

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

A.D. 70 THEORY

By Mark Dunagan

The above false doctrine is known by several designations: The A.D. 70 Doctrine, Realized Eschatology, and the Max King Theory, so named for the man who popularized it. The general thrust of the teaching is stated by Max King when he said, “The Holy Scriptures teach the second coming of Christ, including the establishment of the eternal kingdom, the day of judgment, the end of the world, and the resurrection of the dead, occurred with the fall of Judaism in 70 A.D.” (*The Nichols-King Debate*, p. 1). The contention of this theory is that all of the following happened in A.D. 70: 1. All Bible prophecy was fulfilled completely. 2. The kingdom came with power. 3. The second coming of Christ occurred. 4. The Judgment Day took place. 5. The dead were raised and death was conquered. 6. The Law of Moses ended. 7. Satan’s rule ceased. 8. The world ended. 9. Heaven and Hell began.

Nothing New

The above theory is not a new or fresh approach to Scripture, but is actually a retelling of an old error. In 1883, Dr. A. Wilford Hall wrote a book entitled, *Universalism Against Itself*. The author noted, “Universalism teaches that this important event (the coming of Christ) took place at the destruction of Jerusalem, nearly 1800 years ago. This position is taken in order to avoid, if possible the admission of a future general judgment, which every where stands closely connected with the second coming of Christ” (p. 91). In fact, in the 1930’s, C.H. Dodd taught a similar error (the final events were all fulfilled in the personal ministry of Jesus) and gave it the name, “Realized Eschatology.”

Why Some Fall For This Error

Because there are some passages in which Jesus is described as “*coming*” in a local or physical judgment upon Jerusalem (Matt. 24:1-34), some erroneously contend that all New Testament references to the “*coming*” of Christ in judgment must allude to the destruction of Jerusalem. This contention ignores the fact that the Scriptures portray Jesus as “*coming*” in a number of different senses. 1. Jesus “*came*” to earth as a human being (Luke 19:10). 2. He “*came*” when the church was established on Pentecost (Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1). 3. He “*comes*” to discipline congregations that are no longer faithful (Revelation 2:5). 4. In addition, He has promised to “*come*” in a universal judgment (Matthew 25:31-32).

Some who hold to this theory have been puzzled by certain passages, such as James 5:7-8 “*for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*” They argue that this passage predicts an imminent coming of Christ within the lifetime of the first century Christians. They feel that if Jesus did not return within that ancient timeframe, then Bible prophecy has failed. First, some have contended that the apostles believed that Jesus was going to come within their lifetime, yet this error is clearly corrected by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:1ff. We should note that Paul faced an error similar to the A.D. 70 Theory, for some were arguing that “*the day of the Lord has come*” (2:2). Secondly, the second coming is always “*at hand*” because of its secretive nature (1 Thess. 5:1-3), yet the reference in James may be to a physical judgment that God would bring upon their rich oppressors.

The Kingdom of God

This theory argues that the kingdom of God did not come until A.D. 70 (Matt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1), for this coming kingdom is connected with a “*coming*” of Christ, yet the kingdom of God is the same relationship as the church (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 20:28; Rev. 1:5-6). The church was clearly in existence on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 (2:47). In addition, the kingdom of God is the expression of the reign of Christ. There cannot be a kingdom without a king, yet Jesus is reigning prior to A.D. 70 (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:29-31; Eph. 1:19-23). In Mark 9:1, Jesus predicts that the kingdom will come with power. In Luke 24:49 He told them to stay in Jerusalem, for they would be clothed with power from on high. This promise is repeated in Acts 1:4, and then Jesus connects with power with

the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (1:8). The Holy Spirit did not come upon the apostles in A.D. 70, but rather in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Then there is the issue of baptism. According to John 3:3-5, one cannot see the kingdom of God unless they are baptized; yet if the kingdom of God did not come until A.D. 70, then why did the apostles preach and practice baptism long before this? (Acts 2:38; 8:12). In the Colossian letter (written prior to A.D. 70), Paul told these Christians that they were in the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13 ***“For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son”***). Sadly, the A.D. 70 advocates argue that this kingdom was a powerless and incomplete kingdom, yet Paul told the Colossians who were in this kingdom, ***“in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority”*** (Col. 2:10).

The Second Coming

Unlike the destruction of Jerusalem, which is predicted in Matthew 24:1-34, the second coming of Christ is different in a number of respects: 1. The second coming will be sudden, and unexpected, as a thief comes in the night, and without any warning signs for believers or unbelievers (Compare Luke 21:20 with 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3). 2. Life on earth for Christians followed the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk. 21:21-24), yet life on earth will not follow for Christians at the second coming (1 Thess. 4:17-18). 3. At the destruction of Jerusalem, the coming of Jesus was invisible, something that only believers would perceive (Matt. 24:33), yet at the second coming, He would come in exactly the manner as He left, that is visible (Acts 1:11 ***“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven”***). 4. The destruction of Jerusalem was a judgment upon a particular city, but the second coming involves all nations (Matt. 25:31-32; Rev. 1:7 ***“Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they that pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him.”*** When Jerusalem was destroyed, did the people in Africa or South America ***“mourn over Him”***?)

