

**True or False
Prophet? The Great
Tribulation and
Parousia Shock**

By GHOSTONTHENET

When we last left off, the followers of The Way were bolting from Judea to escape the coming calamity; the great tribulation. I feel I will start with the easier portion, which is generally agreed to have been fulfilled in A.D. 70 and then move onto what I consider to be the trickier parallels.

for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:22-24 ESV)

The first sentence indicates these are “days of vengeance”, the obvious question is ‘vengeance for whom?’ The answer has already been provided and may be summed up in this text; “so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” (Matthew 23:35-36 ESV) As one might imagine this would be a very steep penalty, but what about “to fulfill all that is written”? A fellow orthodox preterist at Theology Web¹ posting with a screen name ‘DeeDeeWarren’ calls attention to this passage,

"Son of man, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel, saying, 'The days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing'? Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.' But say to them, The days are near, and the fulfillment of every vision. (Ezekiel 12:22-23 ESV)

The hyperbole here is not very difficult to spot. Chances are that “every vision” refers not to every prophecy ever written occurring in a brief amount of time soon, but oracles of judgment upon the covenant people in obvious contradiction to this proverb, so also this passage. Christ next says, “Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!” This is very true, for those followers of The Way, being pregnant or nursing infants would severely inhibit a flight from Jerusalem, as for those still within the city in time for the great tribulation, the crushing weight of the famine once Titus had surrounded the city for the final siege make such a statement valid indeed. Josephus wrote about several dramatic examples of this,

As the famine grew worse, the frenzy of the partisans increased with it, and every day these two terrors strengthened their grip. For as corn was nowhere to be seen, men broke into houses and ransacked them. If they found any, they maltreated the

¹ Theology Web, www.theologyweb.com, this is a very large theology debate forum with posters all across the religious spectrum, whether Christian or otherwise, at which I post under the screen name GhostontheNet. The thread is <http://www.theologyweb.com/forum/showthread.php?t=12560&page=1&pp=15>

occupants for saying there was none; if they did not, they suspected them of having hidden it more carefully and tortured them. Proof of whether or not they had food was provided by the appearance of the unhappy wretches. If they still had flesh on their bones, they were deemed to have plenty of stores; if they were already reduced to skeletons, they were passed over, for it seemed pointless to dispatch those who were certain to die of starvation before long. Many secretly exchanged their possessions for one measure of corn – wheat if they happened to be rich, barley if they were poor. Then they shut themselves up in the darkest corners of their houses, where some through extreme hunger ate their grain as it was, others made bread, necessity and fear being the only guides. Nowhere was a table laid – they snatched the food from the fire while still uncooked and ate like wolves.

The sight of such misery would have brought tears to the eyes, for while the strong had more than enough, the weak were in desperate straits. All human feelings, alas, yield to hunger, of which decency is always the first victim; for when hunger reigns, restraint is abandoned. Thus it was that wives robbed their husbands, children their fathers, and – most horrible of all – mothers their babies, snatching their food out of their very mouths; and when their dearest were dying in their arms, they did not hesitate to deprive them of the morsels that might have kept them alive. This way of satisfying their hunger did not go unnoticed: everywhere the partisans were ready to swoop even on such pickings. Wherever they saw a locked door they concluded that those within were having a meal, and instantly bursting the door open they rushed in, and hardly stopped short of squeezing their throats to force out the morsels of food! They beat old men who held on to their crusts, and tore the hair of women who hid what was in their hands. They showed no pity for grey hairs or helpless infancy, but picked up the children as they clung to their precious scraps and dashed them on the floor.²

Woe indeed, and that doesn't even count the horrors of the fighting and the war itself. And what about “**For there will be great distress upon the earth**”? The term translated as “earth” here is as follows,

γῆ

ge

Thayer Definition:

- 1) arable land
- 2) the ground, the earth as a standing place
- 3) the main land as opposed to the sea or water
- 4) the earth as a whole
 - 4a) the earth as opposed to the heavens
 - 4b) the inhabited earth, the abode of men and animals

² Josephus, The Jewish War 5.10.2-5.10.3

5) a country, land enclosed within fixed boundaries, a tract of land, territory, region

Of these definitions, the most likely from an orthodox preterist standpoint is this last definition, which would make the phrase, “the land”. To be more specific, it is the land of Judea. Kenneth Gentry, though in a different context, offers this data on the phrase,

The Rabbis are particularly careful in their description of “the land” (הַאֲרֶץ, *he ge*). Edersheim notes that “Palestine was to the Rabbis simply ‘the land,’ all other countries being summed up under the designation of ‘outside the land.’”³ Elsewhere he comments:

The pilgrim who, leaving other countries, entered Palestine, must have felt as if he had crossed the threshold to another world. Manners, customs, institutions, law, life, nay, the very intercourse between man and man, were quite different. All was dominated by the all-absorbing idea of religion. It penetrated every relation of life. Moreover, it was inseparably connected with the soil, as well as the people of Palestine, at least so long as the Temple stood. Nowhere else could the Shekhinah... dwell or manifest itself; nor could, unless under exceptional circumstances, and for ‘the merit of the fathers,’ the spirit of prophecy be granted outside its bounds. To the orthodox Jew the mental and spiritual horizon was bounded by Palestine. It was ‘the land’; all the rest of the world, except Babylonia, was ‘outside the land.’ No need to designate it especially as ‘holy’; for all here bore the impress of sanctity, as he understood it.^{4 5}

In favor of this interpretation also is what immediately follows, **“and wrath against this people.”** This presumably refers either to divine wrath against the covenant people who rejected His Son, or wrath by the Gentiles against the land poured out in the war. I will save documentation of the **“great distress”** until the parallels in Matthew and Mark. In the text declaring, **“They will fall by the edge of the sword”**, several things are obvious, the first is that this is a war with ancient weapons, although some futurists are adept at magically transforming such things into modern weapons.⁶ The second is that Gentiles will be cutting down the covenant people in this war. As to **“and be led captive among all nations”**, Josephus gives the following data,

³ Gentry cites Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life p. 14. Gentry adds, “See Mishnah tractates: Orlah 3:9; Gittim 1:2; Abodah Zarah 1:8; Mikwaoth 8:1. Kelim 1:6 notes that “there are ten degrees of holiness. The Land of Israel is holier than any other land.””

⁴ Gentry cites Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah book 1 chapter 7

⁵ Kenneth Gentry, Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil p. 82

⁶ No kidding! One of the more comical chapters of Gary DeMar’s End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the Left Behind Theology was number 1, which deals with Ezekiel 38 and 39. Wherein he ably manages to make a mockery of Tim Lahaye’s transformation of soldiers riding horses, armed with bows and arrows, war clubs and spears into warplanes, intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-equipped MiG fighter-bombers, and burning molten steel smashing to the ground. It is therefore ironic that the man has the audacity to claim to be interpreting scripture in its literal sense.

Of the youngsters he picked out the tallest and handsomest to be kept for the triumphal procession; of the rest, those over seventeen were put in irons and sent to hard labour in Egypt, while great numbers were presented by Titus to the provinces to perish in the theatres by the sword or by wild beasts; those under seventeen were sold.⁷

I will first note that those sent to Egypt could very well have been sold throughout the provinces from there. Those distributed throughout the provinces to die in brutal Roman forms of entertainment are obviously being led captive, and as I saw when writing about the gospel preached to all the world, all nations can be a figure of speech for the Roman empire. The last set under seventeen who were sold are not given a location of where they all went to, implying they went all over the place.

