

The three issues addressed in this article are related, which is why I'm covering them together. Note that my New Testament quotes are from the New King James Version, and my Old Testament quotes are from the Revised Standard Version.

It would be a good idea to begin by showing just how Christians get their interpretations on the three issues that my article is addressing. They take a completely literal rendering of Matthew 24:36 (and similar verses such as Matthew 25:13 and Mark 13:33), the interpretation of which seems to be supported by the surrounding verses. This verse, which I quoted to begin my article, says that only the Father knows the hour. The hour referred to is obviously the time of the Second Coming, as shown by Matthew 24:42, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming," and Matthew 25:13, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." As we can see, these two verses and verse 36 appear to clearly say that the time of the Second Coming cannot be known, and that it is not indicated anywhere in the Bible. So Christians come to believe that it is not possible for the time of the Second Coming to be known in advance.

In regards to the second issue, concerning what it means by saying that Christ will come like a thief in the night, the Christians arrive at their interpretation by reading passages such as Matthew 24:36-44. After reading these verses it should be obvious how they arrive at the interpretation that by coming like a thief it means that the return will happen at an unexpected and unknown time.

The third issue is the comparison of the coming of the Son of man to the days of Noah. Since Christians believe that the biblical flood story is literal, and that a few thousand years ago the earth was destroyed by the deluge, they will naturally interpret Matthew 24:39, which likens the coming of the Son of Man to the coming of the flood, to indicate destruction at the time when Christ returns. This is to be accompanied by the visible Second Coming that they believe to be confirmed by Matthew 24:30, which says that the people of the world will see Christ returning on clouds. They would also view Matthew 24:37-39 as confirmation that the time of the Second Coming can't be known. This passage comes straight after verse 36, which I have previously mentioned, and explains it. It says that the coming of the Son of Man will be the same as the days of Noah, in that in the days before the flood, the people were eating and drinking, or carrying on with their worldly affairs, until the day that Noah entered the ark. It says that they didn't know until the flood came and took them all away, and then finishes by saying that the coming of the Son of Man will be the same. They reason that the flood is compared to the return of Jesus, and that since the people at the time of Noah didn't know when the flood would happen until it came, this means that it will be the same with the people at the time of the Second Coming. The people won't know until it happened, but no one could know the time in advance.

Having noted these facts, it seems to be an uphill battle for potential

Bahá'í Apologists. Lamentably, I have yet to see anything written by Bahá'ís on these issues which is good enough to silence all of the critics. Because of this, I decided I would submit this article to fill the void. Unless something sufficient is written, the Bahá'ís will be seen by many as a religion (or cult) who claim to know something that only God can, in direct contradiction to Scripture. The burden of proof lies on the shoulder of the Bahá'ís to prove that our beliefs are sound.

When reading the Bible, it is important to know who is being spoken to. In passages on the subjects that my article covers, my belief is that the non-believers are the ones addressed. Many Christians have interpreted these verses to be the "Bible teaching" regarding everyone. It is important that I prove my belief, as any mistake made in interpreting who is referred to in those verses could make one have a significantly different interpretation of the nature of the Second Coming.

Matthew 24:36 is the first verse I will look at. This verse says, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." The way the verse is written shows that it is a fact at the time when Jesus said His words, and clearly it is also a prophecy as to how it will be later. Verse 39 indicates that people will only know the time of the Second Coming once it happens, so even if verse 36 means that literally no one can know the hour, people will eventually know the hour. My belief on the meaning of Matthew 24:36 is quite different to that of the few other Bahá'ís whose interpretation of this verse I know, in that I think that the verse is addressing the world in general, or the non-believers. The others believe that the verse applies to literally everyone, and they claim that it speaks of the day and hour, but that it doesn't say anything about the year. So the claim is that the exact time can't be known, but the year can. I myself supported this argument until I had read the Bible through more. From looking at all the relevant texts, there is no reason to believe that the verse means that the precise time can't be known, but the year can. The word "day" is often used in reference to a new age, and it refers more to time than the specific 24-hour day in which the age commenced. Mark 13:33 proves conclusively that "day" and "hour" should not be literally interpreted in Matthew 24:36, saying, "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is." So it is clear that the year is also included in Matthew 24:36.

I'll now talk in detail about my interpretation of this verse, and then attempt to prove it biblically. My interpretation can be found in the Bahá'í writings: "The Hour which We had concealed from the knowledge of the peoples of the earth and of the favoured angels hath come to pass."

(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Page: 11)

This sentence says that the hour (in other words, the time) of the Second Coming had been concealed from the knowledge of those on earth. It indicates that this hour is not concealed anymore. This is consistent with what Matthew 24:39 says will be the case with the Second Coming. As the above sentence

indicates, the hour was concealed from the knowledge of the world in general, but not from literally all. This is what is implied by Matthew 24:39, which refers to the world in general, or the non-believers (and which interprets Matthew 24:36), as I will soon show in detail, in case what I've said hasn't convinced some. As to the angels mentioned, I will address this problem shortly. The other quotation of relevance speaks of the Kitab-I-Iqan, revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, saying that it: "broke the "seals" of the "Book" referred to by Daniel, and disclosed the meaning of the "words" destined to remain "closed up" till the "time of the end.""

(Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, Pages: 138-139)

This sentence says the same thing. If the words of the Bible were sealed until the time of the end, as Daniel 12:4,9 say, then the numerical prophecy mentioned in Daniel 12:7, the context of which shows is clearly a numerical prophecy of the time of the end, or the time of the Second Coming, must have been sealed. This is fully in agreement with the former quote. In the immediate context of speaking of the words being sealed, Daniel 12:10 says that none of the wicked will understand, but the wise will understand. From reading verses 8-9, and then verse 10, it is clear that what the wise will understand includes the numerical prophecy mentioned, which clearly points to the time of the Second Coming. My belief is that prior to the unsealing, the world in general could not be certain of their interpretations.

I have already written on what the Bahá'í Writings say on this subject, but there are other comments I have that are solely my own. My interpretation of this verse is that is true in one sense, and it is the one that the Bible deals with commonly. It is true in the sense that God is the source of all knowledge, and only He knows the hour and what happens at that time intrinsically. It would not be a contradiction if someone else knew the hour, since this knowledge would come from God, the only one who knows the hour. In John 8:28, Jesus says that He can do nothing of Himself, but that He speaks what He is taught by the Father. This verse shows that it would not be a contradiction for a verse to say that only God knows something, and to also say that Jesus knows it. Colossians 2:2-3 proves that my belief is correct, concerning the hour of the Second Coming. Having noted that John 8:28 shows that Jesus gets His words, and thus knowledge from the Father, and since Jesus is said not to know the hour (Mark 13:32 says this, and other manuscripts that the NKJV translation didn't use for Matthew 24:36 mention Jesus as not knowing the hour, though "but My Father only" obviously excludes Jesus), Colossians 2:3 appears contradictory. Colossians 2:2 speaks of "the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ," which verse 3 follows by saying, "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Mark 13:32 had said that Jesus doesn't know something, which shows that Jesus wasn't Omniscient, but here it says He knows everything. Colossians 2:3 is correct in saying that Jesus had all knowledge, as His wisdom and knowledge were given to Him by the Father, and so Jesus does have knowledge. But the other verse is also correct in saying that Jesus doesn't know something, because He can of His own self do and know nothing, and He can't receive knowledge unless given to Him from the

