

# Parousia

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## The Prophetic Pillars of the Prewrath Position



Part 3: The Salvation of Israel Occurs After the Seventieth Week of Daniel Ends

# The Prophetic Pillars of the Prewrath Position

## The Third Prophetic Pillar:

## THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL OCCURS AFTER THE SEVENTIETH WEEK OF DANIEL ENDS



by Charles Cooper

### Introduction

At the memorial service for Robert Van Kampen, Eitan and Orit Kashtan were present. They are, what is often referred to as *completed Jews*. The reference to them as “completed Jews” is tolerated, but not particularly appreciated. They see themselves as merely “sinners saved by grace.” That Eitan and Orit are physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is not looked upon by them in the same sense in which many Gentile believers look upon the “Jewishness” of their Jewish friends. We Gentiles tend to make a big deal of it. One might be inclined to think that Eitan and Orit would be a bit prideful of their inclusion in the “first nation of humanity” in God’s eyes. However, the opposite is true.

Much like the four hundred silent years between the Old and New Testament when God did not speak to Israel through a prophet, we have not heard “thus sayeth the Lord” for almost 1900 years. Yet, for this author, every time I see a Jew trusting Jesus as Messiah I sense the sovereign hand of God working in modern time. Consequently, I am even more convinced that God is going to fulfill His promise that one day “all Israel” will be saved.

### The Problem

However, many people refuse to believe that Israel (the ethnic people group)<sup>1</sup> has a future in God’s economy. Rather, they teach that Israel

lost all rights to the blessings of God when she rejected her Messiah. In the theological beliefs of preterists, posttribulationists and amillennialists, the church is the new “Israel of God,” and has inherited all the blessings promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. This is typically referred to as *replacement* theology; i.e. God replaced Israel with the church. Therefore, only those individual Jews who put their faith in Jesus Christ as savior (Messiah) have any future with God. Therefore, by definition, the replacement theologians must insist that Israel’s future does not involve a physical earthly kingdom with David as king and the Jews as his subjects.

Such a conclusion creates more problems than it solves. On the very last day the Lord Jesus was physically on earth, the apostles asked Him directly, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” The context indicates that this question was asked 10 days before the church came into existence. Jesus, in response to the apostles’ question, states, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:6-7). Summarily, Jesus disclosed that God’s specific timetables were not going to be made known. It is important to note, however, that Jesus did not say Israel had *no* future. The apostles’ question and Jesus’ answer rule out any such notion. Not only will Israel have a future, but Scripture also outlines the specifics. Three passages confirm this conclusion explicitly: Daniel 9:24; Luke 21:24; and Romans 11:25-27.

### THE EXPOSITION OF DANIEL 9:24

“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophesy and to anoint the most holy place.”

#### The 490 Year Delay

In this often-debated passage, Daniel indicates explicitly that Israel is to expect a specific 490-year<sup>2</sup> delay in God’s ultimate fulfillment of His covenant promises.<sup>3</sup> The delay is not for 483 years, or 486 and a half-years, but 490 years. Any promises made to Israel and Judah about their eternal restoration must await the completion of their penalization. A face value hermeneutic requires that Israel’s delay has been extended to cover now more than two thousand five hundred years. The futurity of the last seven years of Daniel’s Seventieth Week prophecy (prophetic pillar number one) is a fact accepted by a majority of premillennialists.<sup>4</sup> Critical to this discussion is Daniel’s inclusion of both *Israel* (the nation) and *Jerusalem* (the city) in his prophecy. Both the people and the city are shut up under a specific 490 plus year time of chastisement. That fact alone should dispel any notion that Daniel 9:24 has been fulfilled. For God’s promise “to bring in everlasting righteousness” when the delay ends certainly has not been realized in Israel and Jerusalem.

Daniel lists six purposes<sup>5</sup> for Israel’s 490-year delay. The first three purposes find their fulfillment during the passing of the 490 years: *transgression*, *sin*, and *iniquity*. These are three aspects of sin in general. Of the first three purposes, the phrase *to finish the transgression* alone contains a definite article. Therefore, it sets the stage for what follows. Daniel is not referring to transgressions in general, but *the* transgression. This is the transgression that Israel is known for—unfaithfulness to her God. This is the basic sense of the term. *Transgression* comes from a Hebrew word which means, “to rebel.” Isaiah 48:8b states concerning Israel, “And you have been called a rebel [transgressor] from birth.” Ezekiel echoes Isaiah with stronger language when God states, “Son of Man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a *rebellious* people who have *rebelled* against Me; they and their fathers have *transgressed* against Me to this very day (Ez. 2:3).” (Italics added)

Yet, in Ezekiel 37:21-23, God instructs Ezekiel to inform Israel of a promise. Ezekiel writes,

Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel... They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their *transgressions*, but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God. (Italics added)

The point is this: Israel will finish her rebellion against God with her 490-year-plus delay. The implication is clear that once the 490-year-plus delay is finished, Israel will no longer rebel (transgress) against her God.