We now come to the last part, “and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” George Peter Holford noted,

The undisputed facts are, that Jerusalem has not since been in possession of the Jews, but has been successively occupied by the Romans, Arabic Saracens, Franks, WawaInes, and lastly by the Turks, who now posses it. It has never regained its former distinction and prosperity. It has always been *trodden down*. The eagles of idolatrous Rome, the *crescent* of Mahomet, and the *banner* of Popery, have by turns been displayed amidst the ruins of the sanctuary ; and a Mahomedan mosque, to the extent of a mile in circumference, now covers the spot where the Temple formerly stood. -- The territory of Judea, then one of the most fertile countries on the globe, has for more than *seventeen hundred years* continued a desolate waste. The Jews themselves, still miraculously preserved a distinct people, are, as we see, scattered over the whole earth, invigorating the faith of the Christian, flashing conviction in the face of the infidel, and constituting an universal, permanent, and invincible evidence of the truth of Christianity.⁸

This was of course certainly true in 1805 when he wrote, but now the Jews have since been in control of Jerusalem since 1967. Such fills my heart with joy, is it possible that this heralds a more widespread acceptance of Yeshua Christ and His New Covenant among the sons of the kingdom of God, the Jews? Let us watch and pray that it is so. Reverting back to A.D. 70, believe it or not this passage is universally accepted as fulfilled then even among dispensational futurists. John Walvoord, the noted proponent of that view writes, “all agree that Luke 21:20-24 was fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem...”⁹

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut

⁷ Josephus, The Jewish War 6.9.2

⁸ George Peter Holford, The Destruction of Jerusalem: An Absolute and Irresistible Proof of the Divine Origin of Christianity, emphasis his

⁹ John Walvoord, Major Bible Prophecies p. 296

short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

(Matthew 24:21-22 ESV)

For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

(Mark 13:19-20 ESV)

The common futurist interpretation of this is that this will be a time of global calamity killing vast amounts of people everywhere. As my pastor put it after talking about judgments of **YHWH** in the past, “the great tribulation will make those judgments look like picnics.” Such an interpretation would be difficult for the preterist, as even counting the widespread wars following the death of Nero Caesar the loathsome vulture, places like North America, Australia, India, China, etc. would be in no danger of having all humans living there be wiped out. In response Gary DeMar notes,

Jesus was not describing a worldwide tribulation in this verse. The geographical context is Judea: “Then let those who are in *Judea* flee to the mountains” ([Matthew –Ghost] 24:16). All one had to do to escape the impending tribulation was to leave the city and head for the mountains. Therefore, the boundary of this particular “great tribulation” did not extend beyond the city limits of Jerusalem.¹⁰ How could anyone on foot, carrying a nursing baby, escape on foot if a modern tribulation is in view? Tanks and jet planes would thwart any attempted exodus from the city.¹¹

DeMar has a point, by futurist fantasies this is in the midst of the reign of Antichrist, who is itching to slaughter every Christian he can in light of their failure to take his mark and worship him. He would know exactly where to look for Christians trying to flee to the hills, thanks to these oracles 2 millennia in advance. Even if Christians somehow managed to escape on foot, getting past tanks and jet planes, they could be found by exactly the same means the Taliban and the like hiding out in caves were found in the recent Afghanistan war.

The admonition to pray that the flight isn’t on the Sabbath also implies that other men are forcing it to be a disadvantage to flee at that time. This would make perfect sense at a time when the Pharisee’s strict interpretation of the Sabbath law limited one to a three quarter mile maximum distance journeyed.¹² The idea that this is not forced on someone

¹⁰ I disagree with DeMar here in that I think the boundaries of the great tribulation here extend throughout Judea rather than merely Jerusalem.

¹¹ Gary DeMar, End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the Left Behind Theology p. 86-87

¹² “A Sabbath day’s journey “was a distance of 2,000 cubits or around one kilometer, ingeniously reckoned by interpreting Ex[odus –Ghost]. 16:29 (‘let no one go out of his place on the seventh day’) in the light of Num[bers –Ghost]. 35:5 (where the Levites’ pasturelands are defined by a radius of 2,000 cubits from any one of the six ‘cities of refuge’”)” F.F. Bruce, The Book of Acts revised edition p. 39, cited in Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church p. 115-116 note 27

is of no help, Yeshua is a believer that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27 ESV) Obviously, fleeing for one's life on a Sabbath day is acceptable by this standard. It is notable that so many futurists think the only real escape from the great tribulation will be a pre-tribulational rapture rather than a flight from Judea. This, however, contradicts Christ Himself when He commands that they should be "praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place" (Luke 21:36 ESV). Being plucked off the face of the earth in a premature resurrection doesn't require a prayer for strength! While flight from Judea obviously does!

Another point of evidence comes from the 1 Maccabees text I cited last book about those standing for the covenant fleeing to the hills. What followed this were various victories of the rebels against Antiochus' abominable decrees. The reaction was as follows,

When King Antiochus heard these reports, he was very angry, and he sent and gathered all the forces of his kingdom, a very strong army... He turned over to him [Lysias –Ghost] half his forces and his elephants and gave him orders about everything he wanted done, and about the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, against whom he was to send a force to crush out and destroy the strength of Israel and what was left of Jerusalem, and to efface their memory from the place, and settle aliens in all their borders, and distribute their land among them.¹³

However, in Maccabees this plan never comes to fruition and backfires. However, this passage has all the smell of Luke's version of this part of the discourse, meaning that it is very possible Yeshua has deliberately reversed what happens after the flight to the hills, and that His movement is the true Israel of **YHWH** that is thereby vindicated. Another point of evidence comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls,

On the day when the Kittim fall, there shall be battle and terrible carnage before the God of Israel, for that shall be the day appointed from ancient times for the battle of destruction of the sons of darkness. At that time, the assembly of gods and the hosts of men shall battle, causing great carnage; on the day of calamity, the sons of light shall battle with the company of darkness amid the shouts of a mighty multitude and the clamour of gods and men to (make manifest) the might of God. And it shall be a time of [great] tribulation for the people which God shall redeem; of all its afflictions none shall be as this, from its sudden beginning until its end in eternal redemption.¹⁴

¹³ 1 Maccabees 3:27-36

¹⁴ Dead Sea Scrolls, *The War Scroll* (IQM) 1.9-15. (numbering imprecise in this edition) The translator notes of their translation, "Hypothetical but likely reconstructions are placed between [] and glosses necessary for fluency between ()." That is, damage to the scroll makes parts in the brackets illegible but probably able to be reconstructed by the context of what are legible, actual additions to the text for coherence where there is no evidence for such a statement in the original in the parenthesis.

Before commenting on this passage, I will first place this document in its context. This was a very eschatological prophecy/plan for a forty-year war, in which the sons of light fight with **YHWH**'s aid to destroy Gentile nations. This is evident later in the document, where it states, "He will pay their reward with burning [fire by the hand of] those tested in the crucible. He will sharpen His weapons and will not tire until all the wicked nations are destroyed."¹⁵ I think it reflects a similar mindset to that Tacitus reports among the Jews before the fall of Jerusalem, "Most people held to the belief that, according to ancient priestly writings, this was the moment at which the East was fated to prevail; men would now start forth from Judaea and conquer the world."¹⁶ This also was probably the rationale behind the militaristic false prophets and false messiahs already dealt with. A discussion of the document's date also sheds light on its context,

With Y. Yadin and other archeologists and historians, I believe that both the weapons and tactics of the War Rule correspond to the art of war practiced by the Roman legion rather than by the Greek phalanx. In particular, the square shield (*scutum*) of the foot-soldier, and the buckler of the horseman (*parma* or *clipeus*), the battle array of the three lines (*acies triplex*), the 'gates of war' or openings between the units (*intervalla*), seem to be characteristically Roman. In addition, only the cavalry were to wear greaves – a custom introduced into the Roman army during the time of Julius Caesar in the middle of the first century BCE, and since the reference to the 'king' of the Kittim points to the Imperial epoch (after 27 BCE), the date of its composition should probably be placed in the last decades of the first century BCE or at the beginning of the first century CE.¹⁷

That being said, I will now provide my argumentation. It is only mentioned that the "[great] tribulation" will come upon "the people which God shall redeem" and not everyone. This is amplified because the document is about the utter destruction of all "wicked nations" by the hand of **YHWH** in vengeance; the great tribulation of it is clearly something that happens to merely the "sons of light". For if the whole purpose is the destruction of the Gentiles, a great tribulation affecting everyone internationally would be received either with great jubilation for making the task at hand much easier, or as a mixed blessing, rather than the downbeat tone of this Qumran passage. The language here echoes Yeshua, and that it would imply that neither He nor the Qumranites came up with this concept of the great tribulation, but that it was possibly well known.

I will now offer a comparison in an effort to prove this point. The Qumran document states, "it shall be a time of [great] tribulation for the people which God shall redeem; of all its afflictions none shall be as this, from its sudden beginning until its end in eternal redemption." It says that of all the afflictions of those **YHWH** will redeem and probably has redeemed, this will be the greatest ever. Compare with "For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now," and the parallel is striking. Add to this the linguistic similarity of "until its end in eternal redemption." (for in "eternal redemption" there is obviously not

¹⁵ Dead Sea Scrolls, *The War Scroll* (4Q491) 17:1-5 (numbering imprecise in this edition)

¹⁶ Tacitus, *The Histories* 5.13

¹⁷ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* p. 162-163

likely to be any more tribulation) and “and never will be” and the parallel is quite strong indeed. To explain this, I suspect the idea was going around that at the same time Israel would triumph over the Romans a great tribulation would come upon it in the process but it would nevertheless win the war. This would explain what seemed to me to be the admonition against joining the nationalistic false Messiahs and false prophets. Besides which, the saying “if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short” weighs heavily against a militaristic victory like that of The War Scroll.

