

## Understanding Where We Are In the Stream of Prophetic Time

One of the most popular topics for debate that I encounter not only in the offline world, but also in the online world, centers around the argument of where we are in the stream of prophetic time. By “prophetic time,” I refer to the usage, debate, and interpretation of various prophecies in the Bible to try to identify or *map* where (precisely or approximately) we are at—especially with reference to the return of the Son of Man, who most believe to be Jesus Christ. The *dogmatism* that I find is startling, especially in light of the Bible’s clearly worded warnings that nobody will know *when* Jesus returns. And, of course, most people today like to twist those words to mean that we just won’t know the exact hour or day—but that apparently this shouldn’t stop us from trying to determine the week or year or month or time of year, etc.

Still, rather than expend time tackling the multitude of reasonings surrounding “last days” interpretations and offering my refutations, I would like to take a few moments explaining why I avoid such debates and interpretations as suspect.

First, I firmly believe that we will not be able to interpret the remaining prophecies of the Bible that await fulfillment, because we aren’t *allowed* to. I’m not referring to our being able to discern the “day” or “hour” when I say that, however. I’m referring to knowing just where we are at in the stream of prophetic time *as a whole*. It’s contradictory for someone to acknowledge that we don’t know *when* the day will come when the Son of Man appears, and yet out of their other side of their mouth announce that we’re “close.” The expression “close” is far too broad a term to be so heavily-handedly used by anyone placing their interpretations ahead of the Bible. Yet I see this time and again from those claiming to be followers of Christ. I’ll accept the fact that we’re one day *closer* than we were yesterday, but that doesn’t make the End *close* in the way that most End-Time propagandists like to use it.

The fact of the matter is that the expression “close” is abused, and its abuse has wrecked the faith of many down through the ages and also generated a huge population living in apathy. It has, in effect, become its own undoing.

I also strongly believe that the writers of the Christian (Greek) Scriptures purposely wrote their recorded accounts for reasons lost to us today. This belief plays an important role in why I believe what I do, so I hope to return to this point later in this article.

I also believe that the “tribulation” that Jesus referred to has already occurred, and that there is not some soon-to-arrive “great tribulation” that will soon manifest itself upon mankind. Again, this is a statement that needs to be addressed, and I will do so in this article by providing my scriptural evidences.

And finally, I do not accept the propagandistic teaching espoused by some religious groups and organizations that Jesus’ return was to be invisible and that it has already occurred and they (the group or organization) are the only one who knew it.

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This, too, will be addressed in this article as part of the discussion surrounding my reasons for believing about the stream of prophetic time the things that I believe.

### The “Great” Tribulation

Most Christians today believe that there is a “Great Tribulation” that is to occur on a scale the likes of which the world has never before seen nor will see again, and that unless it’s ended by God Himself, nobody will be saved. However, there are numerous schools of thought which extend outward from this standardized belief (a rapture will carry off true Christians so they won’t need to suffer through it, for example), so one can reasonably say that the teaching of the “Great Tribulation” is a core teaching of Christianity, while the teaching *about* the “Great Tribulation” differs from Christian denomination to Christian denomination. Baptists view it differently from Catholics, who view it differently from Jehovah’s Witnesses, who view it differently from Lutherans.

As stated before, I will not address the different teachings of any given group or groups of Christians because it will take far too long. However, I *do* want to address the *core* teaching itself: the “Great Tribulation.”

This core teaching of modern-day Christianity centers on the words of Jesus, as recorded by those who wrote them down. Below are those words, in table format so that a comparison can be made.

Matthew 24:4-22	Mark 13:5-20	Luke 21:8-24
<p>And in answer Jesus said to them: “Look out that nobody misleads YOU; <sup>5</sup> for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. <sup>6</sup> YOU are going to hear of wars and reports of wars; see that YOU are not terrified. For these things must take place, but the end is not yet.</p> <p><sup>7</sup> “For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another. <sup>8</sup> All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress.</p> <p><sup>9</sup> “Then people will deliver YOU up to tribulation and will kill YOU, and YOU will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name. <sup>10</sup> Then, also, many will be stumbled and will betray one another and will hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and mislead many; <sup>12</sup> and because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off. <sup>13</sup> But he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the</p>	<p>So Jesus started to say to them: “Look out that nobody misleads YOU. <sup>6</sup> Many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and will mislead many. <sup>7</sup> Moreover, when YOU hear of wars and reports of wars, do not be terrified; [these things] must take place, but the end is not yet.</p> <p><sup>8</sup> “For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, there will be earthquakes in one place after another, there will be food shortages. These are a beginning of pangs of distress.</p> <p><sup>9</sup> “As for YOU, look out for yourselves; people will deliver YOU up to local courts, and YOU will be beaten in synagogues and be put on the stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them. <sup>10</sup> Also, in all the nations the good news has to be preached first. <sup>11</sup> But when they are leading YOU along to deliver YOU up, do not be anxious beforehand about what to speak; but whatever is given YOU in that hour, speak this, for YOU are not the ones speaking, but the holy spirit is. <sup>12</sup> Furthermore, brother will deliver brother over to death, and a father a</p>	<p>He said: “Look out that YOU are not misled; for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The due time has approached.’ Do not go after them. <sup>9</sup> Furthermore, when YOU hear of wars and disorders, do not be terrified. For these things must occur first, but the end does not [occur] immediately.”</p> <p><sup>10</sup> Then he went on to say to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; <sup>11</sup> and there will be great earthquakes, and in one place after another pestilences and food shortages; and there will be fearful sights and from heaven great signs.</p> <p><sup>12</sup> “But before all these things people will lay their hands upon YOU and persecute YOU, delivering YOU up to the synagogues and prisons, YOU being haled before kings and governors for the sake of my name. <sup>13</sup> It will turn out to YOU for a witness. <sup>14</sup> Therefore settle it in YOUR hearts not to rehearse beforehand how to make YOUR defense, <sup>15</sup> for I will give YOU a mouth and wisdom, which all YOUR opposers together will not be able to resist or dispute. <sup>16</sup> Moreover, YOU</p>

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<p>nations; and then the end will come. <sup>15</sup> "Therefore, when YOU catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy place, (let the reader use discernment,) <sup>16</sup> then let those in Ju-de'a begin fleeing to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let the man on the housetop not come down to take the goods out of his house; <sup>18</sup> and let the man in the field not return to the house to pick up his outer garment. <sup>19</sup> Woe to the pregnant women and those suckling a baby in those days! <sup>20</sup> Keep praying that YOUR flight may not occur in wintertime, nor on the sabbath day; <sup>21</sup> for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. <sup>22</sup> In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short.</p>	<p>child, and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death; <sup>13</sup> and YOU will be objects of hatred by all people on account of my name. But he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved. <sup>14</sup> "However, when YOU catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation standing where it ought not (let the reader use discernment), then let those in Ju-de'a begin fleeing to the mountains. <sup>15</sup> Let the man on the housetop not come down, nor go inside to take anything out of his house; <sup>16</sup> and let the man in the field not return to the things behind to pick up his outer garment. <sup>17</sup> Woe to the pregnant women and those suckling a baby in those days! <sup>18</sup> Keep praying that it may not occur in wintertime; <sup>19</sup> for those days will be [days of] a tribulation such as has not occurred from [the] beginning of the creation which God created until that time, and will not occur again. <sup>20</sup> In fact, unless Jehovah had cut short the days, no flesh would be saved. But on account of the chosen ones whom he has chosen he has cut short the days.</p>	<p>will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of YOU to death; <sup>17</sup> and YOU will be objects of hatred by all people because of my name. <sup>18</sup> And yet not a hair of YOUR heads will by any means perish. <sup>19</sup> By endurance on YOUR part YOU will acquire YOUR souls. <sup>20</sup> "Furthermore, when YOU see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. <sup>21</sup> Then let those in Ju-de'a begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her; <sup>22</sup> because these are days for meting out justice, that all the things written may be fulfilled. <sup>23</sup> Woe to the pregnant women and the ones suckling a baby in those days! For there will be great necessity upon the land and wrath on this people; <sup>24</sup> and they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled.</p>

Bible scholars are in agreement that "Mark's" account was written first, of the three that are here cited. That means that we can read and examine Mark's account of the conversation as the oldest rendering of what it is believed that Jesus said to his disciples. Also, Bible scholars know that "Matthew's" and "Luke's" accounts were *based* on the account written in "Mark." That means that they derived their information from "Mark's" account. This tells us that whether one argues that "Matthew" and "Luke" essentially copied "Mark" for their own written account or whether they are in agreement due to "inspiration," the underlying fact remains that there should be little or no discrepancies *in the account itself*. However, there are differences and discrepancies—not in irrelevant details, *but in the actual ordering of events and the placement of those events*.