The second purpose in Daniel’s list is the phrase *to make an end of sin*. We receive help in understanding the meaning of this phrase from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament). The Septuagint translators understood the sense of the Hebrew to be *to make sins scarce*. The particular Hebrew word for *sins* “occurs about 580 times in the Old Testament and is thus its principle word for sin. The basic meaning of the root is to miss a mark or a way.”<sup>6</sup> While man may not be actively rebellious, he, by nature, continually misses the mark of God’s holiness. Daniel promises Israel that her days of missing God’s mark are numbered. The final phrase in this first triad is *to*

**Daniel promises Israel that her days of missing God’s mark are numbered.**

*make atonement for iniquity*. The Hebrew term for *iniquity* (*awon*) is a collective noun. It is singular, but refers to the sum of one’s past misdeeds. Notice Genesis 15:16 which states, “The iniquity (past misdeeds) of the Amorite is not yet complete.” All of the misdeeds of the Amorites were bottled up into one. Interestingly, it was 400 years before God judged the Amorites. Similarly, Israel is given a 490-year time allotment to atone for her past misdeeds (perversions) against God.

After the 490-year-plus delay, God will forgive Israel’s rebellious past and implement the benefits of the new covenant. Notice Jeremiah 31:34:

“And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Israel will finally receive total forgiveness and cleansing from her past sins. This is echoed in the final three purposes stated in Daniel’s list.

#### The Benefits After the Delay

Gabriel told Daniel that “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city... to bring in everlasting righteousness.” The Hebrew grammar makes the point with certainty.<sup>7</sup> Only a literal fulfillment of this expectation hermeneutically is permissible: the people and the holy city await “everlasting righteousness.” Jesus Christ made it possible for God to grant personal righteousness to many. However, God will not apply the blood of Jesus to the *nation* of Israel until the full 490-year period has been completed. Isaiah well captures God’s promise when he writes, “Israel has been saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will not be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity” (Is. 45:17).

The fifth purpose of the 490-year delay is “to seal up vision and prophesy...” The Hebrew literally says, *to seal vision and prophet*. Again, the Septuagint is very helpful. It states, “to finish [end] the vision.” The

sense is this: with the completion of the 490-year delay (regarding the people of Israel and their city—Jerusalem) revelation through intermediaries will cease. Jesus Christ, Himself, physically present on earth, will personally attend to the needs of Israel starting the day after the completion of the 490-year delay. With the death of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3 and 7) prophecy to Israel will cease and direct control by Christ will begin.

The final purpose to be realized with the completion of Israel's punishment for her rebellion will be "to anoint the most holy *place*." In the New American Standard Bible, the term *place* is italicized. This indicates that the term does not appear in the original Hebrew. However, the translators are offering their interpretation of the key Hebrew phrase, *qodesh qodashim* (holy of holies). The choice is either a place or a person.

Interestingly, there are only two occurrences of the Hebrew term *anointing* in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. Isaiah 61:1 prophetically declared that Jesus Christ would be God's anointed messenger to the afflicted.<sup>8</sup> Since Jesus is holy from eternity past, this indicates that that which is already holy can be anointed for service. The other occurrence is in Daniel 9:24. While it is not possible to be dogmatic, it would appear to be more probable that the "anointing of the most holy" has something to do with the Messiah. Since the Lord was anointed in conjunction with His first advent, He will be anointed in conjunction with His Second Advent. In summary, Daniel 9:24-27 offers hope for both Israel (the nation) and Jerusalem (the holy city) for the future.

#### THE EXPOSITION OF LUKE 21:24

**"And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."**

It would be difficult to read the New Testament and miss the fact that the Jews were expecting the Messiah to come and free both the nation and Jerusalem from the long years of Gentile domination. Any hope to this effect was dashed by the Lord's prophetic statements in the Olivet Discourse. Luke 21:24 records a very important prophetic statement concerning Daniel's people (Israel) and his holy city (Jerusalem). It is this prophecy, which allows us to add the *plus* to the phrase 490-year-*plus* delay. The Lord Jesus indicates that Israel's delay will continue for an undetermined length of time. The Lord designates this period as "the times of the Gentiles." *Times* is the Greek term *καιροι* (*kairoi*, times). It may be a technical term, i.e. it means the same thing each time it is used in a certain context. Dr. Darrell Bock writes,

It may be that *καιροι* (*kairoi*, times) is a Lucan technical term for the first of these eschatological periods, since the term has this technical meaning when it describes an era with an eschatological... emphasis, such as "times" or "periods"...<sup>9</sup>

This fact can be seen in Acts 1:6 which declares that "the times and epochs are fixed by God's own authority." Thus, *the times of the Gentiles* is a specific time-period, which not only describes Israel's future, but her past as well. Judah and Jerusalem had already served a 483-year

sentence. Now it would continue. The Lord indicates in Luke 21:24 that the AD 70 destruction would mark the continuation of Jerusalem's trampling. Revelation 11:2 indicates that the end of Jerusalem's trampling by Gentiles culminates with the end of the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week.<sup>10</sup>

Luke states that many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem either will die or be exiled "into all the nations." "Jerusalem," on the other hand, "will [continue to] be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." The concept of *trampling under foot* is a figure of speech. Specifically,

The literal trampling of enemies in warfare accounts for the use of "trampling under the feet" as an image for any victory over one's enemies... To place "under one's feet" also implies dominion and rule... The imagery of "under the feet" can also connote possession... Additional meanings of the imagery of being under the feet include disdain, defilement and judgment... Oppression and persecution are also pictured by the image of the foot.<sup>11</sup>

