

# The Faithless Foundation of Dispensational Premillennialism

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## Introduction

This chapter and the next expose the fallacies of dispensational premillennialism, a system of doctrine which presumes that God and Christ made many serious mistakes in trying to bring about the Messianic kingdom. As a result, many prophetic pundits such as Hal Lindsey, Jerry Falwell, and Tim LaHaye, all dispensational Zionists, charge that God now needs man's intervention to accomplish his will. In practice, these men assert that they know better than God did. Classical premillennialists and dispensationalists like Mark Hanna are aghast at what the Zionists are doing.

The arrogance of premillennialism and its endless speculations and updates of failed prophecies of the return of Christ continue to produce skepticism and unbelief in Christ. Multitudes, who don't recognize the foundation of assumed superiority over God, help spread its ignorance.

Religious fundamentalists, who profess belief in God and Christ, often fail to recognize the faithlessness of premillennialism. It's so widespread that it crosses denominational lines and affects many people's basic beliefs. Seventh-day Adventists, who are premillennial, broadcast the errors of dispensational Zionists.

Countless books, publications, and movies teach the doctrine. Entire radio and television broadcasts preach it daily. The *Left Behind* series of books and movies by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins is setting such sales and audience records that many people read these fiction books as if they were proven doctrine. These authors now target children with their books and video games to distribute their false assertions even more.

The sheer popularity of the doctrine demands a closer look to see whether dispensational premillennialism is in accord with the Bible, or if it slanders God's character.

Most people who believe premillennialism are honest and profess greater respect and faith in God than the leaders of this movement do. Thus, I've written this small book to examine the facts with truth-

seeking premillennialists so that together we might rejoice in a God of heaven who is powerful enough to keep his word and his promises made through the Old Testament prophets.

## Overview of Premillennialism

Premillennialism has a simple meaning. It comes from *pre*, meaning “before,” and *millennial*, meaning one thousand. Hence, premillennialism refers to Christ’s coming as premillennial, meaning that Christ will return to earth before he reigns on David’s throne for one thousand years. [Is the physical reconstitution of David’s throne unique to dispensationalism?]

## General View of Dispensational Premillennialism

Figure 1 illustrates the general view of premillennialism. It describes the basic features of the theory that most premillennialists hold. The major events are as follows:

1. In the Old Testament, God called the nation of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. When they desired a king, he permitted them to have one to teach and prepare the Israelites for the Messiah. The Christ would come and reign as a universal king over all the nations.
2. At his first coming, Christ intended to set up that earthly kingdom as it was in the days of David, but the Jews rejected him.
3. Because the Jews rejected Christ at his first coming, Jesus did not establish the kingdom as he planned. Instead, he postponed it and established the church, as an interim institution.
4. When Christ comes the second time, he will establish the kingdom he planned to build the first time he came into the world. These preparations will take several steps:
  - a. The righteous will be resurrected and, with the living saints, “raptured into the skies” to be with

Christ for seven years. The unbelieving world will hear and see nothing of all this, except that the people in question have disappeared.

b. Since there will not be a single true believer left in the world, wickedness will run rampant. This period of “tribulation” on the earth will last for seven years.

c. At the end of seven years, Christ will return with a heavenly army and overthrow all the wickedness on the earth. He will also resurrect the “tribulation saints,” who are converted to Christ during the tribulation period. How these are converted is unclear.

5. At last comes the establishment of the millennial kingdom where Christ will reign from Jerusalem in the tabernacle of David, and on the throne of David for 1,000 years.

6. After the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed for a little season; the revolt of Gog and Magog will occur. The final resurrection of the wicked will also occur, and then the last judgment comes where all will begin their eternal state. The righteous will go to heaven and the wicked will go to an eternal hell.

This summarizes the general view of premillennialism, without many details about the restoration of the Jews, the rebuilding of the temple, etc., about which many premillennialists disagree. Different views exist on many parts of premillennialism. Mormons believe the temple will be built in Independence, Missouri. Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe the wicked will spend an eternity in hell after the final judgment. Some premillennialists say the righteous will never go to heaven, but rather spend an eternity on the earth after the 1000-year reign.

Still, we need to be familiar with these six general points of premillennialism, as this is what a significant portion of the religious world now believes. It is important to develop a sound general knowledge of the theory, because many people who hold to some form of premillennialism don’t themselves have an accurate picture of the doctrine.

## The Sincerity and Enthusiasm of these Premillennialists Isn't at Issue

While we hear nearly daily on the newscasts of efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East, many don't realize that millions of dispensational premillennialists are praying, working, and contributing money to achieve just the opposite. They passionately want war, nuclear war, to break out in the area.

Dispensationalists see the necessity for the temple to be rebuilt on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem before Christ comes back. This will necessitate the destruction of the Dome of the Rock, the second most sacred site in Islam, that sits on that very spot. Hal Lindsey wrote about the need for the new temple:

There remains but one more event to completely set the stage for Israel's part in the last great act of her historical drama. This is to rebuild the ancient Temple of worship upon its old site... There is one major problem barring the construction of a third Temple. That obstacle is the second holiest place of the Moslem faith, the Dome of the Rock. This is believed to be built squarely in the middle of the old temple site. Obstacle or no obstacle, it is certain that the Temple will be rebuilt. Prophecy demands it. (Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977], pp. 56-58.)

Grace Halsell (from the Texas panhandle!), a writer with a special interest in the state of Israel, reveals in *Forcing God's Hand, Why Millions Pray for a Quick Rapture and Destruction of Planet Earth*, that many premillennialists are proudly and ardently contributing, working, and praying for Jewish terrorists to destroy the Muslim Al Aqsa Mosque on the temple mount in Jerusalem. This is necessary so that the third temple can be built in its place and Christ can return.

Gershon Gorenberg, in *The End of Days, Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, describes how sympathetic PhDs in physics are researching the Temple Mount for the exact location for the rebuilding. Others are concentrating on raising pure priests, literally "off the ground," so they won't even be contaminated by the land under which someone might be buried. When asked if they will have Levitical priests who can produce a priestly pedigree so they can offer

the sacrifices, some claim they are really descended from those who served in the temple.

Others in the movement are concentrating on raising genetically correct red heifers to be sacrificed by the restored Levitical priesthood in the rebuilt temple. With amazing attention to detail, some are creating the garments that these priests will wear, and craftsmen are recreating to the finest detail sacrificial utensils for carrying out the animal sacrifices.

These activities require enormous amounts of money, most of which is contributed by premillennialists in the United States. The sincerity and enthusiasm of these folks cannot be doubted.

## **Historical Background of Dispensational Premillennialism**

Many in our age first encounter premillennial doctrine through the *Left Behind* series of books and movies. However, the modern version of dispensational premillennialism originated with J. N. Darby, a Plymouth Brethren preacher in the early 1800s in England. Gary DeMar, a well-known researcher on this subject, revealed the following fact concerning the pre-tribulation rapture, a popular feature of the doctrine:

The pre-tribulation rapture of the church is the basis of the entire multi-volume *Left Behind* series of books and movies, yet pre-tribulation advocate H. A. Ironside, whom LaHaye regards highly, admits its novelty, i.e., it was unknown for 1600 years before Darby introduced it: (Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction* [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001], p. 20.)

H. A. Ironside, a premillennial theologian and writer, said:

[Until] brought to the fore through the writings and the preaching and teaching of a distinguished ex-clergyman, Mr. J. N. Darby, in the early part of the last century, it is scarcely to be found in a single book or sermon through the period of sixteen hundred years! If any doubt this statement, let them search, as the writer has in measure done, the remarks of the so-called Fathers, both pre- and post Nicene; the theological treatises

tises of the scholastic divines; Roman Catholic writers of all shades of thought; the literature of the Reformation; the sermons and expositions of the Puritans; and the general theological works of the day. He will find the “mystery” conspicuous by its absence. (H. A. Ironside, *The Mysteries of God* [New York: Louizeaux Brothers, 1946], 50-51.)

W. E. Blackstone, a Methodist clergyman, wrote a highly popular book, *Jesus Is Coming*, which gave added force to the Zionist premillennial movement in 1932.

## **The Scofield Reference Bible**

Perhaps the greatest force for propagating dispensational premillennialism before the 1980s was C. I. Scofield’s *Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in 1945, and revised (most significantly in 1967) many times since then. Scofield, a lawyer and Congregationalist preacher, published a King James Version of the Bible, to which he added thousands of footnotes, which contained his personal commentary from the dispensational point of view. More than anything else, Scofield’s Bible led to the popularity of dispensationalism. It’s easy to see why. Folks would point to their Scofield Bibles, saying, “It’s in the Bible!” when in reality, it wasn’t in the Bible, but rather in a King James Version with the personal notes of one man in the margins! After spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in advertising, the book was a raging success. All Methodists were classical premillennialists throughout the 1800s, a considerable number. Dispensationalism was a radical departure from this classical premillennial doctrine. New York Zionists likely bankrolled the book and the advertising campaign. Scofield was stretching dispensational theology to new absurdities in his notes.

Other non-dispensational varieties of premillennialism also exist. A lesser light in the premillennial movement included William Miller, a Seventh-day Adventist who prophesied the return of Christ in 1843, then 1844, and went into oblivion. Ellen G. White, the Seventh-day Adventist founder and prophet, was also a part of the movement. Charles Taze Russell, leader of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, made many false predictions of the return of Christ. Premillennial teaching also influenced Mormon prophet Joseph Smith.

## The Influence of Hal Lindsey

In 1970, Hal Lindsey, a New Orleans tugboat operator, launched the modern popular dispensational Zionist movement with the publication of his book *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Lindsey had attended a theological school founded by C. I. Scofield, the Dallas Theological Seminary. This school used W. E. Blackstone's *Jesus Is Coming* as a textbook. Charles Ryrie (whose writings we'll also see later) was Dean of the Graduate School there, Dr. John Walvoord (again, whose writings we'll also see later) was President of the Seminary from which Lindsey graduated. If the reader isn't familiar with these giants of influence in the dispensational world, he soon will be in this study.

### Why Premillennialism Should Be Examined

Many readers at this point may wonder, "What difference does it make if someone wants to believe in premillennialism?" or "Why oppose someone who wants to believe it?" They may reason, "Surely, if someone is mistaken on the doctrine, Christ isn't, and he'll certainly know when, where, and how to return."

By the conclusion of this short study, we hope every reader will know the answers to those questions. Be assured that premillennial leaders understand the impact of their doctrine upon our beliefs and actions in the present age. John Walvoord, author of *The Millennial Kingdom* and President of Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote:

If premillennialism is only a dispute about what will happen in a future age which is quite removed from present issues, that is one thing. If however, premillennialism is a system of interpretation which involves the meaning and significance of the entire Bible, defines the meaning and course of the present age, determines the present purpose of God and gives both material and method to theology, that is something else. It is the growing realization that premillennialism is more than a dispute about Rev. 20 that has precipitated the extended arguments on the issue in our day. For the first time it seems to be commonly recognized that premillennial theology has become a system of theology, not an alternate view of eschatology which is unrelated to theology as a whole.

(Dr. John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* [Findlay, OH: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959], p. 15).

