

FULFILLED! *Magazine*

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

We have liftoff . . .

. . . and the sky's the limit!

Why is there still
evil in the world?

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We Have Liftoff!

After several months of planning and trying to learn the ropes of magazine production, we finally launched our first issue last spring. Judging by the responses we have received, *FULFILLED! Magazine* is a welcome addition to the growing number of Preterist resources. Many thanks to those of you who wrote, emailed and called—what a blessing it is to hear from you!

At this point, we plan on publishing quarterly. We appreciate those who have offered their help and financial support. This magazine is truly a labor of love, by those who have a passion for furthering the awareness and understanding of Preterism. None of the contributing authors have received compensation for their work, and we are not charging for subscriptions. If you would like to help in our efforts, here are a few ways you can do that: first, keep us in your prayers! Although this can easily become a Christian cliché, we truly believe that this is the foundation upon which any effort should be built. Next, if you have any expertise in graphic design, Adobe Photoshop, MS Front Page, MS Publisher, etc., and don't mind answering an occasional question, send us an email. (brian@fulfilledmagazine.com)

Lastly, for those who would like to contribute financially, we have a few points we wish to make clear. At this time, we do not have a nonprofit status, so any gifts will not be tax-deductible. We hope to gain a nonprofit status in the future, but . . . one thing at a time! Also, we are not looking for “the widow’s mite,” or “sacrificial” giving. Nor do we want you to divert funds from ministries which are helping further the gospel, feed the poor, etc. Since the demographic of our readers is primarily Christian, we are in a sense “preaching to the choir,” and therefore do not want to siphon funds from ministries that are spreading the Gospel of Christ. However, if you have a passion for spreading the awareness and understanding of Preterism, and have a few extra dollars, we welcome your support. Make your checks payable to:

Brian Martin
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While Dispensationalism continues to garner millions (both numerically and monetarily), Preterism, with its self-published books and local conventions, is quietly growing. Well, maybe not as quietly as before—our first issue went out to people in 43 states, as well as Canada, the Philippines, Ethiopia, South Africa and Spain!

In this issue we touch upon a delicate topic, one which will undoubtedly be revisited many times—the modern nation of Israel. Preterism does not view present-day Israel as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Instead, the Church is seen as “the Israel of God,” in which prophecy is fulfilled. This is often called “Replacement” theology, and is frequently railed against in Dispensational writings.



Personally, I prefer the term “Fulfillment” theology, for it is not as if Christians arbitrarily decided to replace national Israel with themselves. Rather, national Israel was a type and foreshadow which finds its fulfillment in the Church. Just as Christ did not come to abolish or destroy the Law, but to fulfill it, so the Church did not “erase” Old Testament Israel—it

fulfilled its types and shadows. In fact, Preterists are quick to point out that Paul preached nothing but “the hope of Israel,” and only what was found in “Moses, the law and the prophets.” The reason that Paul’s fellow Jews persecuted him after his conversion to Christianity is because the Gospel presents a different application of “the hope of Israel” and what “Moses, the law and the prophets” taught. Preterism carries this application through to the area of eschatology.

Unfortunately, many equate this view as a form of anti-Semitism. Therefore we wish to state upfront that neither the editors, nor any of the contributing writers (to our knowledge) are anti-Semitic in any way. This is not to say that there are not some among those wearing the Preterist label who may hold anti-Semitic views. But just as “Christians”

KEEP US IN YOUR
PRAYERS!
ALTHOUGH THIS
CAN EASILY
BECOME A
CHRISTIAN
CLICHÉ, WE TRULY
BELIEVE THAT THIS
IS THE
FOUNDATION
UPON WHICH ANY
EFFORT SHOULD
BE BUILT.

Continued on next page

FREE SUBSCRIPTION!

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Mailbag

I am thrilled to read that you will start a magazine. That is what is needed, and you may be just the one God has planned on doing that.

John L. Bray
Lakeland, FL

Thank you very much for the first issue of the magazine. It was a very refreshing experience as I read through the articles, no doctrinal disputes just helpful and thoughtfully written pieces. The theme “how then should we live” is God honoring and edifying to all who would read it. May God be all in all, amen. Your brother in Him,

Clifford

My wife and I read “Fulfilled Magazine” from cover to cover, on the day it arrived. I liked it so much! I liked the articles, and I liked the good spirit. I am just sad that I have to wait three months to get the next issue!