In a true sense, all of the above nuances are applicable in Luke 21:24. History bears out the truth of the Lord's prediction. Since the Babylonian captivity, Jerusalem has been under the dominion of Gentile nations in one form or another. Her people have been defeated, possessed, ruled, oppressed, and persecuted to this very day. The city and the most sacred temple site in all the world is trampled daily by unbelievers and infidels. A false god's temple and his worshippers show utter contempt for the true God of the heavens. The duration of Jerusalem's woes is indicated by the clause "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Dr. Darrell L. Bock, research professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, is very helpful in stating the weight of this important clause. He lists three significant conclusions to be drawn:

- (1) [that] the city's fall is of limited duration; (2) [that] there is a period in God's plan when Gentiles will dominate, which implies that the subsequent period is of a different nature...; and (3) [that] Israel's judgment now but vindication later suggests what Paul also argues in Romans 11:25-26: Israel has a future in God's plan.<sup>12</sup>

The Apostle John records in the Revelation of our Lord that the termination of Jerusalem's woes will occur at the end of the Seventieth Week of Daniel. The 490-year-plus delay for Israel and her city's ultimate restoration culminates in a final seven-year period. This seven-year period is bifurcated. The first three and a half year segment does not receive much attention in Scripture explicitly. However, the second half is consistently identified in Daniel and Revelation. It is numerically identified as forty-two months; twelve hundred and sixty days; one thousand two hundred and sixty days, and time, times and half a time. In each case, the people or city of God is shown suffering at the hands of the Evil One or his people.

John writes in Revelation 11:2, "Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the

nations; and they will tread [trample] under foot the holy city for forty-two months.” The grammatical and theological parallels between this verse and Luke 21:24 establish a clear termination point for the “times of the Gentiles.” Not surprisingly, it is exactly as Daniel 9:24 indicated.

### THE EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 11:25-27

“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.’ *‘This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’*” (Italics added)

### The Prelude to Israel’s Salvation—Romans 11:25

The Apostle Paul begins Romans 11 with a rhetorical question, which should settle the debate, concerning whether Israel has a future or not. Paul questions, “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!” Using himself as an example (Rom. 11:1), Paul indicates that God had (Rom. 11:2-4), has (Rom. 11:5-6), and will have a “remnant” through out all generations (Rom. 11:7-10). However, since only a remnant of Israel will be saved, Gentiles should not wrongly conclude the nature of God’s intent. Paul indicates that Gentile salvation is a direct result of Israel’s transgression, which God would forgive immediately if Israel (the nation) would repent (Rom. 11:11-24).

Barring the repentance of Israel, God will personally bring her in to a right relationship with Himself. It is in Romans 11:25-27 that Paul speaks directly to the fact that Gentile blessings and Israel’s restoration are intimately tied together. Please notice that verse 25 begins with the word *for*, which indicates a beginning explanation of Paul’s comments, which ended at verse 24. Having spent two and a half chapters dealing with Israel’s refusal to repent, Paul ends Romans 11 with a final statement of explanation. God has set a time in the future when Israel (the nation) will have a complete restoration. Paul ends Romans 11 with the final statement about Israel’s future. This should erase any misunderstandings in the minds of the Gentiles about God’s purpose for His chosen people.

### Israel’s Future A Mystery—Romans 11:25b

Paul begins his discussion by saying, “I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery...” In Romans 11, Paul highlighted God’s decision to break off “some of the branches” of Israel and to graft in some Gentiles. Such a decision by God does not give the Gentiles any basis for arrogance toward the Jews. The clause, “I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed...” is a favorite expression of Paul to highlight significant information about to be shared with the reader.<sup>13</sup> Paul indicates that this significant piece of information about to be shared with the Romans is a mystery (το μυστηριον).

The term *mystery* (musterion) is a bit confusing to the average reader for two reasons. First, the word is transliterated instead of being translated; and secondly, the modern definition of mystery is foreign to the biblical notion.<sup>14</sup> Charles C. Ryrie is helpful at this point. He writes,

The concept of a mystery is... a secret which only the initiated share. This includes two ideas: (1) a time when the secret was not known followed by a time when it became known; and (2) deeper or higher wisdom which is revealed to the one initiated into an understanding of the mystery.<sup>15</sup>

The point is that a biblical mystery could never be discovered by human wisdom; it must be revealed by God. Thus, Paul reveals new information to his audience—information, which should dispel any arrogance on the part of the Romans toward the Jews. This is the purpose of Paul in sharing this new information with the Romans that is reflected in the statement, “so that you will not be wise in your own estimation...” The future of Israel is not left to man’s speculations, but to the revelation from God. It is sad that in the modern era mankind still seeks to put forth the groundless notion that God has abandoned Israel. It would appear that men have not heeded Paul’s advice to not be “wise in your own estimation.” Abandoned forever, no! A temporary hardening, yes!

### The Hardening of Israel—Romans 11:25c

With the clause, “that a partial hardening has happened to Israel,” Paul begins an explanation of the content of the mystery.<sup>16</sup> We have established that the nature of a mystery is that of information revealed by the Spirit of God, heretofore unknown to the reader. Paul indicates that this new information concerns a *hardening*. The term *hardness* (porosis) occurs three times in the New Testament.<sup>17</sup> In each case, the term is used metaphorically to refer to man’s unwillingness to correctly respond to God in faith.

