DOCTRINE OF THE FIG TREE

August 23, 1992

I. Preliminary Considerations.
   A. The Jews lost the second commonwealth in 70AD, as they did the first commonwealth, due to their negative volition to doctrine.
   B. This event, occurring within the Church Age, was a fulfillment of prophecy (Lk.19:43,44; 21:20-24; Mt.23:38; 24:2; cp. Dan.9:26 "...and the people [Romans] of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary...").
   C. From that date until 1948AD the Jewish people were at no time in possession of a national homeland.
   E. God promised to restore the Jews to their land if they would, in their captivity, repent of their evil (Deut.30:1-10).
   F. The return witnessed in the last half of the twentieth century is in unbelief, which fact seems to contradict the previous observation (see point IV.A.).
   G. Israel must be a nation before the Tribulation, which fact alone means that the Rapture of the Church had to wait until Israel was re-established as a nation (the two witnesses of Rev.11 minister at a time when Jerusalem is in Jewish hands and when the Temple is in place).
   H. The restoration process is the result of a political process known as Zionism (whose father was Theodor Herzl).
   I. Jewish leaders have, in the present century, aggressively and doggedly sought out their fellow Jews among the nations in fulfillment of Jer.16:14-16 (cp. Zech.2:6,7).
   J. Virtual whole communities of Jews have been removed from the place of their dispersion (like Operation Magic Carpet, which brought all the Jews [48,000] out of Yemen in 1950; and Operation Solomon, bringing some 50,000 from Ethiopia in 1991; hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews immigrated in the shadow of the collapse of Soviet communism).
   K. The bulk of world Jewry resides in the U.S.A., and it will take the Rapture and a spiritual conversion to get them out (Jer.50:6-10,17-20; 51:6,9,10,45,46; Rev.18:4).

II. The fig tree is a symbol for national Israel (Jer.8:13; 14:1-10; 29:17; Hos.9:10; Joel.1:7 "My vine fig tree"; Micah.7:17).

III. Christ cursed a fig tree on His way to cleanse the temple on Tuesday of Passion Week (Mt.21:18,19a; Mk.11:12-14).
   A. Out of hunger He approached the fig tree, desiring mature figs (cp. Micah.7:1,2).
   B. The planted tree represents national Israel, and the absence of ripe figs represents the absence of mature believers to deliver and preserve the nation.
   C. Finding leaves only, He cursed the tree, and it withered immediately.
   D. Leaves represent the people and their national society (affluence, institutions, social life, etc.) that are necessary but do not carry a nation.
   F. On Wednesday morning they observed the tree that had withered from its roots (Mt.21:19b-22; Mk.11:19-21).
   G. In 70AD the nation was destroyed at its very roots, eliminating the chance of a new state emerging from the cataclysm. (Historical attempts to establish a Jewish state failed until the 20th century. One example is the Crusades; another is mentioned on pages 183,184 of Jerusalem by Gulston; much earlier was the Bar Kochba revolt in 133AD.)

IV. In a parable on faith (mustard seed) Jesus used a fig tree (wild fig tree: *ficus sycamorus*) to teach Israel's post First Advent dispersion (Lk.17:5,6).
A. The disciples desired greater faith.
B. Jesus used the mustard seed analogy to illustrate the growth of faith.
C. The faith represented by a mature mustard tree would call for the uprooting of the fig tree, Israel.
D. The subsequent planting in the Gentile "sea" represents Israel's dispersion.
E. Israel is also represented by a mountain, which doctrine in the soul (maximum Faith-Rest via prayer) moves into the sea (cp. Mk.11:21-23; Mt.21:20,21).
F. Mountains are a prophetic symbol for world powers (cp. Dan.2).

