

THE MANNER OF SHORTENING THE DAYS

OF MATTHEW 24:22 AND MARK 13:20

by

Richard H. Minehart

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Author: Richard H. Minehart
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Advisor: Dr. Charles R. Smith

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate^{ed} the manner by which "those days" will be shortened. In order to accomplish this purpose it was necessary to formulate and answer several secondary questions: the identification of "those days," "the elect" and the number of days involved.

The first part of the paper deals with a study of the verses comparatively, grammatically and contextually. By means of this study it was concluded that "those days" refers to the Great Tribulation period of the Seventieth Week of Daniel's prophecy and that the term "the elect" refers to those who turn to Christ during that period. A word study of *κοτοβω* shows a primary meaning of "amputate" and a secondary meaning allowing the idea of "shortened by plan."

Since a large segment of Christianity identifies "those days" as the Siege of Jerusalem in AD 70, it is necessary to discuss this view. This view was rejected because it disregards the context of the passage; it fails to identify the "Abomination of Desolation" (Mt. 24:15); it disregards the great severity called for by the words of Scripture (Mt. 24:21) and finally because this view identifies "the elect" as the Church which had little, if anything, to do with the AD 70 Siege.

The second basic view within orthodox Christianity is that the prophecy of Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 will be fulfilled at the close of the Great Tribulation. Within this view four methods of shortening "those days" are discussed. Shortening the individual days was rejected as was shortening the number of days which was shown to be Scripturally set at 1260 days. The last two methods discussed, the return of Christ and the decrees of God, in combination seem to this writer to be the solution to the manner of shortening "those days."

It is the conclusion of this writer that Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 speak of the Great Tribulation being shortened by the return of Christ. The time of His return was decreed by God to be shorter than it might have been. Were it not for His return at that time all those who turn to Christ during the Seventieth Week would lose their physical lives.

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Charles R. Smith

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
I A STUDY OF THE PASSAGES	3
<u>A Comparative Study</u>	3-6
<u>A Grammatical Study</u>	6-9
The Negative Pronoun	
The Conditional Clause	
Prophetic Aorist Tense	
Grammatical Conclusions	
<u>A Contextual Study</u>	9-12
<u>A Word Study</u>	12-15
κολλοβάω	
σώζω	
II THE AD 70 VIEW	16
<u>What Is To Be Shortened?</u>	16-17
<u>Identification of "The Elect"</u>	17-20
<u>The Manner of Shortening</u>	20-22
<u>Difficulties of This View</u>	22-27
Unanswered Questions	
<u>The Abomination of Desolation</u>	
<u>The Great Tribulation</u>	
The Elect	
<u>Conclusion</u>	27
III THE TRIBULATION VIEW	28
<u>What Is To Be Shortened?</u>	28-30
<u>Identification of "The Elect"</u>	30-35
"Historic Premillennial" Identification	
"Dispensational Premillennial" Identification	
<u>The Number of Days</u>	36-38
<u>The Manner of Shortening</u>	38-46
The Solar Day	
By Shortening the Number of Days	
By Christ's Return	
By God's Decree	
CONCLUSION	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	49

INTRODUCTION

The reason for any study starts with a question. That question may come from another person either verbally or in print, on purpose or by accident, directly to the student or even directed to another. It may come from one's own mind through a reading of the Scriptures. No matter what way the question is implanted, it grows and demands an answer. Such is the case of this study.

Even though set in thesis form, the value of this paper is primarily private. It satisfies the desire for an answer to a question that was often answered for this writer by several different teachers but in a general way. Some had settled the question of how "those days" were to be shortened in a sentence or two. This did not satisfy. If, by this study, someone else may profit that will be fine. If not, this writer is still satisfied.

It will be apparent to the reader that the author of this paper has adopted the basic set of presuppositions that result in the pretribulational and premillennial view of the second advent of Jesus Christ. There is no apology. It is this set of presuppositions that has determined many of the choices of life such as church affiliation, mission service and the last three years of schooling here at Grace Theological Seminary.

Because of different presuppositions, various views have been developed by Christian brothers. It is hoped that the differences between views will be discussed in that light and in love.

It is the presuppositions of this writer which have posed the question of this paper. If, according to the pre-tribulational and premillennial school of thought, the period of the tribulation is a determinable and specific period of time, how then, could that period of time be shortened?

To answer the above question it will be seen that this study breaks down into three parts. First it is necessary to study the passages in question to find out their meaning from a grammatical, historical, linguistical and contextual perspective. Secondly, since a large segment of orthodox Christianity holds to presuppositions that result in their viewing the verses under study as being fulfilled in AD 70, it was deemed proper to study that view and its difficulties. The third section of this study is devoted to the view that fulfillment of the verses is future. It is within this view that this writer would find the answer to his question.

All Scripture quotations will be taken from the New American Standard Version of the Bible.

CHAPTER I

A STUDY OF THE PASSAGES

This chapter will, through a careful study of their contents, determine the meaning of Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 so that proper deductions can later be drawn from them as regards the means whereby "those days" are shortened. The efforts of this study will also enable the reader to understand who "the elect" are and the period of time during which "those days" take place.

A Comparative Study

It is rather obvious that both passages in this study represent the same discourse of our Lord. The similarity of the two passages is shown, especially in the first phrase, where the same introductory words, *καὶ εἰ μὴ* are used and in the second phrase, where the whole phrase is identical in both passages. The second half of the sentence, while having a common meaning, has but the prepositional phrase *διὰ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς* as identical words.

Both passages convey the same meaning to the reader but there are differences in wording. In the first phrase both used the same verbal root (*κολοβόω*) but Matthew used the aorist passive form while Mark used the aorist active

form. There is no real difference in meaning because of this. Matthew, by the use of the passive voice does not ascribe the action to anyone but merely states that the action did occur. Mark, by the use of the active voice and the addition of the nominative case *κύριος*, names the person who did the acting, namely the Lord.

Still referring to the first phrase, Matthew uses the term *αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι* -- those days, while Mark uses *τὰς ἡμέρας* -- the days. This is simply a change in case from nominative in Mark to accusative and the addition of the demonstrative pronoun in Matthew. Both can be translated in the same manner -- "those days" as in the KJV, NASB and NIV or they may be translated "those days" in Matthew and "the days" in Mark as in the RSV and ASV.

In connection with the passive and active verbs, the case usage of Matthew and Mark determines that "those days" will be the subject of the phrase in Matthew and "the days" will be the direct object of the phrase in Mark. In either case both phrases refer to a specific period of time. What this period of time is will be demonstrated later.

As was stated previously the second phrase is identical in both passages.