It should be noteworthy for the reader that "Mark's" account makes mention of the "days of a tribulation" and states that it will be on such a scale that "has not occurred from the beginning of the creation which God created until that time" and also states that this tribulation "will not occur again" after it takes place. For emphasis, the writer of "Mark" points out that "unless {God} had cut short the days, no flesh would be saved," but that "on account of the chosen ones whom he has chosen he has cut short the days." **[See EndNote #1]**

The majority of Christians rightfully acknowledge that a devastating tribulation occurred upon the Jews when the Roman armies came against Jerusalem in 70CE. In fact, the actual *details* of that siege and destruction so clearly are indicated in the passage, that it would be folly to suggest otherwise. Jesus had warned his followers that when they caught sight of the "disgusting thing," they were to flee "to the mountains." Historically speaking, there was around 3 years' reprieve in which to escape, because the Roman armies left off from their siege for that time of pause before the final, merciless slaughter recorded in the pages of history, in 70CE. Those horrific events definitively met the tribulation described, and, prophetically speaking,

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were days for meting out Jehovah's justice against His chosen ones, the nation of Israel.

The *problem* is that modern-day Christians don't stop there. They feel that there is to be a *greater* fulfillment of this foretold "tribulation" by insinuating that there is to be a *Great* Tribulation, of an even *bigger* scale, in *our* day. All the while, they render the Bible's own declared Truth as *untrue*. The reality is that the account is a *promise*: as bad as the Tribulation would be, it would *not* occur *again*. So, if we declare our agreement that the "tribulation" had even the tiniest measure of fulfillment in 70CE, we cannot then say *but there is coming a greater fulfillment* in our day. Either it was fulfilled, or it was not.

This creates a problematic situation for modern-day Christianity, because the majority of Christians looks at the world scene and can see plainly that the conditions are getting "worse" for those alive in our day. As an example, how does one explain that there are more people dying today than died in 70CE when Rome rose up against Jerusalem and slaughtered so many Jews? How does one explain the Holocaust of World War II, at the behest of Adolph Hitler and his Nazi regime? And how does one explain the fact that humankind now has the capability to wipe out all human life on this planet?

The solution: adjust the *intentions* of the Bible writers so that while what they wrote is true "in a sense," what they *intended* it to mean had application for *our* day, when we would see a *greater* fulfillment. It's an inescapable case of trying to "have your cake and eat it too." This line of reasoning is especially prevalent among "Jehovah's Witnesses," who subscribe to the Watchtower's application of "the chosen ones" spoken of in "Mark's" account to mean the "anointed," or "144,000" or "spiritual Israel." By extension, "the chosen ones" can also be applied to a much lesser degree to "Jehovah's Witnesses" as a religious group. So, when one of "Jehovah's Witnesses" reads Mark 13:20, and they encounter the expression "the chosen ones," they mentally substitute the expression with the ones claiming to be "anointed" or "of the 144,000" among "Jehovah's Witnesses."

Other Christian groups exhibit similar "replacement" thinking when it comes to this verse, believing that in some form or another, Christianity will come under some coordinated effort to stomp it out of existence, igniting a "Great Tribulation." Of course, I am over-simplifying the actual collection of beliefs surrounding the "tribulation," but as stated at the outset, it is not the purpose of this article to examine and critically refute all of those various teachings.

Getting back to the "tribulation," though, there are some points that need to be made as to the timing, historical reference, *and* the questions that it leaves modern-day Christians with in our beliefs, such as mentioned a few paragraphs ago.

Let's argue for a moment that modern-day Christianity *is* correct: that while the tribulation which the Jews underwent in 70CE was, in fact, real and valid—that there is *also* a modern-day fulfillment that will occur, in *our* day.

If Jehovah God knew that such a Tribulation was to occur, why didn't He do something to *prevent* it in the case of the Jews in 70CE, and why not do something to *prevent* it when it occurs in *our* day, presumably on a much larger scale with even *more loss of life*?

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The answer rests in "Luke's" account. The "tribulation" is equated with "days for meting out justice, that all the things written may be fulfilled." (Luke 21:22, NWT) It was *Jehovah's* justice that was being carried out by the Tribulation taking place, His judgment against the apostate nation of Israel and its religious leaders. In their unfaithfulness, they had brought the wrath of their Owner down upon them. (Confer Matthew 23:32)

Only the *faithful* ones would succeed in escaping this momentous period of judgment from Jehovah God. Even if we argue that there *is* a modern-day fulfillment, the *target* for the Tribulation of judgment does away with the vain notion that the Tribulation is against so-called "faithful Christians" in some "final" effort to stamp out Christianity "once and for all." Also, if the "faithful Christians" are considered synonymous with "the chosen ones," then why would the Tribulation need to be cut short by Jehovah if faithful Christians are to be "raptured" before the so-called coming "Great Tribulation" begins? Why not allow the *rest* of humankind to wipe itself out, since it itself will be caught up in the "Great Tribulation" anyhow? After all, the "faithful" ones will have escaped the Tribulation by identifying when it was time to "leave Judea" and flee "to the mountains." Or, as some religions teach their adherents, they will be raptured away, not even suffering a broken fingernail.

It's clear, at least to me, that there are serious *problems* with modern-day Christianity's view and understanding of the "tribulation" spoken of within the pages of God's Word. It's a case of trying to make a square peg fit into a round hole, and each branch or denomination trying to put its own doctrinal spin on the issue of the Biblical "tribulation."

If we simply *accept* what the Bible *itself* says, and set aside our *need* to make the writers' intentions match *our* expectations, we are left with only one application: that the "tribulation" Jesus is describing was the one experienced by the nation of Israel in 70CE at the hands of the Roman armies. The fact of the matter is that their "house" was abandoned to them, and Jehovah removed His protection that they might experience His displeasure towards them. (Matthew 23:38)

Just as in the days of Elijah, when seven thousand men came through because of their faithfulness towards their Grand Creator, there was again a "remnant" of faithful ones who succeeded in escaping the Tribulation of 70CE. (Romans 11:5) The apostle Paul argued *at length* that even in their apostasy, the nation of Israel was *never* rejected by Jehovah God. (Romans 11:1) And if they were never *rejected*, then they never *ceased* to be the "chosen ones" of Jehovah, the first people that Jehovah God ever formed a special covenant relationship with. Even in the words of Jesus, one finds that it was the nation of Israel which rejected their Owner, not the other way around. (Confer Matthew 23:37)

Again, we either accept the Bible at its word, or we reject it and impose our own interpretation, to suit *our* interests.

We need to remind ourselves that the Tribulation was specifically for the nation of Israel, for its apostasy and unfaithfulness, and *only* for the nation of Israel.

How do we know this? And how do we know that there isn't a modern-day or latter-day fulfillment (a forthcoming *Great Tribulation*)?

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First, we have already established that the Tribulation was for the nation of Israel, Jehovah's "chosen ones," His covenanted people, due to their course of apostasy and unfaithfulness. We confirmed this by referring to Jesus' own words at Matthew 23:37:

<sup>33</sup> "Serpents, offspring of vipers, how are YOU to flee from the judgment of Ge-hen'na?  
<sup>34</sup> For this reason, here I am sending forth to YOU prophets and wise men and public instructors. Some of them YOU will kill and impale, and some of them YOU will scourge in YOUR synagogues and persecute from city to city; <sup>35</sup> that there may come upon YOU all the righteous blood spilled on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zech-a-ri'ah son of Bar-a-chi'ah, whom YOU murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. <sup>36</sup> Truly I say to YOU, All these things will come upon this generation.  
<sup>37</sup> "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,— how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But YOU people did not want it. <sup>38</sup> Look! YOUR house is abandoned to YOU.—Matthew 23:33-38 (NWT)

Establishing the order of events, we have Jesus first saying that a persecution will be carried out by the nation of Israel against those who are sent forth to her, these being "prophets and wise men and public instructors" and that some of these would be killed, some scourged, and that the persecution will take place "from city to city." This is in accordance with Jesus' prediction: "...that there may come upon YOU all the righteous blood spilled on the earth." He even adds, "Truly I say to YOU, All these things will come upon this generation."

Which "generation" is he referring to? Is he referring to some future generation, some 2,000 years hence? Of course not, because he never says "*that* generation"—he says "*this* generation." It's a judgment spoken to the ones hearing him saying it. To the "wicked generation" that was alive in his day. He says with unmistakable finality that their "house" is "abandoned" to them. What "house"?

The issue of the abandoning of this "house" is relevant to our discussion, because we need to understand *what* exactly was abandoned by Jehovah God, since we've already established that He didn't reject them as His "chosen ones." Logically reasoning on the matter should cause us to recognize that the "house" and the "chosen ones" are separate things.

Jerusalem was long considered the holy city of the nation of Israel. It was there that one could find the Temple itself, built and dedicated to the true worship of Jehovah God. The nation of Israel developed an idolatrous attachment to the city, working out political alliances and appeasing the Roman government to maintain their continued existence and to protect the city of Jerusalem and the Temple therein, instead of showing reliance on Jehovah God for continued prosperity and blessings.

