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Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of Exile

: Restoration Eschatology and the

Origin of the Atonement.

Brant Pitre

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic: 2005. 0801031621.

Chapter One: Introduction

Pitre begins his work with his thesis statement (1.1), which sets forth his two primary objectives of the study: to “attempt to trace the development and shape of the concept of eschatological tribulation in *late Second Temple Judaism*” (2, emphasis in original); and “to determine whether *the historical Jesus ever spoke or acted on the basis of his own expectation of a period of eschatological tribulation*” (3, emphasis in original). He posits at the outset that the evidence he surveys will show that Jesus did in fact speak and act in a manner consistent with Jewish expectation of the eschatological tribulation as demonstrated through an examination of late Second Temple Judaism. This specific belief and hope is demonstrably tied to the Jewish conviction of the ingathering of the twelve tribes from among the nations (4).

At this point (1.2), Pitre provides a brief sketch of the notion of tribulation within Jewish literature as a way of defining the boundaries of his investigation within scholarship. He then goes on to survey modern historical Jesus research, building upon key scholars in the field, beginning with A. Schweitzer. The author writes well to show a thorough understanding and investigation of each scholar’s various conclusions, while maintaining the necessary brevity of an introductory survey. Of modern historical Jesus researchers Pitre is most interactive with N. T. Wright (2.8), who has been influential in (re-) establishing the role of the exile in the Second Temple period and in the background for Jesus’ own messianic expectations. Pitre will return to Wright in an excursus below.

The third section of the Introduction has to do with the methodology which will guide the thesis (1.3). At the outset the author states,

“This study will use traditional methods of historical-criticism, such as exegesis in light of the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish literature, the use of insights from the

1-1000

070: [Clement: First Epistle of Clement](#)

075: [Baruch: Apocalypse Of Baruch](#)

075: [Barnabus: Epistle of Barnabus](#)

090: [Esdras 2 / 4 Ezra](#)

100: [Odes of Solomon](#)

150: [Justin: Dialogue with Trypho](#)

150: [Melito: Homily of the Pascha](#)

175: [Irenaeus: Against Heresies](#)

175: [Clement of Alexandria: Stromata](#)

198: [Tertullian: Answer to the Jews](#)

230: [Origen: The Principles | Commentary on Matthew | Commentary on John | Against Celsus](#)

248: [Cyprian: Against the Jews](#)

260: [Victorinus: Commentary on the Apocalypse "Alcasar"](#), a Spanish Jesuit, taking a hint from [Victorinus](#), seems to have been the first (AD 1614) to have suggested that the Apocalyptic prophecies did not extend further than to the overthrow of Paganism by [Constantine](#)."

310: [Peter of Alexandria](#)

310: [Eusebius: Divine Manifestation of our Lord](#)

312: [Eusebius: Proof of the Gospel](#)

319: [Athanasius: On the Incarnation](#)

320: [Eusebius: History of the Martyrs](#)

325: [Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History](#)

345: [Aphrahat: Demonstrations](#)

367: [Athanasius: The Festal Letters](#)

literary methods of form, source, and redaction criticism, and close examination of how each Jesus tradition fares under the standard criteria of historicity. In particular, each Jesus tradition will be subjected to rigorous exegesis before any arguments are made regarding its historicity, meaning, and significance for the message and ministry of the historical Jesus" (23).

Following this statement of procedure, Pitre then outlines the various sources from antiquity with which he will interact (3.1), his use of the Old Testament (3.2), and his criteria of authenticity regarding matters surrounding the historical Jesus (3.3).

Finally, Pitre returns to the work of N. T. Wright in an excursus to discuss his nuanced view of the end of exile within Jewish messianic expectation during the Second Temple period (3.5). Straightforwardly he asserts, "Unfortunately, what Wright means by 'the end of exile' is inherently flawed" (32). Pitre's point is simply that while Wright is correct in bringing forward the end of exile motif as a vital aspect of Jewish hope and messianic expectation, he is also "fundamentally wrong in his understanding of [the exile]" (32).

The fundamental points of Wright's argument (along with Pitre's challenges) are given as: 1) claiming that the Babylonian exile had not yet ended, 2) a re-defining of *exile* to no longer refer to geographic expulsion, and 3) Wright equates the Jews of the Second Temple period with all Israel. In contrast with this perspective, Pitre contends that geographic expulsion is still in view, which means that the greater portion of Israel was still in exile during this period (34) and that the scattering of Jews among the nations still await the fulfillment of the end of exile (35). Pitre concludes, "while *no* first-century Jew living in the land would have considered themselves to still be in exile, *every* first-century Jew would have known that the ten tribes of the northern kingdom were still in exile" (38, emphasis in original). Thus, the primary hope and messianic expectation among Second Temple Judaism was the final ingathering of all twelve tribes of Israel from among the nations (40).

