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# ISRAEL'S FALL FEASTS AND DATE-SETTING OF THE RAPTURE

**by Thomas Ice**

July 1992

Jesus will return on October 22, 1844
**--William Miller**

Jesus will return on September 28, 1992
**--Dorothy Miller**

1992 is witnessing a plethora of attempts to set the date for the rapture. Most of these schemes use the Fall Feasts of Israel's annual seven feast cycle in some way to set the month and day of the rapture. Then they may use cycles of feasts combined with other schemes to arrive at the year, usually 1992 or 1993. Some of the dates I have seen suggested include August 1992; September 8, 1992; September 28, 1992 (the most popular); October 28, 1992; Fall 1993.

Last week Hal Lindsey told me that date-setting fever has swept through the Christian community in Korea advocating September 28, 1992. As a result, Lindsey's prophecy books have been banned from many bookstores because they are viewed as heretical since he does not follow their date-setting scheme. This is very interesting in light of some of Lindsey's American critics who keep insisting, in spite of Lindsey's documented denials, that he is a date-setter. In Korea he is considered a heretic because in reality he is not a date-setter.

Most of us remember the stir created by the dogmatic assertions of Edgar Whisenant and his booklet *88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988*, not one of them true. Much of his rationale revolved around his use of Israel's feasts. I wrote against his views during that time [See "Dispensationalism, Date-Setting and Distortion," *Biblical Perspectives*, (Sep/Oct 1988; Vol I, No 5)]. In this article I want to explain why I think this current round of date-setting is equally invalid.

## HISTORICISM AND DATE-SETTING

Date-setting of the second coming has been more prevalent down through church history than many in our day may think. Such notables as John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, and Jonathan Edwards are only a few of the more well-known Christians to have engaged in the art. Actually, in our day there is less date-setting going on than there was 150 years ago when the historicist approach to prophetic interpretation was dominate within Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism. This approach to prophecy is by its very nature given to date-setting, since the historicist believes that the current church age is fulfilling progressively the sequence of Revelation, building up to Christ's return in chapter 19.

Historicism would take numbers like the 1260 days (3 1/2 years) of Daniel and Revelation and postulate that each day represents one year, hence the "Year/Day" theory. This period of time was viewed as the tribulation period with the Pope and Catholic church identified as the anti-Christ. It is not hard to see why the historicist view was also called the Protestant interpretation. One

scheme saw the tribulation beginning in A.D. 534 with Justinian and ending at the French Revolution in 1794.

The most famous date-setter in American history was the Baptist William Miller. Miller was a classic historicist. He took the 2300 days from Daniel 8:14 when "the holy place will be properly restored" and turned them into years. Miller's starting year was 457 B.C., the time when Nebuchadnezzar profaned the Temple in Jerusalem. When you add them up you arrive at the year 1843 as the time of Christ's second coming. But when that year came and when, like any other year, it was discovered that a year had been left out for the shift from B.C. to A.D., thus 1844 was the true year (similar to Whisenant's recalculation). However, it too came and went and Miller's scheme became known as the "Great Disappointment."

While there are more details involving the historicist approach, you can see by the very nature and fabric of this viewpoint that it is at root a date-setting approach to interpreting prophecy. Even though the historicist hermeneutic was the one most widely practiced before, during, and after the Reformation, by the middle 1800s it began to fall into extreme disfavor. Historicism had been virtually the only game in town for Protestants and was enthusiastically practiced by most Amillennialists, Postmillennialists, and Premillennialists alike. About the only ones continuing to practice this hermeneutic in our day are Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and Seventh-Day Adventists. In fact, the Seventh-Day Adventists denomination sprang out of the Millerite movement.

## THE RISE OF FUTURISM

Even before "The Great Disappointment" in America, historicism was already in decline in Europe. Application of a *consistent* literal hermeneutic to Bible prophecy, as restored by the Reformers in other areas of theology, enabled interpreters to see that days meant days, not years, and the anti-Christ was to be a specific person in the future. Thus, by the 1820s many in the British Isles were beginning to revive the futurist hermeneutic practiced by many early Christians before Constantine (A.D. 313). Futurism, as opposed to historicism, views prophetic events as having a future fulfillment during the future seven-year Tribulation period.

