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FULFILLED!

Magazine

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

Welcome to our first issue!

*Hurricanes, Earthquakes and Tsunamis:
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Welcome to the first issue of *FULFILLED!* Magazine! We pray that you find it encouraging and edifying, and we look forward to hearing your response. Obviously, as we grow into this venture there will undoubtedly be many changes in content and vision. Still, we must start somewhere, so the following is the inaugural vision of *FULFILLED!* Magazine:

First and foremost, we desire to bring glory and honor to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus did not say that it was by our doctrine, nor by our eschatology, that others would know we were His disciples, but by our love for one another. Therefore, it is our prayer that within these pages the different views of a spiritual rapture and a literal rapture; of Preterism and Transmillennialism; responses to Futurism and the cries of “heretic,” etc. may be presented in love. For even if we have impeccable doctrine, yet have not love, we are as clanging cymbals—and who wants to listen to that? When Futurists visit our websites and read our books, they have often perceived a certain “attitude” in the materials. Granted, they may not understand the whole context—especially in online message boards—but we should take care, as Paul said, to let our speech always be with grace. In keeping with that spirit, this issue has a wonderful article by Doug Reed, titled *Love or Doctrine?*

“AFTER ALL, WHEN ONE LOOKS PAST THE ESCHATOLOGY, WE ARE TYPICAL CHRISTIANS WHO FACE THE SAME STRUGGLES AS OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WITH DIFFERING VIEWS.”



Secondly, we pray that, as we reason together, we will create an atmosphere in which individuals will be sharpened and challenged to grow, rather than accused or ridiculed. Realizing that a body is composed of many different parts, we desire to see a sense of unity and community amongst Preterists, where we focus on our common belief of fulfilled prophecy, rather than on our differences of opinion as to how it was fulfilled. In *When Shall These Things Be?* (edited by Keith Mathison), it is stated that although the contributing authors may disagree on certain particulars of doctrine, they stand shoulder to shoulder in their agreement on the future resurrection, judgment and physical return of Christ. As Preterists we should be willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with each other on our common beliefs, while still allowing “wiggle room” for the particulars.

Thirdly, in this day and age of hectic schedules, few have the time needed to read a book—let alone a book on some “strange” doctrine (as many view Preterism). While there are many excellent books defining and defending Preterism, and many copies have been put into the hands of Futurists, most, it would seem, are gathering dust. Therefore, we desire to provide nuggets that will be bite-sized, palatable and nourishing—not to the Preterist only, but to the Futurist as well. Many who can’t (or won’t) afford the time to read a book may very well skim through a magazine. Who knows—if something catches their attention, they might end up blowing the dust off that volume someone gave them years ago, and reading it! Our hope, and prayer, is that

Preterists will view this magazine as a non-confrontational means of sharing the doctrine of Preterism with others.

Lastly, we hope to provide Preterists with more than eschatology. After all, when one looks past the eschatology, we are typical Christians who face the same struggles in life as our brothers and sisters with differing views. There-

fore we hope to provide devotional pieces and testimonies that Preterists, who are often isolated from meaningful fellowship, will find encouraging. This issue’s devotional is titled *Passing Through, or Pressing Through?*

As you can see, accomplishing all of this will be no easy task. We would greatly appreciate your prayers in these matters. And we want to hear from you! Send your emails to brian@fulfilledmagazine.com, or write us at:

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God bless,



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Hurricanes, Earthquakes and Tsunamis: Signs of the Times?

by Brian L. Martin

The past eighteen months have seen a devastating tsunami, numerous hurricanes and earthquakes which have resulted in casualties numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Many prophecy pundits are quick to point to these as “signs of the times,” indicating that the Second Coming of Christ is surely drawing near. Even those within Christianity who avoid the often confusing arena of Bible prophecy are sitting up and taking notice. Are these catastrophes, which seem to be increasing in intensity, really “signs of the times”? Are they evidence of what the Bible calls “the last days”?

Certainly, by considering these events in light of Bible prophecy, we do not intend to minimize or ignore the tragedy wreaked by them. The loss of life, the resulting homelessness of tens of thousands, the orphans, etc. are almost beyond comprehension. Whether or not these events fulfill Bible prophecy, there are certainly passages which we can apply to them as we demonstrate the love of Christ by comforting those who sorrow (2 Cor. 1:3-4) and sharing with those in need (1Jn. 3:17-18).

Associating natural disasters with what the Bible calls “the last days” is not unwarranted, as the following passage from Jesus’ discourse on the end of the age reveals:

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. (Mt. 24:7)

While it is certainly scriptural to link natural disasters to the last days, it is noteworthy that throughout history there are examples of natural disasters being interpreted as a sure sign of Christ’s soon return. In *The Day And The Hour*, Francis Gumerlock chronicles many instances in which the people of a particular era were sure that Christ was about to return because of the “signs of the times”: an earthquake in A.D. 363¹; an eclipse and drought in 418²; the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 993³; a famine in 1033⁴; famine and pestilence in 1259⁵; earthquake and the Bubonic plague ca. 1348⁶; an epidemic in 1369⁷; an earthquake in 1580⁸; and the list goes on.

