

The
END-TIMES PROPHECY
Of
JESUS

Revisiting The Olivet Discourse

GERRIE & MARTIE MALAN



Second Edition

THE END-TIMES PROPHECY OF JESUS

(Revisiting The Olivet Discourse)

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Special Enhanced PDF Edition

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DEDICATION

This book is the third in a team effort between Gerrie and Martie Malan. While Gerrie has once again been the scribe in the process, the understanding of biblical knowledge presented flows from intensive Bible study, discussions and eventual contribution by both. We also have great appreciation for the constant feedback of old friends Dirk Wissing and Coen de Milander on the content of this book and other works, as well as on technical matters. Friend Obie Oberholzer, with his wife, Rina, has also put in much more effort than simply reading the book. Their feedback has also contributed towards important improvements with this Second Edition.

We present the book, as we have the others, in honour of our heavenly Father, who gave the Son of His love as the Light of the World, and His Word as the lamp for our feet and light unto our path, and who mercifully looks upon the heart of people (Isaiah 29:13).



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PREFACE

Because the authors grew up in a specific milieu of Bible interpretation – one in which a very specific futuristic view of Revelation and other prophecies such as the Matthew 24 Olivet Discourse of Jesus was accepted – we fully understand that the average person is inclined to read the Bible against all their fixed perceptions from the word ‘go’. If one had been taught and accepted that many of the important Bible prophecies were still awaiting fulfilment, this would provide the fixed basis of understanding against which you would read the Bible. If you had learned that there would be a rapture of the believers, then that would similarly be an element in your approach in reading the Bible. It is simply a basic human trait.

The Scriptures are the standard, the measuring instrument, and not all kinds of viewpoints of people.

Our simple plea regarding this book is that readers will receive the content and carefully weigh the accuracy of our interpretation by the relevant Scriptures. The Scriptures are the standard, the measuring instrument, and not all kinds of viewpoints of people (including ours). If your conclusions find that the expositions are in agreement with the Bible, your feedback would be appreciated. This is possible through the contact page on our website, www.hoseaconnection.org/wcontact.php. Those who disagree are as welcome to send us your views with its Scriptural foundations. We, the authors, are searching for the pure truth of the Scriptures. It is not about conveying our understanding of this important portion of the Scriptures in a prescriptive sort of manner. We would much rather try to make a contribution in a way in which we can search the content of the Scriptures with the reader, and wherever it is deemed necessary, to discern any contaminated teachings from the pure. The Bible teaches us an important principle in the words of Jesus of Nazareth: *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32).

Milton Terry's *Biblical Hermeneutics*, a book from the late 19th century, is still widely accepted today as a benchmark of works in this area. In this book he accentuates the necessity to apply sound principles of Scripture interpretation at all times. He encourages people to put themselves in the place of the original writers, and *study to obtain the impression their words naturally made upon the minds of the first readers* (p. 495-496). In addition, he warns that it is abuse of language to say that words such as 'immediately' or 'near at hand' can mean 'ages hence' or 'after a long time' (p.595). Unfortunately one often comes across neglect of this basic principle in books about the Bible.

Respected theologians of the past five centuries have regularly expressed caution in their books against less than good methods of interpretation. Alexander Brown (1894) is one such person who pointed out in his book, *The Great Day Of The Lord* that some methods of interpretation used in his time have already produced disappointing results – dates minutely fixed, prophecies falsified, hopes deferred, and new methods of interpretation invented to be falsified in turn. Eventually it came down to the application of all kinds of indefensible liberties (p.389). It is a pity that many modern day students of eschatology (end-times) are either ignorant of the valuable writings of these earlier theologians, or that they purposefully choose to ignore their works.

A core characteristic of the popular modern end-times philosophy is that a prophecy may have multiple fulfilments. This is an application against which several scholars such as Milton Terry (1883:495-496) have spoken out in the course of the past centuries. The double prophecy or double fulfilment teachings admit the fulfilment of various prophecies once in biblical times, but then teach that there will be another fulfilment in our future. It is amazing how much this approach has become embedded in the work of so many contemporary Bible teachers and televangelists despite the absence of such a principle in the Scriptures. God's ultimate prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, never mentioned such a principle in his teachings or prophetic statements.

THE THEOLOGY OF INDIFFERENCE

Over the past few years, precious relatives, friends and acquaintances have shown that believers will generally respond to our understanding of the Scriptures in one of three ways. The majority will tend to respond with silence, avoiding any sort of discussion as far as possible. Here and

there one would respond constructively, whether it is in agreement or disagreement. The third group's response has been to send us the writings of well-known authors. We are not saying this in any degrading spirit or with any specific person in mind. It merely serves to confirm the similar experiences of other authors. After one of our discussions on a certain end-times topic, one friend stated categorically that we were really asking her to set aside her learning of forty years.

The sad thing about approaches such as those described above is that most Christian believers, if not all, state they accept the Scriptures as inspired by the Holy Spirit and call it the Word of God or Sword of the Spirit. However, and in contradiction to their confession about the Scriptures, they seem to fear or reject, any scripturally rooted commentary or principle that differs from their existing convictions.

Following the Great Disappointment when all the 2011 end of the world predictions by Harold Camping came to nothing, a letter in a local newspaper suggested that many years of unsound end-times teaching in the church at large was responsible for the ease with which Christians fall for all these false predictions. One agitated reader responded by calling on theologians and church leaders to answer this 'false teacher'. He obviously did not have the confidence or knowledge to write such an admonition himself. This once more illustrated the unfortunate situation Lisa Robinson (2009) has called the theology of indifference – the reality that many sincere believers blindly accept the interpretations of others without diligently applying the example of the Bereans (Acts 17:11). This example requires them to test for themselves if the Scriptures are being taught correctly and within true context. By doing so, valuable and necessary confidence will be gained for situations in which the Scriptures are being discussed.

The large variety in content of the many end-times websites on the Internet is clear testimony of the confusion that is the order of the day. Bear in mind the Internet's effectiveness to distribute this confusing array of content.

Every believer should accept personal responsibility for accurate understanding of the Scriptures. One cannot transfer this to someone else, irrespective of the person's learning, alleged anointing, preaching ability, or whatever we admire and respect in a person. We need to spend more time with the Bible itself than with books (or television programs, etc.) about the Bible. As

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far as this book is concerned, we give them as the what and why of the authors' **understanding** in order to facilitate Bible study, but **never as replacement for the Bible**. Readers should **test any author's understanding against the Bible and not the Bible against an author's understanding**. The heart of our desire should be to stimulate in people a growing love for the Word of the Truth, in the same way we also endeavour to grow continuously.

To help those who desire to take up and develop this responsibility, we have written a concise book called *Rightly Divide the Word* in which we discuss the basic principles readers can use to assist your own Bible study. It is available as a free E-book at the moment and in different formats to download via our website www.hoseaconnection.org.

LAST THOUGHTS

Matthew 24 forms the basis of our consideration and is complemented where necessary, from Mark 13 and Luke 21, as well as other passages of Scripture needed to provide applicable perspectives.

Our desire with this book is to provide a relative concise discussion of Jesus' end-times prophecy recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, primarily for the non-academic reader. At the same time, we wish to ask the academic reader to carefully consider important basics they may disagree with. This purpose and focus make a measure of brief verse by verse commentary inevitable and it also directs the structure. Still, we are not presenting a voluminous book as many dealing with end-times Scriptures often are. We understand that the average reader does not have the time or taste for scholarly books of 500 pages. For those who would wish to go deeper and weigh our understanding in much more detail, we provide a list of valuable resources towards the end of this book.

May God bless all in your search for the truth in and of His Word.

Gerrie & Martie Malan
Woodgrange-On-Sea
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September 2014

THE BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

We understand that the considerable confusion that reigns on Matthew 24 and the parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21 came as the result of divergent interpretations by writers through past centuries. The person speaking here was Jesus of Nazareth, giving His prophecy of the end-times. The confusion that has developed and grown in time would most certainly deeply trouble Him over our generation of people, just as He was over that city and His own people before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. After all, each word from His mouth during the time He lived and taught among His people was undoubtedly measured to fit into the calling He had to fulfil before being taken up into heaven again.

Since the Reformation in the Middle Ages, spreading of the light of the Word from Europe accelerated. Despite the light of the Scriptures that shone brightly over Jesus' prophetic discourse, or rather, His end-times prophecy, confusion also developed. This is not strange in itself, because there were already drastic differences of opinion about Him during His earthly lifetime.

Before and during Jesus' crucifixion His persecutors used His words to create a reason for disposing of Him. Despite the fact that the reason they presented could not convince the Roman Governor to sentence Him to death, they took the blame upon themselves and had their way – all according to the prophets of old:

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us and on our children (Matt 27:24-25).

The persecutors of Jesus had Him crucified by the suppressors of Israel as a result of His words. The other group who followed Him also did so as a result of His words, because they believed that He truly was the promised Messiah, the Son of God. In time many books were written on Him, of which the four Gospels we know counted among the first.

It is a characteristic of all forms of literature that a group of writers sometimes become fixed in a certain mode. Writers of books on the meaning of the Olivet Discourse of Jesus have mainly formed two schools of thought. On the surface it does show that they agreed on Jesus as the Saviour. When one comes to the meaning of His words, however, one group teaches that Jesus had come to fulfil the Law and the Prophets; in other words, that which was still to become true, had indeed become so during His ministry on earth. (The meaning of ‘fulfilled’ in this context is discussed under the authors’ third point of departure).

The second group teaches that at least part of Jesus’ end-times prophecy is only to be fulfilled in the distant future after His ascent into heaven. As time passed the gap between the two groups deepened and made way for a third group that took something from both sides to write new interpretations on what has been written in the Scriptures. This third group is also not clearly identifiable as they differ substantially among themselves; even more so as time passes.

Since the mid 1800’s the different groups’ paths have moved far from each other on what Jesus had meant with His end-times prophecy. The authors of this book would love to see a renewed passion developing among the followers of Jesus to interpret this end-times prophecy correctly according to the principle: *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim 2:15).

Any contribution to the subject of the meaning of Jesus’ recorded words needs to be tested against the authors’ points of departure. In order to ensure the reader is left in no doubt in this regard, we provide a brief explanation of our respective points of departure.

OUR POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Firstly, one should bear in mind that the people of the first century and the generations before them, read the Scriptures as complete units without interruptions in-between. The Scriptures were not divided into chapters and verses. One should therefore study the prophetic discourse

of Jesus as an integral part of the whole Book of Matthew and not as an isolated portion. In the same way, Mark 13 should be understood within the context of the whole Book of Mark and Luke 21 within the whole context of that book. One will then see more clearly how Jesus directed a unity of warnings to the religious leaders in Jerusalem throughout His ministry. In this book we begin with our Lord's third prediction of His death, although one could go even further back.

It is necessary to know that the division of the Bible into chapters was a 13th century addition, while verse numbers was a 16th century development. This gave rise to new methods of interpretation and today people often read chapters as if they are complete units, even verses on their own, without seeing or understanding their connection to the greater whole.

Secondly, and flowing from the first, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt 20:17, Mark 10:32 and Luke 18:31) should be regarded as an integral part of the Olivet discourse. For the purpose of this study we will at least need to go past Matthew 24 and right through to Matthew 26:67 (Mark 14:65 & Luke 22:71).

