

The Past Great Tribulation

By Gary DeMar

“**M**essiah 1975? The Tribulation 1976?” This was the title of an article that appeared in *The Jack Van Impe Crusade Newsletter* in April of 1975. While Van Impe stated, “We do not believe in setting dates concerning the return of Christ,” he does believe that we can ascertain the nearness of Jesus’ return based on certain “signs.” All we can know is that He “is near.”¹

Van Impe and many like him base their assumptions on a misreading and misdating of Jesus’ Olivet Discourse. He wrote: “Jesus did say, ‘When you shall see all these things, know that it [or He] is near, even at the doors.’ His reference in that twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is to false christs, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes and numerous other happenings.”²

Salem Kirban has struck a similar prophetic chord. When he wrote *Countdown to Rapture* in 1977, he was sure that the rapture was near. For Kirban, the state was “being set for this final world catastrophe which will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon... a battle where 200 million will die!”³ In 1977, when the Shah of Iran was still in power, this Islamic nation was the prophetic bogeyman. Supposedly, with the infusion of aid from the United States and the former Soviet Union, Iran was “to be a principal force in the Middle East.”⁴ The increased militancy of mid-eastern dictatorships and seemingly overnight revival of Islamic fundamentalism would “launch the Battle of Armageddon. And the stage is being set...right now!”⁵ After listing how the world has changed morally in past decades, Kirban concludes: “Those of us familiar with Scripture can easily see the handwriting on the wall as the way is prepared for the coming Antichrist..... Evidences that surround us show us that this old world is on the verge of a nervous breakdown ... and no amount of Valium can resolve the problem. Based on these observations, it is my considered opinion, that the time clock is now at 11:59.”⁶

As has been shown in previous chapters, the “signs” that contemporary date-setters use to justify their belief that the rapture is the next prophetic event, followed by a great tribulation, the rise of antichrist, and Armageddon, are found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. John F. Walvoord, a

leading spokesman for the theory that the events described in Matthew 24 are yet to be fulfilled, believes that the time is near for the rapture. In an interview with *USA Today*, when asked if the prophetic clock is ticking, Walvoord answered “Yes.”⁷ Walvoord wrote in another context:

In the predictions that Christ made almost 2,000 years ago, He accurately portrayed the progress in the present age. In [Matt. 24:]4-14 He predicted at least nine distinctive features of the period: (1) false christs (vv. 4-5); (2) wars and rumors of wars (vv. 6-7); (3) famines (v.7); (4) pestilence (v7, KJV); (5) earthquakes (v.7); (6) many martyrs (vv. 8-10); (7) false prophets (v. 11); (8) increase in wickedness with love growing cold (v. 12); (9) worldwide preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom (vv. 13-14). Luke 21:8-24 records similar prophecies.⁸

Of course, these predictions describe conditions prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. That generation would not pass away until all these things took place (Matthew 24:34). It is inappropriate therefore to interpret them so that they are removed from their first-century context and their obvious application to the then-existing temple and Jewish nation and project them into the distant future.

In 1980 Hal Lindsey told his readers that “*The decade of the 1980s could very well be the last decade of history as we know it.*”⁹ Lindsey has been so sure that the end is near that in 1970 he wrote in *The Late Great Planet Earth* that he believes the Antichrist “is alive today—alive and waiting to come forth.”¹⁰ The Middle East war against Iraq in early 1991, Lindsey told us, was “‘setting the stage’ for that last, climactic war.”¹¹

Charles Ryrie, best known for the *Ryrie Study Bible*, expresses similar sentiments based on his understanding of Matthew 24. He writes that “Jesus said that these coming days will be uniquely terrible. Nothing in all the previous history of the world can compare with what lies in store for mankind. ‘For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world... and never to be equaled again’” (Matt. 24:21, NIV).¹²