### *Dispensational Futurism*

Increasingly scholars began to take literally the Old Testament promises to restore the Jews to their land so that end-time prophecy could be fulfilled. Scholars also begin to realize that if they took these prophecies to apply literally to Israel, then this meant that the church had a different and distinct program than Israel within God's plan. Thus, the futurist interpretation contributed to the development of a new brand of premillennialism which we today know as dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism was developed and championed by Irishman J.N. Darby. Historian Ernest R. Sandeen noted that

> Darby's view of the premillennial advent contrasted with that held by the historicist millenarian school in two ways, First, Darby taught that the second advent would be secret, an event sensible only to those who participated in it. . . . Second, Darby taught that the secret rapture could

> occur at any moment. In fact, the secret rapture is also often referred to as the doctrine of the any-moment coming. (Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Baker Book House, 1980):62-63)

As this new dispensational futurism gained ground during the last half of the 19th century, date-setting, as encouraged by historicism became less frequent. In fact, dispensational futurism rose precisely because it was an anti-date-setting theology. "Unlike the historicist millenarians," observes Sandeen,

> Darby taught that the prophetic timetable had been interrupted at the founding of the church and that the unfulfilled biblical prophecies must all wait upon the rapture of the church. The church was a great parenthesis which Old Testament prophets had not had revealed to them. As was true of all futurist, of course, Darby maintained that none of the events foretold in the Revelation had yet occurred nor could they be expected until after the secret rapture of the church. Christ might come at any moment." (63)

Sandeen further notes that

> Darby avoided the pitfalls both of attempting to predict a time for Christ's second advent and of trying to make sense of the contemporary alarms of European politics with the Revelation as his guidebook. (64)

**THE NATURE OF THE RAPTURE**

I have never heard of a historicist who ever believed in the pretrib rapture of the church. Logically it is impossible. Historicists have always been posttrib. They see the second coming and the rapture as the same event. Therefore, their date-setting has always been in reference to the second coming.

On the other hand, the doctrine of the pretrib rapture is understood from the Scriptures when one *consistently* applies the literal hermeneutic of dispensational futurism. Further, as I will show later, since the pretrib rapture was always understood by dispensational futurists to be an any-moment possibility and a signless event, then it is logically inconsistent (even contradictory) to attempt to date the rapture. Contemporary efforts to date the rapture are lapses back into the historicist methodology, which is an abandonment of *consistent* literal interpretation demanded by the dispensational futurist hermeneutic. Use of Israel's Feasts to date-set is a historicist approach similar to the old "year/day" theory of the past. In fact, to blend the hermeneutics of futurism and historicism, as rapture date-setters do, really serves only to undermine the understanding and defense of the pretrib rapture position from the Scriptures. Why? Because a historicist approach does not take the Bible literally enough to distinguish between God's plan for Israel and His plan for the church. Nor does it distinguish between Christ coming *for* His saints (the rapture) and Christ's coming *with* His saints (the second coming).

My church history professor at Dallas Seminary, Dr. John Hannah, used to illustrate the mixing of conflicting ideas with a story from the Civil War. One young man who grew up near the Mason-Dixon line could not decide which side he wanted to fight for. So he put on a blue top and a gray bottom and got shot from both sides. So it is with attempts to date-set the rapture. One could not

even believe in the pretrib rapture if the historicist approach is applied to the Bible. On the other hand, when the *consistently* literal approach of futurism is applied to the Bible it does yield the pretrib rapture. One of the characteristics of the pretrib rapture is that it is a signless, any-moment event. Thus by its very nature it is impossible to even attempt date-setting and be consistent with the rationale which upholds the very position. Perhaps many of the rapture date-setters have developed their positions within an environment where they have not had to think through the basis, nor had to defend the rapture from its critics. Therefore I wonder if they understand the destructive implications of trying to mix two conflicting systems in light of interpretative issues.