Glenn
North Carolina

I just got the first issue of Fulfilled Magazine. I have one word, “WOW!” I can’t tell you how impressed I am at the quality of your publication. The look as well as the content is outstanding. I will be passing the word about Fulfilled Magazine. God Bless.

Doug Reed
Pastor, Thorncrown Chapel

I’m thrilled to see a preterist focusing on life in the kingdom. While we need to remain sharp on the issues that brought us to this position in order to help others see the reality of the kingdom, we desperately need to LIVE the reality of the kingdom to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you for your articles that avoid focusing on our differences in favor of enjoying our similarities.

Shannon

What a surprise to find the first edition of Fulfilled Magazine in my box yesterday. Great work!! You’ve made an excellent beginning on a project that fills a gap in Christian literature. Thank you, and praise God!

Jim Wade,
Huntsville, TX

Brian, brother, I just received your first copy in the mail and sat down and read the whole thing. I am very impressed. I loved your layout and I did not find one word misspelled. You did a magnificent job with it. Also, the material was good, especially the emphasis all the way through for love, unity, and especially among preterists. Be sure and keep me on the list. I will send out notice to some of my readers to subscribe to it. Thanks again for doing such a good job.

Love,
Ron McRay
Flint, Texas

THE THEME “HOW
THEN SHOULD WE
LIVE” IS GOD
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EDIFYING TO ALL
WHO WOULD READ
IT.

Liftoff (cont.)

who bomb abortion clinics are not accurately portraying Christianity, so Preterists who are anti-Semitic are not accurately portraying Preterism.

Don K. Preston states, “The question of whether America should support Israel is a legitimate *political* question.” Unfortunately, much of the political support seems to be fueled by an eschatology which asserts that God has not fulfilled His promises to Israel. Acknowledging that those promises are fulfilled in the Church does not make one anti-Semitic. As David B. Curtis states, “I’m not anti-Semitic. I just believe that while in the Old Covenant the distinction was between Jew and Gentile, in the New Covenant the distinction is between believer and unbeliever.” And how are we believers supposed to exhibit our participation in the New Covenant? By loving one another. We are called to love one another, and to have our feet shod with the gospel of peace. And when we feel that our hard-to-receive message is justified because it is the truth, we must remember that we are to speak the truth in love.

God bless,

Brian

Why I'm Partial to Full Preterism

by Brian L. Martin

Both Full and Partial Preterists agree that Christ came in judgment in AD 70. Both agree that Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation are prophecies of that judgment—although Partial Preterists see some items as yet future. And that's where the two divide—Full Preterists believe that all prophecy was fulfilled in the AD 70 judgment coming, while Partial Preterists believe in a yet future physical return of Christ, and a general resurrection and judgment. These two—a physical Second Coming and resurrection of the dead—appear to be the sticking point between Full and Partial Preterists. As R. C. Sproul stated in *The Last Days according to Jesus*:

“The great weakness of full preterism—and what I regard to be its fatal flaw—is its treatment of the final resurrection. If full preterism is to gain wide credibility in our time, it must overcome this obstacle.” (p. 203)

While I don't want to put words into anyone's mouth, if the concept of a “spiritual” resurrection were as easily discerned in the Scriptures as, say, the imminency with which the early Church expected it is, Partial Preterists might be more inclined to accept a “spiritual” rather than physical Second Coming and resurrection. However, even Full Preterists have different interpretations of the resurrection. I am still grappling with the various concepts of the resurrection—trying to get a handle on them.

So, you might rightfully ask, why am I partial to Full Preterism? Not because of my understanding of *how* the resurrection took place, but my understanding of *when* it took place. Consider the following Old Testament resurrection passages:

Isa 26:19
 Your dead shall live;
 Together with my dead body they shall arise.
 Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust;
 For your dew is like the dew of herbs,
 And the earth shall cast out the dead.

Dan 12:2

*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
 Some to everlasting life,
 Some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

Aren't these *Old Testament* prophecies part of the “all things which are written” that Jesus said would be fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem?

