

# Parousia

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## Dispensational FOUNDATIONS

Acts, Joel, and Revelation

Part 2 of 2 by Charles Cooper

**A**rmed with nothing more than raw conviction and a face-value appreciation of the Word of God, Martin Luther stood alone and cried *sola fide*—faith alone. In an age of the “herd mentality” few can fully appreciate the courage required to stand alone against society and tradition. Perhaps Martin Luther’s path would have been made easier if an assembly of cheering supporters had lined that path. We at The Sign Ministries are very thankful to God for the growing assembly of cheering supporters of the prewrath position. Amazingly, some support has come from unlikely places. I was quite excited to learn through recently written books that the dispensational winds of change are blowing. Having recently been described as one who has fallen from “dispensational grace” due to the fact that I changed my position on the rapture, Dr. Craig A. Blasing’s most recent writings on dispensational developments are vindicating. “Why is this important?” you may wonder, “I am only interested in what the Bible says.” The answer is very simple; pretribbbers attack the prewrath position on two issues: imminency and dispensationalism. To respond accurately, we must understand the issues clearly.

Imagine my surprise when I read that the prewrath position rejects dispensationalism.<sup>1</sup> This is one of several criticisms Dr. John Witmer<sup>2</sup> indicates in a recent review of *The Rapture Question Answered Plain and Simple* by Robert Van Kampen. That conclusion could not be more untrue. Robert Van Kampen, in his theological treatise on eschatology,

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## The heart of dispensationalism is the recognition of a distinction between national Israel and the church...

*The Sign*, makes this point clear.<sup>3</sup> The heart of dispensationalism is the recognition of a distinction between national Israel and the church, says Dr. Charles C. Ryrie. Even a cursory reading of *The Sign* proves that Robert Van Kampen does adopt this conclusion. But Mr. Van Kampen does not draw so sharp a distinction (as the pretribbers do) between God's programs for national Israel and the church that *He cannot work with both groups at the same time*.

Pretribbers rapture the church before the Seventieth Week of Daniel begins. They insist that the Seventieth Week is the wrath of God and a part of an interrupted phase of God's program for the Jews. Since, in their opinion, there can be no overlap between God's program for national Israel and the church, and the church must be removed before the wrath of God begins, the Rapture must occur before any part of the Jewish phase resumes. This reasoning is an incorrect conclusion drawn from a correct biblical truth and is one of the primary shortcomings of

traditional dispensationalism as confirmed in the recent writings of some dispensationalists.<sup>4</sup> So major are the suggested *changes* or *developments* to dispensationalism by these writers that they are termed *progressive dispensationalists*.<sup>5</sup>

The changes encouraged by progressive dispensationalists should not be under-appreciated. They strike *great concern* in the hearts of many traditional dispensationalists. In response to Drs. Blasing and Bock's book, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, traditional dispensationalists<sup>6</sup> wrote a book entitled *Issues in Dispensationalism*. To add leverage to their arguments, Dr. Charles C. Ryrie was designated the consulting editor. The first chapter of the book is written by Dr. Ryrie who argues that progressive dispensationalism is not a development of traditional dispensationalism but is, in fact, a change. A change so major, argues Ryrie, that progressive dispensationalism might better be called "covenant premillennialism."<sup>7</sup> In Ryrie's estimation, to change the description of the relationship between national Israel and the church from "a clear distinction" to "a distinction"<sup>8</sup> is to cut the heart out of dispensationalism. In Ryrie's opinion, the bottom line is that progressive dispensationalists' conclusions are

dangerous. "Dangerous to whom or what?" is the question.

Dr. Ryrie, in a section of his chapter entitled "Pondering the Future," thinks out loud about the consequences of the modified (progressive) dispensationalists' views. Ryrie lists three complaints: that too much is given up to covenant theologians; that the church is being neutered; and that possible "changes in traditional dispensational premillennial eschatology"<sup>9</sup> is a possible outcome of this new thinking. Ryrie writes,

One can well ponder what will happen to the pretribulational Rapture teaching in years to come. In *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* there is no discussion of the Rapture question. At one of the Dispensational Study Group meetings one dispensationalist wondered "if we will find more posttribulationalists as the Dispensational Study Group moves." He himself had not moved to that position but was apparently concerned about this fallout from the teachings of progressive dispensationalism. Let us hope he is not a true prophet.<sup>10</sup>

Please notice the shaky ground upon which the pretrib Rapture stands. Any change or development in one's understanding of the relationship between national Israel and the church throws the pretrib Rapture into serious question.