Chapter Two: The Messianic Tribulation and the End of the Exile in Late Second Temple Judaism

This chapter surveys a number of texts from late Second Temple Judaism to uncover data and discover perspectives on 1) how the eschatological tribulation is depicted, 2) the precise literary context of the texts, 3) how *messianic* plays a particular role in the eschatological viewpoints, 4) what scriptural basis is provided for such expectation, and 5) what connection exists between the eschatological tribulation and the restoration of Israel as the end of exile (42-43). Rather than summarize Pitre's summaries or make an attempt to survey each of his interactions, I will simply point out certain sections of his overview which hold particular interest to my own range of study and interest.



The first work which is engaged is *The Apocalypse of Weeks* (1 Enoch 93:1-10; 91:11-17) (2.2), which emphasizes a period of tribulation which is to precede the era of salvation (44). More specifically, this era is one which will be characterized by Israel's apostasy and the widespread deceit and violence. Pitre sees four particular points emerge: 1) it appears that the primary function of this tribulation is to inaugurate the final judgment, 2) there is no direct reference to a messianic figure in the text (the only "king" is God himself), 3) history seems

to move on the typical apocalyptic understanding of predetermined patterns, and 4) the eschatological tribulation seems to be directly connected to the exile and the restoration of all Israel (45-46). From this the author sees the tribulation as "the climax of Israel's exilic sufferings" (47).

Third on Pitre's survey is The Book of Daniel (2.4), which focuses on "the latter period of the wrath" and the "time of tribulation" (52). Daniel's famous vision of the four beasts and the judgment scene before the "one like a son of man" and the Ancient of Days introduces a messianic element to eschatological expectation. Pitre's exegesis of these events shows unparalleled and worldwide tribulation with the rise of an eschatological tyrant, and a period of war, lawlessness and persecution of the saints (53). The eschatological framework is found in that it will precede a time of judgment to establish an "everlasting kingdom" ([Daniel 7:18, 26-27](#)). The emphasis given in Daniel on the period of tribulation is seen as "the eschatological climax of Israel's continuing exile" (59). Thus, it is the expectation of the messianic figure, whose death atones for the sins of Israel will also lead them out of exile (61).

The Psalms of Solomon (2.8) appear seventh in Pitre's survey, of which he states, "There is absolutely no question that the tribulation described in the Psalms of Solomon is messianic" (79). There are two initial descriptions given of the messianic tribulation (both which appear to refer to the same set of events): it is a time of divine judgment upon an apostate Israel and defiled temple cult as well as a period of suffering (80).

370: [Hegesippus: The Ruin of Jerusalem](#)

386: [Chrysostom: Matthew and Mark](#)

387: [Chrysostom: Against the Jews](#)

408: [Jerome: Commentary on Daniel](#)

417: [Augustine: On Pelagius](#)

426: [Augustine: The City of God](#)

428: [Augustine: Harmony](#)

420: [Cassian: Conferences](#)

600: [Veronica Legend](#)

800: [Aquinas: Eternity of the World](#)

1000-2006

[FUTURIST](#)
[HISTORICAL](#)
[MODERN](#)

1265: [Aquinas: Catena Aurea](#)

1543: [Luther: On the Jews](#)

1555: [Calvin: Harmony on Evangelists](#)

1556: [Jewel: Scripture](#)

1586: [Douay-Rheims Bible](#)

1598: [Jerusalem's Misery : The dolefull destruction of faire Ierusalem by Tytus, the Sonne of Vaspasian](#)

1603: [Nero : A New Tragedy](#)

1613: [Carey: The Fair Queen of Jewry](#)

1614: [Alcasar: Vestigatio arcani sensus in Apocalypsi](#)

1654: [Ussher: The Annals of the World](#)

1658: [Lightfoot: Commentary from Hebraica](#)

1677: [Crowne - The Destruction of Jerusalem](#)

1764: [Lardner: Fulfillment of our Saviour's Predictions](#)

1776: [Edwards: History of Redemption](#)

1785: [Churton: Prophecies Respecting the Destruction of Jerusalem](#)

1801: [Porteus: Our Lord's Prophecies](#)

1802: [Nisbett: The Coming of the Messiah](#)

This period of suffering is twofold in its effect, serving as both a time of testing for the righteous and a purgation for the sinful. From this is gathered the perspective that both righteous and sinful will experience the great tribulation. It is interesting to note, then, that one of the principle tasks of the Messiah is "to gather the dispersed people of Israel, at least some of whom were 'scattered over the whole earth' in the eschatological tribulation itself" (83, emphasis in original). Such expectation demonstrates the hope of Israel in an increasingly lawless and defiled system, disfigured by their apostasy.