Tim LaHaye believes in a future great tribulation based on passages of Scripture that found their fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Because of his pre-tribulational rapture doctrine, he also believes that “the church will be raptured before the Tribulation begins....”¹³ The determination on how near the rapture might be is based upon a faulty reading of the signs outlined by Jesus in Matthew 24. While LaHaye does not set a date for the rapture or for the great tribulation, he does tell us that “Jesus is coming. Soon! Maybe today. Maybe tonight. Maybe before I draw my next breath.”¹⁴ Jack Van Impe is equally emphatic when he writes, based on world conditions, “The Rapture is near, my friend...the signs are all around us.”¹⁵

Billy Graham writes that “the words of Christ in Matthew 24, in which He spoke of the signs of the end of the age,” along with other prophetic passages, “remain powerful and evocative images of what may lie just ahead.”¹⁶ It is in this chapter of Matthew’s gospel that Graham believes “Christ tells precisely how the last days of planet Earth will unfold.”¹⁷ It is Graham’s misinterpretation and misplacement of the time when the “signs” in Matthew 24 appear that leads him to this erroneous conclusion. Jesus was describing events that would come upon that first-century generation.

A Past Great Tribulation

Can any of these modern-day predictions be justified by an appeal to Matthew 24, especially verse 21? I do not believe they can. Authors who promote such a scenario as being based on “Bible prophecy” ought to be held accountable for their repeatedly mistaken predictions: “Anyone who buys a prediction of a scriptural end-of-the-show schedule ought to ask for a double-your-money-back guarantee if the interpretation turns out to be a lot of hooey. Lindsey, John Walvoord and a whole string of evangelists would need a federal bailout.”¹⁸

Is the great tribulation of Matthew 24 a description of a future seven-year period where the Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel and then turns on the Jews, bringing about worldwide destruction?

“There will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall” (Matt. 24:21).

One reason offered for the belief that the great tribulation is still a future event is the seemingly unqualified statement in Matthew 24:21 concerning a “great tribulation, *such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.*” This language is nearly identical to Ezekiel 5⁹: “And because of all your abominations, I will do among you *what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again.*” Ezekiel 5:9 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. by the Babylonians, and yet Bible commentators who hold out for a yet future great tribulation state that “never again would God execute a judgment like this.”¹⁹ But God did execute a greater judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and dispensationalists claim that there will be yet an even greater tribulation sometime in the near future. The language of Ezekiel 5:9 and Matthew 24:21 is obviously proverbial and hyperbolic.²⁰

While the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 was certainly a calamity for the Jews, futurists argue, it was not the great tribulation that will take place on a *worldwide scale*. The tribulation described by Jesus in Matthew 24 was local, confined to Judea, Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees (chapter 23) and tells them that these judgments will come upon “this, that” is, their generation (23:36). He mourns over the city of “Jerusalem” (23:37), not the world, and pronounces judgment upon the temple, leaving it, not a future temple, “desolate” (23:38; 24:2).

The people live in houses with flat roofs (24:17). The Sabbath is still in force with its rigid travel restrictions (24:20). In Mark’s account of the Olivet Discourse we learn that the disciples will be delivered “up to the courts,” “flogged in the synagogues,” and made to “stand before governors and kings” (13:9). Jesus uses similar words in Matthew 10:17-18 when He sends the twelve out as witnesses to Israel: “But beware of men, for they will deliver *you* up to the courts, and scourge *you* in their synagogues; and *you* shall even be brought before kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.” The book of Acts records the fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction of religious and political tribulation (4:1-22; 5:17-40; 8:1-3; 12:1-9;

14:19-20; 16:22-23; 22:30-23:11) in the period before the destruction of Jerusalem.²¹ The existence of these religious and political tribunals is indicative of what life was like in first-century Judea. The tribulation had reference to the Jews, the people of Judea (Matt. 24:16; Luke 21:20-24); it was not a worldwide tribulation.²²

Those who remained in Jerusalem up until the time of the temple's destruction had to be able to "see the abomination of desolation" (24:15). People around the globe will have no such advantage if what Jesus is describing here refers to a worldwide tribulation period. The only ones who can benefit are those who can see the temple. The tribulation period cannot be global because all one has to do to escape is flee to the mountains. Notice that Jesus says "let those who are in *Judea* flee to the mountains" (24:16). Judea is not the world; it's not even the nation of Israel!