Luke 21:20, 22

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. . . For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

To my knowledge, Full Preterists, Partial Preterists and even many Futurists see this as a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. If that is the case, and *all things which were written* (the *Old Testament* prophecies) were fulfilled, shouldn't the resurrection have also taken place during that time frame? This premise is strengthened when we consider that Daniel was told that the prophecies he had received were not for him, but for *the time of the end*—and that he would die and arise again at that time:

Dan 12:7-9, 13

*Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?” And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till **the time of the end**. 13 “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”*

see *Partial* next page

AREN'T THESE OLD
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 AT THE DESTRUCTION
 OF JERUSALEM?

Gleanings from “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:

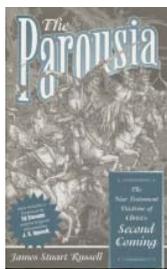
“Few books have forced me to rethink ideas or challenged my assumptions as much as this one has.”

IMPENDING FATE OF THE JEWISH NATION.

The Parable of the Barren Fig-tree.

Luke 13: 6-9: *He also spoke this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit on it, and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it, and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’”*

The same prophetic significance is manifest in this parable, which is almost the counterpart of that in Isaiah 5, both in form and meaning. The true interpretation is so obvious as to render explanation scarcely necessary. Its bearing on the people of Israel is most distinct and direct, more especially when viewed in connection with the pre-



ceding warnings. Israel is the fruitless tree, long cultivated, but yielding no return to the owner. It was now on its last trial: the axe, as John the Baptist had declared, was laid to the root of the tree; but the fatal blow was delayed at the intercession of mercy. The Saviour was even then at His gracious work of nurture and culture; a little longer, and the decree would go forth—“Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?”

No doubt there are general principles in this, as in other parables, applicable to all nations and all ages; but we must not lose sight of its original and primary reference to the Jewish people. Stier and Alford seem to lose themselves in searching for obscure and mystical meanings in the minor details of the imagery; but Neander gives a luminous explanation of its true import: “As the fruitless tree, failing to realize the aim of its being, was destroyed, so the theocratic nation, for the same reason, was to be overtaken, after long forbearance, by the judgments of God, and shut out from His kingdom.” ❧

“I CAN NEVER READ
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READING *THE
PAROUSIA*

-R. C. SPROUL

Partial

All things (which included the resurrection of Dan. 12:2) were to be fulfilled when the power of the holy people had been completely shattered. Wasn’t this fulfilled in AD 70 when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed? In fact, aren’t these passages from Daniel and the previous one in Luke parallel passages? Did Martha have Daniel in mind when she talked of Lazarus’ resurrection?

John 11:23-24

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Once again we see the resurrection associated with “the last day,” which surely is synonymous with “the time of the end” and “the end of the days.” (Dan. 12:2, 13) The fact that Jesus said *all things which were written* would be fulfilled when Jerusalem was destroyed, and that Peter told his generation “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Pt. 4:7), which included the resurrection, makes me partial to Full Preterism. I may not understand how it took place, but it seems pretty evident when it took place. ❧



Todd Dennis



My application of that imagery is brought into every day life now using a Preterist Spiritual/Idealist hybrid approach. The Lake of Fire is still burning all works of unrighteousness, and proceeds straight from the throne of our God—who is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29). Those who are outside of the Covenant are within that lake day and night even now, and are under all of the chains of the sin, the death, and the devil (the definite article “the”

is in the original Greek in many key passages, such as Rom 5:12, thus indicating the *corporate* sense of sin and death). Those influences can only be conquered in Christ. Call it “Temporal Conscious Punishment” if you wish, but the torment of that outer darkness is evident by their self-destructive behavior and wailing and gnashing. Just read some lyrics from the typical heavy metal band and you will hear testimony straight from the lake. X

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If Satan and the demons have been cast into the Lake of Fire, how do you explain all of the evil in the world today?

Samuel Frost



The question assumes that “Satan and the demons” are the cause or explanation of “all the evil in the world.” The scriptural evidence, however, leads me to a different conclusion.

1. *God created evil.* Isaiah 45:7; Lamentations 3:38, etc. The clearest picture in Scripture of this fact is that God made the tree of the knowledge of good and evil *before* the failure of Adam and Eve. Therefore, evil existed before God created man. Evil was *known* by the mind of God in its entirety from eternity.