The third phrase of the sentence is the more complex of the three phrases and the most different. Matthew starts the phrase with the postpositive conjunction *δὲ* while Mark uses *ἀλλὰ* to begin the phrase. Both *δὲ* and *ἀλλὰ* are used

as adversative conjunctions and are most commonly translated "but" as most versions do in this case. While ἀλλά is a strong adversative, δὲ can be used in just as strong a sense (cf Mt. 6:6, 14, 20, 23 and many others).¹

Both writers use διὰ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς but then Mark adds οὓς ἐξελέξατο -- whom he chose. This is not really a difference but rather an explanation as to who τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς are.

Mark again uses the aorist active form of κολοβῶ while Matthew uses the future passive form of the same verb. Normally this contrast between a future passive and an aorist active would make a great difference in meaning. However, due to the prophetic nature of both passages such a difference is negated. The future passive of Matthew obviously indicates an action at a later time but Mark's use of the aorist active for the second time in the sentence which is part of the conditional nature of the sentence also indicates a future action. This will be more fully discussed in the section entitled "A Grammatical Study."

To finish the sentence under study, both Matthew and Mark revert to their terms to describe what will be shortened.

¹H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 244.

Matthew using αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι and Mark τὰς ἡμέρας -- both identical to the former usage even with respect to case.

It has been shown that both passages are describing the same discourse of our Lord and that the meaning is identical. The differences in words and forms should not be construed as either showing two different discourses of our Lord, or as evidence against the doctrine of inspiration. Very few, if any, would hold that Christ spoke in Greek rather than Aramaic or Hebrew. Matthew and Mark, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit recorded the words of Christ in Greek. Because of the different ways of saying the same things in Greek, it is perfectly possible to have the same meaning but use different forms and words. This seems to be exactly the case in these two verses.

A Grammatical Study

There are basically three grammatical features of interest found in Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20.

The Negative Pronoun

The construction οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθῃ πᾶσα σὰρξ is found in both passages. Unlike a situation where the negative is located next to πᾶς the negative here is separated from πᾶσα by ἂν ἐσώθῃ and therefore "the negative goes with the verb."¹

¹A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 752.

When the negative is next to $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ the resultant meaning would be "not all." In our texts, because of the separation, "the idea is 'no flesh,' not 'not all flesh,' i.e. 'some flesh' would have been lost."¹

The Conditional Clause

The second construction of grammatical interest is the second class conditional clause which makes up the first half of the sentence in both passages. There are several stipulations which result in a conditional clause of the second class. First, only past tenses of the indicative occur.² Second, "the protasis is introduced by $\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ and $\acute{\alpha}\nu$ usually occurs in the apodosis."³ Third, the use of $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\ \mu\grave{\eta}$ is, with the exception of only five uses of $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\ \mu\grave{\eta}$ in the first class condition, "confined to the second class condition and to the elliptical use. . . ."⁴

Both $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\omicron\lambda\omicron\beta\acute{\omega}\ \epsilon\gamma\gamma\alpha\gamma\epsilon\alpha\iota$ (or $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\omicron\lambda\omicron\beta\omega\sigma\epsilon\iota\upsilon$) and $\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\omega\delta\eta$ are aorist indicatives. The protasis is introduced by $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\ \mu\grave{\eta}$ and $\acute{\alpha}\nu$ is found in the apodosis. The aorist is used in both protasis and apodosis. Thus both passages clearly qualify as second

¹Robertson, Greek Grammar, p. 752.

²Ibid., p. 1012.

³Dana and Mantey, Grammar, p. 289.

⁴Robertson, Greek Grammar, p. 1016.

class conditional clauses.

In a second class conditional clause it is important to keep in mind that "the premise is assumed to be contrary to fact"¹ but it may be true. The point is assumption or the treatment of the premise as untrue. "It assumes it to be untrue and follows with the results which would have come."²

Prophetic Aorist Tense

The third point of interest grammatically is in close connection with the conditional clause, and that is the use of the aorist tense. While necessary for the clause to be classified as a second class conditional clause the aorist "is used proleptically, as if the future were past, in accordance with the genius of prophecy."³

Grammatical Conclusions

It has been shown through the grammar of both of the passages that those under the possibility of not being saved, were all flesh. That due to the conditional nature of the second class clause all flesh would be lost if it were not for the fact of the shortening of the days. Finally,

¹Robertson, Greek Grammar, p. 1012.

²James L. Boyer, "Greek Exegetical Methods," an unpublished class syllabus (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, n.d.), p. 43.

³Alexander B. Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," in Vol I of Expositor's Greek Testament, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 293.

the aorist tense in these passages is used proleptically and indicates the certainty of a future event.

A Contextual Study

In order to do justice to any text it is mandatory that the text be studied as a part of a larger sphere. Therefore the contextual setting of any verse is of value. It is even more important when dealing with verses such as those in this study. There are several questions that the verses cannot answer by themselves. After a contextual study the reader should be able to answer the questions, "what are 'those days?'" and "who are 'the elect?'"

In the Gospel of Matthew there are recorded six great discourses of Christ, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount and ending with the Olivet Discourse.¹ Though not all of these discourses are found in Mark, the passages under study are found within the Olivet Discourse which is

¹Hendriksen gives these discourses as follows:

The Sermon on the Mount
The Charge to the Twelve
The Seven Kingdom Parables
Kindness Toward the Little Ones and The Forgiving
Spirit Toward All
The Seven Woes
The Last Things

Walvoord lists four major Gospel discourses as follows;

Sermon on the Mount
Kingdom Parables
John 13 - 17 and the Church
Olivet Discourse

recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

The Olivet Discourse took place within the last week of Christ's earthly life and

was delivered after Christ's scathing denunciation, in Matthew 23, of the hypocrisy and false religion which characterized the scribes and Pharisees, closing with His lament over Jerusalem, where the prophets of God through the centuries had been rejected and martyred.¹

As Christ and the disciples left the temple area the disciples drew His attention to the temple buildings. This prompted Christ's answer as recorded in Matthew 24:2.

And He answered and said to them, "do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down"(NASB).

The entire group then left the city, crossed the Kidron Valley and went to the Mount of Olives. Here in response to private questions from Peter, James, John and Andrew(Mark 13:3) Jesus delivered the Olivet Discourse. It is to be noted that there were three questions asked(cf Mt. 24:3, Mk. 13:4 and Lk. 21:7). The first question is almost identical in Matthew and Mark with Luke's account so close that there is not a doubt they are all recording the same event. This first question concerns the temple destruction and the city of Jerusalem. The second and third questions have nothing to do with the temple or the city for they

¹John F. Walvoord, Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come (Chicago: Moody Press), p. 179.

concern "the sign of Your coming" and "the end of the age" (Mt. 24:3). These last two questions are of great importance to this study for it is within the context of Christ's answer to these questions that the verses under study are found.