### The Extent of the Hardening

Paul indicates the extent of Israel’s hardening by stating, “that a *partial* hardening has happened to Israel...” Effectively, Paul has already stated that God *had, has* and *will have* a “remnant according to God’s gracious choice.” The book of Acts highlights the salvation of many Jews during the early years of the church. Therefore, Paul states the obvious that the hardening in Israel is *in part*. A fact seemingly missing in the thinking of those who argue that Israel (the nation) has no future. The salvation of every single Jewish person who has received Christ as Lord and Savior throughout the ages confirms Paul’s statement that “those who were chosen obtain it [salvation] (Romans 11:7b).”

### The Time-frame for the Hardening

The fact that God has chosen “to harden” a portion of the nation of Israel which effectively locks them up in their unbelief is not a permanent condition. Paul states that the partial hardening that has happened to Israel will last “*until* the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom. 11:25).” There is some debate about the precise meaning of “until,” but in context, Paul is marking the termination point of Israel’s hardening. Israel’s “hardening” will last *until* the time in which “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” What then is the exact meaning of the phrase “the fullness of the Gentiles?”

“The ‘fullness of the Gentiles’ has been interpreted in two ways: qualitatively and quantitatively.”<sup>18</sup> A qualitative sense “has reference to

Gentile blessing and opportunity in this age.”<sup>19</sup> However, such a view does not accord best with the context. A quantitative sense refers to the actual number of Gentiles to be saved. The “fullness of the Gentiles” “is best explained as the full number of elect Gentiles...”<sup>20</sup> Simply put: the national salvation of Israel follows the *completion* of the salvation of a Gentile “remnant” during the church age. This is the mystery!

### Israel’s Restoration Promised—Romans 11:26

Romans 11:26 is significant. When the “fulness of the Gentiles” has come in, Paul states, “all Israel will be saved...” The essential issue concerns the important phrase *all Israel*. Two questions come to mind: (1) does *all* mean *all*? and (2) does Israel refer to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

### The Identity of the Saved

We will address the second question first. Some scholars insist that the term *Israel* in Romans 11:26 refers to the church. The most well-known proponent of this view is John Calvin. He writes for many in the Reformed school of theology who see the church as the new spiritual Israel comprised of both Gentiles and Jews. However, this view renders Romans 11:25-26 unintelligible. Along this line of thinking, one would have to say that part of the church has been hardened until Gentiles are saved. Then all the church will be saved. Such a view does not make sense. From the very first verse of chapter eleven, Paul has given every possible clue necessary to insure that the reader understands that physical descendants of Israel are his focus. That Israel (the ethnic nation) is Paul’s referent is the one detail of chapter eleven that should be without debate.

The first question we posited above concerns the number of Jews to be saved at the end of the Seventieth Week. The choice is between a great majority, but not every single living Jew at the end of the Seventieth Week or every single living Jew who survives Daniel’s Seventieth Week. John F. Walvoord supports the first choice. He states, “As their [the Jews] rejection, although national, did not include the rejection of every individual; so their restoration, although in like manner national, need not... include the salvation of every individual Jew.”<sup>21</sup>

Whatever Paul’s meaning in Romans 11:25-27, it cannot mean a mere remnant of ethnic Israel. This would not serve as a distinction between the “remnant” of Israel “at the present time” and the “all Israel” saved when “The Deliverer will come from Zion (Rom. 11:26).” In other words, the group saved when “The Deliverer” comes “from Zion” must be distinct from the mere “remnant” of Israel saved at any one given time. Otherwise, there is no contrast between the two groups. Paul is clearly looking forward to a time when the nation as a whole is in a right relationship with their God. This is the essence of his prayer in Romans 10:1-2.

Fortunately, Scripture speaks to this very matter. Zechariah 13:8-9 says:

“And it will come about in all the *land*,” declares the LORD, “That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but *the third* will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’” (Italics added)

Taken at face value, the one-third/two-third deliverance/destruction ratio must be understood literally. *The prophecy is specifically limited to the land of Israel, which must include both Judah and Samaria*. The context would necessitate a yet future fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy given the heavy emphasis on “in that day” that occurs in Zechariah 13:1, 2, and 4. Consequently, we must conclude that every single Jew in the Land of Israel that survives God’s Day of the Lord refining process will be “saved!”

What about those Jews who are not living in the land of Israel? About them, Isaiah 66:20 states, “Then they [the parts of the nations that survive Armageddon] will *bring all your brethren from all the nations* as a grain offering to the Lord...” (Italics added) The emphasis upon “all your brethren from all the nations” logically seems to demand that those Jews who survive the wrath by Satan/Antichrist and the “refining wrath” of God will be saved. In summary, every single Jew that survives the persecution by Satan/Antichrist and God’s refining wrath will “get saved.”

### The Time of Israel’s Salvation

For those who take Scripture at *face value*, the fact of the national salvation of Israel and Jerusalem is not debatable. The timing of that salvation is very much debated. It is this author’s opinion that the national salvation of Israel and Jerusalem cannot occur before the conclusion of the yet future Seventieth Week of Daniel. A literal fulfillment of Daniel 9:24 demands that Israel’s salvation must stand outside the Seventieth Week of Daniel. This is confirmed by Paul. Paul indicates that “the partial hardening” of Israel will last *until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in* (Rom. 11:25).<sup>22</sup> There is debate about the meaning of the term *until*. This term is best taken to point “to a time... after which the hardening of Israel will cease.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Paul agrees with both Daniel and Luke.