When the Roman armies came to set siege to it, the Jews dug in and were willing to go to their death to defend it. And when the armies of Rome left for a reprieve, the Jews believed they had achieved a momentous victory against a world power. It wasn't long before they realized how wrong they were—and at what price that realization came! Any notions they may have had that it was Jehovah that brought them their temporary "victory" were suddenly dashed in 70CE. Jehovah had removed all forms of divine protection from this holiest of all cities in the world. Even the Temple was ransacked and destroyed by the foreign legions. Jesus' words held true: their "house" really had been abandoned to them. But not only that: they had

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brought the wrath of their Owner down upon them, and the Tribulation was their sentence.

This was not to mean that Jehovah would forever after forget about them, or the Covenants He had established with the nation of Israel. Even Jesus indicated this when he said “For I say to YOU, YOU will no means see me from henceforth until YOU say, ‘Blessed is he that comes in {Jehovah’s} name!’”

According to Jesus, the start of the Tribulation for the nation of Israel also marked the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles, a period during which the nation of Israel would be essentially blind to the fact that their Messiah had been in their midst. The apostle Paul worded it thus:

**What, then? The very thing Israel is earnestly seeking he did not obtain, but the ones chosen obtained it. The rest had their sensibilities blunted;<sup>8</sup> just as it is written: “God has given them a spirit of deep sleep, eyes so as not to see and ears so as not to hear, down to this very day.”<sup>9</sup> Also, David says: “Let their table become for them a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and a retribution;<sup>10</sup> let their eyes become darkened so as not to see, and always bow down their back.”**

**<sup>11</sup> Therefore I ask, Did they stumble so that they fell completely? Never may that happen! But by their false step there is salvation to people of the nations, to incite them to jealousy... True, with reference to the good news they are enemies for YOUR sakes, but with reference to [God’s] choosing they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.—Romans 11:7-11, 28 (NWT)**

Here, Paul reaffirms the fact that the nation of Israel *is* the “chosen ones.” In addition, they are blinded to the Good News in order to incite them to jealousy. For thousands of years, they had been Jehovah’s specially selected people, out of all the earth, and He had cared for them, protected them, tried teaching them—all to the exclusion of every other nation or people on the Earth. And yet they trampled their lofty privilege, even going so far as to allow the very Son of God to be put to death. This would not go without notice or punishment by Jehovah God. But after the time of punishing was over, He would lovingly extend Himself to them. Until then, the Undeserved Kindness would be extended to *all* who would accept the Good News of God’s Kingdom, as attested to by John 1:12. (See also John 4:20-23)

So far, then, we’ve established these things:

1. The tribulation was Jehovah’s “meting out” of judgment for the nation of Israel’s apostasy and unfaithfulness. (Luke 21:22-23; Matthew 23:37-38) They had come to have an idolatrous view of their home city, Jerusalem, and thought it “untouchable,” believing that Jehovah would never allow anything to happen to it (even the disciples were appalled at the idea of something happening to the Temple).
2. The tribulation marked the *beginning* of the Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24), during which the nation of Israel would be divinely blinded in order to incite them to jealousy as Jehovah sent forth the calling to Gentiles. (Romans 11:8-10; Romans 11:11)
3. The tribulation took place “within” the generation of those he had chastised, (Matthew 23:36; Mark 13:30; Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32) in 70CE, when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and killed countless Jewish men, women and children in a horrendous slaughter, after the Jews had persecuted

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followers of Jesus that Jesus had sent forth to Jerusalem and the nation of Israel as a witness of him and who he was.

Since the tribulation Jesus foretold took place in 70CE *and* Jesus said that such a tribulation would not occur again, we are left with some important questions that need to be answered.

### **Question: *What about the Holocaust carried out in World War II?***

Since we have already determined that the evidence that Jehovah had removed divine protection from the nation of Israel is in the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple *and* that the nation of Israel has not yet made a proclamation of "Blessed is he that comes in {Jehovah's} name!" then the tribulation which started in 70CE is limited to that frame of prophetic time, but the times of the Gentiles continues.

The best way to understand the situation is by re-examining the tribulation, it's intended group, it's reason for taking place, and how it was "cut short," as well as why it needed to be. We can perform all of these without ever needing to give a point-by-point rebuttal to so-called "replacement" theology so prevalent in modern-day Christianity, because by verifying the tribulation of 70CE, we *automatically* dismiss any attempts to pin the tribulation to a later time and group.

As already established, the Jews were deemed unfaithful due to their course of apostasy from Jehovah God. They had turned to the nations in order to secure their prosperity and continuation, by forming alliances and allegiances. As a result, Jehovah God brought judgment upon them in the form of first the tribulation, and then a period of blindness and mourning as they felt what it was like to be totally cut-off for their apostasy. They would be overrun by the same nations which they had looked to for survival. And the rage of Rome was without doubt insatiable as soldiers destroyed the Jewish system of things in 70CE. Had those days *not* been "cut short," it is certainly within the realm of probability that every single Jew would have been hunted down and killed.

Jehovah, in His vast Wisdom and immense love, *did* cause the anger of the world power of Rome to subside, however. This was not only to save those Jews who *had* heeded the warning and fled to the wilderness (Revelation 12:6) as the faithful remnant of Israel likened to the remnant that survived in Elijah's day (Romans 11:5), but also to allow an unknown number of Jews living in and around Judea to survive and to remember the Great Day of Jehovah's anger. (See Isaiah 59:1-15, which appropriately describes the spiritual condition of Israel in the days of Jesus. Also, compare with Isaiah 60:20, which speaks of a period of "mourning" on the part of Israel.)

Even so, the hatred by Israel's enemies remains, and blatant examples of this deep-seated hatred can be found either in the pages of history—where we read of the spite that has been heaped upon Jews even by Christians, starting around the turn of the first century and growing in intensity for the centuries after—down to our modern-day, where tensions are always at their peak in the Middle East as surrounding national groups express their disdain and hatred for Jews every day through newspapers, websites, and the evening news reports. In spite of this longtime enmity, there is evidently *something* holding the full measure of it back,



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holding the enemies of Israel back from carrying out their genocidal rage against the Jewish population.

That, of course, raises the issue of the Holocaust which took place in World War II at the behest of Adolph Hitler and his followers and supporters. Was the Holocaust the precursor of a forthcoming tribulation greater than the one experienced in 70CE?

In order for that to be the case, we would first have to dismiss several already-established scriptural and historical facts by our declaring:

1. That the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70CE was not the Tribulation which Jesus said the nation of Israel would suffer for their apostasy and lack of faithfulness and that since it wasn't, then Jesus lied when he said that the generation alive when he said the warnings and spoke the judgment would see the fulfillment of his words.
2. That the faithful Jewish Christians who recognized the Roman troops' withdrawal from Jerusalem was the *right* time for Christians to flee, before those armies returned in 70CE to destroy the city and its Temple, was merely *coincidence*.
3. That Jerusalem and the Temple was not destroyed after all, and Jehovah's judgment against Israel for its apostasy is still pending.

In any case, it is inescapable that the tribulation occurred in 70CE, so how does that fact tie in with the suffering which Jews endured in the Holocaust? On a similar note, is the Holocaust evidence that a "greater" or "Great Tribulation" is in store today?

Again, not if we accept Jesus as having spoken true. It is logically impossible for us to say that Jesus' words found fulfillment in 70CE, and yet say that there is an even "greater" tribulation yet to occur, and that *that* is what Jesus *meant* when he expressly stated that the tribulation which was to occur *would not occur again*.

Which leaves the question of the Holocaust. The Bible is silent on the Holocaust, insofar as I am aware. The genocidal campaign that Adolph Hitler attempted to carry out against Jews did not have the same impact that the campaign carried out by Rome *did* have. For one, Jews were concentrated in Judea, for the most part, in the days of Rome's dominance of Israel. In Hitler's day, the tribes of Israel had already been dispersed out into the world, displaced from their land and to remain so during the times of the Gentiles. Too, there is nothing to indicate that the Holocaust was a result of punishment from Jehovah God—as He had already imposed discipline on the nation of Israel, and withdrawn His protection. Having done so in 70CE, Jehovah would not have re-entered punishment since the nation of Israel is still under the original sanction—which has resulted in their spiritual blindness as to the Kingdom of God. That seems to indicate that the Holocaust was simply another scarred blemish on the history of humankind and its ability to hate.

**Question: Why does the account say that "...no flesh would be saved..."?**

One needs only to look at the situation on the world scene today to find the "inspiration" for so many Christian groups applying those words to the modern-day world scene. Humankind has harnessed the power of the atom and learned the

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devilish potency of chemical warfare, not to mention the apparent disregard for the value of human life as thousands die daily from starvation, disease, poverty, and more.

However, such things are indicative of another warning that Jesus gave, and not the one involving the tribulation, which would be “cut short” by Jehovah for the sake of His covenanted people, Israel. As mentioned in the previous section, had Rome’s wrath not abated, it is entirely within the realm of probability that Jews would have become practically extinct. Fortunately, those days *were* cut short for the sake of Jehovah’s “chosen ones.” Of course, since the wrath of Rome *did* abate in its assault on Jews, we can only speculate as to what might have happened had it not been “cut short.”