In His answer, Christ gives many general characteristics that are to be found before His coming and before the end of the age. These are recorded in Matthew 24:4-14 and Mark 13:5-13. Walvoord itemizes nine such characteristics as follows:

(1) false Christs, 24:4-5; (2) wars and rumors of wars, 24:6-7; (3) famines, 24:7; (4) pestilence, 24:7; (5) earthquakes, 24:7; (6) many martyrs, 24:8-10; (7) false prophets, 24:11; (8) increasing evil and loss of fervent love, 24:12; and (9) world wide preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, 24:13-14.¹

At verse 15 of Matthew's account there is an evident shift from the general to the particular (cf Mk. 13:14). It is here that Daniel's "abomination of desolation" is mentioned. This announcement seems to indicate a particular point in time, a specific event. For it is with this specific event that a period of time begins, the great tribulation. It is "those days" of which verse 22 speaks, "those days" of the great tribulation.

It is within this same setting that "the elect" are mentioned. "The elect" can therefore be identified as those

¹Walvoord, Matthew, p. 183.

whom God has chosen who are in evidence during this period of great tribulation.

Christ continues His answer in verses 23-31 indicating conditions during the great tribulation and the times just after the tribulation and His return.

Thus a contextual study has established exactly what period of time is described by the term "those days." It can also be determined by the context who "the elect" are. "Those days" have been shown to be the days of the great tribulation spoken of by Daniel the prophet and "the elect" are those of God's choosing in evidence during that period of tribulation.

A Word Study

There are two words of interest found in both passages that will be studied.

κολλοβώω

The heart of the two verses under study is the word *κολλοβώω*. Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 are the only occurrences in the New Testament of Greek words derived from this root. Its most literal meaning would be to amputate or "mutilate."¹

¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 442.

This word only occurs once in the Septuagint, in 2 Samuel 4:12. This appearance uses *κολοβόω* in its most literal sense which is "amputate."¹ There *κολοβοῦσι*, a present tense use of the verb, is followed by the accusative "of that affected or of the one concerned."² Thus *κολοβοῦσι τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν* can be translated, they cut off (amputate) their hands.

Other Greek literature uses this word and its derivatives. It is in these less literal usages where the idea of "to shorten" comes. For example the substantive "*κολόβιον*, an under-vest with shortened sleeves, occurs in an inventory of property"³ in the Tebtunic Papyri. It is an easy step from sleeves to time and thus the idea to cut off time gives an equivalence, to shorten a time period.

σώζω

A second word of importance in the passages under study is *ἐσώθη* which is the aorist passive indicative form

¹James H. Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-literary Sources (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1930), p. 353.

²Gerhard Delling, "*κολοβόω*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. III, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 823.

³Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary, p. 353.

of σωζω. This often used word (of the Greek language) has many shades of meaning. In Greek literature its primary meaning is "'to save' and 'salvation' in the sense of an acutely dynamic act in which gods or men snatch others by force from serious peril."¹ The object or person being "saved" the person or thing doing the "saving" and the situation from which they are "saved" vary greatly.²

The other meanings of σωζω in Greek literature other than the New Testament include the concepts of keeping or preserving, benefit or well being, "preserving the inner being,"³ and a religious usage outside of Christianity.

In the New Testament σωζω is used in as wide a divergence of meanings. These meanings can be divided into two basic ideas, one having to do with the physical realm and the other having to do with the spiritual life. In the spiritual sense, the idea is to save "or preserve from eternal death, from judgment and from all that might lead to such death, e. g. sin. . . ."⁴

¹Werner Foerster, "σωζω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VII, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 966.

²The reader is advised to consult the work cited above for examples of this nature.

³Foerster, "σωζω," p. 968.

⁴Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 806.

The physical sense, to "preserve or rescue from natural dangers and affliction,"¹ is the concept put forth by the two passages under study. With this word as with so many others, it is the context of the passage which determines the meaning. The context shows that there is to be great tribulation and that, were it not for the shortening of the days, all flesh would perish. Surely this refers to physical life and death and physical suffering and not spiritual life or death. Here *σωζω* would take on the meaning of physical preservation. Prior to Mark 13:20 the word *σωθησεται*, the future passive indicative form of *σωζω* is used in v 13 and there the context of preserving to the end shows the ultimate point is eternal and *σωζω* here "denotes salvation in the eschatological sense, when eternal life will be crowned with glorification(Rev 2:10)."²

By a study of these two Greek words we have arrived at the point where "those days" will be "amputated" or "cut short" and that physical life will be "preserved" or "saved" by this action.

¹Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 806.

²D. Edmond Hiebert, Mark, A Portrait of the Servant (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 322.

CHAPTER II

THE AD 70 VIEW

Among those who are even remotely considered orthodox Christians, there are two basic positions taken regarding Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20. All in this group mentioned above regard these passages as prophecy at least at the time Christ spoke these words.¹ The issue then is the time when the prophecies are fulfilled. The vast majority of amillennial and postmillennial scholars hold to the fulfillment of this prophecy in the AD 70 siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

What Is To Be Shortened?

Since this view sees the fulfillment of this prophecy completed in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem it is necessary to show that the number of the days of the siege were shortened. There are a number of very able scholars who have accomplished this task within their own set of presuppositions.

There is no controversy within this view as to the number of days of the siege period. In Scripture there is no place that enumerates them and secular history gives a

¹The Liberal-Critical position which sees no prophecy or fulfillment in Scripture, but rather after the fact narration of historical events will not be dealt with.

definite number of the days involved as shown by the following:

The siege commenced on the 14th of Nisan, 70 AD, and ended on the 8th of Elul, a total of 134 days.¹

It is simply a matter for those who hold to the idea that the siege equals the "great tribulation" to show that the length of the siege was shorter than it might have been from a military point of view. Those scholars who are representative of this view would be A. T. Robertson,² A. Carr,³ M. R. Vincent⁴ and many others.

Identification of "The Elect"

Because the siege is all that is in view it would seem that there is only one possible answer revealing the identity of "the elect." They must be those of the physical nation of Israel who survive the siege and destruction. However, this is not the case. Among the supporters of this view there is a wide divergence of opinion on this point.

¹E. W. G. Masterman, "Jerusalem," in Vol III of The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, ed. by James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 1619.

²A. T. Robertson, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in Vol I of Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1930), p. 191.

³A. Carr, The Gospel According to St Matthew in The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Edited by J. J. S. Perowne (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1891), p. 184.

⁴Marvin R. Vincent, "The Synoptic Gospels," in Vol I of Word Studies in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), pp. 128-129.

