Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:18, 20 to heart. Most assume that the capital letter on “Word” in John 1 is part of the Bible! Happily most now know that the KJV’s 1 John 5:7 is a forgery. It was a failed attempt to introduce the Trinity into Scripture and is now everywhere recognized as not part of genuine Scripture.

Read Matthew and Luke first, and only then John and Paul! “There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Messiah Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). This is the Christian creed. The word “God” never means the Triune God in the Bible, and in the New Testament refers to the Father 1300 times. It is surprising that people don’t consider this common-sense data.