Walvoord is absolutely right. Premillennialism isn't just an argument about what happens when Jesus returns or Revelation 20. It affects one's view of the trustworthiness of God and Christ, and the inspiration of the Bible. It may be safely said that the founders of premillennialism did not believe in a sovereign God or that Jesus spoke by inspiration from God. In fact, premillennialism makes a false prophet out of Christ and nearly all the New Testament authors, and justifies the execution of Jesus. Sadly, the vast majority of premillennialists do not know the faithless foundations of their system of doctrine. Keep reading and see.

## **The Rejection of Christ, Did It Surprise God?**

Premillennialists claim that Christ came to offer the Davidic kingdom prophesied of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and that he offered it, but the Jews rejected it. Their rejection surprised God and caused a detour in his plan, so that Christ established his church instead, something not prophesied in the Old Testament at all. This chapter contrasts the premillennial view with the scriptural view of the rejection of Christ.

## **The Premillennial View of the Rejection of Christ**

The following quotations from premillennial leaders substantiate their view of the rejection of Christ.

In *There's a New World Coming*, Hal Lindsey wrote:

For anyone who cared to investigate there was no lack of evidence to show that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. Had the people received Him, He would have fulfilled the kingly prophecies in their day in addition to the ones regarding the suffering Messiah. But when the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Christ, the fulfillment of His kingship was postponed until the final culmination of world history. (Hal Lind-

sey, *There's a New World Coming* [Powder Springs, GA: Vision House Pub., 1973], p. 30.)

Dr. C. I. Scofield in his *Scofield Reference Bible*, wrote:

The kingdom announced as 'at hand' (Mt. 4.17, note) by John the Baptist, by the King, and by the Twelve, was rejected by the Jews, first morally (Mt. 11.20, note), and afterward officially (Mt. 21.42, 43), and the King, crowned with thorns, was crucified...Afterward He announced His purpose to 'build' His church." (Dr. C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1909, 1945], p. 1226.)

W. E. Blackstone, likewise, affirmed the centrality of the rejection of Christ in his classic work *Jesus Is Coming*:

This kingdom was at hand, that is, it came nigh, when Jesus, the King, came. So much so, that the three favored disciples witnessed a foretaste of its glory and power on the Mount of Transfiguration. But the Jews rejected it and slew their king. They were not willing to have this man reign over them, and therefore the Kingdom did not "immediately appear." (W. E. Blackstone, *Jesus Is Coming* [Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1932], p. 83.)

Further on, Blackstone said:

This we believe is the true explanation of the subject. The Kingdom did come "nigh" when Christ came, and had they received him, it would have been manifested, but now it is in abeyance, or waiting until He comes again. (*Ibid.*, p. 88.)

Charles Ryrie, in his book *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, further substantiated the premillennial contention:

The Kingdom which Christ faithfully offered while on earth was the very same earthly, Messianic, Davidic kingdom which the Jews expected from the Old Testament prophecies. But it is a matter of history that such a Kingdom was not ushered in at the first advent of Christ. (Charles Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillen-*

*nial Faith* [Neptune, NJ: Louizeaux Brothers, 1953], p. 93.)

and:

Certainly the kingdom was not set up when Christ was on earth. Instead it was rejected. (*Ibid.*, p. 95.)

M. R. DeHaan, the well-known radio preacher and writer on premillennialism, in his book *The Second Coming of Christ*, also confirmed this point:

...the kingdom of heaven is the reign of heaven's King on earth. This Jesus offered to the nation of Israel when he came the first time, but they rejected it and he went to the cross. (M. R. DeHann, *The Second Coming of Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971], p. 98.)

S. D. Gordon, a leading premillennialist writer, in his book *Quiet Talks About Jesus*, wrote:

It can be said at once that His dying was not God's own plan. It was conceived somewhere else and yielded to by God. God has a plan of atonement by which men who were willing could be saved from sin and its effect. That plan is given in the Old Hebrew code. To the tabernacle or temple, under prescribed regulations, a man could bring some animal that he owned. The man brought that which was his own. It represented him. (S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks About Jesus* [Revell, Chicago, 1906], p. 114.)

Notice particularly that Gordon asserted *that the death of Christ on the cross wasn't in God's plan*. God had already provided for the forgiveness of the Jews on the basis of animal sacrifices!

Thomas Ice, an influential modern writer who defends premillennialism, said in his book, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?*, a written debate with Kenneth Gentry:

I believe the scriptures teach that Israel could have obtained her much sought after messianic kingdom by recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. We all know the sad reality—the Jews rejected Jesus. As a result the king-

dom is no longer near, but postponed, awaiting Jewish belief, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation. (Thomas Ice, <W0>*The Great Tribulation: Past or Future* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999], p. 115.)

To summarize, the rejection of Christ is the pivotal point of premillennialism. But it didn't catch God by surprise or force him to change his plans, as he foretold it in the Old Testament.

## **What God Thinks of Those Who Try to Change His Plans**

In contrast to these dispensational premillennialists, notice David's statement in Ps. 33.10, 11:

The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.

David spoke of God as changing the nations' plans, not as one whose plans are changed by the nations! In Isa. 14.24, 27, Isaiah commented about God's dealings with the nations:

The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand...For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?

According to premillennialists, the wicked nation of Israel did! They frustrated God's plan and turned back his hand. In Isa. 46.9-10, God contrasted himself with idols when he said:

Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure...

If premillennialists are right, God is no better than an idol! Finally, in Ps. 2:1-4, David said that when the nations attempted to thwart the Messiah's mission, God laughed at them:

Why are the nations in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed; Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us! He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them.

Thus, the Bible presents an entirely different picture of the true God than does dispensational premillennialism. God laughs at those who treat him like some powerless idol who can't carry out his own plans.

## **The Scriptural View of the Rejection of Christ**

We have seen that the basis of dispensational premillennialism is the belief that the Jews' rejection of Christ caught God off guard. However, the Bible teaches that God foresaw the rejection of Christ by the Jews. Premillennialism, which Walvoord calls "a system of theology and not an alternative view of eschatology" rests entirely upon a false premise. Did the rejection of Christ by the Jews really catch God and Christ by surprise? Were their plans contingent upon the will of the Jews? Both the Old and New Testaments teach that the rejection of Christ was not unexpected, but rather was according to the eternal plan of God.

In Isaiah 53, Isaiah prophesied about 700 years before Christ that the Israelites would reject him and put him to death. Notice how six apostles quoted and applied this Messianic passage to Jesus: John (Jn. 12:38), Paul (Rom. 10:16), Matthew (Mt. 8:17), Peter (I Pet. 2:22), Luke (Lk. 22:37), and Philip (Ac. 8:32-38). Isaiah said in verse 3:

He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah prophesied the rejection of Christ by the Jews over seven centuries before its actual occurrence!

In Lk. 18.31-33, Jesus prepared the apostles for his rejection:

...[Jesus] took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man. For he shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully treated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Jesus stated two facts in this passage that premillennialists must deny: (1) he affirmed he would fulfill all the things written in the prophets (which included the kingdom prophecies), and (2) he affirmed that the prophets foretold of his rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection.

In Lk. 24.44-46, Jesus told the apostles after the resurrection:

...These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them. Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day.

In Ac. 2.23, Peter preached on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ that:

...him [Jesus], being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay.

In I Cor. 15.3, 4, Paul said:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

These passages show beyond all doubt that God determined, he foreknew, and the Old Testament prophets predicted hundreds of years ahead, that the Israelites would reject Christ. The claim of

premillennialists that the Jews' rejection forced God and Christ to abandon their plans for the kingdom is manifestly false.

One final passage deals with the rejection and its effect on the plan of Christ in Job 42.1, 2, where Job stated one of the lessons he had learned through his suffering and debate with God:

Then Job answered Jehovah, and said, I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained.

Job testified that our God is powerful so that no purpose of his can be thwarted. Yet the entire theory of premillennialism rests on the assumption that the Jews restrained God's plan by their rejection of the Messiah.

Likewise, in Isa. 42.4, Isaiah said of the Messiah's coming to establish his kingdom:

He shall not fail nor be discouraged til He has established justice in the earth.

And in Ps. 89.34, a Messianic psalm, the Messiah said:

My covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of my lips.

Contrary to God and Christ, premillennialism asserts that the Messiah failed and broke and altered the word that went out from his lips. God testified hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth that he expected the Jews to reject him. Thus, God wasn't surprised, and Jesus didn't establish the church because the Jews ruined his plans. God controlled the whole situation, and he laughs at the ridiculous assertions of those who think otherwise.

## **The Faithless Foundation of Premillennialism**

While many premillennialists are sincere people who love God and want to obey him, the men who invented their doctrine don't even pretend to share their faith in God and Jesus. This chapter introduces the faithless men who devised the doctrine. The vast majority of premillennialists have no idea that its foundation rests upon an absolute lack of faith in Christ and God. In all probability, most of the

founders of the doctrine don't even believe in the same Christ or God that you and I do.

Rather than making groundless assertions, this chapter first examines the unbelief of atheists and skeptics. Next, it shows how modernist scholars share that same basic unbelief in Jesus and his prophecies concerning the last days. Finally, it exposes the very words of the authors of modern dispensational premillennialism to prove their own lack of faith in God and Jesus. Thus, this chapter demonstrates the faithless foundation of premillennialism.

## **Atheists and Skeptics Believe Jesus Was Mistaken**

Of course, atheists and skeptics don't believe the Bible, or at least a major part of it. However, we want to notice the basis of unbelief for many of them.

To begin, let's remember several passages in the teaching of Jesus that cause unbelievers to stumble. In Mt. 16.27-28, Jesus said to his Jewish listeners:

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, *there are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.* [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Note that Jesus, speaking to some of his disciples ("I say unto you"), said some of them were going to be alive at his next coming, at which time he would render judgment to every man.

Likewise, in Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse in the week before his death, Jesus showed the apostles the buildings of the temple and prophesied its destruction (v1-2). They then asked him, "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (v3). Jesus answered their questions in the Olivet Discourse. He foretold the leading astray of many Christians (v5), wars and rumors of wars (v6), famines and earthquakes (v7), the rise of false prophets (v11), the preaching of the gospel in the whole world before the end comes (v14), the abomination of desolation (v15), great tribulation (v21), Christ coming as lightning coming from west to east (v27), the sun and moon darkened (v29), Christ coming on the clouds

of heaven (v30), on a day and hour that only the Father knows (v36), etc.

The controversial part of Jesus' statement is verse 34:

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

What do you think about these two prophecies? Did Jesus come during the lifetime of some his disciples and render judgment to every man? Did he come on the clouds of heaven during his generation? Have you personally wrestled with prophecies like these?

Ed Stevens reveals in *Questions About the Afterlife* how these passages trouble skeptics:

...the most prominent and recurrent argument in the skeptic's attack is the problem of imminency in the New Testament. (Ed Stevens, *Questions About the Afterlife* [Bradford, PA: International Preterist Association, 1999], p. 50.)

Many share this great difficulty with Jesus' statements and use it as an excuse for disbelief.

## **Jewish Skeptics**

In response to the question, "How does the passage of time affect the Christian claim of a second coming of Christ?" Jewish skeptics discredit Jesus:

Answer: Time makes the Christian doctrine of a "second coming of Christ" lose all credibility. If Jesus promised to come back shortly and the disciples expected so strongly to see Jesus return and establish the kingdom of God and neither event occurred, for what can the church still hope? In essence, Christian theological speculations on the "second coming of Christ" represent nothing more than the systemization of a mistake.

