

BAMBOOZLED

BELIEVERS

by Michael Biehler

Bamboozled Believers

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a minefield of dangerous texts that could explode, destroying cherished but bogus theology. This book throws the spotlight of truth on taboo texts - texts that are routinely avoided by preachers who dance around passages that give rise to tough questions. Since they are considered to be God's revered spokesmen, many preachers believe that they cannot make mistakes; they must appear confident and be authoritative. Also, they've signed their denomination's statement of faith and must toe the party line. They cannot admit, even to themselves, that some of their preaching is pure poppycock.

This book will take many of you to places where you don't want to go. You will see that many trusted leaders have been feeding their flocks fables. This book challenges you to think outside of the box by drawing upon Scripture and asking some tough questions to show that the

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paperback-prophet industry has been pumping out pure drivel.

The “taboo texts” are dangerous in two very different ways: first, they can incite the most hateful behavior in the sweetest, most godly, Bible-believing Christians. Many pundits scream “heresy” as a way of suppressing discussion of the Scripture passages that we will examine. And we know from history that when they hear the word “heresy”, many true believers start gathering kindling wood. I sincerely hope that hatred does not well up inside of you as you contemplate these ideas. Hatred is a most unchristian emotion. The truth can withstand scrutiny... don’t be afraid of dialogue. Let’s reason together.

The second way in which the “taboo texts” are dangerous is this: if you come to agree with the truths that these texts proclaim, and start asking the questions that flow from them, you may be labeled a “heretic”. You may be rejected, ostracized, even excommunicated. If you are a pastor, you may become unemployed because some churches value the **“traditions of men”** more than they value the truth. Some churches cannot acknowledge error, so they must banish all who question their extra-biblical dogma. For example, my church purges itself of all dissent with a clever policy. Each year all pastors must sign a statement in which they agree to resign if they come to disagree with anything in our Statement of Faith. The denomination marches on, teaching as truth the doctrines of men, and thanks to our clever policy, the Scriptures cannot be used to correct the erroneous dogma... we say that the Bible is “the final authority on all matters of faith and practice”; but in reality, human tradition takes priority.

I say again, if you come to agree with what the “taboo texts” so clearly teach, then you will also come to know the veracity of Voltaire’s assertion: “It is dangerous to be right when the established authorities are wrong.”

What will you do with this book of potentially dangerous ideas? If

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you are not a Christian, I offer you the voyeuristic pleasure of seeing the irrational, inconsistent way that most Christians understand the book that they supposedly study. I hope that you will help me to reach the bamboozled Christians with the truth that the Bible proclaims; I hope that you will ask questions that provoke some Christians to actually try to understand God's Word. If you aren't yet a Christian, please start by reading Appendices 1, 7, and 8. There you will find an unusual defense of the faith. I will try to show you that there are good reasons to believe that there is a creator-God who communicates with us through Scripture. Also, since you may not be familiar with some Christian vocabulary, Appendix 14 is a glossary that may help.

If you are a believer, you know that there are divisions between churches and angry divisions within churches because Christians cannot agree on what the Bible teaches about Jesus' second coming. If you love truth, you will be delighted to discover that this doctrinal disarray is rooted in a faulty paradigm... the divisions can be healed. At first this book will make your comfortable pew somewhat less cozy, but as you contemplate the truths that this book proclaims, you will see that the truth has the potential to unify Christians and thereby change the world!

Perhaps this book will shake you out of your complacency. Most of us admit to gaps in our Bible knowledge; but we assume that our leaders have their theological ducks in a row. As you will soon see, that is not always the case.

I am writing in the first person for three reasons: first, I am compelled to write because of the ugly way that some "godly" people have responded to the questions that I ask. Apparently they believe that evil is permissible in their fight to defend their extra-biblical "Christian" fables. I want the Reader to know that this book presents truths for which my family and I have suffered; this book is not an abstract treatise on some

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arcane point of theology. Based on my painful experience, I will discuss the way that Christians should respond to biblical arguments that they find unpalatable.