Another school of thought concerning the “days” being “cut short” so that at least *some* flesh might be saved alive is that the pause and withdrawal by Rome marked the foretold “cutting short” period of the tribulation, which allowed faithful ones to flee “to the mountains.”

This is a plausible reasoning on the issue that seems to be promoted within the account of “Matthew”:

**“Therefore, when YOU catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy place, (let the reader use discernment,) <sup>16</sup> then let those in Ju-de´a begin fleeing to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let the man on the housetop not come down to take the goods out of his house; <sup>18</sup> and let the man in the field not return to the house to pick up his outer garment. <sup>19</sup> Woe to the pregnant women and those suckling a baby in those days! <sup>20</sup> Keep praying that YOUR flight may not occur in wintertime, nor on the sabbath day; <sup>21</sup> for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. <sup>22</sup> In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short.—Matthew 24:15-22 (NWT)**

In this rendering of the conversation by Jesus to his disciples, he tells them that when they “catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation,” which would have been the Roman armies, Jesus says, “then let those in Judea *begin* fleeing to the mountains.” This would appear to indicate that an exodus would not occur all at once, and it also indicates that it wasn’t a warning merely to those at Jerusalem, but rather to all those “in Judea” itself. This, of course, reaffirms that the judgment was coming *against Judea*, including Jerusalem. In other words: against the nation of Israel—that is, the Jewish nation.

In this alternative explanation, the brief intermission in the Roman assault afforded the faithful Christians an opportunity to escape—even though by all appearances the withdrawal of the Roman army was perceived to be a victory by the Jews who had withstood the siege. Thus, fleeing Jerusalem and Judea itself was an unprecedented act of faith on the part of those who had become followers of Christ. The days that “were cut short” refers to that brief intermission before Rome’s armies returned to carry out the destruction of Jerusalem in 70CE, a provided avenue and sign from Jehovah God to those faithfully listening to the words of His Son, Jesus. What other logical explanation was there for the odd withdrawal of Roman troops from the initial siege imposed by Rome, if not divine providence? And in this alternative view, the “chosen ones” are a reference to the faithful remnant of Jewish Christians. (see John 1:12, compare with Matthew 22:14)

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In either understanding, the core issue is that the “no flesh saved” is in reference to either the nation of Israel as a whole, or to the faithful few who became Christian. Either way, it is *not* a reference to the modern-day world condition where humankind now holds within its grasp the ability to wipe out every living thing on the surface of the earth. As tempting as it can be at times to impress upon someone the validity of God’s Word, the Bible, we should never find ourselves having to take a scripture out of its proper context in order to strengthen our witness.

When discussing with someone the bleak situation that the world is facing today, rather than lean upon a scripture like Matthew 24:21-22 to explain the situation to them, we would be better served to point to Luke 21:25-26—which appropriately describes things as they are today.

And while the tribulation arrived and then ended, there remains the “days” of “trampling” by the Gentile nations. The “days” that Jesus was referring to, it appears, was to the time which was allotted to the Gentile nations to trample down Jehovah’s “chosen ones.” It was not for an indefinite period, but was predetermined by Israel’s Owner in His immeasurable mercy and wisdom. Jehovah would be stern with His covenanted people, but He would not be unloving toward them. (Compare 2 Corinthians 2:7-8) At the same time, He would be unjust and disloyal if He simply allowed the Gentile nations to trample down His covenanted people indiscriminately for all time, knowing human’s capacity for dominance and wanton slaughter (Ecclesiastes 8:9). He has, therefore, set the limits.

In their supremacy, unchecked by Jehovah God except for the time which they are given to trample Israel, advancements would take place and this we can see by the leaps and bounds of such things as technology, science, medicine, and military. With advancements comes boldness, and with boldness comes ignorance. (Compare Genesis 11:6)

It’s *reasonable*, then, to acknowledge the increase in “the roaring of the sea and its agitation, while men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth” (Luke 21:25b-26a, NWT) just as we can acknowledge the validity in “on earth anguish of nations, not knowing the way out”—not because they aren’t trying to establish peace and security, but because they are looking to *themselves* for those things, and not to the Kingdom of God. That’s why they don’t *know* the way out from the troubles of this system of things. (cf. Luke 18:34; Romans 10:2-3) However, in spite of humankind’s propensity for self-destruction, there is no indication in the Bible that Jehovah God will allow humankind to actually destroy itself. Quite the opposite, the Bible indicates that He will bring to ruin those ruining the earth.

### **Question: What about the “tribulation” mentioned at Matthew 24:9?**

It’s easy enough to think that the “tribulation” mentioned at Matthew 24:9 is somehow synonymous with the “tribulation” which began in 70CE. However, a careful reasoning on it will demonstrate that they are two separate periods of trouble. This also introduces one of the more curious passages in the Christian Greek scriptures where the accounts disagree *as to chronological placement*.

According to the account in Matthew, this is what we are told:

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**<sup>9</sup> “Then people will deliver YOU up to tribulation and will kill YOU, and YOU will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name.—Matthew 24:8 (NWT)**

The use of the word “then” indicates that the writer places the timing of the “tribulation” to be suffered by Christians as taking place *after* the events of Matthew 24:4-8. That is, *if* the writer uses “then” in the way we *expect* him to be using it. Again, this is a situation where we must be absolutely certain that we are not imposing our own interpretation onto the Bible’s message due to certain preconceptions we bring.

The Greek word used here is *τότε* (*tote*), and means “then, at that time.” Now, if the writer of Matthew uses this in order to establish chronological order, that is, by placing the “tribulation” against Christians as occurring *after* the events described in Matthew 24:4-8, why did he go against what the writers of Mark (the earlier account) and Luke established in *their* accounts as to chronological order? Why would there be a discrepancy? If we insist that the accounts must match, we are left with only two possibilities:

- 1) either the writer of Matthew *purposely* changed the timing, disagreeing with the writers of Mark and Luke as to what Jesus *actually* said;
- 2) or the writer of Matthew is not using “then” in the sense that we are supposing (as a chronological marker placing the tribulation of Christians as occurring *after* the events of Matthew 24:4-8)

A comparison of the three accounts is appropriate at this time:

Mark 13: 9	Matthew 24:9	Luke 21:12
“As for YOU, look out for yourselves; people will deliver YOU up to local courts, and YOU will be beaten in synagogues and be put on the stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them.	“Then people will deliver YOU up to tribulation and will kill YOU, and YOU will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name.	<sup>12</sup> “But before all these things people will lay their hands upon YOU and persecute YOU, delivering YOU up to the synagogues and prisons, YOU being haled before kings and governors for the sake of my name.

According to the older account (Mark), Jesus tells his disciples that they will be persecuted right up until the “end.” At the same time, he tells them that a “tribulation” is coming against the nation of Israel, and to be on the watch for it that they might escape the coming “tribulation.” The two events, then, as far as the older gospel account is concerned, are *separate*. Interestingly, the writer of Mark only uses the word “tribulation” in reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

Similarly, the writer of Luke has Jesus telling his disciples that they will be persecuted for their preaching assignment, but specifies that this persecution will take place *before* the events described at Luke 21:8-11. This shows an agreement with the writer of Mark. And, just as the writer of Mark only used “tribulation” in reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem, the writer of Luke likewise differentiates between “persecution” and “tribulation” to avoid any confusion.

That leaves us with the writer of Matthew. In “Matthew’s” account, there are actually *two* tribulations mentioned. The first is used as an expression of the persecution which will be experienced by those carrying out the assigned preaching word, and a “great tribulation” which will be experienced by the nation of Israel. This should help

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us to appreciate that the writer of Matthew *also* recognizes a difference between the two. Even though he has elected to use the same word for both situations, he marks the one coming against Israel as the *greater* of the two.

Which leaves us with the issue of “Matthew’s” use of the word “then” in his account. This can be resolved by realizing that what the writer of Matthew is indicating is that the tribulation that will be experienced by Jesus’ apostles was to take place *before* the “great tribulation” which was to come upon the nation of Israel, as noted at Matthew 23:34-35 and 24:21. Whatever his reason was for using “then” at Matthew 24:9, the tribulation in that verse occurs *before* the “great tribulation” in Matthew 24:21, and that is really all that we can firmly establish in our day. But that is enough to also establish agreement with the other two gospel accounts, Mark and Luke.

### **Question: What is “the end” mentioned at Matthew 24:13?**

Here, again, we have a passage where modern-day Christianity has imposed its interpretation on what the Bible says. The majority of Christianity reads this verse and believes it is referring to the end of the system of things which we live in. This is especially true among “Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

But what happens if we allow the Bible to speak for *itself* in this matter?

According to the account in Matthew, Jesus makes specific prophetic statements to the religious leaders of Israel, noting that they will be persecutors of those whom he sends forth to them, but that their judgment is coming. The end of their cherished system is coming swiftly, in fact.