Progressive dispensationalists have confirmed that Mr. Van Kampen is correct. Correct in the sense that there are "theological connections"<sup>11</sup> between Israel and the church and that these connections do not necessarily demand so drastic a distinction between Israel and the church. To be sure, most progressive dispensationalists are not willing to draw the same conclusions as Mr. Van Kampen does on every issue. However, on this one point they do agree: God's programs for national Israel and the church can and do overlap.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the pretribbers, the prewrath position teaches that the church age is *terminated* by the Day of the Lord and not by the beginning of the Seventieth Week of Daniel. This conclusion is supported in the first two chapters of the book of Acts.

### A Clarification

Before we examine the first two chapters of Acts in detail, we need to review the meaning of some basic terminology with respect to Israel. Abraham had two sons—Ishmael and Isaac. From Isaac, two boys were born—Esau and Jacob. God elected



A C T S 2 : 1 7 - 2 1

**“And it shall be in the last days,” God says, “that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

Jacob to be the son who would continue the line of promised future blessings. It is this Jacob whose name was changed to Israel and who is the father of the twelve tribes. Every person who traces his genealogy back to Abraham through Isaac and Jacob is a natural or ethnic Jew. An ethnic Jew is not automatically saved (Luke 3:8). Only by placing faith in the promises of God do natural Jews become saved or part of the “remnant according to the election of grace.”<sup>12</sup> This is Paul’s meaning in Romans 9:6 when he writes, “they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” Rather, “at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” The disciples of Christ belong to this Jewish remnant of righteousness. Paul indicates that he too belongs to this Jewish remnant of righteousness (Romans 11:1-2). Israel therefore consists of a remnant of righteousness (the elect) and those who were hardened (unsaved). Any discussion about Israel that does not take this point into consideration may error when addressing her future.

### Acts 1-2: The Question and An Answer

The book of Acts documents what happened to the Jews (the remnant of righteousness and the hardened) after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. The first chapter of Acts records the question: *Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* (1:6). The apostles’ question has two parts to it: the timing of and the nature of the coming kingdom. To the timing question, Jesus offers a rebuke (1:7); it is none of their business concerning the specific timing God the Father has determined. It is very important to understand that Jesus did not say that God would not restore the kingdom to Israel, but that it was not theirs to know when God would bring this great event to pass.

Regarding the nature of the coming kingdom, Jesus remarks that Jewish and non-Jewish individuals alike are to receive the Spirit-empowered witness of His resurrection. Rather than Jews ruling over Gentiles, the righteous remnant of Israel are to work to make brothers and sisters of Gentiles. This activity is to continue until the uttermost parts of earth hear the message (1:8). Immediately after this bombshell, Jesus ascends into heaven, and two white-appareled men instruct the apostles indicating that Jesus would one day return in similar fashion to earth. Questions immediately come to mind. Will Christ return *before*, *as* or *after* the Spirit-empowered witnesses reach the uttermost parts of earth? And what happens to Israel (the remnant and the hardened) during the interim? The answers to

these questions are presented and developed in chapters two and three.

Upon the ascension of Jesus, the faithful followers of Christ are to witness and make disciples of all nations. This mission is inaugurated by the reception of the Holy Spirit. Ten days after Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit came in fulfillment of God’s promise. Peter then explains the coming of the Spirit from an Old Testament passage of Scripture—Joel 2:28-32. The specific formula used in Acts 2:16 indicates a literal fulfillment.<sup>14</sup> It is not like, similar, or typical, but exactly what Joel actually promised through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joel 2:28-32 is specifically quoted as the biblical explanation for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.<sup>15</sup> With the outpouring of the Spirit, we learn what happened to the Jewish remnant of righteousness—they became Jesus’ Spirit-empowered witnesses to the world.

Peter’s quotation of Joel 2:28-32 evidences several changes from its Old Testament counterpart, the most important being the phrase “in the last days.” The original phrase “after these things” is very broad and offers no clue as to when the event would occur from Joel’s perspective. However, with the alternate phrase “in the last days” the timing becomes crystal clear. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit marked the entrance into a period called “the last days” (the church age), “the period preceding the day of the Lord.”<sup>16</sup> “The gift of the Spirit is thus

**“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”**



a token that the last days foretold by the prophets have arrived.”<sup>17</sup> This period is characterized by prophetic utterances (2:17). Unlike the previous generations, both male and female, the young and old, slave and free will reveal God’s will. Secondly, heavenly wonders and earthly signs will mark the beginning of the eschatological Day of the Lord (2:19-20); and thirdly, salvation is available to anyone requesting it (2:21). The book of Acts does contain prophecies, visions and miraculous signs.<sup>18</sup> However, there are no cosmic disturbances on a magnitude prophesied by Joel listed in Acts. Therefore, the Pentecost experience is a *beginning* of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, but it certainly is not the *total fulfillment*.<sup>19</sup> A second significant change by Peter of Joel’s passage is the phrase “and they shall prophesy” at the end of verse 18. Peter’s insertion of this sentence in Joel’s prophecy at the beginning of verse 19 underscores the fact that as prophetic activity marked the beginning of “the last days,” the end of “the last days” will be characterized by prophetic activity as well. God’s servants shall announce the coming Day of the Lord. This confirms that a process of fulfillment has begun. The process began with the outpouring of the Spirit and will end with the Day of the Lord. The time period between these two events is called “the last days,” the church age, the dispensation of mystery.

