

THE RADICAL GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

*A Vision of Victory for the Church of the 21st
Century*

Orlando Mostert

Chapter 7: The Invasion of Gog and Armageddon (37BC-70AD)

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KINGDOM VISION

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KINGDOM VISION

I present to you a whole new vision of the times in which we live. All your prophecy books and televangelists tell you that the rapture is any moment, the Antichrist will take over the world, the Kingdom of God will only come one day in the future.

Here is the alternative Kingdom Vision:

- Jesus is now Lord; He is now ruling in the heavenlies.
- We are in the Kingdom Age which means we have all power now over the power of Satan and our job now is to disciple the nations.
- The world system is now under judgment and will collapse; “Babylon” is falling.
- The Kingdom of God is spreading in power and glory until it will fill the earth.

World systems are collapsing ... but the Kingdom of God is rising. Nations will be discipled into the Kingdom of God, there are already more than 700 million charismatic evangelicals worldwide. Soon the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Get ready for a greater outpouring of God’s presence and power in his church:

The Kingdom Vision ... a vision of victory for the church of the 21 Century.

Orlando Mostert

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Chapter 7: The Invasion of Gog and Armageddon (37BC-70AD)

INTRODUCTION

The common view in all popular prophecy books is that the great “end time” battle of Armageddon described in Revelations and in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is a coming invasion of Israel by a coalition of Arab armies led by Russia out of the north. This is totally false. There is no Russian invasion of Israel coming. The invasion of Israel by Gog out of the north has already happened in 37 BC and the battle of Armageddon already happened in 70 AD just as Jesus predicted in Matthew 23 & 24 it would happen to “this generation”. Bible prophecy once again has been accurately fulfilled in history. Why is this important? Three reasons...

- 1) It will strengthen your faith to see the incredibly accurate prophecies of Ezekiel and Jesus fulfilled in history.
- 2) The current turmoil in the Middle East is heading for catastrophe and none of the predictions of prophecy writers in the evangelical church with regard to Israel are going to come true and when they don't you will need an alternate interpretation of all these prophecies already fulfilled in history.
- 3) You need to get your eyes off of Middle East politics and a supposed rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, Antichrist and Armageddon. All that has already happened. Get your attention on the real Temple of God (the Church) and His covenant of power and glory with us to use us to establish His Kingdom on earth.

In our last chapter I introduced you to the history of the Jews miraculous return to Israel, gathered out of the nations to rebuild the Temple, rebuild Jerusalem and re-establish an independent Israel. The prophecies of Ezekiel were wonderfully fulfilled. The question that the Lord asked Ezekiel after showing him a valley of bones (a dead Israel, a destroyed city, land and Temple), “Can these bones live?” (Ez.37:3). Can Israel be brought back from the dead? That was answered 500 years later with a resounding yes! By 101 BC an independent nation, and a Jewish king with a kingdom larger than David, a rebuilt Temple, a functioning priesthood and no idols in the land.

But this did not last. It was not long before the nation degenerated into murderous and greedy factions vying for political power and priestly factions fighting over control of the Temple and the vast tithing revenue flowing in from all over the world. There were slaughters of thousands in civil wars, and religious factions. All over money and power.

The priestly group that re-established the purity of the Temple and the Laws called themselves “Zadokites” or “the Righteous Ones” and degenerated by the time Jesus and John began their ministries into what we know as the Sadducees. A holiness movement that started well turned quickly into a money grabbing priestly class desperate to cling on to the Temple revenues and supporting any political party that would allow them to control the

office of High Priest. A reformist party broke away from the “Zadokites” called the Pharisees with a call of “back to the word of God”! But they too soon degenerated into just another religious group desperate for positions, power and money.

God had enough of Israel's backsliding. He determined to bring judgment on the whole lot. He was finished with the old Covenant that was incapable of bringing righteousness. It was time for a New Covenant of the heart. He was finished with the temple and its money making priests. It was time for a New Temple, His church, a place where He could pour out His Spirit. A place where He could truly dwell with mankind. He was finished with earthly Jerusalem which had become a cesspool of fornication, murder and greed. It was time for a New Jerusalem.

For the purpose of judgment God raised up an old enemy of Israel to invade the land, Jacob's brother Esau. His descendants were known as Idumeans (from the land of Edom) and Amalekites (the grandson of Esau). Their leader had a title... Gog.

The Invasion of Gog

So in Ezekiel 36 we have the Lord's great promise to Ezekiel made in about 597 BC while the nation was destroyed and in captivity in Babylon that He would gather Israel and return them to their land (Ez. 36:24). This was fulfilled in 533 BC when they were released by Cyrus the Mede to allow the

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captives to return to Palestine and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. About 42,000 decided to take up the offer.