No amount of Christian theological acrobatics will ever solve the problems engendered by the historical reality that a promised imminent fulfillment made two thousand years ago did not occur as expected by the

New Testament. Simply stated, Jesus is never coming back, not then, not now, not ever. (Gerald Sigal, "FAQ," Jews for Judaism website, www.jewsforjudaism.org, 1999-2003.)

Thus, we see that the supposed failure of Jesus to fulfill his own prophecies provides a major argument for skeptical Jews to deny that he is the Christ.

## **Bertrand Russell**

The prominent atheist Bertrand Russell wrote on Mt. 16.27-28:

I am concerned with Christ as he appears in the Gospel narrative that does not seem to be very wise. For one thing, He certainly thought that his second coming would occur in clouds of glory before the death of all the people who were living at that time. There are a great many texts that prove that and there are a lot of places where it is quite clear that he believed this. His coming would happen during the lifetime of many then living. That was the belief of his earlier followers, and it was the basis of a good deal of his moral teaching. (Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957], p. 16.)

Russell then concluded that since Jesus was mistaken on this, his character was also flawed; and thus, his morality.

## **Tim Callahan**

This well-known skeptic of Christ, said Mt. 16.27-28 and Matthew 24 couldn't have been fulfilled prior to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, and wrote in his book *Bible Prophecy: Failure or Fulfillment?*:

Obviously, the gospel had not been preached to the entire world by 70 C.E., even if we interpret the whole world as being nothing more than the Roman Empire. (Tim Callahan, *Bible Prophecy: Failure or Fulfillment?* [Altadena, CA: Millennium Press, 1997], pp. 185-189.)

Obviously, Callahan doubted that the gospel had been preached as Jesus said it would be in his generation. Many people agree with his skepticism.

## **Gerald A. Larue**

Another skeptic, Gerald A. Larue, deduced that Jesus was wrong about his coming:

Although apocalyptic mythology as found throughout the New Testament is portrayed in its most organized form in Revelation, the gospel writers gave authority for the idea to John the Baptizer, who introduced the theme in the gospels, and to Jesus, who explained signs of the end of the age and promised his disciples that the new kingdom of God would be ushered in during their lifetime (Matt. 16:28). Jesus was wrong. All we can say is that from that time on, every prophetic pronouncement of the end of time has been wrong. (Gerald A. Larue, "The Bible and the Prophets of Doom" [*Skeptical Inquirer*, January/February 1999], p. 29.)

We are not surprised that one who doubts the claims of Jesus to be a true prophet said, "Jesus was wrong." We expect that of an atheist or a skeptic.

## **C. S. Lewis**

Although C. S. Lewis is not thought of as a skeptic, but rather an apologist for the way of Christ, his views on these prophecies of Christ are certainly skeptical:

The apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one that you will find very embarrassing. Their Master told them so. He shared, and indeed created their delusion. He said in so many words, "this generation shall not pass till all these things be done." And he was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else. This is certainly the most embarrass-

ing verse in the Bible. (C. S. Lewis, “The World’s Last Night,” essay in *The Essential C. S. Lewis*, editor Lyle W. Dorsett [New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988], p. 385.)

Lewis was embarrassed by the implication that Christ was deluded in these prophecies, and then he deluded his apostles. He certainly saw the problem with the use of “generation” in Mt. 24.34, which he thought was the most embarrassing verse in the Bible. These are strange, powerful words from a famous “Christian apologist.” While not the words of an atheist or skeptic, they sound the same.

## **Charles H. Spurgeon**

It may surprise you that Charles H. Spurgeon, the most famous British Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century, said, on Mt. 16.27-28:

If a child were to read this passage I know what he would think it meant: he would suppose Jesus Christ was to come, and there were some standing there who should not taste death until really and literally he did come. This, I believe, is the plain meaning. (Charles H. Spurgeon, “An Awful Premonition,” *12 Sermons on the Second Coming of Christ* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976], pp. 3-6.)

Spurgeon didn’t believe the prophecy was fulfilled, and, as the atheists and skeptics, he also believed Jesus was wrong and deluded.

These quotations show the low esteem in which atheists, skeptics, and even some religious apologists and preachers hold these prophecies of Jesus. It’s safe to say that all of these men (1) thought Jesus was wrong, and (2) they knew better than Jesus did. That’s no surprise in the case of atheists and skeptics, is it? Thus, representatives from atheists, skeptics, famous evangelists, and Jews all agree that Jesus was mistaken, his prophecies failed, and the return of Christ did not occur as God expected.

## Modernist Religious Scholars Also Believe Jesus Was Mistaken

Modernist religious scholars also disregard the teaching of Jesus in these prophecies that he would come and render judgment during the lifetime of some standing there. This is important because of the tremendous influence these (mostly German) scholars have exerted in denominational seminaries. They've produced and influenced many theologians, commentators, writers, and evangelists.

While these scholars claim to be Christians and have devoted their lives to studying the Bible, they don't believe it's infallible. They believe the teachings of Jesus and the Old and New Testament writers were susceptible to errors just like the writings of you and I are prone to mistakes. Generally, they openly deny the bodily resurrection of Christ, his deity, and the inspiration of his teaching. Premillennialists wouldn't dare do so, but modernist religious scholars do.

Most premillennialists share with us a conservative attitude toward the integrity of the scriptures. Thus, we aren't too familiar with modernist scholars and want to now notice their basic beliefs and attitudes toward the teaching of Christ and his apostles. Then we'll see that premillennial scholars harbor the same attitudes toward the teaching of Christ as atheists and modernists.

### David Strauss

The first modernist scholar we'll note is David Strauss. Concerning the Olivet Discourse, Strauss wrote:

Jesus at first speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and farther on, and until the close, of his return at the end of all things, and that he places the two events in immediate connection. (David Strauss, *Life of Jesus, Vol. III*, translated by George Eliot [New York: Macmillan & Co., 1898], cited by J. Marcellus Kik, *Matthew Twenty-Four* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1948], p. vii.)

Thus, Strauss believed that Matthew 24 dealt with both the destruction of Jerusalem and another return at the end of time, in immediate connection with each other. Of course, neither Strauss nor premillennialists believe that what Jesus foretold occurred as he said it would.

## C. C. McCown

Another famous modernist scholar, C. C. McCown wrote:

Either Jesus is mistaken or these discourses are not from him. The Christian church cannot without disloyalty escape this dilemma. (C. C. McCown, *The Search for the Real Jesus* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940], pp. 243-244, cited by J. Marcellus Kik, *Matthew Twenty-Four* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1948], p. vii.)

A third possibility seems not to have occurred to McCown: Jesus may have been right! I believe he was, but McCown couldn't allow that alternative, because he had already determined that Jesus was wrong, and that he knew better than Jesus did. Obviously, the "real Jesus," who McCown found, was not infallible in his teaching. I doubt that McCown believed in the same Jesus you do. I know he didn't believe in the same Jesus I do.

## Rudolf Bultmann

An outstandingly influential German modernist, Rudolf Bultmann, said many frank things about Jesus' teaching not being worthy of trust on eschatology, the study of "last things" including the Christ's return, the resurrection, and the judgment. Bultmann wrote:

The problem of Eschatology grew out of the fact that the expected end of the world failed to arrive, that the "Son of man" did not appear in the clouds of heaven, that history went on, and that the eschatological community could not fail to recognize that it had become a historical phenomenon and that the Christian faith had taken on the shape of a new religion. (Rudolph Bultmann, *History and Eschatology: the Presence of Eternity* [Harper and Brothers, 1957], p. 38.)

Then Bultmann said:

The mythical eschatology is untenable for the simple reason that the parousia [coming or presence—SGD] of Christ never took place as the New Testament expected. History did not come to an end, and, as every school-boy knows, it will continue to run its course.

The problem of Eschatology grew out of the fact that the expected end of the world failed to arrive, that the “Son of Man” did not appear in the clouds of heaven. (*Ibid.*)

Bultmann thought Jesus had spread myths because he didn’t know any more about the future than a schoolboy. These words came from a man claiming to be a Christian scholar. Through his extensive writings, he’s influenced millions of lifelong Bible students and preachers, yet he sounds like an atheist or a skeptic, doesn’t he? Surely, if you claim to be a Christian, this probably isn’t the view you have of Jesus.

Obviously, modernist scholars who make such statements believe that (1) Jesus was wrong, and (2) they knew better than the Son of God himself. However, we’re going to learn that (3) they felt they had to rescue Jesus from the problem he deluded himself into. I doubt that you believe that you know better than Jesus or that you have to rescue him.

Bultmann also broadened his discussion to the teaching of the New Testament authors. He viewed them as mistaken, wrong, and deluded:

The message of the coming end of the world runs through most of the New Testament, and for a time the conviction is retained and maintained in the face of doubts, that the end is at hand in the immediate future. As Paul writes to the Romans: “the night is far spent, the day is at hand” (xiii.12). Likewise the author of I Peter writes: “The end of all things is at hand” (iv.7), and the author of Revelation: “The time is near” (i.2, cf Heb. x.25; James v.8). (*Ibid.*, p. 34.)

In another of his books, Bultmann spoke again concerning the imminence of the end as held by the authors of the New Testament:

Of course, Jesus was mistaken in thinking that the world was destined to come to an end. (Rudolph Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, translated by R. H. Fuller [Cleveland, OH: William Collins Publishers, Inc., 1956], p. 92.)

I’m certainly not accustomed to perusing one of Jesus’ plain statements, and when I don’t understand how it could be true, then pronouncing Jesus as mistaken. Are you? I’m still old-fashioned enough to believe that if Jesus and I disagree on a simple statement, I’m the

one who is wrong, not Jesus. I'm uncomfortable thinking I know more than Jesus does, and that perhaps I need to save him from his own misunderstandings. How about you?

Finally, notice three small quotations from Bultmann:

Jesus' expectation of the near end of the world tuned out to be an illusion. (Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I*, translated by Kendrick Grobe [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970], p. 22.)

...the parousia [presence or coming—SGD] of Christ never took place as the New Testament expected. (Rudolph Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth* [New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961], p. 5.)

This hope of Jesus and of the early Christian community was not fulfilled. (Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958], p. 14.)

Thus, Bultmann felt little or no confidence in the teaching of Christ, as he regarded it as a mistaken illusion and mythology.

## **Albert Schweitzer**

Albert Schweitzer, legendary French theologian and missionary, expressed a lack of confidence in the teaching of Christ that will alarm those unfamiliar with him:

The whole history of "Christianity," down to the present day is based on the delay of the Parousia, the non-occurrence of the Parousia, the abandonment of eschatology, the progress and completion of the "deschatologizing" of religion which has been connected therewith. (Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961], p. 360.)

Schweitzer obviously believed that since Christ's kingdom was delayed without the imminent return of Christ, "Christianity" was put in its place. He also taught that Christ's church was never foretold in the Old Testament and was just a secondary work, a holding action.