"And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short" (Matt. 24:22).

"Those days" refers to the tribulation period leading up to Jerusalem's destruction. The sign of "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" (Luke 21:20) was a warning to "the elect"—the Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem and its environs—to leave the city so they would not be caught in the impending conflagration. "No life would have been saved" refers to no life in Judea since Judea is the geographical context. James Stuart Russell comments:

During the three years and a half which represent with sufficient accuracy the duration of the Jewish war, Jerusalem was actually in the hands and under the feet of a horde of ruffians, whom their own countryman [Josephus] describes as 'slaves, and the very dregs of society, the spurious and polluted spawn of the nation.' The last fatal struggle may be said to have begun when Vespasian was sent by Nero, at the head of sixty thousand men, to put down the rebellion. This was early in the year A.D. 70, and in August A.D. 70 the city and the temple were a heap of smoking ashes.²³

One of the first things we should recognize about Jesus' words is an implied shortening of the tribulation that was coming. If God had allowed those "very dregs of society" to continue in their rebellion, not a single soul would have been left alive in Jerusalem. But for the sake of the elect the tribulation period was cut short. God also restrained the Romans from venting their anger completely.

Luke identifies the tribulation period as being confined to the land of Israel and the people living there in the first century: "Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the *land*, and wrath to *this* people" (Luke 21:23). The land of Israel is in view, and "this people" refers to the Jews living in Israel at the time when Jerusalem is "surrounded by armies" (21:20), an event that occurred just prior to Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70. "*The land* should be taken in the restricted sense which we give the word, *the country*.—St Paul seems to allude to the expression, *wrath upon this people*, in Rom. ii.5-8 and I Thess. ii.16."²⁴ This means that the intention of "no life would have been saved" (24:22) refers to those living in Judea (24:16) at that time. If Jesus is referring to the entire world, then how would fleeing to the mountains help? Since Jesus offers a simple way to escape the coming judgment, the judgment must be local.

"Then if any one says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,; or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, or, 'Behold, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them" (Matt. 24:23-26).

It's possible that the description of events in Matthew 24:23 is different from the signs described by Jesus earlier when He said that many would come in His name saying "I am the Christ" (24:5) and that "false prophets" would arise to "mislead many" (24:11). In all likelihood, Jesus is describing

events separated by an interval of time. Jesus gives the impression that His coming in judgment would be near the end of that present generation. False christs and false prophets would appear soon after His ascension, “but that is not yet the end: (24:6). As Roman oppression increased, the unbelieving Jews embraced an increasing number of messianic figures hoping to be delivered. One of the earliest was Simon, a man who “astonished them with his magic arts.” He was thought to be “what is called the Great Power of God” (Acts 8:10).

The Apostle Paul describes those in his day who acted like “Jannes and Jambres,” the two sorcerer high priests who “opposed Moses” (2 Tim. 3:8). They were said to “oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith” (3:8). Jannes and Jambres used “great signs” in an attempt to mislead the people in Moses’ day by using deception to duplicate the true miracle of Aaron’s rod turning into a serpent (Ex. 7:10-12).

The men Paul had in mind in his day were the same people Jesus warned about in His Olivet Discourse. In fact, Paul himself was thought to be “the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and let four thousand men of the Assassins out into the *wilderness*” (Acts 21:38). This incident is reminiscent of Jesus’ words about those who will give support for a false prophet claiming that “He is in the *wilderness*” (Matt. 24:26). Those who had rejected their Messiah at the “time of [their] visitation” (Luke 19:44), the same people who wanted “to make Jesus king” to overthrow the tyrants of Rome (John 6:15), were still looking for a political savior right up until the time of Jerusalem’s destruction. Josephus writes:

A false prophet was the occasion of these people’s destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God....²⁵

Josephus describes how a star resembling a sword stood over the city. He also chronicles the sighting of a comet showing its brightness for a full

year. Other inexplicable events are recounted, most of which were probably false but had the effect of persuading the people that their deliverance was at hand: “A heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple.”²⁶ No doubt false prophets and false messiahs fabricated these stories to bolster their credibility with the terrorized population.