The second reason that I write in the first person is this: I intend to use Pauline¹ bluntness. Other books presenting this information have been written by gracious scholars who have suffered far more than me. Despite their mistreatment, these writers are gentle with those who disparage them; honey flows from their keyboards, and they produce informative books that you should read. Yet their books do not get wide circulation. Unlike those gracious, godly men, I choose to write in the style used by Jesus and Paul. Jesus called hypocrites “**hypocrites**”. When speaking of those who demanded that Gentile believers be circumcised, Paul said he hoped that they would “**emasculate themselves**”.² I won’t mince words; but my rhetoric is tame by comparison. Perhaps God will speak to you through my direct style.

Third, I write in the first person because I am writing for my children. I’m an old man who has three young children. By the time that my children are old enough to contemplate the issues in this book, there is a good chance that I will no longer be here. I want them to know that the Bible is not a collection of incomprehensible conundrums. I want them to know that if we simply accept what the taboo texts teach, then the Bible does make sense. God does not contradict himself. What is taught in one part of the Bible must agree with what is taught in the other parts... this

1 The Apostle Paul wrote fourteen, maybe fifteen, of the books of New Testament. He did not pull any punches as he told it like it is. I will write in a similar direct style.

2 The English Standard Version (ESV) and the New International Version (NIV) use the term “emasculate”. The King James Version (KJV) writes that Paul wishes that they could be “cut off” or killed. Translation is not an exact science. I will show that translators sometimes inject their theological bias into their translations. Sometimes we need to dig a little deeper to understand the original meaning of a passage.

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is a fundamental principle of rational hermeneutics. Confusion develops when people take metaphors literally and try to force their preconceptions onto the text. **“God is not the author of confusion”** (1 Cor. 14:33 KJV).

Throughout this book bold type will be used for Scripture quotes. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted. Note that there is no underlining in the original. As the author of this book, I underline to emphasize the parts of passages that I am discussing. Please don’t be offended if sometimes my explanations are too detailed or you see some repetition... I do not intend to be condescending, it’s just that I am always conscious of the fact that I am writing to and for my children. Ideally, a hundred million people will read these words and my book will help to start a new reformation. Realistically, I proceed on the assumption that only my children and maybe a few dozen other people will ever read this book.

Metaphorically speaking, “I am a canoe in the open ocean trying to change a supertanker’s course by pushing on its hull.” Or in plain language, I am an ordinary man who is addressing all Christians, attempting to present the truths that I see but that most others do not as yet accept. You know about canoes and supertankers, so you can understand the metaphor. But that metaphor would be incomprehensible to people who lived 2,000 years ago. Similarly, some of the metaphors used in Scripture can create confusion today. In the Bible, trees actually don’t actually **“clap their hands”** (Isa. 55:12). And maybe, at Jesus’ second coming, the **“stars”** don’t actually **“fall”** either (Matt. 24:29).

I should also state that God has given me no special revelation. I’ve been 100 percent wrong in the past and probably still have big errors in my analysis of Scripture. While I don’t claim to have everything figured

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out, I would like to share with you a paradigm shift³ that has dramatically deepened my understanding of the Bible. None of what I say is original. I stand on the shoulders of brilliant men who present powerful arguments; I have come to believe that bad translations and bad assumptions have resulted in some very bad theology. I make no claim to great intellect, but I do have an advantage over many who have gone before me. In our modern era, computer software makes it easier to analyze Scripture and search engines make it easy to read different perspectives on any subject. You don't have to be a genius to read and evaluate the reasoning of brilliant people. If you know the truth, **"...the truth will make you free."** (Jn. 8:32) May God instill in you a hunger for the truth!

3 A paradigm shift is a revolutionary transformation in understanding. Here's an illustration of a paradigm shift from a long-forgotten sermon: A man got onto a subway car with his three little children. The children ran wild, disturbing all of the other passengers, but the father did nothing; he was lost in thought. A lady fumed with growing rage as she observed the father's indifference to his children's bad behavior. She confronted him, demanding that he control his children. Then she learned that the father was on his way home from the hospital where his wife had just died. Instantly her anger changed to understanding and sympathy as she experienced a paradigm shift in her understanding of the situation.

In this book I am calling for a paradigm shift in our understanding of the Bible. I am also saying that we cannot correct our errors if we maintain our medieval mindset and hurl the poison word "heretic" at those who have a different understanding.