Thirdly, one needs to have clarity on exactly what Jesus meant with His statement that He came to fulfil (or complete) the Law and the Prophets. The image we have here is that of a hollow that is being filled up. Jesus would therefore complete the Law and the Prophets by bringing the messianic era into reality. One needs to determine from the Scriptures whether the fulfilment (or completion) of the Law and the Prophets can or may be separated from all the prophecies of what would befall Jerusalem and the two houses of Israel (the separated kingdoms of Israel and Judah) in the latter days, or in the fullness of the times or seasons (*kai-roi*). We need to make sure we recognise this inter-dependency.

Fourthly, we apply the basic principles of Scripture interpretation that we describe in our free eBook, *Rightly Divide The Word*. That the Bible is the primary interpreter of the Bible stands out among these principles and is a non negotiable point of departure.

Lastly, we consider it crucial to look at the biblical concept of Jerusalem as the Holy City compared to the realities of the Jerusalem that Jesus encountered, as well as the concept of the New Jerusalem.

There are a number of instances where we will be discussing the meaning of specific and core Greek words within the context they appear. On the other hand, we also refer to **specific Jewish concepts** and note that **Matthews Gospel account was written to a Hebrew reader-**

ship. The question might therefore arise as to why this account was seemingly written in Greek. We find the answer in the political developments during the intertestamental period which saw Greek becoming the common language used in Alexander the Great's Greek Empire and thereafter. While some original New Testament writings may have been written in Hebrew, the texts our Bible translators used have been preserved as Greek writings and translations. Word studies and explanations are consequently based on Greek words. We always recommend using several Bible versions as protection against possible subjective interpretations that translators may have translated into their versions.

GOING TO JERUSALEM

Matthew 20:17 (Mark 10:32 & Luke 18:31) records Jesus taking the twelve disciples aside and saying to them they were going to Jerusalem where He, the Son of man, would be handed over to the Jewish leaders who would condemn Him. Then they would hand Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged and crucified. On the third day He would be resurrected. This was the third prediction of the destiny that awaited Him.

It was during this part of their journey that Jesus and his disciples passed through Jericho where He visited the chief tax collector Zaccheus at his house. In the face of accusations because he visited this sinful man at home, Jesus underlined that the Son of man came to seek and save the lost. It is the same message we find, for example, in John 3:16-18.

From here on the Bible record shows that tension between Jesus of Nazareth and the religious leaders was rising sharply, preparing the way for the fulfilment of His destiny on the cross. These leaders were offended by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the parables directed at them and the crowd's admiration of the man they described as the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee. He acted against the money changers and those selling doves in the temple complex, stating they were turning the temple, God's house of prayer, into a den of thieves. The days that followed are recorded as ongoing altercations between Jesus and the different religious groups, and culminated in His strong denouncement of their hypocrisy (Matt 23). And on the cross He eventually cried out, "*It is finished (completed, filled up, accomplished, concluded)*" (John 19:30).

THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

The Religious Leaders

It is important to understand that religion was at the very centre of Jewish life. The priests at the temple not only officiated over the religious life of the Jews, but were also rulers and judges in civil matters. By the first century, election of the high priest was more a political than religious event. King Herod was a pawn of Rome and made sure the leaders in the priesthood would support him to carry out the desires of Rome. They had in many respects turned away from the purposes for which God had raised up a priesthood for His people. Josephus wrote, for example, that the priesthood even authorised a daily sacrifice for Caesar in the temple (McClafflin, 1992:82-97; Reed, 2012).

At the time of Jesus' life upon earth the religious system was dictated by a number of groups: The Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, the Zealots and the Essenes (although the latter, which isolated themselves from the society, are not part of the Gospel record). Together these groups exercised an influence on the Jewish society, which was out of all proportion to their numbers. In the earlier period of the Jewish history the priests were the most influential group. By the time of Christ, however, the **Pharisees** had become more influential with the common people. They were primarily a group of laymen that arose and developed in the intertestamental period. Their initial purpose was to fight against the intrusion of Hellenism (or Greek influence). Unfortunately they became so caught up in excessive detail of ceremonial law and oral tradition that they forgot God's original purpose for the law. In the process they lost touch with the common people.

The **priesthood** lived in luxury, which they supported with a temple tax that every Jew was required to pay. As wealth and position became the primary concerns for the priestly **Sadducees** (who also originated in the intertestamental period), they too lost touch with the people. This group accepted only the written books of the law and rejected the books of the prophets and the writings, as well as the oral tradition of the Pharisees. Membership seemed to be hereditary. They welcomed the Hellenistic culture and Roman influence as it guaranteed their privileged lifestyle. Eventually they became the greatest enemies of Christ. McClafflin (1992:90) points out that the Sadducees died out with the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem, while the Pharisees survived and became the foundation of Judaism in later centuries.

Also originating from the intertestamental period, the **Zealots** were a fanatical group with the main objective of overthrowing the Roman government. Their repeated violent actions eventually became full-scale rebellion and were largely responsible for the Roman-Jewish war during the period of 66-70 AD, leading to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Scribes of the Old Testament times acted primarily as secretaries or clerks (e.g. Ezra). By the time of Jesus, however, they were better known as lawyers or teachers, with three main duties: to be copyists, preservers and interpreters of the Law. According to McClafin (1992:93, 94) they were a professional group who usually aligned themselves with the Pharisees. As the leading authority in the Jewish religious system, the Scribe was assured of a prominent position.

The Institutions

Four institutions stand out in their dominance of life in the Jewish society into which Jesus of Nazareth was born, namely the Sanhedrin, the Synagogue, King Herod and the temple.

The Sanhedrin

Let us look first at what the Sanhedrin was and whom it was comprised of. This term is found in more recent Bible versions such as the Holman Christian Standard Bible, but not the older ones in which the words *council* or *court* have been used. Literature written on or concerning the Gospels has been using it more often (McClafin, 1992:94).

It is uncertain when the Sanhedrin was first instituted, with some suggesting that the concept began in the days of Moses, for which Numbers 11:16-24 serve as reference basis. While the nation was in the wilderness, God led Moses to choose 70 elders from among the people to help him in the day-by-day process of ruling the people. The earliest record of an institution called a Sanhedrin is found in the works of Josephus who mentioned a political Sanhedrin convened by the Romans in 57 BC. Greek resources generally depict the Sanhedrin as a political and judicial council headed by the country's ruler (Schoenberg, 2013).

It appears that this institution operated at two levels. The first level had smaller councils of 23 and less members (as few as seven) depending on the size of the town/city. They were attached to the synagogues throughout the land and exercised wide-ranging powers in both **civil and religious matters** on that local level. Remember that the Jew saw very little difference between these two areas (McClafin, 1992:95).

The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was the supreme religious body in the land during the time of the holy temple, around which its activities centred. It was led by a president (seemingly the High Priest, although this is uncertain) and had 70 other members (of which one officiated as vice-president). Members came from influential families of the Sadducees, Pharisees and Scribes. There was also a representation of elders, who usually came from the wealthy, noble class from which the Sadducees were drawn. It dealt with religious and ritualistic temple matters, criminal matters, proceedings in connection with the discovery of a corpse, trials of adulterous wives, tithes, preparation of Torah Scrolls for the king and the Temple, drawing up the calendar and difficulties relating

The Sadducees died out with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, while the Sanhedrin was abolished by the Roman

to ritual law. One can therefore appreciate that the Great Sanhedrin was the most powerful institution of the Jews. It was the one before which Jesus of Nazareth was brought and which condemned him to death (McClaflin, 1992:95-96; Schoenberg, 2013).

The Sanhedrin was abolished in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

The Synagogues

Next, we look briefly at the institution of the **synagogue**, which we are introduced to in the Gospels. Its origin is obscure. Some in Jewish religious circles argue that it is of ancient origin and dates back to the time of Moses. However, it is acknowledged that the synagogue as a permanent and central institution probably originated during the Babylonian captivity. As the place of public worship, the synagogue became the pivot of each community, just as the temple at Jerusalem had been the centre for the entire Jewish people. After the return from the captivity, when the religious life was reorganised, especially under Ezra and his successors, congregational worship, consisting of prayer and the reading of sections from the Bible, developed side by side with the revival of the cult of the temple at Jerusalem, and thus led to the building of synagogues (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1996).

By the time of Jesus of Nazareth's earthly ministry the synagogue had become the most important means of maintaining the Jewish religious system, or perhaps more accurately, the Mosaic dispensational system. Not only had the day-to-day religious activities shifted to the syna-

gogue, but the rabbis or teachers serving in them had become more visible to the people than the priests serving at the temple.

McClaflin (1992:84) describes the situation as follows:

In short, the synagogue served as a substitute for the temple and became the center of Jewish religious, civil, and educational activity...Since Jesus found synagogues everywhere He went in Palestine and used them to communicate His message, we see that this institution was a vital part of Jewish life at this time.

King Herod

McClaflin (1992:68-70) accentuates that although they were ruled at various stages by several different empires after the Babylonian exile, the Jews were allowed more or less to control their own affairs. Antipater, an Idumaeen and father of Herod the Great, used the political confusion in the Jewish ranks of his time to work his way into a position of influence and eventually gained control of the Jewish nation in 46 BC. He died soon afterwards from poisoning. His son, Herod (the Great) convinced the Romans to make him ruler of Palestine and he ruled from 37-4 BC. We remember him as the king who had the baby boys in Bethlehem murdered in an attempt to kill Jesus. (This event compared to Herod's death in 4 BC might seem confusing, but the seemingly conflicting dates are due to a known and accepted error in our calendar).

When he died, the Romans appointed three of his sons to rule over three different portions of the land their father had ruled. Herod Antipas was given the authority over Galilee and Perea; Herod Archelaus controlled Judea, Samaria and Idumaea; while Herod Philip governed the area north of the Sea of Galilee and east of the Jordan River. Archelaus, a cruel king, was removed by the Romans in 6 AD. They replaced him with a Roman governor, which in Jesus' time was the man Pontius Pilate. The Herod one reads of most during the life of Jesus of Nazareth was Antipas. It was to him that Pontius Pilate sent Jesus in his attempt to avoid taking responsibility for the decision demanded by the religious leaders' accusations. Because the Idumaeans were regarded as pagans, the orthodox Jews never liked or accepted the Herods.

The Temple

Under God's instruction and design, Moses and the people constructed a portable sanctuary, the Tabernacle, during their sojourn in the

Sinai Desert (Exod 35-40). As they settled in the Promised Land, local sanctuaries and altars in the hills emerged. In 957 BC King Solomon built the first temple to replace the portable sanctuary, the Tabernacle, as well as the local sanctuaries and altars in the hills. This temple was damaged at various times by invading Egyptian and Assyrian forces, and it was eventually destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Before this event the temple housed the Ark of the Covenant, but it has not been seen since.

After the fall of the Babylonian Empire, the Persian king Cyrus the Great commissioned the rebuilding of the temple (generally known as the second temple), fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 44:28. Work began in 538 BC and was completed 23 years later. It was not as impressive as the former one, but still played its central role in the religious and civil life of the Jewish people. According to classical Jewish belief, the temple was the figurative ‘footstool’ of God’s presence among the people and **Jerusalem was regarded as the centre of the known world:** *“Thus saith the Lord God; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her”* (Ezek 5:5).

Recorded history shows that the temple came close to being destroyed again in 332 BC when the Jews refused to acknowledge the deification of Alexander the Great. There were several desecrations by invading forces afterwards too, but the temple survived.