Lange would make "the elect" believers in Christ not only at the time of Jerusalem's destruction, "but all who, according to the divine decree, should become believers down to the end of the world."¹

Another would make "the elect" "escaped Christians, who offered up unceasing prayer for their brethren and countrymen. . . ." ²

Barnes has no doubt as to their identity when he states,

the elect here doubtless means Christians. On their account--to preserve them alive, and to make them the instruments of spreading the gospel--Jesus said that those days should not be lengthened out so as to produce their destitution.³

Lenski leaves no room for national Israel to be considered as "the elect" for he states that the "shortening was, of course, not due to the wicked Jews whose day of reckoning had come."⁴ He identifies "the elect" as

¹John P. Lange, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in Vol 8 of the Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical Doctrinal and Homiletical, trans. and ed. by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 426.

²A. Lukyn Williams, W. J. Deane and B. C. Caffin, "St. Matthew," in Vol 34 of The Pulpit Commentary, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Chicago: Wilcox & Follet Co., n.d.), p. 437.

³Albert Barnes, Matthew and Mark, in Notes on the New Testament, Explanatory and Practical, ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 256-57.

⁴R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 941.

Christians but not just those Christians living at that time. To demonstrate some of the confusion surrounding the choice of Christians as "the elect," it is well to quote Lenski at some length. He states that God

looked at "the elect," at their interests, and for their sakes docked those days. This act of God's is misunderstood when it is restricted to the elect who were then living. It is then conceived as enabling them to live through those days without losing their faith. But the elect did not pass through the horrors that occurred prior to the siege and during the siege. Those that were in Jerusalem escaped betimes. Moreover, at that time many elect were scattered about elsewhere in the Roman empire, far from the horrors going on in Judea. The very first clause states that the shortening enabled some of the Jews to remain alive. This shows that "because of the elect" refers not only to the elect in general but also to their spiritual interest. By the power of God the Jews were at that time kept from extinction and they are still being kept as a strange phenomenon in the world. They never amalgamated with other nations and races, and thus they are a sign for the elect of all ages. The Jews of today are scattered over all the world, without a land, a government, or any other tie such as other nations have, are outcasts from their own country, and thus are miraculously marked for all time for all the elect, whose enlightened eyes cannot but see what God has thus placed before them.¹

Besides being written prior to 1948 and the establishment of the state of Israel, Lenski reveals weaknesses with his own position. When he refers to the "many elect" who were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, he surely must see that this also applies to the Jews as well.

Williams, in The Pulpit Commentary makes reference to

¹Lenski, Matthew, p. 941.

some who,

not so suitably, explain "the elect" to be those Jews who should hereafter turn to the Lord; or the elect seed, "beloved for the father's sake"(Rom XI 28).¹

This view brings about a wide variety of opinion as to the identity of "the elect" as has been shown. Aside from this obvious difficulty others shall be dealt with later.

The Manner of Shortening

Because this view sees the fulfillment of the passages complete by AD 70, the manner of fulfillment is then found in history. Few, if any, would deny God's providential hand in the events that brought about the end of the siege and the destruction of Jerusalem. The supporters of this view claim the following providential acts as the means God used to shorten the siege and thus fulfill the prophecy at that point in time.

The first providential means of shortening the siege occurred approximately 27 or 28 years before the final destruction. Herod Agrippa had desired to improve the already strong fortifications but stopped their improvement by order of the Emperor Claudius about AD 42 or 43. Josephus gives an account of this as follows:

As for the walls of Jerusalem, that were adjoining to the new city(Bezetha), he repaired them at the expense of the public, and built them wider in breadth and higher

¹Williams, Deane and Caffin, "St. Matthew," p. 437.

in altitude; and he had made them too strong for all human power to demolish, unless Marcus, the then president of Syria, had by letter informed Claudius Caesar of what he was doing. And when Claudius had some suspicion of attempts for innovation, he sent to Agrippa to leave off the building of those walls presently. So he obeyed, as not thinking it proper to contradict Claudius.¹

Party strife within the city kept the Jews from properly preparing for a siege and once it was under way kept them from making a better defense of the city. Josephus relates this strife as follows:

And now there were three treacherous factions in the city, the one parted from the other. Eleazar and his party, that kept the sacred first-fruits, came against John in their cups. Those that were with John plundered the populace, and went out with zeal against Simon. This Simon had his supply of provisions from the city, in opposition to the seditious. When, therefore, John was assaulted on both sides he made his men turn about, throwing his darts upon those citizens that came up against him, from the cloisters he had in his possession, while he opposed those that attacked him from the temple by his engines of war; and if at any time he was freed from those that were above him, which happened frequently, from their being drunk and tired, he sallied out with a great number upon Simon and his party. . . .²

A result of this party strife was the destruction by fire of large amounts of provisions. The footnote by Whiston shows the importance of such destruction.

This destruction of such a vast quantity of corn and other provisions, as was sufficient for many years, was the direct occasion of that terrible famine, which

¹Flavius Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," in Vol IV of The Works of Flavius Josephus, trans. by William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 104.

²Flavius Josephus, "The Wars of the Jews," in Vol I of The Works of Flavius Josephus, trans. by William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 354.

consumed incredible numbers of the Jews in Jerusalem during its siege. Nor probably could the Romans have taken this city, after all, had not these seditious Jews been so infatuated as thus madly to destroy, what Josephus here justly styles "The nerves of their power."¹

A fourth providential means of shortening the siege took place because of a lack of military leadership and fortitude of the defenders. The defenders abandoned many defensive positions from which, with some resolution on their part they could not have been ejected by the Romans. Again Josephus shows that the Romans obtained

by good fortune what they could never have gotten by their engines; for three of these towers were too strong for all mechanical engines whatsoever. . . .²

The classic statement by Titus concerning the fall of Jerusalem vividly shows that from a military standpoint, the siege was shortened greatly. Josephus relates the statement of Titus as follows:

We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men, or any machines, do towards overthrowing these towers!³

Difficulties of This View

One cannot deny the historical happenings regarding the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Nor can one deny

¹Josephus, "Wars," p. 354.

²Ibid., p. 466.

³Ibid., p. 468.

that Christians are often termed "the elect." Likewise, the supporters of this view cannot deny that national Israel is often termed the "chosen of God." What is denied is that the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is the complete fulfillment of the passages under study.

Unanswered Questions

The questions asked by the disciples are not answered by this view. The disciples wished to know when the temple would be destroyed. Jesus did not tell them the answer to this question in Matthew or Mark. They also wanted to know when the end of the age would be and what the sign of His coming would be. Jesus did answer this in Matthew and Mark by the general and specific characteristics already discussed. The most obvious characteristics are the "abomination of desolation" and the "great tribulation."