Father. So you could say that Jesus didn't know something that He actually did, as what Jesus knows is not what He knows, but what the Father knows, if you understand what I'm trying to say. There is no reason to believe that the meaning of the verse is that Jesus hadn't been told the hour yet. God would tell us if He was going to make Jesus Omniscient eventually. Since there is no reason to believe such a thing, we can assume that this was not the case, and stick to the supported interpretation, not conjecture. The intention of Mark 13:32 is to show that only through God can one know the time. So it seems that my paradox shows that Matthew 24:36 isn't literally saying that only God can know the hour, except in the sense that only He can know it intrinsically. If it is literally saying that only God can know the hour, then since it excludes Jesus from knowing the hour, it would contradict Colossians 2:3, which says that Jesus knows everything. If He knows everything then He would know the hour. To further support my argument, Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the LORD gives wisdom." We remember how God granted Solomon a request, and Solomon chose wisdom. God was very pleased with this request, and Solomon became incredibly wise. It is correct both to say that the wisdom was Solomon's, and to say that it wasn't. It was his in the usual sense, and it wasn't his in the sense that the wisdom was God's. But you still call the wisdom Solomon's. In Genesis, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt both had dreams. In Genesis 40:8, Joseph said that interpretations belong to God, yet then asks to hear about the dream so that he can interpret. Does this make Joseph God? It certainly doesn't, as the interpretation was given by God through Joseph. So in one sense, Joseph didn't know the interpretation, even once he gave it, and in another sense he did. The only way he knew was when God told him, so likewise Jesus would have received knowledge of the hour. As Joseph said that the interpretation (knowledge) belonged to God, not himself, Jesus said that His words were given to Him by God, and did not come from Himself. The same situation is seen with Daniel, when he gave interpretations. In Daniel 2:23 he says that God gave him wisdom, and in verse 20 he says that to God belong wisdom and might. So in one sense Daniel was wise, in another sense, he wasn't. It would be correct for Daniel to say that he doesn't know the interpretation of visions, as only God does, in the same way as with Joseph. So it is clear that Matthew 24:36 would only mean that Jesus is showing His subordination to the Father, not that He couldn't know the hour through God. He will never know the hour of Himself. Something the same can be found in the Bible, when the Jews say to Jesus, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). Amazingly, this verse is used as proof that Jesus is God. I agree that only God can forgive sins, though that doesn't mean that anyone forgiving sins is God. The Jews obviously thought so, as this verse makes clear. It seems that Trinitarians will mercilessly jump on anything the Jews, who consistently erred, say, if it will serve as proof that Jesus is God. When one looks more closely at the verses there is evidence that Jesus disagreed with what the Jews said. If Trinitarians weren't so caught up by their desire for proof that Jesus is God, they would see that the verses following Luke 5:21 show that the Jews understanding was wrong. Verse 22 says, "But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?"

It is quite obvious from this verse that Jesus disagreed with the Jews, and believed that they had erred. In the next two verses Jesus corrects them, and tells them that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. He came nowhere near saying that the Jews were right, and that He is God, but rather He said that "the Son of Man," not God, has power to forgive sins. If one reads Matthew 16:7-9, and then Luke 5:21-23, they will see how clear it is that in both cases the Jews were wrong. As verses like John 5:21-26 show, Jesus acted as God while on earth, being given the power and authority to do things that only God could. But the real doer was God, who gave Him the power. If Jesus really could do nothing of Himself, then He couldn't forgive sins of Himself. But that's what Trinitarians need to prove that Jesus is God. Funnily enough, Trinitarians forget this. If Jesus could forgive sins off His own authority, that would be a different matter. One can't help but wonder how those who give the argument ignore John 20:23. The disciples had just received the Holy Spirit, and Jesus tells them that if they forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If Jesus' forgiving sins makes Him God, does that mean that the disciples would also be God, if they forgive sins?

Such observations show how passion and prejudice can distort interpretation of Scripture. The most influential Christian Apologist of today, Josh McDowell (among others), uses the forgiving sins argument in giving evidence for the Trinity. When other factors come into play, all the qualifications in the world can't save a person from interpreting the Bible correctly. That's probably why so many people having the same prestigious qualifications related to religion have vastly conflicting interpretations.

Now we are able to look at the verses following Matthew 24:36. Is there any further proof of my interpretation from the surrounding context?

There is certainly proof, and it comes immediately after, in comparing the days of Noah to the coming of the Son of Man. Verse 37 says that the days of Noah will be the same as the coming of the Son of Man. Verse 38 speaks of the time prior to the flood, saying that the people were eating and drinking until the day that Noah entered the ark. The things mentioned, such as eating and drinking, are not good things. It is referring to worldly affairs, as evidenced by the fact that the people said to have been doing these things are those who verse 39 goes on to say were destroyed in the flood. Only the worldly people died in the flood, not the good. Verse 39 says, in speaking of the people of that time, "And did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." This verse, speaking of the non-believers, says that they didn't know something until the flood came. What was this? Obviously what they didn't know was that a flood was going to destroy them all, and when the flood would take place. Since the verse compares this to the coming of the Son of Man, we interpret verses 37-39 to mean that most of the world will be involved with the affairs of the world until the time when the Son of Man comes, when they will be destroyed. The people will be caught off guard when Christ returns, and won't have known that He was going to return when He did. From the way verse 39 is written it is clear that they could have

known when it was going to happen prior to its happening, since not knowing until the flood came, which is compared to the coming of the Son of Man, is obviously a bad thing. This is further confirmed by looking at the story of Noah. The eight who were saved on the ark knew the exact time prior to its happening. In Genesis 7:4, God told Noah the very day that the flood would start. The meaning is clear: Most of the world will not know when Christ is going to return, but will only know the time of His return once He has already come, at which time they will be destroyed. A few people will have knowledge of the hour prior to its happening, and these are the people who will not be destroyed, as Noah and the other believers knew the time of the flood, and were not destroyed. This now gives us more than enough right to claim that it is possible for some to know when Christ is going to return prior to His coming, and that verse 36 is referring to the world in general. That verse says that no one knows the hour, and in explaining this, the comparison to the days of Noah shows that some knew the hour then, though most didn't. So the most won't know the hour until the Second Coming has happened, though they could have known in advance. Clearly one can only know the hour through God, as Noah was given it through God. The verse means that only God can reveal the time to anyone; that they are incapable of knowing of themselves. If they were to know the hour, this would not make them know something that Jesus (and the angels of heaven) didn't, as He also had knowledge through God.

Let's have a look at the gospel of Luke, as this corroborates what I have just said. I noted that in the context of the return of Christ, Jesus said that no one knows the day and hour, except the Father. From looking at Luke 21:34, which is from the same prophetic address of Christ, but which is in parts slightly different, we see that Jesus said that the day would come unexpectedly for those who were involved with the cares of this life. It says, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly." To paraphrase the verse, "be careful so that you don't become involved in the cares of this life, so that Christ's return will come on you unexpectedly." The end of the quote clearly means that the day will come unexpected to those who are worldly. The verse is clear that the unexpected return is a result of their worldliness, as the next verse confirms, in saying that the day will come "as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth." The snare is the unexpected return. A snare is certainly not something that is good, as is evidenced by its definition. A snare is a trap; something by which one is entangled. Christians claim that by saying that Christ would come like a thief in the night it means that He would come unexpectedly. Their understanding is that this applies to everyone, but the Bible shows that the return should not come upon one unexpectedly. From my evidence in the previous paragraph it is clear that if the return comes on you expectedly then you knew the hour and had watched.

Notice that verse 35 says that the day would come as a snare to "all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth." The Bible has many verses using the word "all", but it is clear from reading the Bible that oftentimes most are

intended. Verse 35 isn't as literal as it appears to be, as indicated by the comparison of the flood to Christ's return. One might note that before the flood, God had promised to destroy "all flesh (Genesis 6:13)," yet eight people were saved. Just after this promise, God told Noah that He and those seven would be exempted. The same thing is indicated in Matthew 13:43 (cf. Daniel 12:3), which speaks of there being righteous people when Christ returns. The day wouldn't come upon these people as a snare.

The gospel of Mark speaks about watching, or being ready for Christ's return, just as Luke does. In Mark 13:34 Jesus illustrates the meaning of His command to watch, speaking of the doorkeeper of the house who was commanded to watch. In verses 35-36, He tells the people (represented as doorkeepers) to watch, lest when He (represented as the master of the house) returns, He finds them asleep. If they are asleep, they obviously didn't expect Christ to return at the time, so the day would come as a surprise. This is what will happen with mankind at the time Christ returns, as foretold in Matthew 24:38-39.