After Herod the Great was made ruler by the Romans in 37 BC, he complained the temple was built like a fortress and was shorter than Solomon’s temple by about 27,43 m (90 feet) because of a decree by Darius, a later Persian king. King Herod no doubt wanted to be remembered forever as the builder of the greatest temple of the Jews, possibly believing it would gain him acceptance among them. The work of rebuilding the temple began in 19 BC which was the 18th year of King Herod’s reign. When Herod died in the year 4 BC, the main part of the building had been completed, but the work on the complex continued for another 60 years. It was fully completed in 63 AD, only seven years before being completely destroyed by the Roman army in 70 AD (Bible History Online, 2013).

Before Herod embarked on the reconstruction of the temple, it covered a relatively small area on top of Mount Moria. He doubled that area by incorporating part of the hill to the northwest (which had to be levelled and on which he built the Antonia Fortress) and by filling up parts of the surrounding valleys. The temple mount was surrounded on its four

sides with massive retaining walls – of which the Western Wall (or Wailing Wall) is the only remaining one (Bible History Online, 2013).

One need only look at illustrations of Jerusalem and the size and splendour of the temple area to appreciate the status and influence it had in the Jewish culture of the time. This, together with the fact that Herod the Great was not regarded as a true Jew accentuates the ungodliness of the civil and religious system of the time.

THE OLD, EARTHLY JERUSALEM

Although no biblical city or town is as well-known as Jerusalem, and which many today continue to call the holy city, Jerusalem was not built, and not even named by the Hebrew nation. The name is found for the first time in Joshua 10:1. It was a Jebusite city before David captured it (2 Sam 5:6). The original name was most likely Urusalimum or Ursalimmu. It meant ‘Foundation of Shalem’, which was a known Ugaritic god. The name was probably only Hebraized because it seemed to mean ‘Rain of Peace’ in the Hebrew language. In other words, the Hebrews seemingly did not rename the city when they had the chance, perhaps because it was easily transliterated into something very Hebrew (Abarim Publications).

When Solomon dedicated the temple he built, he said that the Lord God had spoken directly to his father, David, saying that He had chosen Jerusalem so that His name would be there (2 Chr 6:6). Nehemiah 11:1 is the first of five mentions of Jerusalem as ‘the holy city’ in the Old Testament. The last reference is found in the seventy sevens prophecy in Daniel 9:24. The New Testament also has five mentions - two in Matthew and three in Revelation. In Revelation 11:2 it refers to the physical Jerusalem, with Revelation. 21:2 and 22:19 speaking about the New (heavenly) Jerusalem.

To summarise:

- Jerusalem of old was the city on which God placed his name (e.g. 1 Kgs 8:29).
- The city was described as the gate to God’s people (e.g. Obad v. 13).
- It housed the temple.

- The temple was known as God’s House, as the place of meeting with God.
- Jews were required to go to Jerusalem on specific occasions to worship.
- Jerusalem was regarded by the Jews as the centre of the world.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From our discussion one should be no doubt as to the centrality it all had in the Jewish society (brief as it is in the face of every relevant detail one could present to illustrate the God-given role of the Hebrew nation, the city of Jerusalem, the temple, and those instituted by God to serve in it). But at the heart of it was why God took the posterity of Jacob (Israel) out of Egypt to that land (which the Romans later renamed Palestine): That all the peoples of the earth might know Him (1 Kgs 8:60).

Dear reader, there should also be no doubt in your mind that the land and city that Jesus of Nazareth encountered had long before lost its claim of being the holy land and holy city or city of God. Jerusalem of Jesus’ time was a corrupt city ruled by corrupt leaders whose actions were directed by man-made religious traditions amidst political expediencies. Jesus left no doubt about His sentiments in this regard, for example:

**Jerusalem of Jesus’ time
was a corrupt city with corrupt leaders.**

Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt 15:6-9).

Even so the Messiah later expressed His desire to have been able to gather “...*thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not*” (Matt 23:37)! And how many times before Him did God not send prophets to call them from their wicked ways?

THE BUILD-UP

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

The message of John the Baptist was, “*Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near*” (Matt 3:1). After Jesus’ baptism by John in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit’s descent upon Him, the voice from heaven that declared He was the beloved Son, and his temptation by the devil in the wilderness, Jesus began to preach the same message: “*Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near*” (Matt 4:17).

Although the expressions ‘kingdom of God’ and ‘kingdom of heaven’ are not found in the Hebrew Scriptures, they do appear in rabbinic literature. Apparently the Pharisees developed these terms at a later stage, possibly as part of the practice to use euphemisms to avoid unintentionally misusing God’s name (Lindsey, 1987-2004). ‘Heaven’ is often regarded as a virtual synonym for ‘God’ in the Hebrew mind and thus also the Scriptures. These two expressions refer to one and the same within this context. Matthew applied the expression ‘heaven’ as he was writing to the Jews. Mark and Luke both used the ‘kingdom of God’.

Viola (1998:31) concludes that the Bible never defines the kingdom’, but only describes it. There are a number of ways to describe the kingdom of God, depending upon what aspect one wishes to emphasise. In contemporary language, however, a kingdom is the expression of a king’s authority. Viola summarises that:

- The kingdom of God is not a place and should not be confused with geography;
- It is not heaven, and also not a particular place on this earth; and
- God is concerned with people and humankind.
- Since humans live in geographical locations, God is concerned with places as well.

Viola then defines the kingdom of God as the sphere of God's authority and reign. Viewed in this way, the concept of the 'kingdom' can be understood to refer to

- sovereignty (or authority to rule) rather than territory; and
- the sphere (or realm) of exercise rather than its extent.

For the Hebrew sages (wise men) 'kingdom of heaven' was a spiritual expression meaning the rule of God over a person who kept or began to keep the written and oral commandments. Lindsey (1987-2004) illustrates this view with a statement of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korhan, that Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ("*Hear, O Israel*") is recited before Deuteronomy 11:13-21 ("*If, then, you obey the commandments*") in the daily prayers to indicate that one should accept first the kingdom of heaven, and only afterwards the yoke of the commandments. Matthew 6:33 confirms a similar sequence of actions: "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*"

Jesus began His public ministry as Herod put John in prison, a situation that may have influenced the latter to focus on a political and military deliverer despite his own earlier proclamation about the Lamb of God on the banks of the Jordan River. John heard of Jesus' teachings and miracles and sent some of his disciples to ask whether Jesus was indeed the Messiah, or whether they should expect another (Matt 11:1-3). Jesus' emphasis on the spiritual aspects of the kingdom, to the exclusion of the political element, seemingly differed from John's understanding of how the Messiah would usher in the kingdom of God. John's disciples were sent back with the assurance of the many messianic signs that Jesus performed.

Although the passages of Scripture in which Jesus explicitly refers to the already present dimension of the kingdom of God/heaven are not many, his whole preaching and ministry are marked by this dominant reality. This present aspect of the kingdom manifested itself in different ways in the person and deeds of the Christ (Wood, 1996:648-649):

- Casting out demons
- Healing the sick
- Working of miracles such as turning water into wine, raising Lazarus from the dead and walking on water.

In their discussion of the expression "*The kingdom of God has come near you*" (Luke 9:35), Bivin and Blizzard of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research indicate that the Greek word for near (*engiken*) means, 'about to appear'. The Hebrew equivalent, however, is *karav*, and that word means that it has already arrived. Drawing from the usage of the word *karav* in Genesis 20:4, Deuteronomy 22:13-14, 2 Kings 16:12 and Isaiah 8:3, they conclude that the Hebraic understanding of 'near' is not futuristic, but present tense (1994:62-63) – therefore present in Jesus' time.

Jesus sent His disciples out to preach and teach. Upon healing the sick they were to say to the people that the kingdom of God had come near them. It is an idiom that often denotes physical intimacy. Their declaration meant that God had personally taken charge of the situation.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE PREDICTED

Matthew 24:1-2 (Mark 13:1-2 & Luke 21:5-6)

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Learned men of the past have shown that Jesus and His disciples were all beholding the temple in Jerusalem of their time. To suggest another temple of the future is to go beyond and above what is written. There is no scriptural basis for asserting that any other, future temple is meant (Chilton, 1987:6). And of course the same applies to any suggestion of another audience than Jesus' close group of disciples with Him.

There is no scriptural foundation on which to decide that Jesus was referring to any other temple than the one of His time.

History shows that the temple was destroyed by the invading Romans in 70 AD. Some commentators also argue that the remains of the Western (or Wailing) wall standing even today show this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled.

Commentators also argue whether the retaining walls should be understood to be part of the buildings of the temple. Bray (2008:11), on the other hand, argues that not leaving one stone upon another is a proverbial and hyperbolic way of describing **vast destruction**. What remains true as

recorded by Josephus and others is that the temple, once regarded as the ‘footstool’ and centre of God’s presence among the people, had been utterly destroyed and remains so until this day. This also fulfilled the prophecy of Micah (3:12), that Zion would be ploughed as a field and Jerusalem become heaps.

Johnson’s *The Peoples’ New Testament Commentary* of 1891 states that the remaining ruins of other great temples still indicate their former splendour. The Parthenon, the Acropolis, the temples of Karnack, Luxor, and Baalbec are examples; but to find even the foundations of the Jewish temple it is necessary to dig beneath the modern city. It has entirely disappeared from the face of the earth, and a Muslim complex stands on the spot where it stood.

In view of the background we described, we believe that God had long before withdrawn His presence from the temple of man-made religion that replaced the sanctuary on which His name had been. After all, He sent His Son to His own, but His own people would not receive Him despite the many warnings given by God’s prophets throughout the centuries (John 1:11). Ironically, the position of Messiah’s appearance is confirmed by Jewish rabbinical sources. One of the most respected rabbis in Jewish history, Rabbi Ben Maimon (also known as Maimonides) wrote in the 12th century that Daniel had elucidated to the Jews the knowledge of the end-times. However, this knowledge is regarded as secret and the wise rabbis have barred the calculation of the days of Messiah’s coming, so that the untutored populace are not led astray **when they see that the End Times had already come but without sign of Messiah** (based on their Messiah concept of a political and military saviour). Rabbi Moses Abraham Levi stated that he has examined and searched all the Holy Scriptures, but could not find the time for Messiah’s coming clearly fixed, except in the words which are written in the 9th chapter of Daniel (Missler, 1996).

It would in view of these statements be difficult to believe that the Jews of Jesus’ time would have understood the prophecy in a different sense than the Christians, however much they may have denied it throughout the centuries and still do today. In 1941 the spiritual leader of the Jewish Chabad group made the statement that the Hebrew Talmud declared more than 1500 years earlier, that all end-times for the redemption have passed – it only awaited repentance (Chabad.org).

THE DISCIPLES QUESTION JESUS

Matthew 24:3 (Mark 13:3,4 & Luke 21:7)

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

We should remember that these disciples had been living in an intimate relationship with Jesus **in the true sense of discipleship as it was understood in that culture**, which even allowed a married man to leave his wife without her agreement for a time, to follow the sage (or wise man and teacher) – Matthew 19:29:

And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

They did not join up with their teacher for the day only. Consequently we should not have any doubt that they were referring to a supernatural sign. Note also, that they were not mentioning signs, but only addressed Him in the singular. This is important in view of the habit of popular modern end-times teachers and preachers to explain signs (plural) of the times.