## Werner Georg Kummel

The German modernist scholar, Werner Georg Kummel, took the same position as Bultmann and Schweitzer:

It is perfectly clear that this prediction of Jesus was not realized and it is therefore impossible to assert that Jesus was not mistaken about this. (Werner Georg Kummel, *Promise and Fulfillment* [London: SCM Press LTD, 1957], p. 149.)

Kummel is another modernist scholar who wasn't afraid to pronounce Jesus wrong, implying that he knew more about what Jesus taught than Jesus did. Later on, we'll see attempts by scholars to rescue Jesus (and God who sent him) from the problem they got themselves into.

## H. J. Schoeps

Another in a long line of German modernist scholars, H. J. Schoeps also had great influence on Bible scholarship among scholars, preachers, and writers on the teaching of Jesus. He asserted:

We should misunderstand the apostle's letters as a whole, and the governing consciousness from which they sprang, if we failed to recognize that Paul only lives, writes, and preaches, in the unshakable conviction that his generation represents the last generation of mankind. (H. J. Schoeps, *Paul, The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961], p. 102.)

When Schoeps spoke of the "last generation of mankind," it was not what Jesus spoke of. Jesus listed things that would happen in "this generation." Schoeps assumed Paul spoke of the last generation of mankind, something Jesus never said, and then he concluded Paul was wrong. He proceeded with too much confidence in his own knowledge and too little in that of Jesus and his apostles. Neither Jesus nor Paul foretold of the end of time for all mankind. No New Testament writer used the expression "end of time," and no one spoke of a judgment on all mankind. They prophesied the end of the Jewish age in A.D. 70.

Schoeps concluded, with more confidence in his own interpretation than Paul's inspired teaching:

Paul had misunderstood many things...[his] expectation of an imminent end turned out to be a delusion. (*Ibid.*, pp. 262-263.)

In Schoeps' view, Paul and nearly everyone claiming allegiance to Christ suffered from delusions:

It is undeniable that Paul, with the whole of primitive Christianity, erred about the imminently expected parousia. (*Ibid.*, p. 46.)

Dare you and I express such arrogance about the inspired word of God, let alone even think it? Surely, we have more confidence in God's abilities and his word than Schoeps did!

### **C. C. Berkouwer**

C. C. Berkouwer, another influential German modernist scholar and an amillennialist (an imprecisely defined term which practically means he is neither a post- nor pre-millennialist, though he still believed in a millennium) also believed that Christ and nearly all New Testament authors were mistaken on the subject of his coming:

Consistent eschatology sees the expectation of the coming of the Kingdom within the first generation of believers as the heart of eschatology. We are...obligated to deal with the accented nearness of the Kingdom found in the New Testament. We read there that the end of all things is at hand; that the believer is to be sane and sober (I Pet. 4:7); that the Lord is at hand (Phil. 4:5); that the judge is standing at the door (James 5:8, 9); that the time is near (Rev. 1:3). (C. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972], p. 65.)

Berkouwer's belief that Jesus and the apostles were mistaken wouldn't allow him to take any of this literally, so he interpreted all these statements of imminence as a call to watchfulness.

## Nils Alstrup Dahl

The Danish modernist theologian Nils Alstrup Dahl wrote that Paul's prophecies of Christ's coming didn't materialize during his generation:

Today nineteen hundred years later, we know that the future did not unfold as Paul hoped and expected! (Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Studies in Paul* [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977], p. 157.)

After looking at these modernist theologians' disbelief in the words of Jesus and the apostles, we should remember where to place our confidence when our thinking conflicts with Jesus' teaching, or any other teaching given by inspiration of God. Note Paul's statement in Rom. 3.3-4:

For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? God forbid: yea, *let God be found true, but every man a liar*; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy words, And mightest prevail when thou comest into judgment. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Paul affirmed that when our thoughts conflict with God's, man is wrong, not God. If God is who he claims to be, shouldn't we expect that? I'm fairly confident that you and I agree with Paul, "Let God be found true, and every man a liar."

## Why Would These Men Continue to Be Bible Scholars?

The question arises: Why would men continue to devote their lives to studying the word of a God who cannot maintain his own sovereignty or carry out his own will? Why study the Bible that says God makes his plans and no one can frustrate them, when they don't believe it? Why assert their faith in a God who says there is no God like him and he will accomplish all his good pleasure, when they declare that Christ's church wasn't even in God's plan.

In their view, God is no more trustworthy than an idol who couldn't bring about his will? Why set themselves forth as experts on the teaching of Christ when they think Jesus was a mistaken sap who

didn't know any more than a schoolboy who, as he was being delivered up, mocked, killed, and rising on the third day, claimed that he was fulfilling all things written through the prophets? Why devote their lives to studying the teaching of such a self-deceived man?

Of course, none of these men do, but wouldn't it be ridiculous if they claimed to be "fundamentalists" or "literalists?" Surely, men who don't believe Jesus' prophecies any more than they do are anything but literalists or fundamentalists! Likewise, how ridiculous if they called themselves "evangelical" (the word from which "gospel" comes) if the good news is that Jesus and all his apostles were mistaken! How arrogant to assert that Jesus was mistaken, and then claim to be a fundamentalist! What conceit and egotism that would be!

How much are you and I willing to study the writings of anyone we know is a false prophet? These men pretend to be scholars of the teaching of Christ; when in reality, they think his teachings are mythological! Dare we place our confidence in the attempts of modernist scholars to help Jesus overcome the Jews thwarting his plan to establish his kingdom?

## **Dispensational Premillennialism Is as Faithless as Atheism, Skepticism, and Modernism**

After considering the disbeliefs of atheists, skeptics, and modernists, we now turn to the leaders of the premillennial movement, and find precisely the same attitudes. Modern prophetic speculators won't forthrightly assert that Jesus was deluded and mistaken, but we can definitely see where that attitude originated.

This isn't to accuse premillennialists of being atheists, skeptics, or modernists. *However, their system of doctrine shares exactly the same faithless basis of atheism, skepticism, and modernism. Premillennialism rests squarely on the false beliefs that God can fail to accomplish his will, that he doesn't nullify the counsel of the nations arrayed against him, and asserts that Jesus and most of the New Testament authors were mistaken on the final coming.*

Admittedly, that's quite an accusation. Let's see if the facts can back it up.

### **C. I. Scofield**

We've already seen where Scofield introduced a new variety of dispensational premillennialism to the masses with his Scofield Bible.

He taught in the margin notes how the rejection of Christ by the Jews forced God to change his plans for Christ to reign on David's throne the first time he came into the world:

The kingdom announced as "at hand" (Mt. 4.17, note) by John the Baptist, by the King, and by the Twelve, was rejected by the Jews, first morally (Mt. 11.20, note), and afterward officially (Mt. 21.42,43), and the King, crowned with thorns, was crucified...Afterward He announced his purpose to "build his church." (Dr. C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1909, 1945], p. 1226.)

How is Scofield different than atheists, skeptics, and modernists, who don't believe God could accomplish his purposes, who couldn't nullify the counsel of the nations, or in a Christ who didn't know what he was talking about? Scofield wasn't an atheist or a skeptic, who said Jesus was wrong or deluded, but he believed like the atheists and skeptics we've seen. Scofield expressed more confidence in his own opinions than in what God's word plainly taught. He thought Christ could be mistaken long before he, Scofield, could be wrong.

## **Hal Lindsey**

Hal Lindsey made dispensational zionist premillennialism popular in his book *The Great Late Planet Earth*. In *There's a New World Coming*, he wrote:

For anyone who cared to investigate there was no lack of evidence to show that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. Had the people received Him, He would have fulfilled the kingly prophecies in their day in addition to the ones regarding the suffering Messiah. But when the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Christ, the fulfillment of His kingship was postponed until the final culmination of world history. (Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming* [Powder Springs, GA: Vision House Pub., 1973], p. 30.)

How does Lindsey's lack of faith in a sovereign God and an inspired Christ differ from the same statements atheists, skeptics, and modernists made earlier? They all believe Christ was mistaken. Lindsey went to a seminary established by such a man (Scofield), used the

textbooks of another (Walvoord), and the Dean of Graduate School (Ryrie) and the President of the seminary (Walvoord) were two more. He didn't fall far from the tree, and wasn't far from the atheists, skeptics, and modernists who preceded his teachers. Lindsey isn't an atheist or a skeptic, who says Jesus was wrong or deluded, but he believes like the atheists and skeptics we've seen.

## **Dr. John Walvoord**

Here's the take of Dr. John Walvoord, President of the Dallas Theological Seminary, on Mt. 24.15-16, 21 particularly:

The fulfillment of this prophecy necessarily involves the reactivation of the Mosaic sacrificial system in a temple in Judea. The present occupation of Jerusalem by Israel may be a preparatory step to the re-establishment of the Mosaic system of sacrifices. Obviously, sacrifices cannot be stopped and a temple cannot be desecrated unless both are in operation. (Dr. John Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1971], p. 235.)

Walvoord believed that the first time God tried to establish the Messiah's kingdom, he had everything prepared: the Jews, Jesus, the Roman Empire—everything. Why would Walvoord, who believed that God failed miserably the only time he ever tried it, believe that God would succeed the next time? Believing in a God who can be thwarted by the nations, who sometimes succeeds and sometimes fails in accomplishing his will, Walvoord and those who agree with his system of doctrine, should have no confidence in such a God at all. Walvoord wasn't an atheist or a skeptic, who said that Jesus was wrong or deluded, but he believes like the atheists and skeptics we've seen.

## **Charles Ryrie**

The Dean of the Graduate School at Dallas Theological Seminary, Charles Ryrie, wrote:

The Kingdom which Christ faithfully offered while on earth was the very same earthly, Messianic, Davidic kingdom which the Jews expected from the Old Testament prophecies. But it is a matter of history that such a Kingdom was not ushered in at the first advent

of Christ. (Charles Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* [Neptune, NJ: Louizeaux Brothers, 1953], p. 93.)

Ryrie believes history proves Jesus was unable to establish his kingdom when he said he would. Obviously, Ryrie isn't an atheist or a skeptic who says Jesus was wrong or deluded, but he believes like the atheists and skeptics we've seen.

## Dr. Thomas Ice

Dr. Thomas Ice is a dispensational scholar and prolific writer on the subject. Listen to him discuss the word "generation" in Mt. 24.34:

Now, why does "this generation" in Matthew 24:34 (as well as Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32), *not* refer to Christ's contemporaries? Because the governing referent to "this generation" is "all these things." Since Jesus is giving an extended prophetic discourse on future events, one must first determine the nature of "all these things" prophesied in verses 4 through 31 to know what generation Christ is referring to. Since "all these things" did not take place in the first century, then the generation whom Christ speaks of must still be future. It's as simple as that. (Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, *The End Times Controversy* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2003], p. 92.)

Ice never had a problem with any other passage in the Bible speaking of "this generation" except this single verse, Mt. 24.34. He understood what "this" meant, and he understood what "generation" meant. But when he came to this verse, he knew it hadn't been fulfilled, so he hopped to his poor mistaken God's aid and helped him out of a problem he made for himself. Knowing better than God, he has to use "this" and "generation" in a way that is nowhere used in the Bible, so that it means *anything except what Jesus said!*

Ice also said concerning Mt. 24.34:

I do not believe that Christ's Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) contains a single sentence, phrase, or term that *requires* a first-century fulfillment except for Luke 21:20-24. (*Ibid.*, p. 96.)