Scripture does not *explicitly* state the actual day of Israel’s salvation. Hosea 6:2 perhaps contains the closest statement in this regard. The prayerful attitude of Israel when she repents is expressed. Hosea 6:2 states, “He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him.” This is Israel’s prayer. Whether the Lord will honor Israel’s prayer is not explicitly stated in Scripture. However, with the nation of Israel expressing a repentant heart, it is difficult to believe the Lord will not answer.

We are certain that the salvation of Israel must occur before the sounding of the seventh trumpet detailed in Revelation 11:15. At the seventh trumpet, God almighty takes back the rule of earth and begins His final wrath, this is depicted in the bowl judgments of Revelation

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“all Israel will  
be saved...”**

chapters 15 and 16. Revelation 16:19 indicates Jerusalem will be completely destroyed by the seventh bowl judgment. However, Zechariah 14:5 promises deliverance of God's people prior to God's judgment of the nations. Therefore, Israel must be saved before the final wrath of God begins at the seventh trumpet.<sup>24</sup>

### Conclusion—The Scriptural Proof of Israel's Salvation

And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the *Gentiles*. And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. Simeon [Peter, the Apostle] has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the *Gentiles* a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 'After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old." (Italics added)

Acts 15:12-18 is a very important text to end the debate concerning the future salvation of Israel (the nation). The text follows the first church council convened in Jerusalem to discuss Gentile conversion and inclusion in the church. After Peter, Barnabas and Paul defended God's work among the Gentiles, James offers a summary statement concerning God's work and the church's instructions to the new Gentile converts. The quoted passage above offers four very important insights. *First*, James understands God's work among Gentiles as the taking of "a people for His name." *Second*, the taking of "a people for His name," is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. James specifically refers to Amos 9:11-12. The *third* insight James offers is that Jesus "will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David..." This refers to the restoration of Israel under Davidic rule which Jeremiah 30:9 promises. The *fourth* and final insight James offers concerns *timing*. Notice the beginning of verse 16 again. *After these things* is an alteration of *In that day* which occurs in the original passage in Amos 9:11. James, under the Holy Spirit's direction, instructs the church that David's restoration will follow the "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name."

The importance of Acts 15:12-18 must be seen in light of Acts 1:6-8. Instead of thinking that the kingdom would come immediately, the Apostles finally understood that God's future program for Israel (the nation) would follow His program for the Gentiles. Thus, Luke is consistent in both his Gospel and the book of Acts. God in a future day is going to restore the fortunes of Israel. ■

### ENDNOTES

1. Throughout this article, *Israel* refers to the national group descending from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The only exception is the spiritualized sense of amillennialists in the phrase "Israel of God."
2. For a defense of the concept of a prophetic week equaling seven years, see *Parousia*, issue #12.

3. Specifically, Israel awaits the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1- 15:17), which consists of the Palestinian (the land grant, Deut. 28-30), the Davidic (eternal kingly lineage, 2 Sam. 7:4-16), and the New Covenant, (future kingdom blessing, Jer. 31:31-33).
4. For a defense of the futurity of Daniel's Seventieth Week, see the lengthy discussion in *Parousia*, issue #12.
5. Six infinitives follow the main verb in Daniel 9:24. Each serves as the purpose of the main verb.
6. *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, eds. R.L. Harris, G.L. Archer and B.K. Waltke, 2 vols., by G.H. Livingston, s.v. "afj" 1:277.
7. The Hebrew hiphil stem indicates causative action.
8. See Luke 4:18, 7:22 and Matthew 11:5 for New Testament confirmation.
9. A technical term is a word that has the same meaning every time it is used in a particular context. In this case, *kairoi* refers to the period extending from the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 until the end of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, in Baker's Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996) 1682.
10. That Revelation 11:2 refers to the end of the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week can be proven by recognizing the relationship between the trumpet judgments and the three "woes" of Revelation 8:13. The pronouncement of first woe following the fifth trumpet and the second woe following the sixth trumpet establishes a clear sequential chronology in Revelation 8:1-11:19. The third woe is represented in the seven bowls, which finishes the wrath of God. The death of the two witnesses occurs in the context of the second woe. This demands the conclusion of the seven-year period, not it's beginning.
11. L. Ryken, J.C. Wilhoit, and T. Longmann III, Ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998) 906.
12. Bock, *Luke 9:51 – 24:53*, 1680-1681.
13. J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT, 2 Vols; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 2:91.
14. The fact that the Greek word and the English word look and sound alike demonstrates that we have a transliteration instead of a translation. Also, the modern notion of a "whodunnit" in which the audience must discover the secret, which no one knows, is not consistent with the biblical notion. The biblical notion requires God to reveal the secret or it will never be known.
15. C.C. Ryrie, "The Mystery in Ephesians 3," *BSac*, 123 [1966]: 26.
16. The Greek word οτι begins that clause and indicates purpose.
17. Mark 3:5 speaks to the unreceptive response of the Jews to the ministry of Jesus. Ephesians 4:18 speaks to the heart condition of Gentiles who are alienated from God. In each case, the failure to correctly respond to God is highlighted.
18. M.G. Vanlaningham, "Romans 11:25-27 and the Future of Israel in Paul's Thought," *MSJ*, 3[1992]:154.
19. J.F. Walvoord, "Eschatological Problems VIII: Israel's Blindness," *BSac* 102 [1945]: 288-289.
20. J.L. Burns, "The Future of Ethnic Israel in Romans 11," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, C.A. Blaising and D.L. Bock, Ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) 211.
21. J.F. Walvoord, *The Return of the Lord* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972) 108.
22. Luke 21:24 refers to the Gentile domination of Israel and Jerusalem. Romans 11:25 refers to the number of elect Gentiles called by God to salvation throughout the "times of the Gentiles."
23. Vanlaningham, "Romans 11:25-27 and the Future of Israel in Paul's Thought," 153.
24. This important detail will be discussed in the next issue of *Parousia*. The fourth prophetic pillar of the prewrath position concerns the timing of God taking back His rule over earth.