The question may however be asked, ‘How bad was the war of 66-70 (or if taking out the last pockets of resistance counts, 66-73)?’ Well, Josephus described it like this; “No destruction ever wrought by God or man approached the wholesale carnage of this war.”¹⁸ In a similar fashion, Eusebius described it as the time when **YHWH** was “completely blotting out that wicked generation from among men.”¹⁹ He then went on to say,

The calamities which at that time overwhelmed the whole [Jewish –Ghost] nation in every part of the world; the process by which the inhabitants of Judaea were driven to the limits of disaster; the thousands and thousands of men of every age who together with women and children perished by the sword, by starvation, and by countless other forms of death; the number of Jewish cities besieged and the horrors they endured – especially the terrible and worse than terrible sights that met the eyes of those who sought refuge in Jerusalem itself as an impregnable fortress; the character of the war and the detailed events at all its stages; the last scene of all was when the Abomination of Desolation announced by the prophets was set up in the very Temple of God, once renowned, when it underwent utter destruction and final dissolution by fire – all this anyone who wishes can gather the precise details from Josephus’ history.²⁰

It is also worth noting that Eusebius cites the great tribulation passage of Matthew 24 as evidence for “our Saviour’s absolutely true prediction, in which he reveals those very things in this prophecy”²¹. And this was of course, directly after quoting extensively from Josephus’ description of the fall of Jerusalem. But what am I to make of the statement “And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days”? I think that with the flight from Judea being mentioned as the ways of escape, a plausible explanation would be that if the seeds of sedition were not providentially ended by **YHWH**, Roman indignation against the Jews would grow to the point where they would exterminate the whole race and the whole Christian movement within it’s empire. Am I being melodramatic? I think not, Josephus reports this dismal element from a speech by Agrippa on the eve of the war.

¹⁸ Josephus, The Jewish War 6.9.4

¹⁹ Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5

²⁰ Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5

²¹ Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.7

‘Possibly some of you suppose that you are making war in accordance with agreed rules, and that when the Romans have won they will be kind to you, and will not think of making an example to other nations by burning down your Holy City and destroying your entire race. I tell you, not even if you survive will you find a place of refuge, since every people recognizes the lordship of Rome or fears that it will have to do so. Again, the danger threatens not only ourselves here but those also in other cities; for there is not a region in the world without its Jewish colony. All these, if you go to war, will be massacred by your opponents, and through the folly of a few men every city will run with Jewish blood. There would be an excuse for such a massacre, but if it did not take place, think how wicked it would be to take up arms against such kindly people! Pity your wives and children, or at least pity your mother city and its sacred precincts. Spare the Temple and preserve for your use the Sanctuary with its sacred treasures. For the Romans will no longer keep their hands off when they have captured these, since for sparing them hitherto they have received no thanks at all. I call to witness all you hold sacred, the holy angels of God, and the Fatherland we all share, that I have not kept back anything that is for your safety; if you make a right decision, you will share with me the blessings of peace, but if you are carried by your passions, you will go without me to your doom.’²²

That being said, it may be asked ‘How could it be that this was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the carnage of World War I and World War II greatly exceed then, for it was to be great tribulation such as never was and never will be.’ Besides the probable connection to the language of Qumran which envisions the great tribulation merely afflicting the ‘sons of light’, Gentry notes,

The unique-event language of Christ is common stock-in-trade in prophetic writing. Lane comments on Mark 13:19, the parallel verse to Matthew 24:21: “The severity of the distress that will accompany the destruction of Jerusalem is vividly suggested through Semitic hyperbole. Characteristically, oracles of judgment are couched in language that is universal and radical. The intention is to indicate that through human events God intervenes powerfully to modify the course of history. The entire world feels the vibrations of that intervention.”²³ This is most interesting to the preterist, for it dismantles the futurist argument. The Old Testament has many such statements that support our view that the language is hyperbolic.

Regarding the tenth woe of the tenth plague upon Egypt, the Scripture says: “Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, *such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again*” (Exo. 11:6). According to dispensationalists the Great Tribulation affects the entire earth. Consequentially, it affects Egypt. But this passage says Egypt will *never again* experience such a terrible event as the tenth plague²⁴, which occurs hundreds of years before Christ.

²² Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2.16.4

²³ William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* p. 471

²⁴ Gentry’s idea being that such an event would cause a greater cry in Egypt.

Yet the future Great Tribulation is supposed to be the worst ever for everyone – including Egyptians.

In a prophecy regarding the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem God employs language reminiscent of Christ's: "And I will do among you what *I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again*, because of all your abominations" (Eze. 5:9)... And this is specifically about Jerusalem, which is very prominent in the Matthew 24 passage.²⁵

As a final note, realizing that I may have futurists or others just itching to try to demonstrate that the book of Revelation teaches a global great tribulation. Therefore, I will note that all the verses cited in favor of this either have the Greek oikoumene, in which case it would refer to wars across the empire in A.D. 68-69, or the Greek ge which I have argued can have the meaning of land, in which case it is often the land of Judea.

For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

(Matthew 24:27-28 ESV)

Of this Wright argues, "When the 'son of man' was vindicated, there would be no question, nor room for doubt. It would be clear to anyone, whether or not they had eyes to see. Jerusalem's destruction would not be something about which one might debate. It would be like lightning shining from east to the west. The eagles – the Roman eagles, presumably – would gather round the carcass and pick it clean. The great city that had rejected Jesus' message, his way of peace, would be destroyed. He would thereby be vindicated as a prophet; yes, and more than a prophet."²⁶ This would, I think, be a good time to remind the reader of the documentation I previously provided about the eagle standards, making the Roman connection plausible. Add to this Gentry's note that the word "eagles" in this discourse is the same Josephus uses for the eagle standards (aetos).²⁷ The only real argument I am aware of for "vultures", as the ESV and other translations have it, with any substance is that eagles don't generally eat carrion. However, that may be the very point of the statement, normal eagles don't typically devour carcasses but the Roman eagles do. Kenneth Gentry makes a good case for this interpretation's fulfillment in history,

This judgment comes through the providential instrument of the Roman army. Israel is judicially dead; [and I might add spiritually –Ghost] the Roman armies will devour her carcass. This is why Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37); this is why God leaves her house desolate (Matt. 23:38). The Spirit of God, which is her life, departs... Thus, as Jerusalem collapses to her "death" the marauding armies of Rome pour into the city on that fateful day to devour her corpse. Jerusalem is so stripped of her valuables that Josephus writes: "So gluttoned with

²⁵ Kenneth Gentry, Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil p. 67-68

²⁶ N.T. Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, p. 360

²⁷ Kenneth Gentry, Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil p. 75.

plunder were the troops, one and all, that throughout Syria the standard of gold was depreciated to half its former value” (*Wars* 6:6:1). The soldiers gather as bickering eagles over a corpse, picking it apart and gorging on its valuables.²⁸

That being said, I now move onto the verses that fuel the accusations of false prophecy by Yeshua,

The Collapse of the Universe and the Son of Man Pulling a Pop a Wheelie on a cloud

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

(Matthew 24:29-31 ESV)

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

(Mark 13:24-27 ESV)

"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

(Luke 21:25-27 ESV)

From the mere look of this text, it appears that we have the collapse of the universe, the second coming of Yeshua Christ, and the blowing of the final trumpet on judgment day. Therefore, from my viewpoint the question arises; is there good reason to either take parts figuratively, or reason to believe the events following this trumpet aren't all part of the final judgment? I believe there is, I will begin with the alleged disintegration of the universe. DeMar notes of this,

The only written revelation Jesus had and His disciples knew was what we call the Old Testament... Noting is hidden to the trained student of the Old Testament Scriptures. When Jesus wanted to define Himself, He pointed His disciples to the

²⁸ Kenneth Gentry, [Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil](#) p. 74-75

only reliable dictionary... The language used by Jesus in Matthew 24 was familiar. The disciples had heard it before. They knew what Jesus meant when He described the sun and moon going dark and the stars falling from the sky. The end of a nation was at hand...

