

Prophecy Questions to Ponder

I grew up in the Assemblies of God. I taught for many years what we call Pre-Trib Rapture and end time dispensationalism. I had charts and diagrams. I was very certain the end times were upon us. I along with many other young people in the 1970's who read Hal Lindsey's book "The Late Great Planet Earth" (60 million copies sold to date) we were convinced all the signs were showing the rapture about 1981 and a 7 year tribulation thereafter with the Antichrist ruling from the European Union and Russia about to invade Israel in the final battle of Armageddon.

That was then...this is now 40 years later. I am very surprised to still be on the "late great planet earth" well into the 21st Century. And still preachers are talking about the "end times". Should we not be talking about the end of the Babylonian system of world oppression and the rise of the Kingdom of God to fill the earth?

But there was something not right in my spirit about this whole teaching system that did not sit right. So as the years went by I made it my earnest desire to understand the real gospel of the Kingdom and the plan of God for the ages. My website is the result of my research...a new vision of victory for the Church of the 21st Century.

Below are a list of prophetic issues and questions that need to be studied and answered that I have collected for your consideration. There is a general thrust to a lot of these questions that I want you to realize. We are bombarded from the pulpit by the emphatic declaration that we are in the "end times". I am convinced that a lot of prophecies are already fulfilled in major events like the war between the Romans and Israel in 70 AD that resulted in the holocaust of over a million Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple as prophesied by Jesus.

My contention is that we are now in the Kingdom Age and we are prophetically now fulfilling Rev.20-22....the time for the coming of the Parousia or the Presence of the Lord to be manifested in the earth, the glory of the Lord to be manifested in His church which is the New Jerusalem and the healing of the nations.

Consider the following questions and scriptures in that light....

A. Questions about the "End Times".

In such passages as Matthew 13:39-40; 13:49; 24:3; 28:20; etc., isn't Jesus referring to the end of an *age* (Greek *aion*) rather than the end of the *world* (Greek *kosmos*)? In other words, if the author was talking about the end of the world, wouldn't he have used *kosmos* when he actually used *aion*?

Since the thrust of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24/25; Mark 13; Luke 21) is the destruction of the temple, isn't it reasonable to believe that the *age* in question was the age of the Jewish dispensation, thus the Old Covenant order—especially since the ancient Jewish system of temple sacrifices for sin ended with the destruction of the temple in AD 70?

The “time of the end” mentioned in Daniel 12:1-13 was to be when the burnt offering was taken away. Since burnt offerings ended in AD 70, must not this be the timeline, thus the “last days” of which the Bible speaks?

Doesn't every mention of the last days in the New Testament refer to the first century (Matthew 24:3, 14, 34; Acts 2:14-20; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; 10:11; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Hebrews 1:2; 9:26; James 5:3-9; 1 Peter 1:5, 20; 4:7; 2 Peter 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18).

Isn't the focus of Jesus in his “this generation” prophecies (Matthew 12:38-45; Matthew 23:36; Mark 8:38-9:1; Luke 11:50-51) about judgment upon Israel? Wouldn't this coincide with the destruction of Israel and the temple in 70 AD?

Again considering audience relevance, doesn't Paul imply in 1 Corinthians 1:7-8 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 that the Day of the Lord will come during the lifetimes of his readers? Does it make any sense for Paul to tell his Thessalonian Christian brothers in 52 AD to be watchful for the Day of the Lord if the catastrophe was not to take place until thousands of years later?

The phrase “the day of the Lord” is used in 17 or so passages in the Old Testament (Isaiah 2:12, 13:6, 13:9; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1,11,31, 3:14; Amos 3:8:18-20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14-18; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5) and in some 5 passages in the New Testament (Acts 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10). It is also alluded to in other passages (Revelation 6:17, 16:14). Since this phrase in the Old Testament at least sometimes refers to historical judgments that have already been fulfilled in some sense (Isaiah 13:6-22; Ezekiel 30:2-9; Joel 1:15; Joel 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18), isn't it reasonable to infer that the times in the New Testament that we see this term may also refer to already fulfilled events?

B. Questions about the Rapture and Tribulation

If Jesus is going to rapture the church out of the world, why does Jesus pray for the exact opposite thing to happen—that the church would NOT be taken out of the world—in John 17:15?

If Jesus' Second Coming would be the world seeing him coming in a physical body, why does Jesus say “In a little while and the world will see me no more” in John 14:19?

The term *Parousia* is the Greek word used 24 times in the New Testament which is often translated as “coming,” that is Christ's Second Coming or his return. Can't this term also legitimately mean “divine presence” or “nearness,” or even in specific reference to Christ's punishment of Jerusalem or finally the wicked? (See *Strong's* #3952.) Isn't it indeed translated as “presence” in 2 Corinthians 10:10 and Philippians 2:12? Doesn't this understanding at least open up the possibility of a past fulfilment of Jesus' words in Luke 21: 22, 32 as well as a future "Parousia"?

Doesn't the Jewish War of 66-70 AD qualify as a great tribulation, given that that over a million Jews were killed, their nation was dissolved, their temple decimated,

and along with it went their whole world order and the centre of their religion—the centuries old system of animal sacrifices for sin?

DIDN'T JESUS SPECIFICALLY SAY THE TRIBULATION WOULD HAPPEN IN HIS GENERATION (Matthew 24:9, 21, 29, 34)? Isn't every time the phrase "this generation" used in the New Testament outside of the Olivet Discourse, the meaning is clearly those living in the first century (Matthew 11:16; 12:38-45; 23:36; Mark 8:12; 8:38-9:1; Luke 7:31; 11:29-32, 49-51; 17:25).