For those who would say that, although these things have existed throughout history, they are

increasing like birth-pangs (Mt. 24:8), Gumerlock records the following observation:

English Baptist John Gill preached between 1750 and 1752 that signs of the End were occurring more and more frequently, and that the final slaying of the Two Witnesses would take place shortly.⁹

In 1999 Steven A. Austin and Mark L. Strauss posted a technical paper on the Institute for Creation Research web site titled *Earthquakes and End Times: A Geological and Biblical Perspective*. They open the paper with the following: *According to a number of Christian writers and teachers on Bible prophecy, Jesus predicted in the Olivet Discourse that a pronounced increase in the frequency and intensity of earthquakes would occur just prior to His return to the earth. Many of the same writers and teachers claim that the decade of the 1990s has experienced a pronounced increase in both frequency and intensity of earthquakes as compared to earlier decades of the twentieth century.* The authors then list no less than nine well-known prophecy teachers who made such claims.

After analyzing the technical data from several earthquake databases, they state the following in their conclusion: *A number of prophecy teachers say that a pronounced increase in frequency and intensity of earthquakes has occurred in the latter part of the twentieth century, a worldwide trend fulfilling a prophecy made by Jesus. Contrary to these prophecy teachers, no obvious trend is found indicating an abnormal increase in the frequency of large earthquakes during the last half of the twentieth century. Neither is there a noteworthy deficiency of earthquakes in the first half of the century. Graphical plots of global earthquake frequency indicate a decreasing frequency of earthquakes through the century. The decades of the 1970s, 80s and 90s experienced a deficit of larger earthquakes compared to earlier decades of the century. The 70s, 80s and 90s are precisely those decades that many prophecy teachers suppose, erroneously, show a dramatic surplus of larger earthquakes.* [emphasis added]

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Ockham's Razor

by Brian L. Martin

WILLIAM OF OCKHAM (1285-1349), WAS AN ENGLISH THEOLOGIAN AND PHILOSOPHER. HE WAS NOTED FOR HIS INSISTENCE ON PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION TO LANGUAGE AS A TOOL FOR THINKING AND ON OBSERVATION AS A TOOL FOR TESTING REALITY. HIS THINKING AND WRITING IS CONSIDERED TO HAVE LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR MODERN SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY. OCKHAM'S INSISTENCE ON THE USE OF PARSIMONY (WE MIGHT CALL IT MINIMALISM) IN THOUGHT RESULTED IN SOME LATER WRITER'S INVENTION OF THE TERM, OCKHAM'S RAZOR. ONE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS METHODOLOGY IS THE IDEA THAT THE SIMPLEST OR MOST OBVIOUS EXPLANATION OF SEVERAL COMPETING ONES IS THE ONE THAT SHOULD BE PREFERRED UNTIL IT IS PROVEN WRONG.

While we must exercise caution in using worldly philosophies to interpret Scripture, the application of Ockham's razor to the imminency passages of the New Testament is quite thought provoking. Consider just these few imminency passages, from the many dozens available:

Matt 16:27-28

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

The majority of commentators are divided as to exactly what event, which occurred during the lives of some of those standing there, fulfilled this prophecy. The Transfiguration, Pentecost, the Ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem are offered as possibilities. In spite of this lack of unity, they all seem agreed on this point: it wasn't the Second Coming of Christ, although that seems to be the obvious subject of verse 27.

Matt 24:33-35

So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Many devices are used to tell us why the generation to which Christ was referring was not His generation. A gap is put in the chapter, thus separating the first portion, addressed to Christ's generation, from the last portion, which is addressed to some future generation. Or *generation* is defined as the Jewish race, or a group of wicked people.

1 Thess 4:15-17

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds

to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

A plain reading of this passage would lead one to the conclusion that Paul expected at least some of his contemporaries, and perhaps himself, to be alive at Christ's return. Yet we are told that Paul was using an "editorial" *we*, which referred to the saints in general who would be alive at the Second Coming.

Rev 1:1-3

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Although the phrases "shortly take place" and "the time is near" would seem to be self-explanatory, commentators provide us with several reasons why we can still look for the events to be fulfilled in our day (or later). One is that "shortly" does not mean that the fulfillments are near, but will take place speedily, in a short period of time, once they commence. Another interpretation is that, while the commencement of the fulfillments (or some of the fulfillments) may take place shortly, their complete fulfillment may stretch over long periods of time. And then, of course, there is the fact that what is "near" in God's perspective may indeed be millennia in man's.

Returning to Ockham's razor, we first note that each of the above passages requires a different "explanation," and that none of the explanations fit the other passages. Redefining "generation" does suffice for Matt. 16:28; using an editorial "we" does not work for Rev. 1:1-3, and so on. And these are only four out of dozens of imminency passages. While some of those other imminency passages might fall under the explanations already given, you

The Parousia

by J. Stuart Russell

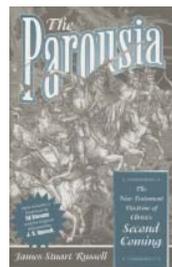
This ongoing series of articles is taken from *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*, by James Stuart Russell. Originally published in 1878, Russell used an older style of English, and the King James Version of the Bible. We have taken the liberty, when it does no harm to the text, to update the English and use the New King James Version of the Bible. In 1999, *The Parousia* was reprinted with a foreword by R. C. Sproul in which he stated:

"Few books have forced me to rethink ideas or challenged my assumptions as much as this one has."