A brief note of interest regarding *The Testament of Moses* (2.9) is that "the suffering of a righteous remnant within an apostate Israel during the tribulation somehow *inaugurates* the coming of the [*sic*] God's kingdom" (89, emphasis in original).

Interesting points in *4QPsalms Peshar* (4Q171) (2.11) are found in the scroll's emphasis on the return from exile and the restoration of the community. In the coming period of affliction, the righteous will take the suffering upon themselves. Somehow the righteous will be delivered from the suffering, demonstrating some sort of atoning or redemptive significance (97). Pitre points out that "the vocabulary of this redemptive act is couched in terms of a return from exile" (97). Thus, there is a necessary trial for the righteous which is has a purging function emerging from the tribulation (98). "In other words, the persecuted righteous will atone for sin and thereby be restored to the land precisely by *suffering the eschatological tribulation*" (99, emphasis in original).

Also of interest is *1QWar Scroll* (1QM) (2.15), which speaks of "the day of calamity" and the "time of distress" which Pitre interprets as consistent with his ongoing investigation and working definition of the eschatological tribulation. The tribulation is also designated as "the trial of God," which further emphasizes its function as testing and purging the true people of God (113). The eschatological battle which is described in this document makes a strong connection between the eschatological tribulation and the end of exile (115). It is the tribulation which would bring about the return of the twelve tribes of Israel from exile, as well as see the defeat of the sons of darkness and the restoration of Jerusalem (116). The pattern of suffering and tribulation as preceding restoration remains.

Although Pitre surveys 17 various documents and fragments from late Second Temple Judaism, only a few points have been listed here. His findings are well presented and there appears to be a consistency which allows him to make solid summaries and conclusions. His final subsection (2.18) brings together several of his key points. He begins with the assertion, "Before the destruction of the Second Temple, there was clearly a widespread expectation that a time of suffering and catastrophe would in some way be related to the advent of the eschatological deliverer of the last days" (127). Thus, suffering and catastrophe have a place in the advent of the last days of Israel's exile, just prior to the end of exile. Second, he maintains that the expectation of messianic tribulation can be found in a diverse range of various genres of Jewish literature from the period (127-128). This demonstrates the wide-spread belief of such themes which shaped (and was shaped by) messianic expectation. Finally, Pitre summarizes his results by cataloguing several major aspects of the tribulation which existed within Jewish belief. They are (listed in order of frequency):

1. The tribulation is tied to *the restoration of Israel and the End of the Exile*.
2. A *righteous remnant* arises during the tribulation.
3. The *righteous suffer and/or die* during the tribulation. This sometimes includes *the suffering and/or death of a messianic figure*.
4. The tribulation is tied to *the coming of a Messiah*, sometimes referred to as the "Son of Man."
5. The tribulation precedes *the final judgment*.
6. The tribulation is depicted as *the eschatological climax of Israel's exilic sufferings*, often through the imagery of the *Deuteronomomic covenant curses*.
7. The tribulation has *two stages*: (1) the *preliminary stage*, and (2) *the Great Tribulation*.
8. The tribulation precedes *the coming of an eschatological kingdom*.
9. An *eschatological tyrant, opponent, or anti-Messiah* arises during the tribulation.
10. *Typological images from the Old Testament* are used to depict the tribulation.
11. The tribulation is tied to *the ingathering and/or conversion of the Gentiles*.
12. The tribulation has some kind of *atoning or redemptive function*.
13. The *Jerusalem Temple* is *defiled and/or destroyed* during the tribulation.
14. The tribulation precedes the *resurrection of the dead and/or a new creation* (Pitre, 128-129).

Chapter Three: The Tribulation and the Enigmatic Sayings of Jesus

In the next chapter of his thesis, Pitre build his study around four main teaching sections from the gospel accounts: [Matt. 6:9-13//Luke 11:1-4](#); [Matt. 11:12-13//Luke 16:16](#); [Mark 9:11-13](#); [Matt. 10:34-36//Luke 12:51-53](#) (*Gos. Thom.* 16). The author states that his reasoning for selecting these particular passages is to demonstrate the wide impact made by the tribulation upon the ministry of Jesus (131). Further, there is material taken from different form categories, which helps Pitre interact with the independent tradition.