In Ezekiel 37 the Lord shows Ezekiel that Israel was like a valley of bones but bone came together to bone and flesh was added and soon it was restored. And so we see in the history that after much struggle of several hundreds of years Israel managed to become an independent nation once again in 143 BC and Jews from all the nations returned to the land.

But then in Ezekiel 38 and 39 God tells them...while they dwell in peace in their land a large invasion force composed of many different nationalities would invade Israel from the north and this large coalition army would be led by an ancient enemy of theirs called Gog who at that time would be the Chief Prince of a territory north of them. The reason he would invade was "to take a spoil". He and his invading army would invade for the great wealth in Israel at that time. But even though he would invade, the Lord promises to bring judgment upon him and his people. So who is Gog and his foreign invasion force and when did this happen?

Remember in our Ezekiel timeline we are now in the period after 101 BC when Israel is independent, it has a king and it is dwelling safely and generating new wealth that would attract an invader.

The Identity of Gog

We can find other references to "Gog" in the Old Testament but to do that you must understand something about how ancient Hebrew was written. In ancient Hebrew written by Ezekiel and the prophets there were no vowels like a,e,i,o,u. It was all just written as consonants. So Gog would be written "GG". It was only later in about 900 AD with the Masoretic text that vowels were added and then sometimes it would be a guess as to which vowels you put in. There are two other references in the Old Testament to an ancient enemy of Israel called "GG". He is called "Agag" in our Bible (Nu.24:7 and 1 Sam.15:32-33) and it gives us a valuable clue to the identity of "GG" in Ezekiel 38. Agag in both cases is described as the king of the Amalekites. Thus the term "GG" is a title for a ruler such as Pharaoh of the Egyptians or Abimelech of

Philistia. In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament written in Greek in about 2nd century BC the Rabbi's translated "GG" as "Agag".

Amalek was a grandson of Esau the brother of Jacob and the descendants of Esau were generally known in the Bible as Edomites (they lived in Edom) who aligned themselves with their other family clan the Amalekites. The leader of this group of Esau's descendants had the title of "GG". It is among these people that we can find the prophecies that the Lord refers to in Ezekiel 38 that He speaks of in times past. These prophecies refer to the ancient hatred that Esau had for his brother for stealing his birthright blessing and his plot to gain back this lost inheritance in time.

In Gen. 27:36-41 we are told that after Jacob steals his birthright Esau cries to his father Isaac and asks for a blessing for himself and his descendants. Isaac tells him he will dwell in the fat of the land but will serve his brother. But Isaac also prophecies to Esau that *"the time shall come to pass when thou shall have the dominion and shall break his yoke from off thy neck"*. But this was not good enough for Esau who vowed *"when the days of mourning for my father are at hand then I will slay my brother Jacob"*.

This war between the descendants of Esau and Jacob continued during the time of the Exodus when the Amalekites attacked Israel. Exodus 17:14,16:

"And the Lord said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; ...because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

This was such an important prophecy that the Lord made Moses write this down as a memorial for generation after generation. There is to be war with Amalek until they are wiped out.

The prophecies of Obadiah and Malachi further confirm the prophecy of Isaac that Esau (Edom) will break the yoke of Israel off his neck, take dominion and possess the land of Israel...but that God will destroy them after they do this! The entire book of Obadiah is a prophecy against Esau/Edom that they will take Jacob's possession but that the Lord will fight against them.

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This is repeated in Malachi 1:3-4:

“And I hated Esau and laid his mountains and heritage waste...whereas Edom says, we are impoverished but we will return and build the desolate places; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, they shall build but I will throw down; and they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people with whom the Lord has indignation forever.”

The prophets declared that the descendants of Esau (Edomites and Amalekites) would throw off the yoke of Israel and would possess the land of Israel and take the dominion but the Lord will make a war against them and destroy them out of the land. This is the battle that Ezekiel 38 is referring to and why the Lord says that Gog is the one He has spoken of long before that He will have war with from generation to generation. Ezekiel 38:17 *“Thus saith the Lord, Art thou he of whom I have spoke in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?”*

Gog Invades a Peaceful Israel...

The rule of the Maccabee dynasty continued until in 47 BC Julius Caesar made Antipater who was the king of the Idumeans (Esau's descendants, who still retained a small kingdom in the south of Palestine) the procurator of Judea. In 42 BC he was assassinated and through a struggle the last of the Maccabees, Antigonus took back the rulership of Judea and became king of Israel again.. But the Edomites were not finished...they intended to take the land!

