

Book Review

Prophecy Watch, by Timothy Demy and Thomas Ice (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1998). 379 pages. Paperback. \$9.99. Reviewed by Dr. Curtis Mitchell, Professor of Biblical Studies at Chafer Theological Seminary.

In a skillful manner, the authors use the “Socratic method” of teaching. Throughout the book, they ask key questions and deliver more than adequate answers.

The book contains twenty-five chapters divided into five parts: Signs of the Times (pp. 7–76); The Rapture (pp. 77–118); The Tribulation and the Antichrist (pp. 119–180); Armageddon and The Middle East (181–220); and The Millennium (pp. 221–265).

The book is full of excellent illustrations that make the volume easy to understand. They liberally sprinkle the pages with helpful charts and graphs and write in readable language.

Among other issues, the volume discusses at some length an idea referred to as “The Septa-Millennial Theory.” Before reviewing this book, I had not encountered this theory. After reading the eight pages twice, I cannot determine the author’s position. Be that as it may, if the theory requires that one accept 4000 BC as the beginning of God’s creative efforts, I have problems with the theory.

The rest of this review considers positive and negative features. The division labeled “Sign of the Times” sets forth a sane discussion of the issue. They list such things as the return of Jewish people to Palestine since World War II and Israel becoming a sovereign nation in 1948. The book contains an excellent listing of New Testament words setting forth the Rapture (pp. 78–79). In addition, this volume contains a great series of charts that clarify the various theories with reference to the time of the rapture (pp. 80–81). The book contains a tremendous discussion of the Preterist, Historicist, and Futurist views of the book of Revelation (pp. 92ff). The book also contains a nice graph contrasting the Rapture and Christ’s Second Coming to set up His kingdom (pp. 101–102).

Demy and Ice set forth a brief but adequate history of Dispensationalism, but for some reason they fail to mention the significant sermon of

Pseudo-Ephraem. By including this sermon, the history of Dispensationalism is pushed back over 1000 years. I know that Dr. Thomas Ice is aware of the contribution of Pseudo-Ephraem. I am at a loss to explain the omission. The book also contains an excellent repudiation of the attempt some make to connect Israel's feast cycle to the rapture and Christ's Second Coming.

The writers strongly advocate imminence as illustrated by their statement on page 42, "All attempts at date-setting destroy ... imminence." Yet, these same men approvingly cite Dr. Fruchtenbaum's attempt to fit the seven churches mentioned in Revelation chapters two and three into a series of steps the churches must pass through. Even if Dr. Fruchtenbaum's dates are only approximations, he clearly sets forth stages through which the church *must* pass (p. 47). It appears that the authors attempt to claim imminence and yet embrace a sequence of events for the church age. They cannot have it both ways.

I appreciated Dr. Fruchtenbaum's discussion of the two gatherings of the Jews into the promised land; it is quite helpful. First, the Jewish people will be gathered in unbelief and following that ingathering, they will subsequently be gathered in belief.

This book also contains a brief discussion of the Greek words used to describe the Rapture phenomenon (p. 79). There is a marvelous discussion of literal interpretation wherein they show conclusively that the pretribulational rapture is based on the principle of literal interpretation (pp. 84–88). The authors convincingly set forth reasons why the Church and Israel are distinct. They show effectively that while the New Testament Church is a "mystery," the Old Testament clearly predicts the second coming of Christ to set up His Kingdom. They set forth a thirteen-point chart wherein the Rapture and Second Coming are vividly contrasted (pp. 101–102). They show the folly of attempting to lump the Rapture and the Second Coming into a single event — an interval between the two is necessary (pp. 103–105). Among many items that *must* take place, the authors point out that such events as the judgment seat of Christ require some time to elapse (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). Hence, a certain period must elapse between the Rapture and the Second Coming.

Despite some inconsistency on the matter of imminency, the authors cite approvingly a classic statement by Dr. Renald Showers: "Other things *may* happen, but nothing *must* happen (p. 105). The authors are

non-committal concerning any lapse of time between the Rapture and the Tribulation, yet they adamantly oppose setting dates for the Rapture.

The segment titled, “Are there other arguments for pretribulationism” (pp. 112–113) does not strengthen the book. Most of these arguments require an exegetical stretch. The authors are to be commended for their insight into both Old Testament and New Testament passages dealing with the Tribulation (pp. 121–130). The writers are also to be commended for distinguishing between the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation. They conclude the segment with the following summary, “Regardless of the view taken, both have a seven-year Tribulation with two parts, and both recognize an increase in intensity during the last three-and-a-half years” (pp. 128–129).

The authors give an excellent discussion of the Holy Spirit’s role in relation to the Tribulation (pp. 135–138). They present an exhaustive listing of the eleven names and titles by which the Bible reveals the Antichrist (pp. 140–142). Citing Dr. Pentecost, they present a valuable summation of the person and activities of the false prophet (pp. 145–146).

I must take exception to the concept of a Gentile Antichrist. Clearly in Daniel 11:40 we are in the “End Time.” While Daniel 11:1–35 may denote Antiochus Epiphanes, this clearly is not true of Daniel 11:36–45. In fact the authors list Daniel 11:36 as one of the titles of the Antichrist (p. 142). They give him the title of “the strong-willed King.” So even the authors recognize that Daniel 11:36–45 does *not* refer to Antiochus Epiphanes but rather to the Antichrist. Therefore, I cannot agree with their statement on page 148, “Most commentators agree that Daniel 11 speaks of Antiochus Epiphanes.” This is true of Daniel 11:1–35, but is not true of Daniel 11:36–45. The authors continue their insistence on a Gentile Antichrist by pointing out the fact that Antiochus Epiphanes was a Gentile (p. 148). This is like saying the present Pope is Polish hence all future popes will be Polish. Their strongest argument seems to rest on a mistranslation of the NASB rendering Daniel 11:36 “the gods of his fathers” instead of the KJV rendering “The GOD of his fathers.” This is a rather common phrase used along with “God of our fathers,” or “God of their fathers,” hundreds of times in the Old Testament. It always refers to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I still hear the words of the professor who taught me Hebrew, Dr. Charles Feinberg: “Gentlemen, the Jewish people will never accept a Gentile messiah.”

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The authors bring to light three purposes for the Tribulation: (1) To make an end of wickedness and wicked ones; (2) To bring about a worldwide revival; and (3) To break the power and will of the stubborn Jewish Nation and thus bring about a national regeneration (pp. 158–159). They also present an effective chart concerning the battle of Armageddon wherein they set forth the eight stages of the battle. It was refreshing to find that they recognize that no fighting takes place on the site of Megiddo. Their contention is that the battle of Armageddon is actually at Jerusalem (p. 184). A thorough discussion of the battle and/or campaign of Armageddon follows the chart (pp. 184–219). This is the finest, most detailed, description of Armageddon that I have encountered.

Though not agreeing with the authors on some points, I highly recommend this book. It contains many things that were new to me and it will make a valuable contribution to any student of prophecy.

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