# Foray Into South America

by Bill Lee-Warner

The Sign Ministries was recently invited to the countries of Argentina and Uruguay, South America, to present the Bible's teaching on the second coming of Christ. Three members of the staff went: Rev. Roger Best, Rev. Bill Lee-Warner, and Gary Vaterlaus, the newest member of our growing team. The invitation came several months previous from Jorge Marquez, a pastor in Montevideo, Uruguay. The twelve-day ministry was truly an unforgettable one.

From March 2-7 we were in Buenos Aires, Argentina at Jesus-The Solution Church pastored by Juan Crudo, a fellow pastor of Jorge Marquez. Each evening, virtually every seat was filled and people stood in the isles. The presence of the Lord was evident and there was a great hunger for eschatological teaching. Each session's teaching concluded with a call for those present who did not know Christ to trust the Lord as Savior. We also had the opportunity to speak at a "daughter church" pastored by Alfredo Dimiro. The openness and responsiveness of the people to God and His Word was clearly evident in the estimated 50 plus people who trusted the Lord as Savior.

On Wednesday, March 7, our team flew to Montevideo, the capital city of Uruguay, where we experienced a similar response to our teaching. Nearly 1500 people attended the first evening's session in Pastor Jorge's downtown church, Mission of Life. Every chair and isle was filled, people sat on the stairs up to the platform, the balcony was packed, people crowded the foyer, and many listened from out in the street. Roger spoke first and concluded the evening with an invitation to receive Christ. The response that evening set the tone for the remainder of our time in Montevideo—an unmistakable hunger for the Lord and His Word.

Additional invitations were scheduled into our time there including two radio interviews and a televised panel discussion which were broadcast across nearly all of South America. Pastor Jorge invited us to

speaking to his leadership team of 300 people on the final Saturday, and then on Sunday we participated in the morning service and two evening services. While there, we were especially privileged to have an excellent translator named Christian Galoti.

Our contact with Pastor Jorge is a significant one. His passion and vision to reach the entire Spanish-speaking world with the Gospel and the teaching of God's Word is deep and aggressive. Surely, the Lord opened this door! Only the future will reveal God's ultimate plans for this opportunity.

The pastor's wife indicated to us that no other event in the history of their church had brought such large numbers of people to hear teaching from God's Word. Our prayers are that God will bless His work in and through Pastor Jorge, his team, and the fellowship of churches ministering with him. If Pastor Jorge's plans materialize and the Lord so wills, The Sign Ministries will return to South America to continue ministry in Uruguay, Argentina, and other countries.

We are grateful to the Lord for all our new friends in South America, and we would covet your prayers not only for the possibility for a return visit, but for all that the Lord calls us to be and do in this ministry until Jesus comes again. ■

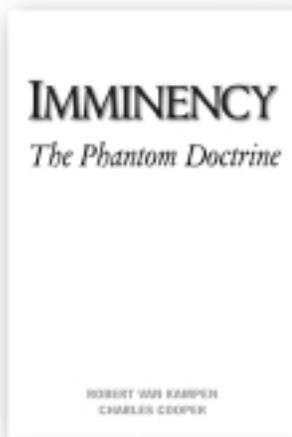


**Above:** Gary Vaterlaus, Marianella (daughter of Enrika), Christian (our translator), Bill Lee-Warner, Roger Best, Pastor Jorge, Vicky (Daughter of Enrika), Enrika (our driver in Uruguay) at a restaurant the final night of our South American ministry trip. **Left:** The Presidential office in Buenos Aires, Argentina. **Below:** The skyline of Montevideo, Uruguay.



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The Phantom  
Doctrine

*An excerpt from section one, "The Problem":*

Will we, the church, face a very real persecution at the hands of a very real Antichrist before we are translated into the presence of God at Christ's second coming? If not, to whom does Christ refer when speaking of the "elect of God"? If this passage were understood at face value, it would seem that He is referring to the church going into the last days. But there are many that disagree with this conclusion, those who cannot accept the possibility of extreme hardship just before the Rapture of the church. The "imminent (any moment) return of Christ" is their only possible solution to keep the church away from this terrible time of persecution. For want of a better term, I have chosen to call this theory of an "any moment" return of Christ, a *phantom doctrine*. As we continue, we will see that there is good reason to label this belief a "phantom". It will be your responsibility to weigh their doctrine of imminency against the teaching of Scripture.