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I have the joy that passes understanding...it comes from being at peace with my creator. But it also comes from the life that He has given to me. It's unusual for an old man to be the father of young children so I would like to tell you how that came to be.

My first wife died after a ten-year battle with cancer. Our youngest daughter was in junior high and our oldest had already finished university. Three years later I started looking for a Christian woman with whom to share my life, but I had a big problem. Few women inhabit my very small theological island. Fortunately, the Internet came to our town as I started my search. Also, at that time, a computer-savvy young woman started attending my church. She helped this old geezer put his profile on the "Christian Matchmaker" website. As I searched for a "soul-mate" in cyberspace, the young woman and I became good friends. It seemed that

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whenever we talked we couldn't stop talking. She was the most vibrant woman that I had ever met. I loved her, but from a distance because she was way too young. Then one day my daughter said: "Dad, why don't you marry Tania?" I thought: "She's unattainable." But I decided to try. I stopped wearing white socks. I started flossing my teeth. I read books about relationships... Our courtship lasted two agonizing years. I pursued, she resisted. She gave me absolutely zero encouragement, but I sustained myself with this thought: "Persistence in a man generally pays. The woman feels security and flattery through being loved." ☺ Then one beautiful day, she said: "Let's get serious." It is now sixteen years later and we have three absolutely fantastic children. Tania is the best wife and mother that any man could ever imagine. I tell her that I want the following words inscribed on my tombstone: "His wildest dreams came true and she was wilder than he ever could have dreamed." ☺

She truly is the answer to my prayers. We know the total love that is only possible between two people who love God first. Without her support, I could not have endured the hatred of my Christian brothers. I dedicate this book, and my every breath, to her.

CHAPTER 1

“Shall not Taste of Death”

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels and then he shall reward every man according to his works”
(Matt. 16:27 KJV).

What is Jesus talking about in this verse? It certainly sounds like his second coming, the end of the world, and the subsequent judgment of all people. Almost every Christian would agree that this is a statement about the end of the world, but they would be wrong! Perhaps you will be surprised when you read the next verse:

“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom”
(Matt. 16:28 KJV). Jesus was speaking to his disciples. He said that some

of them would live to see him coming to **“reward each man according to his works”**.

Footnotes in many Bibles tell us that Jesus was referring to the transfiguration.⁴ Some footnotes suggest that he may have been referring to the Day of Pentecost.⁵ But these footnotes are not inerrant.⁶ We know that the footnotes are wrong for two very good reasons: first, there was no **“rewarding of each man according to his works”** at the transfiguration or on the Day of Pentecost. And second, the transfiguration happened just six days after Jesus spoke. If a teacher told his students that some of them would live to see men walking on Mars, everyone would understand that he was predicting an event decades in the future. Similarly, Jesus’ words indicate that a substantial amount of time would pass before his coming in glory and judgment. When he told his disciples some of you **“shall not taste of death”**, he was saying: “Decades will pass, most of you will be dead, but some will live to see my second coming.” It is crystal-clear: Jesus told his disciples that he would return during the first century.

Dear Reader, you have just encountered an explosive idea. If you cannot accept the simple reasoning that I have presented in these three preceding paragraphs, then there is no point reading any further. I will give you many more texts like this one and more logical analyses that make orthodox futurists hyperventilate; but before moving to other passages, I would like to discuss the way that some of our leaders deal with this particular text.

Please imagine that you are writing the comments in a study Bible;

4 The transfiguration is described in Matt. 17:1-9, Mk. 9:2-8, Lk. 9:28-36, and in the glossary.

5 The Day of Pentecost is described in Acts 2 and in the glossary.

6 The Bible claims to be verbally inspired by God and thus in its original form it is inerrant. Many Christians seem to forget that footnotes and translations are produced by fallible men. They are not inerrant.

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you are a distinguished and godly biblical scholar. When you come to Matt. 16:27, 28 you are puzzled by Jesus’ statement that he will come again before all of his disciples have died. You believe that Jesus will come and judge every man and establish his earthly kingdom; but you are certain that this will happen some time in our future, not during his disciples’ lifetimes. You check various translations; yes, Jesus really did say that he would return before all of his disciples had “**tasted death**”. And to make matters even worse, those same words are also recorded in Mark 9:1 and in Luke 9:27. You consult several other commentaries; most say that Jesus was speaking about the transfiguration. But you know that doesn’t make sense. So what do you do?

