

THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMING WITH POWER – Chapter 12

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM – With an Examination of DISPENSATIONALISM and the “Scofield Bible”

by [Philip Mauro](#): 1928

Three of the Gospels record a prophecy of Christ concerning His Kingdom, which, by His express word, was to be fulfilled in the lifetime of some who heard it. This is Mark’s record of it:

“Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power”

Mark 9:1

Matthew records the same prediction, but with a slight variation of language, the time of the predicted event being stated thus: “Till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom” (Mat. 16:28). In Luke it reads: “Till they see the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:27).

Have we then the authentic record of any event happening within that generation that answers to this prediction? There were two happenings that claim attention as we seek an answer to this question. Both those happenings were of great importance in the accomplishment of God’s revealed purposes concerning His Kingdom, and both occurred within the time so emphatically limited by our Lord’s words.

Those two events were, first the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and second, the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation by the Romans in A. D. 70. Each of these events may be regarded, and without straining at all the

meaning of the words, as a coming of the Kingdom of God. And each, moreover, may be regarded, in the light of Scripture, as a coming of that Kingdom with attendant circumstances that answer to the phrase "with power"; circumstances such as were absent during Christ's earthly ministry.

For the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was unquestionably a coming of that Kingdom which the apostle Paul afterwards defined as "Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). We recall, moreover, in regard to the phrase "With power," that our Lord, in speaking to His disciples concerning the then approaching advent of the Holy Ghost, had said, "Ye shall receive power" (Acts 1:8). Power was needed and was promised for the effective preaching of that gospel whereby those who believe it are translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:12,13); that gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

The appalling destruction of the Jewish nation, their beautiful city and their magnificent temples which unprecedented catastrophe was described anticipatively by Christ Himself (Mat. XXIV, Mark Xlll, Luke XXI) was likewise a most evident and impressive coming of the Son of Man "in power." It was a coming in final judgment upon that nation; and its awful details prefigure the final judgment of the world.

Unhappily the significance of that world-shaking event is greatly minimized in the teaching of our day. And my conviction is that, unless one sees the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and the events attending and consequent upon it in their true relation to the whole scheme of God's dealings with the human race in its two divisions of Jews and Gentiles, he will not be able to understand the general purport of Bible prophecy.

Of the two events referred to above as possible fulfilments of

our Lord's prophecy, one occurred within a year of the time the prophecy was uttered, whereas the other lay much farther in the future about forty years. Nevertheless, some who were standing there, notably the apostle John, lived to "see" that great work of divine "power" and judgment, which Moses had foretold (Deut. 28:49-64), and the like of which had not been "since the beginning of the world" (Mat. 24:21).

After much deliberation upon the matter, my conclusion is that, if choice must be made between those two events, it is the one later in date – that is, the annihilation of the Jewish nation, that being the manifest taking away from them of the Kingdom of God (according to the word of Christ recorded in Matthew 21:43) – that our Lord had in view when He uttered the prophecy we are considering. I will indicate, in what follows, my main reasons for so thinking.

1. The words, "There be some standing here that shall not taste of death" indicate that He had in contemplation an event that lay at a considerable distance in the future relatively to the ordinary duration of human life. His reference to the death of some then standing by would hardly be appropriate with respect to an event that was to happen within the space of a year.
2. But a stronger reason is found in our Lord's Olivet prophecy, which is recorded by each of the three Gospel-writers who record the prophecy spoken at Caesarea Philippi. For in Christ's Olivet prophecy, the desolation of Judea, the siege of Jerusalem, the demolition of the Temple, and the world-wide dispersion of the Jewish people, were foretold in detail. Specially is it to be observed that our Lord made use in that prophecy of expressions that are strikingly similar to those used in the earlier prophecy. Thus, referring in the Olivet prophecy to the approaching desolation of Judea and Jerusalem, He said, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass until all these things be

fulfilled" (Mat. 24: 34). Manifestly the words I have italicised are the exact equivalent of "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till—" Moreover, in each case we have the emphatic introductory clause, "Verily I say unto you." Furthermore, the preceding chapter records the judgment pronounced upon the leaders of the nation, whereof the closing words are, "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation" (Mat. 23:36). And then follows His sore lament for Jerusalem, in which occur the words, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. These correspondences afford good reason for the belief that our Lord's prophecies at Jerusalem were amplifications of the brief prediction spoken at Caesarea Philippi.

