

A.D. 70: The Final Event in Bible Prophecy?

Introduction:

- 1) The apostle John warned about the danger of false teachers and the importance of holding to the one true gospel. **1 Jn. 2:24; 4:1, 5f; 5:3; 2 Jn. 4-6, 9-11**
- 2) This is consistent with both the example and teachings of Paul. **Acts 15:1f; Gal. 1:6-9**
- 3) I bring that up to introduce an examination of a doctrine that challenges us to radically alter our approach to the Scriptures.
 - a) **Mt. 25:31-34, 41, 46** has already taken place in the judgment on Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 - b) **Jn. 5:28f** does not refer to the resurrection of any physical bodies and took place in A.D. 70.
 - c) The appointed day of **Acts 17:30f** has already passed.
 - d) **1 Cor. 15** was fulfilled about 1940 years ago. **15:50-54**
 - e) Same is true of **1 Th. 4**'s promise of the return of Christ and the warning of vengeance in **2 Th. 1**.
 - f) **2 Tim. 2:17f**. Would have been true five to seven years later.
 - g) **Heb. 9:27f** was only true up until A.D. 70.
 - h) **2 Pet. 3:10** refers to the passing away of the Jewish system at the hands of the Roman army.
- 4) The initial reaction may be, "You've got to be kidding."
 - a) It is radical and I want us to understand that this is not a question about the interpretation of a couple of difficult passages such as **Mt. 24** or **Rev. 20**, but a fundamental reshaping of the Bible, its promises, and its threats.
 - b) It is not wrong because it is radical—it is wrong because it is unscriptural.
 - c) The doctrine we are examining is one that diminishes hope, minimizes the element of fear of punishment and, with some, ultimately shifts the emphasis from a hope laid up in heaven to an emphasis on a societal transformation.

I. DEFINING AND EXPLAINING THE DOCTRINE.

A. Basic Concept.

1. The doctrine known as Realized Eschatology did not originate then, but began to impact churches of Christ after the 1971 publication of *The Spirit of Prophecy* by Max King of Warren, OH.
2. King taught that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and not the cross was the climactic event in biblical prophecy.
3. When Jesus came in judgment against the Jewish nation that was the second and final coming of Jesus, the resurrection and judgment took place then, and there were no more prophecies to be fulfilled. (See Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).

4. He taught that while the kingdom (church) may have been established in Acts 2, it didn't come into its full glory and power until A.D. 70 when the Old Covenant was completely taken away.
 - a. Gal. 4 was said to teach that just as Isaac and Ishmael co-existed in Abraham's house for some years, God allowed Judaism to co-exist with Christianity until A.D. 70 when it was cast out.
 - b. The covenants had a period of overlapping.
5. The only resurrection that will take place occurred in or was completed by A.D. 70.
 - a. The RE view of the resurrection has evolved some over the past 40 years.
 - b. All REs agree that it has nothing to do with the restoring to life of human bodies, but what they do teach isn't always consistent and can be difficult to understand.

B. Key Terms.

1. A.D. 70 Doctrine.
 - a. Commonly called this because it contends all remaining biblical prophecy found its fulfillment in the events of that year (and perhaps a year or two afterward).
 - b. "Scripture indicates that the time of Jesus' Coming, the Resurrection, and the Judgment was confined to the first century." Wayne Petty, p. 462, *Essays on Eschatology*
 - 1) Taken from Appendix I in the *Essays* written by Samuel G. Dawson.
 - c. "There is no time period between the fall of Judaism and the second coming of Christ. They are essentially the same event – at any rate they are inexorably linked." Max King, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, pp. 137, 138
 - d. Two notes:
 - 1) The events of A.D. 70 are subjects of Bible prophecy (Mt. 24; Lk. 21; et al), but neither the climax nor the end.
 - 2) There are many who believe Revelation was written before A.D. 70 and prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem, but do not believe in all the things we are talking about.
2. Realized Eschatology.
 - a. *Eschatology* is the study of the end of time, last things, etc. and *realized* means that it has already taken place.
 - b. Probably the best term to describe the doctrine.
 - c. "Prophecy found its complete fulfillment in the second coming of Christ, and now may be regarded as closed and consummated." Max King, *Prophecy*, p. 137

3. Preterism.
 - a. From a Latin word meaning past, this term is sometimes used of those who believe the Revelation was completely or largely fulfilled in either the destruction of Jerusalem or the fall of the Roman Empire.
 - b. It has also come to be applied to “full preterists” who believe every biblical prophecy has its fulfillment in the past, and specifically in the fall of Jerusalem. Full preterists (Realized Eschatologists) are very different from the historic preterists. A huge difference between a preterist view of Revelation and a preterist view of the entire Bible.
4. Transmillennialism™ is a trademarked word invented by Max and Tim King.
 - a. It really has no meaning except that that they contend it moves through or beyond (trans-) the traditional teachings that have gone before.