#### The First and Last Day of “the Last Days”

Many conservative scholars will admit that the first day of the church<sup>20</sup> began on the day of Pentecost. Dr. Stanley D. Toussaint’s comments are typical of those who take this position.

This event marked the beginning of the church. Up to this point the church was anticipated (Matt. 16:18). The church is constituted a body by means of Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). The first occurrence of the baptism of the Spirit therefore must indicate the inauguration of the church. Of course Acts 2:1-4 does not state that Spirit baptism took place at Pentecost. However, 1:5 anticipates it and 11:15-16 refers back to it as having occurred at Pentecost. The church, therefore, came into existence then.<sup>20</sup>

However, the termination or end of “the last days” (church period) has not shared an equal consensus. Pretribblers insist that the church age can end—at any moment—at the Rapture before Daniel’s Seventieth Week begins. However, Joel teaches us something quite different.

The prophet Joel is considered by many scholars to be “the fountainhead of Hebrew predictive prophecy.”<sup>22</sup> As such, several key concepts of biblical prophecy are first introduced through his writings. Among the concepts is the very important Day of the Lord. “This day becomes the frame of reference in the Lord’s climactic program for Israel and the nations.”<sup>23</sup> Joel developed the Day of the Lord concept in the context of a national disaster. The most destructive locust plague described in Scripture had hit the land of Judah. Proclaimed as a precursor to the final judgment of God, the locust plague was to convince Judah to repent. Without repentance, judgment was sure. Fortunately for Judah, the warning was heeded and *ultimate* judgment was *postponed*. This scenario comprises the first major section of the book of Joel.

The final major section of the book of Joel develops the events of Israel’s future (2:18-3:21). Judah would enjoy the blessings of the removal of the northern army (2:18-20), and the land would be restored to productivity (2:21-27).

These blessings were to be immediate. There were also to be future blessings which are outlined in 2:28-3:21. The first of the future blessings involved the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would bring about an increase in prophetic revelation (2:28-29). Then cosmic and earthly signs and wonders would signal the coming of the Day of the Lord (2:30-31). Joel then promises a deliverance for “the remnant” whom the Lord calls (2:32). Between the signal of the imminent wrath of God and the actual pouring out of God’s wrath, Joel indicates “there shall be deliverance...” The fact that the group delivered is called “the remnant whom the Lord calls” is one more reason that supports the rapture occurring immediately before the coming of the wrath of God. We then learn from Joel’s writings that the Day of the Lord would include the judgment of the nations (3:1-7). God’s reason for

JOEL 2:28-32; 3:15-16

**“And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls...”**

**The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars lose their brightness. And the Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble. But the Lord is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel.**



JOEL : “the fountainhead of Hebrew predictive prophecy”

# When does the Day of the Lord begin in relation to the events of Daniel's Seventieth Week?

judging the nations stems from their continued hostility toward God's people. Immediately following God's wrath against the nations, the people of God (natural Israel) will receive their ultimate blessing—the long awaited kingdom of God.

Notice the sequence given by Joel. First, the outpouring of the Spirit produces prophetic revelation. Second, cosmic and earthly disturbances will signal the beginning of the Day of the Lord. Third, "the remnant whom the Lord calls" is delivered. Fourth, the Day of the Lord's judgment against the nations is followed by the Messianic age of ultimate blessings. This exact same pattern is adopted by prophetic writers who followed Joel in the Old Testament.<sup>24</sup> This is not the only usage of Joel 2:28-32 in connection with eschatological apocalypticism<sup>25</sup> which confirms the importance of this passage for our discussion. While some New Testament writers adopt the sequence indirectly, others allude directly to it. Peter's reference to this time frame in Acts 2:17-21 is direct. Given that the totality of the Joel prophecy was not fulfilled at Pentecost, the sequence of Joel 2:18-3:21 is very important for discerning the next major phase of God's program.

In his gospel, Luke indicates that Jesus was not only aware of the sequence but also included the sequence in His *parousia* (Luke 21:25). The same sign that signals the arrival of the Day of the Lord signals Christ's return to rapture the saints. It is therefore no surprise to find the same sequence in the book of Acts. It is, however, surprising that Joel 2:28-32 appears as an explanation for the church's beginning which is also the beginning of "the last days."