The Abomination of Desolation

This view has a problem in showing when and where the "abomination of desolation" of Daniel was set up before the siege and destruction.

Most Church Fathers give as this "abomination" a "statue of Titus or Caligula or Hadrian(Jerome)."¹ Later commentators point to atrocities committed by some within

¹Bruce, "Synoptic Gospels," p. 292.

the city during the siege. These attempts seem to do an injustice to the text since:

(a) The language of the text seems to refer to something that took place before the destruction of the Temple.

(b) Anything occurring after the siege was over and the city and the Temple were destroyed could not possibly be a sign for anyone within the city to flee, as opportunity for flight would be past.¹

The last possibility for the identity of the "abomination" is that of A. B. Bruce and others when he says,

the horror is the Roman Army, and the thing to be dreaded and fled from is not any religious outrage it may perpetrate, but the desolation it will inevitably bring.²

This explanation seems to be grasping at straws. The Romans had been in Palestine and in Jerusalem proper since Pompey, in 63 BC, after "being shut out of the city, took it by storm."³ With the Roman troops in and around Jerusalem for over one hundred years, it seems strange that the "abomination" was not recognized as such and that the people had not fled the city long before. If the Roman Army was the "abomination" those who could observe it found it impossible to flee for they were effectively sealed within the confines of the encircling Roman Army. Therefore, as a sign, the Roman Army could not fulfill the intentions of Christ for

¹W. E. Biederwolf, The Great Tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ, A Study of Matthew 24 (Boston: Hamilton Brothers, 1929), pp. 14-15.

²Bruce, "Synoptic Gospels," p. 292.

³Masterman, "Jerusalem," p. 1618.

the people to flee.

The Great Tribulation

While not denying the great loss of life and terrible suffering¹ that took place during the siege and following, it seems that this tribulation does not meet the description of Matthew 24:21 and Mark 13:19. These two verses make the tribulation the worst disaster ever. In order to put aside such a literal meaning of His words, the supporters of the siege view have used the idea of "Semitic hyperbole."²

One advocate of this "Semitic hyperbole" states that,

it is characteristic for oracles of judgment to be couched in language that is universal and radical.³

This writer finds it difficult to understand Jesus Christ using language that would confuse His own disciples to such a degree as this answer would if He was only using hyperbole.

Whether "the elect" be Christians or Jews, the siege and destruction of Jerusalem was not the worst disaster ever.

¹The reader is invited to consult the previously cited I.S.B.E. article or similiar volumes, Josephus' work or many of the commentaries that reveal the suffering and loss of life. Of special note is Mauro's work, The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation, chapter 15. Mauro has picked many examples from Josephus for his readers.

²William L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. by F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 471.

³Ibid.

Very few, if any, Christians lost their lives at that time. Surely the persecutions of Rome or the sufferings endured by the Christians during the Reformation would far outstrip the siege and destruction of Jerusalem as far as suffering is concerned for Christians. Even if "the elect" are Jews, the suffering of the Jews during World War II, where over six million Jews lost their lives, rules out the siege as the worst disaster ever. Even the tribulation of World War II is overruled by the troubles listed for the world in Revelation 6-19.

The Elect

This view, by making "the elect" Christians, brings about a further difficulty. The Christians "that were in Jerusalem escaped betimes,"¹ "and removed to the city of Pella in Transjordan."² Without Christians in the city the point of the shortening of the days is lost. The purpose of shortening the time was so that some might survive. Even making the Jews "the elect" brings about problems. Every person in Jerusalem and environs could have perished and yet, because of the large number of Jews scattered throughout the world, many Jews would have survived. God does not need large numbers for He continually works with a "remnant," as

¹Lenski, Matthew, p. 941.

²F. F. Bruce, The Spreading Flame (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), p. 157.

shown graphically in the account of Elijah and the 7,000 who had not bowed their knees to Baal(cf. 1 Kings 19:18).

Conclusion

It has been shown that there are two basic weaknesses of this view. First is the lack of an answer to the questions of the disciples. The disciples were concerned with Christ's second coming and the end of the age. The AD 70 Siege view does not answer these questions. In His answer Christ gave many characteristics of His coming and the end of the age. The description of the "abomination of desolation" as a statue of one of the Roman Emperors or the Roman Army does not do justice to the text. Another characteristic of the end of the age given by Christ was "great tribulation." Even the terribleness of the AD 70 Siege does not meet the description of the text as the worst disaster ever.

The second weakness of this view was the selection of Christians as "the elect" which in turn gives an inadequate reason for shortening the days in order that some might survive.

CHAPTER III

THE TRIBULATION VIEW

The second basic position taken regarding Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 is that this period of time which is to be shortened is the Great Tribulation.¹ While this view is not held by the majority of orthodox Christians it does find support from able scholars.

What Is To Be Shortened?

In response to the questions of the disciples (Mt. 24:3), those holding this view see the answer of our Lord divided between Matthew and Mark on the one hand and Luke on the other. The supporters of this view hold that Christ's answer concerning the destruction of Jerusalem is recorded in Luke. Biederwolf may be overly conclusive when he states that, "it is universally admitted that Luke's account of Christ's prophecy, in his twenty first chapter refers to the Destruction

¹It is to be noted that there are 3 basic views of the entire Olivet Discourse. However, two of those three views can be combined in reference to the verses of the discourse under discussion. These would be Biederwolf's General Views one and three, both of which see the Olivet Discourse referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, at least up to Matthew 24:28. The reader is advised to consult Biederwolf's work, The Great Tribulation and The Second Coming of Christ, pages 6-7 for a fuller statement of the three views.

of Jerusalem. . . ,"¹ but this writer has found none who disagree on this point. The answer found in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, according to this view, "does not give us the words which relate to the destruction of the temple. . . ,"² but rather deals with His answer "as an accurate statement of end-time events, which will lead up to and climax in the second coming of Christ to set up His millennial kingdom on the earth."³

An important part of these end-time events seen by this view, is the period of three and one half years just prior to Christ's second coming. This period is known as the Great Tribulation. It is this period of three and one half years that the supporters of this view hold is the "those days" of the verses under study.

This position is arrived at by holding to a set of presuppositions which includes as paramount the literal interpretation of the Scriptures and insists that close attention is to be paid to the contextual setting of any passage under study.

Contextually then, it must be remembered that the entire discourse is in response to the three questions of

¹Biederwolf, The Great Tribulation, p. 12.

²Arno C. Gaebelen, The Gospel of Matthew, An Exposition (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961), p. 3.

³John F. Walvoord, The Rapture Question (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 181.

the disciples. When, in that answer, Jesus states, "when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)" (Mt. 24:15), the supporters of the tribulation view immediately identify the discourse with end-time events. The "abomination of desolation" is identified as the Anti-christ, the "holy place" is the Holy of Holies in a reconstructed temple and the "great tribulation" of verse 21 and "those days" of verse 22 are to be equated with the Great Tribulation.

