

# THE A. D. 70 DOCTRINE

Ted J. Clarke



## *About the author...*

Ted was born in Illinois. He is married to the former Sherrie Mooney and they have three children and seven grandchildren. Ted has served in local work in Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Alabama and Arkansas. He graduated from Memphis School of Preaching in 1972, has a B.A. degree from Alabama Christian School of Religion and has done graduate work at ACSR and Harding Graduate School. Ted has conducted meetings in 14 states and has made two mission trips to Jamaica. He speaks on several lectureships, has written for several brotherhood publications and participated in several debates. Ted has worked with the congregation in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas since 1991. He has served as editor of the Fulton County Gospel News since 1991.

## Introduction

Since the 1970s, primarily Max King of Warren, OH has promoted this false doctrine, when he published his book, *The Spirit of Prophecy*. In *The Nichols-King Debate*, King claims: “The Holy Scriptures teach that the second coming of Christ, including the establishment of the eternal kingdom, the day of judgment, the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead, occurred with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D” (1). The followers of the A. D. 70 doctrine do **not** believe there will be a future second coming of Christ, at which time all the dead will be raised and judged, with the righteous receiving an immortal resurrection body and eternal life and the wicked given eternal punishment in hell. Incredibly, they contend all of those promises were fulfilled when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in the year A. D. 70. There are others, such as Ed Stevens and some denominational names that basically agree with King, but do not follow all that Max King teaches on this topic. Others like Jack Scott, Don Preston, and Tim King (Max’s son) follow his thinking very closely.

## The Supposed “Key”

One of the first teachers of this idea was J. Stuart Russell in a book, published in 1887, entitled, *The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord’s Second Coming*. Others have pretty much followed Russell’s approach. There is a very close association between what the doctrine of Universalism has taught about eschatology (end time events) and what is taught by present day A. D. 70 theorists (Varner 32-77). Terry Varner has given a summarized history of this movement which we do not have the space to review (32-77). For King, and others, all Biblical prophecy was concluded in A. D. 70 and there is **nothing** that remains to be fulfilled (*Spirit* 392; *Cross* 666). King’s supposed “key” to interpreting the prophecies in this fashion is given below.

It is the belief of the author that the spiritual method of interpretation is firmly established in the Bible, and that it is the basic and primary method of interpretation involved in end-time prophecy. This is not to deny that the literal method has a place

in scripture, for many prophecies have a material fulfillment. This is especially true in Christ's first coming to fleshly Israel, and also with respect to the last days of fleshly Israel. Since prophecy involves two Israels of God (fleshly and spiritual) in the last days, one can expect to find a twofold application of prophecy. One must, however, recognize the fact that the spiritual method of interpretation prevails in regard to the establishment and development of spiritual Israel, and to her is given a large portion of Old Testament prophecy. (*Spirit 1-2*)

Part of what King says is true, but one cannot consistently make all interpretation pertaining to the nation of fleshly Israel have only a physical application, nor can one make all interpretation pertaining to spiritual Israel, the church/kingdom of Christ, have only a spiritual application disconnected from anything physical.

King does not strictly adhere to his "key," except where his A. D. 70 doctrine requires. For example, John the Baptizer was sent to the physical nation of Israel as a forerunner of Christ (Matthew 11:7-14; 17:10-13). According to Isaiah 40:3-4, John was to fill the valleys, lower the hills, make the crooked paths straight (cf. Luke 3:2-5). Did John physically make Palestine a flat land with nothing but straight roads? Of course not, for what the prophet Isaiah had reference to was a spiritual application; John paving the way for Christ by preaching to the spiritual hearts of Israel to prepare for their Messiah (Varner 19-20). Regarding the church as spiritual Israel, did all prophecies given to them demand spiritual application apart from everything physical? Certainly not! Jesus foretold of the suffering of His followers (Matthew 10:16-22; John 15:18-20; 16:1-4). Was this suffering only spiritual, totally apart from the physical? Of course not! Read Acts 5:27-28, 40-41; 14:19-21; 16:19-24; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-16; Revelation 2:10 et al. (Varner 19-22). Because of these examples and many others that could be mentioned, King's supposed key to understanding the Scriptures will not work.