**“Woe to YOU, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because YOU build the graves of the prophets and decorate the memorial tombs of the righteous ones,<sup>30</sup> and YOU say, ‘If we were in the days of our forefathers, we would not be sharers with them in the blood of the prophets.’<sup>31</sup> Therefore YOU are bearing witness against yourselves that YOU are sons of those who murdered the prophets.<sup>32</sup> Well, then, fill up the measure of YOUR forefathers.**

<sup>33</sup> **“Serpents, offspring of vipers, how are YOU to flee from the judgment of Ge-hen’na?<sup>34</sup> For this reason, here I am sending forth to YOU prophets and wise men and public instructors. Some of them YOU will kill and impale, and some of them YOU will scourge in YOUR synagogues and persecute from city to city;<sup>35</sup> that there may come upon YOU all the righteous blood spilled on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zech-a-ri’ah son of Bar-a-chi’ah, whom YOU murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.<sup>36</sup> Truly I say to YOU, All these things will come upon this generation.**

<sup>37</sup> **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,— how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But YOU people did not want it.<sup>38</sup> Look! YOUR house is abandoned to YOU.<sup>39</sup> For I say to YOU, YOU will by no means see me from henceforth until YOU say, ‘Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah’s name!’”—Matthew 23:29-39 (NWT)**

After this scathing exchange, the disciples are shocked at what Jesus was suggesting in his denouncement. Jerusalem destroyed? But this was the holiest city of Israel, and where the Temple dedicated to Jehovah Himself was located!

So, the disciples approach Jesus to find out more, first saying:

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Mark 13: 1	Matthew 24: 1	Luke 21: 5
As he was going out of the temple one of his disciples said to him: "Teacher, see! what sort of stones and what sort of buildings!"	Departing now, Jesus was on his way from the temple, but his disciples approached to show him the buildings of the temple.	Later, as certain ones were speaking concerning the temple, how it was adorned with fine stones and dedicated things,

In all three gospel accounts, the disciples are trying to draw Jesus' attention to the Temple, how it was such an important part of the Jewish system of things, the core of their worship of Jehovah God.

Jesus understands what they are trying to impress upon him, and says to them in return:

Mark 13: 2	Matthew 24: 2	Luke 21: 6
However, Jesus said to him: "Do you behold these great buildings? By no means will a stone be left here upon a stone and not be thrown down."	<sup>2</sup> In response he said to them: "Do YOU not behold all these things? Truly I say to YOU, By no means will a stone be left here upon a stone and not be thrown down."	he said: "As for these things that YOU are beholding, the days will come in which not a stone upon a stone will be left here and not be thrown down."

The suggestion appears to cause the disciples serious concern that the Temple, which had been built, destroyed, and then rebuilt, might be destroyed *yet again*, and they plainly inquire about this:

Mark 13: 3	Matthew 24: 3	Luke 21: 7
And as he was sitting on the Mount of Olives with the temple in view, Peter and James and John and Andrew began to ask him privately: <sup>4</sup> "Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are destined to come to a conclusion?"	While he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying: "Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your {presence} and of the conclusion of the system of things?"	Then they questioned him, saying: "Teacher, when will these things actually be, and what will be the sign when these things are destined to occur?"

The first thing we need to establish is what *"things"* are being inquired about by the disciples when they ask "When will these things be."

That can be ascertained by simply looking at the *context* of the question. Even the writers of the gospel accounts knew what the disciples are asking about: the persecution of those sent forth by Jesus (Matthew 23:34), the abandonment of Jerusalem by Jehovah God (Matthew 23:38), the coming of the Messiah (Matthew 23:39), and the destruction of the Temple (Matthew 24:2). The "conclusion of the system of things" or "end" is the conclusion of the *Jewish system*, *not the Gentile system* as many Christians today believe. We can prove this by pointing out that it is the domination of the Gentiles during the times of the Gentiles (the Gentile system

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of things) which *initiates* the conclusion of the Jewish system of things, starting with the period of Tribulation (“*great tribulation*”, according to “Matthew”) to be experienced by unfaithful Israel. This “trampling” underfoot of Israel by the nations was to continue up until the appearance of the Son of Man.

As further evidence, one only needs to look to the Jewish captivity to Babylon as an example of when the Jewish system of things and system of worship were ended, and remained non-existent until the Jews’ return from captivity and the rebuilding of the Temple. This time, however, the ending of that system of worship would be *final*, because the sacrifice of the Christ would open the way for *all* who would accept the invitation to become sons of the True God (the ripping of the curtain in the Temple that separated the Holy of Holies from the remainder of the Temple is likewise an indication of this).

Curiously enough, some point to Israel’s (re)birth as a nation in 1948 as an indication that either Israel has been restored or that the Temple will be rebuilt. However, we would do well to note just *who* authorized the nation of Israel to have sovereignty once again: it was the same Gentile nations which have been trampling it underfoot for centuries upon centuries, not Jehovah God. And the prophecies surrounding the *real and true* restoration of Israel—as recorded in the Bible—have not underwent fulfillment in even the tiniest ways. The sovereignty of Israel that we are witness to today is an illusion meant to mislead even the “chosen ones,” if possible.

**Question: Is Jesus’ return (coming) *invisible*?**

The publishers of the *New World Translation* chose to use “presence” in place of the word “coming” used in the majority of Bible translations at Matthew 24:3, and this creates an opening for the unique teaching held by “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and a few other Christian groups that Jesus’ return would be *invisible*, known only to the faithful followers of Jesus.

Rather than discuss the pros and cons of such an editorial decision, which would fall outside the scope of this article, we would be better served by comparing the verse to the statement which instigated it:

Matthew 23:39	Matthew 24:3
For I say to YOU, YOU will by no means see me from henceforth until YOU say, ‘Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah’s name!’”	While he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying: “Tell us... what will be the sign of your presence...”

The logical question which should be asked, then, is how Jesus’ words at Matthew 23:39 can be fulfilled if Matthew 24:3 is speaking of an *invisible* presence or coming. This is further complicated by the fact that the accounts of “Mark” and “Luke” make no mention of Jesus’ “presence” or “coming” when citing the disciples making their inquiry of Jesus, making the issue surrounding Jesus’ “coming” or “presence” only a matter of importance to the writer of Matthew—and since that writer also includes the scathing accusations of Jesus against the Pharisees, as recorded at Matthew 23:29-38, the statement at Matthew 23:39 (Jesus’ “coming”) and Matthew 24:3 (Jesus’ “presence”) must have been related for the writer of “Matthew.”

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The argument posed by religious groups insisting on an *invisible* "presence" is that Jesus' presence is *only* known to his *faithful* followers. "Jehovah's Witnesses" teach, for example, that Jesus made his "invisible" return in 1914, and that only they recognized this monumental event. Unfortunately, this nullifies what Jesus said would occur *at his "presence" or "coming"*: that the "trampling" would *end* for the nation of Israel. One need only to look to see if the nation of Israel is now proclaiming what Jesus said they would when he *comes*: "Blessed is he that *comes* in {Jehovah's} name!"

The answer is there is no such proclamation being made by Jews alive today, *even though Jesus said that they would be declaring this at his coming*. Therefore, we must accept the fact that Jesus' "presence" or "coming" has not yet taking place *and* that the "trampling" imposed upon the nation of Israel is still underway, and that we are still living in the allotted "times of the Gentiles." Unfortunately, there are those who try to maneuver and manipulate the plainness of what the Bible says on the matter by providing loopy reasonings such as that there are differences between Jesus' "presence" and Jesus' "coming," and how "eyes of understanding" is what the Bible writers *meant*. Just as unfortunate is that a necessary rebuttal on the arguments supporting the view that "eyes of understanding" falls outside the framework of this article.

Still, it cannot be stressed enough the caution required on our part to avoid imposing our own preconceptions and biases upon the Bible's message, especially when we do so in order to support *our* teaching or understanding, over the Bible's teaching.

Jesus' return (or "presence" or "coming") will be as plain as it will be *glorious*. It will be unmistakable. Interpretations will not need to be adjusted from 1874 to 1914 or to any other year or date. While I do not *personally* believe that he will return in a *fleshly* body, I *do* believe that he will return in a spiritual manifestation the likes of which the world has never before seen, with full Kingdom power and glory, and all of his angels with him, as attested to in the following scriptures:

**For I say to YOU, YOU will by no means see me from henceforth until YOU say, 'Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah's name!'"—Matthew 23:39 (NWT)**

**"When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne.—Matthew 25:31 (NWT)**

**Look! He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, and those who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in grief because of him.—Revelation 1:7 (NWT)**

**And the heaven departed as a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and [every] island were removed from their places. <sup>15</sup> And the kings of the earth and the top-ranking ones and the military commanders and the rich and the strong ones and every slave and [every] free person hid themselves in the caves and in the rock-masses of the mountains. <sup>16</sup> And they keep saying to the mountains and to the rock-masses: "Fall over us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, <sup>17</sup> because the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"—Revelation 6:14-17 (NWT)**



**Question: What of the “false christs” Jesus warned about?**

After the disciples asked their questions of Jesus, concerning the things he had said, Jesus gave them a warning to not be misled:

Mark 13: 5-6	Matthew 24: 4-5	Luke 21: 8
So Jesus started to say to them: “Look out that nobody misleads YOU. <sup>6</sup> Many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and will mislead many.	And in answer Jesus said to them: “Look out that nobody misleads YOU; <sup>5</sup> for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.	He said: “Look out that YOU are not misled; for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The due time has approached.’ Do not go after them.