Antipater had a very clever and ambitious eldest son called Herod. At the young age of 25 Anthony the Roman general made Herod the “tetrarch” or ruler of northern Palestine which he administered very ably for the Romans extracting taxes and extending the borders of his reign. In 37 BC Herod went to Rome to ask to be made the king of all Judea. At this time after the death of Julius Caesar, Anthony and Octavian were in control of Rome and after big bribes they granted him the crown of Judea. But the problem was that there was still the matter of a king of Israel, Antigonus ruling in Jerusalem which meant he would have to fight to get control of Judea. For this coming invasion

Anthony and Octavian gave him the right to use the Roman legions in Syria as an invading force to grab the throne.

Ezekiel 38 gives us a description of this invading army as coming out of many nations in what we can recognize as countries of the Middle East at that time. And this was exactly the compilation of the Roman legions of the time. Only about 10% of the legionnaires came from Italy. The rest were recruited from local regions where they were stationed. Many locals would sign up for the Roman army as a means of gaining Roman citizenship. The army that Herod used to invade Israel from Syria in the north was truly an international task force made up of many nations!

Thus Herod the Great fulfilled the prophecies of Gog of Ezekiel 38. He was the “GG” or leader of the Edomite/Idumeans because he was the son of the King of Idumea. He was also the Chief Prince of Meshach (Tetrarch of northern Palestine). Meshech is not “Moscow” and “Rosh” is not Russia. The Psalmist says in Psalm 120:5 “Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech”. David had to flee from Saul for his life and live among the Philistines in Meshech. He did not flee to Moscow! He fled to northern Palestine to live among the Philistines. This was the same area that the young Herod was the “Chief Prince” of at age 25.

Herod gathered an international Roman army made up of men from all over the Roman empire and invaded Israel from the north. He came to “take great spoil” just as Ezekiel prophesied he would. For traditional dispensational prophecy writers who insist that “Rosh” is Russia leading a great international coalition to invade Israel (supposedly including Germany as “Gomer”), this idea that they come to “take great spoil” is an enormous difficulty. Why would anyone want to invade modern Israel for today? There is no great oil wealth. The wealth of Israel is the creative capacity of the Jewish people in creating technology. I read some books that talk about the great wealth of potash in the Dead Sea. But Russia is the world's largest producer of potash, why invade Israel for this low cost commodity? None of these Armageddon scenarios

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so beloved by Televangelists makes any sense whatsoever except to convince people that Satan is going to triumph and take over the world!

The historical record of the invasion of Gog and his armies into Israel is clearly understood when you study what enormous wealth Herod the Great managed to accumulate after his invasion and conquest of Judea in 37 BC. There were two great sources of income during this time in Israel. The collection of taxes for Rome (of which Rome was happy to share a large portion with those given franchises to extract tax) and the control of the Temple income in Jerusalem. The Temple tithe income in Jerusalem alone was an incredible source of revenue. Jews from all over the world would come to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate the three great feasts of Israel. They would bring with them their tithes and they would bring foreign money (with heathen images on it) with them to buy animal sacrifices from the priests. The priests would change this foreign idol money into acceptable temple shekels. Thus the very profitable trade in the temple of the “money changers”.

Herod the Idumean, descendant of Esau was now king of the Jews. He now set about the business of wealth extraction with great gusto. He rebuilt the great temple in Jerusalem into one of the great wonders of the world allowing temple revenues to increase dramatically. He installed his own High Priest and extracted the great temple wealth into his own coffers which he used to build new cities (Caesarea), build temples, amphitheaters, and hold games and spectacles.

By the time Jesus came on the scene in Jerusalem in 29 AD to begin His ministry the situation in Judea and Jerusalem was hopeless and beyond saving. The priesthood was corrupt and mad for money and power. The Pharisee “back to the word” holiness movement was on a synagogue building spree to add more and more proselytes to their movement welcoming the cash flow of their new religious movement. Jerusalem was a center for trade, commerce and foreign gods. Hellenization of Jews adopting Greek and Roman ways of life was common. Nobody was interested in the Lord or His Kingdom. The only ones interested in a “Kingdom

of God” were the Zealots who were terrorists looking for a military Messiah to liberate Israel from the hated Romans.

The descendants of Esau had now broken the yoke of Jacob and taken the dominion just as Isaac prophesied and they not only controlled the land of Israel but also the temple and the priesthood. They had it all. But they were not satisfied. They were still under Roman rule. After the death of their king Herod, the Romans decided to rule this region with their own leaders. No need to share the spoils with the Idumeans. But this was not acceptable to the Zealots and Idumeans who started agitating for complete independence from Rome. The Zealots believed in the time prophecies of Daniel that the Messiah would come in their time to bring them a great deliverance from their enemies and restore to the Kingdom to Israel. But they had rejected Jesus as Messiah.