Isaiah wrote that “the day of the LORD is coming,” and when it comes,

The stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light;
the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light.

(Isa. 13:9-10)

This is a description of a localized judgment of a world power that existed long ago. Who did God raise up to judge Babylon? “Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them” (13:17a). This proves that the Babylon of long ago is the object of judgment. The day of “destruction” which came from “the Almighty” (13:6) is described with graphic descriptions: “Hand will fall limp” (13:7); “every man’s heart will melt” (13:7); “they will writhe like a woman in labor” (13:8). When the day of the Lord comes, it will be “cruel, with fury and burning anger to make the land a desolation” (13:9)...

The disciples immediately recognized the source and meaning of Jesus’ words. They understood that Israel would come under a judgment similar to Babylon. *The language is identical.* The interpretation should equally be *identical*. Jerusalem²⁹ would be treated like the pagan nation of Babylon. This is why Jesus appropriates and applies the Babylon language to Israel and the Book of Revelation characterizes Israel as Babylon (14:8),³⁰ “the enemy of the true people of the covenant God.”³¹

The destruction of Pharaoh and Egypt is described in a similar way. It is not coincidental that Jerusalem is said to be Egypt in Revelation 11:8. Both in Egypt and Jerusalem God’s faithful people were persecuted. The Jerusalem of the first century sought to kill those who taught that Jesus was the promised redeemer.

And when I extinguish you,
I will cover the heavens, and darken their stars;
I will cover the sun with a cloud,
And the moon shall not give its light.
All the shining lights in the heavens
I will darken over you

²⁹ I will again personally say Judea rather than just Jerusalem is more likely the intention.

³⁰ Ironically, as Revelation goes I would argue the “Mystery Babylon the great” which is a “great city” is to be understood as Jerusalem.

³¹ DeMar quotes N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* p. 354. Though DeMar quotes Wright accurately, it is worth noting that DeMar capitalized “God” for Wright, who doesn’t because he doesn’t consider it a proper name, hence he either uses **YHWH** or says what kind of god, i.e. “covenant god”.

And will set darkness on you land.

(Ezek. 32:7-8)

Egypt's conqueror was Babylon (32:11). The language is analogous to the words Jesus used in Matthew 24:29. If the prophecy is not "literal" (using the modern sense of the word) for Babylon and Egypt, then we should not expect it to be "literal" for Jerusalem.

While Scripture describes one nation bringing down the fortunes of another nation, we know that God is behind it all. God is in heaven, but "His sword" finds its way to earth through the terror of other kingdoms. Again, descriptions of happenings in the heavens form the backdrop for national upheaval in the description of the end of a political era.

And all the host of heaven will wear away,
And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;
All their hosts wither away
As a leaf withers from the fig tree.
For My sword is satiated in heaven,
Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom,
And upon the people whom I have devoted to
destruction.

(Isa. 34:4-5)

God did not come down *physically* to mete out judgment upon Edom. But the text states that His sword "shall descend for judgment upon Edom." Did a sword come down from heaven? Did the host of heaven "wear away"? Was the sky "rolled up like a scroll"? Certainly not in literal terms. Again, such language is simply a description of Edom's national judgment.³²

As fellow preterist DeeDeeWarren once quipped at TheologyWeb, "God doesn't have to destroy the universe every time he passes judgment." I believe this refers to the time when Jerusalem was destroyed, the decisive victory of the Romans in the war. I will note the time when it began to be true that, "The territory of Judea, then one of the most fertile countries on the globe, has for more than seventeen hundred years continued a desolate waste."³³ As Wright states, "We have already commented on the meaning of the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars. It is crass literalism, in view of the many prophetic passages in which this language denotes socio-political and military catastrophe, to insist that this time the words must refer to the physical collapse of the space-time world. This is simply the way regular Jewish imagery is able to refer to major socio-political events and bring out their full significance."³⁴ The only conceivable pushback I can think to this is that Luke's version contains the destruction of Jerusalem before his version of the

³² Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church p. 149-152

³³ George Peter Holford, The Destruction of Jerusalem: An Absolute and Irresistible Proof of the Divine Origin of Christianity. Holford was, of course, writing in 1805.

³⁴ N.T. Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God p. 361

collapse of the universe. However, unlike the other two, he lacks the word “after”, implying that the two events may not be isolated.

That being said, what about the text stating that “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn”? The first step would be to analyze the phrase “tribes of the earth”. For that, Thayer lists the definition for what is translated “tribes”

φυλή

phule

Thayer Definition:

1) a tribe

1a) in the NT all the persons descending from one of the twelve sons of the patriarch, Jacob

2) a nation, people

Thayer is right in 1a about the term being used in this way, it is used in this passage; “Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes (phule) of Israel.”” (Matthew 19:28 ESV) The next word is *ge*, which I have already argued there is plausible reason to give it a localized sense, hence, we have the twelve tribes of the land in a none too happy state over this “sign of the Son of Man” appearing. But what about the phrase and its meaning? Kenneth Gentry helps out on this,

Here I prefer the Authorized Version (KJV) to most other translations (including the New King James Version). It follows the Greek word order more closely and translates the passage so accurately: “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven” is the translation of the Greek, which reads: *καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ* (*kai tote phanetai to semeion tou huiou tou anthropou en ourano*, Matt. 24:30a).

I believe it is somewhat misleading to translate the phrase: “then shall appear the Son of Man in the sky.” To understand this verse in such a manner not only requires a restructuring of the text, but is patently anti-contextual. It is important to note that the “sign” is what “shall appear”: “then will appear the sign.” The Son of Man does not appear; the sign appears. Then Christ defines what the sign signifies: it is the sign “of the Son of Man” (a descriptive genitive).

What Christ teaches here is extremely important to redemptive history. He is responding to the question of his disciples regarding when the end of the “age”... will occur (Matt. 24:3). In essence, his full answer is: When the Romans lay waste the Temple (vv. 6 and 15 anticipate this) and pick apart Jerusalem (v. 28); that is,

when the government of Israel utterly collapses (v. 29), then it will be evident he who prophesies this destruction is “in heaven.”...

The Temple’s final destruction (which is the main topic of the discourse, Matt. 23:38-24:3) serves as a sign that the Son of Man is in heaven. It is his curse upon “these things” (Matt. 24:2) that causes this woe, it is his wrath as the Son of Man in heaven that sovereignly brings judgment... He prophesies it; the Jews will experience the fulfilling of his powerful word...

Interestingly, smoke serves as a sign for Israel’s armies in the Old Testament: “Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city” (Jdgs. 20:38). In Scripture the bellowing of smoke clouds from a scene of judgment often serves as evidence of that judgment (Gen. 19:28; Josh:18:20; 20:40; Psa. 37:20; Isa. 14:31; 34:10; Rev. 14:11; 18:9)... In the smoky destruction of Jerusalem [and smoky destruction of the Temple –Ghost] these Jewish leaders should see his position of power...³⁵

If that is so, how is it that the tribes of the land would “**see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**”? The first clue to the interpretation of this comes from the passage in the book of Daniel, which reads,

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

(Daniel 7:13-14 ESV)

The obvious thing one first notes in reading this text in its connection to Yeshua (who did, after all, call Himself the Son of Man) is that He is heading in the wrong direction according to the view that He goes from heaven to earth, for the Ancient of Days (**YHWH**) is not upon the earth, but in heaven, and the metaphorical transport of “clouds of heaven” lends credence to this. The second problem is that Yeshua Christ denies that His heavenly Father has a body at all; “**But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**” (John 4:23-24 ESV) So then, they will see the demonstration that Christ has acquired a universal kingdom; they will see His vindication as a true prophet.