This is a particularly interesting passage in the Bible, because of the numerous ways it could be understood to us today. Only one part of Jesus’ warning is clear and unmistakable: the warning to not be misled.

Jesus says this, apparently, in relation to the inevitability that there would be those who would “come on the basis” of his name, saying “I am he” or “I am the Christ” and “the due time has approached.” Where the writers of Mark and Matthew say that “many” will be misled, the writer of Luke simply says “Do not go after them.”

The difficulty in understanding is in whether those coming “on the basis of (Jesus’) name” are acknowledging that *Jesus* is the Christ or whether *they themselves* are claiming to be the Christ.

If these ones are acknowledging *Jesus* to be the Christ, then their “misleading” may be due to their using that acknowledgement as part of their own agenda, whatever that may be. One possibility is of their making claims that a rebellion against Rome is what “Jesus would have wanted,” when this was never the case. Yet historical records indicate that numerous instigators of rebellion against Rome rose up in Jesus’ day, as well as after his departure to heaven. Some of these may have heard some of what Jesus preached about the downfall of the yoke of Rome and the Kingdom of God being “at hand” and filled in the rest of blanks with their own approach to the problem, all the while using Jesus’ proclamations as a *basis* for their actions in order to secure followers. Interestingly, some modern-day scholars are now coming to the opinion that the betrayal by Judas was intended to compel Jesus into taking action and start an insurrection against Rome as well as manifesting his true identity to the world, and this change in perception has been publicized in some more modern media treatments of Jesus and his relationship with Judas. But the possibilities are endless, and we cannot know with any certainty because the Bible is silent on the matter, beyond casting Judas in an unfavorable light—even though it does acknowledge that Satan “entered into” Judas, thus compelling Judas to engage in actions he might not otherwise have of his own free will.

On the other hand, if these ones are *claiming themselves* to be the Christ, this, too, would be a cause for concern. But the disciples had already identified Jesus as the Christ, and it is unlikely that they would have been misled by someone else rising up and claiming to be the Christ.

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One argument I have presented on occasion is that these ones may be claiming to be *anointed*, which is actually what “Christ” means in Greek: “anointed one.” However, I am more inclined to think that these ones will simply be those who acknowledge that Jesus *is* the Christ, but try to carry out their own agendas, and there appears to be sound support within the Christian Greek scriptures:

**In like manner, notwithstanding, these men, too, indulging in dreams, are defiling the flesh and disregarding lordship and speaking abusively of glorious ones...Yet these [men] are speaking abusively of all the things they really do not know; but all the things that they do understand naturally like the unreasoning animals, in these things they go on corrupting themselves.**

<sup>11</sup> Too bad for them, because they have gone in the path of Cain, and have rushed into the erroneous course of Ba’laam for reward, and have perished in the rebellious talk of Ko’rah! <sup>12</sup> These are the rocks hidden below water in YOUR love feasts while they feast with YOU, shepherds that feed themselves without fear; waterless clouds carried this way and that by winds; trees in late autumn, [but] fruitless, having died twice, having been uprooted; <sup>13</sup> wild waves of the sea that foam up their own causes for shame; stars with no set course, for which the blackness of darkness stands reserved forever.—Jude 10:8, 10-13 (NWT)

The writer of Jude makes it clear that these ones are able to pass themselves off as sincere followers of Christ, hiding what they are. And they would draw off followers after themselves as they ingratiated themselves to followers of Christ.

**Question: What of the “wars and reports of wars” Jesus predicted?**

This is another one of those passages which is a favorite for modern-day Christian groups to misapply to *our* day in order to explain why, if the events described in this passage had their fulfillment in 70CE, are there still wars—and on an increasing scale. That’s a valid question that will be addressed shortly.

Before we do, however, let’s look at what Jesus says to his disciples:

Mark 13:7a	Matthew 24:6a	Luke 21:9a
Moreover, when YOU hear of wars and reports of wars, do not be terrified;	YOU are going to hear of wars and reports of wars; see that YOU are not terrified.	Furthermore, when YOU hear of wars and disorders, do not be terrified.

You may notice that I haven’t included the very next portion of the scripture in any of these citations, and there is a reason, which I will get to in a moment.

The three gospel writers’ accounts are in agreement that the disciples are going to “hear of wars and reports of wars.” When we think of “war,” we may immediately think of war on the scale that war occurs *today*, so if we find ourselves doing so, we have to recognize that we are imposing our own preconception on the Bible’s message, and avoid doing so. This is made more clear when we locate our “stream of prophetic time” marker in Jesus’ specific words “the end is not yet” and remind ourselves that “the end is not yet” is Jesus’ reference to the end of the Jewish system of things, as we’ve already established earlier in this article.

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With that in mind, then, the “wars and reports of wars” must be a reference to the uprisings against Rome which would begin to occur (and had been occurring, even in Jesus’ day), leading up to the final assault by Rome in 70CE. Historical records offer us ample proof that the Jews carried out numerous uprisings with increasing tenacity, up until the destruction of Jerusalem. The news of these uprisings would reach the ears of his disciples, but they are told by Jesus not to be terrified (some translations use the word “troubled” here) at such things.

Next, Jesus tells them:

Mark 13:7b	Matthew 24:6b	Luke 21:9b
[these things] must take place, but the end is not yet.	For these things must take place, but the end is not yet.	For these things must occur first, but the end does not [occur] immediately.”

Here again, we find that vague expression “these things.” The question we find ourselves asking is “*What things is Jesus referring to as having to take place?*” While most Christians readily apply “these things” to the wars and reports of wars, most fail to recognize that Jesus is *also* talking about the false “christs” which would arise.

Notice how one Bible writer puts it:

**Young children, it is the last hour, and, just as YOU have heard that antichrist is coming, even now there have come to be many antichrists; from which fact we gain the knowledge that it is the last hour.<sup>19</sup> They went out from us, but they were not of our sort; for if they had been of our sort, they would have remained with us. But [they went out] that it might be shown up that not all are of our sort.—1 John 2:18-19 (NWT)**

Also, this statement, by another Bible writer:

**However, brothers, respecting the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we request of YOU<sup>2</sup> not to be quickly shaken from YOUR reason nor to be excited either through an inspired expression or through a verbal message or through a letter as though from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here.**

**<sup>3</sup> Let no one seduce YOU in any manner, because it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness gets revealed, the son of destruction...**

**And so now YOU know the thing that acts as a restraint, with a view to his being revealed in his own due time.<sup>7</sup> True, the mystery of this lawlessness is already at work; but only till he who is right now acting as a restraint gets to be out of the way.<sup>8</sup> Then, indeed, the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will do away with by the spirit of his mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his presence.—2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 6-8 (NWT)**

In both of these accounts, written *after* Jesus gave his warning to his disciples, it is recognized that false “christs” would be a significant part of the “things” which Jesus said “must take place” before the “end” of the Jewish system of things. It would be folly for us to say that when Jesus says that “these things must take place,” that he is only talking about “wars and reports of wars.”

And again, we can look to historical records, including the Bible itself, to see that this is precisely how things went for early Christianity, which came to be inundated with Gnostics, whose beliefs were similar enough to that of Christians, that they were able to worship alongside early Christians without being discovered for what they really

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were. Too, the Bible makes reference to apostates such as Hymenaeus and Philetus in the Christian congregation.

However, we want to also exercise caution when it comes to Jesus saying that the “end is not yet” because otherwise we will be snared into thinking that just because the “end” occurred in 70CE, this does *not* mean that wars would cease from the Earth. This is a line of reasoning that many fall into, however, and they dismiss the fulfillment of Jesus’ words that all of the things he prophesied would occur *within* the generation of those contemporaneous to him.

**Question: What of the “nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom” Jesus predicted?**

Again, this is a passage that is heavily relied upon by many “apocalyptic” religious groups, such as “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” who lean upon their own interpretation of the world events in relation to the prophetic statements made by Jesus, making it fit their body of beliefs in order to explain why things are the way they are today. One of the prevailing lines of reasoning on this verse is that because there have been *world wars*, then *surely* Jesus must have *meant that* when he said the following words:

Mark 13:8	Matthew 24:7-8	Luke 21:10-11
“For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, there will be earthquakes in one place after another, there will be food shortages. These are a beginning of pangs of distress.	’ “For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another. <sup>8</sup> All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress.	Then he went on to say to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; <sup>11</sup> and there will be great earthquakes, and in one place after another pestilences and food shortages; and there will be fearful sights and from heaven great signs.