If the great tribulation (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21) is *global*, why did Jesus tell those living in Judea to flee to the mountains to avoid the tribulation (Matthew 24:16)?

Doesn't Daniel tell us exactly when the *time of distress* (12:1), the *resurrection* (12:2), the *time of the end* (12:9), and the *abomination of desolation* (12:11)—all occur when the *power of the holy people has finally been broken* (12:7) and the *burnt offering taken away* (12:11)? Can there be ANY doubt that this was AD 70?

Don't Revelation 1:1-3, 3:11, 22:6, 22:7, 22:10, 22:12, 22:20 mean what they say—that Revelation is about things that **MUST SHORTLY HAPPEN** (soon after Revelation was written)? Can we overlook or minimize audience relevance? Can "soon" or "quickly" mean far distant future—or that when Jesus *does* come that he will come quickly?

Isn't Paul strongly suggesting in Colossians 3:4-6, 1 Timothy 6:11-21, and Titus 2:11-13 that he and his readers would witness Jesus' Parousia?

Doesn't it seem clear in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 and 2:14-19 that the Parousia and judgment was imminent—the time frame being so close at hand that it "has come upon them?" Isn't the wrath here the same as in Luke 21:21-28, which is limited to Jesus' generation?

C. Questions about the Kingdom of God and the Millennium

How can Jesus' kingdom be physical/earthly/Jewish when Jesus rejected a physical kingdom in John 6:15; John 18:36?

How can Jesus' kingdom have not yet come, when John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the apostles all declared the "kingdom of God is at hand" (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 10:7; Acts 28:31)?

Why would Jesus' kingdom be set up in earthly Jerusalem, even though Paul said earthly Jerusalem was bondage and the old covenant (Galatians 4:24-25) that was passing away (Hebrews 8:13)?

Since Jesus declared that the Kingdom had come when he cast out demons, didn't He usher in the kingdom during his time on earth (Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:8-20; Luke 11:20)?

Why should we read the “thousand years” in Revelation 20 as literal, when the number thousand is used figuratively elsewhere in the Bible to mean perfection, completion, etc. (Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Chronicles 16:15; Psalm 50:10; Psalm 105:8)?

How can the “millennial” kingdom of God be of the Jews when Jesus himself said that he took the kingdom away from them and gave it to the Gentiles who produce the fruits (Matthew 21:43)? If Jesus took the kingdom from the Jews and gave it to the gentiles, why is there no scripture to show another transfer back to the Jews?

How can there be a new temple built in Jerusalem for the Millennium? Doesn't the New Testament explain that while the physical temple was about to be destroyed (Matthew 24:2; 34), it is being replaced by the church with Christ as the cornerstone and Christians as the living stones (Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:4-8)?

Are there any references in the Bible to the temple being built a third time? If there is going to be a rebuilt Jewish temple in the future, why does Scripture say God does not dwell in temples made by hands anymore (Acts 7:48, 17:24)? Isn't Christ the new temple (John 2:19-21; Revelation 21:22)?

If we are in the New Covenant era, which Scripture says is FOREVER (Hebrews 13:20), why would God go back to a temple system of the Old Covenant which Paul called bondage (Galatians 4)

If God was going to go back to animal sacrifices for sin in a future millennium, does that mean Christ died in vain (Galatians 2:21)?

Why can Jesus' earthly kingdom be set up in earthly Jerusalem, when Jesus himself said the hour was coming when worshipping God would NOT be in Jerusalem (John 4:21)?

D. Questions about Israel

If God has two different plans for Jews and Gentiles, why does Paul say there isn't any longer a distinction (Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11)?

Weren't the Jews as a nation rejected and given to others (Matthew 3:7-12; 8:8-13, 21:33-46, 22:1-8, 23:29-39; John 8:37-47; Romans 9:6-8; 9:30-32; Romans 11:7-24; Hebrews 8:13; 12:12-24)?

Wasn't the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:15-16) given to those individuals, either Jew or Gentile, who believe, that is, are Jews *inwardly*—in the heart—(Romans 2:28-29; 10:1-4; Galatians 2:15-16; 3:28-29, 4:24-31; Philippians 3:3-9; 1 Peter 2:5-10; Revelation 3:9)?

Don't all the New Testament texts comparing Israel to a fig tree point to Jerusalem's destruction rather than its restoration (example: Luke 13:6-9)?

E. Questions about the New Heaven and Earth

How can the New Heaven and New Earth be a utopia when there is still sin therein (Isaiah 65:20; Revelation 21:8; 22:15)?

Is the New Jerusalem really to be taken literally, as a literal city sitting just above the earth, 1500 miles square, with one street, etc.? Isn't the New Jerusalem better understood as the church, since it is described as having the twelve apostles as the foundation stones (Revelation 21:14) and is the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2; ref. Matthew 22:1-14; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-27)?

When Paul says that "the end of the ages has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11), could he mean the "end of the world"? If so, why didn't he say what he meant? If so, why does the Bible speak of the world NEVER ending (Psalms 78:69; 89:36-37, 93:1, 96:10, 104:5, 148:4-6; Ecclesiastes 1:4; Ephesians 3:21)? Isn't it clear that Paul did not have the end of the world in mind since he spoke of more distant ages and generations elsewhere (Ephesians 2:7; Ephesians 3:21)? Doesn't Paul clarify in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 that what is soon to pass away is the present *form* or *fashion* of the world, not the world itself?