2. *“God is righteous in all of his dealings”* (Dan 4:35) and therefore can do no wrong. Even though He causes evil events—that is, events that we view as evil, and events that men bring about on other men (and we hold those men accountable for their evil actions)—God Himself is not an agent. God is accountable to no man, and cannot be charged with

committing evil. His motivations for bringing about the evil actions of men *are qualitatively different* and *righteous*, whereas evil men fail to have these motivations. They are accountable. God is accountable to no man.

3. *“Man’s mind is on evil all the time”* (Genesis 6:5). The distinction between these men and Noah is that “Noah found *grace*” (Gen 6:8). This grace enabled Noah to obey God. *Jeremiah* concurs: *“the heart of man is evil, who can know it?”* Man is born with the knowledge of good and evil—the Second Coming of Christ did not alter this fact in the slightest. In order for man to be transformed into the image of Christ, he must *also* have eternal life. Having the knowledge of good and evil in our minds is the agency for evil to exist.

4. *“Satan” was temporary.* One would need powerful gifts of the Spirit to discern his activities in the world today. One would have

William Bell

First, let us consider what evil is. There are two kinds of evil in the world—moral evil and natural evil. Moral evil is that of “persons against persons.” Included in that would be war and crime. Natural evil is identified as “nature against persons” such as earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes and floods.

It is not always easy to distinguish between the two of them. Properly used medications taken by a parent have been known to cause birth defects. Recently I read in the newspaper that, of malpractice cases which are reported, doctors are the 3rd leading cause of death. The number could be higher. On the other hand, natural disasters are often compounded by people unwilling to help alleviate the sufferings, as witnessed in the horrors of Katrina.

Moral evil results from freedom of choice. God could not create beings with freedom of choice and then limit their freedom to choose. The free actions of created beings cause more suffering than anything else in the world. So,

in response to why evil still exists in the world, it exists because of man’s freedom to choose. Many times those choices are evil. Because the demise of Satan does not eliminate the freewill choice of man, evil is not eradicated from the world.

Natural evil is far less important in the modern world theologically, but harder to explain. It is independent of man’s freewill, proceeding from God’s creation. Natural law is a necessary condition for the fulfillment of both divine and human objectives, being essential for free creatures to function in a normal manner.

For example, the same sun that is needed for life on earth can also burn. Fire warms and consumes. Water is indispensable to existence but also can kill. Gravity holds things on the

See *Bell*, p. 10

John Noë

Full Preterists agree that Satan has been cast into “the lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev. 20:10 KJV), sometime around AD 70 or so. What we disagree on is, “what does this mean?”

Some Preterists contend that, by being cast into the lake of fire, Satan was annihilated or rendered inoperative in the lives and affairs of humankind. Therefore, they attribute the existence of all evil in the world today as solely coming out of human hearts. Jeremiah 17:9; 18:12; Matthew 15:19; Luke 6:45 are cited in support. To my knowledge, what happened to the demons is not revealed in the Bible.

Renowned Preterist author, J. Stuart Russell, however, struggled with this understanding of post-AD 70 reality and “this restriction of satanic power.”¹ His solution was to revert to an amillennial explanation.² In so doing, Russell compromised his Preterist view by viewing the end of the thousand years, the loosing of Satan, and his being cast into the

lake of fire, as “still future, and therefore unfulfilled.”³

Many Christians find it difficult to conceive of the world today as not having Satan and his demonic cohorts in it and operative, as some Preterists claim the past fulfillment of their being cast into the lake of fire actually means. I would like to propose another Preterist solution.

Satan “was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev. 20:10 KJV) after the end of his “little season” of loosing (AD 63-70). I suggest that this does not necessitate Satan’s demise, or his being all burned up, annihilated, terminated, or rendered totally inoperative and removed from any influence on the earth, as some Preterists have assumed. Here are three reasons to support my thesis.

See *Noë*, p. 14



Perspectives

Why Share Preterism?

Why should we share Preterism? People always ask me, “Why is this important—what does it matter if Christ has returned or not”? My answer is always the same, “Does *truth* matter”? If it doesn’t, then we don’t need to study the Bible at all. But if truth does matter, then Preterism matters.

