



Let No One Alarm You About Desolations Matthew 24:15-22

Have you ever heard of the booklet referred to, “88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will be in 1988” by Edgar C. Whisenant?

What did you think of the following historical note? Is this something new to you?

“Prior to 1831, no one believed in a rapture separate from Jesus’ Second Coming! Prior to that, all the great minds of the church- Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine of Hippo, Aquinas, Luther believed in one future coming of Christ, not two!”

What did you think of Whisenant's bold claim, "Only if the Bible is in error, am I wrong; and I say that to every preacher in town."

Verse 15

There are solid biblical reasons for grounding this in the 1st century AD:

- 1) There is the personal connection to the disciples ("you" and "your").
- 2) There is the parenthetical connection of "let the reader understand."
- 3) There is the historical connection to the book of Daniel.
 - Daniel's abomination of desolation occurred in 167 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes IV built an altar to Zeus and offered swine on the altar (1 Maccabees 1:54).
 - Similarly, the Romans brought their idols into the temple and sacrificed to them (Josephus, *War*, 6.316).
 - Notes the Roman historian Tacitus, "The temple was filled with abominations. The very altar was laden with dead bodies, and

the sanctuary defiled in the same manner”
(*Histories* 5.12-13).

Remember: To force the meaning of this text to what will happen in **our** future is to turn a questionable possibility into a dogmatic certainty!

Verses 16-20

These verses emphasize the horrors that lie ahead of first-century Jesus followers and fit hand-in-glove with historical events of the Jewish War:

16: Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3) notes how Christians fled the city at Christ’s command and escaped slaughter.

17-18: Urgency was commanded, as factions of Jews killed other Jews indiscriminately to gain control of the city (Josephus, *War*, 6.288-315).

19: Josephus graphically describes infants still clinging to their mother’s breasts after women were slaughtered (*War*, 5.447-461).

20: Flight during winter or Sabbath would be harder. Tacitus notes, “The temple itself was besieged... filled with abominations... laden

with dead bodies, and the sanctuary defiled in the same manner (*Histories* 5.12-13).

Remember: Events that have historical fulfillment can still have ongoing theological application. While these events in Matthew 24 have been historically fulfilled, urgency in the church in the face of persecution is needed all over the globe!

To be continued...

Historically, followers of Jesus were saved during the slaughter of the Jewish War because they obeyed Jesus! The Scriptures are given for our protection and provision for all of life! We can trust in Jesus and be “saved,” both from the pitfalls of this life that sin brings and for eternity! Jesus is coming again! May He find us “doers” of the Word (James 1)!