If your name is Dr. Henry M. Morris, you decide to go along with the others. Here is what Dr. Morris wrote:

The fact that Matthew, Mark and Luke all record this remarkable promise immediately before the experience of Peter, James and John on the mount of transfiguration indicates that they understood the experience to be the fulfillment of the promise. In effect, the three disciples were translated in a vision (Matt. 17:9) to the glory of the future kingdom.⁷

I quote the late Dr. Morris because I have the highest regard for him. His creationist books have dramatically impacted my life. I marvel at his accomplishments and am awed by his powerful intellect; but I now know that when it comes to eschatology, Dr. Morris is out to lunch.

He says that since the description of the transfiguration follows immediately after Jesus’ “remarkable promise”, the transfiguration must

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be the fulfillment of that promise. He ignores another very good reason why Matthew, Mark, and Luke describe the transfiguration immediately after quoting Jesus' "remarkable promise". People usually record events in chronological order, and the transfiguration happened just a few days after Jesus made his promise. Dr. Morris also ignores two important facts: there was no "rewarding according to works" at the transfiguration, and all of his disciples were alive at that time because it happened just a week after Jesus made his "remarkable promise".

With the flimsiest of arguments Dr. Morris attributes Jesus' "**coming in his kingdom**" to "**reward each man according to his works**" to the transfiguration. He then goes on to give us a dose of his futurist eschatology. Jesus said that the disciples would see him coming in his kingdom during their lifetimes. Dr. Morris says: "three disciples were translated in a vision to the glory of the future kingdom." He has moved the coming of the kingdom of God thousands of years into the future. He has directly contradicted Jesus' assertion that the kingdom would come during their lifetimes.

There is no pleasure seeing Dr. Morris using such intellectual contortions. I draw his footnote to your attention only to show that even the godliest people can be bamboozled.⁸ And once they've installed an error as a cornerstone of their theology, even the godliest men will twist Scripture to preserve their delusion. Dr. Morris is typical of a thousand other expositors whose futurist mindsets will not allow them to accept Matt. 16:27, 28 and the thousand other verses that speak of Jesus' coming

8 The following quotation from Carl Sagan beautifully expresses the condition of most 21st century Christians: "One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We're no longer interested in finding out the truth; the bamboozle has captured us. It is simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves... that we've been so credulous" (The Fine Art of Baloney Detection by Carl Sagan, *Parade Magazine*, Feb. 1, 1987).

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during his disciples’ lifetimes.

This book’s thesis is that Christians have been bamboozled by an error so big and so obvious that we cannot bring ourselves to admit that we have been so wrong. We must swallow our collective pride and admit that we have been wrong; we need a paradigm shift in our understanding of the Bible! Jesus clearly and repeatedly stated that he would return during the first century. Many, many times the New Testament writers express their eager anticipation of his imminent return. If he didn’t return, the Bible is nonsense and if he did return, our futurist eschatology is nonsense.

Since the Bible is a minefield of “problem texts” that can explode, destroying cherished but bogus futurist eschatology, most Christian leaders use the “avoid and ignore” strategy for dealing with the “problem texts”. So my eyes widened one Sunday morning service when I read in the church bulletin that the Scripture reading would be Matt. 16:21-28. Was the pastor’s sermon going to deal with Jesus’ coming in his kingdom during his disciples’ lifetime?! Well no... that wasn’t his topic; it turned out that his text was **“take up your cross and follow me”** from verse 24, but he had inadvertently told the secretary who prepared the bulletin that the reading would include verses 27 and 28. When he read aloud, he simply stopped reading at the end of verse 26. He certainly didn’t want to open a can of worms...

This book opens the can of worms, pours them on the table, and shows you that the hundreds of verses that we routinely avoid actually do make sense. This book is a call for a new reformation, one that has already been started by devout men who have written scholarly books on this same subject. I will reference some of those books, but please understand that this book is not going to go into great detail. Instead, this book is an attempt to give you the big picture. To adamant futurists, this book will

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feel like a finger in the eye. People who have been studying their Bibles all of their Christian lives may ask themselves: "Why didn't I see this before?" I completely understand this puzzled feeling, because I didn't see these things for twenty-five years. For me, it all started like this...