"The last days"<sup>26</sup> (the period we now live in or "the church age") began with the outpouring of the Spirit and will culminate with the last "Day," (John 6:39,40,54). Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:2) and Peter (2 Peter 3:1-13) both highlight the significance of the Day of the Lord by indicating that faithful believers will miss this great Day of final judgement. Paul indicates that believers will escape this day, but Peter indicates the wicked will not. Therefore, Acts 1-2 allow us to conclude that the Day of the Lord terminates the "last days" (the church age) with the rapture/resurrection of the righteous and wrath/ruin for the wicked.

## The Critical Question

Therefore, the critical question is this: when does the Day of the Lord begin in relation to the events of Daniel's Seventieth Week? "A number of pretribulationists hold that the Day of the Lord begins immediately after the Rapture or at least with the start of the Tribulation," says Dr. Paul D. Feinberg.<sup>27</sup> Feinberg adds, "I would start the Day of the Lord about the middle of the week..."<sup>28</sup> He concludes that the entire Seventieth Week is the wrath of God, but that the Day

of the Lord is an intensified expression of God's wrath which begins at the midpoint of Daniel's last week. Dr. Renald Showers defines the Day of the Lord in a similar way when he writes,

We must recall... in the Scriptures the expression the Day of the Lord has a double sense in relationship to the future... a broad sense referring to an extended period of time involving at least the 70th week plus the Millennium... [and] a narrow sense referring to one specific day—the day

on which Christ will return to the earth from heaven immediately after the Great Tribulation.<sup>29</sup>

The prewrath position, on the other hand, teaches that the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-17, which is described in parallel language to Joel 2:28-32; 3:15-16 and Isaiah 2:10-21, signals the beginning of the eschatological Day of the Lord. By recognizing this truth, the prewrath position clearly distinguishes between the wrath of Satan/Antichrist (Rev. 12:12) and the wrath of God which begins at the Day of the Lord and fulfills Isaiah 2:17: "The Lord alone will be exalted in that day..." To properly meet this criterion, Satan's counterfeit christ must cease to be any threat whatsoever. It will be God's Day alone. There are four reasons for this conclusion: the composition of the sixth seal, the sequence, the reaction of the wicked, and the timing.

First, the composition of the sixth seal is right. The sixth seal consists of the sign that signals the beginning of the eschatological Day of the Lord which is taken from Joel 2:30-31 and the reaction of the wicked which is taken from Isaiah 2:20-21: "In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, in order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, before the terror of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble."

Second, the sequence is right. The sign of the sun, moon, and stars is followed by the rapture of the elect, the wrath of God to the nations (trumpets and bowls) and the millennial blessings. This is the sequence developed by Joel, adopted by the Prophets, and expanded in the New Testament, particularly by Christ to His disciples. Our Lord in His Olivet Discourse indicates that the sign of the Day of the Lord in the sun, moon, and stars would be followed immediately by His return to gather together His elect (Matthew 24:29-31). Joel indicated a deliverance immediately following the sign of the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:32). The sixth seal is immediately followed by the sealing of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1-8) and the rapture of the church to heaven (Rev. 7:9-17). Then the seventh seal releases the seven trumpets of God's





judgment. The sequence is first the sign, then deliverance, and finally wrath.

Third, the reaction of the wicked is right. In the original Greek, the very first word of Revelation 6:17 is οτι (*hoti*) which, along with the verb *has come*, indicates that verse 17 is the cause for the resulting activity in verses 15 and 16.<sup>30</sup>

There are two reasons given for the wicked hiding and seeking death—the face of Him who sits on the throne (God the Father) and the wrath of the Lamb (Jesus Christ).<sup>31</sup> Isaiah also declares that the wicked would react to two things: “the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty” (Isaiah 2:10, 21). The “face” of God is a figure of speech. God the Father does not have a literal face (John 4:24). The word *face* is placed in the verse to denote His presence or person. This is a very common expression in the Old Testament (Psalm 42:5, 11; 1 Kings 10:24; Leviticus 23:40). The “face” of God is a parallel expression to “the glory of His majesty” used in Isaiah. God the Father is spirit and therefore is invisible (Colossians 1:15); however, invisibility does not limit the revelation of God’s majesty and holiness. As one does not have to see the sun to feel it, one does not have to see the Father to be aware of His presence. Paul confirms that both the Father and the Son will descend from heaven together at the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:14. God the Father will come in “the glory of His majesty.” The contrast between the wickedness of man and the righteousness of God will be overwhelming; the wicked will not be able to stand. The wicked are also hiding and seeking death because of the wrath of the Lamb, an equal expression to Isaiah’s use of “the terror of the Lord.” The terror of the Lord is the outpouring of the wrath of God.