We are dual beings, created by God and composed of flesh and spirit. From that moment of creation God has never ceased to communicate with mankind in ways that relate to both body and spirit. For example, Curtis Cates points out that we are God's church family, but we are fleshly human beings. Our worship to God is tied to our dual nature. We spiritually observe the Lord's Supper as we physically eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23-28). When we are physically immersed in water in Christ's name our spirits are cleansed from sin [Acts 2:38; 8:35-40; Romans 6:3-5] (Cates 20-21). In this life God deals with us as we are, composed of both flesh and spirit. In the next life the inner man will receive an immortal spiritual body to inhabit (1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8).

The A. D. 70 Doctrine is so complex in its approach to prophecy and the Scriptures in general that it is impossible to cover even its essential elements in one fairly short manuscript. Accordingly, I want to encourage our readers to consult some of the very good and inexpensive resource books available on this topic. I refer to those books marked with an asterisk "\*" in the "Works Cited" at the conclusion of this lesson. While I have not cited from all of these, they are all valuable books which inform one on this topic. In the remaining space I want to consider what has been promoted as Max King's "greatest argument" for his A. D. 70 theories. I have chosen this course because of the claims of A. D. 70 theorists regarding Luke 17:20-37, and the fact that there is not a great deal of material answering their erroneous claims on this passage.

## Matthew 24-25

We flatly reject King's claim that all eschatological events are past, having been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Most of us who do reject the A. D. 70 theory believe that Matthew 24, and its parallel treatments in Mark 13 and Luke 21, clearly show that the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem, while being an important event in Biblical prophecy, did not fulfill all prophecy about end time events!

Note the context for Matthew 24. Following Christ's scathing rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:1-33, Jesus lamented the unfaithful violence of the Jews towards God's messengers and warned them that God's judgment would make their house desolate when He would come again in the name of the Lord (verses 34-39). In chapter 24 the disciples sought to impress Jesus with the magnificence of the temple structures, to which Christ replied that not one stone would be left upon another (verses 1-2). This response by Christ prompted His disciples to ask, "*Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world*" (verse 3). Jesus answered the disciples' questions about the "when" of His coming in the destruction of Jerusalem by giving them a number of signs which would precede the event (verses 4-34).

Then Christ used the topic of judgment upon Jerusalem to warn of the final and eternal judgment upon all the earth (verses 35-51). Actually, Matthew 25 should also be included as part of Christ's teaching on the second coming and judgment. Luke 21:34-36 shows that this latter section was not speaking of an event connected with the local destruction of Jerusalem. There Jesus said, "*For as a snare shall it come **on all who dwell on the face of the whole earth***" (verse 35). Matthew 24:34 says that all the signs and events of which Jesus had previously spoken in verses 4-33 would happen to "this generation," the Jews to whom He then was speaking. It is a fact of history that Jerusalem was destroyed in A. D. 70. However, the destruction of Jerusalem was not the "end of the world." "Heaven and earth" did **not** pass away. Jesus said regarding that "*day and hour*" no one knew except God. Then He went on to speak of what it would be like when He did come in judgment "*on all who dwell on the face of the whole earth*" (Luke 21:35; Matthew 24:37-25:46). This division of Matthew 24 into verses 4-34 dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem, and verses 35-51 referring to the judgment connected with Christ's second coming absolutely destroys the A. D. 70 doctrine. This second section shows: [1] there is to be a future coming of Christ **after** the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:37, 39); [2] there will be a universal judgment of all who dwell on the face of the whole earth (Luke 21:35; Matthew 25:32); and [3] the eternal rewards of everlasting punishment or eternal life will be given at this time (Matthew 25:34-46). Since these passages are such powerful refutation of the A. D. 70 doctrine, King and others seek to overthrow their force.

