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Why do futurists not understand scripture?



By Dan Maines

Why do futurists not understand scripture?

Scripture is clear, consistent, and rooted in God's covenant faithfulness. Yet futurists often miss the plain meaning. They do so not because the text is unclear, but because traditions and presuppositions blind them. From the fulfilled perspective, we can show exactly why they struggle.

Time statements are ignored

Matthew 24:34 - Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† Jesus tied His words to the generation that stood before Him. Futurists refuse to accept this and stretch "generation" into thousands of years, making Christ's words void. Yet every New Testament time statement presses urgency, "the time is near" (Revelation 1:3), "in a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay" (Hebrews 10:37). Futurism must either redefine words or deny Scripture's plain testimony.

Audience relevance is overlooked

Luke 21:20 - But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

† The disciples were told what they would see. It happened in AD 70 when Titus and the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem. Futurists act as if Jesus was speaking to us today, skipping over His own audience. Yet the Bible was written to them, for us. If we erase audience relevance, we cut the Bible loose from history and let it float into endless speculation.

Apocalyptic language is misread

Matthew 24:29 - But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.

† This is prophetic judgment language, drawn from Isaiah 13:10, which spoke of Babylon's fall in 539 BC. No one in Babylon saw stars literally fall. Futurists read cosmic signs as literal astronomy, when Scripture consistently uses them to describe God's judgment on nations. By misreading genre, they misapply prophecy.

The finished work of Christ is denied in practice

Luke 21:22 - These are the days of vengeance, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.

† Christ declared the cross finished His work (John 19:30). AD 70 brought the covenantal judgment that fulfilled the prophets. Futurism leaves believers waiting for "completion," keeping them bound to fear and uncertainty. But the gospel proclaims

that redemption is accomplished, and the kingdom is present.

Revelation is treated like a newspaper

Revelation 1:1 - The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place.

Revelation 1:4,11 - John to the seven churches that are in Asia.
† The book was a letter to real churches, about things "soon" to happen. Futurists rip it out of its context, using it as a lens for modern politics, wars, and headlines. But John wasn't writing to us about our time. He was warning first-century believers of the trials about to fall upon them.

Tradition outweighs scripture

† The reason futurists can't see is simple, tradition has hardened them. They read Scripture through creeds, prophecy charts, and popular preachers instead of letting Scripture interpret Scripture. The Pharisees missed Christ because of tradition. Today, futurists miss the fulfillment of His promises for the same reason.

Daniel 12 is misapplied

Daniel 12:1-2 - Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time, and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

† Futurists claim Daniel 12 speaks of a distant resurrection, but Jesus directly tied this "time of distress" to the tribulation of the first century (Matthew 24:21). The "rescue" of Daniel matches the salvation of the remnant, while the judgment fell on apostate Israel.

2 Peter 3 is misunderstood

2 Peter 3:10 - But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

† Futurists insist this must mean the end of the physical universe. Yet Peter was speaking of the "elements" (stoicheia) of the Old Covenant system. The passing of the heavens and earth was covenantal, not cosmic. The "new heavens and new earth" of verse 13 echo Isaiah 65:17, where Jerusalem's restoration was in view.

1 Thessalonians 4 is read as a rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 - For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who remain, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

† Futurists read this as a secret rapture. But Paul was using covenantal imagery, just as God "came in the clouds" in judgment in the Old Testament (Isaiah 19:1). The living and the dead being gathered is the picture of covenant renewal, not an escape from earth. Paul was comforting the Thessalonians that their dead loved ones would share equally in Christ's victory.

Writers supporting fulfillment

† Clement of Rome (c. AD 96) wrote shortly after Jerusalem's destruction, pointing to fulfilled judgment and urging believers to remain steadfast. He never pointed to a distant, future apocalypse but saw God's promises already working in their midst.

Clement, 1 Clement 41:1 - Let us therefore approach Him in holiness of soul, lifting up pure and undefiled hands to Him, with love towards our gentle and compassionate Father who made us His chosen portion. For thus it is written... Behold, the Lord

takes for Himself a nation out of the midst of the nations... and from that nation shall come forth the Holy of Holies.

† The Epistle of Barnabas (late first century) interpreted the temple's destruction as a sign of God's covenant shift, echoing Jesus' words that old things had passed and the new had come. This confirms the audience relevance of the first century. Barnabas 16:3-4 - Furthermore He says again, Behold, they who pulled down this temple shall themselves build it. It's happening now. For because their war it was destroyed by their enemies, and now they themselves will rebuild it.

† Eusebius (early 4th century) returned to the truth by recording how Jerusalem's fall matched Christ's prophecies exactly, showing God's faithfulness in real history, not in speculative futurism.

Ecclesiastical History 3.5 - But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, to leave the city and dwell in Pella, then the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and His apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.

Writers drifting into futurism

† Justin Martyr (mid-2nd century) began introducing more futuristic expectations, especially about a literal kingdom on earth. Here we see the drift from the apostles' fulfilled focus into speculation that laid the groundwork for futurism.

Dialogue with Trypho 80 - But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there'll be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged.

† Irenaeus (late 2nd century) expanded that speculation, expecting a future antichrist and kingdom. This shows that futurism wasn't apostolic teaching but a later development.

Against Heresies 5.30.3 - But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he'll reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem, and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire.

How it applies to us today

† Understanding Scripture in its fulfilled context frees us from fear and false hopes. We no longer wait for endless wars, antichrists, or cosmic collapses. Instead, we live in the New Covenant, where Christ reigns, His promises are fulfilled, and His kingdom has no end. Our call isn't to chase signs, but to proclaim the victory of the cross and the reality of His presence.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Matthew 24:34; Revelation 1:1-4,11; Hebrews 10:37; Luke 21:20,22; Isaiah 13:10; John 19:30; Daniel 12:1-2; 2 Peter 3:10-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Isaiah 19:1; Isaiah 65:17
† Josephus, Wars of the Jews 6.4-6
† Tacitus, Histories 5.13
† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5
† Clement of Rome, 1 Clement 41:1
† Epistle of Barnabas 16:3-4
† Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 80
† Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5.30.3

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