The nature of the rapture differs from the nature of the second coming in a number of ways. Notice some of the differences from the chart "Contrasts Between The Rapture and Second Coming."

## ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

While Israel is given signs to observe relating to God's plan for His elect nation, the church is told to watch and eagerly await the any-moment rapture.

### *Signs for Israel*

Paul notes that "*Jews ask for signs*" (1 Cor 1:22). Why? I believe it is because God has historically related "signs and seasons" to His earthly plan for Israel.

Toward the end of Israel's 70 year captivity, Daniel was studying Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11-12) and noted that the 70 years of captivity were coming to an end (Dan. 9:1-2). This lead to Daniel's famous prayer of confession on behalf of his people (Dan. 9:3-19). It appears that Daniel thought that after this 70 year captivity God would bring Israel into the time of her glorious kingdom rule. So he was expecting Messiah to come and with Him the glorious kingdom.

This was not to be the case! God told Daniel that instead of Messiah and the kingdom coming at the end of the 70 years of captivity, they would not arrive until after 70 weeks of years, or 70 sets of seven (*i.e.*, 490 years) (Dan. 9:24-27). God kept stretching out the time frame for consummation of His plan for Israel. But it is related to "times and seasons." How else should we take numbers? Should we say that numbers don't count? No! This is the errant path of those who spiritualize and thus make of no effect the meaning of God's Word. Instead we do take them literally. Numbers ***do*** count.

In fact, God has even stretched out the time of fulfillment of His 70 weeks by placing an unrevealed period of time between the 69th and 70th week called the church age. So far the gap has lasted almost 2,000 years. This is why the New Testament sometimes refers to this age as the "last days" (Heb. 1:2). God is letting us know that once this age of grace ends at the rapture, then there are no more surprises. No more stretching out chronology relating to Israel's timetable. This is the last time period before Israel's final week of years comes to pass.

There are "times and seasons" relating to God's plan for Israel and the second coming. We know, for example, that there are at least seven years of time (the Tribulation) left for Israel. This is confirmed by the use of chronological indicators in Revelation such as 1260 days (11:3; 12:6), "a time and times and half a time" (*i.e.*, 3 1/2 years) (12:14), and (42 months (13:5). So once the seven year period starts, a believer will be able to chronicle many events scheduled to transpire during this time such as "the Abomination of Desolation" (Dan. 9:27;

Matt. 24:15) which is slated to occur at the mid-point or three and a half years through the seven year period. This is clearly a sign. Then a believer who survives the next three and a half years will know that Christ's second coming will then occur. So we see that clearly "times and seasons" are related to God's plan for Israel as a general principle. But what does the Bible say about God's plan for the church as it relates to "times and seasons"?

***No Signs for the Church***

When the disciples ask Jesus in Acts 1:6 *"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?,"* Christ had not yet revealed to them the mystery (*i.e.*, secret) about the intervening dispensation of grace called the church. Christ's response set the tone for chronological matters in relation to the whole church age. *"It is not for you to know times or epochs* [seasons] *which the Father has fixed by His own authority"* (Acts 1:7). Notice the "times and seasons" are set having been predestined by God, but for the church we are not to know them, they are a part of God's secret counsels. Why? I think because "times and seasons," chronology, and signs all relate to God's earthly people Israel. However, for God's heavenly people--the church--things related to heaven cannot be discovered or figured out, they must be revealed. "*The secret things belong to the* LORD *our God, but the things revealed belong to us* [Israel]" (Deut. 29:29). Further, Moses notes that in order to find out what is going on in heaven, we on earth, need someone from heaven to come down and tell us (Deut. 30:11-12). In other word, we need revelation from God as to what He is doing. What is God's revelation to His heavenly people (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:10; 3:10; 6:9; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:5; 3:1-4), the church?