### King's "Greatest Argument"?

In a cassette tape series teaching on "Covenant Eschatology" (another name for the A. D. 70 theory), Tim King, son of Max, said that he was speaking with a university professor "about the differences when you look at the coordinate teachings of Matthew 24 and Luke 17[:20-37]." The unnamed professor reportedly told Tim King, "You know, Tim, I think that is your father's greatest argument" (*Overview:Matthew 24 tape*). The younger King obviously agreed or he would not have used the quote as he did.

What supposedly makes Luke 17:20-37 such a great argument for the A. D. 70 doctrine? Luke says some things in this section of Scripture that are also found in Matthew 24. King believes that this creates an impossible problem for those of us who divide Matthew 24 neatly into the two sections noted above, with verses 4-34 pertaining Christ coming in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, and verses 35-51 to a yet future coming of Christ in judgment on the whole world. There are some **similar** sayings and events that Matthew's account divides into these two sections that Luke might seem to combine or mix together in Luke 17:20-37. King says,

Evidently some have not taken the time to compare Mt. 24 with Luke chapters 17 and 21. Luke puts in the fall of Jerusalem section what Matthew has in the future coming of Christ section—if what is claimed for **two sections** is a legitimate exegesis of the Olivet Discourse. (*Cross* 353).

We will illustrate these proposed sections of Matthew 24 and Luke 17 in a moment and show that they do not have the import King assigns to them. Before we do that, consider some other matters.

First, King wrongly assumes that Luke 17 is part of the Olivet Discourse like Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. Luke 21 was, as Matthew 24 and Mark 13, delivered upon the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem. However, according to Luke 17:11 and 19:1, 11, 28-29, Jesus spoke what is recorded in Luke 17 sometime after He left Galilee but before He came to Jericho, on His way to Jerusalem. The Olivet Discourse was given **after** He had made His entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-38). It is also worth noting that none of the standard harmonies of the gospels that I have seen combine Luke 17 with Luke 21.

Second, Luke 17 is not a treatise on the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. Neither the temple nor Jerusalem is mentioned in that text. Christ's teaching here relates, not to the local destruction of Jerusalem, but to the universal judgment that would come upon all men. We will point out some of the universal markers in these verses that point to that future event. Nearly all commentators agree that Luke 17:20-18:8 go together as a unit of teaching given by Christ.

Third, similarity of words or phrases does **not** mean identity of a person, place, or thing (event). Just as some people had the same name, but were different, just so one may describe similar but different events using the same type of words. This is especially true in the Scriptures regarding the judgment of God upon people or nations. Scripture says that God rides the clouds in judgment, but in Nahum 1:3 the judgment was upon Assyria and in Ezekiel 19:1-2 the judgment was upon Egypt. The same is true with the figurative troubling of the heavenly bodies as the sun, moon, and stars (representing the fall of the governing powers of the nations). These were signs that were also used to depict judgment at different times upon different nations, such as Babylon (Isaiah 13:10); Egypt (Ezekiel 32:7-8); Israel (Amos 8:9); and the nations of the world (Revelation 6:12-14). Jesus used the same type of language of coming on the clouds and the troubling of the heavenly bodies to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 26:63; 24:29). One should not find it difficult to accept that the final future judgment upon all mankind might use the same type of judgment language.

What follows is a chart found in the printed outline study guide for the cassette tape *Overview* mentioned earlier (King 20). The material in lighter print on the left hand side under Matthew 24 are those matters in verses 4-34 that pertain to the destruction of Jerusalem. The darker bold print on the left relates to those things I believe pertain only to the second coming of Christ in verses 35-51. On

the right hand side under Luke 17, the lighter print statements, which are similar to some statements in Matthew, are mixed among the bolder print sayings. Since it is unlikely that Christ kept switching back and forth every few verses in Luke 17 from the destruction of Jerusalem to the end of the world, King avers that Luke had to be talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. However, we shall show that throughout the Luke 17 passage the Lord was speaking of His still future final coming in universal judgment upon all of the world.