In the midst of this apostasy Jesus prophesied in Matthew 23 and 24 what was to come. He saw what was coming...Ezekiel 39 and the prophecies of the destruction of Gog (the Edomite Jews) and his confederates (the Zealots). Armageddon was coming and it would happen to the generation that was then alive to hear the words of Christ. God was finished with the old order of national Israel. He was going to bring judgment on Gog that had invaded and taken control of Israel. The Lord was going to liberate Israel in bring forth a new people, a new Israel with the law in their hearts, born again into a new nation, a new temple, a new Jerusalem.

The End Times & Matthew 24

But what would make the early Church believe they were living in the “last days”? The answer is found in Luke 21 and Matthew 24. They believed Jesus when He said “this generation” would see the end of the age and His return! The entire “end time” narrative we read in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 is Jesus warning His disciples that the end of the old order had come, He recognized who the Idumeans were who now controlled Israel and the prophecies of Malachi and Obadiah about their coming destruction. He knew who Gog was and the prophecies that the Lord would utterly destroy

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them in the land after their invasion and occupation of Israel. But He also knew of the prophecy of Ezekiel that a remnant of Israel would be delivered. That is why Jesus exactly described to His disciples what would happen to that generation.

The three questions of the disciples....

The disciples showed Jesus the great temple in Jerusalem that took decades to build by Herod at enormous cost and was a true wonder of the ancient world. Jesus startled His disciples by stating emphatically that the time would come when not one stone would be left on another. They like the other Jews of their time were aware of the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel, time prophecies, that indicated judgment and destruction and the appearance of the Messiah in their time. So they asked Him three questions:

Matth 24: 3, “when shall these things be, what shall be the sign of thy return and the end of the world” (the original Greek uses the word “eon” meaning “age”, so the disciples were referring to the end of the “age”).

Let’s answer these three questions with three statements that will give you an entirely new view of the end times:

- These things were to happen within 40 years (a generation) of when Jesus spoke these words (33 AD)
- The end of the Jewish age of temple sacrifices for sin and the end of the Jewish nation occurred in 70AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Roman armies of Vespasian and Titus slaughtering 1,100,000 people in the process.
- The signs of the Lord returning in the clouds to pour out judgment over Jerusalem were to be famines, pestilence, wars, false Messiahs, signs in the heavens, persecutions of His disciples, the gospel preached in all the world and eventually Jerusalem surrounded by armies before its destruction.

These three statements place the entire fulfillment of Matthew 24 from 33 AD to 70 AD! But let’s see if this is so...

Jesus answered the “when” question with a very clear, unmistakable statement in verse 34, “*For verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled*”. When Jesus said “this generation” which was to see the fulfillment of all the predictions He made, was He referring to the people who were listening to Him speak in 33 AD or was He talking to us 2000 years in the future? At first glance reading through Matthew 24 it seems that these prophecies can only refer to a future generation; the end of the world has not come, neither a great tribulation nor the return of Christ. Or have they?

But reading through the chapter it also seems obvious that Jesus was directly speaking to His disciples warning **them** not to be deceived, warning **them** that they would be persecuted, warning **them** to flee from Jerusalem when they see the abomination of desolation etc. So which generation is it?

In Matthew 23 the previous chapter Jesus described the wickedness of that generation and declared that Jerusalem would be left desolate and that judgment is coming upon them, and He says in verse 36, “all these things shall come upon **this** generation”. He was clearly referring to those living in 33AD in Jerusalem. The same would hold true for “this generation” in Matthew 24:34 that would see the end of the temple, the destruction of Jerusalem and His return upon the clouds.

For the Dispensational Rapturist teachers of today “this generation” of Matthew 24:34 is the generation that saw Israel becoming a nation again in 1948, which is why the enormous expectation of the return of Christ by 1988 and the prediction of a Russian invasion of Israel in the 1980’s. The problem is that they are now in the same prophetic time trap that the Jehovah’s Witnesses got themselves in a 100 years ago. They put out these prophecy books declaring that the generation that saw the Great War (1914 World War 1) would be “this generation”. Then as the decades passed came the death watch, “who is still alive from 1914?”.

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Obviously they had to drop this false teaching eventually. When the 40 year generation period of 1988 passed with no Rapture, then the prophecies started shifting in the 1990's. "This generation" was the generation that saw Israel capture Jerusalem in 1967. So the new 40 year cut off date was 2007 which looked very promising; the Rapture at the new millennium date of 2000 and a 7 year Tribulation till 2007. Well that also did not work out (unless I missed the Rapture). Now the current craze is 2012. And that will also pass with no Rapture (of course if I am wrong I will be enormously happy to exit out of here ...but unfortunately I don't believe it).

The entire teaching of modern day prophecy books that we are living in the "end times" is based on this mistaken interpretation of Matthew 24 that we are "this generation" that will see the coming of the Lord, the Great Tribulation, the Rapture.