[Matt. 6:9-13//Luke 11:1-4](#)

"Lead us not into *peirasmos*" ([Matt. 6:13](#)) seems to be one of the more important texts

1805: [Jortin: Remarks on Ecclesiastical History](#)

1810: [Clarke: Commentary On the Whole Bible](#)

1816: [Wilkins: Destruction of Jerusalem Related to Prophecies](#)

1824: [Galt: The Bachelor's Wife](#)

1840: [Smith: The Destruction of Jerusalem](#)

1841: [Currier: The Second Coming of Christ](#)

1842: [Bastow : A \(Preterist\) Bible Dictionary](#)

1842: [Stuart: Interpretation of Prophecy](#)

1843: [Lee: Dissertations on Eusebius](#)

1845: [Stuart: Commentary on Apocalypse](#)

1849: [Lee: Inquiry into Prophecy](#)

1851: [Lee: Visions of Daniel and St. John](#)

1853: [Newcombe: Observations on our Lord's Conduct as Divine Instructor](#)

1854: [Chamberlain: Restoration of Israel](#)

1854: [Fairbairn: The Typology of Scripture](#)

1859: ["Lee of Boston": Eschatology](#)

1861: [Maurice: Lectures on the Apocalypse](#)

1863: [Thomas Lewin : The Siege of Jerusalem](#)

1865: [Desprez: Daniel](#)
(Renounced Full Preterism)

1870: [Fall of Jerusalem and the Roman Conquest](#)

1871: [Dale: Jewish Temple and Christian Church](#) (PDF)

1879: [Warren: The Parousia](#)

1882: [Farrar: The Early Days of Christianity](#)

1883: [Milton S. Terry: Biblical Hermeneutics](#)

1888: [Henty: For The Temple](#)

1891: [Farrar: Scenes in the days of Nero](#)

1896: [Lee : A Scholar of a Past Generation](#)

1902: [Church: Story of the Last Days of Jerusalem](#)

which highlights Pitre's work (133, see also the Introduction on p. 1). Again, the author interacts closely with N. T. Wright, who interprets this prayer as an expression of "the ancient Jewish hope for a *New Exodus*" (137, emphasis in original). Wright's approach to the text stems from his connection of the overarching Old Testament texts which speak of a new exodus and the end of exile. Pitre acce

pts this claim, but seeks to strengthen Wright's position through his own analysis and exegesis (138f.). A key text is found in [Exodus 4:22-23](#), where God's fatherhood of Isr

ael is seen as being connected to the exodus event, but more specifically to the deliverance which is provided through Passover (138). Such a background image serves to strengthen the petition which Jesus makes when addressing *Father* ([Matt. 6:9](#)) to set the appropriate context for his prayer.

The reference to God's name being hallowed and the call for the kingdom of God to come ([Matt. 6:9-10](#)) also finds connection with the Old Testament narrative. Indeed, Pitre sees a strong link between

the parallels of this sentiment with the theme of a new exodus as found in [Ezekiel 36:22-28](#) and [Micah 4:5-8](#) (140). An examination of these texts demonstrates the expectation of the coming kingdom of God being a time when Israel would see the very name of God hallowed throughout the land (e.g. 141). Regarding the *coming* of the kingdom, Pitre asserts that such can be envisaged when viewed not as a geographic entity (not even an abstract reign of God), but rather a people who are emerging from exile (143).

Pitre further examines the petitions for the daily provision of bread ([Matt. 6:11](#)) as well as the forgiveness of debts/sins ([Matt. 6:11](#)). Quite simply and straightforwardly, the exodus event can be seen in parallel with the request for daily bread as one considers the sustenance of manna in the wilderness, suggesting that the return from exile has indeed begun (144). The notion of forgiveness finds connection to the messianic Jubilee which is quite present in the Old Testament and various messianic expectation. Building upon Wright, Pitre contends that *forgiveness of sins* is equivalent to *return from exile* (145).

All of this leads up to the clause, "lead us not into *peirasmos*," which must be considered in light of exilic return and new exodus if the preceding verses held such a strong connection (cf. 146). Even more so, Pitre suggests that this phrase is also related to the eschatological tribulation (146). The question and scope of the eschatological tribulation comes into play for Pitre who, along with W. D. Davies and D. Allison, asserts that Jesus understood as beginning with the persecution and death of John the Baptist (150-151). Therefore, "*all* trials and tribulations - even those that were to take place on a daily basis - could be interpreted as manifestations of the eschatological time of trial" (151, emphasis in original). He goes on to state:

"Because the very notion of the final ingathering of the lost tribes of Israel was fundamentally eschatological in nature, there is good reason to believe that in *context* the *peirasmos* is referring to the eschatological tribulation that would precede the end of the age and the coming of the kingdom of God. In support of this is the fact that the eschatological tribulation was specifically connected by several early Jewish texts to the coming of an eschatological *kingdom*" (151, emphasis in original).

The prayer for deliverance from the time of trial is understood by Pitre as the prayer for deliverance from the tribulation itself, a position he shares with Schweitzer and Wright (153).