Back to Matthew chapter 24 again. Now it would be appropriate to look at the rest of the chapter. Verses 40-41 say, "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left." These verses clearly mean that those who have detached themselves from the world will be saved, but those who have corrupted themselves will be left among others of their sort. After this, verse 42 says, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." It's important to know who is being addressed in this verse. There is no reason to believe that everyone, including the steadfast believers, is being addressed in this verse, since the surrounding verses show how it is going to be for the people living when Christ returns. So this verse must speak to those who are prophesied to be destroyed, those who aren't watching. As verse 36 spoke of all, yet meant most, this verse is the same. Verse 43 actually helps interpret this verse, and supports my suggestion. It says, "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into." What do we notice about this verse? The verse says that the master of the house (or householder) didn't watch, and because of this he didn't know the hour. Because he didn't watch he had his house broken into. Having one's house broken into is a bad thing, just as being cut in two is (Matthew 24:51). The Bible commands us explicitly to watch, and as Matthew 24:43 says, if we watch our house won't be broken into. So clearly those addressed could have known the hour, and to know this they would have to watch, or put themselves in a position to receive divine assistance, as Noah did. The wording of Matthew 24:43 appears problematic to what is being said in other verses, when it says that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have been watching." If interpreted incorrectly, it would lead one to believe that the knowledge of the hour would cause the master of the house to watch. But from the wording it can say that if he had been watching, he would have known the hour. So if he had known the hour it would be because he was watching. Clearly this verse states that if you've watched, you'll know the hour, but if you haven't

watched, you won't know the hour. In verse 42, Christ tells the people to watch, as they don't know the hour. As the non-believers are spoken to, it is clear that if they watch they will know the hour. There is nothing in verse 43 suggesting that watching is pointless, or that the master of the house did all that he could, and was prepared. The verse says that if he had watched, he would have known the hour. So if people prepare for Christ's return, they will know when He is going to return. Verse 43 does not offer any proof that the master of the house couldn't have known the hour, as it just says that if he had known it, his house wouldn't have been broken into. This doesn't say that he couldn't have known the hour. This would have to be established by proof from other verses. Surrounding verses Matthew 24:39-42 give support for the belief that this verse is telling how it will be at the time of the Second Coming, and that the master could have known the hour. Mark 13:37 says, "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" If we interpret Mark 13:35 as do Christians, and then read the following verse, then we would have to believe that one must watch even if they don't know the hour at the time, so my interpretation of Matthew 24:43 (and thus Matthew 24:42) must be correct. That the master of the house in verse 43 is a non-believer who should have watched, or made himself ready for Christ's return, is confirmed in the Bahá'í Writings.[1]

We notice in verse 43 that the master of the house did not see the thief when he came. It is clearly implied that the master of the house not only didn't see the thief when he came, but didn't know that he had arrived. Applying this to the Second Coming we see the exact opposite of the usual Christian message. The verse speaks of the house being broken into. It is implied that the thief was there for a while and then left, before the master of the house realized what had happened. It is clear that if the master of the house had watched, he would have seen the thief when he came. If Matthew 24:43 is interpreted literally then Revelation 1:7 couldn't mean what most think, as the master of the house didn't know what had happened until the thief had broken into his house. He didn't see the thief come.

Obviously the mere act of looking through the outward eye has nothing to do with the biblical admonition. By saying that the thief "would have watched" if he knew the hour, spiritual perception concerning the signs is meant. Otherwise, many in the world would be punished if they stopped looking towards the sky for a few short minutes, which just so happened to be the time when Christ arrived. There is no justice in that.

The next few verses in Matthew further confirm what I have already said. In verse 44 Jesus tells those addressed to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour they don't expect. This indicates that the master of the house in the former verse didn't watch, and that he could have known the hour had he watched. The master of the house in that verse was not ready, hence the admonition given in verse 44 to be ready. Remember that Luke 21:34 says that if Christ comes unexpectedly to anyone that it is a result of them not watching, so there can be no doubt who is being addressed here. So in verses 42-44 Jesus

is saying what will be the case with the non-believers, yet warning them, so that they have a chance to be ready, and not have the return take them by surprise. Doubtless few will be aroused by these exhortations, as indicated by Matthew 24:39, which is a prophecy. The following verses after verse 44 are the same as those in Luke chapter 12, but Luke has a few words on the subject before this. Luke 12:35-36 says, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately." These verses show that one must be spiritually alive, and patiently wait for the Second Coming, so that when Christ comes, they will attain His presence, and not be destroyed. From reading 2 Peter 3:7 it is clear that only the non-believers, the "ungodly men," will be destroyed when Christ returns. Luke 12:37 begins by saying, "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching." The rest of the verse says that of these people the master will eat with them, and come and serve them. Verses 42 and 44 also speak of bounties to be given to those wise servants who watch. Verse 38 says, "And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." This obviously means that with the wise servants, Christ could come at any time and find them watching, ready for His return. Verses 39-40 are Luke's counterpart to Matthew 24:43-44. Immediately after this in Matthew, Jesus starts speaking of the faithful and wise servant, but in Luke, there is a verse in between this. In this verse (verse 41), Peter asks Jesus if He is speaking the parable only to the disciples, or to all people. Jesus does not answer him directly. In verses 42-44, which parallel Matthew 24:45-47, Jesus speaks of the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household. These verses are clearly speaking of those who watched. Verses 45-46 then move to speak of the evil servant. These verses parallel Matthew 24:48-51. Verses 45-46 say, "But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink with the drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." This shows what will happen to the good servant, who was ready, if he becomes involved with the affairs of this world. Notice how much living a good life has to do with salvation and being ready for the Second Coming, according to Jesus. He said that if the people become involved with the cares of this world, He will come when they are not looking for Him, or not watching for His return. It will be like the master of the house in Matthew 24:43 who didn't watch (and didn't know the hour) and thus had his house broken into. The whole objective is to be ready for the thief, so that you can open the door for him when he comes. In other words, you want to "catch" the thief. Jesus said not only that to those who weren't prepared He would come when they weren't looking for Him, or don't expect Him, but also at an hour when they are not aware. This doesn't suggest that the world in general won't have realized that He has returned, thus indicating a silent return, but it doesn't refute it either. Luke 12:46 ends by saying that Christ will cut the evil servants in two. Clearly this is metaphorical. Are we to believe that

Christ, the one who told Peter to put his sword into his sheath, and never hurt anyone, will cut people in two when He returns? Jesus is speaking in parables here, so there is no reason to believe this. Matthew 13:47-50 speaks of the kingdom of heaven, and in speaking of it, mentions the angels who will come forth at the end of the age, and cast the wicked into the furnace of fire, where there would be wailing and gnashing of teeth. The kingdom of heaven is entirely spiritual, and does not come with observation, as Jesus said in Luke 17:20. So obviously the punishment mentioned is not going to be seen in an outward sense.

I noted earlier that Peter had asked Jesus whether Jesus was speaking His parable concerning the coming of the Son of Man like a thief to the disciples only, or to everyone. Jesus did not give a yes or no answer, but instead spoke of those who are ready, and those who are not. It seems like Jesus did this so that the people see that it's possible that they could be the wise servant. Since the words of Jesus show that one can fall from being a wise servant to being an evil servant if they don't continue to watch, He must have felt it best not to give the disciples an answer, as the words might not eventually apply to them. This is perhaps what Christ is indicating in the following verses, since He speaks first of the wise servant, then of the evil one.