I have already shown you the many scriptures showing that the writers of the New Testament all believed that they were living in "the last days". That is because the New Testament (including Revelations as proven by Ken Gentry in his book "Before Jerusalem Fell") was written before 70 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Most people reading Matthew 24 are willing to concede that yes some of the signs Jesus spoke of did happen during that day but what about His promise to return? Surely that cannot be applied to that generation?

Jesus already came in the clouds!

Actually yes, the promise of His return in the clouds to that generation happened and not only the New Testament writers but Jesus Himself said He would return in that generation!

When Jesus stood before the priests at His trial, Caiphas, the High Priest asked Him, "**Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed. And Jesus answered Him and said I Am, and you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven**" (Mark 14:61-62). Jesus predicted they

(the High Priest and the Sanhedrin) would see Him coming in the clouds! In response to this statement the High Priest "rent his clothes...and said ye have heard his blasphemy" Let me explain to you the importance of this interaction between Jesus and the High Priest, what was really going on and not what popular prophecy books think is going to happen.

You read recent popular prophecy books and they tell you "Jesus is coming soon in the clouds of glory and every eye will see Him! Praise God, the TV crew from CNN in Jerusalem will dramatically display to all the world the return of Christ descending on a cloud from heaven!" Or something like that. But here is what Jesus was actually saying to Caiphas and his fellow priests, and they understood perfectly what He meant and that is why they cried "blasphemy" because they read the same Bible:

"Caiphas I am! I am the one who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, I am Yahweh who came down Mount Horeb in a cloud, I am Yahweh who rides the swift cloud in judgment of the nations and you will kill me but I will rise again and I am coming back again and you will see Me coming in a cloud of judgment on you and all of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and I will put an end to your hypocrisy, your lies, your Temple, your sacrifices which I no longer accept, the end has come for Jerusalem, you wanted Me as the Messiah to deliver you from Rome but I will use Rome to put an end to you"

This coming of the Lord in the clouds as a sign of divine judgment is clearly expressed in Isaiah 19:1:

"...behold the Lord rides upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it"

The priests saw Him coming in clouds of judgment in 70AD when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and that proved to be "the sign of the Son of Man in heaven". He now rules over all nations and even Rome must do His bidding!

But Jesus also prophesied that some of His disciples

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would be alive at the time of His return. In Matthew 16:27-28 Jesus said to His disciples, “For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father’s glory with His angels...I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom”. Jesus predicted some of His disciples would not die before they saw Him coming with His angels in glory!

After His resurrection Jesus met with His disciples before His ascension and indicated to Peter that he would suffer for Him and so Peter asked Jesus what about John? “Jesus answered, If I want him to remain until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” John 21:22. History tells us John lived to an old age and saw the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. John saw the return of Jesus in the clouds of judgment just as Jesus said he would.

No wonder James declared, “we are living in the last days” (Jas.5:3) and “the judge is standing at the door” (Jas.5:9). He knew “the Lord’s coming is at hand” (Jas.5:8). The writer of Hebrews would say, “In just a little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay.” (Heb.10:37) Around 57 AD Paul writing to the Corinthians declared that “the time is short” (1 Cor. 7:29). Peter declared that “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Peter 4:7). The “coming of the Lord” they are referring to here is not His coming on the last day of the resurrection of the dead and the Rapture, that is still in the future. What they were referring to was the coming of the Lord in judgment on Jerusalem and Israel in judgment (“coming in the clouds”).

Ken Gentry in his book “Before Jerusalem Fell” gives a strong historical study showing that the Book of Revelations was written before 70AD when Jerusalem fell. We can then understand why John in his opening verse (Rev.1:1) declares these prophecies must “...shortly come to pass” (not in 2000 years time!). John goes on to say in Revelation 1: 3,7 “Blessed is he that reads and those that hear the words of this prophecy for **the time is at hand... behold he cometh with clouds and every eye shall behold him and they also which pierced him...**” Can you see what John is saying in Revelations? The coming of Jesus in the

clouds to bring judgment on Jerusalem is at hand and **those who pierced Him in 33AD** will still be alive to see this judgment and people all over the world will “see” this judgment. Later in Revelations he predicted exactly how many months this judgment would take to destroy Jerusalem, 42 months: “and the holy city shall they (the Gentiles, Rome) trample under foot for forty and two months” (Rev.11:2) And this is exactly what happened, the armies of Vespasian and Titus fought for 42 months from 66 AD until Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.

All the early New Testament Church believed they were living in the “end times”, judgment was coming in their time and Jesus would return in the clouds of judgment in their day. And it happened! Just as Jesus predicted and all the signs of Matthew 24 were fulfilled!