Finally, there is a fourth reason for believing that the sixth seal signals the beginning of the Day of the Lord; the timing is right. There are two indicators of time given. The first has to do with the concept of a *day*. Notice what the response is of the wicked in Revelation 6:17, “the great *day* of His wrath has come.” It is a specific “day of wrath” that has come. The Jewish concept<sup>32</sup> of the day following the night is powerfully depicted in the sixth seal. Following God’s night will come God’s day. The sudden absolute darkness that envelops the earth will prevent human activity to any great degree. Just as the sudden darkness brings earth’s activities to a stand still, the sudden coming of the Light will send the wicked into hiding as the righteous are raptured. Absolute darkness will give way to absolute Light.

The second indicator of time is the verb ελθεν (*elthen*), which means “has come.” For you who have read *The Sign*, this verb is discussed in detail. For you who may not understand anything about the Greek language in which the New Testament was originally written, I have provided the sidebar below with an overview.

I believe that the kind of action used here is *ingressive* (the beginning of the action); the wicked are responding to the cosmic disturbances which signal the imminent wrath of God. There are four reasons for this view. First, there is the nature of the verb itself. *Elthen* (has come) is a verb that results in a state of being. In the sentence “the audience sat down so that the speaker could begin,” *sat down* would be aorist and the emphasis would be on the beginning (ingressive) of the action, i.e., “began to sit down.” They did not take their seats all at the exact same time, but one by one until they were all seated. This is the idea demonstrated in Revelation

# GREEK VERBS

Greek

verbs indicate three important issues for a reader: tense, voice and mood. *Elthen’s* (has come) tense is aorist, its voice is active, and its mood is indicative. **Tense** means time—yesterday indicates past time, today indicates present time, and tomorrow indicates future time. *Go*, *went*, and *gone* are three tenses of the verb *to go*. However, unlike English, the Greek language also expresses the kind of action.

The Greek language is generally more interested in the kind of action than the time of action. The simple sentence “he walked home” in Greek can mean action in progress (he began to walk home), action ended (he walked all the way home) or simply an event (he walked home). Context is the most important clue in determining what kind of action the aorist is indicating. The Greek verb also indicates

**voice**. Voice refers to whether the subject of the verb is doing the action (active), receiving the action (passive), or both (middle). An example of each would be: “he hit the ball” (active); “he was hit by the ball” (passive); and “he hit himself with the ball” (middle). Finally, the Greek verb indicates **mood**. Mood refers to how a person portrays an action. An action can be portrayed as real (indicative), potentially real (subjunctive), probably real (imperative), or wished to be real (optative). Notice: “you are hitting the ball” (indicative); “you should be hitting the ball” (subjunctive); “you may hit the ball” (optative); or “hit the ball!” (imperative). Please understand that this is a very simplified overview.

6:17. “The Aorist of verbs which denote a *state* or *condition* generally expresses the *entrance* into that state or condition.”<sup>33</sup> A literal translation of our phrase would be “the day of His wrath began to come.”

Secondly, this would explain the activity of the wicked in verses 15 and 16. The reason they hide and seek death is because the sign of the Lamb’s imminent wrath has just happened. Both Joel and Peter’s use of Joel 2:28-32 indicate that the sign comes *before* God’s wrath. The intent of the sign in the sun, moon, and stars make it clear that the wicked will be aware that the wrath of God is beginning. When the universe loses all light sources and the glory of God lights up the whole world as a spotlight on Jesus, the wicked will run, hide, and seek death.

A third support for recognizing the sixth seal as the signal that begins the wrath of God is the rhetorical question which concludes Revelation 6:17, “... and who is able to stand?” *This is an important clue and it is often overlooked by interpreters.* “All questions serve to simulate and arouse thought in a more vivid and engaging way than is true of statements,” writes John Beekman.<sup>34</sup> Beekman distinguishes between real and rhetorical questions. “The first asks for information, the second conveys information.”<sup>35</sup> The first asks a question which someone else must answer; the latter asks a question which he himself must answer. Immediately, we ask what fact is conveyed by the rhetorical question, “who is able to stand?” There are five possible ways rhetorical questions are used in the New Testament. Beekman stipulates that “rhetorical questions in the New Testament transform into statements which function to highlight certitude, incertitude, evaluation, command, or a new subject or new aspect of

the same subject.”<sup>36</sup> The particular question in Revelation 6:17 is a rhetorical question of certitude. Rhetorical questions of certitude “simply express the fact that the speaker is sure of what he is saying; he speaks with certainty.”<sup>37</sup>