Ice and LaHaye have turned Bible interpretation on its head, and it's hardly the literalism they profess. The generation is specifically identified as "this generation," the one in which Jesus lived. Prophetic speculators have played Ice's game for centuries. They find some generation when they believe Christ is coming (always their own), and then identify some events they think are indications of his coming. *Voila*, it's "this generation," even if it is two thousand years later than the "this generation" of Jesus' time.

If these speculators aren't willing to take literally "this generation" to mean Jesus' contemporaries, why would "these things" that were about to happen be contemporary to what Jesus said? If "this" isn't literally true, why would "these" be literally true? In other words, why would we have any assurance that "these" refers to anything Jesus spoke of?

On the timing of the tribulation in Mt. 24.21, among the "these things" Jesus said would be fulfilled in "this generation" of his listeners, Ice explained why it couldn't be fulfilled in Jesus' generation:

If the Tribulation is a past event, then the rapture of the church is impossible, premillennialism cannot be true, Israel does not have a future national blessing, the current nation of Israel is not prophetically significant, and our current state of existence would have to be the millennial kingdom or new heaven and new earth. However, I do not believe the Bible teaches that the Tribulation is any way *past*. Instead, Scripture tells us that it is a *future* event that could commence very soon. (Thomas Ice, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* [Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999], p. 69.)

Notice Ice's reasoning. If Jesus were not mistaken and the tribulation were fulfilled in his generation like Jesus said it would be, then premillennialism cannot be true. Thus, Israel does not have a future national blessing, the current nation of Israel is not prophetically significant, *and Ice doesn't believe that the Bible teaches that the tribulation is in any way past!* In other words, if Jesus were right, all of Ice's material is worthless, so the tribulation couldn't be in Jesus' generation as he said it would be. This is, indeed, a heavy argument, isn't it? You and I can either believe what Jesus said or believe what Ice says, but we can't believe both!

Tim LaHaye, author of *The Left Behind* series, and co-author of several books with Dr. Ice, says this about the importance of Matthew 24:

The Olivet Discourse, delivered shortly before Jesus' crucifixion, is the most important single passage of prophecy in all the Bible. It is significant because it came from Jesus Himself immediately after He was rejected by His own people and because it provides the master outline of end-time events. (Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001], p. 38.)

Again, Ice said concerning the importance of Matthew 24:

A proper understanding of the Olivet Discourse is absolutely essential for anyone who wants to gain a clear picture of God's plan for the ages. This discourse is so significant that the way a person interprets it will impact his understanding of the rest of the prophecy passages of the Bible. (Thomas Ice, *The End Times Controversy* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2003], p. 151.)

Matthew 24 is an extremely important passage. It's also important for us to make up our own minds at the outset whether we will believe what Jesus said, or what Ice says.

Let's be reminded of Paul's statement in Rom. 3:4:

...let God be found true, but every man a liar.

Certainly, these men are not real "fundamentalists" are they? *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* says of fundamentalism:

...a: movement in 20th century Protestantism emphasizing the literally interpreted Bible as fundamental to Christian life and teaching  
b: the beliefs of this movement  
c: adherence to such beliefs.

Is one who believes Jesus was mistaken, a failure, wrong, and deluded literally interpreting the Bible? Is he adhering to Jesus' teaching if he thinks he knows more than Jesus does about his coming and return, and needs to help Jesus solve the problem? Is one really evangeli-

cal if his “good news” is that Jesus was mistaken and deluded? How did these labels ever stick? Such mislabeling reminds us of Mark Twain’s comment about Christian Science, to the effect that it was like Grape-Nuts Flakes. You open the box, and there are no grapes, nor nuts. Dispensational Premillennialism is neither literal, fundamental, nor evangelical, but based on the teachings of pretentious, self-centered, egotists who think they know more than Jesus and his apostles, nothing less.

Ice and LaHaye aren’t atheists or skeptics, who say Jesus was wrong or deluded, but they believe like the atheists and skeptics we’ve seen.

## **Mutual Exploitation of Premillennialists and Unbelieving Jews**

Interestingly, dispensational Zionists in the United States donate (some knowingly, some unknowingly) tremendous sums of money to support terrorist activity against the Al Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. They also finance raising red heifers for sacrifice, training pure priests with the proper garments to offer animal sacrifices in the new temple, obtaining proper sacrificial utensils, as well as converting Jews to Christ. However, unbelieving Jews think Jesus was mistaken, deluded, and a false prophet on the same prophecies that premillennialists do! What an effective evangelism program that has to be!

Since supporters in the USA contribute so much money, unbelieving Jews in Israel willingly accept premillennialists’ money to fund their Temple Mount campaigns. The common basis for the mutual exploitation between these two cynical groups is their belief that Jesus was mistaken in his prophecies about his coming. Why wouldn’t they be able to work together? What a paradox!

Grace Halsell, in her book, *Forcing God’s Hand, Why Millions Pray for a Quick Rapture and Destruction of Planet Earth*, explained this mutual exploitation:

Nathan Perlmutter of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith provides us with the most clear-cut explanation of why U. S. Jews support the Christian Right. First, he says, he feels himself a somewhat typical American Jew in that he weighs every issue in life by one measure: “Is it good for the Jews? This question satisfied, I proceed to the secondary issues.”

In the case of Jerry Falwell, liberal [unbelievers in Christ—SGD] Jews should support him because he supports Israel. Liberal Jews may not agree with Falwell's domestic policies on more nuclear weapons, abortion or prayer in schools. But, contends Perlmutter, these are secondary issues. In his book, *The Real Anti-Semitism in America*, Perlmutter writes:

Jews can live with all the domestic priorities of the Christian Right on which liberal Jews differ so radically because none of these concerns is as important as Israel. (Nathan Perlmutter, *The Real Anti-Semitism in America* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1998], cited by Grace Halsell, *Forcing God's Hand, Why Millions Pray for a Quick Rapture and Destruction of Planet Earth* [Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1999], pp. 83-84.)

Perlmutter recognizes that evangelical fundamentalists interpret scripture as saying all Jews eventually must accept Jesus Christ or be killed in the battle of Armageddon. But meanwhile, he said:

We need all the friends we have to support Israel. If the Messiah comes, on that day we'll consider our options. Meanwhile, let's praise the Lord and pass the ammunition. (*Ibid.*)

Irving Kristol, a leading spokesman for New York's Jewish intellectual community, also urges American Jews to support Jerry Falwell and other right-wing fundamentalists. After all, why should Jews care about the theology of a fundamentalist preacher? (*Ibid.*)

So the American contributors think Jesus was mistaken and know the Jews to whom they're sending the money don't believe in him for that very reason. At the same time, the Jews accepting their money, also believe Jesus was mistaken and don't care what the contributors believe! If the cynicism and exploitation between these two groups were converted to energy, we wouldn't have a looming energy shortage, would we?

# **Dispensational Premillennialism Rests Upon a Lack of Faith in God and Jesus**

The very words of premillennialists establish the fact that their doctrine discredits the words of God and Jesus. Premillennialists boast that they are the ones who interpret the Bible literally. But just how much of a literalist are they when they claim the Jews thwarted God, in contrast to his foretelling of that Jewish rejection of Jesus? Do literalists say that the Jews' rejection of Christ surprised God? How much of a literalist are you and I if we say Christ and most of the authors of the New Testament were mistaken in all the prophecies about last things? If we claim to be evangelical, what kind of "good news" is that?

## **The Three Real Issues**

Anyone who studies eschatology, the doctrine of last things, and premillennialism knows that the subjects include many fascinating issues. Especially interesting are the land promise to Israel, the establishment of Israel in 1948, and the future of the nation of Israel. Other issues concern the rapture—was it pre- or post-tribulation, the binding and loosing of Satan, and the resurrection. Debates occur over the new heavens and new earth, Jesus and the fig tree, and the identify of anti-christs. Still others speculate on the man of sin, the restraining power, the little horn of Daniel 7, etc.

However, there are really just three basic issues that should be settled first: (1) the sovereignty of God, (2) the faithfulness or dependability of God, and (3) faith in Christ and his teaching. Do we believe in the sovereign power and faithfulness of God, and are we going to have confidence in the teaching of Christ?

Stated another way, are you and I going to believe in a God who makes grandiose plans and then can't pull them off? Are we going to trust in the doctrines of men who believe Christ was mistaken, that mere men know better than Christ and all the New and Old Testament writers?

In Matthew 24.4, the first thing Jesus said in answer to the disciples' questions about his coming and the end of the world was:

Take heed that no man lead you astray.

Would Jesus think you and I are led astray by scholars who teach that God couldn't fulfill his plan, or that Jesus was mistaken or deluded, and deluded his disciples? It's a question worthy of serious contemplation.

## **ISSUE #1: The Sovereignty of God**

A sovereign exercises supreme authority within a limited sphere. The Bible sets forth God as sovereign because he created everything and everything belongs to him.

While Daniel was in Babylonian captivity, the royal wise men, enchanters, soothsayers, and magicians failed to reveal and interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dreams. In contrast to their inability, Daniel foretold of the kingdoms between his time and the coming of the Messiah's kingdom. He prophesied of the future of the Babylonian kingdom, under which he was then living, the Medo-Persian Empire, which would succeed Babylon, the Greek empire; and finally, the Roman Empire. Premillennialists and we agree on these four kingdoms. Then Daniel said in v44:

And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Likewise, premillennialists and we agree that the Messiah would come and establish his kingdom in the days of the Roman Empire.

Five centuries later, when John the Baptist came preaching during the days of the Roman Empires, in Mk. 1.14-15, Mark said:

Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel.

Here is where the premillennialists and we disagree. They say God really didn't do that. They insist that the Messiah's kingdom, of which Daniel and John prophesied, was postponed because Israel rejected Jesus.

Despite their claims, God is sovereign. He allows no one to nullify his plans, not any individual, and not any nation. He said in Mal. 3.6:

For I, the Lord, do not change.

Sadly, premillennialists believe in a God who does change, basing their system of doctrine on the assertion that God did what he said he wouldn't do. They allege that he changed because of the rejection of Christ by rebellious Jews!

James said concerning God's nature in Jas. 1:17:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.

The God I believe in has no variation, and he casts no shadows by turning. Premillennialists, on the other hand, insist that God does vary and turn, and zigs and zags, if someone just resists him hard enough.

In Isa. 46:10, Isaiah described Jehovah as the one:

...declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

Contrariwise, premillennialists insist that God's counsel did not stand, and he did not do all his good pleasure. They presumptuously believe that the Jewish rejection of Christ caused God's counsel not to stand so that he did not complete all his good pleasure.

Again, notice Paul's statement about the nature of God in Rom. 3:3-4 on the subject of the rejection of Christ by the Jews:

For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? God forbid: yea, let God be found true, but every man a liar.

According to premillennialists, Israel's want of faith *did* make of none effect the faithfulness of God! Premillennialists make God a liar, while letting atheists, modernists, and prophetic speculators be found true!

People who make these claims, whether they're atheists, modernists, or prophetic speculators, should be asked, "Who in the world do you think you are to substitute your teaching for God's?" Dare you and I be so arrogant in thinking that mere men can overpower God?