I thought that I knew the Bible. I had been a Christian for a long time when one day my little girl asked: "Dad, why doesn't Jesus like pregnant women? Why is it bad to be pregnant or be nursing a baby when Jesus comes to end the world?" Then she read me this passage from Jesus' Olivet Discourse:

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matt. 24 KJV)

I was sure that I could answer my child's question; just look at the

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context, right? First, I noted that Jesus was answering his disciples’ question about **“the end of the world”** (vs. 3 KJV) and I knew that the **“abomination of desolation”** is something that the antichrist would do shortly before the great tribulation and the end of the world. But these “facts” didn’t help me to answer her question so I had to admit that I was stumped. I asked my pastor for help; he explained that there are lots of things in the Bible that we don’t understand. He said: “Some day, when we see Jesus, he will explain everything to us.” I didn’t like his non-answer, and I kept her question in the back of my mind. About seven years later I learned two facts that answered the question and created a maelstrom of misery:⁹

1. The phrase **“end of the world”** is not translated correctly in the King James Version of the Bible. The word translated “world” is the Greek word “aion” which is similar to the English word “aeon” and means a period of time. All modern translations that I am aware of now correctly translate the phrase **“end of the age”**. Jesus was discussing the destruction of the magnificent temple in Jerusalem, and the attendant end of the Old Covenant age. That age came to an end when the temple and the city were destroyed by Roman armies in AD 70. The Bible never says that the world will end!¹⁰ (Please note, throughout this book I will quote from the English Standard Version [ESV] except when I want to show that a poor translation has contributed to futurists’ errors.)

9 I learned these two facts, and many more, when I read *The Parousia* by Stewart Russell. Ultimately, much of what I say in this book is derived from Russell’s book. *The Parousia* is a scholarly classic that I heartily recommend, but I must also caution you that it was written almost two hundred years ago and uses “olde” English that is difficult to understand.

10 Appendices 2 and 3 deal with the “end of the world”.

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2. A passage in Luke 21 shows that the **“abomination of desolation”** has nothing to do with the antichrist and the end of the world. As you read the passage below, compare verse 21 with verse 15 that is quoted above. You will realize that seeing **“Jerusalem compassed with armies”** is the same as seeing **“the abomination of desolation”**. The other verses in each passage show that they are describing the same event. What could be more abominable, to a first century Jew, than pagan armies that were about to destroy the holy city?¹¹

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter there into.

22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. (Lk. 21:20-23 KJV)

Two thousand years ago, when hostile armies approached a city, the

11 I am not sure if the **“abomination of desolation”** refers to the armies or to an act that one of the armies committed at the start of the war. Perhaps you assume that Roman armies laid siege to Jerusalem for three-and-a-half years and then captured it; but that is not what happened. The Romans did not surround Jerusalem until March of AD 70. Before their arrival, Jewish armies fought vicious battles against each other within the city and inside the temple. Josephus distinguishes the four factions as the Sicarii, the followers of John of Giscala, the soldiers of Simeon bar Giora, and the Zealots. A discussion of the details of their actions is far beyond the scope of this book. If you want to learn more, I recommend *First Century Events in Chronological Order* and *Final Decade Before the End*, both by Ed Stevens.

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people would gather inside of the walled city and prepare to defend themselves. Jesus advised his disciples to do the opposite. He said when you see armies approaching the city, get out and run for your lives... Running would be difficult for pregnant women and women with nursing babies. Jesus was warning his disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem which was going to occur before that generation “**passed away**” (Matt. 24:34). That explanation certainly sounded reasonable to my daughter; but my pastor did not like it. He called it “heresy”. He simply could not accept my assertion that Jesus’ Olivet Discourse deals with events that happened almost 2,000 years ago.

A “heretic” cannot serve on the church board and a “heretic” cannot be a church member, so I was removed from the board and excommunicated. Quoting Matt.18:18 “**...what you bind on earth is bound in heaven**”, the pastor explained to me that the church has the power to condemn me to hell. My excommunication means that I am excluded from the kingdom of God.¹² He says that I will be condemned to hell for all eternity if I do not recant these heretical views. How’s that for a “maelstrom of misery”?