**Chart 2: The Unity of the Olivet Discourse as Seen from Matt. 24 and Luke 17.**

Matthew 24	Luke 17
17 "... him on housetop..."	23 "...look here or look there..."
23 "Look here...or there..."	24 "For as the lightening flashes..."
27 "For as the lightning comes..."	25 "...this generation..."
28 "...carcass...eagles..."	<b>26 "As it was in the days of Noah..."</b>
34 "...this generation..."	<b>27 "They ate...drank...married..."</b>
<b>37 "But as the days of Noah..."</b>	<b>30 "...Son of Man... revealed..."</b>
<b>38 "...eating, drinking, marrying..."</b>	31 "...He who is on the housetop..."
<b>39 "coming of the Son of Man..."</b>	<b>35 "...two women grinding..."</b>
<b>40 "...two men ... in field..."</b>	<b>36 "...two men ...in field..."</b>
<b>41 "...two women grinding..."</b>	37 "...body...eagles..."

As may be seen, the consequences of dividing Matthew 24 into TWO divisions results in dividing the parallel teaching of Luke 17 into FIVE divisions within a span of 14 verses. How could any of the disciples follow the conversation of Jesus if this is what he did? Are we really to believe that this is what Jesus is doing in Luke 17, or is the solution to say that the writer is oblivious to what he is doing as he writes the account as he recalls? To the fundamental Bible scholar, neither choice is acceptable. (*Overview 20*)

King fails to see that the similar language in Luke17 does not mean the same in some instances as it does in Matthew 24. With your Bible in hand, please follow closely the study of comparing Luke 17 with Matthew 24.

**Comparing Luke 17 With Matthew 24**

The setting for the discussion of Christ’s second coming in Luke 17 grows out of the demand of the Pharisees to know “*when the kingdom of God should come*” (verse 20). Jesus’ reply that “the

kingdom of God cometh not with observation” describes the spiritual nature of His kingdom. Jesus told Pilate, “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36); therefore, its arrival is not “observable” like world kingdoms which come to power. All earthly kings, such as Pilate or David, reign before they die, but Christ was raised from the dead to sit on His throne (Acts 2:29-30). Christ’s triumphal coronation after His victory over death and ascension to God’s right hand would not be visible by human sight, but the results of this enthronement would be made manifest to all. Peter proclaimed the occurrence of this grand event in Acts 2:22-36. There were visible hints of what was to come regarding Christ’s kingdom, such as His entry into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass (Luke 19:28-40; Zechariah 9:9), but such was not the type of signs of a king the Pharisees expected.

**Verse 21** – Because Christ’s throne was not an earthly one with a physical palace and a territory with physical borders, no one could say, “Lo, here! or lo there!”, pointing to a specific place on earth as the seat of God’s kingdom rule. The kingdom of God is real, but not worldly; it is “*within you*” or “*in the midst of you*” (ASV margin). Whether this means that God’s kingdom reign is “within” the heart of man governing his life, or “in your midst,” referring to Christ’s presence as God’s Son and Messiah, the kingdom was not the visible tangible entity that the Pharisees had hoped to see come.

**Verse 22** – Verses 22-37 develop in response to the question of the Pharisees and seem to indicate that Christ’s reply that “*the kingdom of God is in the midst of you*” may have direct reference to Jesus as the Son of man. This verse foretells of a time of His absence from the disciples’ midst (cf. John 14:2-3, 12, 18-20 et al.). In His absence the disciples would desire to see again even “one of the days of the Son of man [when He was personally with them, but] ye shall not see it,” that is, not in their lifetimes.