The next important concept to grasp, is the term 'coming' in their words. It is the Greek word *parousia*, and expresses a being present, or presence. There is absolutely no indication here, or elsewhere in the New Testament, of a physical, bodily return or presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who teach such a bodily presence have to read or philosophise it into the Scriptures. This specific expression is used by Matthew only and in this sense we need to bear in mind he was writing to a Jewish readership and therefore applied **well-known Jewish concepts**. The parallel portions from Mark and Luke refer very specifically to the temple's destruction:

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? (Mark. 13:3-4).

And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? (Luke. 21:5-7).

Hand in hand with the concept of the Lord's presence, the verse includes "*the end of the world.*" The word 'end' used here is the Greek *sunteleia*, and **it indicates an entire completion or consummation of a dispensation.** *Aion*, translated in the King James Version as 'world', is better translated as 'dispensation'. Note that we do not have two separate events being addressed here, but one. **This verse establishes context for the term 'end' throughout the prophecy.** The predicted destruction of the temple and end of the Mosaic dispensation is one and the same event.

Dubov (2009, under the Jewish Chabad.org umbrella) writes that the expression 'End of Days' has always been taken in Hebraic understanding as a reference to the messianic era. In other words, the people within whose cultural, historical, geographical and literary context the books of the Old Testament had been written have always understood the concept as relevant to the messianic era. By studying their writings one is left with no doubt that they understood the end of days to be a convergence, a coming together of times in the coming of the long awaited Messiah. If we, then, believe that Jesus of Nazareth was and is that Messiah, on what grounds can we now redefine the meaning of expressions such as the 'end of days', or 'latter days', or 'end of the age' such as recorded here to mean something else? The only reason for such a definition is to make it fit the modern, man-made end-times doctrines. There is no biblical substantiation apart from the manipulation of the contextual aspects of the relevant Scriptures. We need to take similar care when we read words such as 'world' in our translations, especially so when they are read in an end-times context.

What is therefore referred to as 'completion of the age or dispensation' in this portion of the Scriptures, is that momentous crisis of the ages when the Mosaic dispensation and its temple were to fall in ruin. The presence or coming (*parousia*) addressed in Matthew. 24:3 according to the Scriptures and ancient Hebraic understanding **was to take place at the end of an age or dispensation and did not imply the cessation of the human race on earth.** And the age to come, the messianic time,

would accordingly be the period that would follow immediately after the termination of the pre-messianic age (Terry, 1883:458). As the latter had not yet come when Jesus spoke, it would consequently have had a future meaning **for them**.

Chilton (1987:7-8) also describes the concern of the disciples and that their questions revolved around this one great issue, namely the fact that their own generation would witness the close of the pre-messianic (or pre-Christian) era and the arrival of the new age foretold by the Old Testament prophets. All they asked was **when** it would come and **what sign** they should look for, in order to be fully prepared.

Matthew 24:4-6 (Mark 13:5-7 & Luke 21:8-9)

And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Jesus was speaking to his disciples and not to the multitudes, telling them that the rumours of wars and wars itself should not trouble them. Such things would happen and has been happening throughout most of human history – such as World Wars I and II, for example. And we underline again that the focus of the disciples' question was the temple. To take these words of Jesus as being addressed to the people of our time is to read into Scripture what is not written - and the more than 200 unfulfilled end-times predictions since the first century are more than sufficient evidence of the error of such an approach.

False Christ's would come or appear (*erchomai*) and we discuss the fulfilment as we consider Matthew 24:23-26. The word translated as 'end' in this case, is the word *telos* and it essentially describes a point aimed at as a limit – in other words, the conclusion of an act or state (in this case the Mosaic dispensation).

Matthew 24:7-8 (Mark 8 & Luke 21:9-11)

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers [various] places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

The word *odin*, translated here as ‘sorrows’, is translated ‘birth pains’ by some such as the Holman Christian Standard Version, as ‘travail’ by Jahn in his Exegeses Bible, and as ‘throes’ in Green’s Interlinear Bible. Whichever term one chooses, it is descriptive of violent pangs, of intense pain, such as might be present in birth or death. And such has been the history of humanity to considerable extent and most definitely of the Hebrew nation. We will note more of this as we progress with the discussion of the prophecy.

Luke calls these events fearful sights and great signs from heaven, thereby accentuating its severity and intensity.

PERSECUTION, BETRAYAL AND FALSE PROPHETS PREDICTED

Matthew 24:9 (Mark 13:9-12 & Luke 21:12-16)

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.

Both Mark and Luke are more descriptive in being handed over to the councils (or Sanhedrins), flogged in the synagogues, and standing before rulers and kings. Their record is similar to the Matthew 10:17-21 text which describes the commissioning of the twelve by Jesus. In the parallel portion of Luke (verses 16-19), they are also told at the same time that not a hair of their head would be lost:

And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.

History shows that most of these disciples, later known as apostles, were indeed killed before the great tribulation that befell Jerusalem (which we deal with in our discussion of Matthew 24:21).

Matthew 24:10-11

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

The period of 66-70 AD was characterised by Jewish revolt against Rome. Increased taxation, the Roman control over the High Priest, general treatment of Jews by the Romans, and ideological tension between the pagan Greco-Roman world and Jewish belief in one God had raised the tension. Under Caesar Nero the Jews' status as citizens of the Empire was revoked, leaving them unprotected against harassment by non-Jewish citizens. The final incident that boiled over in full-scale revolt in 66 AD was the discovery that Roman governor, Florus, had stolen huge amounts of silver from the temple.

Roman soldiers stationed in Jerusalem, as well as a back-up contingent of soldiers sent by Rome was defeated, convincing the Zealots they could actually defeat the Roman Empire. A large number of Jews were killed or sold into slavery by the heavily armed and highly trained force that Rome sent against the rebels in Galilee. Jewish leaders who escaped and fled to Jerusalem were promptly killed if they did not fully support the revolt. Some rebels later burned the city's granaries (or food supply) in the belief that it would force everyone in the city to rise up against the Romans, but they only made it easier for the Romans to eventually destroy Jerusalem in 70 AD (Pelaia, 2013). All in all, the position inside Jerusalem was characterised by internal offense, betrayal and hate among the different Jewish groups.

In his description of the last events when the Roman soldiers invaded the city, Josephus recorded the role of false prophets who deceived the people into believing that God commanded them to go to the temple area where they would receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. He recalls that like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, they did not regard the denunciations that God had made to them. By all collecting at the temple area they made much easier the efforts of killing and capturing by the Roman (Josephus, 1998:889). And it would be naive to think that these false prophets were not active throughout all the years of the revolt and siege of Jerusalem.

Matthew 24:12,13 (Mark 13:13 & Luke 21:19)

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Vincent's Word Studies (e-Sword) accentuate that the implication is not only one of many, but of the majority. *Robertson's Word Pictures* (e-

Sword) state love would give way to hatred and suspicion. The historical record leaves no uncertainty as to the truth of this reality in those days.

The word translated as ‘end’ is once again the Greek word *telos*, describing a point aimed at as a limit; the conclusion of an act or state. The *People’s New Testament Commentary* (Johnson, 1891) states that Christian Jews who endured in their faith to the end were saved by fleeing to Pella, beyond the Jordan, at the signal pointed out by the Lord. It is discussed in more detail under Matthew 24:16. One needs to underline here, though, that this portion of Scripture shows how important it is to understand the content in its true context. The expression ‘save’ is one that is so easily presented from the pulpits as referring to a ‘salvation of the soul from eternal condemnation in hell’, without careful consideration of the portion of Scripture at hand. Here we understand it to signify that holding fast to their faith would result in physical deliverance from the calamity that would be.

Luke’s rendering (21:19) of endurance to the end is “*In your patience possess ye your souls*”(KJV). The Holman Christian Standard Bible renders the text, “*By your endurance gain your lives.*” If one considers that the previous passage noted not a hair of their head would be lost (despite the fact that some would be killed), the Holman rendering seems to bring clarity.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

One can safely say that this verse is one of the most crucial ones within the prophecy of Jesus against Jerusalem. It is a verse often used to defend popular modern end-times doctrines, in the sense that there are yet parts of the human race on earth today who have not heard the gospel. In one article we read many years ago (and which we firmly supported at the time) it was explained how the contribution of the electronic media and especially the internet had now made this part of the prophecy a soon to be fulfilled reality.

Our understanding (and that of so many sincere Christians) has been totally clouded through the years by our focus on the Scriptures from and

in a modern, Westernised point of view and context. *Oikomene*, the Greek word translated here as ‘world’ referred to the ‘inhabited earth’ of that time and understanding, rather than the whole globe. A closely related meaning is ‘humankind’ (Mounce, 2006:808,809). This word was especially used of the Roman Empire. For example, Caesar Augustus decreed that a census should be taken of the whole *oikomene*. In Acts 11:28 we read that a prophet named Agabus predicted a severe famine throughout the *oikomene*. The Holman Christian Standard Bible correctly translates this portion as ‘throughout the Roman world’. Modern end-times teachers, however sincere they may be in their interpretations, do violence to both the content and context of this text when they apply this to our world of today. We have been deceived for so long by a combination of our lack of knowledge of the language and wrong perspectives created in our Westernised understanding by less than accurate translations.

During the sixteenth century, as he was translating the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*) into German, Luther realised what many Hebrew scholars of the twentieth century have affirmed. It was impossible to convey so much in so few words in any other language. In the Hebrew language, Luther said, one hears God speak (Wilson, 1990, quoted by Lawrence).

When Stephen was stoned and the followers of Jesus the Christ were persecuted by Paul, it caused the Gospel to spread faster (Acts 7:54-8:4). The Book of Acts describes how the Gospel was taken throughout the known world. Paul was converted to Christ and he brought the Gospel to the Gentiles. In his letter to the Colossians (1:6) he declared that **the gospel was bearing fruit and growing over the whole world**. Here the word used is *kosmos*, which referred to the orderly arrangement of humanity on earth, and here also in the sense of the known world of their time, the Roman Empire. This understanding is clear from Paul’s largest work, his letter to the Romans:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, **their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world** [*oikomene*] (Rom 10:17-18; authors’ accentuation).

The reference to ‘all the nations’ further and firmly establishes our understanding. Acts 2:1-11, in which we read of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost states that **devout Jews**

from every nation under heaven were together in Jerusalem on that day, and then those nations are all mentioned – any map of that time confirms once more that the context is the Roman Empire: *“Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and, in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians...,”* (v.9-11).

THE CLIMAX

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION AND ESCAPE OF BELIEVERS

Matthew 24:15-20 (Mark 13:14a-18 & Luke 21:20-23)

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in winter, neither on the sabbath day.

The text in Luke's account reads, "*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.*" In this regard, it should be noted that Luke was not writing his account for a Hebraic readership and would therefore make sure his intended reader, someone he addressed as 'most honourable Theophilus', would understand. In fact, the context of his introduction underlines this reality.

Commentators vary on their interpretation of the text in view of their understanding of what Jesus meant with His reference to the holy place according to Matthew's record. It is usually taken to be the temple, for example Robertson, who interprets the text to refer to the Roman army's presence in the temple. Luke's text, however, refers specifically to Jerusalem surrounded by a body of troops. Bear in mind that Jerusalem was called the holy city. In Hebraic thought a city or town was described as a guarded place.