For a less simplistic answer, let me give you four reasons why Preterism is important—reasons why your view of eschatology matters.

1. Eschatology is a major theological issue in the Scriptures.

R.C. Sproul says that 2/3 of the New Testament is either directly or indirectly eschatological. Other experts say that 25-30% of the whole Bible is eschatological. If eschatology matters that much to God, shouldn’t it matter to us?

2. Salvation is tied to eschatology.

How much salvation you currently have depends on your eschatological view. If you were to die right now, where would you go? That depends on your eschatology. No one goes to heaven prior to the Second Coming. Look at what Jesus said:

And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man. John 3:13 (NASB)

Has this fact changed? If so, when did it change?

Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” . . . Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later.” John 13:33, 36 (NASB)

In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and

receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:2-3 (NASB)

If Jesus has not yet returned to receive His disciples to Himself, then John 3:13 is still in effect. Look also at the following:

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, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall 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. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (NASB)

If the dead have not yet been resurrected, which happens at the Second Coming, then no one is yet in heaven. But where do most Christians believe that they go at death? Heaven! (Have you ever been to a Christian funeral?)

Heaven was not opened until the Second Coming because salvation was not complete until the return of Christ:

. . . so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. Hebrews 9:28 (NASB)

This is the only place in the New Testament where the return of Christ is called a **Second Coming**. His appearing is said to be “for salvation.” Peter states that their salvation was not yet complete:

. . . who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:5 (NKJV)

Salvation was ready to be revealed—when? In the last time, which coincided with the return of Christ. If Christ has not returned, then salvation is incomplete and no one has yet

DOES TRUTH
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AT ALL! BUT IF
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PRETERISM
MATTERS.

by David B. Curtis

gone to heaven.

3. Israel!

What do you do with the modern day nation of Israel? Is God's prophetic calendar tied to the modern day nation of Israel? No! God is finished with the nation of Israel. Let's look at a parable in Matthew 22: 1-10:

1 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,³ and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come."

In this parable the king is God, the son is Christ, and those invited are the nation of Israel. National Israel did not accept the invitation.

4 "Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."' 5 But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. 7 But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."



What is verse seven speaking of? Very clearly it is a prediction of the AD 70 judgment of Jerusalem, and national Israel.

8 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' 10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests." (NKJV)

Israel lost its privilege, and all nations were invited to come to the wedding celebration of the Lamb. This destruction of the nation of Israel, because of their rejection of Christ, was prophesied from the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry.

"... and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Matthew 3:9-10 (NKJV)

Jesus came in judgment on the nation of Israel in AD 70, ending forever the nation, its physical temple and sacrifices. So, God is through with Israel as a nation. But most Christians think that the Jews are God's special people and must be protected. A faulty eschatology is affecting our foreign policy. What Christian leaders teach about the Jews and Arabs influences how Christians view the events unfolding in the Middle East. I also believe that there is a direct connection between the church's view of Israel and terrorism. I say this because I believe that our view of Israel has affected our foreign policy. It is my belief that a wrong view of who Israel is affected all Americans on September 11, 2001. I believe that the attack on the twin towers in New York City and all the lives that were lost that day were a result of a faulty view of Israel.

It seems that Osama Bin Laden agrees with me that our view of Israel is connected to terrorism. Listen to what he said: "Our terrorism is a good accepted terrorism, because it's against America, it's for the purpose of defeating oppression so America would stop supporting Israel, who is killing our children."

So Bin Laden says that terrorism is connected to America's support of Israel. And I say that America's support of Israel is tied to a faulty theology. Because of Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism, most American Christians believe that we have a biblical mandate to stand with and protect Israel. In 1997 the ICEJ gave support to a full-page ad placed in the New York Times entitled "Christians Call for a United Jerusalem" signed by 10 evangelical leaders. Given so much teaching like this, you can understand why so many Christians believe that we are to be supportive of Israel.

However, what we discover when we try to relate the Old Testament nation of Israel to the New Covenant is that the fleshly nation was but a **shadow** of the heavenly nation of spiritual Israel, which can only be entered into by Spirit, not by the flesh. Therefore, physical Israelites, could, from then on, have no place in the nation of Israel (which is after the Spirit) except on the basis of personal salvation, through their faith in Christ Jesus.