**Verse 23** – In Christ’s absence some would try to deceive the disciples saying, “*See here; or, see there*” as though Christ were present back on earth. Jesus warned against being duped by such claims. Matthew 24:23 also refers to the time of Christ’s absence when some would say, “*Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.*” The Lord issued the same type of warning against being deceived by such claims. Both Matthew 24:23 and Luke 17:23 have reference to the time of Christ’s absence from the earth and false claims about His presence here, but Matthew’s context is rooted in the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke’s passage relates to any time prior to the second coming of Christ in universal judgment. Therefore, the warning about such things is timeless. The claims to be Christ made by men like David Koresh, Sun Yung Moon and others, are just as groundless as all others who made those pretenses prior to the fall of Jerusalem, or after it. Matthew 24:23-26 gives more of an urgent emphasis to this warning, perhaps because of the proximity in time of that event, but Luke’s universal and timeless application of the same caution shows that the similar material does not signify that they were part of the identical discourse.

**Verse 24** – This verse promises that what the disciples would desire, “*to see one of the days of the Son of man*” (verse 22), would come to pass, but only at Christ’s second coming. The disciples need not be deceived by false claims of His coming, for as obvious as lightning streaking across the sky, “*so shall the Son of man be in his day.*” This is no secret coming of Deity, but obvious. Lightning was used in some theophanies in Scripture, whether accompanying His presence (Exodus 19:16; 20:18), or as His agent in judgment (Psalms 18:9-16). It will be impossible not to know when Christ returns “*in his day*” (Luke 17:30), which is likely a variation of “*the day of the Lord*” (Isaiah 13:6; Joel 2:1; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5); a day of judgment.

Again, the passage in Matthew 24:27 relates to “*the coming of the Son of man*” in judgment

upon Jerusalem, which Christ foretold in verse 3. This is similar language used in a similar judgment event, but not the same event. Luke 21:20-24, which is parallel to Matthew 24 and Mark 13, shows that Christ came in judgment upon Jerusalem via the armies of the Gentiles (Rome). But the judgment in Matthew 24:4-34 is local and Luke 17:20-37 has markers of universal judgment, as there are in the last half of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:35-51 and its parallels. These markers, shown in the discussion of the following verses, demonstrate that the coming of Christ in judgment in Luke 17 involves all mankind, not just Jerusalem.

**Verse 25** – The fact that Jesus says, “*first* [before His day of judgment which will be evident to all - TJC] *he must suffer many things and be rejected of **this generation**,*” does not mean Luke 17 refers to the time of Jerusalem’s fall. Of course He must suffer many things and be rejected by “*this generation*” to whom He was speaking, for that was the time frame chosen by God for Christ to come, conduct His ministry, and be crucified and raised from the dead (Galatians 4:4; John 1:10-12; Acts 2:22-24). In God’s plan Christ was only in the flesh on earth approximately 33 years. However, Jesus did not say to His disciples in Luke 17 that the judgment of the whole world would take place during the lifetime of that generation. He did say in Matthew 24:34 that Jerusalem would be destroyed during the time of the same generation to whom He spoke. In fact Luke 18:7-8, the conclusion to this unit of Christ’s teaching, implies some substantial passage of time: “*And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*” Marshall suggests that the probable meaning here of “bear long” (Greek, *makrothumeo*) is, “The elect cry to God night and day, but he puts their patience to the test by not answering them immediately...or, they call to him night and day even though (it seems as if) he is dilatory towards them...” (674-675). In verse 8 Christ responds in such a way that justifies this concept of a significant passage of time. “*I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*” While the word “speedily” might seem to negate the idea of much time, the Greek phrase is *en tachei*, which can refer to “something which happens after a short interval, i.e. ‘soon’, or which happens in a very short space of time, i.e. ‘quickly’, or which happens before men are ready for it and when they do not expect it” (Marshall 676). “Soon” can be a relative term, depending upon one’s perspective about the matter (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-9).