Albert Barnes (e-Sword) gives similar interpretation to Luke, noting that Mark (13:14) used “(...) *standing where it ought not (...)*”, meaning the same thing. All Jerusalem was esteemed ‘holy’ (see Matt 4:5, for example). The meaning of this is, that when they saw the Roman armies standing in the holy city or encamped around the temple, or the Roman ensigns or standards in the temple, they should realise desolation of the city and temple was near. One would find it very difficult within the understanding of that society, to separate the city from the temple and vice versa.

The whole of Jerusalem was regarded as ‘holy’ by the Jews.

In the Hebraic mind anything involving the worship of idols or false gods in their sacred places was seen as an ‘abomination’. During the last siege and events preceding it in the years between 66 and 70 AD, Jewish places of worship throughout Judea were desecrated by the Roman army and various abominations by some Jews also took place inside the temple. One melted the holy vessels. The priests, including the high priest, were killed and one who knew nothing of priestly affairs was chosen to be high priest. Drunkenness manifested in the temple and throughout Jerusalem thousands of Jews were killed by their own. There can be no doubt that whenever the pagan armies were seen to approach or surround the city, the Jews would have had the fear of another desecration of the temple in their mind. The Roman army was itself called the ‘abomination’ on account of the images of the emperor, and the eagles, carried in front of the legions, and regarded by the Romans with divine honours. The *People’s New Testament Commentary* of Johnson (1891) agrees that the Roman army, heathen, with heathen images and standards, ready to sacrifice to idols on the temple altar, working the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple, is what is meant.

Luke’s record is simple and clear that Jesus was referring to the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman army and His statement indicated Jerusalem and the temple’s desolation was at hand. All the philosophising of the popular modern end-times commentators have done biblical truth enormous damage with the many and varied misrepresentations of the ‘abomination’. One film of years ago comes to mind, for example, in which the abomination was a huge computer in the temple in Jerusalem. We say it without any sarcasm, but it is no wonder the world at large is so set on attempts to prove the Bible to be a book of myths. Christian believers with the best intentions succeed regularly in providing them with ammunition.

Many years earlier the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel during the Babylonian exile and gave him the well-known seventy sevens prophecy relating to the ‘end-times’. In our EBook, *Daniel Without Make-up And Long Toes*, we show from history that the people in exile were the people of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The other ten tribes of the original Israel had been dispersed across the known world long before in such a way that even the knowledge of their tribal identity had become lost. What is important for our current discussion is that the angel underlined the application of the prophecy to the people of Judea and Jerusalem. It did not apply to the people of all nations of the then known inhabited world or the world in a far distant future. As Jesus spoke to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, He did not change that reality to widen the scope. He very specifically reiterated Daniel’s record of **the holy place**, and of **the people in Judea**.

Skirmishes began to break out between the Jews and Romans early in the decade of 60-70 AD. When the Roman army went up to Jerusalem in 66 AD under the command of Cestius Gallus to put down the Jewish rebellion, they surrounded the city, but withdrew unexpectedly at some point. Having advanced with his army to Jerusalem, and besieged it, Cestius Gallus suddenly and inexplicably raised the siege, and withdrew his army, when the city might have been easily taken (Josephus, Wars 2.19.7). This was a signal of an opportunity for the community of believers in Jesus as the Messiah to make their escape, which they accordingly did, going over the Jordan, as Eusebius [an early ‘church father’] wrote in the fourth century, to a place called Pella (New Advent.org). Thomas Newton (1754:21 of 61) noted that there was no record that any of them perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Scott (1998) made an extensive study of the major arguments in modern debates on whether the reports of early Christian historians such as Eusebius and Epiphanius of such an escape are correct. He concluded that the ancient writers are more likely to be correct than modern doubters.

And whichever way one looks at it, the statements by Jesus that some in His leadership group would be killed and that those in Judea (clearly referring to the believers) should flee to the mountains, contradict the popular modern philosophy of a coming pretribulational ‘rapture of the believers’.

The last few verses of this portion emphasises the urgency of the matter in different ways. There should be no delay. Jesus stated that it would be best if such flight did not come in winter or on a Sabbath day.

The first circumstance would entail severe hardship given the winters of that area, while the second was based on the reality that they were still ruled as being under the law and the flight on a Sabbath would be impossible as the gates of Jerusalem were shut on the Sabbath (Fenemore, 2010). Churton (1785) noted that this escape of the believers took place in the mildness of Autumn and for six successive days, which did not include a Sabbath day. They were thus afforded the opportunity to leave Jerusalem, allowing them enough space for their journey and even for choosing where to go. Modern archaeological discoveries of tunnels under the city have also suggested some of these as possible escape routes.

GREAT TRIBULATION

Matthew 24:21-22 (Mark 13:19-20 & Luke 21:23-24)

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, and no, nor ever shall be. And except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

This is certainly one of the most prominent and most discussed portions of the prophecy. It is also one of the most abused and misrepresented ones. Take the following, for example: Criticising aspects of preterist views on Matthew 24 (in other words, the views of those who believe all Bible prophecy has been fulfilled), the writer of an article on the Internet asked that, if the destruction of Jerusalem was the Great Tribulation along with the persecution of believers, how preterists explained Matthew 24:21 “*which states that the period after the ‘anti-christ’ signs a seven-year peace treaty with Israel will be the worst time in all of history?*” [Authors’ accentuation].

One may look at that verse whichever way you wish, but it does not make such a statement in any way. You have to read the elements of ‘antichrist’, ‘seven-year’ and ‘peace treaty’ into the text since it is simply not there. This is nothing short of sloppiness in dealing with the biblical text, however sincere the purpose might be.

Luke gives more detail of what the tribulation would entail – they would fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (or filled up, completed). Commentators differ

on what the reference to times of the Gentiles meant. We understand it simply to refer to the oppression and contempt that would follow the conquest of Jerusalem and Judea by the Gentile Romans.

Scholars who accept Ezekiel 5:9 as forewarning of the Roman siege, and this seems to be correct, unfortunately often also project it to another fulfilment in some distant future. We have already shown earlier that there is no biblical substantiation for the double fulfilment approach:

(...) Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations (...) and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all winds.

Anyone who reads the historical record by Josephus and others in this regard will understand just how great a tribulation those in Judea and Jerusalem suffered at the hands of the Roman soldiers. According to Josephus 1,100,000 people were killed during the siege, of which the majority were Jews. Another 97,000 were captured and enslaved. Soldiers entering houses to plunder found in some entire dead families who died from famine. In the city they had to clamber over heaps of dead to carry out their task of wiping out Jews (Josephus, Wars, 6.5.1 & 6.9.3). *“The whole of Judea lay smouldering in ruins, virtually depopulated. The Days of Vengeance (Luke 21:22) had come with horrifying, unpitiful intensity. The holy city had become the Babylonian whore; and now she was a desert, ‘the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird’ (Rev 18:2)”* (Chilton, 1987:15).

Edersheim (1947:449) described the tribulation as unparalleled in the terrible past of the Jewish nation’s history, and also unequalled in their bloody future. It would be so dreadful that, if Divine mercy had not intervened for the sake of the followers of Christ, the whole Jewish race that inhabited the land would have been swept away. This description gains more weight if one considers that during its long history, Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, and captured and recaptured 44 times. It is one of the oldest cities in the world (Wikipedia, History, 2012).

Let us conclude this portion by accentuating that our few notes do not even closely reflect the horror the city and its inhabitants went through in

that final period leading up to and including the destruction of the city and its holy temple. Those who might still doubt just how great a tribulation it was would do well to study the record of Josephus and others in this regard. At the same time it is crucial to bear in mind the proper context of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:21, **which concerned the world (and more specifically, the Roman Empire) of their time.** It cannot and should not be divorced from the true historical and geographical context, and then be projected as still awaiting fulfilment in our generations' future. The Scriptures do not project or support such an approach. It also does not support a principle of double prophecy, i.e. one fulfilment in 70 AD and another in a later generation. There is no rule or principle in the Bible showing that prophecy should be interpreted in such a way. **Jesus never indicated any other fulfilment than one in the generation of his disciples.** We look into this aspect again in our consideration of Matthew 24:34.

As far as the shortening of those days for the elect's sake is concerned, we understand the elect to be **that generation of believers.** They were the generation predestined (or elected if you will) to be the vehicle through which the messianic dispensation and kingdom of God would be established. This prophetic statement would make no sense if the 'elect' were going to be 'raptured' before the tribulation. Jesus was certainly not making such a statement and He most certainly did not describe either a seven year or three and a half year great tribulation period which the various rapture philosophies propose. We strongly recommend our book on Daniel (*Daniel Without Make-up And Long Toes*) to challenge and facilitate Bible study in this regard.

Vincent (e-Sword) shows that various causes did in fact combine to shorten the siege:

- Herod Agrippa was previously stopped in his work of strengthening the walls by order of the Roman Emperor.
- The Jews were so absorbed in their internal conflict that they had completely neglected preparations to withstand the siege.
- The magazines of corn and provisions were burnt down before the arrival of the army under Titus.
- Titus and his army arrived suddenly.
- The Jews voluntarily abandoned parts of the fortification.

Titus, looking at the fortifications his army had overcome, confessed that it was only God who could have made their success possible (Josephus, Wars, 6.9.1).

Matthew 24:23-26 (Mark 13:21-22)

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

Portions of Scripture dealing with false Christs, false prophets and false teachers are also probably of the most abused and misapplied one can think of. They are usually indiscriminately applied to people today without consideration of the true context in which they are found in the Bible. By that we do not mean that there are not modern false prophets or teachers (or false Messiahs for that matter), but that one is not false simply because he or she has a different understanding of Scriptures than you might have. What is important here in Matthew 24, is the context. Jesus was describing to his disciples the **destruction of the temple and Jerusalem**, and taking the warning against false Christs and prophets out of that context leads to dangerous misrepresentation.

Bray consolidates various written records in his wide-ranging book on the fulfilled prophecy of Matthew 24. He notes that in those days false “Christs” did appear on the scene, promising deliverance to the people so they would not give in to the pressures of Rome. In order to actually appear as Messiahs, these men had to demonstrate their authority by different signs and wonders, which they did in various ways such as attempting to lead people into the desert or secluded areas where God would supposedly deliver them. But the Roman siege became reality nonetheless. Jesus warned that such claims were to be ignored as it would be to no avail (Bray, 2008:114-115).

Quoting 19th century theologian N. Nisbett, Bray shows that from the death of Herod the Great to the destruction of the temple, the Jewish History is filled with the names of false Christs and false Prophets who deceived both the Jews and Samaritans. None appeared before this period, and not more than one for five or six centuries after it (quoted from

Kett's *History, the Interpreter of Prophecy*, 3rd. Edit. vol. I, o. 168, by N. Nisbett). Newton (1754) also provides a number of examples from ancient literature, for example from the works of Eusebius, Josephus and Origen. He notes that Jesus did not only foretell the appearance of such impostors, but also the manner and circumstances of their conduct. Miracles through sorcery was not unusual in biblical times as the examples of Jannes and Jambres in Egypt (Exod 7:11-12) and Simon Magus in the New Testament record (Acts 8:9-11). Having astounded the people with his sorceries for a long time, they called him the great power of God. Several names of such people are found in the old literature.

The destruction of Jerusalem was so complete that very little development took place in the area for some 200 years.