Christ, upon instructing His disciples on how citizens of the kingdom should conduct themselves after His departure until His return, counseled a posture of "readiness," "alertness," "waiting and watching," faithfully engaged in performing the tasks He left His followers to do (Matt. 24:45-47; Luke 12:35-40; Mark 13:33-37). While it is true that these passages from the Gospels refer to the coming of the Messianic Kingdom at the second coming following the Tribulation, it appears that the posture of readiness, alertness, watching, and waiting is also Christ's will for His church as commanded in the Epistles. No where is there even a hint that signs will relate to the rapture.

## WATCHING AND WAITING IN THE EPISTLES

It is common for those who advocate and practice date-setting to attempt to justify their actions by quoting our Lord's statement to Abraham before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do"* (Gen. 18:17)? However, this does not apply to date-setting in relation to the rapture. First, this was a comment made to Abraham. It is not a timeless principle which means that God will always warn against judgment. God may always warn against judgment, but the rapture is not a time of judgment, the tribulation that follows is. There are plenty of warnings being issued by God's people during the tribulation. Second, we should not apply a passage relating to someone else to the church, especially when the church has received her own set of specific instructions on this matter as we are about to note.

The fact of the matter is that the rapture of the church is something that could happen at any-moment, without signs or warnings. Thus a church age believer should be constantly watching and waiting for our Lord. The posture of

watching and waiting for the Lord clearly implies that the rapture is what Bible teachers have called "imminent." Imminence means that Christ could come for His church at any-moment; that there are no signs relating to the rapture; that no prophecy has to be fulfilled before Christ could call us to meet Him in the air. Note some of the many passages in the Epistles that teach this truth:

***1 Corinthians 1:7***

Paul expresses delight, in this letter to the most carnal of churches, that they were *"awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."* We see from this that Christ's coming for His church is seen as imminent. If imminent, then date-setting is prohibited.

***Philippians 3:20***

Paul notes that the believer's *"citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."* This verse strongly emphasizes that our focus is upon waiting for Christ, which would exclude knowing the time of His arrival. For if the time of His coming could be known, then we would be waiting for a certain day or hour. Instead, eager waiting for a person implies that timing is not known.

***1 Thessalonians 1:10***

In writing to another Greek congregation Paul once again commends them for *"wait[ing] for His Son from heaven."* As noted in previous passages, this same posture of waiting would disallow date-setting.

***1 Thessalonians 5:1-11***

*"Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night."* In this passage Paul explicitly says that church age believers cannot know about the times and seasons. Why? Because the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly like a thief. True, it comes as a thief to unbelievers, but the reason why this passage says that believers should not be overtaken "like a thief" (5:4) is because believers are "sons of day" (5:5), and thus do "not sleep" but instead are "alert and sober" (5:6). This does not mean that we are prepared because we know the date of His return, instead we are not surprised because we are expecting the rapture.

***Titus 2:13***

God's grace teaches believers certain lessons, according to Paul's letter to Titus. Our first lesson is *"to deny ungodliness and worldly desires"* (2:12). The grace of God, says Paul, teaches believers to be *"looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus"* (2:13). Thus our Blessed Hope is the imminent return of Christ--the rapture. We are to look for Christ, not signs relating to His coming.

***Hebrews 9:28***

The mysterious writer of Hebrews echoes the chorus begun by Paul when he notes that the attitude of a believer is to be one *"who eagerly await[s]"* Christ's return.

***1 Peter 1:13***

Peter, one of Christ's disciples who were given the commands in the gospels to watch and wait admonishes believers to *"gird you minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* Our focus is on Christ and His coming, not circumstances which we may think indicates His return.

***Jude 21***

Once again believers are said to be *"waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Looking for the Savior not for signs.

## THE CHURCH IS A MYSTERY

Three time in his epistles Paul declares that God's plan for the church age was not revealed in the Old Testament. Therefore, things related to God's plan for the church could not have been revealed in the Old Testament. This would exclude the possibility of seeing the church fulfill prophetically any of Israel's feasts on the basis of these statements. Further, it would exclude any rapture date-setting schemes which are built upon revelation given for God's plan for Israel. Read carefully the following verses.