3. But there is yet another reason in support of the view stated above; and this reason I regard as conclusive. In foretelling those coming "days of vengeance," in which "all things that were written" were to "be fulfilled" (Luke 21:22), Christ gave His disciples a sign whereby they should know that the predicted days of vengeance were come, so that they might save themselves by flight; the sign being the encircling of Jerusalem with armies (v. 20). And then, in order to impress the lesson upon their minds, He spake a parable concerning the figtree and all the trees, and said: "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all be fulfilled" (vv. 31,32). Thus we have Christ's own statement to the effect that the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the nation was a coming of the Kingdom of God. And this He again coupled with the affirmation that his prediction would be fulfilled before the passing of that generation.

In studying the three accounts of our Lord's Olivet prophecy,

the student should observe that the period designated in Luke's account "the days of vengeance," wherein there should be "great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people," is the same period that Mark designates "the days of affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation unto this time" (Mark 13:19) and that is designated by Matthew the "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time" (Mat. 24:21). The context of the several passages make it certain that one and the same period of unprecedented calamity is referred to in the three passages.

Comparison should be made also with Daniel's prophecy. "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). The close similarity between the language of this prophecy and that of our Lord's Olivet prophecy gives assurance that both refer to the same event. The words of the angel to Daniel refer expressly to the Jewish nation ("the children of thy people"). Those who were to be delivered in that time of unparalleled distress—those "found written in the book" —were, of course, the disciples of Christ, who took warning by their lord's utterance, and fled for their lives when they saw His predicted sign. Happy for them they did not have some of our modern expounders of prophecy to instruct them as to the meaning of this prediction.

And particularly it should be observed, as fully confirming what is said above touching both the place, and also the time of that season of distress and tribulation, wherein all the prophecies of "wrath upon this people" were to be fulfilled, that the locality is expressly limited to JUDEA (Mat. 24:16), and that the time is expressly limited to THE GENERATION THEN LIVING (id. 34).

THE IMMENSE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

By pondering the Scriptures cited above the reader will be enabled to perceive the truly immense significance of the execution of God's long deferred, though oft threatened judgments and the pouring out of His wrath upon that nation which He had chosen for Himself, and with which He had dealt for a millennium and a half as He had never dealt with any other. For this was the nation He had so marvellously delivered out of Egypt; the nation to which He had given His holy law amidst the terrors of Sinai; the nation He had brought into the land of promise, driving out before them nations greater and mightier than they; to which He had sent His prophets with warning and with promises; and to which, last of all, He sent His only Son. And if one but calls to mind the many prophecies, beginning with Deuteronomy 28:49-68, that pointed to and were fulfilled in that stupendous event, (the destruction of Jerusalem) he will surely realize something of its unique place and importance in the scheme of God's dealings with mankind.

Finally, we have our Lord's own word for it that those were to be the days of vengeance wherein all things that were written should be fulfilled (Luke 22); and He was then speaking of a period that was to come within that generation; a period of great distress in the land (of Judea) and of great wrath upon that people. Hence the words "All things that are written" can mean nothing less than the many predictions of the prophets of Israel concerning the judgments that would be executed upon them if they persisted in their disobedience and apostasy.

To this also the Apostle Paul manifestly had reference when, writing to the Thessalonians, twenty-five to thirty years later, he said of the Jews that they "both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men", because of all which, "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:16).

THE DISCIPLES' TWO QUESTIONS

In view of all the foregoing, it seems clear that the first question asked by the disciples of their Master ("When shall these things be?" (Mat. 24: 3) had reference to the demolition of the temple, whereof He had just spoken (v.2); and that the other question ("And what the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?") had reference (a) to His "coming" for the destruction of the temple, and (b) to "the end of" the then elapsing Jewish age. For that coming judgment would be "the day of the Lord" for that people. It was an event such as the prophets of Israel might well have described in the very strongest terms, and portrayed by means of the most impressive prophetic symbology.