Further Allusions to the Coming Wrath

Luke 13:1-5 *There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."*

How vividly our Lord apprehended the approaching calamities of the nation, and how clear and distinct His warnings were, may be inferred from this passage. The massacre of some Galileans who had gone up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover, either by the command, or with the connivance of the Roman governor; and the sudden destruction of eighteen persons by the fall of a tower near the pool of Siloam, were incidents which formed the topics of conversation among the people at the time. Our Lord declares that the victims of



these calamities were not exceptionally wicked, but that a *like fate* would overtake the very people now talking about them, unless they repented. The point of His observation, which is often overlooked, lies in the *similarity* of the threatened destruction. It is not 'you *also* shall all perish,' but, 'you shall all perish in *the same manner*.' That our Lord had in view the final ruin, which was about to overwhelm Jerusalem and the nation, can hardly be doubted. The analogy between the cases is real and striking. It was at the feast of the Passover that the population of Judea had crowded into Jerusalem, and was there cooped in by the legions of Titus. Josephus tells us how, in the final agony of the siege, the blood of the officiating priests was shed at the altar of sacrifice. The Roman soldiers were the executioners of the divine judgment; and as temple and tower fell to the ground, they buried in their ruins many a hapless victim of impenitence and unbelief. It is satisfactory to find both Alford and Stier recognizing the historical allusion in this passage. The former remarks: the force of which is lost in the English version "*likewise*," should be rendered "*in like manner*," as indeed the Jewish people did perish by the sword of the Romans.

"I CAN NEVER READ
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READING *THE
PAROUSIA*

-R. C. SPROUL

Now, unless words do not mean what they say, it is certain that not only in the Apocalypse and the Epistles, but also in the Gospels, the Second Coming of Jesus had very narrow limits of time assigned to it. These coincide unmistakably with the winding up of the Jewish age, at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The New Testament writers were entirely of one mind as to the speedy advent of the heavenly King and the heavenly kingdom. In the four gospels Christ's own predictions on the subject are numerous and emphatic, and are expressed in great variety of language. The words attributed to Him are free from all ambiguity. To deny (as some do) that His utterances are correctly reported is to strike a fatal blow at the integrity of the Gospel records, and to make it uncertain what His real teaching on any subject was. —Ernest Hampden-Cook, *The Christ Has Come*



Perspectives

Don K. Preston



A well-known Futurist author and speaker claims, “Preterists . . . overall tend to allegorize key texts (i.e. Matthew 24:29-31). Allegorizing occurs when an interpreter brings into a text a meaning, based on ideas, from outside the text. Thus, their interpretation cannot be supported from a normal reading of the words and phrases.”

Preterists do not *allegorize*. We do honor the metaphoric nature of apocalyptic language. We honor the type/anti-type use of language. We honor the inspired application of Old Testament prophecy by New Testament writers.

Where in the words “animal sacrifices” is one compelled to see Jesus’ sacrifice? “Lamb” does not mean “Jesus.” Yet, “Christ is our Passover.” Does the literal word “Temple”

mean “church”? No, but that is how the Hebrew writer interpreted the typology of the Old Testament temple (Hebrews 8:1; 9:24f). A dispensational reading of the Old Testament would not reveal that Israel was a shadow of good things to come.

The New Testament writers viewed Israel’s history as typological: “those things happened *as types of us*” (literal rendering of 1 Corinthians 10:11). This cannot be overemphasized. It is not allegorizing for the New Testament writers to make spiritual application of Old Testament language! It is inspired *application*!

Preterism honors the shadow-v.-reality doctrines. The New Testament inspired writers say that *the literal realities anticipated coming spiritual realities*. It is not “allegorizing” to honor these applications. Israel failed to see the spiritual realities, and killed Christ.

So, when the New

See *Preston*, p. 14

***How would you
the claim that
“spiritualizes***

Edward E. Stevens

It is no surprise that futurists accuse preterists of “spiritualizing” everything, especially since preterists accuse them of “literalizing” everything. But both extremes are equally wrong. It is just as fallacious to “spiritualize” all the literal language in the Bible as it is to “literalize” all the figurative language in the Bible.

The Bible contains all kinds of language (figurative, literal, historical, symbolic, apocalyptic, typological, poetic, hyperbolic, parabolic, etc.). Each type should be interpreted “according to its own particular genre” (or kind of literature).



Historical narrative needs to be interpreted historically and literally. Apocalyptic language needs to be interpreted apocalyptically.

Apocalyptic language (like the book of Revelation) should be interpreted like a political cartoon in the newspaper at election time. You know, the ones in the editorial section picturing donkeys and elephants dressed up in weird costumes doing idiotic things! Most Americans understand what the donkeys and elephants symbolize (the two major political parties), but the point of the cartoon is not always as obvious. Sometimes we have to get a little more background information on the political figures and events before we enjoy the satirical humor intended by the cartoonist.