***Romans 16:25-26***

*"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith."*

***Ephesians 3:4-8***

*"And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ."*

***Colossians 1:25-27***

*"Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

## THE RAPTURE AND THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS?

Dorothy Miller's book *Forbidden Knowledge: Or Is It . . .* (Joy Publishing; 1991) makes a case that the "last trumpet blast of this Rosh HaShanah [Feast of

Trumpets] gathering beautifully describes the focal point of Christian hope, the Rapture" (90). In my discussion with Dorothy on the phone concerning her views she has proven to be a delightful, gracious, and humble Christian lady. She is open to dialogue on this matter and while she strongly favors this view she is not overly dogmatic about this issue as was Whisenant. In short, I like Dorothy and even though I disagree with her on this matter we share much in common in the area of prophecy and I hope she considers me a friend as I do her. I must admit that I have found it interesting that America's most famous date-setter, William Miller, and now a current date-setter, Dorothy Miller, have the same last name. I don't think it means anything in particular, it is simply something they have in common in addition to their attempts at date-setting.

Miller's approach is dependent upon the notion that the annual feasts of Israel have typical significance. I, as do most evangelicals, have no objection to this view. We all agree that the first four feasts (the Spring cycle) were fulfilled at the time of Christ's first coming, and that the final three feasts (the Fall cycle) will be fulfilled in relation to His second coming. The difference between myself and Miller is whether or not the church fulfills some of Israel's feasts, or, as I contend, only Israel fulfills all seven feasts. Ponder the chart, "Miller's Feast Summary," representing Miller's understanding of the feasts and their fulfillment.

"When one looks at the verses that describe the Rapture," says Miller, "there is a fascinating similarity to the Feast of Trumpets" (85). She rightly notes that 1 Thessalonians 4:16 teaches that "Jesus will come for the believers *'with the trump of God'*" (85). She combines Thessalonians with the fact that 1 Corinthians 15:52 further describes the rapture being signaled by the phrase "at the last trump." She demonstrates that there is a basis within Jewish tradition (not Biblical tradition) that the right horn of the ram sacrificed in place of Isaac was called "the last trump." Since a ram's horn or shofar is blown on the Feast of Trumpets, then it is deduced that "the last trump" in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is synonymous with the Feast of Trumpets. Miller explains,

> Since the Rapture is a gathering of believers and since the trumpet in the Old Testament was used primarily for gathering the people, let's consider the possibility that Rosh HaShanah [Feast of Trumpets] may actually be the **day of the year** that the Rapture occurs. (86)

While Miller only suggests "the day of the year that the Rapture occurs" in *Forbidden Knowledge*, she does go on in a subsequent book, *Watch & Be Ready! 1992 Millions Disappear?* (Prophetic Research Association; 1992), to say that "Believers may hear that trumpet call on September 28, 1992" (85). September 28th is the day scheduled for the Feast of Trumpets in 1992. This, in brief, is an example of a contemporary attempt to set a date for the rapture.

In a recent phone conversation with another date-setter, he expressed disappointment over the fact that a number of well-known prophecy teachers had shown little interest in his schemes. He was disappointed that he was not receiving a hearing from them since he had put a lot of thought into his approach and he thought his math was correct. I tried to tell him that it was legitimate to reject someone's view without getting extensively involved in the details since the Bible prohibits date-setting of any kind. Thus, it is not a matter of pouring

over the latest scheme, as if we are missing a piece here or a detail there, looking for a break that will cause everything to fit together into the precise date for the rapture. Nor is it an issue as to how accurate the math in a given scheme is or isn't. Usually the calculations in most date-setting schemes are the most accurate part of their presentations. The real problem is with the basic belief that the Bible allows such attempts. Since the Bible does not give any basis from which to set dates, any attempt is wrong regardless of how consistent it is with the presuppositions assumed. Now I will examine further the viability of the Feast of Trumpets thesis.