“For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt. 24:27).

Jesus would come “just as the lightning come from the east,” that is, quickly and without warning. In the Bible, lightning often signifies the presence of the Lord and His coming in judgment (Ex. 19:16; 20:18; Job 36:30; Ezek. 21:15, 28; Zech. 9:14). God was not physically present during any of these Old Testament comings, but His presence was obvious, as the reaction of the people will testify: “And when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance” (Ex. 20:18). The lightning and thunder did not terrify the people. They had seen such things before. What frightened them was the reality that the Lord had come. What the people saw was the manifestation of the Lord’s coming even though they did not actually see Him. In a similar way, lightning is associated with the coming of the Lord in Deuteronomy 33: “The LORD *came* from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He *shone forth* from Mount Paran, and He *came* from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; at His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.” Was God physically present? He was not. Did He come? Most certainly! Jesus warned the churches of Ephesus (Rev. 2:5), Pergamum (2:16), and Sardis (3:3) that He would come in judgment if they did not repent. Were any of these comings the second coming?

All of the signs listed in Matthew 24 have reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. While there is no doubt that many today look at current world conditions and surmise that the rapture must be near, this view is impossible based on what we’ve learned thus far. Jesus established the time frame for Jerusalem’s destruction—it would occur within a generation. Before forty years passed, Jerusalem would be “trampled underfoot by

the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). The “times of the Gentiles” refers to the four kingdom nations depicted in Daniel 2. Rome is obviously the fourth and final kingdom to oppress the Jews. With the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, the “time of the Gentiles” is completed (see Rev. 11:2).

Claiming that the great tribulation is a past event is not meant to minimize the realities of persecution that take place around the world in our day. We will always have tribulation, tribulation that is overcome in Jesus (John 16:33). Entry into the kingdom comes through “much tribulation” (Acts 14:22). What we will not have is a rapture that will remove us where tribulation is a reality.

The Wrath of the Lamb

Matthew 24:27 reveals that Jesus is somehow participating in Jerusalem’s destruction. This is exactly the point. When the temple was ransacked by Nebuchadnezzar, we read that “*the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God*” (Dan. 1:2). Nebuchadnezzar “besieged” Jerusalem, but God orchestrated the entire affair.

Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to
plunderers?
Was it not the Lord, against whom we have
sinned,
And in whose ways they were not willing to
walk,
And whose law they did not obey?
So He poured out on him the heat of His anger
And the fierceness of battle;
And it set him aflame all around,
Yet he did not recognize it;
And it burned him, but he paid no attention.
(Isa. 42:24-25)

Jesus came “like lightning” to set Jerusalem “aflake all around.” If you recall, it was Titus, as God’s representative agent, who set the temple on fire and leveled the edifice. God calls Assyria the “rod of My anger, and the staff in whose hands in My indignation” (Isa. 10:5). Assyria was sent by God “against a godless nation... to capture booty and to seize plunder, And to trample them down like mud in the street’ (10:6).

In A.D. 70 Rome was sent by God to fulfill a similar task. “Our Lord forewarns His disciples that His coming to that judgment-scene would be conspicuous and sudden as the lightning-flash which reveals itself and seems to be everywhere at the same moment.”²⁷

On His way to the cross, Jesus had prophesied what would happen to the generation of Jews who rejected Him: “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, *but weep for yourselves and for your children*. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, ‘FALL ON US,’ AND THE HILLS ‘COVER US’” (Luke 23:28-30). Who brought this judgment? As Jerusalem’s destruction drew near for that generation, “they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of *Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?’” (Rev. 6:16-17). It was the “wrath of the Lamb [Jesus]” that brought judgment to Israel. Luke 23:28-30 was fulfilled before that generation passed into oblivion. Remember, Jesus told the “Daughters of Jerusalem” to “weep for *yourselves and your children*.” No future generation was in view here. This is more evidence that the Book of Revelation was written before Jerusalem was destroyed.²⁸

”Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather’ (Matt. 24:28).