What about all the promises that God made to Israel? The entire Old Testament is simply packed with promises that God made to Israel. Promises of a land, and a temple, and peace and victory. Now, if the nation Israel was to be destroyed, then what happens to all the promises God made to Israel? Has God's word failed? No! We know that God is faithful, and that He always keeps His word.

In Romans 9 Paul shows his readers, first century Romans,

See *Why Share?*, p. 12

Bell (from p. 7)

ground, but can also cause untold damage. Without the vast seas, it would not be possible to take oceanic cruises around the world, but that same sea can drown us and overflow the land during a storm.

If it was within our power, would we opt for a natural world that is less flexible, with rigid laws where nothing can cause pain and suffering? That might also mean living in a world that can provide no challenge, beauty or growth. Which is the greater evil? It is not evil that God created a world, with both fixed laws and flexibility, which can create disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis and other natural calamities. But those same events also trigger both the best (and worst) in man through freedom of choice.

The heroism, sacrifice and good-will actions of many who have risked life and limb to aid their fellow man, is only produced in such conditions. Likewise, horrible rapes, neglect, and wide-scale abuses occur as well. On the one hand, a greater good is produced even from these natural calamities, which then raises the question. Are they really evil? While many individual evil choices are made, which takes us back to the moral issues

of man's free will, it does not appear that having a world where the weather is mostly beautiful, the fishing is good, the wildlife and natural beauty flourishes and man can count on the sunrise day in and day out, is an intrinsic evil.

Ultimately, in my opinion, the true evil in this world is that which is contrary to, and in rebellion to, the revealed will of God. Whether Satan was destroyed or not, man's freedom of choice necessitates the existence of moral evil, for only man is a moral creature, free to choose, made in the image of God, who is the ultimate free and moral being. Thus, to rid the world of evil, requires the destruction of man's freedom of choice, his likeness in God's image, i.e., morality, and hence, the destruction of man as man. With this thought in mind, take any place in the world that is unpopulated by man and ask yourself, "what evil is really being done there?" If men did not exist on earth, would there truly be any evil? ✕

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Quoting Ephesians

by Brian L. Martin

A while back my wife and I had the pleasure of spending an afternoon of food and fellowship with three other couples—all of whom were Preterists. In fact, everyone at the table could trace their Preterist roots—either directly or indirectly—to one man at the table. In a way, he was our Preterist "patriarch." As the meal wound to a close, one of the men asked the "patriarch"—a man in his eighties—if he could still recite the first chapter of Ephesians. The patriarch replied that he thought he could, and proceeded to recite the first half of chapter one. He then said, "this is my favorite part," and started quoting chapter two.

The power of those verses as he spoke was moving beyond words. The inflection and emphases he placed on particular words and phrases went beyond a mere recitation of memorized text. And it's not as though he is trained in recitation or oratory, for he is not. No, the power of those words did not come just from the mind which had memorized them, but also from the heart which had felt their impact. Here was a person who *knew* what it was to be *dead in trespasses*, and yet to be *made alive in Christ*. He knew that he had *been saved by faith—and that not of himself*. Nor was this just "shallow" emotionalism, for when this individual begins talking theology, the average Christian, including me, is quickly left in the dust.

I said all of that to say this: the opponents of Preterism often insist on continuing to "swallow camels" until we can answer every single last gnat at which they strain. Therefore, many Preterists must spend an undue amount of time engrossed in eschatology. But there is a subtle danger to this. We can get to the place that when we read the Bible, the only thing that "jumps off the page" at us is another point that supports Preterism, or another verse that disagrees with Futurism. Our search of the Scriptures can turn into an exegetical exercise, like a lawyer

preparing a case, rather than a heartfelt cry to know more of God. In short, we can become modern-day Pharisees, able to define, defend and debate our position, but all the while growing more and more distant from the One who is the very focal point of the Scriptures. Jesus told the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures—you do well, for they speak of Me."

If we find in our Bible study that the only thing that "moves" us is finding another "gem" for Preterism, or finding another refutation of Futurism, then perhaps it is time to lay down our eschatology for a while. Perhaps it is time to rekindle our first love with the One who bought us with His imperishable blood; the One who, while we were yet sinners, gave His life for us that we might pass from spiritual death into life.