## ISRAEL'S FEASTS AND THE CHURCH

It must be admitted that most dispensational premillennialists have tended to see at least one of the Israel's feasts fulfilled by the church. The feast of Pentecost is usually seen as fulfilled by the church at her birthday in Acts 2 by many dispensationalists. This creates a problem since it is inconsistent with maintaining a *consistent* distinction between God's plan for Israel and His plan for the church. This errant notion that the church fulfills the Feast of Pentecost gives ground and a basis to Miller's perspective that the church also fulfills the Feast of Trumpets in the rapture. If this were true, then it would also follow that the rapture would have to occur on the day in which that feast is celebrated. However, I do not think that the church fulfills *any* of Israel's feasts. Israel's feasts have been and will continue to be fulfilled in relation to Israel.

Terry C. Hulbert wrote a doctoral dissertation in 1965 at Dallas Theological Seminary entitled "The Eschatological Significance of Israel's Annual Feasts." Hulbert declares,

> The seven appointed times were given as a typical presentation of the commitments made to Israel in the Abrahamic Covenant and those which amplified it. As these can be fulfilled only by Israel, so the typology of the feasts can relate only to that nation. (2)

This does not mean that the church is not built upon the sacrificial work of Christ on the cross. This is certainly the basis for forgiveness of sin in any dispensation. However, it is to say that the seven feasts of Israel do serve as a specific typological prophecy picturing God's plan of redemption for His people Israel. It is important to note what Hulbert has said about the fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost. His views are illustrated in the chart "Israel's Feast Summary," which I think best expresses the Biblical intent that all seven feasts are to be seen as a fulfillment for Israel and not the church.

> The fourth feast did not foreshadow a church composed of sin-prone Jewish and Gentile believers pictured by two loaves of unleavened bread. This point is important, for if the church had fulfilled this feast, it could also fulfill the last three as the Amillennarian claims. However, the church is not revealed in the typology of any of the feasts, being related to them in the same way it is related to unconditional covenants made to Israel. It benefits from God's fulfillments to that nation, but is distinct from it. (1)

If we are going to consistently apply the Grammatical-Historical method of interpretation, commonly known as the normal or literal hermeneutic, then we cannot see *any* of Israel's feasts being fulfilled by God's program for the church. Why? Because these feasts are given in Leviticus 23 to Israel as part of her law. The church has been given the Lord's Table as the feast we are to celebrate *"from now on* ***until*** *the kingdom of God comes"* (Luke 22:18). If we see any of the feasts being fulfilled by the church then we are practicing the same kind of "replacement theology" which many practice, but to a greater extreme, who see the church replacing Israel in God's plan. Nowhere does the New Testament speak of the church fulfilling any of Israel's feasts. Therefore, since Israel's feasts are fulfilled only by Israel and not by the church, then Rosh HaShanah or the Feast of Trumpets *cannot* be a prediction of the rapture of the church. Israel's fifth feast does not give any insight into the day of the year on which the rapture will occur.

Hulbert's summary of the purpose for the fulfillment of Israel's feast makes the best sense within the framework of a *consistent* literal hermeneutic.

> When God fulfilled the first four feasts He had provided everything necessary for Israel to enter into literal kingdom blessing--redemption, separation, resurrection, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Israel's rejection of these, however, made necessary a national change of heart before the Kingdom could be established. Foreknowing this, God included the Feasts of Trumpets and Day of Atonement in the annual cycle. Thus, the Feast of Trumpets predicted God's alerting of the nation for the impending event which would bring about repentance. The Feast of the Day of Atonement predicted, not the death of Christ which had already been typified in the Passover, but the new reaction of Israel to the Redeemer's death. This change will take place when the believing Remnant repents during the Tribulation period. The event which fulfills this sixth feast is identified as God's intervention to save Israel from destruction as Gentile armies attack Jerusalem. (2-3)
>
> Israel as a nation officially rejected in turn each spiritual provision offered by God and made available through the fulfillment of the first four feasts. The paschal lamb of God pointed out by John the Baptist was rejected as an imposter. The resurrection of Christ, as it answered to the Feast of Firstfruits, was suppressed in its proclamation by the bribe money paid to the sentries, . . . Finally, the coming of the Spirit was rejected at Pentecost as the Jews taunted the apostles with charges of drunkenness.
>
> By the time of the close of Acts chapter 2, God had done all He could do for Israel until they repented as a nation. Thus, the significance of Peter's second sermon in Acts 3 was that it reemphasized the condition of millennial blessing already laid down in the Old Testament, but as yet unfulfilled. . . .
>
> Of the utmost importance here is the fact that with the shedding of the blood of Christ to take away sin, and with the coming of the Spirit to empower the life of the redeemed, all of the spiritual requirements for the millennial Kingdom had been met as far as God was concerned. But God's provision could not be operative until man appropriated it. This point