If we accept Jesus’ own words, we will realize that when Jesus tells his disciples that the events he just mentioned are but the “beginning of pangs of distress,” that these “pangs of distress” are evidently another reference to the Tribulation that is to come upon the nation of Israel (compare Mark 13:17-19; Matthew 24:19-21; Luke 21:23-24).

Therefore, if these things are a *beginning* of “pangs of distress,” then these things mark the *beginning* of the Tribulation that the nation of Israel is to suffer, as borne out by the scriptures indicated in the preceding paragraph of this article. And so we are forced to conclude that when Jesus prophesies that “nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom,” he was indicating that the nation of Israel and the nation of Rome would clash, and this reached its climax in 70CE, with the period of trampling beginning by the Gentile nations.

What, though, about the “earthquakes in one place after another” and the “food shortages”? Religious groups such as “Jehovah’s Witnesses like to point to the so-called “increase” in the number of earthquakes which have occurred, especially since 1914, and the widespread disease epidemics which have taken place since 1914,

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such as the Spanish Influenza, and then argue that Jesus must have *meant* our day today for when these things would be fulfilled. The arguments are persuasive, of course, or “Jehovah’s Witnesses” would not be able to secure new additions to the movement—or other groups would not successfully find new ones to join their cause. But even if an argument is persuasive, it does not make it true.

As an example that earthquakes *were* occurring before the destruction of Jerusalem, in fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction, the great city of Pompeii was severely damaged in 63CE, forcing many parts of the city to be rebuilt (it was destroyed utterly in 79CE, when Mount Vesuvius erupted). For more information, visit the following article ([Don't blame the Trojan Horse: Earthquakes toppled ancient cities, Stanford geophysicist says](#))

On the topic of “food shortages” and “pestilences,” there was apparently no shortage of these in the closing days of the Jewish system of things, according to several historical records. (See Acts 11:28)

The one part of the conversation where the accounts of “Mark” and “Matthew” differ from “Luke’s” account is with the addition that the writer of Luke makes, “and there will be fearful sights and from heaven great signs.” Why, if this is something Jesus told his disciples, would the writers of Mark and Matthew omit it? Similarly, why do “Mark” and “Matthew” make mention of “these are a beginning of pangs of distress” while “Luke” omits that portion of the conversation from his account? Without having the writers available to ask directly, we will not soon know. Was the writer of “Luke” making note that these events were divine signs, “fearful” to those who were to perish, and a cause for jubilation (“from heaven great signs”) for those who knew that their deliverance was at hand? This supposition would certainly find support in the words recorded at Luke 21:28.

Another intriguing possibility is that when Jesus says that there *will be* food shortages and there *will be* earthquakes, he was indicating that these events would not cease from the earth, that these will continue just as they have been taking place. (Compare Mark 14:7; John 12:8) This is a *possible* understanding which could find support in the claim made by unbelievers who fail to see *beyond* the common, everyday events. (See 2 Peter 3:3-4)

Next, Jesus discusses the matter of the “tribulation” or persecution that his followers would suffer at the hands of the Jewish people. The writer of Luke specifically notes that this persecution would occur *before* the events foretold, at Luke 21:8-11, and thus places the persecution as happening *before* 70CE. History supports this placement, as early Christians were highly despised by the Jewish nation. Even the apostle Paul confesses to being a zealous opponent to Christians for a long period of time, before he finally converted to being a Christian himself.

**Question: What about “...this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all nations; and then the end will come”?**

Most Christians today cannot fathom the idea that the “good news of the kingdom” could have possibly been preached throughout the earth in the days leading up to

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the destruction of Jerusalem in 70CE, especially in light of the fact that the “end” has obviously not come.

But, as explained already, the “end” being spoken of here is the end of the Jewish system of things, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple—and not the end of the world of humankind as a whole. Recall what Jesus said to the Pharisees:

**For this reason, here I am sending forth to YOU prophets and wise men and public instructors.—Matthew 23:34 (NWT)**

**“Then people will deliver YOU up to tribulation and will kill YOU, and YOU will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name.—Matthew 24:9 (NWT)**

**“As for YOU, look out for yourselves; people will deliver YOU up to local courts, and YOU will be beaten in synagogues and be put on the stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them.—Mark 13:9 (NWT)**

**“But before all these things people will lay their hands upon YOU and persecute YOU, delivering YOU up to the synagogues and prisons, YOU being haled before kings and governors for the sake of my name.<sup>13</sup> It will turn out to YOU for a witness.—Luke 21:12-13 (NWT)**

How, though, can it be said that the “good news of the kingdom” went out into all the inhabited earth when today there are thousands of places which *still* have never heard the “good news of the kingdom”? Surely this means that Jesus’ words were *meant* for *our* day, right?

To find our answer, we must take a look at the original Greek word that the NWT editors decided to translate as “inhabited earth.”

The original Greek word is **οἰκουμένη** (oikoumene) and does mean “the inhabited earth,” but *more specifically* refers to “the Roman Empire, all the subjects of the empire.” (*Strong’s*) There is no reason to dismiss the reach that was managed by the efforts of the apostles and early Christians in the days leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, especially when we take into consideration the words recorded at 1 Timothy 3:16, where we read that Jesus “was preached about among nations,” as well as Romans 1:8, which says, **“First of all, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ concerning all of YOU, because YOUR faith is talked about throughout the whole world.**

The “whole world,” as understood by Paul, was the farthest reaches of the Roman empire. By the time the end of the Jewish system of things had come, the “good news of the kingdom” had truly gone out to all of the “inhabited earth,” true to Jesus’ words. Keeping in mind that the preaching work was to serve as a witness not only to Gentiles, as Jehovah opened the Way for them to accept or reject, but also as a testimony to his covenanted people, the nation of Israel, that they had become a proud and presumptuous people because of their privileged position before their Owner. (Cf. Romans 11:11-12; Romans 11:25-32; Romans 10:19-21)

**Where are we *now* in the stream of prophetic time?**

Every Christian knows that Jerusalem was laid waste in 70CE and that the Temple was destroyed. Just as Jesus had foretold, the “end” of the Jewish system of things had come, and the trampling by the Gentile nations had begun. The “great tribulation” was imposed upon the nation of Israel, and then when the wrath abated, the period of “blunted senses” and blindness to the Good News of the Kingdom would continue until the Son of Man manifested himself to the entire world, not with so-called “eyes of understanding,” but in such a magnificent glorious manner that there would be no doubt in *anyone’s* mind that it was Jesus himself coming to take rulership of the Earth, and his myriads of angels with him. Only false prophets and false christs would have the audacity to try to convince others that only they knew where Jesus was, that only they knew how to find him, and that if you wanted to see Jesus, you had to go with them.

But if the fulfillment of Jesus’ words as recorded in Mark 13, Matthew 24, and Luke 21 found their fulfillment in the events leading up to and including 70CE, then what *now*? Where are we *today* in the stream of prophetic time?

Well, we’ve already established that we are still in the “times of the Gentiles.” And the nation of Israel is still under the period of “trampling.” And Jesus has not returned to the Earth as of yet. Too, there are numerous prophecies which have yet to be fulfilled. The Messiah is yet to make his appearance as the Son of Man, for example. Some mistakenly believe that Jesus’ first appearance was in the role of Messiah, but it was actually in the role of the Christ, the sacrificial symbolic Lamb that would serve to reconcile humankind back to his Grand Creator, even though some insightfully realized Jesus was also the forthcoming Messiah.

However, once the Jewish system of things ended, as Jesus foretold it would, that also concluded the manner in which Jehovah God dealt with humankind. For thousands of years He had spoken to humans through His covenanted people, the nation of Israel, by raising up prophets to make His judgments known. But all of that was a part of the Jewish system of things, and that system of things was no more. This important facet of the discussion is borne up by the writer of Hebrews, who wrote:

**God, who long ago spoke on many occasions and in many ways to our forefathers by means of the prophets, <sup>2</sup> has at the end of these days spoken to us by means of a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the systems of things.—Hebrews 1:1-2 (NWT)**

Even Jesus warned that after him, there would be no further “signs” or indicators once the Jewish system of things ended:

**In reply he said to them: “A wicked and adulterous generation keeps on seeking for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jo’nah the prophet.—Matthew 12:39 (NWT)**

In other words, once the Jewish system of things ended, humankind would not know where it was at in the stream of prophetic time. The last markers came in the form of the prophetic words of Jesus that were discussed in this article already, and those would get his followers as far as 70CE. But after that, something significant would happen, and this is where I believe we find ourselves today.