Identification of "The Elect"

Within the tribulation view there is a difference as to the identification of "the elect." The reason for this difference lies in the divergence of opinion as to when the rapture occurs.

"Historic Premillennial" Identification

This school of thought is well described by Boettner when he states,

Historic Premillennialism holds that the Christians who constitute the Church go through the Tribulation and are exposed to its afflictions, at the end of which Christ comes with great power and glory to raise the righteous dead and to rapture the saints who are caught up to meet Him in the air but who almost immediately return with Him as He comes to destroy the forces of Antichrist in the battle of Armageddon and establish His kingdom.¹

¹Lorraine Boettner, The Millennium (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), p. 141.

Because of its obvious posttribulational position, those of historic premillennial thought identify "the elect" as the Church. Most impressive of the recent supporters of this system are George E. Ladd and Robert H. Gundry.

A problem appearing in historic premillennial thought concerning "the elect" is the wrath of God. Revelation 6-19 clearly indicates that during the tribulation period God is pouring out His wrath upon the world. Most historic premillennialists hold that God's wrath and man's wrath are poured out during the tribulation. They hold that the Church does not receive the wrath of God but does receive the wrath of man, i.e. the Antichrist. In refuting this idea Walvoord states that,

many of the judgments by their very nature cannot distinguish saved from unsaved. The judgments of famine and the sword, or earthquakes and stars falling from heaven, war and pestilence, are not by their nature suitable for discriminatory judgment. They would fall upon just and unjust alike.¹

Gundry has attempted to eliminate this problem of God's wrath falling upon the just and the unjust alike. Therefore,

He views the tribulation as a period of Satanic wrath (covered by the seal and trumpet judgments) during which the Church will be severely persecuted, with many being slain. He does not bring divine wrath into the picture until near the end of the seven years (with

¹Walvoord, Rapture, p. 236.

the bowl judgments), at which time he sees all saints raptured and divine judgment striking God's enemies on earth at the time of Armageddon.¹

In Gundry's and other historic premillennialists' views, then, the church is identified as "the elect" who suffer the wrath of the tribulation and because of its suffering, "those days" are shortened.²

In refuting the posttribulation position Walvoord examines "twelve major arguments advanced in support of post-tribulationism."³ He uses 37 pages of his book to accomplish this and most fortunately concludes in a summary by stating,

Suffice it to say that pretribulationists have an adequate answer for each posttribulation contention. Most important is the fact that posttribulationists have not a single Scripture passage where the church as the body of Christ is found in the events of the tribulation time preceding the second coming.⁴

"Dispensational Premillennial" Identification

Again we turn to Boettner for a brief description

¹John A. Sproule, A Revised Review of The Church and The Tribulation by Robert H. Gundry (Birmingham, Alabama: Gateway Publication, n.d.), p. 26.

²Gundry's position is more than adequately refuted, provided one is a pretribulationist, by the work cited above. Sproule accomplishes this by a combination of cogent questions such as found on p. 27 and by means of excellent exegesis as shown by his discussion of the use of ΕΚ in Rev. 3:10.

³Walvoord, Rapture, p. 131.

⁴Ibid., p. 169.

of the dispensational view of the relationship of the Church and the tribulation. He states,

Dispensationalism, on the other hand, holds that the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation, that Christ may come at any moment without warning signs, that at His coming the righteous dead are raised and that they together with the living saints are caught away in a secret Rapture to meet the Lord in the air, where they remain for a period of seven years. During that time the Antichrist rules on the earth and the dreadful woes spoken of in the Book of Revelation, chapters 4 through 19, fall on the inhabitants of the earth.¹

Due to the rapture the Church is gone, but there will be "the elect."

Some of the older dispensationalists make the identification too easy. They would state with English ". . .remember, in the Gospels 'the elect' is Israel and not the Church, as it is in the Epistles. . . ." ²

During the tribulation two different evangelistic groups will be in operation and operating very successfully. The first of these is the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3ff. They will begin their work at the start of the tribulation, work very successfully in an unopposed way(cf v 8) until their work is over and in the middle of the seven year period they will be killed. With their work will be the 144,000 saved and sealed Jews(Rev. 7:4-8). They will operate during the tribulation period. Their success is indicated in Rev. 7:9-10

¹Boettner, The Millennium, p. 141.

²Eugene S. English, Studies in the Gospel According to Mark (New York: Our Hope, 1943), p. 429.

by the group identified as the "great multitude." This "great multitude" is identified later in verses 13 and 14 as martyrs "who come out of the great tribulation." They are "from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues," and are primarily the product of the evangelistic efforts of the two witnesses and the 144,000 sealed Jews. This "great multitude" does not survive the tribulation "because they come to Christ and repudiate the Antichrist"¹ and are slain. Others who also come to Christ during the tribulation must survive in order to have saved people who will populate the earth during the millennial reign of Christ.

Many dispensationalists identify "the elect" as Israel. Representative of these would be McClain who states,

And the elect here are those of the nation of Israel, for whom this will be the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:), and of whom God had spoken through Isaiah: "In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer" (54:8, ASV).²

Other dispensationalists would agree with the following statement.

It is possible that the Gentile believers are included among this select group. Regardless of whether they are in this designation or not, it is certain that a number

¹Herman A. Hoyt, Studies in Revelation (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1977), p. 54.

²Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1974), p. 461.

of Gentiles will come safely through this period and "be saved." Probably they are not definitely in view here, due to the definite Jewish emphasis throughout.¹

It is this Jewish emphasis that is most notable about the tribulation. To show this Jewishness, Pentecost quotes G. Stanton as follows:

The tribulation is primarily Jewish. . . . It concerns "Daniel's people," the coming of "false Messiah," the preaching of the "gospel of the kingdom," flight on the "sabbath," the temple and the "holy place," the land of Judea, the city of Jerusalem, the twelve "tribes of the children of Israel," the "son of Moses," "signs" in the heavens, the "covenant" with the Beast, the "sanctuary," the "sacrifice and the oblation" of the temple ritual-- these all speak of Israel and prove that the tribulation is largely a time when God deals with His ancient people prior to their entrance into the promised kingdom. The many Old Testament prophecies yet to be fulfilled for Israel further indicate a future time when God will deal with this nation. . . .²

Pentecost himself continues in this same vein by stating that the purpose of God "is to populate the millennial kingdom by bringing a host from among Israel and the Gentile nations to Himself."³

From this it is evident that "the elect" is not the Church but rather "the elect" are those who, during the tribulation, come to Christ.