Also notable are the passages about **YHWH** riding clouds in judgment, I will here quote my personal favorite to use. “An oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his

³⁵ Kenneth Gentry, Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil p. 79-81

presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.” (Isaiah 19:1 ESV) The first thing to note is that the movement is vertical in the downward direction; **YHWH** goes from heaven to Egypt. It is also difficult to read the passage literally, as the rest of the prophecy doesn’t square at all with idols literally trembling (not to mention the constant Biblical polemic that idols are worthless carvings that can’t even protect themselves from being destroyed) and men’s hearts being liquefied. So then, Christ’s prophecy also greatly resembles this figurative episode, it even has what is basically the equivalent of men’s hearts melting “within them”; “**and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**” (Luke 21:25-26 ESV) I think George B. Caird is correct when he wrote,

Here, as in the book of Daniel . . . , the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven was never conceived as a primitive form of space travel, but as a symbol for mighty reversal of fortunes within history and at the national level. . . How odd of Mark, say the critics, to append to a question about a historical crisis a discourse which is an answer to a question about an eschatological crisis! . . . But supposing Mark was right! . . . Supposing the prediction of the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven really was an answer to the disciple’s question about the date of the fall of Jerusalem! Is it indeed credible that Jesus, the heir to the linguistic and theological riches of the prophets, and himself a greater theologian and master of imagery than them all, should ever have turned their symbols into flat and literal prose?³⁶

But how could it be that when Yeshua says “**And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven**”, He doesn’t mean events that will coincide with the last trumpet at the Final Judgment? The first thing I will note is that there is more than one eschatological trumpet possible, for example Revelation 8:6-9:21 has seven judgments on earth heralded by seven trumpets. Gary DeMar argues thusly for this passage,

The Greek word translated “angels” is the common word used for “messengers.” God’s prophets, as messengers, and ministers, both in the Old and New Testament, are described as angels. Even dispensational prophecy writer Ed Hindson recognizes this. “The term *angel* (Greek, *angelos*) means ‘messenger.’ God’s angels are His divine messengers (Heb. 1:14; Rev. 1:1), and His true prophets and preachers are called angels of the churches (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).”³⁷ In the Greek version of the Old Testament (Septuagint or LXX), the Greek word *angelos* is translated numerous times as “messenger”: “And the LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His

³⁶ George B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* p. 20-22. Cited in N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* p. 341. I think it highly possible that the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and the coming on the clouds is one the same, and hence, by the Daniel 7 text and Matthew 26:64, it is a demonstration that Christ truly does reign on high, obviously taught the hard way.

³⁷ Ed Hindson, “False Christ’s, False Prophets, Great Deception”, in William T. James, *Foreshadows of Wrath and Redemption* p. 33

messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place” (2 Chron. 26:15). The people continually “mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophecies, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy” (26:16). These verses parallel the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Haggai is described as “the messenger [*angelos*] of the LORD of hosts (Hag. 1:13). The priest in Malachi is designated a messenger [*angelos*] of the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 2:7). John the Baptist is an “angel,” a messenger of God (Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; cf. Mal. 3:1). Jesus “sent messengers [*angeloi*] ahead of Him” (Luke 9:52). The spies Joshua sent to Jericho are called “messengers” (James 2:25).³⁸

As to actual interpretation, Gentry argues,

A more reasonable interpretation of Matthew 24:31 is to view it as a symbolical trumpeting in of the ultimate Jubilee Year. This is the time of the forgiveness of man’s ultimate debt; it is the “day of salvation.” By employing imagery drawn from the Year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25, the Lord here speaks of the final stage of redemption. This redemptive culmination begins in his earthly ministry, as we may surmise from such passages as Mark 1:15: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” It is sealed at the destruction of Jerusalem, which we see in Mark 9:1: “Assuredly, I say to you there are some standing here who will not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” The levitical Jubilee law is a ceremonial symbolically portraying the coming of full forgiveness in the Messiah and the incorporation of the nations into the people of God (see: Matt. 8:11-12; Rom. 11:11-25; Eph. 2:12-21).

The Old Testament Jubilee Year follows after seven consecutive Sabbath years. The Sabbath year is a God-ordained year of rest for the land held every seventh year. The Year of Jubilee occurs after the passing of seven sevens, or after the forty-ninth year. It is the culmination of all of the sabbatical tokens of rest.

In the Year of Jubilee, Israel experiences release from bondage and debt:

And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. For it is the Jubilee, it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field. In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor’s hand, you shall not oppress one another (Lev. 25:10-14).

³⁸ Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church p. 174-175

The typology of redemption contained in the Jubilee legislation lends it a beautiful prophetic utility. Isaiah employs Jubilee imagery to prophesy of the coming ultimate Jubilee:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor, He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty upon the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God (Isa. 61:1-2)

The Lord Jesus Himself introduces the fulfillment of the Jubilee Law in his ministry, when he preaches from Isaiah 61 at the Temple:

And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD.” Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:17-21).

Thus, Christ’s ministry introduces “the Acceptable Year of the Lord” (Luke 4:19), “the Day of Salvation” (2 Cor. 6:6), which the righteous of the Old Testament longed to see (Matt. 13:17).

This is why the Lord mentions the sounding of the “trumpet” in Matthew 24: it was the means for announcing the Jubilee. According to Matthew 24:31, when the Temple order collapses, Christ’s “angels” will go forth to all nations joyfully trumpeting the gospel of salvific liberation [Gentry has the same idea as DeMar on “angels” –Ghost]...

Through gospel preaching by faithful messengers, God gathers the elect into his kingdom from the four corners of the world. The phrase “from one end of heaven to the other” does not indicate the place of the action in heaven above; it signifies nothing more than “horizon to horizon” (Deut. 30:4; Neh. 1:9; cp. Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28-29). Rather it speaks of evangelistic activity spreading throughout the earth; it parallels “from the four winds,” that is, the four points of the compass.³⁹

To augment Gentry on this, the reader may remember that I had formerly argued that in context of the text in 1 Maccabees dealing with the flight from the hills, meant that followers of The Way would not only have to flee Judea, but also be prepared for action. Of all the text in Matthew 24 and its parallels, this verse fits this concept the best. This

³⁹ Kenneth Gentry, Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil p. 85-88

also probably parallels the occasion in the parable of Matthew 22:1-14 where after the armies of the king destroy the city of those that murdered His servants, He sends His servants on another round of invitations to all they come across. That being said, we will move on.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
(Matthew 24:32-34 ESV)

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.
(Mark 13:28-29 ESV)

As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.
(Luke 21:30-32 ESV)

Obviously, if my previous writing rings true the interpretation is elementary, these things actually did happen within one generation. Also noteworthy is that when they see these, they know that “he” and “the kingdom of God is near”. Whatever the kingdom of God is, Christ will be ushering it in at this time. Although there certainly isn’t space for it in this section, I hope to deal with the language of what the “kingdom of God” is later. Some dispensationalists argue that this means that “when Israel becomes a nation again know that these things are near” because of the usage of the fig tree as a symbol for Israel. However Gary DeMar in Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church concedes this for the sake of argument and makes an excellent scriptural case that this instead would much more probably predict the judgment against national Israel in light of its fruitlessness in the first century.⁴⁰ That being said we can move on.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
(Matthew 24:35 ESV)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
(Mark 13:31 ESV)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
(Luke 21:33 ESV)

On this and the “this generation” passage, Wright comments,

⁴⁰ Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church, Appendix 2 Fruitless Trees and National Israel p. 397-404

The prediction which follows, that this generation will see the end (Mark 13.30-2), is both thoroughly comprehensible in terms of the whole mindset of Jesus, and thoroughly coherent with the emphasis of the discourse as a whole. This is how the story *must* end. If Jesus is not the last prophet, he is a false prophet. The reference to heaven and earth passing away must not, of course, be taken as an indication that the discourse has after all been about the end of the space-time universe, but as another typical Jewish metaphor such as those in Isaiah or Jeremiah: even though heaven and earth, the things which YHWH created in the beginning, should pass away, unmaking the very word of creation of the sovereign god, yet these words would remain true. This is like saying ‘Truly, truly, I say to you’, only magnified to the furthest degree. There can be no more emphatic statement than this.⁴¹

Gentry amplifies this line of thought,

More significant even than Matthew’s contextual flow is the Lord’s statement in Matthew 24:34: “Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all things are fulfilled.” Here we have an authoritative, clear, and compelling pronouncement of the *time* of the events recorded in Matthew 24:4-31.

The matter before us is “solemnly introduced and emphatically affirmed” by Christ.⁴² We should note first, that Christ is dogmatic when he begins a statement with $\alpha\mu\eta\upsilon$ (*amen*, verily [truly –Ghost]). Hendriksen notes of the word: “In every case ... in which this word occurs in the New Testament it introduces a statement which not only expresses a truth or fact ... but an *important*, a *solemn* fact, one that in many cases is at variance with popular opinion or expectation or at least causes some surprise.”⁴³ Thus, Christ emphatically draws the disciple’s attention to what he is about to say – just as he does in 24:2, where he makes the statement about the destruction of the Temple that leads to the whole discourse.