The dictionary defines *phantom* as "something apparently seen, heard, or sensed, but having no physical reality... having substance only in the mind." Yet, as we will demonstrate by the passages of Scripture they use to prove their theory, pretribulationists (those who want to keep the church out of the persecution associated with Antichrist) see evidence in that which is absent in the text, to keep the church out of this terrible time. They employ a phantom reality to accomplish the very thing that is not taught in the Word of God. We shall see *that there is not one explicit passage in the entire Bible that states that Christ will come and rapture the church away at "any moment"*. Not one! Every passage used to argue for an any moment rapture is used because of what it does not say, not for what it does say, perfectly fitting the definition of a phantom doctrine...

As was mentioned earlier, conspicuously absent from any defense of imminency is an explicit reference in Scripture. This phantom doctrine is deduced from several passages in the New Testament, which we will look at carefully. As we shall see, a closer examination of each passage will show that the New Testament writers were not emphasizing an any moment Rapture, but the certainty of the future revelation of Jesus Christ—our blessed hope. Now let us see what these "imminency passages" really do say and you be the judge. Your future well-being may depend upon it!

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# Sharing the Prewrath Rapture Position

by Roger Best

One question often asked of The Sign Ministries is, “How do I share the prewrath rapture position with a friend or relative or even my pastor?” Obviously, depending upon the situation, there may be many approaches one might take but we would suggest perhaps one of the following.

There is no doubt that the success and growth of The Sign Ministries has, for the most part, been due to people sharing with others what they have discovered through reading *The Sign*, *The Rapture Question Answered: Plain and Simple*, or Marv Rosenthal’s *The Prewrath Rapture of The Church*. As our readers have compared what they have read in the books with what the Word of God says they become anxious to share it. Probably the most common way that this has been accomplished has been to encourage someone else to read one of the books.

The first key however to understanding the prewrath rapture position is having a proper approach to Scripture. Much false doctrine is rooted in an improper hermeneutic or approach to understanding the Bible. Robert Van Kampen began both *The Sign* and *The Rapture Question Answered: Plain and Simple* with a strong emphasis on having the right approach to Scripture. When we go all the way back to the early church we find first that Irenaeus and then Tertullian emphasized a literal or face-value approach to Scripture. In other words, in the study of God’s Word, whenever possible, take it for what it says. The Bible is God’s message to us and He wants us to understand it. Paul put it straight to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 1:13, “For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end.” There are too many Christians who approach the Bible and particularly the book of Revelation with the idea that it is too difficult to understand because of all the symbols and hidden messages in it. They convince themselves that it is not possible to understand the Bible. My friend, if you are born again and have the indwelling Holy Spirit then you are capable, just as the Corinthians were, of understanding God’s message to you. When equipped with the proper hermeneutic, Scripture becomes much more accurately understood. Along with this, one must remember that the entire Bible is God’s Word. The book of Revelation is not the last book of the New Testament only but the last book of the Bible. In Psalm 119:160 it says, “The sum of Thy word is truth.” The theme of Christ’s return for the fulfilling of the promises to Israel and for the catching up of the church runs through the entirety of Scripture. For example, to understand the time line of events in the book of the Revelation one must understand the book of Daniel. So, the first step in sharing the

prewrath position is to be sure your friend understands the proper approach to Scripture. God’s Word is truth. It is without contradiction and can be trusted. We in our day are in great need of a revival of the Berean-like spirit in the study of the Bible. Acts 17:11 describes the Bereans: “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.” That is the key—“examining the Scriptures daily”. It is not what I think or even what I have been taught that is really important, but what the Word of God says. To help you in accomplishing this we have prepared a little 24-page booklet entitled *Understanding Scripture at Face Value Plain & Simple*, which we encourage you to use.

The second key follows logically: always use Scripture as the foundation for what you understand to be scriptural truth. The Bible is the authority! Other books can help but only when they lead you to the Word of God for the final answers. For example, if you are sharing with someone who believes that Christ could come at any moment (the pretrib view), challenge them to find a passage of Scripture that clearly states that idea. They will discover that there are no such passages. Oh, there certainly are verses that speak directly to the fact that Christ is coming back for us, but they deal with the fact that He is returning. They do not deal with the timing of His coming. This is clear in John 14:3 where Christ promises His return and yet it says nothing about timing. Other passages deal with what our attitude should be concerning His coming, i.e. eagerness or expectancy. In Titus 2:13 Paul speaks of expectancy but not timing, and 1 Corinthians 1:7 tells us to be eager but once again there is no mention of timing. Christians are often surprised when they can’t find biblical support for something they had previously accepted as truth. This often opens the door for dialog. May I encourage you not to argue the issue but rather state the truth and let the Holy Spirit do the work. We have testimonials of people who wanted nothing to do with what we are teaching, but time and circumstances caused them to become interested. Finally as the Spirit opened their hearts, they became enthusiastic about their newly discovered truth. Key passages to use in sharing would be 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, Matthew 24:3-31, Mark 13:3-27, and Luke 21:7-28. A comparison of Matthew 24:3-31 with Revelation 6 is often eye-opening as one sees how Scripture fits together.