To conclude, we underline again the fact that the context of this portion of the prophecy is not the presence of false Christs and prophets, but the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. And so complete was that eventual destruction that it was only after some 200 years that people began to do much in the area that the original city had been. The temple, of course, remains destroyed until this day, with a Muslim complex standing in its place (Bray, 2008:12).

Matthew 24:27 (Luke 17:24)

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

The verse is often used to support a future coming, which some call a 'final coming', of Christ in terms of traditional doctrines. Some state that this image describes an event that would be sudden and visible to all around the globe. We do not share that understanding for the simple reason that Jesus was prophesying in a 'world context' of the known inhabited world or Roman Empire of the time. There can be no doubt that the place of Jerusalem in the knowledge of people throughout that empire would ensure that the knowledge of its destruction would most certainly be known throughout without undue delay. He already proclaimed that many would be looking for Him in the desert or secret places, but He said it would be useless to do so. His *parousia*, His presence would be seen or known all over from the events of the destruction of the city and temple and thereafter.

Matthew 24:28 (Luke 17:37)

For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Johnson (1891) accepts the translation as it is and then explains the term 'carcass' as descriptive of the utterly corrupted Jewish state at the time, while the eagle was the symbol which every Roman legion bore as its standard. Vincent (e-Sword), as representative of other views, feels the griffon vulture is meant, which surpasses the eagle in size and power. Aristotle noted how the vulture scented its prey from afar and congregated in the wake of an army. Barnes (e-Sword) adds that wherever wicked people are, the instruments of their chastisement will be assembled. The providence of God will direct them there, as the vultures are directed to a dead carcass. The Afrikaans translation of 1933 also used the concept of the vultures.

THE PRESENCE OF THE SON OF MAN

Matthew 24:29 (Mark 13:24-25 & Luke 21:25-26)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

What we have here is typical prophetic imagery of God's presence and wrath being poured out. Come, let us allow the Bible itself to show this reality:

Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil (...) (Isa 13:9-11).

This was a prophecy against Babylon. The next example was a prophecy against the land of Idumaea:

And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall

be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment (Isa 34:4,5).

In Ezekiel 32:7-8 we read the lamentation for the fall of Egypt:

And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.

Amos prophesied Israel's desolation:

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day (Amos 8:9).

A last example - when the prophet Zephaniah prophesied God's severe judgments against Judah for various sins:

The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of thick clouds and thick darkness (Zeph 1:14,15).

All describe a situation of great calamity. With their visual portrayals the popular films and books have very effectively clouded the issue (no pun intended) and malformed our perceptions and understanding when we read the Scriptures.

Matthew 24:30 (Mark 13:26 & Luke 21:17)

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The Son of man is in heaven, not the sign. The events pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple are the sign that the Son of man was indeed who He said He was – the Son of God, the Messiah seated at the right hand of the Father (therefore in heaven). Matthew 26:64-65 clearly removes any doubt one could have in this regard: “*Jesus*

saith unto him [the high priest] (...) nevertheless I say unto you, **Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.**” The word translated ‘coming’ in this case is *erchomai*, and in this context also reflects the idea of appearance.

Clouds are a symbol of God’s power and glory throughout the Bible (e.g. Isa 19:1) – and which we see also in our discussion of verse 29. The high priest’s immediate outcry of blasphemy is confirmation that he understood Jesus’ claim in these words to be the Messiah – in other words, His claim to be the Son of God.

The Son of man, the Son of God is in heaven and not the sign.

The sign was the coming destruction of Jerusalem and more specifically the temple. Unfortunately preaching, books and in latter decades the powerful impact of visual media have embedded in the minds of readers of the Bible, whether Christian or atheist, literal images and consequent misrepresentation that the Gospel writers never intended. Not only believers in the Christ during that time, but also the Jews who did not receive Him, would have understood the statements clearly.

That Jews resist receiving Jesus of Nazareth as the prophetic Messiah even today simply confirms God’s description that they are a stiff-necked people (e.g. Deut 9:6). As noted in a previous section, one of the most respected rabbis in Jewish history, Rabbi Ben Maimon (also known as Maimonides) wrote in the 12th century that Daniel had elucidated to the Jews the knowledge of the end-times. However, the wise rabbis have barred the calculation of the days of Messiah’s coming (from the seventy sevens prophecy), so that the populace are not led astray when they see that the end-times have already come but without sign of Messiah (according to the Messiah concept of a political and military saviour they had). Rabbi Moses Abraham Levi also stated that he has examined and searched all the Holy Scriptures, but could not find the time for Messiah’s coming clearly fixed, except in the words which are written in the 9th chapter of Daniel (Missler, 1996).

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple tore out the heart of the whole Jewish society and economy which was rooted and grounded in the Mosaic dispensation.

Matthew 24:31-33 (Mark 13:27-29 & Luke 21:28-31)

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

There are all kinds of views and explanations of the trumpet sound and gathering together of God's elect by angels, depending on the reader's view of the whole prophecy; whether it was a prophecy of the events that took place in 70 AD, or whether it described something yet to be fulfilled. Those believing the latter see in it a future gathering. To ensure clarity on our view, we once more need to draw the attention to the context at hand: The disciples' question was very specifically directed at the destruction of the temple, the complex which was regarded in Jewish circles as God's footstool here on the earth and which was at the centre of the Mosaic dispensation.

In the same sense that Jesus was not describing a physical return by Him, he was not prophesying a physical gathering of His elect ones – and we understand the Elect to be that generation He was addressing. They were the chosen generation in whose time the New Testament dispensation of all things would be established here on earth. A trumpet sound was for calling people together and in general signified anticipated victory. In the context of this verse the gospel of the kingdom of God was the trumpet (Bray, 2008:217).

We agree therefore with Gill's understanding, for example, that the expression 'angels' here does not mean ministering spirits (Heb 1:14), but human messengers, preachers of the gospel of the kingdom of God, whom Christ would call, qualify and send forth into all the known world to preach this gospel to Jews in the diaspora (scattering or distribution) and Gentiles alike (Matt 28:18-20). They would be led by the Holy Spirit in their task.

This brings us to the parable of the fig tree in the verse, which is also one that has been greatly abused by those teaching a soon to be physical return of Christ and 'rapture of the saints'. Modern end-times teachers

The 'elect' was the generation in whose time the New Testament dispensation on earth would be established.

have seen in this parable prophecy relating to the founding of the modern state of Israel in 1948. However, the fig tree is not used anywhere in the Bible as a symbol of Israel. In other words, people who do so are creating a new meaning and significance for the image that is not based on a known principle from the Bible, or more specifically the Old Testament. Is it any wonder then, that one well-known author's prediction of a 1988 'rapture' (1948 + 40 years representing one generation) failed to come to pass, as have his subsequent date adjustments? The fig tree imagery in this prophecy is simply used to show that there are clear and well-known signs **his disciples and others would see and understand what were to follow**. We can only underline once more the importance of applying the correct context!

What we do find in the Bible is that Israel is likened to an **olive tree** – see Jeremiah 11:16 and Romans 11:24, for example. They are also likened to a **vineyard** (Isa 5:1-7).

A VERY SPECIFIC GENERATION IDENTIFIED

Matthew 24:34 (Mark 13:30 & Luke 21:32)

Verily I say unto you, This generation (*genea*) shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Although the word *genea* is *flexible* in its broad meaning, scholars find this passage unnecessarily difficult to interpret. Not only does the context of the temple's destruction provide the clear key, but support is found from a number of earlier verses in the Gospel records, as well as thereafter.

It is ironic to see how much more thorough some unbelievers or so-called sceptics study the Bible than Christians. Because Jesus' statement about 'this generation' is interpreted in so many ways and more specifically to suit the popular end-times doctrines, we have devoted considerable attention to it in our own studies. One of the most significant documents we came across was a study by a sceptic (atheist) on this expression (and of course with the purpose to show how lost Christendom is). In his article Mark Smith (2000) quotes 52 Bible translations, 5 lexicons, 25 Bible dictionaries, 6 Bible encyclopaedias, 16 Bible commentaries and the works of 21 academics/authors to show that the Greek word *genea*, in the context of Matthew 24:34, meant **that specific physical gen-**

eration of the apostles and that there were no grounds on which to apply it in the sense of a race or nation stretching over many centuries in the way that popular end-times prophets are doing. Unfortunately people like him then apply this insight to ‘prove’ that the Bible is a book of myths as there **had not been a physical second coming** of Jesus at the time.

The word *genea* literally means a **multitude of contemporaries** (Strong, e-Sword) or the **whole multitude of men living at the same time** (Thayer, 1981:112). Taking the word to mean ‘race’ or ‘nation’ such as popular end-times teachers and preachers propose is not altogether wrong, but it is still to be used of the race or nation of Jews living at that very specific time and not of many or an indeterminate number of generations over a prolonged period of time. Those who see it as anything else than the generation living at that time, are reading the passage out of its true context.

The following passages come from a similar context than that found in Matthew 24:

- Sending out the twelve to the lost sheep of Israel, Jesus stated: “*But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, **Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come***” (Matt 10:23; authors’ accentuation).
- In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus tells the religious leaders that even if He gave them a conclusive sign of His authority, they would not accept it and return to their former course as they felt comfortable in their old religious ways and would only become worse. Having previously (verse 39) called them an evil and adulterous generation, Jesus ends by saying (verse 45), “*That’s how it will also be with this evil generation.*” **Jesus was clearly not describing the whole Jewish nation and over all time with this statement. It simply shows once again that incorrect interpretation in one place invariably creates problems in another!**
- Undoubtedly the clearest Scriptural support comes from Matthew 16:28: “*Verily I say unto you, **There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom***” (Authors’ accentuation).
- Asked by the high priest to tell them under oath whether He was the Messiah, Jesus simply answered: “*(...) Thou hast said: never-*

*theless I say unto you, **Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven***" (Matthew 26:64; authors' accentuation).

The biblical concept of a generation as taken from the Old Testament is 40 years (e.g. Num 32:13). Recently it has been adapted by some to imply 70 or even 100 years in order to suit certain teachings and explanations of why all the 'rapture' predictions have failed to come to pass.

There is only one explanation for the problem so many have in interpreting this passage and it is sadly an expectation **not found in the Bible** unless one forces it into the text: the embedded understanding of a physical coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the world as we know it today, to reign for a thousand years from physical Jerusalem.

NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

Matthew 24:35 (Mark13:31 & Luke 21:33)

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Brown (1853) and other well-known scholars have shown through the centuries that people acquainted with expressions of the Old Testament would understand that the dissolution of the Mosaic and establishment of the new dispensation was regarded in the Hebraic mind as removal of the old heaven and earth and creation of the new. Lightfoot (1859) accentuated that the **destruction of Jerusalem is often expressed in the Scriptures as if it represented the destruction of the whole world**. One must always remember that Jerusalem was regarded as the centre of the world in the Hebraic thought.

Bray (2008:153) summarises as follows:

The Jewish age finally came to a close with the destruction of its city and its Temple; the entire Jewish government, economy, rulership, priesthood, rituals, sacrifices, all became dark and fell from heaven, so to speak, and the Son of man was seen sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of glory.

And the time frame is the same for both events. The Messianic reign followed "*immediately after the tribulation of those days (...)*", and thus in the lifetime of that generation (Matt 24:29).

The dispensation inaugurated with the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ, His ascent to heaven, and established after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD is what has been regarded in Hebraic cultural context as the establishment of the new heaven and earth. That this is not more widely acknowledged in the modern Jewish environment is due, of course, to their resistance in acknowledging Jesus of Nazareth as the prophetic Messiah.