The same is true of the apocalyptic language in the Bible. Before we try to interpret all the weird characters, costumes, and activity described in the book of Revelation, we need to first acquaint ourselves with the history,

See *Stevens*, p. 15

David B. Curtis

Preterism only spiritualizes what the Biblical text tells us is spiritual. For example:

When is the kingdom to come? Is it here now, or is it yet future? When Jesus began to preach, He said that the kingdom of God was “at hand”—it was near! Later in His ministry, Jesus said that the kingdom had arrived:

Matthew 12:28 (NASB) “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Now, if the kingdom of God had come in the first century, then it should be clear that the **nature** of the kingdom was **spiritual**. **Time defines nature**. Jesus said that the kingdom “has come” —**time**—so the **nature** of His kingdom must be spiritual. I think that Jesus tried to stress this point by saying that the kingdom did not come with observation:

Luke 17:20 (NASB) Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when

the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed”



We see this same idea with the resurrection, which Paul said was near in his day:

Acts 24:15 (NKJV) “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be [Greek mello—about to be] a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

If the **time** of the resurrection is seen as AD 70 (the end of the Old Covenant age), then we know that the **nature** of the resurrection was spiritual, rather than physical. The previous illustration that the kingdom of God had

See Curtis, p. 14

How do you respond to Preterism’s “spiritualizing” everything?

Steve & Tom Kloske

It is clear in the discussion of Preterism that there is a major controversy concerning the use of “literal” and “spiritual,” or, more precisely, the idea of spiritualizing the language of the text. Preterists have, by and large, been accused of spiritualizing the text when it benefits them, while literalizing it when it supports their position. Is this a fair accusation? Is it accurate?

Perhaps so, but the use of spiritualizing or literalizing should be judged on its evidential merits and not dismissed by a broad-brush stroke that leaves the reader questioning the credibility of the author. For example, who would “literalize” Matthew 5:27-28 in the discussion of sin and the penalty for it? Jesus declares a strong response, but does it leave the listener questioning the literal meaning of His words? Not at all! Those who heard His words knew He was not advocating mutilation of the body to secure salvation of the soul.

Having said that, *the* question still remains;

how does one determine when to use a literal or spiritual interpretation? First and foremost, we believe you start with a literal approach. This means whenever possible, you attempt to interpret the text *literally*, but as mentioned above, there are times when that is simply impossible.

Another point in this debate is how “literal” and “spiritual” interpretation cuts both ways. It is not only the Preterist that attempts to use both figures of language when interpreting Scriptures. The millennialist also tries to present his position by literalizing or spiritualizing certain language words or phrases in a favorable light.

As we plowed through hundreds of books, we noticed a common thread that Preterists have been accused of: using the literal or spiritual interpretation whenever it benefited their position. The simplest example also reveals the most fundamental flaw in any interpretative

See Kloskes, p. 14



Perspectives

Love or Doctrine?

ANYONE WHO HAS
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A story is told of a conflict between two great leaders of the reformation—Martin Luther and a fellow named Ulrich Zwingli. The two had doctrinal differences which made unity among Protestants impossible. In an effort to make peace, a man named Philip of Hesse brought the two together in a conference hoping they could hammer out their differences. Luther and Zwingli were able to agree on every single point of doctrine except one. They had differing views on communion. Because of this one difference they refused to shake hands with one another after the conference was over, and all hope for a unified reformation was lost.

In our day disunity because of doctrinal differences continues. Anyone who has frequented internet forums knows how doctrine can cause hatred and downright disgraceful behavior between brothers. Something is terribly wrong when we despise others because we believe they do not know as much about God as we do. Rather than showing how much we know God, such behavior proves that we do not know God, for he who does not love does not know God. (1 John 4:7-12).

The question is—can we seek purity of doctrine and still love our brother? That is, can love and doctrine coexist? Some would say no. In fact, many are saying that we are in the midst of a great paradigm change from the modern mindset to the postmodern paradigm. The modern paradigm was based upon great faith in the power of reason and humanity’s ability to find absolute truth. Postmodernism is in some respects a reaction to the failures of the modern paradigm. The postmodernist points to where belief in absolute truth has led us. And where is that? Twenty thousand denominations, that’s where.

The postmodern solution to this problem is to throw out absolutes altogether. The thought is that if we get rid of the idea that there is absolute truth, there can be peace between brothers. This way of thinking might bring a greater peace, but at what price? If we start down the path of relativism, we eventually must lose the absolutes of the Lordship of

Christ and redemption itself. We cannot draw lines, because there are no lines in this paradigm. Any and all beliefs must become acceptable—even those that deny Christ. Therefore, the idea of eliminating absolute truth is not a solution to the divisions among God’s people. The cost is just too high.

On the other hand, there are those who believe unity can come through doctrine. I have heard some say that Preterism will become a unifying force for the whole church. We just need to get everyone to agree, and then we will be one. Through reason and sound arguments we will be able to get everyone to see it our way. Such thoughts might stir the soul, but history proves them unfounded. In fact, when we make doctrinal agreement the basis of our fellowship, the result is not unity but division. We have five hundred years of church history and thousands of denominations to prove this.