[Matt. 11:12-13//Luke 16:16](#)

In approaching an understanding of this difficult text from Scripture, Pitre begins with the observation that two primary points appear to be made by the two versions: 1) "First, *the law and the prophets somehow lasted up until the time of John*, with his

1917: [Morris: Christ's Second Coming Fulfilled](#)

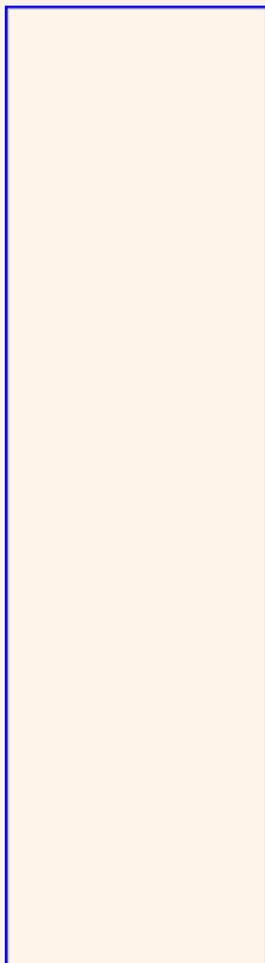
1985: [Lee: Jerusalem; Rome; Revelation](#) (PDF)

1987: [Chilton: The Days of Vengeance](#)

2001: Fowler: [Jesus - The Better Everything](#)

2006: [M. Gwyn Morgan - AD69 - The Year of Four Emperors](#)

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appearance marking the in-breaking of the kingdom of God,” and 2) “Second, the ‘kingdom’ of God currently suffers some kind of ‘violence’” (163-164). There is much to be said regarding this passage, and the author surveys a number of suggested options. His overall suggestion is that the key to unlocking the passage is found in the tribulation, which includes aspects of both the rise of lawlessness and the period of eschatological strife (166-167).

Not a few scholars link together violence enacted against the kingdom with the eschatological tribulation. Also, the survey of Second Temple Jewish literature also demonstrates an expectation of tribulation which is to precede the coming kingdom (e.g. *The Apocalypse of Weeks*) (166-167). The connection with a period of lawlessness is also present in this passage, as is part of the eschatological expectation. It is thus Pitre’s position that the persecution and death of John the Baptist inaugurated the eschatological period, which is now being characterized by the final tribulation of lawlessness and violence (168f., esp. 171). One particular outcome of this reading is that Jesus’ *inaugurated eschatology* is seen in this passage as the tribulation which is part of the kingdom appears (176-177).

[Mark 9:11-13](#)

The next section appears in the wake of Mark’s account of the transfiguration, a scene which points to the future resurrection ([Mark 9:9](#)). Pitre identifies “three formal elements” which comprise Jesus’ response to his disciples in vv. 12-13: 1) “an affirmative answer to the disciples question (Yes, Elijah is coming to restore all things); 2) “a scribal-type riddle” and 3) “an enigmatic declaration of the fulfillment of prophecy” (179). Pitre’s analysis of this section challenges traditional scholarship’s misplaced emphasis on Elijah as a forerunner to the Messiah, instead making the assertion that the Old Testament and early Jewish texts suggest “that [Elijah’s] coming was almost certainly linked with the eschatological tribulation” (181). He lends support to this claim by referring to Malachi 4, Sirach 48, *4Q Messianic Apocalypse*, *4Q Vision*, and *4 Ezra*, each of which he sees as showing the crucial point “that Elijah will return *during a final period of interfamilial and interpersonal strife*” (182, emphasis in original).

It becomes clear through Pitre’s reading of these texts that there was a strong expectation for Elijah to precede the eschatological tribulation. This point serves to underline Jesus’ own link between the coming of Elijah with persecution and suffering (183). Further, the author asserts that Jesus points to the events of interfamilial and interpersonal strife as evidence of the arrival of the eschatological tribulation (184). A second point regarding Jesus’ ministry is seen in the connection he draws between the suffering of Elijah and the suffering Son of Man, both being connected to the time of tribulation (186). In both cases, there is an element of Jesus’ own interpretation and use of the Old Testament and early Jewish texts in order to demonstrate the fulfillment of their expectation.

Of final note regarding the authenticity of this passage: Pitre challenges the position taken up by J. Meier that this text emerged from Gospel traditions which do not adequately reflect this historicity of John or Jesus (189f.). After providing three “flaws” in Meier’s argument, Pitre seeks to demonstrate that the passage meets the criterion of discontinuity with the early church on three specific accounts (191f.). He convincingly argues that the passage is indeed authentic as an accurate representation of the historical Jesus.

[Matt. 10:34-36/Luke 12:51-53; Gos. Thom. 16](#)

The final text which Pitre examines in this chapter comes as one of the more disturbing of the sayings of Jesus. It is pointed out that in both Matthew and Luke the saying comes in the context of references to the eschatological tribulation (200). Although some interpreters, such as B. Ehrman, read this passage as an indication of Jesus’ mission being “antifamily” (i.e., 207), it is more likely the case that, as stated by F. F. Bruce, “familial strife is only the *effect* of his coming, and not its *purpose*” (208, emphasis in original). [Micah 7:5-6](#) clearly stands behind the text as it reads in Matthew and Luke, and Pitre’s exegesis of the text further points to “this future period to *the return of an eschatological remnant of scattered Israel*” (209, emphasis in original). Thus Micah is placing the period of familial strife just before the restoration of Israel and the ingathering of the scattered tribes.