A remark about a soon coming implies, nonetheless, a delay. Since delay in vindication may become an excuse to lose faith, Jesus goes on to say in effect, “Pray and look for the return,” knowing that it will come. Though the delay seems long, after the vindication it will seem short....In comparison to eternity, what is the span of time between Christ’s first and second comings? This point is especially true in light of the vindication’s permanence. (Bock 2:1455)

One must consider the use of “speedily” in 18:8 in the context of Christ’s question, “*When the Son of man cometh, will he find faith on earth?*” While no definite amount of time is specified, “The question as a whole presupposes a time of tribulation for the disciples in which they may be tempted to give up faith because their prayers are not answered; it is meant as an exhortation to take seriously the lesson of the parable that God will certainly act to vindicate them” (Marshall 669). One lexicographer says,

“*aiphindios* [sudden] is comparable to *en tachei* [speedily] in the parable of the Widow and the judge.... Luke 18:7-8 contrasts the slowness and patience of God—who delays [*makrothumei*], takes a long time to do justice for his people—with his sudden and rapid ([*en tachei*] = speedily) intervention. The emphasis is on prompt execution (cf. Rev. 22:12; Plutarch, *Tim.* 21.7). We may interpret “suddenly, all at once, at one stroke” or better “like lightning”: swiftness is a sign of diligence, of a resolute and sovereign will. . . . (Spicq 1:51, fn 6)

These elements indicate that “*the Son of man in his day*” (Luke 17:24, 30) is not the judgment brought upon Jerusalem and the generation contemporary with Christ, but a universal judgment removed in time from A. D. 70.

Other markers point to Luke 17 being a more widespread judgment than Jerusalem. “*In the day when the Son of man is revealed*” it will be night time with people in bed in one location and day time with people up and working in another place when this judgment is rendered (verses 34, 36). This widespread area, geographically far enough apart for it to be night one place and daylight in another proves Luke 17 to be speaking of a judgment beyond Jerusalem. However, this is in harmony with Luke 21:33-35, which also deals with the universal judgment of Christ’s second coming. There the Lord warned, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away*” and cautioned “*take heed unto yourselves [lest] that day come upon you unawares.*” The **extent** of the judgment of “that day” is shown in verse 35, “*For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.*” This fits with the universal tenor of judgment in Luke 17 and shows that the coming of the Lord and the judgment Christ prophesied in Matthew 24:35-51, with parallels in Luke 21:33-36 and Mark 13:31-36, are of **universal scope**, affecting “*all of them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.*” Although the destruction of Jerusalem was tremendously significant, it obviously did not bring judgment on all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. What is more, the judgment of Luke 21:35 speaks of a snare or trap on all in the whole earth. “The image of a trap describes the quickness and unexpectedness with which that day will snap shut and catch its victim. The day will reveal God’s judgment. Jesus’ point is to be ready for it so as to not be left out.... The end’s reality should call one to live prepared for the end, by being faithful to God” (Bock 2:1693). Christians could not be caught unawares in a “snare” by the events in the fall of Jerusalem, for the Lord gave them signs to read which enabled them to flee (Matthew 24:15-16).

**Verses 26-30** – Since these verses are part of the second coming section in Matthew 24:35-51, and agree with the second coming theme here in Luke 17:20-37, we have no need to treat them here, except to point out that they serve the same purpose in both books, pointing to Christ’s second coming in universal judgment.