## ISSUE #2: The Faithfulness of God

Premillennialists believe in a God who is not faithful. He cannot be relied on to keep his promises. Yet, we read:

1 Corinthians 10.13—There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but *God is faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

2 Corinthians 1.18—But as *God is faithful*, our word toward you is not yea and nay.

1 Corinthians 1.7-9—...so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, (that ye be) unproveable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. *God is faithful*, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

In Ps. 27.10 we read:

For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the LORD will take me up.

Most of us realize that the last two people on earth who will forsake their child is his parents—you and I can depend on God even when our own parents forsake us. But according to premillennialists, God's not as dependable as our parents. He's hardly faithful at all.

## ISSUE #3: Faith in Christ and His Teaching

Throughout this study, we've heard from several atheists, skeptics, modernist scholars, and others saying that Jesus was mistaken, deluded, or wrong on several things he prophesied. It's more serious than that. If Jesus was mistaken when he claimed to speak for God, he was a false prophet.

As we've seen, God sets himself forth as the one who knows the future. He calls the things that are not, as though they were (Rom. 4.17), and he declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done (Isa. 46.10). Old Testament prophets

challenged their pagan counterparts to display their prophetic power so that they, the true prophets, could expose their inability. Isaiah charged such to “declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods” (Isa. 41.23).

Such false prophets existed in ancient Bible times; and also in the New Covenant period. T. Francis Glasson, in *His Appearing and His Kingdom* wrote:

Pope Gregory assured the world that the return of Christ could not be far off since he claimed that so many prophecies were being fulfilled in his day.

Of all the signs described by our Lord as presaging the end of the world, we see already accomplished. For we now see that nation arises against nation and that they press upon the land in our own times as never before in the annals of the past. Earthquakes overwhelm countless cities, as we often hear from other parts of the world. Pestilence we endure without interruption. It is true that we do not behold signs in the sun and moon and stars but that these are not far off we may infer from the changes of the atmosphere.” (T. Francis Glasson, *His Appearing and His Kingdom* [London: Epworth, 1953], p. 45.)

With the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, many premillennialists thought one generation (from Mt. 24.34) would bring the world to 1988. That event brought forth a deluge of predictions that the rapture of the church would occur in 1988.

Edgar C. Whisenant’s book *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Is in 1988* released his calculations. Amazingly, Whisenant knew that the Bible would be wrong before he was:

Only if the Bible is in error am I wrong, and I saw that unequivocally. There is no way Biblically that I can be wrong; and I say that to every preacher in town. (Quoted by Ralph Lyman, *A Critique on the 1988 Rapture Theory* [Oklahoma City, OK: Southwest Radio Church, 1988], p. 2.)

On the date-setting phenomenon that has prevailed since the first century, Gary DeMar, in *End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the Left Behind Theology*, said:

The history of date-setting is long and tortuous. Francis Gumerlock catalogs more than a thousand false predictions over the past two millennia, everything from the identity of the Antichrist to the date of Christ's coming. Two common streams run through all of them: they were sure of their prediction and they were wrong.

The track record for pointing out even the "season" or "generation" of Jesus' return is dismal as well: a 100 percent failure rate by everyone who claimed that they were living in the "terminal generation." (Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the Left Behind Theology* [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2001], p. 200.)

Francis Gumerlock wrote:

I originally intended the chronicle to be an article, which I estimated would be about ten pages in length. Twenty-one chapters later, *The Day and the Hour* illustrates century after century, year after year, the perennial fascination of those in Christendom who predicted a date for the Rapture, the Resurrection, or the Return of Christ; those who calculated the nearness of Armageddon, the Last Judgment, or the Millennium; those who announced a contemporaneous identity for the Two Witnesses, a last-days Elijah, the Antichrist, or some Beast from the Book of Revelation; and those who believed that their sect was the 144,000 or their generation the last.

In the course of this study, I have found that it was not only radicals and cultists who had engaged in this type of End-time date setting; almost no Christian denomination has been immune from it. Even some whom we consider heroes of the faith have mistakenly engaged in these sorts of vain speculations. (Francis X. Gumerlock, *The Day and the Hour: Christianity's Perennial Fascination with Predicting the End of the World* [Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2000], p. 2.)

We've already seen how atheists and skeptics deny plain statements in Matthew 16 and 24 to assert that (1) God's word is wrong, and (2) they know better than God. Modernist scholars think the same thing, but (3) they feel obligated to help God by conjuring up new doctrines to save his plan. Now we've seen premillennial scholars doing identically the same thing.

Any experienced Bible student will recognize this pattern of behavior, starting in the Garden of Eden. When God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Satan convinced them that he knew better than God, "He knows that in the day you eat thereof, you shall be as God." Adam and Eve listened to Satan and decided he was right, and God was wrong. Then they assumed that they knew better than God themselves. The basic problem was trust in themselves rather than trust in God.

When God told Abraham in his old age that he would have a son, Abraham thought God had made a mistake. He thought he knew better than God, and that he would help God out. First, he went into Sara's handmaiden, who gave birth to Ishmael. Then God told him that wasn't the son he spoke of. Finally, Abraham and Sara trusted God and Isaac was born as the son of promise.

We see the same thing when Israel wanted to have a king with all the earthly trappings like all the nations around them. They thought God was mistaken. They insisted that they knew a better arrangement for ruling Israel than God did. Thus, their basic problem was trust in themselves rather than trust in God.

The apostle Peter had problems in such situations, as well. In Mt. 16.22, Jesus foretold his suffering and crucifixion; whereupon, Peter rebuked him. Peter told him he didn't know what he was talking about, that such things would never happen to Jesus. Peter sounded like the modernists, didn't he? He sounded like the prophetic speculators. They encounter something God said that they can't reconcile with what they already believe, so they draw the obvious conclusions: (1) God is wrong, (2) we know better, and (3) we'd better help God out.

This is not a new phenomenon when people today think they know better than God. For example, Hal Lindsey wrote that Peter's prophecy that "the end of all things is at hand" (I Pet. 4.7) was still unfulfilled. Lindsey reasoned that Peter did not have the insight into prophecy that believers can have today. (Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970 and 1977], pp. 42, 46.)

Max King pointed out that in Lindsey's book *The Terminal Generation*, that of the 112 source notes, over half of them were taken from then current newspapers and magazines such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, *New York Times*, *U. S. News and World Report*, *Time*, etc. King noted that Lindsey "suggests that the secular press might be called the prophetic press." (Hal Lindsey, *The Terminal Generation* [Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976], p. 185, cited by Max R. King, *The Cross and the Parousia of Christ* [Warren, OH: Writing and Research Ministry, Parkman Road Church of Christ, 1987], p. 748.)

So the issue is, do you and I have faith in Christ and his teaching? Or do we also think he was mistaken, and we can't believe his prophecies?

## **The Bible's Definition of a False Prophet**

When atheists, skeptics, modernists, and prophetic speculators affirm that Jesus was mistaken in Matthew 24, they're making him a false prophet. In Dt. 18.20-22, God defines a false prophet:

But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

That God takes this test seriously can be seen from the fact that if a prophet failed it, he was to be put to death (Dt. 13:1-3, 18.19-21). The fulfillment test even took precedence over the signs or wonders of the prophet (Dt. 13.1-3).

## **Application of God's Test to Joseph Smith**

A particular prophecy that Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church, made on September 22 and 23, 1832 while at Kirtland, Ohio, recorded in *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 84, verses 1-5, reads as follows:

A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and six elders, as they united their hearts and lifted their voices on high.

Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem.

Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased.

Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, *which temple shall be reared in this generation.*

For verily *this generation shall not all pass away* until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house. [Emphasis mine—SGD] (Joseph Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 84, 1-5 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1921].)

The specific city in which the temple was to be built is not mentioned here. However, we find from *Doctrine and Covenants* 57.1-3 that the terms Mount Zion and New Jerusalem are synonyms for Independence, Missouri:

Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion.

And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the court-house. (Joseph Smith, *Ibid.* Section 57.1-3.)

Summarizing the prophecy, Joseph Smith predicted, as a “revelation of Jesus Christ,” that a temple would be built in Independence, Missouri in the generation in which he spoke these words.

As a point of fact, 150 years later, this prophecy has not been fulfilled! The beginning of the temple hasn’t taken place, much less been completed during the generation in which Smith spoke. The Mormons left Jackson County, Missouri before the temple construction started and the temple lot is vacant until this day. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not even own the temple lot and cannot construct the temple on that piece of ground.

In addition, the gathering of the saints, which Joseph Smith prophesied, has not yet begun. What of that generation living then? In a more recent book, Joseph Fielding Smith, then President of the Mormon Church said:

It is also reasonable to believe that no soul living in 1832, is still living in mortality on the earth. (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions, IV* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960], p. 112.)

God said that if the words of a prophet did not come to pass, then he was a false prophet. Thus, according to God’s own words, Joseph Smith was a false prophet.

The reader may ask, “Don’t Mormons know this prophecy is false?” Sure they do, but they also rehearse what they think is a Biblical argument to show it’s no big deal. They claim that Jesus also made prophecies, including a time element, that weren’t fulfilled. Can you guess which ones they have in mind? Matthew 24!

So was Jesus mistaken as a false prophet, just like Joseph Smith? Mormons think that Smith was every bit on a par with Jesus. How about you? Do you think it’s a big deal if Jesus couldn’t make accurate prophecies about time elements?

## Application of God's Test to Jesus

Let's concentrate on three prophecies of Jesus that we've already mentioned to see if God declares him a false prophet:

Matthew 10.23—But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, *Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

Matthew 16.27-28—For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, *there are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

Matthew 24.34—Verily I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished.* [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Premillennialists view none of these prophecies as fulfilled yet, and say that Jesus was mistaken. But, let them not say “mistaken.” Let premillennialists call them what the Bible calls them— false prophecies. Let them call Jesus what he was—a false prophet. Let them also say what punishment God ordained for false prophets—death. And let them realize that the “mistakes” they think Jesus made justified his death sentence! Imagine holding to a doctrine that views Jesus as wrong, mistaken, and deluded to the point that it justifies the execution of Christ!

But it gets worse: If Jesus were mistaken, deluded, and a false prophet, he couldn't be a flawless sacrifice for us. God taught all the way through the Old Testament that sacrifices offered to him had to be flawless, without spot or blemish, to teach us how our sacrificial lamb was to be. The Christ had to be a savior who was without blemish or defect.

However, if Jesus were mistaken, deluded, and a false prophet who deserved to be executed, he wasn't without blemish or defect, was he? Thus, he wasn't a proper sacrifice, and we're left without a sacrifice for our sins! Yet Peter said, in I Pet. 1.18-19:

...knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of

life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, even the blood of Christ...

In verse 22, Peter said: “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth,” affirming that Jesus was God’s lamb without spot or blemish, the perfect sacrifice!

J. Dwight Pentecost, a premillennial writer, de-emphasized the importance of the time element in Mt. 24.34:

It is to be observed that the time element holds a relatively small place in prophecy. (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Academie, 1954 and 1958], p. 46.)

I disagree! The time element plays a defining role in a prophecy containing time. Pentecost’s remark makes prophecies containing time elements meaningless. However, if I believed Jesus were mistaken on many of his prophecies, I’m sure I’d argue that time was meaningless, as well.