Another way to introduce others to the prewrath position is to encourage your friend to read one of the books. This would be particularly helpful if the person is at all open. One of the ways that many folks have approached their pastor is to tell him that they have read a book and have found it most interesting. Simply ask him to read it and tell you what his thoughts are. A good book for this is *The Rapture Question Answered: Plain and Simple*. This book is quite easy to read and since it is not a large volume, it can be read in a relatively

**Always use Scripture as the foundation for what you understand to be scriptural truth.**

short period of time. And yes, we still make the books available to pastors at no cost if they will read them. Let me share a true story in relationship to this approach. A pastor called me and asked if we still gave *The Sign* free to pastors. I responded affirmatively. He then went on to tell me why he was calling. It seems that in the church where he was pastor, a lady had read *The Sign* and was very excited about it and anxious for him to read it. Each week as she would see him she asked if he had called for his free copy. He told me he had good intentions but never got around to calling. He then left that church and moved to another. He was quick to include that his leaving had nothing to do with the lady who constantly asked him about getting a copy of *The Sign*. However, very shortly after arriving at his new church a lady there approached him and asked, "Pastor, have you read *The Sign*?" He said to me, "That did it, I must get a copy of that book." Well, of course we immediately sent him the book, and I trust he has read it. This little story emphasizes the ministry of encouragement. Don't argue! Don't threaten! Just encourage the person and let the Holy Spirit do the work. Humble, patient persistence often gets the task accomplished.

It is unfortunate that even in Christian circles, what one feels or thinks becomes much more important than truth. Through church history it was not uncommon that when someone stood for truth not many were willing to stand along side. But, praise God, they stood firm. I believe God is calling Christians in the twenty-first century to stand for truth. ■

## Newest Member of The Sign Ministries' Staff

**Gary Vaterlaus** has joined the staff of The Sign Ministries as a National Instructor. His job will include organizing and teaching at conferences on the West Coast, as well as ministering at some of our overseas events. He will also be involved in research and writing, including answering questions about the prewrath position.



Gary has a graduate degree in Science and Math Education from Oregon State University. He has worked at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, attended Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, started a Christian publishing ministry in Russia, and attended The Master's Mission's excellent one-year training program. Gary and his wife Missy live in Corvallis, Oregon. They have three children: Katie (7), Spencer (6), and Cooper (2).

Gary is excited to be involved with The Sign Ministries and is looking forward to a fruitful ministry. If you would like to contact Gary, you can email him directly at [gvaterlaus@signministries.org](mailto:gvaterlaus@signministries.org).

## Letters & Email of Encouragement

I've just finished reading [*The Fourth Reich*] and I want to thank you for sending it... One of my jobs as church librarian is to screen books and tapes before they are put into the library. I already have a waiting list for *The Fourth Reich*.

— E.B. in Michigan

A few months ago I attended a prophecy conference here in Dallas... at the end of the night I was both impressed and saddened. Saddened by the hateful tones of the dialogs that came from those of the pretrib view on the panel of experts. Impressed by the character and demeanor exhibited by those of the prewrath and posttrib views. May God richly bless all of you.

— M.C. by Email

Thank you very much for your ministry. I, a former pretribber, am now preaching and teaching what I believe to be the truth about end-time events from the prewrath perspec-

tive—all because someone like Mr. Van Kampen cared enough to publish his studies... I knew the pretrib [position] could not stand up to solid exegesis. However, the prewrath position is the natural outcome of solid exegesis.

— Pastor J.H. in South Carolina

When I bought *The Sign* in 1994, it really changed my walk with Christ. I believe Bob Van Kampen was the most influential Christian writer of the last 10 years. I am a Sunday School teacher... Using some study materials that your ministry mailed to me, I was able to make a compelling case for the prewrath position. At the end of my fourteen-week Revelation study several members, who previously had only known the pretrib "secret rapture" theory, had changed their views.

— S.M. by Email

Your quarterly newsletter *Parousia* is also to be commended for its well-written scholarly in-

sight into eschatological topics. I consider it to be one of the most informative and accurate publications available today supporting the prewrath position. If only more people could be exposed to the teachings in this newsletter!

— R.Y. in Oklahoma

I would like to take this time to express my gratitude for your kindness extended to the men under my care. Your books are a great asset to this department's library.

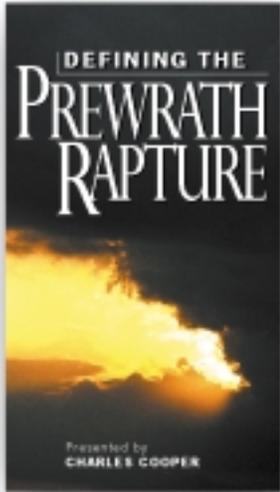
— A.L., Prison Chaplain

It hurts me greatly to learn of the death of Robert. It was his book that brought me a clarity of the end-time Scriptures. I guess he has all the answers now being in the presence of our Lord. I just want to say thank you to his family for letting him take the time to write the books that were so important to me.

— K.D. by Email

# Since Webster's doesn't, we will.

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In **DEFINING THE PREWRATH RAPTURE**, Bible Teacher Charles Cooper provides a general overview of the prewrath Rapture for those new to the position, articulating the biblical foundations supporting the basic fact that the Rapture of the church will occur before the wrath of God against the wicked, but sometime after the beginning of the persecution of God's elect by Satan/Antichrist. For use in any setting, this presentation includes such topics as hermeneutic, the different Rapture positions, the Day of the Lord, and the position of the early church fathers.

*This video is not an introduction to eschatology* (the study of end times) and assumes the viewer has a basic understanding of a premillennial interpretation of Scripture, the Seventieth Week of Daniel, the matter of the Rapture of the church, and the wrath of God to be unleashed upon the wicked.

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