¹Glenn E. Smouse, "The Church in the Olivet Discourse" (Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1962), pp. 77-78.

²Kept From The Hour, quoted in J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 237.

³J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 238.

The Number of Days

The number of the days of the tribulation is clearly identifiable and determinable, as will be demonstrated. This is the crux of the reason for this study.

The key to the timetable of Israel's history is found in Daniel 9:24-27. McClain gives a brief summary of the events which set the stage for the last week--the week of tribulation. He states,

3. The entire time-period involved is exactly specified as Seventy Weeks(24); and these Seventy Weeks are further divided into three lesser periods; first, a period of seven weeks; after that a period of three-score and two weeks; and finally, a period of one week(25, 27).

4. The beginning of the whole period of the Seventy Weeks is definitely fixed at "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem"(25).

5. The end of the seven weeks and three-score and two weeks(69 weeks) will be marked by the appearance of Messiah as the "Prince" of Israel(25).

6. At a later time, "after three-score and two weeks" which follow the first seven weeks(that is, after 69 weeks), Messiah the Prince will be "cut off," and Jerusalem will again be destroyed by the people of another "prince" who is yet to come(26).

7. After these two important events, we come to the last, or Seventieth Week, the beginning of which will be clearly marked by the establishment of a firm covenant or treaty between the Coming Prince and the Jewish nation for a period of "one week"(27).¹

The seventieth or last week, like the other 69 weeks, is a period of seven years in length. This seven year period is divided into two three and one half year periods. From

¹Alva J. McClain, Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), p. 13.

Daniel 9:27 it is noted that the week begins with a "firm covenant." This covenant is broken in the middle of the week and the last half of the week will be marked by the sacrifices being stopped and by "one who makes desolate." This last half week clearly parallels Daniel 7:25 which speaks of one who will

speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time (Dan. 7:25).

There are eight passages which state this time period. The following chart gives the references of these passages and the numerical values of the time periods involved.

Daniel 7:25	time, times, and half a time
Daniel 9:24-27	middle of the week
Daniel 12:7	time, times, and half a time
Revelation 11:2	forty-two months
Revelation 11:3	twelve hundred and sixty days
Revelation 12:6	twelve hundred and sixty days
Revelation 12:14	time, times, and half a time
Revelation 13:5	forty-two months

Each of the above equals the other provided one uses a thirty day month. The most precise measurement would be that one with which there could be no confusion as to the exact length and that one is the 1260 day period. The other two periods of time could be less than that if the Jewish months were used or more if our present solar year was used to calculate the number of days.

The length of the Great Tribulation period or the

second half of the seventieth week has been determined to be exactly 1260 days in length.

The Manner of Shortening

Unlike the siege and destruction of Jerusalem view where there was unanimity of opinion concerning the manner the days were to be shortened, this present view offers a variety of opinions.

The Solar Day

There are some, such as McNeile who would assert "that the days themselves were made shorter than 24 hours."¹ Others also, such as "Lightfoot (with allusion to rabbinical notions about shortened days, in opposition to Josh. X. 13) and Fritzsche understand the word of the shortened length of the days."²

While none of the above are noted as being pre-millennialists, at least one premillennialist has championed this cause. S. Maxwell Coder states,

A more literal understanding of the Lord's words would call for an actual shortening of the days themselves, rather than a shortening of the total period, and this is not without support in the Scriptures.³

¹Alan Hugh McNeile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1915), p. 350.

²Lange, "Matthew," p. 426.

³S. Maxwell Coder, "Eschatology According to Christ," in Understanding the Times, ed. by Wm. Culbertson & H. B. Centz (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), p. 167.

Coder then appeals to Amos 8:9 for support of an 18 hour day. There is some question as to whether Amos 8:9 is speaking of end time events or not. Coder could also have appealed to Revelation 8:12 which states,

And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way (Rev. 8:12).

Since the sun is our source of daylight, a one-third reduction of the sun might be understood as bringing about a daylight period one-third less than at present. Hoyt states this as follows,

from the sun, moon, and stars the quantity of light is reduced by one third, and the length of time these shine is reduced by one third. . . .¹

A one-third reduction of the output of the sun would not decrease the length of a day. Since the amount of sunlight does not determine a day's length but rather the speed of the earth's rotation does so. Dr. Hoyt cannot have both the quantity of light and length of day shortened by the effects of the fourth trumpet. To affect the length of day the fourth trumpet would have to do something to the earth. Of course the language of appearance is very much involved in things of this nature.

This view, while possible, is not likely correct. It does answer the fulfillment of the prophecy, as there will be

¹Hoyt, Revelation, p. 63.

exactly 1260 days and the days have been shortened according to this position. However, all the other parts of the seventy weeks of the prophecy of Daniel have been fulfilled by years made up of days exactly like the ones we experience.

The time period of the individual days does not seem to be the key, for the easiest answer seems to be that "those days" is a unit of time. It is the whole unit of time that will be shortened and not the individual days that go to make up that unit. In this particular point we find support from one with whom we differ elsewhere, R. H. Gundry, as he states, "the more natural understanding, however is to take 'those days' collectively. . . ." ¹

By Shortening the Number of Days

"For the sake of the persecuted saints God will not allow the seventieth week to run its full course." ² In such a neat and brief sentence Robert Gundry settles the manner of shortening "those days."

Gundry is the most prominent of today's posttribulational premillennialists. His opinions and statements carry considerable weight in theological circles today. Therefore, it is important to deal with his position. We must show that this interpretation is not only not convincing but

¹Robert H. Gundry, The Church and the Tribulation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 42.

²Ibid.

that it is not "even credible."¹

Reason and logic alone will not accomplish this feat, Scripture will. Daniel 7:25 says concerning the saints that "they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." Likewise, Revelation 13:5 also indicates that time as 42 months and during such a period the Antichrist has power "to make war with the saints and to overcome them"(verse 7). No matter who is identified as "the elect," be they Church or saved Jews and Gentiles of the tribulation period, the saints will be the object of the power of the Antichrist for that period of time stated in each of the above verses. We have previously shown that that time period is 1260 days. Unless the words of Scripture do not mean what they say, these verses show that the saints "must be given over to the Antichrist for a full 1260 days. . . ."²

By Christ's Return

The tribulation will run its allotted 1260 days of intense suffering and persecution and then suddenly, it will be over, terminated by the visible second coming of Christ. Basically this is the view of men such as Walvoord, Rice and others.

Walvoord very definitely holds to a completed trib-

¹Gundry, The Church, p. 42.