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES AND THEIR FULNESS

The destruction of Jerusalem marks not only the ending of the Jewish nation but also the beginning of "the times of the Gentiles." It is appropriate therefore to refer at this point to two expressions that are familiar to all students of prophecy: "The times of the Gentiles," and "The fulness of the Gentiles." The first occurs in a prophecy of Christ concerning the city of Jerusalem. The second is found in a prophecy of Paul concerning the Jewish people.

Our Lord, after having foretold the world-wide dispersion of the Jews, said:

"And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"

Luke. 21:24

And Paul, after having set forth under the figure of an olive tree the method of God's salvation for both Jews and Gentiles, said:

"I would not, brethren, that ye be ignorant of this mystery, let ye be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part

is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Rom. 11:25

The outstanding feature of each of these prophecies is that it describes a condition that was to last, in the plain sight of all mankind, throughout the entire era of the Gospel. The first puts a conspicuous and agelong mark upon the city of Jerusalem. The other puts an equally conspicuous and permanent mark upon the scattered Jewish people.

My purpose is, in what follows, to show how, in the interest of dispensationalism, the significance of these exceedingly important Scriptures has been changed and the object for which they were given has been in a large measure frustrated. For these are prophecies of what was to be during this present age, and they are strictly limited thereto; whereas they are commonly treated as prophecies of what is to take place after this present age shall have come to an end. For our Lord's word concerning Jerusalem is generally interpreted as a prediction that, when the times of the Gentiles are ended, then Jerusalem will be repossessed by the Jews and will become the capital city of a revived Jewish nation. But in fact (and it ought not be necessary to point this out) the passage says not a word and gives not so much as a hint concerning what will happen to Jerusalem after the times of the Gentiles shall have come to an end.

Similarly the passage in Romans XI is often presented—not as a prophecy that was to be fulfilled throughout this gospel-dispensation, but — as a prediction that, after the work of the gospel shall have been completed, then the Jewish people are to be saved nationally and by a special salvation of earthly character, different from gospel-salvation. The passage, however, not only says not a word concerning a post-gospel salvation for the Jewish nation, but on the contrary

teaches plainly that there is but one "common salvation" (Jude 3) for all men, viz. that figured by the olive tree of this passage.

A TWOFOLD WITNESS TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF BIBLE PROPHECY

Let it be noted that the fulfilment of these prophecies demanded the continued existence of both the city and the people, though sundered the one from the other, to the very end of the gospel era; and it demanded also that the city should be in the hands of strangers, and the people should be in the lands of strangers, during all that great stretch of time. Here then is a two-fold and a conclusive test of the Divine authorship of the prophetic Scriptures. For if, in the course of these "times of the Gentiles," either the city or the people had passed out of existence, or if the city had come into Jewish hands again or the Jewish people as a whole had changed their characteristic attitude towards Christ and His gospel, the prophecies would have been falsified and the entire New Testament discredited. On the other hand, seeing that none but God could have declared how it would fare with the city and people throughout this long age, these prophecies, by their fulfilment, furnish an unimpeachable witness to their Divine authorship, and hence to the Divine origin of the Book whereof they are an integral part.

A CONTINUING FULFILMENT

What gives these prophecies their surpassing value as witnesses to the Divine authorship of the Bible is the fact that they have the extraordinary character of demanding a continuing fulfilment. Prophecies which foretell the happening of a specific event—as the destruction of Jerusalem are of no value at all as evidence until the predicted event occurs. And then the full effect is felt only by the generation living at the time. But these prophecies are of such a nature as to bear witness to every successive generation; and not only so, but

are such that their testimony becomes more and more impressive as the centuries roll on.

Moreover, the fulfilment stands prominently before the eyes of the whole world. For Jerusalem is a conspicuous city; and so likewise as to the Jewish race, they are everywhere; and wherever they are, they are Jews, and known as such.

Therefore, God has made it possible by means of these two prophecies alone, even if there were no other proofs available, for all honest inquirers at all times throughout this gospel dispensation, to have convincing proof of the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; and particularly of the certainty of the predictive element therein.