The Bible also uses the word “slack” for an unfulfilled prophecy with a time element, as in II Pet. 3.9. Dealing with false teachers who thought that the promise of Christ’s coming was invalid because it had been some 35 years since he had given it in Matthew 24, Peter said:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Atheists, skeptics, modernists and prophecy speculators affirm that Jesus was slack. He made promises and then didn’t fulfill them—the very thing that Peter denied. Hardly literalism here! The issue isn’t even about faith in Christ, is it? I don’t believe that Jesus was mistaken as Joseph Smith was, but if the charge were true, according to the Law of Moses, both of them should have been put to death. If yours and my beliefs mean that Jesus was mistaken, then we need to change our beliefs!

## Application of God's Test to Jesus' Apostles

It's not just that Jesus is a false prophet according to atheists, skeptics, modernists, and prophetic speculators, but they also make nearly every author in the New Testament one. For example, in I Jn. 2.18, John wrote:

Little children, *it is the last hour*: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that *it is the last hour*. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

John also prophesied in Rev. 1.3:

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is *at hand*. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Premillennialists believe, of course, that none of these prophecies have been fulfilled; therefore, not only is Jesus a false prophet, but so is his apostle John. It's amazing how these men can think they know better than miraculously endowed apostles and other New Testament writers.

Who should we believe? Those who spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit, or atheists, skeptics, modernists, or prophetic speculators who think they know better than God, Christ, or the apostles? What kind of a blessing is it to be empowered to speak by the Holy Spirit, when you could learn better by listening to atheists, skeptics, and modernists, or attend Dallas Theological Seminary?

In Lk. 21.8, Jesus warned Peter, James, and John against those who would falsely teach of his coming too early:

And he said, Take heed that ye be not led astray: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am he; and, *The time is at hand*: go ye not after them. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Yet if premillennialists are right, each of these apostles prophesied too early of the coming of Christ. They gave the premature declarations Jesus warned against! Were they correct, or were Peter, James and John some of the false prophets Jesus warned about?

In II Peter 3, Peter, opposing scoffers who affirmed that the coming of Christ was not near, said, “The end of all things has drawn near.” If premillennialists are right, then Peter was wrong, and the scoffers were right! Did Jesus’ apostles fail God’s test of true prophets and deserve to be put to death?

## Application of God’s Test to an Angel

In Rev. 22.6-10, John recorded the words spoken to him by an angel:

And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants the things which *must shortly come to pass*.

And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things.

And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God.

And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for *the time is at hand*. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Obviously, premillennialists must believe that the angel’s time statements (at hand and must shortly come to pass) were not soon fulfilled; therefore, the angel was mistaken. Those who have seriously studied Mormonism are familiar with the angel Moroni, whom Joseph Smith said told him many things contrary to scripture. We know what should be done with Moroni—”let him be anathema” (Gal. 1.8-9). Why don’t premillennialists pronounce a curse on the angel of Revelation?

Can atheists, skeptics, modernists, and prophetic speculators possibly keep the words of the prophecy of Revelation, when they teach that Jesus was mistaken, or that nearly all the New Testament authors were mistaken? Obviously not.

## Application of God’s Test to the Apostle Paul

In Phil. 4.5, Paul said:

Let your forbearance be known unto all men. *The Lord is at hand.* [Emphasis mine—SGD]

In Rom. 13.12, he said:

The night is far spent, and *the day is at hand*: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Of course, premillennialists hardly believe that the Lord was at hand, and that the day of the Lord was at hand when he wrote these statements. Thus, Paul was mistaken, too, and a false prophet who was worthy of death.

## Application of God’s Test to the Apostle Peter

In I Pet. 4.7, Peter said:

But *the end of all things is at hand*: be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer... [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Premillennialists don’t believe that the end was at hand when Peter wrote this. Therefore, Peter was mistaken, too, and worthy of death.

## Application of God’s Test to the Author of Hebrews

In Heb. 10.37, the author of Hebrews wrote:

For yet *a very little while*, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

The Lord’s coming in a little while from when this book was written certainly isn’t compatible with premillennialism, so the writer of Hebrews was prophesying falsely, too.

## Application of God’s Test to James

In Jas. 5.8, James wrote:

Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for *the coming of the Lord is at hand.* [Emphasis mine—SGD]

To premillennialists, it's preposterous to think that the Lord's coming was at hand in James' time, since they think it hasn't occurred yet! Premillennialists think that none of these prophecies have been fulfilled. If this is true, every one of these New Testament writers is not just "mistaken," they are all false prophets!

Matthew Tindal wrote:

The Apostles themselves were grossly mistaken, who taught that the *End of the World* was nigh, and the *Coming of Christ at hand*; as is plain, among other texts, in I Cor. 1:10-11; Rom. 13:11-12; Heb. 9:26; Jas. 5:7-8; I John 2:18; II Pet. 3:12-13. (Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation: or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* [London: 2nd ed., 1731].)

The modernist German scholar Werner Georg Kummel reasoned:

If most of the Apostles were mistaken in a Matter of this Consequence, how can we be certain, that any One of them may not be mistaken in any other Matter? (Werner Georg Kummel, *The New Testament: The History of the Interpretation of its Problems* [London: SCM Press LTD, 1957]), p. 54.

As Hal Lindsey said of testing prophets:

The only grade allowed was one of 100 percent accuracy. Anything less would doom the prophet to death by stoning, which was the method of capital punishment in those days (Deuteronomy 13:1-11). (Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970 and 1977], p. 20.)

Lindsey is correct on this point. This being true, we raise another question: Why would we believe anything any of these New Testament writers say? Why would we want to study the writings of any of them? After we're convinced Joseph Smith was a false prophet, we don't continue to study his writings, do we? We don't do it with any of the thousands of men who have made false prophecies about the return of Christ!

Do premillennialists really believe in the sovereignty of the God of the Bible? Or do they believe in a God who is pushed around by unbe-

lieving Jews? Do they believe in God's faithfulness and dependability? Or do they believe in a God who was mistaken, as atheists, skeptics, modernists, and prophetic speculators assert?

Do premillennialists profess real faith in Christ and his teaching? Or do they give lip service to some false image of a Christ who was mistaken, deluded, and a false prophet?

What about you and me?

## **Why Do Men Reject the Teaching of Christ?**

In this study, we've seen many examples of prominent men who rejected the teaching of Christ because they thought they knew better than Jesus. Some may have assumed superiority over Christ in ignorance. Yet the outcome was the same—they demonstrated a lack of confidence in God and his son and put their faith in the reasoning of mere men.

For example, Charles Darwin, before he made his famous journey on the *Beagle*, had been an Episcopal seminarian until he underwent an examination to ascertain his suitability for the priesthood. His father asked him whether he felt inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to become an Episcopal priest. Being totally honest, he answered in the negative, saying, "And therefore, I cannot take holy orders." Of course, no one in the Bible was ever said to be inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to take holy orders and become a clergyman in any denomination. That's strictly man-made doctrine. What Darwin rejected, he thought was scriptural, but he also thought he knew better. As a result, he rejected something entirely unknown to the Bible, and eventually the Bible itself.

As we've seen, atheist Bertrand Russell, skeptics Tim Callahan and Gerald A. Larue, along with C. S. Lewis and Charles Spurgeon, all shared this same characteristic. They all thought they knew better than God and Christ. In most cases, they rejected something they thought the Bible taught when it didn't. They thought they knew better than Christ, so they rejected his teaching, basically because of their own ignorance and inability to properly apply the scriptures!

Denominational religious divisions have probably produced more atheists and skeptics than most other causes combined. The night before he died, Christ prayed that his followers wouldn't be divided (Jn. 17.17-22), "so that the world may believe" that God sent him. Through the apostle Paul, he branded religious division as a work of the flesh

(Gal. 5.19). In most cases, folks don't realize that denominational religious division is relatively new. It did not exist in the New Testament, and it opposes what is in the Bible. Yet, many think they know better than Christ, and reject him over something he himself opposed—man-made doctrines!

Concerning the kingdom of Christ, in Jn. 6.15, at the height of Jesus' popularity, he perceived "that the Jews were about to come and take him by force, to make him a king." However, his kingdom wasn't the militaristic political kingdom they sought, and that premillennialists seek today. If it had been, that would have been the perfect time for Jesus to take the throne! The Jews were ready to fight for a military kingdom. But Jesus' plan didn't fit the Jewish concept at all. They thought they knew better than Christ; and finally, they rejected him because he didn't agree with them.

The same fixation is true with modernist theologians. They correctly interpret what Jesus said, but can't reconcile it with their assumptions that he should have begun ruling a physical kingdom. Thus, they think they know better than Jesus did on the matter, so they reject Jesus' teaching. Now, they are conjuring up doctrines to help God and Jesus out of the strawman mess they've created by disallowing that the divine beings knew what kind of kingdom they wanted to create.

Finally, the same principle is true with prophetic speculators, whose scholarship doesn't reach the level of the modernist theologians. Their behavior is exactly the same; they just don't say it out loud. They pretend to profess faith while deceiving multitudes of premillennialists who genuinely love and want to obey God and Christ. Thus, in practice, the prophetic speculators think they know better than Jesus, yet rather than rejecting Christ outright, they claim to be literalist followers of his teaching. In essence, they reject Jesus' teaching by substituting something they think is better!

While claiming to be believers of God, these men need to be reminded of Paul's statement in Rom. 3.3-4:

For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? God forbid: yea, *let God be found true, but every man a liar*; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy words, And mightest prevail when thou comest into judgment. [Emphasis mine—SGD]

My guess is that the reader doesn't think that God can't fulfill his own will, or that he's unfaithful. Likewise, I doubt that the reader

claims that he knows better than Jesus, or that he needs to help God and Christ out of a jam by replacing Jesus' literal teaching with new doctrine. Even most premillennialists aren't arrogant enough to make these claims of superiority over God and Christ. I shudder at such thoughts. How about you?

Can we rely on God and Jesus to perform their own will? If not, then none of the grand details of how the millennium will work that we spoke of in the first chapter matter at all. If God were too weak to prevent the godless Jews from thwarting his plans when Christ came the first time, why would you and I assume that he's powerful enough to bring about the kingdom the second time? Do we really think that we, as human beings, can rescue God from the mess some assume he's created? What arrogance and being full of ourselves if we actually think such thoughts of superiority!

When Job complained about suffering unjustly, God asked him, "Who are you to question me? Do you know how the world sits upon its axis? Who do you think designed the paths in the sea? Can you control the thunder and lightening? Just who do you think you are to presume to be more righteous than I am?" If God debates premillennialists like he did Job, they can only do what Job did—cease their arrogant boasting and repent of their presumptuousness.

Just who do premillennialists think they are to accuse God of making mistakes and being powerless to carry out his will? Just who do you and I think we are if we assume that we know better and can do better than God said and did? It is amazing that mere men can get the consent of their minds to claim superiority over God's intellect and might and to reject the teaching of Jesus.

## **Plain Passages Premillennial Pundits Don't Believe**

A number of basic passages demonstrate that premillennialism really isn't an argument about the Bible's teaching at all. The real issue is that prophetic pundits like Scofield, Lindsey, LaHaye, Ice, Pentecost, and Van Impe flatly disagree with plain Bible passages. Following are just a few of the passages they don't believe.