By asking a rhetorical question of certitude, the wicked are stating an absolute fact—no one is able to stand when the wrath of God comes. In statement form the issue is obvious, but the rhetorical question makes the point more vivid. These are not the comments of individuals who have experienced some of God’s wrath only to conclude finally that they are doomed. Rather, these are men who are suddenly overshadowed by the presence of Almighty God and realize that the wrath of God is imminent. They conclude that there is no defense against it. At the very hour that they are saying, “peace and safety” (2 Thessalonians 5:3), the lights go out and then the Light of lights will shine. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul indicates that both Jesus Christ and God the Father will descend from heaven at the Rapture. For believers it will be a day of deliverance; for unbelievers it will be a day of destruction.

The final reason for taking *elthen* as ingressive in Revelation 6:17 is because of similar usage in the New Testament. Notice the following examples:

|                   |                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Rev. 6:17</b>  | the day has come                   |
| <b>Mark 14:41</b> | the hour has come                  |
| <b>John 13:1</b>  | His hour has come                  |
| <b>John 16:21</b> | her hour has come                  |
| <b>Rev. 11:18</b> | Your wrath has come                |
| <b>Rev. 14:7</b>  | the hour of His judgment has come  |
| <b>Rev. 14:15</b> | the time has come                  |
| <b>Rev. 18:10</b> | in one hour your judgment has come |
| <b>Rev. 19:7</b>  | the marriage of the Lamb has come  |

**God’s  
programs  
involving  
natural  
Israel and  
the church  
do indeed  
overlap.**

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*Elthen* is grammatically classified as aorist, active, and indicative. The aorist in the indicative usually indicates past time with reference to the time of speaking. Outside the indicative, time is not a feature of the aorist tense.<sup>39</sup> The Greeks were far more interested in the *kind* of action; therefore, the aorist may represent the action as occurring in past time, but the primary emphasis will be the kind of action that occurred. Dr. Ernest DeWitt Burton, a great Greek scholar of the 19th century, said, “The constant characteristic of the Aorist tense in all of its moods... is that it represents the action... simply as an event”<sup>40</sup>—an event in the sense of a moment captured in time. The aorist tense works much like a camera; you get a snapshot. From the snapshot, all you can tell is that an event was captured in a moment. Unlike using a video camera, you cannot discern how long the event had been going on, how long it continued after the snapshot, or how long it lasted in its entirety. A photographer can capture a runner at the very beginning of a race (ingressive), just as the runner crosses the finish line (effective), or, if he could get high enough overhead, he could capture the whole raceway (constative). Ingressive, effective, and constative are descriptions of the kind of action expressed in the aorist tense. In Revelation 6:17, are the wicked emphasizing the beginning of the day of wrath, the ending of the day of wrath, or whole period covered by the day of wrath? Pretribblers argue that this usage of *elthen* is an example of a *constative* aorist—that is, that the emphasis is not on the beginning but on the event itself, which supports their argument that the wicked are responding to their experience of God’s wrath.

Mark 14:41 is the most important parallel. It states “And He came the third time, and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come [elthen, the same word used in Revelation 6:17]; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.’” This passage indicates that the hour had just begun. Events were in motion—Judas and the soldiers were on their way to arrest Jesus—but were in no way complete. William L. Lane, in his fine commentary on *The Gospel of Mark*, writes:

The two statements “the hour has come” and “the Son of Man is handed over to sinners” are synonymous, the second simply clarifying the tenor of the first declaration. They indicate that the moment is imminent when the power of sin and death will overwhelm Jesus and destroy him.<sup>38</sup>

What is immediately clear is that the event need not have actually occurred; rather, the circumstances necessary to bring the event to pass may have only just begun. This is the most logical conclusion in Revelation 6:17 and Mark 14:41.

## Conclusion

Acts 2:14-21 indicates that the first day of “the last days”/church age began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and that the last day of “the last days” will be concluded with a universal loss of all natural light sources. Joel 2:28-32 predicts and Revelation 6:17 depicts that the universal loss of all natural light sources signals the imminent outpouring of the wrath of God—the Day of the Lord. We know that the Seventieth Week of Daniel does not begin with a universal loss of all natural light sources because Christ warned the apostles that deception will mark the beginning of the end times (Matthew 24:4). Given the cosmic disturbances connected with the beginning of the Day of the Lord and the deception associated with the beginning of Daniel’s Seventieth Week, the Seventieth Week *must start before* the Day of the Lord. Since this is true, God’s programs involving natural Israel and the church do indeed overlap. Such an overlap is a panorama of God’s *sovereign dispensationalism* and rejects the *limited dispensationalism* the pretribulationists cling to for their defense of a pretrib Rapture.