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Jesus explains to his disciples:

Mark 13: 24-26	Matthew 24: 29-30	Luke 21: 25-27
<p><sup>24</sup> “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup> and the stars will be falling out of heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. <sup>26</sup> And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory.</p>	<p><sup>29</sup> “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup> And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in lamentation, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.</p>	<p><sup>25</sup> “Also, there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish of nations, not knowing the way out because of the roaring of the sea and [its] agitation, <sup>26</sup> while men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.</p>

In each of the accounts, we find a common set of features: the “sun will be darkened”, the “moon will not give its light”, the “stars will fall from heaven”, and the “powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

Bible readers familiar with the prophetic books of the Bible will recognize these events as part of the “prophetic language” used in some parts of the Bible, especially in times of judgment or punishment by Jehovah God. But there are a couple of points I want to draw to the reader’s attention.

The first of these is what is written in Genesis. There, we read the following words in describing the function of the “celestial bodies:”

**<sup>14</sup> And God went on to say: “Let luminaries come to be in the expanse of the heavens to make a division between the day and the night; and they must serve as signs and for seasons and for days and years. <sup>15</sup> And they must serve as luminaries in the expanse of the heavens to shine upon the earth.” And it came to be so. <sup>16</sup> And God proceeded to make the two great luminaries, the greater luminary for dominating the day and the lesser luminary for dominating the night, and also the stars. <sup>17</sup> Thus God put them in the expanse of the heavens to shine upon the earth, <sup>18</sup> and to dominate by day and by night and to make a division between the light and the darkness.—Genesis 1:14-18a (NWT)**

Here we find the first reference to one of the purposes of the sun and the moon is to “serve as signs.” So, if the sun is to be darkened and the moon does not give its light, should we understand Jesus to mean that there will be no signs given, that we will not be able to identify where we are at in the stream of prophetic time? That certainly seems to be the case, because notice what Jesus told his disciples, just before returning to heaven:

**He said to them: “It does not belong to YOU to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction;--Acts 1:7 (NWT)**

Remember, too, that the only *sign* that would be given henceforth was the “sign of Jonah,” as noted a few moments ago in the article.



## Understanding the Stream of Prophetic Time

It is difficult for the majority of Christians today to accept that we are living in a time of spiritual darkness as to the events in relation to prophecies that remain unfulfilled. For such ones, there *must* be a means by which we can discern the stream of prophetic time and determine how close we are to the “end.” Unfortunately, each generation since the first and second century have fallen into misapplying the scriptures in order to explain why things are seemingly continuing as they have. Each generation has taught that *their* time would see the fulfillment of the “last days,” and each successive generation has found still *worse* conditions and still *better-fitting* events to fit the prophecies—because the previous interpretations have always failed to hold up to the test of time. In our day, disillusionment has reined supreme following disappointments like Miller’s “Great Disappointment,” the predictions of C.T. Russell regarding 1914 being the *end* of the Gentile Times and the arrival of Armageddon, the prediction of J.F. Rutherford regarding the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century... each failed expectation was met with a sleight-of-hand dismissal of the full weightiness of said failed prophecy and a replacement with yet another interpretation.

Indeed, when a religious group or individual relies on contemporaneous events to promote and validate their message, they are actually undermining the Bible. Jesus’ warning was clear, to those who will accept it in its simplicity:

**Then as an answer to him some of the scribes and Pharisees said: “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”<sup>39</sup> In reply he said to them: “A wicked and adulterous generation keeps on seeking for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jo’nah the prophet.—Matthew 12:38-39 (NWT)**

Are we believers because of the “signs” we see around us? Are we believers because someone was able to interpret those “signs” for us, to convince us that Jesus has returned? Are we believers because of the *nearness* of the Great Day of Jehovah? Such reasons for believing open us up to:

- **Disappointment**
  - Expectation postponed is making the heart sick, but the thing desired is a tree of life when it does come.—Proverbs 13:12 (NWT)
- **Being misled**
  - “Then if anyone says to YOU, ‘Look! Here is the Christ,’ or, ‘There!’ do not believe it.<sup>24</sup> For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will give great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones.<sup>25</sup> Look! I have forewarned YOU.—Matthew 24:23-25 (NWT)
- **Serving our Grand Creator out of selfishness.**
  - But Satan answered Jehovah and said: “Skin in behalf of skin, and everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul.—Job 2:4 (NWT)

Our faith should not have anything to do with whether there *appears* to be a pending World War III, or an increase in earthquakes, or whether other aspects of this system of things somehow “proves” that we are near the “end.” Each generation down through the ages has found a reason to believe because of the events of their lifetime, finding such reason in the “signs” of their times. And such ones successfully converted others to their beliefs through zealous promotion of their convictions—only

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to pass from the world scene and leaving subsequent generations to continue in their misdirected foundation for believing.

Only *one* sign is necessary for us to believe. Only *one* evidence has there been given from Jehovah God that we ought to repent and turn around and draw close to our Grand Creator: that of the Christ. If we hold firm to that sole sign that has been provided to us, we will not be caught up in doctrinal speculations as to the “times” we are living in, or that the “end” is near.” It should not matter to us whether Jesus returns in our lifetime, or returns 1,000 years hence.

The *only* thing that should matter is that it will occur, not *when* it will occur.

Our faith should not be in the evidences provided by the *world* scene, which is always changing (1 Corinthians 7:31b; Luke 21:25b), but in the evidence provided by Jehovah God Himself, as stated at Matthew 12:39. Why would we be taken in by the proofs provided by a world that is swiftly passing away, along with its desires? Why would we look to headlines and reports and reports of reports to anchor us in our faith? And why would we want to cause others to believe our message by using such things to bolster the validity of our message?

There is little question that we are living in the “last days.” But we have been living in the “last days” since Jesus departed from the earth. The ridiculers are absolutely correct in their dismissive “Where is this promised {presence} of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep [in death], all things are continuing exactly as from creation’s beginning.” (2 Peter 3:4, NWT) But they are also faithless, and as the writer of “2 Peter” points out:

**For, according to their wish, this fact escapes their notice, that there were heavens from of old and an earth standing compactly out of water and in the midst of water by the word of God; <sup>6</sup> and by those [means] the world of that time suffered destruction when it was deluged with water. <sup>7</sup> But by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men.**

**<sup>8</sup> However, let this one fact not be escaping YOUR notice, beloved ones, that one day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with YOU because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance. <sup>10</sup> Yet Jehovah’s day will come as a thief...”—2 Peter 3:5-10 (NWT)**

A thief comes at night, while the cover of darkness can be used to his advantage. And there is no doubt that the world lies in darkness. Men are groping for the way out, blind in their own lack of faith. The roar of the sea of humankind grows in volume, and the nations’ leaders work to solve the problems themselves. All the while, this fact escapes their notice: that a Day *has* been set. The “times of the Gentiles” will come to its conclusion, and an account *will* be rendered to the Grand Creator.

Because we believe this, we would do well to acknowledge the counsel given by the same writer, as he continues by saying:

**Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought YOU to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, <sup>12</sup> awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah, through which [the] heavens being on fire will be dissolved and [the] elements being intensely hot will melt! <sup>13</sup> But there are new heavens**

**and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.**

**<sup>14</sup> Hence, beloved ones, since YOU are awaiting these things, do YOUR utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace.—2 Peter 3:11-14 (NWT)**

There really are so many other things to say on these matters, but what time has allowed us to discuss this topic should suffice for now.

Jehovah willing, we will stand firm in our faith and in our dedication, not swayed by lying signs and portents which serve as little more than distractions and serve as Satan's means to cause us to falter from our own steadfastness. We are not the sort to serve Jehovah God with a *date* in mind, but because we are the sort of persons who are living testaments of Jehovah God's sovereignty, glorifying our faith in "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the {presence} of the day of Jehovah." We are determined "to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace."

We will serve Jehovah God, not because of *signs* and *omens*, not because of the "nearness" of that Day, but because it is what we *ought* to do. We are determined to prove Satan a liar, and not give into the selfish form of worship—because the Day is near and we don't want to die, because we want to save our "skin," but because whether we live or whether we die, our future hopes rest with Jehovah God.

May our Grand Creator bless us in our efforts, and grant us strength to endure in the face of certain trials and tribulations. And may our Grand Creator give us the power beyond what is normal, that we may glorify His Name and Glory, forever and a day.

Amen.

*Philia,*  
Timothy Kline

September 6, 2004

## **ENDNOTES**

[1] It is my belief that "chosen ones" is here used in reference to the *faithful* remnant of Israel, while the majority of Israel had their senses blunted regarding the Good News of the Kingdom. This faithful remnant is *chosen* because of their faith in the Ransom sacrifice (ie, the Christ), as indicated by John 1:11-12, Matthew 22:14, and other pertinent scriptures (e.g. Revelation 17:14b). (See also Romans 10:19-20) Israel served *as a nation* as the "chosen ones" up until their abandonment by Jehovah God, and then Jehovah God chose to manifest His Glory through "that which is not a nation." However, His covenant will be fulfilled *through* "that which is not a nation," and thus will Israel once again be restored to her Husbandly owner. I hope to be able to more fully address the topic in a future article, as this will be a difficult aspect of the article for many who read it, and it is a subject which deserves our attention.

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