Now let's have a look at what is said in Matthew chapter 25. This chapter runs on from the former chapter, and speaks of the kingdom of God to come at the time of the end. Jesus likens it to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. The bridegroom is clearly Christ. It says that five were wise, and five were foolish. In verses 3-13 it says that the foolish people took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. It says that while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slept. At midnight a cry was heard, saying that the bridegroom was coming, and telling the people to go out to meet him. Then all the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish asked the wise for some of their oil, as their lamps were going out. The wise refused, saying that there wouldn't be enough for themselves and the others. They advised those who didn't bring oil to go to those who sell, and buy for themselves. While these people went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was shut. Later the other virgins came, asking the Lord to open to them. But he answers them saying that he doesn't know them. Finally, those addressed are instructed to watch, as they don't know the time in which Christ is coming. This is a parable, and should not be taken literally. So now we have to determine what the meaning is. Those who took no oil in their lamps are those who didn't detach themselves from the world. In Luke 12:35 Jesus said, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning." This is tied in with being ready for His return. Those who didn't have oil for their lamps ran out of oil, and thus their lamps, which Luke 12:35 shows to be related to their level of spirituality, were not burning. Those with the oil were not becoming involved with the cares of this world. Verse 5, which says that all the people slept while the bridegroom was delayed, cannot be literal. The wise virgins were obviously ready for the return, and thus were watching,

or awake. Mark 13:36 warns the people that if they are not ready, Christ will find them asleep. So the sleep cannot be used here to indicate anything spiritual. The reason for its mention is evident in the following verses. Matthew 25:6 speaks of the cry, telling the people that the bridegroom is coming, and the next few verses contrast those who were ready spiritually, and those who weren't. Verse 5 says that everyone slept, both those who were and those who weren't ready. Since the chapter indicates that all mankind are given a chance to be ready, it is clear that the reason why everyone is said to have slept is to show that both groups have equal opportunity. The difference is shown when the bridegroom came, as to who was and wasn't ready. We then hear of the bridegroom coming, and those who were ready going in with him to the wedding. Those who weren't ready, and didn't have oil when the call was made, around the time when the bridegroom was coming, were refused entry. The chapter suggests that those who don't have light won't be admitted into the presence of the bridegroom when He returns. Verse 13 says, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." Context shows that the "you" who Jesus says don't know the day or hour in which the Son of Man is coming, refers to the non-believers. In the previous verse, Jesus speaks of those who don't have oil in their lamps, and refuses them entry to the wedding, saying, "I do not know you." Verse 13 runs straight on from that, and it would make little sense if the "you" in that verse applied to anyone but those in the previous verse. Those who took no oil obviously didn't know the hour, but those who had the oil knew the hour. Jesus was aware that most of the world would not watch, and thus admonished the people to watch, as then they would know the hour. It could be suggested from the chapter that the non-believers will be aware that Christ has returned at the time. However, the chapter is a parable and there is no reason to believe this interpretation. The parable is of the kingdom of heaven, which comes when Christ does, as shown by this chapter and Luke 21:31. Clearly if the kingdom of God does not come with observation, as Jesus said in Luke 17:20, then neither will Jesus.

Let's now look at the remaining verses relevant to the subjects I'm covering. 2 Peter 3:10 is one. This verse explains what is meant by saying that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. It says that when the day of the Lord comes the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the world will be destroyed, or pass away. This is what Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:35. These things must be metaphorical for many reasons. Heaven, God's abode, cannot literally pass away. Isaiah 65:17 promises new heavens and a new earth, and the context shows that this is in speaking of the end of the Babylonian captivity. The fulfillment of this promise was entirely spiritual at that time, thus it will be the same at the time of the end, which 2 Peter 3:10 speaks of. This is further shown by Ecclesiastes 1:4, which says, "A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains for ever." If the earth remains for ever, then it isn't going to pass away. Psalm 104:5 says the same thing. Isaiah 65:17, and thus 2 Peter 3:10 and Revelation 21:1, cannot be literal for all the reasons given above. Nahum 1:5 is virtually the same as 2 Peter 3:10, and it says that the same things described in 2 Peter 3:10 have happened before, and

are not only to happen at the time of the end. If the promise wasn't fulfilled in a particularly outward sense in the past then there is no reason to believe that it will be in the future. So clearly the destruction at the time of the end will not literally destroy numerous people, or be evident to the people. Since the destruction is to happen when Christ returns, and since the return of Christ must be in a manner that is equally outward, this means that 2 Peter 3:10 provides evidence that the return will be silent. Those on earth (the non-believers) won't realize, even though the world is getting burned up, and they are being cut in two (Matthew 24:51).

The final verse of relevance in the gospel of Luke is Luke 19:44. In this verse, Jesus prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem, saying that it would be destroyed as "you (the people) did not know the time of your visitation." The meaning of this can be found in verse 42. Jesus speaks of the people of the city, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." If these people don't know the things that make for peace, because of spiritual blindness, then they won't know that their city will be destroyed, and when. If not knowing the time when that event of destruction will take place is bad, then not knowing when the destruction foretold to happen at the time of the Second Coming is also bad, and in both situations it is preventable. Notice that verse 42 indicates that knowledge is to be concealed until the time of destruction, just as the knowledge of Christ's return will be concealed until it has happened, with the world in general.

The gospel of John does not include any verses on the subjects that my article covers. But Acts, Revelation, and 1 Thessalonians do. Acts 1:7 is a verse used to refute the belief that the time of the Second Coming can be known. In verse 6, the disciples ask Jesus whether He will restore the kingdom to Israel at the present time. In verse 7, Jesus responds by saying, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." Their argument is that the time of the Second Coming, like the time when the kingdom will be restored to Israel, must also be put in God's authority, and is not for humans to know. This suggestion ignores other verses in the chapter. In verse 4-5 it speaks of the promise of the Father, that the disciples would be baptized with the Holy Spirit "not many days from now." Straight after verse 7 it says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." It is clear that Jesus meant that the disciples would receive power to know the times and seasons which God has put under His own authority. After all, the Greek word used for "time" in Mark 13:33, which says that the people don't know when the time is, is also used for "seasons" in Acts 1:7. If verse 8 doesn't mean that the disciples would receive power to know the times and seasons, then the words are out of place. Since at Pentecost, when the disciples received the Holy Spirit, they were given the ability to speak in other languages that they did not know, it would hardly be a surprise that they should be told the times and seasons that God has put in His own authority. John 20:22-23 speaks of Jesus giving the Holy Spirit to the disciples and then telling them that they can forgive sins, something which only God can do. Acts 2:4 says that the Holy

Spirit gave them utterance. God gives us His Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:8), which is able to tell people things that God has put in His own authority. Just a note on Mark 13:33, what I have said would be to say that the disciples didn't know the hour when Jesus was alive, and my former comments would deem them temporary non-believers. I think that from the gospel evidence that the disciples perhaps only attained the station of being a true believer after Jesus died. To be accounted as having watched, you have to be better than just a good believer. So perhaps the disciples were for a time in the same category as the non-believers, as Acts 1 shows that they didn't know the hour, or couldn't be certain of it, until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given, and they became steadfast. That's why in Mark 13:37 Jesus makes it clear that His words are intended for the disciples as well as for everyone else, though even if those addressed do know the time, the instruction to watch, when not in reference to the non-believers, should still apply to them. One must watch and continue to do so. In Luke 24:49, Jesus instructed the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they are endued with power from on high. If they didn't obey this instruction then they wouldn't have been given this power, and thus they wouldn't know the hour. To take heed of this instruction would not make someone know the hour until Pentecost, though it would be obeying the command of Jesus.

As I explained before, it is not contradictory for the Bible to say that Jesus does not know the hour, though He may know it. You have to look at the Bible critically to see paradoxes like this. So it is not contradictory to say that a person knows the times and seasons put in God's authority. Christians believe that the year for the first coming is pointed to in the Bible. If this is so, then shouldn't that be classified under "times or seasons?" How can they know this, when it is under God's authority, yet claim to be unable to know something else that is under His authority?