I agree with those who say that Christ Himself must be the source of our unity. However, many of these then try to make what they think about Christ the basis of unity, and the cycle continues. They cite belief in certain creeds or traditions to determine *what* is acceptable, and therefore, *who* is suitable for their circle of unity. Yet, as we all know, an increasing number of believers are questioning some of the creeds. What about those believers—are they no longer Christian?

If Christ Himself is our only answer to the divisions among us, we must let Him—who He is and what He has done—truly be the basis of our unity. To help us understand how this is possible, let us take a brief look at first century Palestine.

In Jesus’ day there were distinct ideas among many of the Jews about who was close to God and who was far away. One place those distinctions were clearly seen was in Herod’s temple. We have some pretty big church buildings in our day, yet none of them would have compared to Herod’s temple. Herod’s temple was so big that it took up 20% of Jerusalem. The floors were marble, the walls were beautiful white limestone, and many of its interior walls were paved in solid gold. In some of our

by Doug Reed

large churches today we might have fifty or more ministers serving the people. Yet as many as 17,000 priests served at the temple in Jerusalem.

In all of its beauty, Herod's temple revealed something about the people's relationship with God. Moreover, it said something about the people's relationship with each other. If I would pick one word to describe that statement, it would be "separation." There was separation between God and man, man and man, and even woman and man.

The temple was divided into three courts. The outer court was called the court of the Gentiles. In some respects this first court was for the tourists. People would come from all over the world to see Herod's glorious temple. In fact, it was said in that day that if you had not seen Herod's temple, you had not yet seen a beautiful building.

A sign at the entrance to the second court of the temple warned foreigners not to enter, under the penalty of death. A person was refused access to the second court based on who they were, and what they did. Those who were not descendents of Abraham, the uncircumcised, or those who did not keep the Torah could not enter the second court. If they tried to enter, they would be stoned to death. The Romans did not allow the Jews to carry out capital punishment except for this one offence. If you violated this realm, you would be put to death by man. This second, or center, court was divided into three sub-courts. First, there was the court of women. Like the name implies, Jewish women could go here as well as men and children. Then there was the court of Israel, and only Jewish men could go in here. Finally, there was the court of the priests. You had to be a priest to enter here.

Beyond the second court was the Holiest of Holies. The Gentiles had their court. The Jews had their court. The Holiest of Holies was God's court. Only He could dwell here. It was surrounded by a veil so thick that a team of oxen could not tear it apart. No one except the high priest could enter the Holiest of Holies, and he only once a year at the Feast of Atonement. If a Gentile went into the court of the Jews, man would kill him. If a person went into the Holiest of Holies unlawfully, God would slay him.

The temple was a picture of the relationship between God and man and also between man and man before Christ came. There was separation in every place. There was separation between God and man, Jew and Gentile, and even man and woman. Yet, Jesus, by dying and rising from the grave, tore down all of these walls of separation.

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision

made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph 2:11-14, 19 NKJV)

What *middle wall* do you think Paul is talking about here? He was talking about the wall between the court of the Gentiles and the court of the Jews. When the New Covenant came, there was no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile. God had made them into one new people. You may have noticed in verse 19 Paul told the Gentiles that they were no longer foreigners. Paul's wording here is not by accident. As you recall there was a great sign at the entrance to the court of the Jews that said foreigners were not allowed. Now there were no longer any foreigners with God. Moreover, it was God's desire that the Jews no longer count the Gentiles as foreigners or strangers but as equals before the Lord. It was time to take down that sign.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26-28 NKJV)

What about the distinctions in the middle court? Paul shows us that the distinctions of this court also had been lost. There is no longer any distinction between male and female. That does not mean there is no more gender. It just means that one gender can no longer consider itself closer to God or more important than the other. In Jesus' day men were considered more righteous than women simply by virtue of their gender. Jewish men were called the "Sons of Abraham" and Jewish women, the "Daughters of Eve." Men did not talk to women in public—it was considered beneath them. Furthermore, education in theological matters was for men only and never for women.

In our day we don't realize how radical Jesus was in these matters. He was the first to call women the "Daughters of Abraham." He not only talked with women in public, but he allowed them to be His disciples. Jesus truly tore down the wall between the court of women and court of Israel in His ministry, removing this distinction in all finality at the cross.

See *Love or Doctrine*, p. 12

Signs cont. from p. 3

It would appear that, by claiming the recent disasters are “signs of the times,” our generation runs the risk of adding our names to the growing list of those who felt likewise and were proven wrong. The key to the natural disasters of the “last days,” which always seems to be overlooked, is found in the following verse from Jesus’ discourse:

*Truly I say to you, **this generation** will not pass away until all these things take place. (Mt. 24:34)*

While we acknowledge that there are “devices” used which render “this generation” as some generation other than the one which Christ was addressing, isn’t it interesting what His generation experienced?

Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. (Acts 11:28)

. . . and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were unfastened. (Acts 16:26)

Josephus also records the following, which occurred during the siege of Jerusalem: “But the famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive to nothing so much as to modesty; for what was otherwise worthy of reverence was in this case despised; insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants; and when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives.”¹⁰

. . . for there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continued lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake. These things were a manifest indication that

some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and any one would guess that these wonders foreshowed some grand calamities that were coming.¹¹

Instead of adding our names to the end of a growing list of those who have mistakenly believed they were seeing the “signs of the times,” perhaps it is time to look at the other end of the list—to the very people who heard Jesus speak the words, “this generation will not pass away.” They experienced earthquakes, famine and more during their lifetimes, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem. While the disasters of recent months were certainly devastating and horrendous, they are no more a fulfillment of Bible prophecy than was the eruption of Vesuvius or the Bubonic Plague.