## ENDNOTES

1. For a full discussion of the meaning and purpose of dispensationalism, please see the previous issue of *Parousia*.
2. John A. Witmer, *BSac* 155 (January-March 1998): 113-114.
3. Included as one of the fundamental pillars of the prewrath position is the timing of the salvation of the righteous remnant of Israel who survives the Seventieth Week of Daniel. For a detailed explanation of the five tenets of the prewrath position, see Robert Van Kampen, *The Sign* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993), xix.
4. This is the purpose of Blaising and Bock’s book. For in-depth reading see *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).
5. *ibid.*, 380.
6. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master, eds., *Issues in Dispensationalism*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 11. This is the label of choice for those Blaising and Bock call modern dispensationalists.
7. Charles C. Ryrie, “Update on Dispensationalism,” in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, Willis and Master, eds., 23. Covenant premillennialists agree that Christ will reign on earth for 1000 years, but also believe that the church inherited all the promises of Israel, which as a nation does not have a future in the program of God.
8. *ibid.*, 21.
9. *ibid.*, 23-25.

10. *ibid.*, 25.
11. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, “Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: Assessment and Dialogue,” in *Dispensationalism*, Blaising and Bock, eds., 377.
12. This is clearly seen in progressive dispensationalists’ choice of “already/not yet” language to describe the present relationship of Jesus Christ to the Davidic Kingdom.
13. Romans 11:1-10.
14. “This is that” is a well known method used by members of the Qumran community to alter passages of Scripture they felt had a contemporary fulfillment for them. For a detailed discussion of the particular formula used see Daniel I. Treier, “The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple-Lens Approach,” *JETS* 40 (March 1997) 13-26. Also, “The Reign of the Lord Christ” by Dr. Darrell L. Bock in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, page 47.
15. John T. Carroll, *Response to the End of History: Eschatology and Situation in Luke-Acts*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 129. Please notice footnote 43.
16. I. Howard Marshall, “The Significance of Pentecost,” *SJT* 30 (1977) 358.
17. *ibid.*
18. Prophetic activity in Acts is mentioned in 11:28; 13:1-3; 15:32; 21:9; 21:10-11 involving both male and females; dreams and visionary activity are listed in 12:6-7; 16:9; 18:9; 23:11; and 27:23. For more details see B. J. Hubbard, “The Role of Commissioning Accounts in Acts,” in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. C. H. Talbert, (Danville: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), 192-195.
19. We are not able to be dogmatic concerning whether another period is or is not inserted between Pentecost and the day of the Lord from this passage alone. See, “The Reign of the Lord Christ” by Dr. Darrell L. Bock in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, page 47-48.
20. Marshall, “The Significance of Pentecost,” 368.
21. Walvoord, John F. and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.
22. Walter K. Price, *The Prophet Joel and the Day of the Lord*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 15.
23. *ibid.*
24. Some scholars date the book of Joel to after the return from slavery. I personally support the early date for the book which place Joel as the earliest of the prophets. Consequently, the pattern can be seen in Isaiah 11, Zechariah 13:1-2, Ezekiel 37:11-14, and Amos 9:11-15.
25. R. Zehnle lists Rabbinical sources to support this conclusion. See *Peter’s Pentecost Discourse: Tradition and Lukan Reinterpretation in Peter’s Speeches of Acts 2 and 3*, pp. 123-31.
26. While Peter identified the period as “the last days” (Acts 2:16) and the “last times” (1 Peter 1:20), the writer of Hebrews calls it the “last days,” (Hebrews 1:2). John calls it “the last time” (1 John 2:18), and Jude calls it “the last time,” (Jude 1:18).
27. *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation?* Richard R. Reiter, Paul D. Feinberg, Gleason L. Archer and Douglas J. Moo, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 60-61.
28. *ibid.*, 61.
29. Renald Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* (Bellmawr: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1995) 70.
30. “Quite frequently *οτι* introduces a dependent causal clause. In such instances it should be translated *because* or *for*.” This the conclusion of Dr. Daniel B. Wallace in his book, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) 460.
31. This explains the confusion regarding the correct reading of verse 17 as seen in the differences between two popular translations; the KJV translates *αυτου* (His) and the NASB translates *αυτων* (Their). Either reading is justifiable. I personally favor “His wrath.”
32. Frank E. Hirsch, “Day and Night,” *ISBE*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983) 798.
33. William W. Goodwin, *The Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1887) 24. C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 10.
34. John Beekman, “Analyzing and Translating the Questions of the New Testament,” *Not* 44, pp. 3.
35. *ibid.*
36. *ibid.*, 9.
37. John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974) 239.
38. William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark, NICNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) 522.
39. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) 555.
40. Ernest DeWitt Burton, *Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1982) 16.