Revelation 3:3 is a very good proof verse for the Bahá'í belief. It speaks to the church in Sardis, saying, "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you." This verse speaks of the Second Coming, and it says that if the people don't watch, Jesus will come upon them as a thief. How does a thief come? Does a thief come storming in with trumpet blasts, and intentionally let everyone see him come? Of course not, but that's what most Christians think will happen when Christ returns. So much for Him coming like a thief. A thief comes without noise, and the people may not realize that the thief is there. There is certainly no indication that the non-believers would catch the thief. The biblical verses on this subject show that Christ is a good sort of thief, and that the objective is to catch Him, but to do this we must detach ourselves from the world. Those objecting to the belief that the year for the Second Coming is given in the Bible will ask whether a thief would tell you when he is coming. Well a criminal thief would be unlikely to do so, but with Christ, the opportunity has been given us to "catch" Him when He comes. So their argument has no merit because the case of Christ is quite different. Revelation 3:3 says that Jesus will come upon the people as a thief if they don't watch, and it also says that

they will not know what hour He will come upon them. Obviously they could know the hour in advance otherwise. So Jesus is saying that His coming like a thief in the night will only be that way for the non-believers. Since Jesus wants us to "catch" Him, though is making it hard for us, it would be compassionate that He tells us when He is going to return, since the world in general won't figure out the time He was pointing to. It's interesting how people can give the above argument, considering that a thief wouldn't tell you He was coming, let alone tell you His name. I guess they forgot what sort of thief Christ is.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5 will conclude the passages on the thief in the night issue. 1 Thessalonians 5:1 says, "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you." Verse 2 then gives a reason for this, saying, "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." I have already provided evidence that the day comes like a thief only for the world in general, the non-believers. Paul said that he doesn't need to write to the people of the times and seasons, as they know that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. It seems that he said that he doesn't need to mention the times and seasons as those who are addressed were watching, and thus knew the hour already. They wouldn't even need the numerical prophecies pointing to the year of the Second Coming, if they are watching for the signs. The numerical prophecies still are important, as a source of hope for those living prior to the Second Coming, and for proof that the return has already happened to those who don't believe that it has. The way verse 1 is written implies that Paul does know the times and seasons, but chose not to mention them. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 confirms what is meant by the coming like a thief, saying, "For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." Who is being spoken of here? Only the non-believers. The verse says that the people won't escape. What they won't escape is the snare, which is promised to come upon "all" who dwell on earth, though, as I have formerly shown, some will escape the snare. If one reads Luke 21-34 and then verse 35, it is clear that if the day comes upon anyone unexpectedly, that is the snare. In 1 Thessalonians 5:4, Paul then speaks of the believers, saying, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief." In other words, Christ will not come like a "thief in the night" to those who are prepared for His return. Verse 5 says that those addressed are all sons of light and sons of the day, not of the night or darkness. The next verse says, "Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober." It is clear from the former verse that the "sons of light" are those who are "awake," or ready for the Second Coming. The sleep mentioned in verse 6 is referring to worldliness. The following two verses show the same, and have the same message as some of the words of Jesus.

Another way to show that the time for the Second Coming can be known is to show that certain numerical prophecies in the Bible refer to the time of the end, or the year of the Second Coming. Such verses can be found in abundance. I think it should be quite clear to anyone reading Daniel chapter 7 that verses 25-27 speak of the time of the Second Coming. Verse 25 connects a date with it. But

some will disagree, so let's show, in greater detail than would otherwise be needed, that these verses do indeed speak of the time of the Second Coming. In verses 1-8, it says that Daniel had a vision. In it he saw four beasts, each different from the other. The fourth beast is suggested to be greater than the three before it. This beast is a kingdom, as are the others (Daniel 7:17,23). The fourth beast had ten horns. There came up among them another small horn, before which three of the first horns were plucked up, and this horn is said to speak great things. Verse 9-10 says, "As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened." Since the horn is said to be evil (Daniel 7:25), the reason why verses 9-10 are mentioned straight after is to indicate that the judgment would take place when this horn would fall, and at this time the heavenly kingdom would come. One can't help but notice the similarity between Daniel 7:9-10 and Revelation 20:11-12. The latter speak of a great throne with one who sat on it, from whose presence earth and sky fled away. Numerous dead people are said to be standing before the throne, and the books are opened. The people are judged by what they have done. The prior verse had spoken of the destruction of the devil, thus indicating that this happened at that time. Because of this, it is clear that the positioning of Daniel 7:9-10 is to indicate that at the time of judgment, the horn will be destroyed, or have his dominion taken away. The next verse speaks of Daniel hearing the sound of the words that the horn was speaking. As he looked, the beast was slain. Since the small horn is part of the fourth beast, it also must be affected at this time. Verse 26 says that its dominion will be taken away. Verse 12 says that as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a while. It is clear that these things happening to the four beasts are to take place at the same time. Verses 13-14 speak of Daniel seeing one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days, and being presented before Him. Dominion and glory and a kingdom were given to Him. It says that "his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." It is clear that this must take place at the same time that the former verses speak of. The slaying of the fourth beast, and the taking away of the dominion of the first three obviously take place at the day of judgment, when the books are opened, which is spoken of immediately before. At the day of judgment the everlasting kingdom that cannot be destroyed will be set up. This is confirmed by Daniel chapter 2. In speaking of the vision of the four kingdoms, it says, "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever." (Daniel 2:44) So obviously when the kingdoms, or beasts, lose dominion or are destroyed, the heavenly kingdom will be set up. Clearly this refers to the time of the Second Coming. The son of man must be presented to the Ancient of Days at the time

spoken of in verses 9-10, which is the time spoken of in the following verses. The son of man spoken of is said to have received dominion, glory, and a kingdom when presented before the Ancient of Days. He could not have received these prior to His return, as otherwise the "kingdom that shall not be destroyed" would have already come, which would mean that the beasts would be destroyed or have their dominion taken away prior to the time of judgment, which contradicts the facts. To say that Christ was given the kingdom while in heaven, but then took it to earth, is unsupportable, and I don't have to assume it. I mentioned that it speaks of Him being given glory. Matthew 25:31 speaks of the Son of Man coming in His glory. Obviously the glory is given to Him at this time. Since Daniel 7:13 speaks of coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days, their argument would be to say that this wasn't seen, as Christ isn't seen prior to the Second Coming. But doesn't the Bible say that the people would see Christ coming on the clouds? One cannot arbitrarily say that Christ came to the Ancient of Days with "different" clouds, and that this verse has nothing to do with the time of the Second Coming. Clearly when the judgment of the beast takes place, and the son of man receives glory and dominion, the Second Coming happens.

Now to prove what I've been trying to establish, all I need to do is find a verse that gives a numerical prophecy relating to this time. Firstly, we note that the horn was to make war with the saints, and prevail over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints, and the time came when they received the kingdom (verses 21-22). The Ancient of Days obviously came at the time that Christ came to earth. He comes at the time of the judgment, when the books are opened. In Matthew 16:27 Jesus says that when the Son of Man comes He will reward each person according to their works. This means judgment. The saints receive the kingdom at the time of the Second Coming, as Matthew 25:34 says. Daniel 7:23-24 speaks of the fourth beast, finishing by speaking of the small horn. Verse 25 speaks of him, saying, "He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time." Verses 26-27 then says that the court will sit in judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, and the kingdom and dominion shall be given to the saints, whose kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom. So clearly the exact time of the Second Coming was spoken of in verse 25. Since the horn will wear out the saints for three and a half times, which is a number of years, and the next two verses make it clear that at this time the everlasting kingdom would be set up, which is given to the saints, and which Jesus says will happen at the time of the Second Coming (Matthew 25:34 cf. Matthew 25:31), this is clearly a numerical prophecy regarding that exact time. So the year can be known. Some have claimed that Daniel 7:13 is a prophecy of the first coming, but from a closer examination of the chapter it is clear that this is not the case. One person who disagreed with time-setting agreed with me when I showed that Daniel 7:25 speaks of the year of the Second Coming. His argument was that the year is given, but it is impossible for anyone to work it out. This would be to claim that God put a

prophecy in His own book which is impossible to understand. What would be the purpose of doing this? He may as well leave it out. Where does the Bible say that any part of the book cannot be understood? The Bible does speak of the words being sealed until the time of the end, which would include the numerical prophecy of the Second Coming, but indicates that the wise can know the sealed words before that time. A major problem with His suggestion is that it is impossible that the numerical prophecy couldn't be worked out. Everyone would agree that the first three kingdoms are famous, historical kingdoms, and that the things prophesied about them are true. We would have to believe that a fourth kingdom, which seems to be greater than the first three, would be able to have a horn coming from it that would wear out the saints, and think to change the times and the law for a period of a few, or more than a few years, yet that no one would be able to know when this horn began to do so. This is a little hard to accept. Of course people could know when this time started, and they would be able then to know when the Second Coming would happen.