Yes, it is important (and Biblical) to be able to define, defend and debate our position. But as Jesus told Martha, "you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Have we chosen the good part?

In Acts chapter 4, the Pharisees, who were the bastions of defining and defending their faith, viewed Peter and John as "uneducated and untrained men." But they also recognized that they had been with Jesus. When all is said and done, I would rather that the "Pharisees" of my day not acknowledge me as a defender of Preterism. Instead, by His grace, I would much rather be recognized as "uneducated, untrained" and "as having been with Jesus." ✕

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ . . .

You Are Not Alone!

by Brian L. Martin

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished . . .
2 Tim 4:16-17

Paul was well acquainted with the loneliness that often accompanies the proclaiming of the truth. In the above passage, he states that no one stood by his side in support, but that all had deserted him as he defended the truth. I know that many Preterists can empathize with Paul's situation—perhaps you are one of them.

Please understand that I am not attempting to “read ourselves” into the New Testament, nor over-spiritualize our present-day experiences. Rather, I merely see our situation as being but one of many to which Paul's experience can be applied, agreeing with Milton S. Terry that:

We may readily admit that the Scriptures are capable of manifold practical *applications*; otherwise they would not be so useful for doctrine, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). But the moment we admit the principle that portions of Scripture contain an occult or double sense we introduce an element of uncertainty in the sacred volume, and unsettle all scientific interpretation.

Many Preterists have been nurtured in an environment which exhorted them to personal Bible study. Yet, when they found that their studies led them to conclusions other than what they had been taught, they received everything *but* commendations for their efforts in seeking the truth. Indeed, many have found that, as they attempt to give a defense for the hope that is in them, they have lost all support, and have been deserted by all. Many who were respected as ministers, Bible teachers or diligent students of God's Word, are suddenly condemned as heretics or, at the very least, as being “off” in their theology. And very often, those passing judgment haven't even taken the time to honestly consider what these formerly “respected” students of God's Word believe.

Even though Paul felt deserted in this particular situation, he knew that there were others like him, scattered abroad. In Romans chapter

11 Paul used the analogy of Elijah, who had also felt deserted, and thought he was the last servant of God in the land. But God responded that there were seven thousand who had not bowed their knee to Baal. Likewise, Paul says, there was a remnant saved by grace in his generation. Once again, please understand that I am not equating Preterism with the remnant. Preterists are no more saved than Futurists, for we are all saved on the basis of God's grace, not upon our understanding of every last doctrinal detail. The point I wish to emphasize is that although Elijah and Paul may have felt alone and deserted, God had a remnant of other likeminded believers.

The same is true today—even though you may feel isolated and deserted, know that there are others “out there.” I recently spoke with one brother who said he thought he was the only Preterist in his town. I shared with another brother that one of the goals of this magazine was to give Preterists a sense of belonging to a greater whole, since so many are spiritually isolated. He responded by saying that he felt so isolated at times he could scream! A Pastor recently told me that as he shared Preterism with other Pastors he has known for years, they looked at him like he was mad. Sometime ago I received an email from an individual who had the opportunity to sit down and share Preterism in detail with a couple of other people. They began to see that Preterism wasn't the “heresy” they'd been led to believe it was. One of them told the Preterist that he was glad the Preterist was in the same town. The Preterist wrote that he hadn't heard that in 15 years of living there.

These are just a few examples. No doubt we could easily find hundreds of similar examples, as well as Preterists who have been asked to leave churches, have lost Christian friends and perhaps have even been rejected by family members.

So be encouraged—whatever your situation, there are no doubt many others experiencing something similar. Perhaps even someone reading this article as you are. Preterism is on the move, and someday isolation will be the exception rather than the rule. But until then, even if you *feel* deserted, know that you are not alone! ❧

EVEN THOUGH
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Why Share? . . . cont. from p. 9

and us today, that Israel’s rejection is not inconsistent with the promises of God. To say that the nation is accursed is not to say that God’s promises have failed:

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. Romans 9:6 (NASB)

“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel”—What does that mean? God never promised unconditional covenantal blessings to each offspring of Abraham. God never intended that all of the nation of Israel would be redeemed. Within national Israel is “true Israel,” or “spiritual Israel.” He is telling them not to count on their physical descent. The true Israel is the Israel of faith, not physical birth. The promises God made to Old Testament Israel are fulfilled in the Church of Jesus Christ.