The End of the World

King argues that 2 Peter 3 was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, but note the context of this chapter. 1. The judgment mentioned in 3:9-10 is paralleled with the judgment that came upon the world in the days of Noah (3:3-7). The judgment during the days of Noah was a universal judgment, and not a local judgment like the destruction of Jerusalem. 2. King argues that the ***“world”*** under consideration in these passages is not the material world, but rather the ***“Jewish world.”*** that is, the passing of the Jewish economy. Yet, the ***“world”*** destroyed by the flood, was the physical planet (3:6). The ***“present heavens and earth”*** (3:7), in the context must refer to the same creation that was impacted by the flood, that is, the planet. 3. In verse 10, it is clear that the physical creation is being destroyed. First, the heavens pass away with a roar, the elements, that is the basic elements that compose the material universe, are destroyed with intense heat. Not only are the works on the planet burned up, but also the earth itself is burned up. The ***“burning”*** and ***“destruction”*** in this verse cannot be figurative, because the judgment that parallels this judgment was not figurative (3:3-7), and because this planet is not merely cleansed of evil, but rather, the planet itself is destroyed. Finally, the new heavens and new earth is not life on this planet for believers after the destruction of Jerusalem, for after that event, Christians still found themselves persecuted and this world was still filled with evil (2 Pet. 3:13).

On a side note, these advocates argue that Matthew 5:18 ***“until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished,”*** is teaching that the Law of Moses was removed in A.D. 70 (when heaven and earth passed away according to their theory). In contrast, the apostles clearly taught that the Law ended at the cross (Col. 2:14-16; Eph. 2:15; Heb. 9:15-17; 10:9-10). Secondly, if the expression ***“heaven and earth pass away”*** refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, then did Jesus’ words pass away when Jerusalem was destroyed (Matt. 24:35)?

The Resurrection

King argues that the resurrection under consideration in such chapters as 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection of those from the grave of Judaism. ***“Judaism was the metaphorical grave of the spiritual dead out of which this resurrection took place. The fall of Judaism was the defeat of the ‘ministration of death’ and the opening of the graves. Those who had previously heard and obeyed Christ were found worthy of eternal life in the new heaven and earth. The disobedient were raised to eternal hell or separation from God (2 Thess 1:7-9)”*** (***The Spirit of Prophecy***, King, p. 220). They further describe this ***“resurrection”*** as being the time when the church would be delivered from the Jewish world.

Again, those who adhere to this theory seem bent on ignoring the context of the passages they are studying. 1. The resurrection under consideration in 1 Corinthians 15 is a bodily resurrection, for our resurrection is paralleled to Jesus' resurrection (15:12-18). 2. The resurrection in this chapter happens when (a) the kingdom is delivered up (not set up) (15:24). (b) At the **"end"** (15:24). (c) When Jesus stops ruling, not when He begins ruling (15:25). (d) When all of God's enemies have been defeated, not just some (15:25). (e) When death has been completely defeated (15:26, 55). During the destruction of Jerusalem, death was not defeated, for people continued to die physically and spiritually after that judgment. In addition, Christians continued to be **"mortal"** after that judgment (15:54). 3. The resurrection in this chapter is the resurrection of **"bodies"** (15:35), bodies composed of **"flesh"** (15:39). 4. Another major problem with interpreting this chapter as being the resurrection of the church is: (a) when did the church die? (b) The "body" raised in this chapter was initially planted as an **"perishable," "dishonorable," "weak"** and **"natural"** body (15:42-44). Please note that the body raised is exactly the same body that was sown. The church established on the day of Pentecost, was not a perishable, dishonorable, weak, and natural body!

Various Problems

1. Baptism is paralleled to the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-5), but seeing that the resurrection is supposedly past, does baptism have any validity?
2. The Lord's Supper was to be observed until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26), but if He has come, then where is the authority to continue to partake?
3. Jesus said concerning the resurrection of the dead that they, **"neither marry, nor are given in marriage"** (Lk. 20:35). If the resurrection has already happened, then Christians do not have the right to marry.
4. Jesus also noted that after the resurrection, **"neither can they die anymore"** (Lk. 20:35). If this is not literal, then it is spiritual, and if that is the case then the A.D. 70 advocates have Jesus teaching that no Christian can fall away after the destruction of Jerusalem. In closing, these people have joined Hymenaeus and Philetus in affirming that the resurrection is past already (2 Tim. 2:16-19).

Daily Bible Reading

By Keith Harris

John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of our country, once stated, "So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will become useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society. I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year." Daily Bible Reading is a habit which many great people in the past have engaged in regularly. Many people still do it today. But I'm afraid that if the truth were known, fewer and fewer people have made it a priority and fail to take advantage of God's Word.

We might be surprised at the number of people who have never read the New Testament from beginning to end. It is safe to say that even fewer have ever read the entire Old Testament. Why? Maybe we are simply too busy. Maybe our priorities are misplaced. Whatever the reason, many are missing out of the great benefits that come from spending time each day in the Word of God.

I agree with Patrick Henry, who said, "The Bible is worth more than all other books which have ever been printed." I also agree with Charles Dickens, who wrote, "The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or will be known in the world."

So, what can we do to develop a habit of Daily Bible Reading? First, we must set aside time each day for the sole purpose of reading the Bible. Second, we must start small and have reachable reading goals. Third, we must read slowly, carefully, and with the intention of living out what God's Word calls us to. Finally, we must pray, asking God to allow His Word to penetrate our hearts. Let's seek to develop and maintain a habit of Daily Bible Reading. – **Knollwood church of Christ Articles**, June, 2021. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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