Daniel chapter 12 is another chapter which speaks of the three and a half times. Verse 1 speaks of a time of deliverance, which is associated with the time of the Second Coming. Verse 2 speaks of a resurrection, which is also associated with the time of the Second Coming. Verse 3 says that those who are wise will shine brightly. This is almost the same thing that Jesus said in Matthew 13:43, in the context of speaking of His return. To this point there is no doubt that the time of the Second Coming is spoken of. In verse 4, Daniel is told to shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end, confirming that this time is spoken of. In verse 6 Daniel asks a man clothed in linen, whom he saw in his vision, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" What wonders? Everything spoken of just prior in the chapter. Those things relate to the time of the Second Coming, so Daniel is asking when this will take place. In verse 7, the man says, "it would be for a time, two times, and half a time." So the Second Coming will take place at the end of this period. The calculation and length of the period do not concern this article, as I am not trying to show that a particular year is pointed to in the Bible for the Second Coming, just that a year is. The verse also says, "when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished." This obviously refers to those religious people who have not followed the teachings. The horn would be included under the holy people mentioned in that verse, and it is to lose its dominion at the time when the saints receive the kingdom. So it is very clear that the year for the Second Coming is given in the book of Daniel.

The New Testament mentions the same prophecy of the three and a half times. In Revelation 12:6 the time is expressed as 1260 days, but in verse 14, the time is expressed as three and a half times. Revelation 13:5 says that the beast "was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty two months." How similar does this sound to Daniel 7:25, which says that the horn will speak against God, and wear out the saints until the end of the three and a half times? Revelation 13:7 speaks about this beast making war with the saints. As I showed with Daniel chapter 7,

at the end of the three and a half times, the horn loses his dominion, and Christ returns. So the New Testament also provides a date for the Second Coming.

The final numerical prophecy I will cover is the 2300 days mentioned in Daniel 8:14. The first thing I will establish is that this prophecy speaks of the time of the Second Coming. After this I will argue that Jesus refers to this very prophecy in Matthew 24:15.

Daniel 8:17 says that the vision related to the 2300 days is for the time of the end, however, some claim that this "end," which the end of the 2300 days would reach, was not the same "end" as the Second Coming. It is commonly believed that this prophecy found fulfillment at the time of Antiochus Euphianes. I myself believe that Antiochus is spoken of in the chapter, but that there is indication of a double meaning concerning this prophecy.

So let's have a look at Daniel chapter 8. This chapter, like the former, records a vision Daniel had. In this vision Daniel sees a ram standing on the bank of the river Ulai. The ram had two high horns, the one coming up last being the higher one. Daniel sees the ram charging westward, northward and southward, having great power. Then Daniel sees a he-goat coming from the west across the earth, having a horn between his eyes. The he-goat comes at the ram and strikes it, braking his two horns. The he-goat magnified himself, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and in place of it four horns came up. From one of them came forth a little horn, which grew great toward the south, east, and toward the glorious land. It became great, casting down some of the host, or saints, and trampling on them. He magnified himself, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. Verse 13 says, "Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to the one that spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled under foot?" Verse 14 then says, "For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state." It is clear that the 2300 days begins when the burnt offering is taken away, and the host is given over to be trampled under foot, as the wording of verse 13 shows. The question is only related to some of the things seen in the vision, not all. The reason why the earlier things are mentioned is because they tell us history prior to the time that the 2300 days start, so that we have a sufficient historical background to spot the beginning of this time period.

So let's determine the meaning of the prophecies. This is easy, as an explanation is given to Daniel by Gabriel. In verse 20, he says that the ram with two horns is the kings of Media and Persia. Verse 21 says that the he-goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn is the first king. The next verse says that in regards to the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms would arise from his nation, but not with the power of the horn that was broken. Verses 23-25 says that at the latter end of their rule, a king of bold countenance with great power shall arise. This king would

destroy the saints. He would make deceit prosper, and magnify himself, but then be broken, or killed. Verse 26-27 clearly shows that the end of the 2300 days marks the end of this destruction or abomination he causes, so the time that he dies. No one would disagree that the Persian and Greek empires are spoken of. The broken horn refers to Alexander the Great, and the four kingdoms were those of four of Alexander's generals, who divided his kingdom after his passing. At the latter end of these kingdoms, during the second century BC, Antiochus Epiphanes arose. Everything foretold of him is accurate.

One thing we notice is that from the Bible, it can only be that the periods of time relating to 1260 and 2300 must end at the same time. To begin with, Daniel 8:17 says that the 2300 days ends at the time of the end, and Daniel 12:4 says that the 1260 days ends at this time. The 1260 days, which Bahá'ís believe to be 1260 years, are regarded as future in the New Testament. The horn mentioned in Daniel chapter 7 seems to be exactly the same as that in chapter 8. The horn in chapter 8 is to have great power, cause deceit, magnify himself, and destroy the saints. The horn in chapter 7 is to prevail over the saints, have great power, and then have his dominion taken away. This is to happen at the end of the 1260 days, and as chapter 8 indicates, this will happen when the 2300 days end. The description of the horn in both chapters suggests that they speak of the same person. Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 12:7 say that the saints will be prevailed against until the end of the 1260 days, and Daniel 8:13-14 says that the saints will be prevailed against until the end of the 2300 days. The time mentioned in Daniel 12:7, as when the things mentioned would be accomplished, is the indignation, as the verse makes clear. Daniel 8:19 speaks of the end of the indignation when speaking of the 2300 days. So clearly the 2300 days and 1260 days terminate at the same time, and that time is after the death of Christ.

My belief is that the horn mentioned in chapter 7 is only in a sense the same as that mentioned in chapter 8. This is confirmed by many facts. Firstly, one notes that chapter 7 has the horn being associated with the fourth beast. Chapter 8 mentions two of the beasts of that chapter. Greece, the latter beast, is the third beast in chapter 7, not the fourth. Chapter 8 makes it clear that the horn comes from the third beast, not the fourth. This doesn't mean that the horn of chapter 8 won't continue in power until the time of the end. A double meaning is indicated in Daniel chapter 11. This chapter speaks of events that happened related to the Greek kingdom, and it speaks of Antiochus Epiphanes. Verse 31, which speaks of his forces profaning the temple, and taking away the burnt offering and setting up the abomination of desolation, is unquestionably something that did happen during his lifetime. This admission would seem to admit that the fulfillment of Daniel 8:13-14, which concern what is spoken of in that verse, occurred during his lifetime. But two other things show that my belief does not mean that this should be the case. Daniel 11:35 says, "And some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine and to cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed." Daniel 12:10, which comes straight after speaking of the time of the end, which is regarded as future in the New Testament, says much the same. Daniel 11:36-39