**Verse 31** – “*In that day,*” of the final judgment, the person who is on the housetop is not to enter his house for personal belongings, nor is the man in the field to return back to his house for them. Matthew 24:17-18 and Mark 13:15-16 basically give the same instructions, but for different reasons. Matthew and Mark speak of the necessity of a quick departure from Jerusalem and the cities of Judea, fleeing to the mountains to save one’s life. No material possessions are worth the risk of being trapped in a city or village and losing one’s life trying to get a coat or other things “*out of his house.*” When Christians saw the imminent danger of the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem, they were to flee to the mountains and not enter the occupied areas (Luke 21:20-21). *The “redemption*



*[which] draweth nigh*" in Luke 21:28 is that which God provided by the signs to warn them of the life threatening destruction which would befall those in Jerusalem. Their watchfulness and response of fleeing the city would assure their deliverance. These were part of the signs and instructions given to *"this generation [which] shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled"* (Luke 21:8-32; Matthew 24:4-34). Matthew's and Mark's admonitions to those on the housetops and in the fields to flee were to preserve their physical lives.

On the other hand, Luke 17:31-33, using the same figures of one on the housetop and one in the field not entering back into the home for possessions has a different purpose in mind. Luke's use of these situations is metaphorical and twofold. One cannot seriously believe that here the Lord had in mind the idea of people fleeing from His coming in universal judgment. There would be no place to flee. What then does He intend to convey? First, there is the need for one to have the proper attitude toward the value of one's soul versus the value of material possessions. Luke's gospel clearly stresses this teaching from Christ (cf. 12:15-21; 14:26-33; 16:19-31). When Christ comes again not one material possession will mean anything. Second, there are the implicit warnings of watchfulness and admonition for preparedness in the metaphor. One who is thinking properly about "that day" will be living with focused attention upon the spiritual treasures one can lay up in heaven and have his/her heart given daily to such efforts (Luke 9:23; Matthew 6:19-21). Watchfulness and readiness are also frequent in the second coming of Christ sections of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:35-51).

**Verse 32** – The additional admonition to *"Remember Lot's wife,"* ties these thoughts together. While she was warned about the judgment to come upon Sodom, she could not free her mind from the material blessings of life there, so she looked back in regret of losing it all and lost much more than her physical blessings. This event admonishes us to look ahead, beyond the things of this world, to the blessings that God has prepared for those who are faithful to His call to be separate from worldly things (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). When Christ comes, we are to be ready to go with Him, leaving all behind for greater rewards.

**Verse 33** – This verse supports the interpretation above and proves that Luke 17 cannot be discussing the destruction of Jerusalem. *"Whoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whoever shall lose his life shall save it."* This passage cannot have literal reference to the fall of Jerusalem, for in that event the disciples were given signs and admonitions to flee in order to "save" their physical lives from that judgment. However, Luke's context is related to proper attitudes toward receiving final salvation, not escaping judgment on Jerusalem. One who fills his/her life with obtaining material things, excluding a proper relationship with God, might enjoy physical life now, but the final judgment will bring loss of eternal life.

The first half of the verse emphasizes physical preservation, the second half spiritual preservation. The two halves are laid out in contrastive parallelism so that the second clearly says that a relationship with God defines life. In the end, the one who identifies with God will suffer for it. Seeking to avoid persecution will lead to a lack of commitment ultimately to God....It is a costly choice either way. God does not promise immunity from death and suffering, but he does promise abiding life with him to the one who survives this judgment by the Son of Man. As [Luke] 9:25 says, it profits little to gain the world but lose one's soul. (Bock 2:1436)

Thus, Matthew's application of one on the housetop dealt with one's proper attitude toward material possessions that would help that one preserve his/her physical life (24:16-18), while Luke's point is the proper attitude towards one's physical goods which leads one to the gaining of eternal life (17:31-33).

**Verses 34-36** – See the comments on verses 26-30. Verses 34-36 are also related to the ideas in Matthew 24:40-41 regarding Matthew's section on the second coming. These are not part of the so called problem verses King alleges we must deal with if we divide Matthew 24.