Second, Christ further underscores his dogmatism. He does not simply tell them; he emphatically introduces what he has to say with the declarative “I tell you.” The Lord does not leave the temporal expectation as a casual remark, hoping they will catch it. He alerts them to what he is about to say.

Third, the literal rendering of the Greek reads: “Truly I tell you that *by no means* passes generation this until all these things happen.”⁴⁴ The “by no means” is a strong double negative ($\text{o}\upsilon\ \mu\eta$, *ou me*); and it is put early in his statement for

⁴¹ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* p. 364-365

⁴² Gentry cites William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* p. 479

⁴³ Gentry cites William Hendriksen, *Matthew* p. 289-290

⁴⁴ Gentry cites Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* p. 108. My own lexicons support Gentry’s arguments on the phrase “by no means”.

added emphasis. He is staking his credibility, as it were, on the absolute certainty of this prophetic pronouncement.^{45 46}

However, contrary to such compelling linguistic data in favor of fulfillment within one century, there are two common evasions, that “this generation” is actually the generation that sees the signs of the end of the age, “that generation”, or that “generation” actually means “race” in this passage. In light of all my past writing I find the first option baffling, **YHWH** even went so far as to send chariots flying around the sky all over Judea, leveled cities commonly enough by earthquake (“how often we hear...”) that Stoic philosopher Seneca used it as part of his argument on the temporary nature of everything and what they should do about it in life, and sent the whole empire spiraling into wars civil and domestic, and yet they have the audacity to assert the signs didn’t show up when Christ said they would, and that it is in fact we that are living in the last days like countless generations before were equally sure of?⁴⁷ DeMar further counters this interpretation when he notes,

Second, the use of “this generation” throughout the Gospels makes it clear that it means the generation to whom Jesus was speaking. The following is a list of every occurrence of “this generation” in the Gospels:

“But to what shall I compare *this generation*?” (Matt. 11:16).

“The men of Nineveh shall stand up with *this generation* at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here” (Matt. 12:41).

“The Queen of the South shall rise up with *this generation* at the judgment and shall condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42).

“Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon *this generation*” (Matt. 23:36).

“Truly I say to you, *this generation* will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34).

“Why does *this generation* seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation” (Mark 8:12).

“Truly I say to you, *this generation* will not pass away, until all these things take place” (Mark 13:30).

“To what shall I compare the men of *this generation*, and what are they like?” (Luke 7:31)

“*This generation* is a wicked generation, it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah” (Luke 11:29).

“The Queen of the South shall rise up with the men of *this generation* at the judgment and condemn them, because they come from the ends of the earth to

⁴⁵ Gentry adds in a footnote, “He contrasts the durability and integrity of his prophetic word here with that of the material universe (24:35).” This is of course the “**heaven and earth**” passage also cited by Wright.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Gentry, *Perilous Times: a Study in Eschatological Evil* p. 39-40

⁴⁷ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness* p. 14-41

hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (Luke 11:31).

“The men of Nineveh shall stand up with *this generation* at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold something greater than Jonah is here” (Luke 11:32)

For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them will they kill and some they will persecute, in order that the blood of all prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against *this generation*, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against *this generation*” (Luke 11:49-51).

“But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by *this generation*” (Luke 17:25).

“Truly I say to you, *this generation* will not pass away until all things take place” (Luke 21:32).

Without exception, these verses describe events within the lifetime of the then-present generation [or at least refer to events involving that generation –Ghost]. All the evidence points to the generation of Jews who heard Jesus’ words and would suffer the same judgment as the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests if they did not heed Jesus’ warning and escape before Roman armies surrounded the city and destroyed it (Matt. 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24)...

Third, the adjective *this* points to the contemporary nature of the generation Jesus was referencing... If some future generation had been in view, Matthew would have chosen the adjective *that* (cf. [Matthew –Ghost] 7:22; 10:19; 24:10, 36; 26:29)... A study of how Matthew uses the adjective “this” [Greek *haute* –Ghost] will show that Jesus had in mind the generation to whom He was speaking in mind when He described its soon destruction...⁴⁸

DeMar has a point, I once did a session in Strong’s concordance on how many times “*haute*” is used as “this” in the New Testament. There were so many times it was used in this way that I ended up bored to tears while compiling a complete list (and I have a high threshold of patience) and couldn’t finish it (not to mention I was running out of paper). But what about the arguments that *geneas*, which is translated generation here and in all DeMar’s cites, actually carries the meaning “race”?

The first major difficulty is the sheer dogmatism of Christ’s statement argued for by Wright and Gentry. Yeshua using language that is altogether quite emphatic that in fact the Jewish race will by no means possible pass away until the fulfillment of the prophecy is nonsense, imagining the Jews existing till then isn’t so difficult as to require that much linguistic reinforcement! As put by Ben Witherington, “The attempt to make *genea* mean something like “race” is a ploy of desperation.”⁴⁹ Further difficulty comes

⁴⁸ Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church p. 57-58

⁴⁹ Ben Witherington, Jesus, Paul, and the End of the World: a Comparative Study of New Testament Eschatology p. 264, endnote 32

from DeMar, who notes, “The Greek word *genos* rather than *geneas* is best translated “race” (see Mark 7:26; Acts 4:36; 7:19; 13:26; 17:28; 18:24; 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5; 1 Peter 2:9). “It seems unlikely that all three evangelists would have failed to use this word if this was the idea they meant to convey”^{50,51} They had the opportunity to clear up any confusion simply by changing to a Greek word which two of the evangelists used elsewhere for “race” (for Luke also wrote Acts, as evident from the beginning of the Book), why didn’t they unless this was not what they meant?

We next come to a hotly debated passage that even some orthodox preterists (like Gentry) don’t hold to be fulfilled in the past. Therefore, I believe the passage that occurs next in Matthew would be better dealt with using its parallel elsewhere in Luke where enough is preserved to do a more in-depth analysis.⁵²

And he said to the disciples, "The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, 'Look, there!' or 'Look, here!' Do not go out or follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot--they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all--so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left." And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."
(Luke 17:22-37 ESV)

Of course, the reader will recognize that much of this has already been dealt with. The passage starts with the admonition that although the time will come when Yeshua Christ will no longer be physically on the earth, they are not to take solace in nationalistic Messianic claimants. For when Yeshua personally smashes Jerusalem their folly will be plain to see. This is because as the next sentence indicates, His generation would reject their Messiah. Following this we have a comparison of Yeshua’s coming in judgment to

⁵⁰ DeMar cites David J. Palm, The Signs of His Coming: an Examination of the Olivet Discourse from a Preterist Perspective, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield IL, p. 21

⁵¹ Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church p. 186 See also DeMar’s entire chapter on the question (14) in pages 183-187

⁵² I do not mean that this dialogue was actually uttered on Mount Olivet contrary to where Luke places it, but rather that the mentions of the identical material in the Olivet discourse were simply a reiteration of what He had already said.

the events of Noah's Flood (Genesis 6:1 - 7:9:17) and the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 18:20 – 19:29). Futurists often combine the passage about the comparison to the flood of Noah, which wiped out the whole of humanity and the saying about "no flesh" being saved to argue that Yeshua believed that the great tribulation would be global and if it weren't cut short it would kill everybody in the world. The counterargument is that immediately after that we have the events of Lot's day, which didn't wipe out all of humanity, but according to the Genesis text merely "overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived" (Genesis 19:29). Clearly radius of disaster is not the main thrust of what Christ had in mind. Instead, I think that the following was what was intended.

1. The extreme wickedness of those that had divine judgment rightly fall upon them.
2. The very ordinary course of life going on until very unexpectedly wrath came upon them to the uttermost.
3. The narrow window of escape provided to those that truly follow the will of **YHWH**, and the need of those that take it to be thoroughly prepared, even when #2 is true.

The first thing to do to prove #1 would be to cite the two texts in Genesis about such iniquity abounding. In the flood story, the reason for such a disaster is that:

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.
(Genesis 6:5-6 ESV)

The text on the destruction of Sodom is also very similar,

Then the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know." So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered,

"For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

(Genesis 18:20-32 ESV)

The city was of course destroyed, with obvious implications. Also notable is that the text indicates you have all the men of the town of every age surrounding Lot's house to attempt to force his two angelic guests to engage in homosexual sex (Genesis 19:4 - 19:11), which is an excellent indicator of the kind of abominable crimes against **YHWH** that went on there. Both events saw an end of total annihilation for such great sin abounding everywhere. But exactly how wicked was the generation of Yeshua? Yeshua, His apostles, and Josephus present a rather bleak portrait of that generation,

But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

(Matthew 12:39-45 ESV)

And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you?"