reiterates those things spoken of Antiochus in chapter 8. The rest of the chapter, in speaking of the time of the end (Daniel 11:40) speak of the end of the king of the north. The king of the north and king of the south are spoken of many times during this chapter, yet they refer to many different people living at different times. The things foretold in the last few verses, which seem to be speaking of Antiochus Euphianes, did not happen to him. Since Antiochus, who was the king of the north, is simply one person who could be called this, as he fits the conditions, the last few verses could certainly speak of a future king of the north. Daniel 12:1, which begins by saying "At that time," and then proceeding to speak of the time of the Second Coming, is referring to the time spoken of in the last verse of the former chapter, which has the king of the north dying. Daniel 12:7 contains a numerical prophecy of when this king will die, which is regarded as future in the New Testament, so it can't refer to Antiochus Euphianes. It seems that the person spoken of in the last few verses of Daniel chapter 11 must be a horn who is the same as Antiochus, and since this horn will continue until the time of the end, it must be the one referred to in chapter 7, associated with the fourth beast. Daniel chapter 8 apparently wanted not only to prophesy about Antiochus, but compare him to the horn in the previous chapter, so that it could prophesy of the time of the end. It should be clear from what was later written at the end of Daniel chapter 11 that two different horns could be spoken of interchangeably, and thus the horn of chapter 8, Antiochus, wouldn't need to exist until the literal time of the end. So the fourth beast does not need to be mentioned in that chapter. From everything here, it is clear that the 2300 days could only finish with the 1260. Some have tried to fit this period into what happened with Antiochus Euphianes historically. All of these attempts have failed. Many have said that 2300 evenings and mornings should equal 1150 days. They will mention the morning and evening sacrifices, as if the prophecy was of the number of sacrifices. I'm not sure that it would make any difference if it was. Clearly 1 evening and morning is one day, not half a day. No Jew could have understood it to mean otherwise from the wording. 1150 days isn't quite historically correct anyway. If the beginning of the 2300 days is the time when the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up (those claiming that Daniel chapter 8 refers solely to Antiochus Euphianes claim that this refers only to what happened in 168 BC), then Daniel 12:11 must have begun at this time. This verse says, "And from the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." What happens at the end of this time is not important to my argument, but the 1290 days start around the same time as the 1260 days, and must finish later. If Daniel chapter 8 speaks solely of Antiochus then this verse must also. So this time period would have finished or at least started when Revelation was written. There the 1260 days are regarded as future, so the 1290 must also be. While the daily sacrifice and abomination of desolation are used in Daniel 11:31 to speak of outward events, they can also be inward. Verse 35 does indicate that the time of the end would come when Antiochus was alive, obviously with his death, but apocalyptic literature commonly speaks of current events as though they were the end. It is plausible

that the time Antiochus died could be spoken of as the time of the end, as it is the end of an era.

Matthew 24:15 vindicates my claims. In this verse, Jesus said, "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand). Since verse 14 speaks of the time of the end, this verse must also be related to this time. So we need to go back to Daniel to see where this reference is to. The abomination of desolation is spoken of three times in the book of Daniel, and all three are connected with a numerical prophecy. It can't refer to Daniel 11:31 for obvious reasons. It can't refer to Daniel 12:11, because this comes after the 1260 days/years, at the conclusion of which the kingdom of God comes. So it must refer to Daniel 8:14, which refers to the time of the end. So it is clear that Jesus supported the belief that the time of the Second Coming could be known, though later on He appeared to suggest that the time couldn't be known. But as shown, those verses refer to the non-believers. As Daniel 12:10 said, in speaking of the time of the Second Coming, "none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand." So the Bible clearly shows that the time of the Second Coming can be known.

The Flood

As I implied before, Bahá'ís do not believe that the flood story is a literal account of a deluge that destroyed the earth a few thousand years ago. My interpretation is that the story is symbolical, as the official Bahá'í position states.[2]

There are three kinds of information that I will use to show that the flood story should not be taken literally. If I can show that the flood was no outward event that destroyed most of the humans on the planet, then there would be good reason to believe that destruction could certainly have come at the time that Bahá'ís believe that Christ returned, though I think my prior evidence is sufficient. Bahá'ís do believe that some punishments of an outwardly destructive nature were inflicted on people of the time of Bahá'u'lláh that rejected Him, yet this is far from a destruction of the whole earth. We don't know whether the exact same thing happened in the days of Noah, but since the destruction caused by the flood is compared with that to happen when Christ returns, I need to show that nothing of a cataclysmic nature happened to the world during the time of Noah, and then I'd have shown that the return would be quiet.

One could suggest that if I prove this, Christ could still return visibly. However, the Bible promises that Christ would destroy with fire those who don't know God, and those who don't obey the gospel of Jesus, when He comes (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). This destruction must be the same as that spoken of in 2 Peter 3:10, which says that the whole world and everything in it will be burned up. 2 Peter 3:10 is virtually identical to Nahum 1:5, which says, "The mountains quake before him, the hills melt; the earth is laid waste before him, the world and all that dwell therein." That verse is not a prophecy of the time

of the end, or even prophetic at all. Rather, it is referring to the ways of the LORD in general, so the things spoken of in verse 5 would have happened often. The next verse says that God's wrath is "poured out like fire," showing that the former verse uses symbolism. As is indicated by this verse, the things mentioned in verse 5 are not things that are reserved for specific instances, but are always a consequence of the indignation of God. But we know that "all that dwell therein" the earth have never been destroyed by fire, with respect to any offences committed by people in the Old Testament. Really these facts are enough to show that the Second Coming could not be visible. If 2 Peter 3:10 is not literal, then there is no reason to believe that fire should literally come from Jesus' mouth when He returns, or that there would be any outward destruction at that time. And since the destruction when Christ returns is compared to the destruction of the flood, that would mean that the flood story should not be taken literally. That aside, let's have a look directly at the flood story and its implications.

The flood story attempts to illustrate God's sovereign power to destroy the world which He Himself once created. After the flood, God ensures order in the world by means of a promise which may be understood as recapitulation of His original creation: He will never again destroy the world, and the course of the year shall be according to law (Genesis 8:22). The promise is confirmed by a covenant, of which the rainbow is the objective sign (Genesis 9:12-17).

The flood narrative has therefore theological significance within a wider context, while at the same time describing the Israelite understanding of the world and of nature. It should not surprise us to learn that ancient myths were employed here in order to depict God's relationship to the world He had created. The connection between this narrative and the Sumerian-Babylonian flood myth is evident, as is the dependence of Noah's flood upon the latter. The Sumerian-Babylonian myths are earlier than Noah's flood, so one can't say that they were copied from Noah's flood. The Genesis flood story is clearly an adaption of these myths. The story has been worked into the historical context, and changed from being polytheistic to monotheistic.

In the eyes of Christians, nothing in the Bible can come from myth, as that would mean that it didn't come from God. I disagree with this belief, and have come to believe that many stories in the Bible are mythical. The flood story was very appropriately told, given the understanding of the people at that time. Those hostile to my argument interpret verses in the Bible which reflect incorrect scientific notions prevalent at the time to be addressing the knowledge of the people of the time, so that they could understand. They believe that the Bible is not meant to be infallible scientifically. However, they are very resistant to a symbolical interpretation of stories like the creation narrative, despite the fact that this story is paralleled in an earlier Babylonian myth. The scientific ordering is the same in both. If the former verses are incorrect scientifically, simply addressing the knowledge of the people of the time, then why should it be any different with the creation story, which was an adapted myth? So there's no reason why the creation and

flood stories should be literal. They were appropriately used for the audience, as were the verses using the incorrect scientific notions of the time, which were later proven false.

In the beginning of the very same chapter that the Bible begins to speak about Noah's ark, we find something originating from myth. Genesis 6:1-4 speaks of the intermarriage of fallen angels (or sons of God) and human women, producing offspring called Nephilim. While Christians will deny it, the text means exactly what it says. It has been claimed that the sons of God here were men, not angels. To prove that men are spoken of, Christians give references to humans as "sons of God," and mention the fact that angels aren't physical, and thus couldn't have been intended. In regards to angels, I agree that they are non-physical, but because of this it is clear that many stories in the Bible are not literal stories at all. Take Genesis chapter 19. In verse 3, the two angels eat. In verse 8, Lot begs the people not to do anything sexual with the angels. If the angels weren't physical, then I don't see what Lot was worried about. In verse 10, the angels "put forth their hands and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door." This could only be a physical being doing this, if the story is literal. So the story, containing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, can't be literal. In confirmation that angels were spoken of in chapter 6, there is an abundance of information showing that those living in the biblical era seriously believed that such marriages had taken place. Chapters 1-20 in the book of First Enoch are devoted entirely to the premise that angels had descended from heaven, married human women, and thereby produced a state of almost total corruption on earth. Jude 14-15 quotes from 1 Enoch 1:9, thus giving good reason to believe that the surrounding chapters are reliable. For further proof that Genesis 6:1-4 is mythical in origin, see the article "If It Walks Like a Duck" in *The Skeptical Review: Volume Two, Number Four*.

Since a story found in the same chapter that the flood story begins is mythical, there is not much reason to believe that it would be any different with the flood. Many absurdities are associated with a literal interpretation of the flood story. Those believing that the flood happened are asked to give rational answers to the questions posed to them. My article will cover only some of the problems contained in the story.