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# Open Doors in India

by Roger Best

*The Sign* and *The Rapture Question Answered, Plain & Simple* are making an impact on the Christians in the country of India. Myself and Joe Dockery had the privilege of spending a month in five different regions of India; the translators were kept very busy as each region spoke a different language!

Arriving in Bombay on January 27th, we were met by Pastor Stephen Bandela who accompanied us on our trip. From there we were driven five hours north to the city of Nasik. Our wild ride on a very busy two-lane highway confirmed God's sovereignty and protection! In Nasik we conducted a three-day conference in St. Andrews Church, built nearly one hundred and fifty years ago by David Livingstone. On Sunday, Joe, Stephen and I each spoke in different churches for both the morning and evening services. Nasik is an extremely poor city of over five million people; the signs of bondage to a false religion are obvious everywhere.

Our next stop was Hyderabad. One year ago I had conducted a conference there, and it was a blessing to see old friends and to share in a three-day conference. Last year we had met a young lady, Madhavi, who then had just accepted Christ. What a joy to see her still vibrant in her testimony. She shared with us that her sister had also come to Christ. The hunger and interest from the people, particularly the pastors, made the teaching a privilege and an honor for us. While in Hyderabad we had the opportunity to meet with John Saji, director of Operation Mobilization's efforts in India. Impressed with the organization, we made arrangements for *The Rapture Question Answered, Plain & Simple* to be printed in English there. We are also having it published in Telugu, one of the major languages of India. Both publications should be available within the next two months.

It was then on to Bangalore, where we began on Sunday with Pastor Ramesh Kumar and the Shalom Biblical Baptist Church. On Monday and Tuesday we taught students from the Shalom Biblical Baptist Seminary along with many others including students from Burma. Wednesday morning we traveled to a rural area and held an evangelistic service at the Shalom Biblical Baptist Orphanage. What a joy to hear eighty boys and girls, all from Hindu backgrounds, singing choruses of praise to the Lord. One twelve year-old boy stood and recited the first

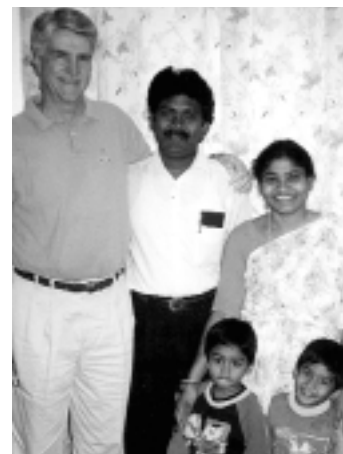
twelve Psalms; he has the first one hundred Psalms memorized! Now that is hiding God's Word in your heart! Our stay in the Kumar home was a special blessing as we witnessed firsthand a family living out Jesus Christ before their Hindu and Moslem neighbors.

We then moved to another area of Bangalore and conducted a pastors' conference which had been expertly arranged by Pastor Daniel Jesudass. Every session was attended by well over two hundred people, and pastors in attendance had an openness to be taught from the Word of God. We also then ministered in three different churches on Sunday. Our hearts were deeply moved by the commitment of the believers and their great desire to be taught the truths of Scripture.

On Monday, February 16th we flew to Cochin where we were met by Andrew and Jane Wesner, who are serving with Operation Mobilization on the ship *Doulos*. We got a grand tour of the ship and had a delightful dinner with Captain Bird and his wife. The next day was the only off-day of the entire trip; summer had arrived in India, and with temperatures in the 90's the rest was refreshing.

On Wednesday we were picked up by Daniel Pappy and went south about three hours to the Light of Hope Mission located in Cheppard. Each evening over two hundred folks gathered for the teaching sessions. Just as in the other regions, we saw their hunger for the Word of God. Part of Light of Hope Mission is an orphanage that has two homes: one with twenty-nine girls and one with twenty-nine boys, their ages ranging from four to thirteen. Each evening they sang as they sat in the front row and paid close attention during the hour and a half of teaching that followed. We fell in love with them, and they have left a lasting impression on our hearts. These precious children have been rescued from a life of paganism.

On February 23rd we began our long journey back to the States. We were tired, but overwhelmed with the love and interest shown to us by our brothers and sisters in Christ who live in India. Pray for them. Their lives are difficult, but they love Jesus and are looking for His coming.



Top: Joe Dockery with Pastor David Bandela, his wife Celina, and sons Dexter and Timothy

Middle: Roger Best and the boys of Light of Hope Children's Home

Bottom: Pastors John Manohar, G. Sampurna Rao, and Jeeva Ratnam



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