Now lets look at the other signs of Matthew 24 that were fulfilled between 33 AD and 70 AD.

False Christs...

Matth 24:4-5 “...for many shall come in my name saying I am Christ and shall deceive many.”

Josephus the historian wrote of an imposter Thadeus who in 45AD had a multitude of followers, took them down to the river Jordan to show his power to part the river. At the time of Felix (mentioned in Acts) the country was filled with imposters that Josephus said Felix had to put to death every day...there were so many. There was an Egyptian who pretended to be a prophet and gathered thousands of men to Jerusalem to show “how at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall down”. Paul was asked in Acts 21:38 whether he was “that mad Egyptian”. Another deceiver was Simon the sorcerer who, according to Irenaeus, claimed to be the Son of God and the creator of angels. Origen writes of a certain wonder worker Dositheus, who claimed to be Christ foretold by Moses. Another was Barchochebas and Bar-jesus

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mentioned in Acts 13:6. Many more could be named. The era was rife with false Messiahs because of the time prophecies of Daniel.

Wars and Rumors of War...

Matth. 24: 6-7, “and you will hear of wars and rumors of war, see that ye are not troubled, be ye not troubled for the end is not yet” (not the end of the world, the end of Jerusalem!)

When Jesus made the prophecy in 33AD the Roman world was relatively peaceful and quiet but that changed in the years ahead. The rise of false Messiahs were causing big problems for the Romans in keeping order in Judea according to Josephus. Before Jerusalem fell four emperors came to violent ends within a space of 18 months. The Roman historian Tacitus writing of the period mentions “disturbances in Germany”, “commotions in Africa”, “insurrections in Gaul”, “war in Britain”, “war in Armenia”. Among Jewish communities there were great killings. In Seleucia 50,000 Jews were killed, there was a great uprising against the Jews in Alexandria with thousands killed; in a battle between Jews and Syrians in Caesarea 20,000 were killed. The Roman world was in a turmoil after the long peace of Augustus and Tiberius.

Famines, Pestilences, Earthquakes...

Matth. 24:7 “and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places.”

The Bible tells us in Acts 11:28 about famine “throughout all the world...in the days of Claudius Caesar”. Eusebius mentions famines during this time in Rome, Judea and Greece. Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius mention famines during those years.

There were also great pestilences and diseases, a natural result when people are dying of famine. Suetonius wrote of a pestilence in Rome at the time of Nero that killed more than 30,000 persons. Josephus writes of great pestilences in Babylon in 40AD.

There were also a great many earthquakes during this time. Seneca writing in the year 58 AD, said “How often have the cities of Asia and Achaea fallen with one fatal shock! How many cities have been swallowed up in Syria! How many in Macedonia! How often has Cyprus been wasted by this calamity!... News has been brought to us of the demolition of whole cities at once!”

Persecutions of the disciples...false prophets.

Matth.24:9 “and they shall deliver you up to be afflicted...”

Jesus predicted that for His name’s sake the disciples would be afflicted, hated, persecuted, imprisoned and executed. The persecution first came from the Jewish authorities with the permission of the Romans who did not want to be involved in local sectarian squabbles. Acts 8:1 they faced “great persecution” and in Acts 22:19 they were “imprisoned and beat in every synagogue”. They were hated and some put to death (Acts 7:59; 12:2). But Jesus also said that among them many false prophets will arise and deceive many (Matth.24:11. Folks, we still have them today!). Peter would later write of many false prophets in the church who led many astray (2 Peter 2), John also recorded this fulfilled prophecy, “many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1) and Paul also spoke of false apostles and false teachers in the church (2 Cor. 11:13; 2 Tim. 2:17,18; Titus 1:10,11).

After the burning of Rome by Nero in 64AD the persecution of the Christians increased dramatically as Nero blamed the Christians for the calamity.

Gospel to be preached to all nations...

Matth.24:14 “and this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

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When Jesus spoke of “then shall the end come”, He is still speaking of the end of the Jewish era and the end of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. The gospel did indeed go all over the world in the next 40 years. The disciples spread the message into the far flung corners of the known world. Paul testifies to this in Romans 1:8 “Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world”. In Romans 16:26 he says of the gospel having been “made known to all nations”. In Colossians 1:6,23 Paul could write “the gospel is come unto you as it is in all the world...the gospel which you have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven”.

The historian Eusebius writing of the beginning of the Church declared that the apostles and disciples spread to all parts of the known world preaching the gospel.

Abomination of Desolation.

Matth.24:15-20 “When you therefore see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet....then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains...”

Jesus now begins to describe the Jewish revolt against Rome that lasted from 66-70 AD. The sins of abomination committed by Israel would result in its desolation..