(Matthew 17:17 ESV)

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

(Mark 8:38 ESV)

And with many other words he [Peter –Ghost] bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

(Acts 2:40 ESV)

Josephus follows suit with the New Testament on this,

To give a detailed account of their outrageous conduct [the leaders of the nationalist factions during the final siege of Jerusalem –Ghost] would be

impossible, but we may sum it up by saying that no other city has ever endured such horrors, and no generation in history has fathered such wickedness. In the end they brought the whole Hebrew race into contempt to make their own impiety seem less outrageous in foreign eyes, and confessed the painful truth that they were slaves, the dregs of humanity, bastards, and the outcasts of their nation [the faction leaders –Ghost].⁵³

I cannot refrain from saying what my feelings dictate. I think that if the Romans had delayed their attack on these sacrilegious ruffians, either the ground would have opened and swallowed up the City, or a flood would have overwhelmed it, or lightning would have destroyed it like Sodom. For it produced a generation far more godless than those who perished thus [i.e. in those previously used Biblical disasters upon the wicked –Ghost], a generation whose mad folly involved the nation in ruin.⁵⁴

This last citation is particularly notable. Josephus first compares the disaster he believed must happen to Jerusalem to those great judgments in the past; in fact he believed that had the Romans delayed in executing **YHWH**'s judgment, His patience would expire and He would intervene exactly as He did then. In fact, Josephus thought that by the time all was said and done, that generation in fact surpassed the generations mentioned in the Genesis texts in regard to their crimes against **YHWH**. I think this fulfills the prediction of Yeshua of what His generation was to do; **"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."** (Matthew 12:43-45 ESV)⁵⁵

Point #2 is easily demonstrated merely by citing Yeshua's own comments, as He doesn't strike me as one to waste His breath; **"They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot--they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all"**. Therefore says Yeshua, they must be prepared to escape the divine judgment which will come unexpectedly using the means provided by **YHWH**, in Noah's day it was the ark, in Lot's he was instructed to flee Sodom by an angel. Yeshua then declares what the parallel to His time of judgment to that of former days,

so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them

⁵³ Josephus, The Jewish War 5.10.5

⁵⁴ Josephus, The Jewish War 5.13.6

⁵⁵ For a good exposition of this passage, see William Barclay, The Parables of Jesus p. 193-197. Therein he places the parable in its historical context, he then argues that the true main point of the parable

away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left." And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."
(Luke 17:30-37 ESV)

The reader will of course realize that the first part is old hat; the flight from Jerusalem and Judea. The admonition to extreme swiftness in such a flight is also present as it was in Matthew 21 and its parallels. Yeshua even admonishes them to “Remember Lot’s wife”. What did Lot’s wife do? “But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.” (Genesis 19:26 ESV) Though this is of course hyperbole, and is not saying that when they fled Jerusalem if they looked back they would be incinerated, it is rather a scriptural example of what kind of hurry they should exercise when the time comes. If there is to be any coherence in the passage, it must be that the “day when the Son of Man is revealed” is the same occasion as when Jerusalem is surrounded by the Roman armies with their idolatrous standards functioning as the abomination of desolation. I believe this lends credence to my previous concept of coming in judgment, as the Greek for “revealed” is,

ἀποκαλύπτω

apokalupto

Thayer Definition:

1) to uncover, lay open what has been veiled or covered up

1a) disclose, make bare

2) to make known, make manifest, disclose what before was unknown⁵⁶

The implication is rather obvious; though the Son of Man was previously “hidden”, now He is quite evident when the Roman armies show up to carry out His judgment. However, as previously mentioned, He would withdraw the troops that had surrounded the city in order to allow those in Jerusalem to flee. Once that happens they must make all haste to escape Judea, for then two people engaged in various activities will find that one has been taken and another left behind.

From this and its parallel in Matthew, some think that a “rapture” is in mind. However, this is highly unlikely, first of all, the comparison is to the harsh judgments of the flood and Sodom, and the only people that were taken out of the world then were the wicked. Second of all, He has just instructed His followers to flee Judea, why should He tell them to make all haste away from there, even hyperbolically telling them to not be killed like Lot’s wife was by her mere looking back, only to in fact tell them about how He will pluck them off the earth in the “rapture” immediately after that? This is only

⁵⁶ Joseph Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament 3.563, p. 405

reinforced by the question immediately after that; “And they said to him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, **“Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”**” (Luke 17:37 ESV)

As this is a saying already dealt with, the meaning is obvious, the Roman eagles will return to prey upon Judea, they will kill large numbers, but not all who are still in the country. “Raptured” people don’t leave behind corpses, they instead attain transphysical⁵⁷ resurrection bodies!⁵⁸ Having completed my argument, I will now finally cite the parallel in Matthew to allow it to have its full impact,

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

(Matthew 24:36-42 ESV)

Thus, it is now quiet obvious that the **“coming of the Son of Man”** and the great tribulation are one in the same, though neither the followers of Yeshua, nor indeed He Himself know exactly when this judgment will be, they can be assured from Matthew 24:34 and its parallels that it will come upon the generation living at the time. Now I will examine one last portion of the discourse in Luke,

“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

(Luke 21:34-36 ESV)

Here Yeshua again admonished His followers to be alert for when the great tribulation came, **“For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.”** Like elsewhere, earth here is ge which can carry the sense of land, thus this disaster will come upon the whole of the land of Judea. Thus, Yeshua tells them to be alert and pray for the strength to flee from the country when the time comes. As to what the meaning of what it means to be ready **“to stand before the Son of Man”**, the reader will have to wait

⁵⁷ I owe this term to N.T. Wright, whom in his Resurrection of the Son of God uses it to describe a body that is not only some kind of immortal spirit but physical, though unlike the physical objects we know now, these are immortal and indestructible (save by direct act of YHWH).

⁵⁸ The text from which the entire idea of a “rapture” stems from the text of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, which is an encouragement text about the resurrection of the dead, telling about how the dead will rise first and then those still alive at the time of the second coming when this happens will be “caught up together with them [the newly resurrected dead –Ghost] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”

until my analysis of the language of the kingdom of God/heaven. Having exited the Olivet Discourse, I will now move on to analysis of time-texts connected with it.

And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. **When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.**

(Matthew 10:11-23 ESV)

As is obvious, the context of this saying is the protocols for the future missions of the apostles. He then warns them to “**be wise as serpents and innocent as doves**” in light of the efforts on their lives by persecuting “**wolves**”. He follows this up with a persecution saying **identical** to that that appears in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, and thus my comments in the previous section apply there. After that comes the highlighted passage about the coming of the Son of Man before all Israel can be evangelized, which is not something that would take a great deal more than 40 years, certainly not two millennia. Ben Witherington complains that: “The focus would be on the largeness of their task, not on the short amount of time until the parousia.”⁵⁹ From there he goes off on an interpretation that is in my opinion most feeble (actually, I consider most of the chapter a lamentable example of exegetical gymnastics that ubiquitously appears among non-preterists when dealing with the time-texts, hardly of the good quality of most of the rest of the book). However, I think he presents a false dilemma; although that focus is indeed intended, it does not mean that Yeshua does not automatically have in mind that in light of the persecutions mentioned above that He will not give out payback to the persecuting towns in the coming great tribulation before they even finish evangelizing all of Israel. Indeed, this fits very smoothly with the passage itself and with the Olivet discourse with its declaration that all these events will occur to the generation of men living at the time. Thus, I will move on to a related saying.

⁵⁹ Ben Witherington, Jesus, Paul, and the End of the World p. 40

But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "**You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.**" Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy."
(Matthew 26:63-65 ESV)

But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "**I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.**" And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death.
(Mark 14:61-64 ESV)

The first point to note is that it is Caiaphas personally who will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds, and not any future generation. Some who wish to still hold to a future fulfillment would argue that he would somehow be enabled to watch what is alleged to be the Second Coming in the afterlife. Others of course would argue that Christ was wrong. Noting that one central issue of the entire section is accusation of false prophecy by Yeshua defeats the first suggestion. My first cite to prove the point is the proceeding context of the above cites,

Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" ...
(Matthew 26:59-63 ESV)

This is also evident as in Matthew immediately after the death verdict given straight after these passages, we read, "Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, 'Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?'"
(Matthew 26:67-68 ESV) This is doubtless why the narratives about Christ's prediction that Peter would deny Him repeatedly before the cock crows appears in all four gospels, that while they are making a farce out of Him for alleged false prophecy at that very time they are beginning to be fulfilled. So then, the only probable interpretation is that He stakes His reputation on Caiaphas seeing Him at the right hand of power and coming upon the clouds of heaven. To this Caiaphas replies 'blasphemy'! Why?