²Sproule, Revised Review, p. 20.

ulation before the second coming when he states,

this does not mean that the period will be less than three-and-a-half years, but that it will be definitely terminated suddenly by the second coming of Christ.¹

In agreeing with Walvoord, Rice states,

I do not think that the tribulation will be less than the prophesied period, but that it will be suddenly, miraculously ended.²

This position may sound rather simplistic but it does have something in its favor. This view, along with this writer, sees "shortening" as cutting off and thus ending a time period. It does not take the idea of "amputation" that *κοτοβω* carries but rather takes the idea of "termination." By using the example of the short sleeved garments cited previously,³ even the concept of "terminated by plan" can be arrived at. Then as today, one does not make long sleeved shirts in order to cut off the sleeves so a short sleeved garment is the result. One makes that garment with short sleeves on purpose--by plan. This view recognizes that the period of the Great Tribulation is set at 1260 days and does not tamper with that number, thus honoring Scripture. It does leave room for the uncertainty or the expectation of Christ's coming by making it sudden and miraculous for later in Matthew 24 Christ made several statements concerning "the day and hour"

¹Walvoord, Matthew, p. 188.

²John R. Rice, The King of the Jews, A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1955), p. 383.

³See page 13.

(v 36), "day"(v 42) and "an hour"(v 44) which are unknown.

By God's Decree

Matthew Henry, while definitely not a premillennialist and holding that "the elect" is the church, states this position very well when he states that the period was "not made shorter than what God had determined, but shorter than what he might have decreed. . . ." ¹

While it is far from the purpose of this paper to convince the reader that God is sovereign, we shall simply state a standard definition of the decrees of God.

The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. ²

God in eternity past planned and chose to implement the present plan. It is in that plan and program that God chose the length of the units of time of the prophecy of Daniel. God chose seventy weeks, seven years to the week, the length of the months and days that made up those years, the division of the final week into two halves of 1260 days duration. He could have chosen to make the prophecy of Daniel

¹Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, ed. by Leslie F. Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 1328.

²The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, The Book of Confessions (Philadelphia: The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1966), p. 7.001-.011.

eighty weeks long. He could have chosen to divide that last week into one third and two thirds. God did not do that but chose that plan which has been revealed to us in Scripture.

The idea "that Daniel's seventieth week is, already, the shortened period"¹ is a difficult view for Gundry to understand. In attempting to provide an escape for those who hold that the decrees of God have set the limit on the time of the tribulation, he intimates that maybe those who support the decrees of God view got their idea from the aorist tenses used for shortening.² After seemingly "setting up" his opponents, Gundry draws attention to the use of the future tense verb *κολοβαλιζονται*, in Matthew 24:22. He also makes a point of the prophetic usage of the aorist verbs indicating they are used prophetically and not as indicators of God's decree. To finish off his opponents Gundry then states,

The future is as certain as the past. An the fact that Jesus made His statement long after the revelation of the chronology of seventy weeks renders untenable the view that the seven years of the seventieth week are already shortened.³

With his first statement this writer could not agree more vigorously. The future is so certain because God has decreed it to be what He desires it to be.

¹Gundry, The Church, p. 42.

²Alford in his Greek Testament does this when he states, "if God had not in his mercy shortened (by His decree, to which the aorist refers). . . ." vol 1, p. 240.

³Gundry, The Church, p. 42.

Gundry's second statement from the previously cited quote brings about disagreement.

The first point of disagreement is a minor one. It is not the "seventieth week" that is to be shortened. It is the last half of that week.

The second point of disagreement involves Gundry's solution to the problem. His solution to abruptly end the tribulation before the 1260 days run their course is a tempting method of answering the problem. Who better than Jesus Christ Himself to change what other Scriptures say? Even this cannot be done. If, as we have previously shown, the time periods referred to in Daniel and Revelation are all the same length, we cannot have a different number when "those days" come to pass than Scripture tells us. If, when the tribulation actually arrives, Jesus makes His second advent at the end of 1230 days instead of 1260 days then Daniel and Revelation are wrong. This cannot be!

The solution that seems most reasonable has to do with man and his perception of time. Man does not live in the future and has difficulty comprehending future events. Jesus is talking to men about a future event. Gundry does not believe that "those days" are shortened by a past Divine decree because of the future tense. However, this writer does believe that "those days" are shortened by the Divine decree. Jesus used the futuristic aorist (εκολοβώθησαν) and the future (κολοβωθήσονται) because He was speaking of

those eschatological days which shall be shortened because of the Divine decree. In the mind of God "those days" have been shortened because he has decreed that they be of a certain length(1260 days) but to man and his understanding of future events they will be shortened. Thus the prophetic use of the aorist tense and the use of the future tense can be, as was shown in Chapter I, two ways of saying the same thing.

We have seen that among premillennarians there are a variety of methods or means for shortening "those days." Of the four views, it has been shown that the view of terminating the period by a change in the number of days does not take into consideration the demands of other Scriptures for a specific number of days for the tribulation period. The changing of the solar day's length, while a remote possibility, does not make for a continuity with the time limits of the other 69 weeks and it does not answer the problem of the term "those days" as more of a time unit than individual days.

A combination of the last two positions, the decrees of God and the abruptness of Christ's second advent seems to be the most natural explanation of what will take place during that time period.

CONCLUSION

After conducting this study, this writer is as convinced, if not more so, that the presuppositions of the premillennial and pretribulational position are valid.

The study of these verses, especially in their contextual setting convinced this writer that the literal or normal method of interpreting the Scriptures even in prophetic passages is the proper course of action. Holding to such a method results in a position that, while not without problems, presents the fewest difficulties and seems to honor the words of Scripture to a greater degree.

Chapter II, The AD 70 View, brought about difficulties that, in this writer's opinion, required too much imagination to reconcile the problems faced. It is necessary for the student to almost overlook Scripture in an attempt to answer conflicts that the details of Scripture brought about. This was shown especially in this view's inability to handle the identification of the "abomination of desolation" and the terminology used by Scripture to describe the awfulness of the tribulation prophesied. This writer cannot accept the prophecy of Matthew 24 and Mark 13 as being finally fulfilled in AD 70.

It was noted that within the premillennial camp there was agreement that the fulfillment of the verses in question

is still future. This fulfillment will take place during the period of time called the Great Tribulation. It was also noted that there were differences within the premillennial camp. These differences were between the two major branches of premillennialism, the historic and dispensational. Here the question was not what is to be shortened but by what means this shortening is to be accomplished. An attempt was made to demonstrate why the method of decreasing the number of days and the method of decreasing the number of hours per day were incorrect. The final two methods of shortening "those days" seem to this writer to be the manner by which "those days" will be shortened. This consists of a combination of the decrees of God determining the length of the period and then the abruptness and miraculousness of Christ's coming to earth. To this we can only add what the last inspired writer of the Bible said, "Come, Lord Jesus."

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