1. Francis X. Gumerlock, *The Day And The Hour*, 24
2. *Ibid*, 28
3. *Ibid*, 50
4. *Ibid*, 58
5. *Ibid*, 72
6. *Ibid*, 84
7. *Ibid*, 86
8. *Ibid*, 134
9. *Ibid*, 207
10. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 5 chapter 10
11. *Ibid*, Book 4 chapter 4

IT IS NOTEWORTHY
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Ockham’s Razor cont. from p. 4

would find that several more than the four “explanations” already given are necessary to deal with all of the imminency passages. And yet, there is one explanation that fits not only these four passages, but *every imminency passage in the New Testament*—the Second Coming of Christ occurred during the generation of the New Testament saints.

This brings us back to Ockham’s words: the simplest or most obvious explanation of several competing ones is the one that should be preferred until it is proven wrong.

Hmmm . . . !

Passing Through, or Pressing Through?

by Brian L. Martin

In the 8th chapter of Luke's Gospel we read the account of the woman who was healed from a flow of blood. Jesus, having returned from healing the demoniac of the Gaderenes, is met by Jairus, who fell at His feet and begged Jesus to come to his house and heal his dying daughter. As Jesus was passing through the town to Jairus' house, the woman with the flow of blood came up behind Him and touched the hem of His garment. She was immediately healed. Jesus, having perceived that power had gone out from Him, asked, "Who touched Me?" Peter responded by saying, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"

Peter's point was that, as the crowd was passing through the streets with Jesus, many people had touched Jesus—they had brushed up against Him, bumped shoulders, etc. So why did Jesus ask, "Who touched Me"? Because the touch of the woman was different than the touch of the others in the crowd. She determined to press through the crowd and touch Jesus, in order to receive something from Him. Her touch was intentional, whereas the crowd's was incidental. Hers was causal, the crowd's casual. And this is why out of perhaps dozens that "touched" the Lord that day, only the woman is recorded as having received anything from her contact. She realized, apart from the rest of the crowd, that the destination was not where Jesus was going—the destination is Jesus Himself!

In our personal walks with Christ, it is much easier than we may realize to become part of the crowd and pass through life, rather than pressing through to Him. Our Bible study, prayers and church activities can take on a "routine" aspect, and our contact with Jesus becomes incidental, rather than intentional. This is not to say that being part of the crowd following Jesus is undesirable, nor unrewarding. But it was the woman who received power

when she made a concerted and determined effort to touch the hem of His garment.

It has been noted that in the culture of that day, not only would a woman never take the initiative to touch a Rabbi, but suffering from a flow of blood she would have to announce herself as being unclean, lest others touch her and become ceremonially unclean themselves! But she was so desperate for a touch from the Master that she not only pressed through the crowd; she went against the religious "establishment." I am not advocating rebellion or divisiveness in the church, merely pointing out that at times the "institutionalizing" of our faith becomes the very thing which we must press through in order to touch Christ. Consider this excerpt from an article on worship:

When was the last time you worshipped? You didn't attend worship—you worshipped. You got higher than the platform, the singers, the preacher—you had an audience, an encounter with God. Worshipping Him is the most significant thing that we can do—it is from worship that everything else flows (service, evangelism, missions, etc.). How often do we really encounter the living God, privately or corporately?

Yes, to be in the crowd following Jesus is a good thing; to have solid Christian habits—regular Bible study, prayer and church attendance—is most certainly desirable as well. But we would do well to examine ourselves from time to time: are we studying to know doctrine, or to know Jesus; in church, do we desire to be comfortable, or do we desire to be challenged to be more Christ like; are we passing through, or pressing through?

If I am honest with myself, I must admit that I am passing through more often than I am pressing through.

How about you?

"IF I AM HONEST
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Love or Doctrine? . . . cont. from p. 9

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light . . . (I Peter 2:9 NKJV)

The wall between the court of the priesthood and the other courts is also removed in Christ. Under the Old Covenant only those of the tribe of Levi were to serve as priests. They would go to God on behalf of everyone else. Those not of this lineage could not approach the Lord themselves; they had to go through the temple priesthood. Now, under the New Covenant, we see a holy nation where all are priests unto God. All may approach the throne of grace.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16 NKJV)



This passage also contains a little temple talk. The throne of grace was the mercy seat in the Holiest of Holies. Because our High Priest, the Lord Jesus, has come, we can now come into the presence of God without fear. The veil between God and man has been removed. Under the Old Covenant no one came into God's presence boldly. In fact, you could die if you went into God's presence in the Holiest of Holies unlawfully. Near to God was a fearful place. Now, under the New Covenant, God's presence is a place we come boldly. There we will not find judgment but help and mercy in the time of need.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (II Cor 5:21 NKJV)

God removed all the walls. He removed the separation between God and man and also man and man. This verse tells us how.