V. In the parable of the fig tree, Israel's re-emergence as a national entity is given as the major sign of Christ's return (Mt.24:32-35; Mk.13:28-31; Lk.21:29-33).
A. The disciples wanted to know the sign (singular: a sign always points to something greater, i.e., the Second Advent) of His return (see Mt.24:3).
B. So Jesus gave them "the sign": namely, the replanted, budding fig tree (national Israel).
C. He also gave them a list of phenomenon that would coincide with the fig tree and would proliferate during those days just before the end.
D. They are: the rise of many false prophets and christs, wars (hot and cold), earthquakes, famines, and plagues (like AIDS).
E. In the parable Jesus assumes the historical replanting of the tree, which was replanted in 1948.
F. Disciples living then were to focus their attention on the budding of the tree, which is Israel's phenomenal post World War II development based primarily on immigration from all nations.
G. The vital conclusion we are to draw from this is that "summer", or the "kingdom of God", (i.e., the Millennium) is near, which is ushered in by Christ's return (Mt.24:32,33; Mk.13:28,29; Lk.21:30,31).
H. How near is set forth as a generation which will not pass away until "all these things" are fulfilled (Mt.24:43; Mk.13:30; Lk.21:32).
I. So the generation witnessing the budding of the tree will survive to the Second Advent.

VI. Objections to the identification and interpretation.
A. Objection: The present return is while Israel is still in unbelief; therefore, it does not count.
B. Refutation: Jesus came to the nation when it was in a state of unbelief (Jn.1:11), and Ezekiel prophesied that God would return them in unbelief, demonstrating that physical restoration will precede spiritual restoration (Ezek.36:22-25).
C. Objection: There is no prophecy relating to Israel and the nations being fulfilled in the Church Age.
D. Refutation: The fifth cycle and dispersion was fulfilled in 70AD (37 years into the age, cp. Dan.9:26), plus many commands to alertness "lest the day overtake us as a thief" (1Thess.5:1-19). Then there is the argument from historical precedence which would (if the above objection is true) make the Rapture generation in the dark approaching a major prophetic fulfillment (Noah knew the time, etc.).
E. Objection: Jews have always resided in the land since 70AD.
F. Refutation: The fact of a small community of Jews in the land is not the issue of this prophecy, but rather the establishment of a nation.
G. Objection: God did not establish the current nation.
H. Refutation: God establishes all nations (Jer.18:9).
I. Objection: When God restores Israel, it will be supernatural and the people will have Millennial prosperity.
J. Refutation: This displays ignorance of the whole restoration process, making the last phase apply to the whole. For a gradual restoration of the land see Ezek.36; and for a gradual restoration of the people from dispersion see Ezek.37; Jer.50:6-8; 51:6,45; Isa.43:5,6; Jer.16:14-18; Zech.2:6,7.
K. Objection: The fig tree does not refer to Israel, and the word "generation" means "race".
L. Refutation: See point I. for documentation as to the identity of the tree. The word γενια genea,
means "generation" (according to usage; see Mt.1:17 [3X]; 11:16; 12:39,41,42,45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34; Mk.8:12,38; 9:19; 13:30; Lk.1:48;50 [2X]; 7:31; 9:41; 11:29-32,50 [2X]; 16:8; 17:25; 21:32; Act.2:40; 8:33; 13:36; 14:16; 15:21; Eph.3:5,21; Phil.2:15; Col.1:26; Heb.3:10). Γένος, genos, means "race" (see Mt.13:47; Mk.7:26; 9:29; Act.4:6,36; 7:13,19; 13:26; 17:28,29; 18:2,24; 1Cor.12:10,28; 14:10; 2Cor.11:26; Gal.1:14; Phil.3:10; 1Pet.2:9, "chosen race").

VII. The prophetic word predicts that other entities would coexist with Israel.

A. Russia as a military power with confederates (Ezek.38 and 39).
B. The "kings of the east" (Rev.16:12).
C. The U.S. (Jer.50,51; Rev.18).
D. The Revived Roman (European) Empire, consisting of 10 nations, under the Antichrist (Rev.13; 17:11-14).
E. European Catholicism (Rev.17).

VIII. Applications to believers living in the Rapture generation and beyond (Mt.24:42, 25:30; Mk.13:33-37; Lk.21:34-36).

A. Each generation is enjoined to watchfulness lest their generation be it.
B. Teachers of doctrine are to act like "porters" signaling the Master's return.
C. Believers who are spiritually alert receive a reward.
D. Those asleep are still raptured (1Thess.5:6).
E. We still watch for the third temple to be built.