I believe it is the way all the biblical allusions interface. The question is, "are you the Messiah, the Son of God"? To this, Yeshua replies with a complex tapestry of Biblical allusions amounting to a potent claim.

A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute *judgment*⁶⁰ among the nations, filling them with *corpses*⁶¹; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

(Psalms 110:1-7 ESV)⁶²

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

(Daniel 7:13-14 ESV)

He also answers in the affirmative to the question of whether He is the Messiah, an individual whom is well known for taking universal dominion, and the Son of **YHWH**. In light of the above two texts, I think this text also applies;

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against

⁶⁰ דין דין

di^yn du^n

deen, doon

A primitive root (compare H113); to *rule*; by implication to *judge* (as umpire); also to *strive* (as at law): - contend, execute (judgment), judge, minister judgment, plead (the cause), at strife, strive.

- Strong's Concordance H1777

⁶¹ גויה

g°vi^ya^h

ghev-ee-yaw'

Prolonged for H1465; a *body*, whether **alive** or dead: - (dead) body, carcase, corpse.

- Strong's Concordance H1472

⁶² Yeshua elsewhere used this as an indication of what the Messiah would be; "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, **"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"** They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, **"How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?"**" (Matthew 22:41-45 ESV) However, as shown by N.T. Wright (Jesus and the Victory of God p. 507-509), this does not state that the Messiah will not after all be a descendant of David (which would be strange due to the frequent New Testament claim that Yeshua is the son of David, including in this very Gospel), but rather is much more than just that.

his anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

(Psalms 2:1-12 ESV)

So then, Yeshua claims that He is the high priest and the ruler who will acquire who will trample His enemies underfoot (even kings and kingdoms) making them His footstool, and that He is the only way of refuge. He is in essence stating that as true high Priest and great king (the reader is advised to read those texts over again if they don't see some of these details), His enemies are doomed, among whom is Caiaphas for usurping His authority and delivering Him up to death. N.T. Wright's comments are helpful,

Jesus' response, then, resonates with ironic power. Now at last, when it can no longer be misunderstood, he can retell the story of Daniel 7 in his own revised version. He is claiming to be the representative of the true people of God. Like the martyrs on trial before pagan tyrants, he is refusing to abandon the ancestral faith and hope, even if it costs him his life. Like Susannah on trial before Jewish judges who turned out to be no better than pagans, he stands before a court who, in his eyes, represent cynical compromise rather than loyalty to YHWH.⁶³ He therefore declares that Israel's god will vindicate him⁶⁴; and that vindication will include the destruction of the Temple which has come to symbolize and embody the rebellion of Israel against God, her determination to maintain her national exclusivism at the cost of her vocation.⁶⁵

Jesus is not, then, suggesting that Caiaphas will witness the end of the space-time order. Nor will he look out the window one day and observe a human figure flying downwards on a cloud. It is absurd to imagine that Jesus, or Mark, or anyone in between, supposing the words to mean that. Caiaphas will witness the strange events which follow Jesus' crucifixion: the rise of a group of disciples claiming that he has been raised from the dead, and the events which accelerate towards the final clash with Rome, in which, judged according to the time-honoured test, Jesus will be vindicated as a true prophet. In and through it all,

⁶³ Wright cites Susannah 56 and his own *The New Testament and the People of God* p. 220 forward, he then adds in a footnote; "Once more, this shows that Jesus' stance is *not* 'anti-Jewish', but is claiming, however controversially, the high ground of Jewish orthodoxy."

⁶⁴ Or I would argue, He will vindicate Himself.

⁶⁵ Throughout the work Wright argues that Christ's view of Israel's vocation is to be the light of the world, certainly not to smite the Gentiles militarily. However, in light of its rejection of YHWH's work in His own, only those who follow Him count as the true Israel.

Caiaphas will witness events which show that Jesus was not, after all, mistaken in his claim, hitherto implicit, now at last explicit: he is the Messiah, the anointed one, the true representative of the people of Israel, the one in and through whom the covenant god is acting to set up his kingdom.

Among the other implications which echo out from this explosive statement, there is one which Caiaphas surely did not miss. If Jesus is to be vindicated as the true representative of YHWH's people; and if he, Caiaphas, is presently sitting in judgment on him, then Caiaphas himself, and the regime he represents, are cast in a singularly unflattering light. His court has become part of the evil force which is oppressing the true Israel, and which will be overthrown when YHWH vindicates his people. Caiaphas, the High Priest, has become the new Antiochus Epiphanes, the great tyrant oppressing YHWH's people. The Sanhedrin was playing the Fourth Beast to Jesus' Son of Man.⁶⁶ The scene, already powerful in theological and political terms, has an added rhetorical dimension. The courtroom is turned inside out: the prisoner becomes the judge, the judge the condemned criminal.⁶⁷

Some may perhaps push the importance of the word "see", which is indeed a literal rendition of the word, to mean that Caiaphas would in fact look out the window to see the Christ pulling a pop a wheelie on a cloud. The difficulty with this is that He will also "see" the Yeshua at the right hand of the Father. Can one really see the right hand of power? Does **YHWH** literally have a right hand? Why is the Christian testimony after the

⁶⁶ I will add that this connection seems to have not been lost on all. This is evident from the book of Revelation in the thirteenth chapter, where you have a "scarlet beast" (presumably due to bloodstain) whose description is plucked straight out of Daniel 7 (it even has the same number of heads as the Daniel text's beasts put together). Alongside it is "another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived." ([Revelation 13:11-14 ESV](#)) Although I have no space for in depth argument, I believe this represents a fusion of Israel's religious leadership who had acted hostile to the gospel, Jews who had fought against it no matter where it went (as opposed to those who didn't), and the false Messiahs and false prophets of Matthew 24 who had deluded the people into not thinking that the Messiah had already come by aid of lying signs and wonders (see Deuteronomy 13:1-5). And that, though they acted like followers of **YHWH** ("two horns like a lamb"), when it came to actual allegiance to Him through His Christ, they delivered His messengers to Roman authorities for punishment and preferred Caesar the Antichrist, the claimant to divinity, whom called himself the Son of God, complete with another gospel (of empire and the Roman Peace). "They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."'" ([John 19:15 ESV](#)) "But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."'" ([Acts 17:5-7 ESV](#)) "Spoke like a dragon" indeed.

⁶⁷ N.T. Wright, [Jesus and the Victory of God](#) p. 525-526

ascension universal that after being taken up to heaven Yeshua is reigning at the right hand of the father when Caiaphas did not in fact look out the window and see it?⁶⁸

Absent of a major rebuttal I think I can say with confidence that it is indeed true that Yeshua staked His reputation on His coming on the clouds within one generation, and that efforts to deny this are much misplaced. After all, He alludes to Roman activity then, and a time that they will surround Jerusalem with armies; once that happens they are to flee with great haste from the land of Judea, where He alludes in His instructions to ancient house designs. The Roman eagles are present, and there are many circumstances of first century life alluded to in the prophecies that would not make sense in future centuries. He says in the very same discourse in every way that that very generation will by no means die off before its fulfillment. Add to this that elsewhere in His ministry, where He links it with the high priest of that generation, and the cities of Israel that persecute His apostles. However, I also believe that those skeptics who use these predictions as evidence that Yeshua was not who He said He was, cutting to the very core of even the most basic beliefs of The Way, are more consistent than many evangelicals on these passages, but that they also have a fundamental misunderstanding of their meaning. As a result, the answer to my question in the title “True or False Prophet?” would be, that Yeshua is in fact by these very passages a true prophet.

So then, we not come to texts like these; “when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.” “For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” Although this ends the study of this section, we have moved irrevocably towards the question, ‘what is this ever-prevalent kingdom of God?’ What is it? What is it not? What could the destruction of Jerusalem possibly have to do with it? All in good time my patient reader.

⁶⁸ See Acts 2:25-36, 5:31, 7:55-56, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22.