The Greek word translated “eagle” in many Bible versions is best translated “vulture” in this context. Did Jesus’ disciples understand what He had in mind when He uttered this seemingly cryptic saying? Being familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, they would have immediately recognized the words of Jeremiah judging those who pervert God’s covenant (Jer. 7:33).

Jesus was acting out in word and deed the prophecies given to Jeremiah centuries before. Notice the similarities between what Jeremiah and Jesus did. Jeremiah was to “stand in the gate of the LORD’s house” and proclaim God’s Word to the people (Jer. 7:2; compare with Matt. 23:36; 24:1). The people were not to “trust in deceptive words,

saying, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD” (Jer. 7:4; compare with Matt. 24:2). The temple was meaningless without obedience: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place’” (Jer. 7:3; compare the Matt. 24:5-11). The temple, the house “which is called by My name,” God says, has “become a den of robbers” (Jer. 7:11; compare with Matt. 21:13; 24:15).

These deeds had led God to reject and forsake “the generation of His wrath” (Jer. 7:29b; compare with Matt. 23:36; 24:34). How would this rejection take place? Days would come when “*the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the sky, and for the beasts of the earth; and no one will frighten them away. Then I will make to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; for the land will become a ruin*” (Jer. 7:33-34). Later in Jeremiah, God revives His complaint against His disobedient covenant people: “And I shall make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I shall cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; *and I shall give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth*” (Jer. 19:7; compare with Matt. 24:28).

The Jerusalem of Jesus’ day, because of its dead rituals, was a carcass, food for the scavenging birds, the Roman armies. This is an appropriate description of Jerusalem’s acts of abomination. In addition, we know that tens of thousands (Josephus says over a million) were killed during the Roman siege. Even the temple area was not spared. The Idumean and Zealot revolt left thousands slaughtered in and around the temple. A single carcass would render the city and temple area “unclean.” According to Numbers 19:11-22, anyone touching the corpse of a human being is unclean: “Anyone who touches a corpse, the body of a man who has died, and does not purify himself, *defiles the tabernacle of the LORD*; and that person shall be cut off from Israel” (19:13). There was no life in Jerusalem since the Lord had departed. As our High Priest, Jesus could no longer remain in the city because of its defilement. It had to be burned with fire for purification.

Just as there is little life left once the vultures have gathered, so with the destruction of the temple and the desolation of the city, the shadow of heavenly things is no more. While the disciples pointed out the then-standing temple, it is up to Jesus’ present disciples to point out the “temple of His body” (John 2:21; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19) to those who would seek salvation, not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Notes

1. Jack Van Impe, “Messiah 1975 The Tribulation 1976?” *The Jack Van Impe Crusade Newsletter* (April 1975), 1.
2. Van Impe, “Messiah 1975?,” 1.
3. Salem Kirban, *Countdown to Rapture* (Irvine, CA: Harvest House, 1977), 12.
4. Kirban, *Countdown to Rapture*, 176.
5. Kirban, *Countdown to Rapture*, 177.
6. Kirban, *Countdown to Rapture*, 181, 188.
7. Barbara Reynolds interviews John Walvoord, “Prophecy Clock is Ticking in Mideast,” *USA Today* (19 January 1991), 13A. According to dispensationalism, the prophecy clock does not start ticking again until *after* the rapture.
8. John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 383.
9. Hal Lindsey, *The 1980’s: Countdown to Armageddon* (King of Prussia, PA: Westgate Press, 1980), 8. Emphasis in original.
10. *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan [1970] 1973), 15.
11. “Artswatch,” *World* (2 March 1991), 15.
12. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Living End: Enlightening and Astonishing Disclosures about the Coming Last Days of Earth* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976, 1976), 21.
13. Tim LaHaye, *No Fear of the Storm: Why Christians Will Escape All the Tribulation* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1992), 60. This book has been republished as *Rapture Under Attack: Will Christians Escape the Tribulation?* (1988).
14. LaHaye, *No Fear of the Storm*, 14.
15. Jack Van Impe, *The Great Escape: Preparing for the Rapture, the Next Event on God’s Prophetic Clock* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1998), 146.
16. Billy Graham, *Storm Warning* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1992), 25.