II. BEING CONSISTENT?

A. “Consistent” Word Meanings.

1. Max King boasts that his teaching is the one consistent approach to prophecy, but that only means he forces words to have the same meaning or application everywhere despite context.
 - a. Day of the Lord, coming of Christ and judgment are said to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem (and end of Israel) every time they are used in the NT.
 - b. King is correct that it is used that way at times. **Mt. 24:1-3, 29-31, 34; Lk. 21:20f**
 - c. The Bible uses this kind of language for symbolic judgment appearances of the Lord. **Isa. 19:1; 13:1, 6, 9f, 13, 17**
 - 1) Significant that those are *two entirely different judgments* in **Isa. 13** and **Isa. 19**.
2. But that doesn't mean that it is used that way every time.
 - a. Most words can be used in different senses. E.g. today *bad* can be *good* and in the Bible we have elder, brother, spirit, soul, love, etc. used in different ways depending on context.

B. The Coming of Christ.

1. The word coming/presence (whether Gr. *parousia* or *erchomai*) is used in more than one sense.
2. Jesus came to the apostles symbolically through the Holy Spirit. **Jn. 14:15-18**
3. Jesus came physically. **2 Pet. 1:16**
4. He threatened to come in judgment against churches. **Rev. 2:5, 16**
5. Promised to come and dine with the faithful. **Rev. 3:20**
6. The Gr. *parousia* is also used of the physical presence of various men. **1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6f; 10:10; Phil. 2:12**

7. Other lessons will look more closely at **1 Cor. 15** and **2 Pet. 3**, but there is nothing consistent about imposing the meaning of **Mt. 24:3** on these passages, when **2 Pet. 1:16** refers to a physical presence.
8. Paul told the saints at Colosse, a predominately Gentile group more than 500 miles from Jerusalem, that the appearing of Christ would be their hope of glory. **Col. 3:1-4**
 - 1) The destruction of Jerusalem simply doesn't fit that picture.

C. About to Come?

1. Another argument along this line is based on the Gr. word *mellō*.
2. This word is used in **Acts 17:31** and translated *will*, and King quotes a portion of what Thayer says on this word: "To be on the point of doing or suffering something."
3. He argues that it must always refer to things about to happen, so if God was about to render judgment then, it could not be referring to something at least 1900 years in the distance.
4. Thayer also wrote, "To intend, have in mind, think to." In other words, the word *mellō* means it has been decided, but doesn't always contain a time reference.
5. In **Mt. 11:14** this word is used of Elijah whose coming was approximately 400 years after the promise was made. "...he is Elijah who was about to come." Young's Literal Translation
6. Jesus was "about to come" from the time of Adam (minimum of 4,000 years). **Rom. 5:14**
7. Can we see that *mellō* does not require an immediate fulfillment?
8. Let's go back to **Acts 17** and get the context of *mellō*. **17:22-32**
 - a. World in **v. 24** would not be limited to the Jewish world.
 - b. **Vv. 26-28** clearly have all nations in view.
 - c. **V. 30** is a call to Gentiles to repent and turn to God based on the fear of the judgment. How would the judgment against the Jewish nation fit into this line of reasoning?
 - d. Dead in **v. 32** is plural.

D. Summary Thoughts.

1. I'm certainly not arguing for inconsistency, but we are not to force words to mean the same thing in every passage. Rather, we are to understand them in a way consistent with their context.
2. We've seen this with the coming of Christ and the idea that judgment had to be "about to happen" and I want you to remember this when looking at the word elements in **2 Pet. 3:10** and King's contention it has to mean the elementary principles of the Jewish religion because it so used in **Gal. 4:3**, but more on that in another lesson.

Conclusion:

- 1) A frequent theme of my preaching is that we be careful not to defend our traditions as commandments of God. Cf. **Mt. 15**.
- 2) That something seems new or radical doesn't make it wrong, but Realized Eschatology is not only new in the sense that it is something many have never heard of, it is new in that it is not taught in the Bible.
 - a) The NT does not teach that Jesus was about to judge the whole world.
 - b) And the figurative coming of Christ to judge Jerusalem did not in any way preclude another appearance to raise the dead and judge the world.
 - c) While the destruction of Jerusalem was an important event in biblical prophecy, Christians were not looking to that event for their glory, hope, inheritance, etc.
 - d) Don't be deceived.
- 3) As we close, let me urge you to do as Paul urged the Athenians to do. **Acts 17:30f**