All of this points to Jesus' words as being an indication that "*he must first unleash the time of strife* that will precede the restoration of Israel and the End of the Exile" (210, emphasis in original). This understanding allows the reader to see this gospel text as pointing to the eschatological division which is part of the messianic restoration of Israel. Taken with the previous evidence, this means that Jesus is here using the imagery of Micah to mark the beginning of the tribulation which would inaugurate the last days before Israel's restoration (e.g., 211).

Summary and Conclusions

After pulling together some of his key points, Pitre sets forth several implications for his reading of these four key texts. First, he recognizes that in order to understand some of Jesus' most enigmatic sayings one must uncover Jewish expectation regarding the eschatological tribulation (217). Furthermore, an examination of these key texts "also show that Jesus, unlike some modern versions of eschatology, went to great lengths to insist upon the fact that the coming of salvation could in no way be detached from a time of suffering and tribulation" (217). Rather, he seems to place a *necessity* of an era of tribulation to come before the time of renewal and restoration (Pitre here says that before an era of *salvation*, which I believe *might* be an overstatement based upon other key gospel texts).

Pitre's final implication is that these passages reveal how "Jesus' message contained an element of realized eschatology that often goes unnoted" (217-218). By appealing to Jesus sense that the kingdom of God has already begun, one must also recognize that Jesus believed that a period of tribulation (the last days) had also already begun. Eloquently put:

"If this is true, then he would have perceived his ministry as not only standing in the morning-glow of the dawn of the kingdom of God, but also under the shadow of the eschatological tribulation" (218).

Chapter Four: The Great Tribulation, the Coming of the Messiah, and the End of Exile

Turning his focus to the *future* expectations of tribulation and messiah within Jesus' own mission and ministry Pitre now offers a reading of Mark 13, the Olivet Discourse. His approach is centered thematically around three main divisions of the text: *The "Birth Pangs" of the Messiah and the Destruction of Jerusalem* ([Mark 13:5-8](#)) (4.2), *The Tribulation and the Ingathering of the Gentiles* ([Mark 13:9-13](#)) (4.3), and *The Temple Destruction, the Coming Son of Man, and the Ingathering of the Exiles* ([Mark 13:14-27](#)) (4.4). The uniqueness of this chapter comes also with Pitre's constant consideration of historical Jesus research throughout (222).

[Mark 13:5-8](#)

The first point of exegesis comes with Jesus' warning against the coming of deceivers (v. 5) who will attempt to lead astray his disciples and others. Coming with what appears to be prophetic authority and claims to be the Messiah, these individuals will seek to capitalize on the increasing time of tribulation - a sign of the last days (226-227). Pitre suggests that there is also an allusion to Daniel's prophecy with the refrain, "these things must take place; but it is not yet the end" ([Mark 13:8](#)) (227). This is connected to the "birth pangs," a vivid use of apocalyptic imagery which closely aligns with Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish literature as a reference to the tribulation. This, according to Pitre, typically does one of two things: "accompanies *the destruction of a city or nation* or precedes *the coming of the Messiah*" (229, emphasis in original).

It appears, then, that the false messiahs are a part of the "birth pangs" themselves which will ultimately bring about the destruction of the Temple and the coming of the Messiah (231).

Of the thorough and helpful interaction with historical Jesus research in this section, I will point out one which has to do with the fulfillment of Jesus' words. It has often been

claimed that this section of Mark was fabricated by the early church to account for the many false messiahs which emerged in the years between the death of Jesus and the Jewish war. However, as Pitre is right to point out, there is no actual evidence available which correlate with what is actually said by Jesus in this passage (242).

Thus, there is good reason to believe this saying as authentic and solid historical ground on which to build a better understanding of Jesus' own understanding.

[Mark 13:9-13](#)

Immediately following the reference to "birth pangs" is Jesus' reference to persecutions which would come upon his disciples as well as the promise that they would receive the Holy Spirit. Pitre regards this passage as "salvation eschatologically conceived" through the threefold exhortation of 1) the *good news* being proclaimed to both Jew and Gentile, 2) the Holy Spirit speaking through the disciples during the trial, and 3) the salvation which would come upon the one who endured *to the end* (254-255).

