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# The Messenger



*"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15*

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## A Closer Look at the "AD 70 Theory" of Last Things

by Olan Hicks  
Conclusion

### HOW DID BELIEVERS WHO LIVED AT THE TIME PERCEIVE THE EVENTS OF AD 70?

A few of the apostles yet lived at this time, as did many folks whom they had personally taught. Inspiration of the Holy Spirit was still there. So they knew what was going on. Thus the matter of how believers living at the time saw these events is important. What was their understanding of the matter?

When the smoke cleared and all the dust settled, did they believe that the second coming of Christ had occurred, as well as the judgment and the final resurrection? Did they believe the holy city John described in Revelation 21 had come down and they were now in it? Did they believe the eternal kingdom of God had come to complete fruition and all of God's promises about things to occur in the last days had been fulfilled? Did AD 70 change anything at all as concerns what they were looking forward to?

In all the information available from that time period there is not to be found a single shred of evidence that anyone living at the time saw it the way the AD 70 brethren do today. There are writings extant which were written by believers at that time and soon thereafter, but all of them say the same things precisely about their faith that were written prior to that time. They were, without exception, still looking forward to the second advent of Jesus yet to come, admonishing one another to be prepared at all times as Jesus had instructed, and holding the hope of a better world to come in a spiritual realm when this world would eventually perish.

A very large book would be filled if all such writings were quoted. Of course we will not try to do that here, but we will give a couple of "samples" which are typical of what was said in them all. These are not inspired writings, of course, and are offered here simply to indicate what was the viewpoint of eye witnesses, believers who lived at the time and had been taught personally by the apostles.

Ignatius was born in AD 50 and so was 20 years old in AD 70. He was martyred in the year 107. He was said to have been a personal disciple of the apostle John. Early in the second century he wrote, exhorting brethren in various places to continue holding to the hope they had always had. To the Ephesians, for example, he wrote, "Have a firm belief in the incarnation, the passion, the resurrection of Christ. These things are no delusive phantoms, but real facts. Let no one divert you from your hope."

Polycarp lived a few years later but was also said to have been a disciple of John personally. His writings likewise speak of all these things as yet to come in the future. In his epistle to the Philippians he exhorted them to do faithful service to him "who cometh as judge of quick and dead; whose blood God will require of them that are disobedient to him. Now He that raised Him from the dead will raise us also; if we do His will and walk in His commandments and love the things which He loved . . ." In the same epistle he said, "For if we be well pleasing unto Him in this present world, we shall receive the future world also, according as He has promised us, to raise us from the dead." Polycarp said very pointedly, "Whosoever shall pervert the words of the Lord to his own lust and say there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the first born of Satan."

AD 70 advocates claim John's writings, especially the book of Revelation, as much of their evidence. But these disciples of John, along with Barnabas, Clement, and all others who lived in the proximity of the time of the AD 70 holocaust, say clearly in their writings that they continued to look forward to all that the Christian hoped for as something yet to come and that it was to occur in another world, spiritual in nature. If it happened in AD 70, all the personal pupils of John whoever wrote, misunderstood it.

## **THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD'S OWN FAMILY**

A piece of historic information that may have been providentially preserved to shed light on this question is the testimony of the next generation of Jesus' own fleshly family.

Historian Eusebius records that a few years after AD 70 emperor Domitian decreed that all descendants of David were to be executed. Jesus and his brothers and sisters were descendants of David. The grandchildren of Jesus' brother Judas were taken before the emperor for questioning. Eusebius says that during this questioning, "When asked also respecting Christ and His Kingdom, what was its nature and when and where it was to appear, they replied that it was not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom, but celestial and angelic; that it would appear at the end of the world, when in glory He would judge the quick and dead and give to everyone according to his works . . ." Upon which Domitian despising them, made no reply, but treating them with contempt, as simpletons, commanded them to be dismissed, and by decree, ordered the persecution to cease (Eusebius Eccl. Hist. – pg. 103).

Regardless of how appealing this theory may seem to be, it is groundless. There are too many parts of it that directly contradict explicit scriptures. We do not deny that the Bible sometimes uses figurative language. But that does not justify this kind of abuse. The bottom line is the AD 70 theory is incompatible with the Bible. We have only touched the hem of the garment here. Paul said, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. 15:26). Since death is as common to the race of man now as it ever was, one cannot rationally believe the AD 70 theory that "all the prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ have been fulfilled."

It is not our purpose to judge, convict, or defeat anyone. This is simply an appeal to God fearing people to hold fast to the word of God and be not led away by human theories that contradict it. There is nothing to be gained in the AD 70 theory, no land of promise in the direction in which it points. It would take away the beautiful hope described in the Bible and put nothing in its place. The Bible warns that there is a definite spiritual danger in denying the coming of the day of God, for in that day things will occur exactly as He has decreed. We must plan on that. Think about it!

*The Following is from Olan Hicks*

### **A SPECIAL APPEAL TO MY FRIENDS WHO ARE FASCINATED WITH THE AD 70 THEORY**

Please stop and think clearly about your position and the direction of your course. You have reached the point of having developed a theory that is "strange" and different from the norm. This theory is taking "center stage" more than Jesus. In your writings you make the AD 70 event, not the cross, the focal point of all scripture. Apparently it seems to you to be the central event in God's dealing with mankind. My fear is that, as this theory is exaggerated; one by one many basic elements of Christian doctrine and practice will be pushed out because this theory, when it is exaggerated to the point you have taken it, conflicts with them.

There is no purpose or goal that is of redeeming value to be achieved in this theory. There is no land of promise in the direction it points. But it could do much harm. It is a pointless exercise in theological gymnastics, a cloud without water, thunder with no rain. The truth is the world has not ended yet, the Lord has not returned, the resurrection has not yet happened, and the eternal inheritance of the faithful is yet to be received when the Lord Himself descends with a shout. "My reward is with me," He said.

Men often make honest mistakes. It is the way of the human mind and I have made my share. Honest mistakes, if linked with right attitudes do not destroy the cause of Christ. But mistakes, honest or otherwise, coupled with closed minds, divisive attitudes, and undue aggressiveness, end up being very harmful.

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**NOTES & NEWS:** Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

*"...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16*