"THIS IS JERUSALEM"

Special heed should be given to the fact that these prophecies relate wholly and exclusively to this present age. Our Lord, in the Olivet prophecy which we are considering as recorded in Luke's Gospel, foretold that there should be "wrath upon this people," that they should "fall by the edge of the sword," and "be led away captive into all nations"; and finally that Jerusalem should "be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." And there His prediction ends. But in all the modern expositions I ever heard or read, the actual prediction of our Lord is virtually ignored, and He is made to say that when the times of the Gentiles are ended, then the Jews will be reconstituted as a nation, and will repossess their ancient homeland, with Jerusalem as their capital city. Thus a prophecy that is limited to a state of things which was to prevail during this present age, is converted into a prediction of a supposed state of things after the age shall have ended.

What our Lord took upon Himself to foretell in this prophecy is that the storm of judgment soon to break upon Jerusalem would not blot it out of existence, as Sodom and Gomorrah were

obliterated, notwithstanding that her sin was likened to that of the cities of the plain (lsa. 1:10, and see Luke 10:12). Nor was it to be entirely abandoned and fall into ruins like Babylon and Tyre. Prophecy had previously declared concerning those famous cities (whose greatness and prosperity seemed to guarantee their permanence) that the former should become "heaps of rubbish," "a dwelling place for dragons," and be "no more inhabited forever" (Jer. 50: 39; 51:37); and that the latter should be scraped bare and become like the top of a rock, and a place for the spreading of nets (Ezek. 26:4,5, 21; 27:36; 28:19). And even so it was (and is) with those once mighty and flourishing cities. Jerusalem, on the contrary, though for its crimes it merited a severer punishment, was decreed to remain intact, but with a mark of Divine retribution abiding upon it (for it was to be perpetually in the hands of aliens), and thus was to serve as a conspicuous monument to the truth of God's word. Had the prophecies concerning the above named cities respectively been the products of mere human foresight, based upon the probabilities of the several cases, their terms would have been reversed, and the longer existence predicted of the Gentile cities.

As to what will befall Jerusalem after the times of the Gentiles are ended, I observe: (1) The Lord did not see fit to speak of that in this prophecy. This is a noteworthy fact; for had He meant to make known that the Jews were to regain possession of their ancient city, He would not have left the passage as it stands in the Bible. (2) Other Scriptures, moreover, reveal clearly that when the work of the gospel among the nations of the world is ended, the Lord will come again; that He will then remove His own redeemed people from this doomed earth, and will pour out the vials of exterminating wrath upon the rest. He Himself has pointed to the destruction of the earth in the days of Noah, and to that of Sodom in the days of Lot, as the typical foreshadowings of the universal judgment to come; and in so doing He laid emphasis upon the fact that the very day that Noah entered the

ark "the flood came and destroyed them all," and "the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained tire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:27,29). It is certain therefore that when "the times of the Gentiles" are ended, there will be no Jewish people left on earth.

THE VAIL ON THEIR HEARTS

It was the Lord's decree from of old (Isa. 6:9-12: Mat. 13:14) that the people of Israel, because of their gross and long continued wickedness and rebellion, should be blinded and hardened to the Word of the Lord. The apostle Paul refers to their spiritually blinded state in figurative terms, saying that the vail which Moses put over his face now lies upon their hearts (2 Cor. 3:14,15). And here (Rom. XI) he adds nothing to this but the fact that the predicted state of "blindness in part" was to continue "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (v. 25). And there he leaves the subject. Again, however, as in the case already noted, modern expositors interpret the Scripture in such manner as to change its meaning in a material respect. For my experience has been that, when this passage is cited, it is not for the purpose of showing that the divinely imposed blindness of the natural Israel was to continue until the work of the gospel among the Gentiles should be completed; but for the purpose of lending support to the doctrine that there is to be a special salvation for the Jewish people (a salvation earthly in kind) after the day of gospel salvation is ended. But the apostle's next words (Rom. 11:26) are—not "and then all Israel shall be saved" (as it should read if this new teaching were true) but—"And so all Israel shall be saved." To this deeply interesting passage we will return in a subsequent chapter.