The focus is once again directed to "all the nations" seems to be a clear eschatological idea, bound together with the end of Israel's exile and the conversion of the Gentiles (258). Furthermore, Pitre demonstrates a close connection with such events and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (reminiscent of Joel), which would occur only as part of the ushering in of the end times tribulation. The passage continues to point out the interfamilial strife (vv. 12-13) which heightens the amount of tension found in the tribulation. Pitre summarily states:

"In light of this Old Testament background, the message of Jesus is clarified: the disciples, in their universal proclamation of the good news of Israel's deliverance, will face many trials and persecutions during the forecast time of strife, but they must not lose the hope that the Spirit would be poured out upon them and that they would indeed be saved" (261).

In what also builds upon Isaiah's call of proclamation, Jesus envisages a mission to the Gentiles in which the good news would be shared. The result would be a gathering of the nations by going to them (263).

Two important questions (among others) arise from Pitre's exegesis and his survey of historical issues: 1) *who* are the "lost sheep"? and 2) *where* are the "lost sheep"? Although many answers are offered to these, Pitre's own conclusions return again to that which finds its foundation in Second Temple literature. He defines the "lost sheep" as those who are found in the scattered and lost tribes of Israel (277), who are presently among the nations (278). If this is the basis for the text, then Pitre is on the right track when he asks, "if the disciples were indeed to follow Jesus [*sic*] command and go to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' is there any way possible for them *not* to enact a mission among the nations?" (278, emphasis in original). There is thus a necessary link which Jesus has made of proclamation to the ingathering of the Gentiles and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (286f.).

[Mark 13:14-27](#)

In examining the final section of the Olivet Discourse Pitre identifies four inclusios which show this to be a single unit, as well as four major themes which are at work throughout the section (290-301). It is the author's position that "*the coming of the Son of Man in [Mark 13:24-27](#) cannot be properly understood apart from the material that precedes it*" (301, emphasis in original).

Building upon the Danielic vision, Pitre demonstrates the probable presuppositions of the text itself, beginning with the reference to the abomination of desolation. The abomination is an event which centers around the Jerusalem Temple and precedes the Great Tribulation. Such echoes of Daniel (five which are specifically discussed in this

section), Pitre concludes that Jesus is using the powerful imagery of Daniel to announce the arrival of the days of the Great Tribulation (309). He further highlights this reading by referring to Jesus' words, "let he who reads understand." This phrase is taken by the author to be Jesus' own call to his disciples that they should recognize the prophecy of Daniel is coming to fulfillment (Daniel's scroll being sealed "until the time of the end" in 12:9) in the present participation in the eschatological tribulation (312-313).

Among the texts which use similar imagery to Jesus' words are many references to unparalleled tribulation which is tied to the exile and restoration of Israel. Thus, it appears to Pitre that these parallels also suggest that Jesus is identifying these events as "*the final period of Israel's exilic suffering*" (321, emphasis in original). Throughout all of this, however, is an eschatological remnant which endures the Great Tribulation. The words in this passage describe a heightened state of emergency, the rises of false messiahs who parallel the activity of the Son of Man (329), and the messianic woes (vv. 14-24). The climax of the Great Tribulation is seen in the apocalyptic imagery of a darkened sun and moon and falling stars which accompany the coming Son of Man (332). Important to Pitre's thesis is the observation that such is not a separate event, but that there is a strong connection between tribulation and the appearance of the Messiah.

In regards to historicity, Pitre notes that the language in this passage (specifically, "abomination to desolation") is not utilized in the New Testament or any other early Christian literature (355). This variation of language holds much evidence regarding the dissimilarity of the passage to the early church community.

Summary and Conclusions

Pitre's statements are once again well-summarized and reviewed in his concluding section. He gathers the implications of much of this chapter in his statement, "For Jesus, it appears that *the messianic tribulation, the Great Tribulation, is nothing less than the climax of Israel's exilic sufferings*. It is the final period of suffering which would precede the Return from Exile, the restoration of the twelve tribes, and the coming of the Messiah" (379).

Chapter Five: The Paschal Tribulation, the Death of Jesus, and the New Exodus

The overarching question which must be raised by Pitre is now addressed: "*How did Jesus view himself in relation to the tribulation?*" (381). Such will be the predominant concern of the present chapter, and the author attends to it following a brief survey of other perspectives (returning again to the scholarly list given in Chapter One) (383). Structurally, this chapter is built around three particular passages which serve to illustrate Jesus' own self-awareness of messianic expectation and the tribulation: [Mark 10:35-45](#); [Mark 14:26-28](#); [Mark 14:32-42](#).