cannot be overemphasized, for it is not only the reason for the delay in the fulfillment of the final three feasts, it is the basis for understanding the relationship of the church to the feasts.
(115-6)

## A PRACTICAL OBSERVATION

Even if the rapture could be dated in a fashion suggested by Dorothy Miller and others, they are so unsure of their speculations that it does not produce any real difference in the lives of those who may be inclined to follow their views. What I mean is that if I really *knew* that the rapture was to occur on a certain day, then I would clearly live my life differently. If I *knew* He was coming one year from now, I would cancel my insurance, not worry about long-term debt, and live my life differently. However, since even those who offer these speculations do not really take them serious enough to actually change their lifestyles, because they are not really sure that they are right, then what practical difference does it make if they are right or wrong in their guesses? They, like other believers who have the same Blessed Hope of the any-moment rapture continue to live their lives in the hope that today *may* be the day.

In addition, even if they were able to come up with the right date for the rapture and they were convinced themselves, how many people would they be able to persuade that they had hit on the correct time, such that it made any kind of a difference. So what if a few thousand believers knew the day of the rapture? Unless it was something that the entire church throughout the whole world had access to then it would not have any kind of impact upon the church and would serve to be nothing more than useless information for the overwhelming majority of the world's believers.

Finally, the actions taken by even those who date-set is not any different than those who believe that all church age believers are to maintain a lifestyle of watching and waiting for the any-moment return of Christ. This illustrates, in the practical realm, that Christ and the Apostle's general commands to soberly watch and wait for our Lord's return serve the church well to prepare her for the time in which our Lord will actually rapture His bride.

## CONCLUSION

This current rash of date-setting most likely will have a negative impact upon many people's interest and their perception of the study of Bible prophecy. Critics of the rapture and prophecy will use these abuses to justify to many their opposition to our beliefs. Sadly others who might have otherwise been interested in learning more about the subject may be frightened away by these extreme applications.

Perhaps the thing that bothers me the most about this whole issue is the apparent lack of understanding by the date-setters, who are advocates of the Pretrib rapture, that their very date-setting schemes are inconsistent with the New Testament teaching of the any-moment rapture. They do not seem to realize that by introducing into our futuristic approach to prophecy ideas and conclusions that flow from the logic of the long discredited historicist hermeneutic they are changing and misrepresenting the very character of rapture theology. Dear rapture friends, please wake up and realize the unintended harm you are doing to the overall teaching on our Blessed Hope--the rapture!

In spite of many recent trends to the contrary, date-setting is still prohibited in the Scriptures. Christ said, *"of that day and hour no one knows"* (Matt. 24:36). We may believe that we are near the general time of Christ's return since Israel is back in her land and other players are being placed on the end-time stage. However, Christ's rapture of His church is a signless event that could happen at any-moment. When it does then God will complete His plan for Israel as forecasted in the three Fall Feasts of Israel. Meanwhile, the Feast of Trumpets does not in any way relate to the rapture of the church.

Our calling as church age believers is faithful watching and eagerly waiting for our Beloved Bridegroom to catch us up into the clouds and take us to His Father's house. What a glad reunion with our Savior we will have. The party which will follow will not be bad either. I don't know about you, but I can't wait to see Jesus. This is why I am eagerly awaiting His any-moment return, as the Scriptures teach. Maranatha!