The various courts and sub-courts of the temple showed levels of righteousness. The righteousness of a Gentile—in other words, not much—was required to enter the first court! The righteousness of a Jew was needed to enter the second court. If you were a descendant of Abraham and you kept the Law, you could go in there. If you had the righteousness of Jewish woman you could enter the court of the women. If you had the righteousness of a Jewish man, you could enter the court of Israel. An even greater righteousness was required to enter the court of the priests. You had to be of an even more exacting lineage, the tribe of Levi, and you had to keep more exacting laws and rituals. Do you know why no one could enter the Holiest of Holies? Because no one had a righteousness as great as God's. All were stained by sin.

God, in Christ Jesus, removed all the distinctions of the temple by becoming sin for all and giving His own righteousness to all. While on the cross, Jesus became sin. He became everybody's having "fallen short." He became the sin of both Jew and Gentile. As He became sin, God rejected His own Son. He put Him outside the house of God. We know this by Jesus' own words while on the cross: "Father, Father why have you forsaken Me?" His rejection ended our rejection, both Jew and Gentile.

Then God gave us the most glorious gift. He gave us His
Cont. on next page

The Dating of Revelation

If there be one thing which more than any other is explicitly and repeatedly affirmed in the Apocalypse it is the *nearness* of the events which it predicts. This is stated, and reiterated again and again, in the beginning, the middle, and the end. We are warned that 'the time is *at hand*;' 'These things must *shortly* come to pass,' 'Behold, I come *quickly*;' 'Surely I come *quickly*.' Yet, in the face of these express and oft-repeated declarations, most interpreters have felt at liberty to ignore the limitations of time altogether, and to roam at will over ages and centuries, regarding the book as a syllabus of church history, an almanac of politico-ecclesiastical events for all Christendom to the end of time. This has been a fatal and inexcusable blunder. To neglect the obvious and clear definition of the time so constantly thrust on the attention of the reader by the book itself is to stumble on the very threshold. Accordingly this inattention has vitiated by far the greatest number of apocalyptic interpretations. It may truly be said that the key has all the while hung by the door, plainly visible to every one who had eyes to see; yet men have tried to pick the lock, or force the door, or climb up some other way, rather than avail themselves of so simple and ready a way of admission as to use the key made and provided for them. -J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia*, (p. 367)

righteousness. When this great gift was given, the veil between us and God fell. We would no longer be separated from, but could now come boldly into, His presence.

We must realize that when God gave His righteousness to all, the wall between God and man fell. Yet, the walls between man and man fell also. If both Jew and Gentile have the righteousness of God, can there be any distinction between the two? If a man and a woman have the righteousness of Christ, can there be any distinction between the two? If both the priesthood and the laity have the righteousness of Christ, can there be any distinction between the two? No; all those walls had to fall.

The entire world as it was represented in the temple changed when Jesus died and rose from the grave. They could never look at their relationship with God in the same way. They could never look at their relationship with their neighbor in the same way. Reconciliation between God and man had come; reconciliation between man and man had also come.

“What does this have to do with us today?” we might ask. We no longer fight over things like bloodline and gender. We have “advanced” beyond these things. We have created our own levels of righteousness today. We continue to put up walls between who we see as “in” and who we see as “out.” One way we do this is our understanding of the scriptures. Doctrine, in many ways, has become the self-righteousness of our day.

Self-righteousness is when we look at who we are, what we do, or even the doctrine we hold, as the reason we have closeness and favor with God. We might be tempted to think doctrine can never be self-righteousness. However, we only have to remember the story of Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli to see that it can. Doctrine kept these men from seeing that they were brothers. It kept them from seeing that what made them acceptable was not that they got it right, but the fact that Jesus got it right through His finished works.

When I see that who Jesus is and what He has done makes me acceptable to God, I must accept

my brother even if he disagrees with me. Believe it or not, a futurist and a preterist are close to God because of Christ, not because of eschatological beliefs. The futurist and preterist are brothers because of Jesus, not doctrine. The fact that the veil remains torn gives testimony to the fact that we are one with the Lord *and* with one another.

Isn't this how God relates to us all? He regularly meets with Christians of all traditions. He does not seem to care who has the right doctrine about how we dress, the day of the week we meet, or even who has the right eschatology. He does not look to see who has it right; He looks instead at His Son. God has no other measure. This is what matters most to Him. This is what should matter most to us, too.

Should we then cease all debate over theological matters? No! These things are important, so have at it. Debate and reason with your brother all you want. However, realize that your doctrinal superiority does not make you closer to God than your brother. There are no doctrinal “courts” in God’s house. Because of Christ you can disagree with your brother and still love him as much as the one with whom you agree. Yes, who Jesus is and what He has done is that big. And because He is that big, both love and doctrine can live together.

The temple was a picture of the relationship between God and man and also between man and man before Christ came. There was separation in every place . . . The entire world as it was represented in the temple changed when Jesus died and rose from the grave.