[Mark 10:35-45](#)

With current discussions of atonement theory being popular within scholarly circles, this first passage is particularly interesting since it deals with Jesus' well-known statement, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (v. 45). Pitre is concerned that the text be read appropriately to its specific historical circumstance, noting the particular dialogue which was set into motion by James and John, as well as the disciples' ongoing struggle for prominence (388-389). His exegesis flows from this and he reads the entire passage as a dialogue concerning "*the theme of eschatological glorification and rule*" (391, emphasis in original). The royal overtones of the language and the reference to glory place an eschatological time frame to Jesus' words, at the same time offering an echo of Daniel 7. The specific references to "cup" and "baptism" denote suffering (Pitre connects the similar language and sentiment to [Luke 12:49-50](#)), and are most likely being used by Jesus to refer to his own eschatological tribulation (394-396).

Pitre further deals with Jesus' understanding of *Son of Man* in reference to his own death, specifically with how that death is connected to the eschatological tribulation (399f.). The author connects the Mark 10 passage with a reading of [Daniel 9:24-27](#) to help solidify the connection of the Old Testament text to Jesus' teaching, and highlights three specific points: 1) "the text clearly prophecies *that the Messiah will die during the tribulation,*" 2) "one of the *primary purposes of the tribulation is to atone for sin,*" and 3) "*the forgiveness of sins* that is wrought by the tribulation will *bring about the End of the Exile*" (401-402, all emphases in original). Pitre sees here a harmonization of the royal and messianic figures whose death would bring about the eschatological tribulation and the final kingdom. The climax of this is that Jesus adopts language from the Old Testament prophets to declare his death as being that which releases the scattered exiles of Israel (405).

[Mark 14:26-28](#)

This passage, which utilizes a quotation from [Zechariah 13:7](#), contains Jesus' words that his disciples would fall away and would be scattered. Pitre's reading of the prophet as background to Jesus' present usage leads him to assert that Jesus is in fact declaring his death to be the catalyst which unleashes the tribulation (457). Thus, with his own understanding of messianic expectation Jesus links his own death with the Great Tribulation, which in turn is linked to the resurrection. The imagery of scattering and re-gathering is also seen in his words, both which are inaugurated by his own death (460). Mention of the resurrection in connection with the tribulation and restoration of Israel is the key aspect of this passage (477).

[Mark 14:32-42](#)

Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is the final passage from the Gospels in which his death is linked to the tribulation. A key verse in Pitre's examination is 14:35: "Keep awake and pray that you not enter into *peirasmos*." The language of the passage highlights certain elements which have been present throughout the thesis, such as *hour*, *cup* and *peirasmos*. The setting itself as the Mount of Olives recalls [Zechariah 13-14](#), where the prophet depicts this location as "key to the outbreak of the final tie of 'testing' and tribulation for the eschatological remnant" (481). The mentioning of the *hour* also points to an appointed time (rather than a particular point in the evening or of the time of Judas' betrayal) in which the eschatological tribulation would begin with Jesus' suffering and death - perhaps retaining some elements of the time of betrayal (482).

Just as Jesus prayed for the *hour* to pass from him, he also prays that this *cup* would be taken from him (v. 36). Pitre's understanding here is that the tribulation which Jesus would endure "*is nothing less than an eschatological Passover*, the final great trial that will precede the ingathering of the exiles in the New Exodus" (487, emphasis in original). This, in turn, would bring about a coming *peirasmos*, which Pitre's study leads him to consider as the final tribulation which would come upon the people of God "before the dawn of salvation" (488). And it is Jesus' willingness to enter into the *peirasmos* which demonstrates himself as the paschal Lamb of the New Exodus (491).

Summary and Conclusions

The conclusions which Pitre draws from this chapter are fourfold:

1. Along with many scholars in historical Jesus research, Pitre affirms that "Jesus both spoke of his own imminent death and saw it as *part of the eschatological tribulation.*"
2. He concludes that Jesus' expectation of suffering is also messianic.
3. Pitre identifies Jesus' understanding of post-tribulation events included "the exaltation of himself and the Twelve disciples in the kingdom and the ingathering of the scattered tribes of Israel."
4. Pitre also asserts that Jesus' viewed his own death as having soteriological and eschatological significance (505, all emphases in original).

Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusions

The final chapter of this impressive thesis includes a summary of the previous chapters (6.1) before turning to implications for the study of the historical Jesus (6.2). The implications which gives as conclusions from his study are listed in brief:

1. ". . . *Jesus should be primarily understood within the context of ancient Jewish restoration eschatology.*"
2. ". . . on whether current historical Jesus research will be open to rethinking long-standing conclusions regarding the *interpretation and authenticity of the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13).*"
3. ". . . the historical Jesus apparently embraced some form of *remnant theology.*"
4. ". . . our focus on the eschatological tribulation has also led us in a somewhat indirect fashion to some important insights regarding several topics that *are* frequently discussed in most works on the historical Jesus. . ."
5. ". . . its contribution to the ongoing debate regarding *whether Jesus taught that his death would somehow have redemptive efficacy*" (515-518, all emphases in original).

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