This book is part of an ongoing soap opera in my local church and in churches around the world as more and more of us realize that we have been bamboozled. This book is more than a discussion of some texts that baffle futurists; it will draw on my experience and some taboo pieces of church history to consider how Christians should deal with theological differences.

Before explaining and defending my “heretical views”, I would like

12 I can joke about excommunication being tough on my wife... she really likes to talk. But these men are deadly serious. During two congregational meetings where I was ambushed and not allowed to speak in my defense, they persuaded the church members to vote for my excommunication. They have done their best to silence me and until now I have not responded.

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to assure you that I am not cooking up a novel perversion of Scripture. One of the Early Church Fathers, a man named Eusebius (AD 265-340), would have answered my daughter’s question about pregnant women in exactly the same way that I did. In *“Ecclesiastical History”*¹³ he refers to the part of Olivet prophecy, which is quoted above, and he attributes its fulfillment to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Chapter 7 of Eusebius’ book is short and is in the public domain, so I have attached it as Appendix 4. If Jesus’ Olivet prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 as I maintain, then my “heresy” is not heresy and there are a lot of bamboozled believers around...

The assertion that Jesus’ Olivet Discourse¹⁴ deals with the events of AD 70 is absolutely outrageous to futurists; but the Bible supports that assertion. In his discourse, Jesus makes a statement very similar to his promise to return before all of his disciples had tasted death. He gives a long list of events that would happen before his return (wars, earthquakes, famine, etc.), and then he describes his return. Finally, he makes this clear and remarkable statement:

“Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, until all these things be fulfilled” (Matt. 24:34 KJV).

This verse is another explosive taboo text that futurists simply cannot accept. Jesus said that he would return during the first century; but futurists have twisted his words so that they can maintain their futurist fantasies. Let’s look at how Dr. Morris deals with this verse. The footnote in his study Bible says:

This generation: The word “this” is the demonstrative adjective

13 Eusebius’ book is also called *Church History*.

14 Jesus’ Olivet Discourse is quoted in Matt. 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 17:20-37, and Luke 21.

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and could better be translated “that generation”. That is, the generation that sees all of these signs (probably starting with world war 1) shall not have completely died away until all of these things have taken place.

Again, I have quoted Dr. Morris because I admire and respect him and because he is typical of a thousand other futurists. He is wrong! The World War 1 generation has passed away and Jesus didn’t return.¹⁵ Please note that Dr. Morris was correct when he said: “The generation that sees all of these signs shall not have completely died away until all of these things have taken place.” Yet Dr. Morris misses or ignores the fact that the first century generation, to whom Jesus was speaking, did see all of those signs.

Several excellent books¹⁶ carefully cover every nuance of Jesus’ Olivet Discourse and show that it deals with his coming in AD 70 and the events that occurred in the years leading up to that event. So I will not go into great detail here; but I must give an overview and respond to the most common objections to my assertion that the Olivet Discourse deals with the events that happened in the first century.

Let’s set the scene: Jesus and his disciples had just left the magnificent

15 Many other futurists believe that the generation that saw the birth of the modern nation of Israel in 1948 is the generation referred to in this verse. Hal Lindsay calls it the “fig tree” generation. In his enormously popular book entitled *The Late Great Planet Earth* Lindsay explains that since a biblical “generation” is forty years, Jesus would have to return by 1988. Oops, like a thousand other futurists, Lindsay was totally wrong.

16 A correct understanding of the Olivet Discourse is the key to understanding eschatology, and misunderstanding the Olivet Discourse is the foundation of all futurist eschatology. Space prevents an analysis of each phrase of the discourse, but I discuss the most common objections to the assertion that the discourse deals with the events of AD 70. The imagery that Jesus uses in his discourse can be confusing. So if your appetite has been whetted and you want to learn more, I recommend the following books: *Last Days Madness* by Gary DeMar and *Prophecy Fulfilled- God’s Perfect Church* by David P. Crews. In addition, I will be posting a series of Bible study lessons that focus on the Olivet Discourse (see www.BamboozledBelievers.com).