In Deuteronomy 32:10-11 Moses described Israel's salvation in the wilderness in terms of God's Spirit hovering over a waste, just as in the original creation account. It is clear, therefore, that God expressed His covenant with Israel in terms of a new creation from the very beginning. Now God did the same with His New Covenant.

Modern end-times 'prophets' and teachers take the Scriptures out of all contexts, including the time context, and transport it to a time thousands of years in the future. This is not what Peter wrote! He was quite specific that he was dealing with something that was **already taking place** (2 Pet 3:10-13):

But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that [day] the heavens will pass with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, [it is clear] what sort of people you [**NB - his readers at the time**] should be in holy conduct and godliness as you [**NB**] wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be on fire and be dissolved, and the elements will melt with the heat. But based on His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell.

Peter was writing of the dissolution of the 'heaven and earth' - the Old Covenant system with all its obligatory rituals and sacrifices, and that it was already beginning to occur at that time. The 'universe' of the Old Covenant was coming apart and would never be revived again. How sad it is to find so many well-meaning individuals and groups today trying so sincerely to revive the Old Covenantal rituals and practices that Jesus completed (which is what 'fulfilled' means in that specific context) on the cross?

It is so important to note that Peter was continually drawing his readers' attention to events that were already beginning to take place, and not events that were to take place thousands of years in their future. The end of 'all things' in proper context of the apostle's time was at hand: the end

of the temple, of the Levitical priesthood, of the whole Jewish economy or system. Note too, the spiritual imagery of the heavenly elements. The Hebraic concept of the last days came to a close with the end of that age, of the Mosaic dispensation. We find this clearly stated in the letter to Hebrews (9:26): “(...) *now once in the end of the world* [end of the ages, HCSB] *hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*”

Paul expressed the similar idea when he wrote to the Corinthians that they were the generation upon whom the end ages had come (1 Cor 10:11): “*Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*”

UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

Matthew 24:36-39; 42-44 (Mark 13:32-37 & Luke 17:26-27; 12:39-40)

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of man be. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of man be.

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

We understand these passages to convey two crucial messages; the urgency of the matter and the fact that they did not and could not know the precise time. The implication was already clear that they, the disciples/apostles and their generation, should be ready for it at all times. In the days of Noah there had been plenty of warning, but the people remained unprepared until it was too late. They were caught unawares by the suddenness of the flood and were swept away. As Gill (e-Sword) points out, **so would also the coming of the Son of Man be, to take vengeance on the Jews in that generation, though they had been forewarned of it by Christ and his apostles.** Their destruction would

be as universal; all would be involved in it, excepting a few, that were directed a little before to go out of the city of Jerusalem to Pella; where they were saved, in the same way that Noah and his family were out of harm's way in the ark.

LEFT BEHIND

Matthew 24:40 & 41 (Luke 17:34-36)

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

We have now come to the last two passages of the prophecy itself, for what follows are the Lord's accentuations of the wisdom of being prepared and ready. These two verses are the well-known 'left behind' Scripture basis for a popular book and film series promoting the so-called 'rapture' theology or doctrines. As we think back on our enjoyment of these films and belief in the doctrinal error they so effectively conveyed as truth, we understand just how dangerous our lack of Bible knowledge had been despite our extensive knowledge of 'biblical teachings'. This was so despite our wide ranging knowledge of 'biblical teachings' and accompanying academic studies.

But does Matthew 24:40 & 41 not illustrate a rapture of some while some are not taken? Many of us have seen the films where two people stand together when suddenly there comes a light and one disappears in the twinkling of an eye, with his/her clothes all neatly folded up in a pile.

No one can deny that the *Left Behind* series of books and the films that flowed from them have taken an important part of the Christian world by storm. The left behind image that Jesus used had a different meaning altogether. In the cultures of the biblical times, during persecutions and wars, the conquering forces would take the strong and young captive and leave the old and weak behind. Two men would be working in the field- an old man and a strong, young one, as was the custom. The young would be taken, the old left behind. The Babylonian exile is one example. Historical records show the reality of just how many young people had been taken captive as slaves by the Romans during the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem, while the old and the infirm were killed.

A simple reality of the times was taken by modern end-times teachers and turned into highly spiritualised fiction presented as biblical truth! Fiction it may be, but it has had a huge impact on the minds of the misled believers. In the words of the late reverend Jerry Falwell, no book apart from the Bible has had such an impact on Christendom than *Left Behind*, the first book in the series by Tim LaHaye and Jeremy Jenkins (Wikipedia, 2013). Although he spoke God's words in another context, the **principle** in Hosea 4:6 surely still rings clear: "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me (...).*"

And to this we can only add: There but for God's grace, who looks upon the heart, goes each one of us!

CONCLUSION

THE NEW JERUSALEM

Although the end-times prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 does not address the concept of a New (heavenly) Jerusalem, it is one that forms an integral part of biblical eschatology or end-times theology. Seeing that we described a number of characteristics of the city of Jerusalem in Jesus' time, we deem it necessary to consider this concept (one that has most certainly intrigued many through the centuries) in this concluding chapter.

While the idea is noted on more than one place in the Bible, it is the imagery of Revelation 21 and 22 that has grabbed the interest - probably enhanced by the popular modern end-times books and films, paintings, and of course, the pulpit theology in our churches. As one can expect (given the wide array of end-times doctrines found in the Christian environment), differences of opinion abound. Even the measurements given in Revelation 21:16 have given rise to different opinions and philosophies. For some it describes a cube (symbol of perfection), while others point out it might also be a pyramid. Many are eagerly awaiting the day that a new, physical holy city comes down out of heaven from God (and according to some, hang in the air above the earthly Jerusalem).

In her conversation with Jesus at the well, the woman of Samaria noted that the Jews said they should go to Jerusalem to worship. She called Jacob their father (in other words their direct ancestor). Jesus replied that **there would come a day (and which He said then already was) when true worshipers would no longer go to (physical) Jerusalem, but would worship the Father in spirit and in truth.** Those were the people the Father wanted to worship Him (John 4:19-24). There can be no doubt that we have here a description of the New Jerusalem:

- It is, after all, the New Testament place of God's presence!

- It has no temple, for God and the Lamb are its Sanctuary (Rev 21:22)!
- It is wherever believers worship in spirit and in truth, which is what the Father wants!
- Believers do not have to go to earthly Jerusalem to worship as required in the Mosaic era. In fact they cannot, for God removed the temple of religion from his sight!

The old (physical) Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army in AD 70. The inhabitants of that Jerusalem went through a great tribulation such as never was before and never would be again (Matt 24:21). Anyone who does not believe the truth of this statement should read Josephus' account of the event. The temple and Jerusalem was left in ruin. In other words, God removed, according to the prophecy of his Son, the old holy city and the temple, which had long before forsaken its place as symbol and centre of God's presence among men, from his sight! The heavenly Jerusalem is found wherever believers worship in spirit and in truth. It will not appear one day in the future, as it had already come according to Jesus' statement to the Samaritan woman (John 4:23).

The heavenly Jerusalem is wherever believers worship the Father in spirit and truth.

Paul called the physical Jerusalem of his time a city of slavery: "*Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother*"

(Gal 4:25-26; our accentuation). Is it any wonder then that the earthly Jerusalem, **which is no longer the holy city of old, and never again will be**, is a city divided among three religions, and that the temple mount today is occupied by the children of Hagar? The time has come for Christians who lead pilgrimages to a so-called holy city that is not anymore, to reconsider just exactly what they are doing. By saying this we do not imply they should not visit Jerusalem, only that they need to bring it into proper perspective.

In his reference to the Jerusalem above, Paul was using the long held rabbinical understanding of a heavenly city which was the archetype of the physical one. It described a spiritual city, one which is free and independent of the Mosaic Law. The writer to the Hebrews used the same

idea (Heb 12:22-24). And in this city to which the readers/audience **had come**, he described the presence of:

- Myriads of angels (some translations add ‘in festive gathering’ or similar);
- The assembly of the firstborn;
- God, the judge of all;
- Spirits of the righteous people made perfect;
- Jesus (mediator of a new covenant – Heb 9:15); and
- The sprinkled blood (of the Lamb – Heb 9:11-14).

No explanation is needed of the presence of angels, God, and Jesus.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, **but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us** (Heb 9:11-12; authors’ accentuation).

The sprinkled blood of the Lamb in the holy of holies of the tabernacle not made by hands was applied **once and for all, having obtained eternal redemption**.

The assembly of the firstborn (or first begotten) is one on which scholars have different views. We understand it to be the spirits of the deceased of Israel who had been in *Sheol* (Heb.)/*Hades* (Gk.) under the Old Covenant, awaiting the Messiah. They were resurrected from *Sheol/Hades* after the resurrection of Christ Jesus, who is described as the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18).

And on the basis of 1 Peter 3:19, the spirits of the righteous people made perfect may be understood as the spirits of righteous people other than those of Israel through the ages. Under the New Covenant there was no longer a separation or differentiation between Israel as God’s chosen people and other nations. The sea (symbol of the nations in a sense of being separated from the ‘holy nation’) existed no longer, the old had passed away (Rev 21:1; 2 Cor 5:17).

The writer to the Hebrews (12:22), the physical descendents of Abraham, leaves no doubt that his readers should know that **they had come** to the New (heavenly, spiritual) Jerusalem that was already prophesied of by Isaiah (65:18,19).

(...) **you have come** to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God (the heavenly **Jerusalem**) (...)" (HCSB).

But **you have drawn near** Zion Mount, and a city God of (the) living. Jerusalem to a heavenly (...) (The Interlinear Bible).

But **ye are come** unto mount Siyon, and unto the city of the living Elohim, the Yeru Shalem of the heavenlies (Exegeses Ready Research Bible).

(...) you **have come** to Mount Tziyon, that is, the city of the living God, heavenly Yerushalayim (...)" (The Complete Jewish Bible).

In Hebrews 4:14-16 the writer stated that:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Authors' accentuations).

We do not need to string verses together as many do to 'prove' a pre-determined conclusion. If Hebrews 4:14-16 and 12:22 are regarded as biblical truth, it leaves no doubt as to the fulfilment of Revelation 15:8 and 21 & 22. If this view is considered an error, it is tantamount to saying that the Book of Hebrews should never have been selected as one of the canonical books of our Bible.

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled (Rev 15:8).

We read in Revelation 21:22 that John did not see a temple in the New Jerusalem, "(...) *for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*" If Revelation 15:8 is still awaiting fulfilment it means that no one today can enter into God's presence! That again contradicts Hebrews 4:16 that declares we can come boldly to the throne of grace.

It is a sobering thought to find and realise that scholars over several centuries past have called upon their readers to return to and understand the simple and accurate contextual truth of the Scriptures. However, their calls have seemingly not been heeded. Sadly, teachers, authors and

preachers in Christendom have remained steadfast in the traditions of men and their denominational synods. Instead of manifesting to the world at large the reality of the Christ's presence among us, the church displays to the world banners on their fences proclaiming that Jesus will be coming soon! And the writings of those bold theologians such as John Lightfoot (1602-1675), Alexander Brown (1800s), Moses Stuart (1780-1852), Samuel Lee (1783-1852), Ephraim Currier (1800s), N. Nisbett (17-1800s), Milton Terry (1849-1914) and Philip Mauro (1859-1952), to list just a few, are seemingly absent in the materials of contemporary Bible Schools, while the popular doctrines of error remain firmly embedded therein. We have personal experience of one network of Bible schools in South Africa that does not allow students in their assignments to present any understanding and arguments that differ from that of the prescribed material. If they do, marks are deducted.

