

## Preface

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**R**obert D. Van Kampen is one of my heroes. To those who knew him, he was a man of great strength, conviction, passion, and drive. In just over sixty years, he accomplished more than most people dare to dream. Yet, in the end, it was none of those things that won my admiration. Bob is a hero to me because he challenged one of my core convictions and forced me to change. This is a feat that only two others have accomplished in my life so far.

As a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and former professor at Moody Bible Institute, I once held theological positions that could not change and still leave me in good standing with either of those schools. One of those positions was the pretribulational rapture. At first, this was not problematic for me. I, too, held to (and even taught) this doctrinal position. My convictions were

disrupted, however, when in the typical style of “Perry Mason,” “Murder, She Wrote,” “Colombo,” and “Matlock,” Bob found one little clue, a clue that didn’t fit. He saw a pattern repeated consistently throughout the New Testament. That pattern was the sign of the imminent outbreak of the Day of the Lord—the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars that immediately precedes the return of Jesus Christ. For everyone else, this fact seemed insignificant. To Bob, it was the foundation for unrest.

For Robert Van Kampen, the significance of the cosmic darkening of the sun, moon, and stars required a different view of the timing of the Lord’s return. By lining up all of the prophetic events yet to occur (either before or after this sign, as the scriptures dictate), he articulated a position on the timing of the Lord’s return to remove God’s elect to heaven, one now labeled *prewrath*.

In light of this sign, I had to sit up and take notice. In so doing, I discovered something else that demanded my reevaluation of the pretrib system. It was the suddenly unambiguous fact that pretrib had an irreconcilable contradiction at its core.

The pretrib system is built on the premise that God does not and will not prophetically deal with either ethnic Israel or the Church outside of each’s respective dispensation. Thus, pretrib rejects any applicability of Matthew 24:4-31 to the Church. In the pretrib system, the fulfillment of Matthew 24:4-31 requires the resumption of the Jewish dispensation, which God halted by inserting the dispensation of the Gentiles (the Church age). Thus, God cannot and will not resume any work with national ethnic Israel until He finishes His special work among the Gentiles, which must conclude before the resumption of Daniel’s final week of prophecy.

The contradiction hit me one day as I was working through Acts 2:17-21. It dawned on me that Peter used a Jewish prophetic text to explain the beginning of God’s

special work among the Gentiles. More significantly, the passage indicates that the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17-21) occurs *during* “the last days.” Hebrews 1:1-2 also places the ministry of Jesus Christ during this same period. In other words, the Bible tells us that the entire period from the beginning of the Lord’s ministry until He finishes taking for Himself a people from among the Gentiles (Acts 15:14) occurs during “the last days.” Thus, the ministry of Jesus (during the Jewish dispensation) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (during the Church dispensation) occur over the same time frame. Equally, I was led to see that the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, which found fulfillment thirty-plus years after the start of the Church’s dispensation, was prophesied by the Lord Jesus during the Jewish dispensation.

In light of these facts, the notion that God does not work with Gentiles during the Jewish dispensation, nor does He work with Jews during the Gentile dispensation, is biblically untrue. Pretribulationism is founded on a false premise. God did and *does* work with both Israel and the Church during the same dispensation. No one really believes that the last sixty years of Israel’s modern history is absent God’s sovereign hand behind the scenes. At the same time, Old Testament scripture does speak of events connected with the Church, even if the term “church” itself is not used. These two contradictions made the pretrib position untenable for me.

These insights caused me to throw out all I had learned about Matthew 24 and Daniel 9. This book, which is written on behalf of the Prewrath Resource Institute, is some of the fruit of my reeducation over the past fifteen years. In the following pages, we will not only help you better appreciate the meaning of Matthew 24:1-31 and Daniel 9, but we will demonstrate the incontrovertible fact that Matthew 24:4-31 applies to the Church and Jewish

believers living in Israel during the God's final phase of human history as we know it.

For some, this book will not be easy reading. Trying to present enough technical information to satisfy the scholarly community of the legitimacy of our arguments concerning the meaning of the text, while remembering that lay students of scripture want to know only how the text applies to them, is not a simple task. It is our hope that you, the reader, will take your time and read carefully what follows in these pages.

The goal of this book is not to impress you with what we see in scripture. Rather, we are attempting to help the Church find the true meaning of events connected with our Lord's return. If what we articulate here is true, a future generation of God's elect will face an unparalleled time of persecution. It will not be easy. It will require preparation. A *Reader's Digest* version will not suffice. Please allow this book to serve as stimulant, if need be, for your spiritual growth. We all know that growth for believers requires hard work!

Charles Cooper  
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