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temple in Jerusalem when he told his disciples that the temple would be destroyed. He said: **"...There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"** (Matt. 24:2). Then, as he sat on the Mount of Olives, his disciples asked two interrelated questions: **"When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?"** Obviously, the destruction of the city and the temple would mean the end of the Old Covenant age. The disciples linked his coming to the end of the age, because he had told them that he would come again, in judgment, before all of them had **"tasted death"** (Matt. 16:28). Jesus responded to their questions by giving them a long list of events that would happen before he came again: false christs, wars, famines, earthquakes, great tribulation, apostasy, false prophets, and **"...the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world..."** (Matt. 24:14). Please note: all of these events did happen before he came in AD 70.¹⁷

Many people object by arguing: "The whole world had not yet heard the gospel. So how could this passage be referring to his coming in AD 70?" Good question, easy answer. We often read these words aloud in Christmas services: **"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed"** (Lk. 2:1). Did Caesar tax the people in Australia and America? No, he did not; so the word "world" in this passage refers to the world of the Roman Empire. Similarly, in Romans 1:8, Paul, writing in the first century, says that the faith had already been proclaimed in **"all the world"**. Had the gospel been proclaimed in Australia or America? No, it had not; obviously he was referring to the Roman "world". He also spoke these words to the people in the

¹⁷ All of these events are recorded in the New Testament and in books written by secular historians of the first century. The best known historians are Josephus and Tacitus.

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church at Colossae “...**be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven.**”¹⁸ So we see that before AD 70, the gospel had been preached to “**all of the world**” even, with a bit of hyperbole, “**to every creature under heaven.**” So the objection is overruled.

Another common objection to the assertion that the Olivet Discourse deals with the events of AD 70 is derived from verse 29 where Jesus said: “**Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.**” Futurists say: “The stars didn’t fall in AD 70, so he must be speaking of a future coming.” This is another valid comment for which there is an easy response. First, we know that there was great tribulation in those days; Roman historian Tacitus tells us that Emperor Nero killed a “vast multitude” of Christians after blaming them for the great fire of Rome.¹⁹ Also, we know that when we call actors and sports heroes “stars” we are using a figure of speech...a metaphor. The Bible often does the same thing. Here are examples of that same kind of language as employed by the prophets Isaiah and Joel:

1. When Isaiah predicted the destruction of Babylon in Chapter 13, he quotes God saying: **10 “For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause**

18 These words are taken from Col. 1:6 and 23. Also, in *First Century Events in Chronological Order* (p. 32-33), Ed Stevens quotes many more Scriptures to show that the phrase “the whole world”, as used in the New Testament, refers only to the Roman Empire.

19 *Annals* 15:44 by Tacitus.

her light to shine." And ¹³ "Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger." These words prophesied a **"day of the Lord"** for Babylon. The prophecy was fulfilled when the Medes (vs. 17) captured the city in 539 BC. The sun didn't actually "go dark" and the earth was not "removed out of her place". These are metaphors.

2. In predicting the military catastrophe that was to fall upon Edom, Isaiah in Chapter 34 says: **4 "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree."** The kingdom of Edom has disappeared from history. Its capital city, Petra, is now a deserted, spectacular, tourist attraction. The stars didn't actually **"fall down"** when this prophecy was fulfilled. Isaiah is using poetic language... metaphors.
3. On the Day of Pentecost Peter said that he was living in the **"last days"**, and then he quoted the prophet Joel who said that there would be miraculous signs in those last days (Acts 2:16-21). Joel's prophesy includes the following statement:

31 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 32 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls (Joel 2:31, 32).

Do you see Joel's imagery? After the sun goes dark and the moon

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turns to blood, there will be survivors in Jerusalem. So he is not speaking of the end of the universe, he is speaking of the “**last days**” before the “**day of Lord**” for Israel. Peter spoke of the same “**last days**” as Joel. He was living in the “**last days**” of the Old Covenant religion; he was living in the “**last days**” before the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem.

Isaiah and Joel use the same metaphors as Jesus to describe military catastrophe. In his Olivet Discourse Jesus is describing a military catastrophe, so we should acknowledge the fact that Jesus was using familiar metaphors. Objection overruled.