And understandably, we can hear the question: Why, if you say the New Jerusalem of the Revelation already is, is the world in the state it is in? The answer comes from both the Old and New Testaments. Modern humankind, like Israel of old, has proved to be a stiff-necked people. Despite being the chosen nation, Israel consistently did what was evil in the Lord's sight during the Mosaic Covenant age and the recorded history is there for all to read (see the Book of Judges, for example). In the New Testament record we see that Yeshua MiNatzaret (Jesus of Nazareth) spoke out against the religious leaders of Jerusalem that they had revoked God's word because of their tradition. Christian leaders through the centuries since Christ have continued to revoke God's word. With their manmade traditions they have robbed the Word of God of its power and the modern church has lost its voice in the world to large extent.

James summarises it for us in simple terms: "*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work*" (Jas 3:16).

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

To wrap up our discussion of the end-times prophecy of Jesus, we wish to accentuate some points made as we worked through the relevant passages in the Bible:

Our reader should be clear on the foundational importance of correct context which is rooted and grounded in the understanding of the people in whose cultural context the Scriptures were written. Incorrect context inevitably forces incorrect interpretation into the text. Unfortunately the

biblical context has too often been redefined far beyond its original place and meaning in past centuries. Modern electronic media have greatly increased the teaching of error dressed up in biblical terminology in the place of biblical truth. And here we might add that half-truths are as dangerous, if not more, than full-blown untruth.

The context of the prophecy Jesus gave to his disciples on the Mount of Olives was **the land of Judea, the city of Jerusalem, the temple and their generation**. Reference to the ‘world’ was made in the context of the known, inhabited world, the Roman Empire, for which we provided not only interpretation from word studies, but also support from other Bible passages. It was not a prophecy directed at people and cities many centuries into their future and on different continents. Any concept of future in the prophecy related to their future. Some of them would still be alive to see the prophecy’s fulfilment (e.g. Matt 16:28).

Hebraic understanding through the centuries had always regarded the end-time as referring to the messianic era. We have no justification to redefine the concept, but should endeavour to understand the text according to the ancient Hebraic view.

The destruction of the Mosaic dispensation was regarded as the destruction of the heavens and the earth, while the New Covenant dispensation is to be understood as the New Heavens and Earth of prophecy. And our readers should be clear that the destruction of Jerusalem itself was not the *parousia* of Christ, for the text states that it would manifest “*Immediately **after** the tribulation of those days (...)*”. Gould (1896) notes that the fall of Jerusalem was a preparation for the *parousia*. It signified the end of the old order which had to precede the beginning of the new. **The *parousia* has been with humankind ever since:**

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: **his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed** (Dan 7:13,14; authors’ accentuation).

You may well ask: Where does it leave us today? The answer is simple: we need to heed the words of Jesus and shed the traditions of men that are rooted in error. We have been given the principles of the king-

dom of God in the Scriptures and that is what we need to live. Milton Terry (1883) accentuated that it should be regarded as a basic principle in grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture that words and sentences can have only one significance in one and the same context. The moment we neglect this principle we drift away on a sea of uncertainty and conjecture. Bernard Ramm added that interpretation (or meaning within context) is one matter, but applications may be many. We cannot find anything wrong with that reasoning. Yet, we need only look around us to see how this simple principle is violated, inter alia by adding futuristic meanings to the historical meaning of texts (Thomas, 2001:33-47).

The authors understand the following statements will be very controversial and we cannot blame anyone, but ask in frankness that you, the reader, carefully weigh them against the Scriptures. Because our minds have been so polluted by years' of wrong teaching and preaching, we humans insist on prophetic fulfilments that would produce spiritual utopias when in reality they foretold the dissolution of the old covenantal or Mosaic dispensation and coming of the new, messianic dispensation. Instead of being slaves to religious rituals and practices that men could never keep, and a dispensation that divided one nation from the others, we have in Christ received a dispensation in which God is the Father of all nations:

(...) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph 4:5-6).

And the kingdom of God is wherever His power and a law written on the hearts of men are seen to manifest in His children. And this law has been so well described in the Sermon on the Mount recorded for us in Matthew 5 – 7.

When asked by a scribe which commandment of the law was the great one, Jesus replied, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*" (Matt 22:36-40). But in John 13:34 Jesus took the second commandment to a much higher level in the words, *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*" This is the New Heaven and New Earth of the prophecies, not a place where people sit in white clothes beside a tranquil

pool playing the harp as some pictures and multi media have polluted our minds with, and we are really not saying this in any derogatory spirit. We, the authors, have been there!

The responsibility for what is accepted as the truth rests squarely upon the shoulders of every individual. We have shared the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of our understanding of the end-times prophecy and note once again in ending, that our understanding should be tested against the Bible and not the Bible against our understanding.

And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it inside of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck; behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; **and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord**, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands (Deut 31:24-29; our accentuation).

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (John 1:11-12).

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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Because our book was written with a predetermined limited product in mind to serve especially that readership who would not wish to work through thick academic books of hundreds of pages, we provide this list for those who do wish to dig somewhat deeper, even if the purpose is to test our understanding somewhat more. In studying these resources the guiding principle should once more be to test the authors' views and understanding against the Bible and not the other way round. Note too, that we do not necessarily agree with everything they have written, but we also apply the same principle. What is important is that most of these resources have been written in past centuries.

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Many more resources are to be found at <http://www.preteristarchive.com/Preterism/index.html>. You will be able to find resources from as far back as the first century on this website.

THE AUTHORS



Gerrie and Martie Malan were married in 1970. Shortly afterwards he entered a new career in the South African Correctional Services, where he served for 25 years. They were transferred many times and also had to relocate twice annually between Pretoria and Cape Town for eight years when Gerrie was a member of the Correctional Services' Parliamentary staff. Although Martie could take up employment for short periods in those years, she mostly found herself in the role of home maker, raising their three children – often under difficult circumstances.

Shortly after he was released on pension in 1995 following severe burnout, Gerrie became a lecturer in Correctional Management at the Technikon SA, which later merged with the University of South Africa. It was in this time that they left the Reformed church in which they were raised to go on a journey through the Pentecostal and Charismatic environments in search of biblical truth.

Martie, in the meantime, had taken on studies in biblical counselling, with Gerrie soon joining her. While she focussed on the area of emotional healing, Gerrie's focus was on spiritual warfare. He continued afterwards with studies in the ministry environment and eventually completed a doctoral degree in Systematic Theology through the United

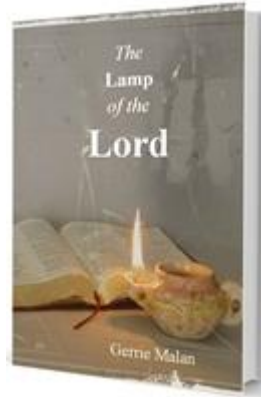
Kingdom based Calvary University. For his thesis he studied Christ's 'born again' and Paul's 'in Christ' concepts. On their journey they had wonderful experiences and met precious people, church leaders as well as ordinary church members. But as they studied the Scriptures, more and more questions arose about specific traditional church doctrines.

A home group of five in April 2001 soon grew to a weekly meeting of some 50 people. The group quickly grew into a formal congregation (Hosea Christian Family Church), which later joined with another where Gerrie and Martie took up the leadership of the Bible College. Today they are not attached to any denomination as they focus on the search for biblical truth on many questions that developed during their journey through the Reformed, Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions. Unlike so many others who in similar processes have turned their back on the Bible, they feel that they have developed a much better understanding of the simple biblical truths when it is stripped of centuries of philosophising and pollution which robbed humanity of the kingdom life that was and is in God's heart for His people.

This book is part result of their search to distinguish the truth from fiction in the midst of, inter alia, all the end-times matters which Christians are being confronted with so continuously today.

You may contact them through their website,
<http://www.hoseaconnection.org>

MORE BOOKS BY THE AUTHORS

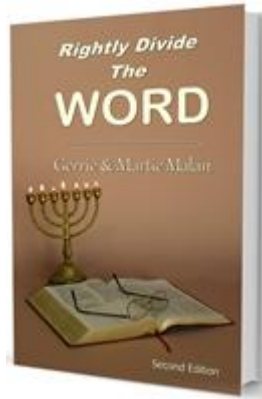


THE LAMP OF THE LORD

(Biblical View Of The Human Soul)

Gerrie Malan

The Bible does not give a clear and precise definition of the soul. The same is true of the expressions 'spirit' and 'spiritual'. Considering the influence of pagan philosophy and Greek philosophical techniques on Christian thought throughout the centuries, and adding the modern variety of approaches to interpretation, it is no wonder that confusion reigns in this regard. In their efforts to fill this void Christian teachers and writers have been presenting teaching filled with assumption and confusion, albeit clothed in biblical terminology. This book is presented as an attempt to facilitate accurate understanding of the concepts that are used widely in popular seminars pertaining to matters such as spiritual deliverance and emotional healing.



RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD

Gerrie & Martie Malan

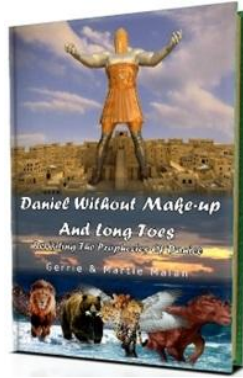
With this book the authors have focused on presenting a book for the average reader of the Bible, to facilitate a true and accurate understanding of the Scriptures. They discuss a number of basic, yet important principles to bear in mind when reading the Bible and point out the many distortions that pagan philosophical practices have led to, as well as errors flowing from subjectivity in translations of the Bible. A few important terms and expressions are discussed in the last chapter to illustrate why rightly dividing the word of truth is deemed so critical.



SNY DIE WOORD REGUIT

Gerrie & Martie Malan

This is the Afrikaans version of *Rightly Divide The Word*

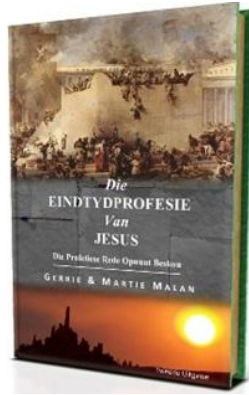


DANIEL WITHOUT MAKE-UP AND LONG TOES

(The Prophecies Of Daniel Revisited)

Gerrie & Martie Malan

End-times prophecies have been brought to the people's attention by the electronic media to an extent never thought possible a few decades ago. And most of these are rooted in some measure, in the biblical book of Daniel. Even if you should eventually decide that you do not agree with the authors' view, you will find the search for the simple truth in the book of Daniel stimulating. They tried throughout their study to strip the Daniel message of the pollution by all kinds of philosophy through the centuries (the make-up) and also specifically identified artificial insertions (the long toes of the so-called 'church age'). Throughout, they weighed the Daniel prophecies against recorded history. In the process important distortions in modern end-times doctrines are exposed.



DIE EINDTYDPROFESIE VAN JESUS

(Die Profetiese Rede Opnuut Beskou
Gerrie & Martie Malan

This is the Afrikaans version of *The End-times Prophecy Of Jesus*.

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