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Preston (from p. 6)

Testament writers make a spiritual application of Old Testament prophecies, *it is not allegorizing*. Through inspiration, they revealed what those Old Testament realities foreshadowed. In other words, the spiritual meaning was there all along, recorded, but “unrevealed.” To reject the spiritual application that the New Testament writers make of Old Testament prophecies therefore, denies the inspiration of the New Testament authors who claimed to be revealing what the Old Testament prophets foretold, but did not understand (1 Peter 1:10-12).

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Curtis (from p. 7)

come shows that it is a fundamental fact of eschatology that **time defines nature**. Since we know that the resurrection is past, we know that it was spiritual and not physical. The resurrection of the dead that took place at the end of the Old Covenant in AD 70 was not a biological resurrection of dead, decayed bodies, but a release from Sheol of all who had been waiting through the centuries to be reunited with God in the heavenly kingdom.

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Kloskes (from p. 7)

approach: attempting to use contemporary situations to interpret ancient contexts.

One of the most visible and prolific writers concerning the neo-millennial positions is also one of the worst offenders. As a writer of many prophetic volumes, who seems consumed with proving the Second Coming of Jesus is literally near or around the corner, he violates his own reasoning when he uses the text of Revelation non-literally to illustrate his reasoning skills. For example, he does not accept the literal meaning of the following text in Revelation: *what must soon take place and because the time is near*. Likewise: *Behold I am coming soon* Rev. 22:7, 12, 20 and other descriptions such as *he had seven horns and seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth* see Rev. 5:6b or . . . *a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven; an enormous red dragon with seven horns and seven crowns on his head. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth*. Now who feels qualified to “literalize” these with confidence so as to explain their meaning clearly? Even this

particular prophecy author would not attempt such a foolish approach.

The point is simple—whenever possible attempt a literal interpretation, but when a literal interpretation is not only impossible, but ridiculous, then seek out the figurative or spiritual interpretation. This should be a fundamental point of interpretation. Admittedly, it leaves the interpretation open to much speculation, but by staying with the essence of the *context*, fanciful scenarios are eliminated. If anyone suggests an interpretation so foreign to the nature of the Scripture that it is against the nature of God, Jesus, the Spirit or even common sense, then avoid it altogether. But if there is merit to the suggestion, and upon prayerful reflection and intense study it seems possible, then minimally it should be considered.

Preterism, we believe, has the most consistent and most conservative approach to the subject of the Second Coming. It leaves the text in its own context and is faithful to the maxim of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture! Preterism has no aspects of “media interpretation,” allows no pressure from contemporary events and is not subject to the whims of cultural, economic, and social movements.

It is an attempt to understand Scripture as the original audience would have understood it!

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Stevens (from p. 6)

culture, language, religion, and politics of the times in which that book was written.

The fundamental task of a Biblical interpreter is to discover exactly what the original **author** intended to communicate to his original **audience** at that specific **time** and **place** under that specific set of **circumstances** (i.e., “Audience Relevance”).

To accomplish that task, we must ask a lot of questions like:

1. Who wrote this? Who was he? What kind of person was he? etc.
2. To whom was it written? Who were they? What kind of people were they? etc.
3. When was it written? What do we know about those times in which it was written?
4. Where was it written? What do we know about those places where it was written from and where it was written to?
5. Why was it written? What do we know about the circumstances which called forth this writing?

By answering as fully as possible these kinds of questions about a piece of writing, we will come a lot closer to discovering exactly what the writer intended to communicate to his original audience, and also probably discover what kind of language the author is using, so

we can interpret it correctly (either literally or figuratively).

We all need to be careful when interpreting Biblical language. Handle it according to the type of language it really is. If it is literal, take it literally. If it is figurative, then take it figuratively. And we must keep in mind that some sentences may incorporate several of these types of literature in it. There is not a “one size fits all” hermeneutic. Each piece of writing must be interpreted according to the kinds of literature contained within it, with due respect to its original author, audience and historical circumstances.

Preterists are just as guilty of “overly-spiritualizing” Biblical language as the futurists are guilty of “overly-literalizing” it. Both are extremes that need to be avoided. All of us need to interpret Scripture according to the particular kind of language it uses.

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PROPHECY QUIZ

Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 2 Pet 1:13-14

The most likely interpretation of this passage is that Jesus had revealed to Peter that:

- A. Peter was about to die
- B. Peter's home was about to be destroyed
- C. Peter would live for many more years
- D. Peter is still alive today

The majority of people are most likely to choose option "A," and least likely to choose "D." That being the case, consider another passage in which Jesus revealed something to an apostle which was to *shortly take place*:

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

So here we have Jesus revealing two events to two different apostles, and each event is to *shortly* take place. In the case of Peter, if we were to say that event would take place at least two thousand years later, we would be laughed at. And yet, many laugh at the suggestion that the events of *Revelation* did indeed take place shortly after it was written. Can we have it both ways? If we don't believe that Peter is still living today, why are we looking for the events of *Revelation* to be fulfilled today, instead of shortly after the book was written?

Preterism . . . it's about time!

It's about the time Jesus told His disciples that He would return—*this (His) generation!*

It's about the time the New Testament authors told their readers Jesus would return—*soon, near, at hand, shortly!*

It's about time for a Scriptural explanation other than delay!

It's about time for a "last days" view that doesn't conjure up gaps and parenthetical ages!



Preterism . . . maybe it's about time you looked into it!