**Verse 37** – The question of the disciples asking, "*Where, Lord?*", is related to the coming "*day when the Son of man is revealed*" in the judgment upon the world (verses 30-36). The request for a specific location was not provided by the Lord, for the universal judgment of the world can hardly be pinpointed to a particular location. Christ's statement, "*Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered,*" makes it clear that when the time comes, "His presence will be clearly indicated, just as the presence of carrion [dead bodies] is clearly indicated by the gathering of vultures overhead" (Marshall 669). But there is more to this proverb than visibility. Vultures feeding on the flesh of men is also a sign of judgment (Deuteronomy 28:26; 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Jeremiah 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Revelation 19:17, 21). The saying here is a maxim or proverb which could be applied to any situation which fits the meaning of the proverb (Fitzmyer 2:1173; Green 636; Nolland 2:862-863). Similar sayings were common in the ancient world (France 342). Like a common saying today, "Where there is smoke, there is fire," the maxim can have a wide range of applications.

Judgment will be visible, universal, and permanent. Once separation occurs, there is no turning back. Vultures gather to feed off dead bodies....This point that once judgment is rendered it is final seems the most likely sense. In effect, Jesus is saying, do not worry about where the judgment will occur, for once it comes, it will be too late and all will see it. As such, the point is not the correctness of the judgment...but its finality when it becomes visible. All will see the judgment's horrific finality....The graphic and emotive image of vultures is a warning that the return will be a grim affair. The return of the Son of Man saves some but permanently condemns others. The return will be what was longed for in 17:22, but when it comes it will mean ultimate judgment for those who are not prepared. This is a classic day-of-the-Lord warning to the unprepared. (Bock 2:1440)

Thus, one should not wonder that the same image of judgment could be used by Matthew 24:28 to describe the A. D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, and by Luke 17:37 to depict the final judgment of all mankind upon the face of the whole earth (cf. Luke 21:35).

Some attempt to make the word "*eagle*" (KJV) in Matthew 24:28 and Luke 17:37 refer to the image of the eagle on the battle flags of the Roman armies. However, the Greek word here *aetos* can refer to either the eagle or the vulture. Both birds "*tear flesh with the beak.*" The use of *aetos* in these two passages refers more properly to vultures which feed on dead flesh (Bock 2:1440; Nolland 2:863). Eagles generally do not eat already dead flesh, but prefer to hunt; nor do eagles "*gather together*" like vultures do (Van Broekhoven 2:1-2). Therefore, there is no tie to the Roman army between Matthew 24:28 and Luke 17:37. Rather, this is a proverb or maxim easily applied to any kind

of fatal judgment, perhaps spoken by the Lord on more than these two occasions, but used of both the destruction of Jerusalem and the final judgment of Christ's second coming.

### Conclusion

We have shown that there is **not one statement** in Luke 17:20-37, that has common language also used in Matthew 24:4-34, that relates to the same judgment event. The two sections were spoken on different occasions and have different contexts; Luke referring to the final judgment at Christ's second coming and Matthew describing the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Neither Max King nor any other advocate of the A. D. 70 doctrine can properly place Luke 17:20-37 into the Olivet Discourse. Neither can A. D. 70 doctrine advocates incorporate Matthew 24:35-51 and its parallels in Mark 13:31-37 and Luke 21:33-36 into the destruction of Jerusalem. All of these passages refer to the yet to be second coming of Christ, at which time He will render judgment and reward everyone according to their works. Luke 17:20-37 harmonizes with the latter half of the Olivet Discourse, but is separate from it. These passages are warnings to be watchful and prepared for the second coming of Christ, for which no signs were given (Matthew 24:35-25:46).

Jesus will come again, without warning! Perhaps it is better to say that Christ warned that He will come again without warning! That unfulfilled prophetic utterance should motivate unbelievers to obey the gospel and encourage Christians to watch the way we live, remaining faithfully ready for "that day" (Matt. 24:42, 44). The A. D. 70 Doctrine, by removing these prophecies from the role of future events, removes the warning and motivation God intended for them. The A. D. 70 doctrine is false and damnable teaching in the twenty-first century, just as it was in the first century (cf. 2 Timothy 2:16-18).

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