In the parallel passage in Luke 21:20-21 He says:

“and when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies then know that the desolation thereof is nigh, then let them which dwell in Judea flee into the mountains...”

Jesus was referring to the prophecy in Daniel 9:26,27 that said, “*the people of the prince that shall come (the Romans) shall destroy the city and the sanctuary...for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation.*”

These prophecies of Daniel and Jesus were

remarkably fulfilled during the revolt of 66-70 AD. Josephus the Jewish historian gives us a lengthy detailed description of the happenings during those days both when he was on the rebel side fighting against Rome and later when he joined the Romans. He tells us that in 66 AD Eleazar the Zealot leader and his army took control of Jerusalem and the Temple area. They stopped the daily sacrifice that was made by the High Priest for Rome and Caesar. Soon faction fighting broke out between rival gangs and in the process the High Priest Ananias and the other priests who wanted peace with Rome were slaughtered in the temple. The Temple was desecrated by the Zealots. The Roman garrison was unable to stop the fighting and they were soon slaughtered as well after surrendering themselves. This caused the Romans to mobilize their legions from Syria under General Cestius who marched on Jerusalem and **surrounded the city**. Then for no apparent reason he stopped the siege and withdrew his troops back to Syria.

When the Christian church in Jerusalem first saw a Roman army surrounding Jerusalem and then mysteriously withdrawing, they remembered the words of Jesus and got out of Jerusalem and headed for Petra in Jordan. The Zealots, however, thought this was a great sign from God and attacked the retreating Roman army and slaughtered them. Rome was appalled and mustered together the largest Roman army assembled under Vespasian and his son Titus and this started a 42 month war in which the blood flowed up and down the whole of Judea as the Romans slaughtered the inhabitants of Judea. The campaign on Judean soil culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the slaughter of 1,100,000 people according to Josephus.

Eusebius the early Church father recorded in his history that the Jerusalem Church remembering the words of Jesus and seeing the Roman siege lifted, quickly left Jerusalem and headed for the hills of Petra. Thus were fulfilled the prophecies of Jesus of the abominations causing desolation; that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies, and then the eventual tragic end...**“for then shall be great tribulation...”** (vrs. 24). This “great tribulation” that Jesus spoke about was not some seven year future Antichrist tribulation period. We have

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already seen that previously that the entire 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel was entirely fulfilled by 33 AD. There is no future seventieth week still to be fulfilled. The historian Josephus who was there to witness these terrible things of the “great tribulation” of that time describes in gruesome detail how terrible the sufferings of the people inside Jerusalem was during the siege of the city by Titus. The hunger and starvation was so great that mother’s ate their own babies. Terrible civil war broke out in the city as people went mad. The slaughter of the people of each other was greater than the slaughter of the Romans.

The Sun and the Moon darkened

Matth. 24:29-30, “and immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened...”

The language used here by Jesus is the same used by Isaiah in Isaiah 13:10 to describe the coming fall of Babylon by the Medes and the destruction of Idumea in 34:4. This is common apocalyptic language used to describe the destruction of a nation.

Gathering of the Elect

Matth. 24: 31, “and he shall send his angels...and gather his elect from the four corners of the earth.”

The Gospel went out first to the Jews throughout the Roman empire. Those who believed Jesus was the prophesied Messiah did not believe the false prophets who went out from 66 AD to gather Jews from all over the world to join the rebellion believing that the Messiah was to miraculously appear to save them from Rome. More than a million Jews from all over the world believed these false prophets and were gathered in Jerusalem but ended up being trapped and slaughtered. The wheat was separated from the tares. In Luke 19:27 Jesus said, “*but those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring here (Jerusalem) and slay them before me.*” That happened in 70 AD. It was also the end of the “judaizers” infiltrating the early

Church!

As In the Days of Noah

Matth. 24: 37-51, “But as the days of Noah were so shall the coming of the son of man be...one shall be taken the other left behind”

The multi-million best selling “Left Behind” series has caused the greatest misinterpretation of these scriptures. These books imply that Jesus is talking about the Rapture. You want to be taken and not left behind! The clear teaching of these books are the Rapture will take the Christians away and the wicked will be left behind to endure the Great Tribulation. Now read these scriptures again and see who is “taken away”! Jesus said it is the wicked that get taken away! The righteous are left behind! Just as it was in the days of Noah when he and his family were left behind and the wicked taken away! Jesus is confirming to His disciples the prophecy of Ezekiel 39. Gog and his invading force of Idumeans and international foreigners swarming all over Judea who had taken control of the land, the Temple and the priesthood would be wiped out from the land...and like the few who survived with Noah, the Church of Jerusalem who headed the words of Jesus fled at the beginning of the conflict and then when it was over returned to re-establish the church in Jerusalem.