The only other objection that I shall deal with here is the common assertion that the words “**this generation**” do not refer to all of the people who were alive at that time. A few pages back we note that, according to Dr. Morris, Jesus was referring to the World War I generation. Some futurists insist that the generation in question is the group of people that saw the birth of the modern-day state of Israel in 1948. Others insist that the Greek word “genea” should be translated as “race”. These are nothing but flimsy and fatuous attempts to promote their failing eschatological fantasies. Here are three good reasons for believing that when he said “this generation” Jesus was referring to his contemporaries.

- First, he said that he would come and destroy the temple before that generation passed away, and then the temple was destroyed before that generation passed away, exactly as predicted. So how can futurists insist that he was referring to the “race” or some future generation? This seems like a slam-dunk, no-brainer to me.²⁰

20 Some will dismiss my argument because they say that I am not being “kind” to futurists. I prefer to think that I am like the man who risks his life to run through the burning building yelling: “Fire!” Atheist and Muslim websites mock Christians about supposedly unfulfilled Bible prophecies and futurists have no answer. When young people hear that we’ve been in “the last days” for 2,000 years, they say: “Give your head

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- Second, Jesus' disciples certainly expected the prophecy to be fulfilled before they had all died. We know this because throughout the New Testament we see many expressions of their eager anticipation of his imminent return.²¹ Would Jesus have intentionally deceived them?
- In Matt. 23 Jesus defines the word "generation" for us. In the passage below, he says that the people to whom he was speaking were the children of those who had killed the prophets. Then he goes on to say that upon that "**generation of vipers**" would come the punishment for "**all of the righteous blood**" that had been shed by their forefathers.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous,

30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the

a shake!" Some abandon the faith, laughing at the futurist fascination with conspiracy theories and hair-brained teaching about everything from barcodes to UFOs. I in turn am yelling "Wake up! Reject the grim fairy tales!"

21 For example: Heb. 10:37, James 5:7-10; 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Jn. 2:18, 28; Luke 18:7, 8; Rom. 13,11; Rev. 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20 and many more... Page 209 of *Christianity's Great Dilemma* by Glenn Hill shows that the intensity of the imminence language is more fervent in the New Testament books that were written closest to AD 70.

damnation of hell?

34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. (Matt. 23:29-35)

In this passage, Jesus states that this **"generation of vipers"** (2,000 years ago) would be punished for their sins and for the sins of their fathers that had been accruing for many generations. And that is exactly what happened in AD 70. Jesus has defined the word "generation" for us.

We should briefly review...

First we learned that Jesus said that he would return before all of his disciples had died, then we learned that he promised to return before that first century generation had passed away. Perhaps you are wondering: "Did Jesus say anything else to indicate that he intended to return during his disciples' lifetimes?" As a matter of fact, yes he did. Speaking to his disciples, Jesus said: **"When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes"** (Matt. 10:23). Obviously this reassurance might have led his disciples to believe that he was going to return during that generation. There is one more such verse.

When he was on "trial" before Caiaphas, Jesus addressed the

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scribes and elders and the "multitude" that had captured him. He said: **"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"** (Matt. 26:65). Caiaphas immediately said that this was blasphemy, deserving of death. He said this because he knew that Jesus was referring to the prophesy in Daniel 7 where one **"like a son of man"** comes **"with the clouds of heaven"** and receives an **"everlasting kingdom"** (Dan. 7:13-14).

Has Jesus received his kingdom? Is he reigning; is he king? This brings us back to where we started the chapter. Remember that in Matt 16:28 Jesus told his disciples that they would see him **"coming in his kingdom"**:

"Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

The third phrase of the Lord's Prayer is **"Thy kingdom come"**. Did his kingdom come as he requested in his prayer? Did his kingdom come as prophesied by Daniel? Jesus said that his kingdom would come before all of his disciples had tasted death... did his kingdom come during their lifetimes? Or was Jesus wrong? Is Jesus reigning? Is he your king? Are you in the kingdom of God?

In the next chapter we will discuss this topic and in the following four chapters we will discuss other aspects of Jesus' first century coming. Since I am presenting information that is absolutely anathema to futurist Christians, I will then turn to a discussion of the vicious ways that some Christians have dealt with theological controversy in the past. Many of us have inherited attitudes that are profoundly unchristian...