17. Graham, *Storm Warning*, 25.
18. Hap Cawood, "If Buying Armageddon Theories, Insist on Money-back Guarantee," *Atlanta Constitution* (9 February 1991), A19.
19. Ralph A. Alexander, "Ezekiel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelein, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 6:773.
20. Also see William Greenhill, *An Exposition of Ezekiel* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, [1647-1667], 1994), 145-46.
21. David J. Palm, "The Signs of His Coming: An Examination of the Olivet Discourse from a Preterist perspective" (Deerfield, IL: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993), 12-13.
22. Any tribulation the Jews experience in other countries is not in view here. The death of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis did not take place in the land of Israel. The great tribulation is a description of what happened to Jews living in Israel in the first century. Over one million Jews died at the hands of the Romans. Nothing will ever compare to it because of Israel's special covenantal status. Here sin was great, therefore her judgment was great: "For the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands were turned toward her" (Lam. 4:2).
23. James Stuart Russell, *The Parousia: A Study of the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, [1887] 1999), 429. For a helpful discussion of the meaning of "no life," literally, "all flesh" (Matt. 24:22), see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., "The Great Tribulation is Future: Rebuttal," in Thomas Ice and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future? - Two Evangelicals Debate the Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 190-91.
24. Frederick Louis Godet, *Commentary of the Gospel of Luke*, 2 Vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan [1887] n.d.), 2:267.
25. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 6.5.2, 742-43.
26. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 6.5.3, 742.
27. Russell, *The Parousia*, 76.
28. For the most comprehensive defense of a pre-A.D. 70 date for Revelation, see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta GA: American Vision, 1999).

Excerpt from "Last Days Madness" (4th ed.) pages 117-129: Reprinted with permission from author Gary DeMar. American Vision, P.O. Box 220, Powder Springs, Georgia 30127

This is only part of the argument that the "Great Tribulation" of Matthew 24 is now past and not in the future. The rest is contained in this 455 page book, "Last Days Madness". (See our book list on web site for this book.)

The word "coming" has several meanings in the Bible. The Second Coming of Christ has not happened yet, but I have had enough of false predictions by dispensationalists. You don't have to believe in a "system" of prophecy. But you can certainly find out by studying that some claims by "big name evangelists" have no biblical foundation. I suggest five books to study to get a more balanced view of end time events. 1) *Last Days Madness*; by Gary DeMar; 2) *The Fundamental Wesleyan Commentary on the Book of Revelation*; 3) *Revelation - Four Views* by Steve Gregg; 4) *The Complete Works of Josephus* - a Jewish Historian and an eye witness to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.; and 5) *The Millennial Bible*. All these books are available from us. See our book list.

Jesus and His apostles were not "mistaken" when they said "the end is near." It was the end of the Jewish age. The Jews only saw two ages, the second one being the reign of the Messiah. Jesus did start his kingdom when He came - as he said before being crucified, "My kingdom is not of this world—if it was my servants would fight." It is wise to study different views on things, usually you will find the truth somewhere in the middle.

Let me add as Vic Reasoner says in his commentary on Revelation "We don't say things that happened in the first century will not be repeated," The point is the dispensational "system" is flawed and not the correct way to view prophecy.

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