Please note: When Jesus refers here to His coming, He is not referring to His coming at the end of the Kingdom Age, at the last trump, at the resurrection. He is referring here to His coming in the clouds which we already have seen is the Biblical reference to His judgment on Jerusalem.

Armageddon

What Jesus was describing in Matthew 23 and 24 is what Revelations describes as Armageddon! As I have already shown you Jesus tells John that what He is about to show him was to shortly take place. I am not going to give you a whole commentary of

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the book of Revelations, that would make this book too long. But it will help us to get the time of Armageddon right if we get the place of where Armageddon occurs right! Popular prophecy writers therefore not only have the time of Armageddon wrong (it was 70 AD, not some future invasion of Russia into Israel) but they also have the place wrong, which I will however show you.

The common interpretation of all prophecy books is that God gathers the armies of Satan in the valley of Jezreel outside the town of Megiddo and there destroys them in a dramatic showdown. The valley of Jezreel outside Megiddo was the scene of some major battles in the history of Israel. So when you go on an Israel tour the guides take you to this valley and show you how the armies from the north, the south and the east are going to come meet in this valley in battle and the valley will be drenched in blood up to the horses' bridles. Very graphic and gruesome but not actually Biblical. Wrong town, wrong place! (and wrong time)

The word "Armageddon" is only mentioned once in the Bible in Rev. 16:16 and never mentioned in the Old Testament even though it is a Hebrew word or words. John writes in Revelation, "*And He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*" So first we must understand that this is a Hebrew word and not Greek and it is therefore in the Hebrew translation of the words that we must understand the meaning of where this place called Armageddon is located.

The word Armageddon comes from two Hebrew words that you can look up in Strong's Concordance: "Har" meaning mountain or mount (Strong's word no. H2022) and "Megiddon" meaning gathering, assembly or congregation (Strong's word no. H4023). Putting these two words together we have the phrase "the mount of the assembly" from the words "har-megiddon". So we can see immediately that there is no indication here of a valley where armies are to be gathered but rather a mountain and not a town called Megiddo (otherwise the word would have been "Armageddo") but a word "megiddon" meaning "assembly". As we do not have the actual word

"Armageddon" occurring anywhere else in the Bible we need to look for the phrase "the mount of the assembly" in the Bible to perhaps give us insight as to what is going on here. Remember, scripture is always the best interpreter of scripture. Are there any clues anywhere else in the Bible as to where the location of this "mount of assembly" might be?

Hebrews 12:22-23 tells us that we are "come to mount Zion...the general assembly" and Isaiah 14:13 Satan says, "I will ascend to heaven...I will sit upon the mount of the congregation". I am not going to do a study for you here of the wonderful spiritual truths behind the phrases, "Mount Zion", the "Heavenly Council", "the mount of the congregation". That is a separate study that has much hidden truth that I will do in another book. Suffice it to say that "Armageddon" does not take place in valley outside Megiddo. It is however the heavenly place also known as "Mount Zion" where God will sit among His divine council and gather the kings of the earth, the demons, Satan and the people for judgment! But this heavenly "Mount Zion" also throughout scripture has an earthly counterpart ...the city of Jerusalem built on Mt. Moriah where Abraham was to have offered Isaac as a sacrifice (the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount). So the place where Armageddon takes place is not outside Megiddo in a valley but in Jerusalem, built on Mt. Moriah, where God will bring a multinational army for a great slaughter. But has there ever been historically such a great battle in and around Jerusalem?

Yes, for it was here in 70 AD on the mount of assembly, Mount Zion, Jerusalem, that God gathered the nations of the world represented by the Roman legions of Titus and according to the Jewish historian Josephus (who was recording the whole event for posterity from the Roman side) the slaughter of 1,100,000 Jews crowded into Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles took place. Thus fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus, "But those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before me." (Luke 19:27) This resulted in the great deliverance of the true Israel of God. This was Jesus returning in the clouds of judgment bringing destruction to "this generation" who was to see all these

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prophecies fulfilled as He promised in Matthew 23 and 24.

Closing note... What does this mean?

- There is no future 7 year “Great Tribulation” where the Antichrist makes a pact with the Jews. The great tribulation of Matthew 24 already happened.
- There is no future Armageddon of a coalition of nations invading Israel led by Russia. Armageddon already happened.
- You are not going to be taken out of the world and the wicked left behind, as it was in the days of Noah it is the plan of God to take the wicked out of the earth and the “meek will inherit the earth” just as Jesus said they would.
- This entire narrative of destruction and Satan taking over the world is in total contradiction to scripture and is part of a propaganda effort by the enemy using well meaning Christian preachers to discourage you from discipling the nations and bring in the Kingdom as Jesus commanded you to do.