The flood story suggests that the highest mountains at the time of the flood were only a few metres in height. The RSV translation of Genesis 7:20 would lead one to believe that the flood waters covered the highest mountains by fifteen cubits, thus allowing the mountains of that time to be any height. However, the KJV translation of this verse is clearly better, when analyzed. It says that the waters rose fifteen cubits, and the mountains were covered. From the KJV there is no reason to believe that the mountains were covered to a depth of fifteen cubits, or that the flood waters ever reached a height greater than fifteen cubits, which is a mere depth of almost seven metres. This would have to mean that the mountains of Ararat were hardly more than small mounds, considering they must have been less than seven metres. They must have been a

fair bit less, considering the waters had to abate before the ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:3-4). It says that the waters continued to abate for approximately another two months, until the tops of the mountains were seen, which means that at the time that the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat, it would still have been submerged. The ark would have been partly underwater, and resting on it. Funny that an ark thirty cubits high was needed to be built to save people from a flood of half that height.

Those believing in the flood story must provide rational answers to the following questions:

Genesis 6:15 says, "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits." A cubit is about one foot and a half. How could two of every animal survive for approximately ten months on a boat encompassing 1,518,70 cubic feet? The food alone would take up a tremendous amount of space.

Genesis 6:17 says, "I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die." Genesis 7:4 reinforces this point, in saying, "every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." Yet, how would a flood destroy sea animals, such as whales, porpoises and all animals entirely underwater?

Genesis 7:8-9 says, "Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah." How did animals that are confined to certain parts of the earth get to the ark?

Kangaroos, polar bears, penguins and others would have to have crossed vast oceans. How did many of the animals withstand climatic changes? Many of those from polar regions could not have withstood the heat of the Middle East. How were the animals prevented from killing their natural prey? Slow animals from other continents, such as snails and sloths, must have started their journey to the ark many years before. How did only eight people feed and water such a large number of animals for many months? How did the animals know where to go when the time arrived to enter the ark? If two of every species, two dogs, two elephants, two goats, and so forth, entered the ark, then are we to believe that the tremendous variety of dogs in the world today, from the great dane to the chihuahua, descended from just two of the species? In saying this I'm assuming that anyone believing that the flood story is literal also believes that the creation story is literal. There is no reason why one should be literal, and the other not. As most who would believe in literal interpretations of these stories would be young earth creationists, one can't help but note that the variety of dogs coming from just two animals would mark a tremendous evolutionary change in only a few thousand years. Not to mention with humans. If the human race began anew from Noah and His sons, then we would have to believe that the wide variations among the earth's people developed in a short time since the flood. Those with vastly different features would had to have come from the same ancestors. How could this have happened?

The above are certainly not the only problems with a literal interpretation of the flood story. Surely anyone not doubting after reading these things is beyond the reach of common sense. With some, none of the problems with the flood story will faze them. My problems will be answered with such answers as "we don't know how it happened, but it did," and "God did it." If these people are content with believing in a story, which, if taken literally, is absurd on the face of it, so be it. My evidence shows that there was no outward destruction of the earth during the time of Noah. In regards to Lot, that story is also taken from myth. So certainly the destruction to accompany the Second Coming could have already happened, and if proof, such as that found in my former article, shows that that 1844 was to be the year this would happen, then the Bahá'í claims are vindicated, and it would be proven that the day had come very much as a snare on the world.

Since this article is not meant solely for Christians, I'd like to close by examining a claim made by a couple of Bahá'ís concerning the meaning of the comparison of the coming of the Son of Man to the days of Noah. This way, my evidence can be considered. After that, I will give a few short comments, intended mostly for Bahá'ís, though the application is to all.

Some Bahá'ís have claimed that the comparison of the days of Noah to the return of Christ indicates that the returned Christ will live exactly as Noah did; He will come silently, be rejected, and then those who rejected Him will be destroyed later. Until recently, I agreed with this, though I saw serious problems with it. The major verse that I thought supported this is Luke 17:26, which says that the days of the Son of Man would be as it was in the days of Noah. Since the word "days" is used in both cases, I interpreted this verse to refer to the lifetime of the Son of Man. I concluded from this that the lifetime of the Son of Man would be identical to Noah, so this verse provided evidence of a silent return, where the Son of Man will be rejected. The problem with Luke 17:26 is that the text neither confirms nor denies that the lifetime of Noah should be compared with the lifetime of the Son of Man. To establish the meaning, we need to look at other verses, as "days" doesn't necessarily mean the lifetime of a person. From looking at all of the other verses on the subject it is clear that the lifetime of Noah isn't what should be compared to the Son of Man. The word "days" simply means the time or age. The people of the world carrying on with their worldly affairs apparently was the case even prior to the birth of Noah, and it is to be like this prior to the coming of the Son of Man. I think that the time just prior to the birth of Noah, and coming of the Son of Man could be called their "days." "Days" would just mean the age the two were living in, and what happens in them. From the only verses of relevance to this subject, it is clear that the intention of Jesus was to show two things. Firstly, that the time prior to the coming of Jesus would be the same as the time prior to the flood, in terms of moral corruption, and secondly, that the coming of the flood would be the same as the coming of the Son of Man. This is illustrated by Matthew 24:37-39, which begins by saying that the coming of the Son of Man would be as the days of Noah, and then speaks of what will happen prior to the Second Coming, and at the exact time of the Second Coming

(this is made clear by the context). Since Luke 17:26 speaks of the days of both, yet then speaks of the days of Noah and Lot, firstly mentioning that the people were carrying on with their worldly affairs, then saying that they were destroyed, and then comparing this to how it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed, it is clear that Luke 17:26 encompassed the age. The main focus is on the time of the Second Coming, which is compared to the flood, an event that occurred during the life of Noah. The information on how it will be prior to the time is important, but only mentioned with the destruction to show us why it will happen. It is very clear from every text on this subject that the lifetimes of Noah and the Son of Man are irrelevant; only the worldliness and destruction associated with them are relevant. Noah is only mentioned because the flood happened during His life. Otherwise, He would not have been mentioned. Clearly Noah's rejection should not be inferred to mean that these verses show that Christ will likewise be rejected when He returns.

This evidence doesn't mean that the belief that the returned Christ will be rejected is disproven, just that the reference to the days of Noah provides no confirmation of it. The comparison to the days of Noah does not go any further than the exact time of the Second Coming. The fact that it doesn't provide evidence that the returned Christ will be rejected, like Noah, is only a problem if this belief can't be supported anywhere else in the Bible.

Let me end with a few hopefully wise comments in closing. This article took me much longer than I expected. Only concerning a few verses in the Bible, I thought it would be done within half a week. After reading the verses through more thoroughly, I began to see that there were a few difficulties I was unable to answer. It took a great deal of reading to prove that a passage like Matthew 24:36-44 was in reference to the non-believers, or the world in general. I had made many assumptions before reading the relevant passages thoroughly, and these distorted my reading of texts, and presented difficulties when looking at other texts. To pick up some of the things I have, I do think that a great deal of reading is required, though were someone to look at the text more critically, the time would be greatly reduced. One thing I've found is that false interpretations I used to have were only shown to me as wrong after I have examined the Bible in great detail. Until recently my textbook knowledge of the Bible has not been too good. Most of the errors I have made in the past are due to lack of reading. I would recommend to others that they do the reading before they begin to write articles. Always look at the weakness in your interpretations, and think about what the other side will say in response. In writing your material, you must have a good knowledge of the Bible, a good knowledge of the beliefs of these people, and an understanding of their psychology, so that you can respond in such a way that you can be assured that your arguments will be convincing. If you have a poor knowledge in these three things then it's almost a guarantee that your argument will go down unsuccessfully with those who disagree. It should ideally never happen that one receives a response to their arguments, containing things that come as a surprise to them.

Notes

[1] `Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982) p. 35.

[2] Shoghi Effendi said, "The statement in `Seven Days of Creation' certainly cannot be considered authoritative or correct. The Ark and the Flood we believe are symbolical."

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