### **Acts 2.15 – Peter Quoted Joel on Pentecost**

For instance, in Ac. 2.15-17, on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, Peter preached the first gospel sermon and said:

For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day. but *this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days*, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams...  
[Emphasis mine—SGD]

Peter affirmed in no uncertain terms that what happened that day was what Joel prophesied of (in Joel 2.28-32) when he said “This is that,” in reference to the last days. Yet, modern-day prophetic pundits explicitly deny what Peter said in the first gospel sermon.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a premillennial writer cited as a leading authority on prophecy, wrote:

Virtually nothing that happened in Acts 2 is predicted in Joel 2. (Fruchtenbaum, Arnold, “How the New Testament Uses the Old Testament,” an article sent to and cited by Don K. Preston, *The Last Days Identified* [Ardmore, OK: JaDon Publications 2004], p. 33.)

Obviously, Fruchtenbaum believes that “this was NOT that,” doesn’t he? If Fruchtenbaum is right, why would Peter even mention Joel 2, do you suppose? Who do you believe, Arnold Fruchtenbaum (and those who agree with him like Jerry Falwell, Tim LaHaye, etc.) or the apostle Peter in the first gospel sermon? Clearly you can’t believe both, and it’s obvious we’re not arguing over what the Bible says. Fruchtenbaum simply doesn’t believe the words of the Bible.

## **Acts 15.13-18 – James Asserted the Tabernacle of David Had Been Rebuilt**

Acts 15 contains the account of God’s demonstration that the Gentiles were to come into the kingdom of Christ in the same manner as the Jews. James quoted Amos 9.11-12 in Ac. 15.14-18 as fulfilled when he said:

And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the

words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; And I will build again the ruins thereof, And I will set it up: That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old.

Thus, James taught that it's proper for Gentiles to come into the church, in fulfillment of Amos 9.11-12, where Amos prophesied of the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David. Though James believed and explained that the tabernacle of David had to be rebuilt before Gentiles could come into the kingdom, premillennialists don't believe it, yet according to James' use of Amos, Gentiles have no right to hear the gospel and obey it if David's tabernacle hasn't been rebuilt. With this in mind, take careful note of what C. I. Scofield said in his *Scofield Reference Bible*:

Dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the N.T. James quotes from Amos 9.11, 12. The verses which follow in Amos describe the final regathering of Israel, which the other prophets invariably connect with the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. (Dr. C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1917], p. 1169.)

Scofield thought Amos 9.11-12 was not yet fulfilled, and claimed that it was the most important passage in the Bible to his theory. The problem with his position is that James thought the prophecy had been fulfilled and quoted Amos 9.11-12 to prove that Gentiles then had the right to hear the gospel. Is this not a practical difficulty with the theory of premillennialism? Does the theory of premillennialism make any difference? Those of us who are Gentiles (such as Scofield, Walvoord, Ryrie, and nearly all premillennialists) should realize that it does make a difference. If premillennialism is right, none of us have the authority to obey the gospel of Christ, much less to preach it! Premillennialism falls on its own "most important passage in the New Testament."

Who are you going to believe on the topic of the Tabernacle of David? James, who thought it was fulfilled, or Scofield and his followers, who don't believe it's been fulfilled yet? Obviously, you can't believe both.

# Matthew 24.14 – Was the Gospel Preached in All the World in the First Century?

In the Olivet Discourse in Mt. 24.14, Jesus said:

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

Twenty verses later, Jesus said (in v34) that it would happen before everyone in that generation died:

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished.

Do you believe the gospel was preached in the whole world in the generation to which Jesus was speaking? Premillennialists say no. As we've seen, atheists, skeptics, modernist scholars, and premillennial pundits also say, no.

Notice that Paul told the Colossians that the gospel had come unto them just as unto all the world, first in Col. 1.5-6:

...because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the *gospel, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world* bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth... [Emphasis mine—SGD]

Then in v23, Paul again said that the gospel that been preached in all creation under heaven:

...if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and stedfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister.

In contrast to Jesus saying the gospel would be preached unto all the world before that generation passed away, and then Paul saying it had been done, Hal Lindsey said:

No one has done that yet. (Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1973], p. 101.)

Did Jesus know what he was talking about or does Hal Lindsey know better? Did Paul speak the truth when he said it had happened or does Hal Lindsey know better? Again, the choice is simple. Do you believe Hal Lindsey, or Jesus and Paul? Obviously, you can't believe both. If you stay with Jesus' and Paul's simple statements, the job will be easy. If choose to go with Lindsey, then you'll have to fiddle with the definition of "generation," and even "this," like all premillennialists do.

## **We Don't Disagree Over What the Bible Says**

In none of these examples do we differ over what the Bible says. We differ over whether we're going to place our confidence in what God says or if we're going to trust in men who don't believe or who contradict the Bible. Dare you or I place our confidence in the assumptions and arrogance of men over the wisdom and power of God and Jesus?

## **Whom Are You Going to Believe?**

As we said in the beginning, many fascinating issues swirl around premillennialism that we could investigate. For example, we could devote ourselves to studying the land promise to Israel, the re-establishment of Israel in 1948, and the new heavens and new earth. We could focus on the binding of Satan, the identity of the antichrist, and the man of sin and the power that restrains him. Likewise, we could delve into the resurrection and the rapture, Jesus and the fig tree, the little horn of Daniel 7, and the future of the Jews.

However, if God can't be relied on to carry out his own plans the first time, then his word can't be relied on. In addition, if Christ were mistaken and deluded as a false prophet, none of these details matter, do they? If we couldn't trust them the first time, how do we know we can trust them the second time to establish the earthly kingdom?

Indeed, many of the prophetic speculators logically don't trust God this time around. That's why they are frantically trying to raise money to prepare the way for God and to help him out of the fix he's gotten himself into. That's also why they are trying to influence world politics

to help destroy the Muslim Al Aqsa Mosque on the temple mount in Jerusalem. They still don't think God can pull it off without their personal intervention.

Contrary to the efforts of prophetic speculators, you and I need to address the most basic issues:

- (1) Are we going to believe in the sovereign power of God?
- (2) Are we going to rely on God's faithful word?
- (3) Are we going to believe Christ and his teaching?
- (4) Are we going to trust the teaching of men who don't trust Christ's teaching, and who think they know better than Christ and all the New Testament writers and Old Testament prophets? Are we going to try to help Christ out of the mistakes these men speak of in their teaching?

R. C. Sproul, Sr., a Reform student of these matters, wrote:

...skeptical criticism of the Bible has become almost universal in the world. And people have attacked the credibility of Jesus. Maybe some church fathers made a mistake. Maybe our favorite theologians have made mistakes. I can abide with that. I can't abide with Jesus being a false prophet, because if I am to understand that Jesus is a false prophet, my faith is in vain. (R. C. Sproul, Sr., "The Problem of Imminency" [Mt. Dora, FL: Covenant Eschatology Symposium, 1993], cited by Ed Stevens, *Questions About the Afterlife* [Bradford, PA: International Preterist Association, 1999], p. 51.)

If we can't agree on the integrity of Jesus' teaching, then we don't share common ground to begin to study any Bible subject, do we? We simply don't believe in the same God and Christ. I believe in a sovereign God who is faithful and all-powerful and can do what he says. Do you? The prophetic speculators won't say outright that they don't believe in God's power and faithfulness, but their doctrines attest to the faithless foundation of their teachings. If you agree with the premillennialists, do you have the nerve to say that you think God is

weak and undependable and can't be trusted? If you agree with the prophetic speculators, then the God and Christ you believe in aren't the ones described in the Bible. The powerless and incompetent beings exist only in the minds of atheists, modernists, prophetic speculators, and their followers who are being duped into disbelief.

And it won't do to study further until you decide whom you're going to believe—divine beings or the arrogant claims of human beings. Who do you choose to believe?

## **A Common Standard of Authority Is Needed for Unity on This or Any Other Subject**

Regardless of what Bible questions we might have, we who claim to be followers of Christ always began at the same foundation point: the Bible is the final authority in God's dealings with man. We all realize religion and politics are the most controversial topics in our society today. Most people try to avoid discussing them. However, one way we can avoid the unpleasantness of controversy is to appeal to a common source of authority.

For example, if we argue about how long the kitchen table is or how warm the room is, a number of ways exist to settle these questions in a pleasant, non-controversial manner. We can agree to take my word in the matter since I'm the oldest, the youngest, the most handsome, or the ugliest person in the group. At least, we would all be agreed. However, if we accept common standards of authority, like a ruler and a thermometer, we can settle all these differences, and we will all be correct!

The same principle is true in determining God's will in religious matters. Surely, we will agree that the Bible should be our standard of authority. Everybody understands Christians claim to follow the teaching of Christ, just as Buddhists claim to follow the teaching of Buddha.

But if one of us doesn't possess any more confidence in Christ's teaching than atheists, skeptics, and modernists do, then we don't share a common ground to begin the study on, do we? Please consider these passages on the dangers of refusing to listen to the teaching of Jesus:

Mark 4.15 – And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.

John 10.3-5 – To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

What of those who won't hear Jesus, think they know better than he does, and prefer the teachings of atheists, skeptics, modernists, and prophetic pundits?

John 12.48-49 – He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

2 John 9 – Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.

Galatians 1.8 – But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema.

Refusing Jesus' teaching has serious consequences, doesn't it? Again, notice Paul's statement about the nature of God in Rom. 3.3-4 on the subject of the rejection of Christ by the Jews:

For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? God forbid: yea, let God be found true, but every man a liar.

Do you or I dare reject Jesus' teaching? Do we have the audacity to substitute man-made doctrines for the inspired words of the Bible? Do we really want to trust the faithless foundation of premillennialism for our salvation? As Paul said, "God forbid! Let God be found true and every man a liar!"

## Suggestion

Every premillennial writer believes that Matthew 24 is the pivotal passage on the subject, the starting point, even though they think Jesus was mistaken in it.

Would you consider reading an essay on Matthew 24 written by someone who believes the words of Jesus in the passage, and doesn't believe Jesus made a single mistake in that chapter or any other? If not, why would you prefer the writings of men who think they know better than Jesus and need to help him out, over someone who still believes in the teaching of Christ? Do you know why you could give consent of your mind to study with disbelievers rather than with believers?

You and I both share the duty to study for ourselves:

1 Thessalonians 5.21 – ...prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

2 Corinthians 13.5 – Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves.

Think it over. Would you like to read an essay on the Olivet Discourse, which gives a verse-by-verse study of Matthew 24-25 and discusses whether it teaches about the destruction of Jerusalem or the final judgment by Samuel G. Dawson. It's available in print as a chapter in *The Teaching of Jesus: From Mt. Sinai to Gehenna, A Faithful Rabbi Urgently Warns Rebellious Israel*, and in *Essays on Eschatology: An Introductory Overview to the Study of Last Things* by Samuel G. Dawson, available at Amazon.com. The author develops the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus as an urgent attempt to turn the Jewish nation back to God through faithful obedience to the Mosaic Law in order to avoid imminent national destruction. When we fail to understand Jesus' mission on earth, we often misapply much of his teaching.

This essay is excerpted from *Denominational Doctrines: Explained, Examined, Exposed* by Samuel G. Dawson, available from Amazon.com