If you by faith belong to Christ, you are Abraham’s seed and an heir according to the promise. It doesn’t matter whose blood you have in your veins, but whose faith you have in your heart. It is covenant, not race, that makes one a child of God.

The promise was always to the spiritual descendants of Abraham, the Church. The Church is not a temporary interruption in God’s prophetic program for Israel as the Dispensationalists teach. The Church is the prophetic fulfillment of that program, because the Church is true Israel. Covenant, not race, has always been the defining mark of the true Israel of God.

4. It affects your world view.

If we are living in the last days—and this world is about to end at any moment—why work for social change? We are not living in the last days! We live in the kingdom of God, and we are to be affecting the world in which we live by the power of God. The Kingdom of God has no end—it is an eternal kingdom. As a young Christian I never really planned for the future because I believed the Lord would return at any moment, so why bother with the future?

Those are just four reasons why I believe that eschatology matters. And since it matters, we need to be looking for opportunities to share the Preterist view, and we need to have a plan to share it. When I’m around believers of the futuristic persuasion, I like to wear a hat that was given to me by someone in my congregation. It says, “Preterism . . . it’s about time.” I wear it, hoping they will ask about it and I can share with them what Preterism is.

It’s not the easiest (or smartest) thing to just say to some-

one, “I believe that Jesus has already returned.” So how do you introduce this subject? How can we introduce Preterism without causing people to tear their clothes and throw dust into the air? I have developed a handout listing a number of “imminency” passages that I use in sharing Preterism. I like to give people the handout with all the Scriptures on it so they can see them for themselves.

As we read the Bible I say to them, “we must keep in mind the **hermeneutical** principle of **audience relevance**, which seeks to discover what the **original audience** understood a passage to mean. The Bible is written *for* us, but it is **not** written *to* us. We must seek to understand what Scripture meant to its original audience—then we can apply it to ourselves. As you read the following scriptures, ask yourself these questions: Who is this written to? When was it written? When did they expect Christ to return?”

In those passages the New Testament believers are very plainly and very clearly told that ALL of the things mentioned would come to pass in **THEIR GENERATION**.

These things include; the gospel being preached in all the world, the abomination of desolation, the great tribulation, and the Second Coming of Christ. This is so clear that it greatly troubles those who hold to a futuristic eschatology. Look at what C.S. Lewis said about Matthew 24:34:

“The apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, ‘This generation shall not pass till all these things be done.’ And he was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else. This is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible.” (Essay *The World’s Last Night* (1960), found in *The Essential C.S. Lewis*, p. 385)

Is Lewis right? Was Jesus wrong? I can’t accept that—can you? Fortunately, Christ did keep His promise to come within the first-century generation. Christ’s Second Coming occurred spiritually—the way He intended it—at the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem. This highly verified historical event signified that sin had finally and forever been atoned, and that all Christians, from generation to generation, could live eternally—on earth and in heaven—without separation from God.

Now, I’m sure that you’re thinking, “If the Lord did come back in AD 70, how did we miss it for all these years?” How

Almost every book in the New Testament talks of a “soon” return of Jesus Christ, and it is very hard to make 2,000 years “soon” by any hermeneutic.

could he have come back and we not have known it? The problem here is one of *preconceived* ideas. It is because of the paradigms that we have developed. We think that the Second Coming is an earth-burning, heaven-melting, globe-changing event; so we assume it could not have already happened.

I submit to you that either Scripture is wrong about the *time* of the Second Coming, and thus not inerrant, or our paradigms are wrong about the *nature* of the Second Coming. Which one of those are you more comfortable with; an incorrect paradigm, or an uninspired Scripture? I think I can demonstrate that our understanding of the *nature* of the Second Coming is wrong. Consider the following verse:

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 (NKJV)

How is it that the Thessalonians thought that the Second Coming had already happened? If they viewed the nature of these things as literal, how on earth could they have thought that they already happened? If their concept of the Second Coming was an earth-burning, heaven-melting, globe-changing event, how could they have thought it had already happened? If Paul was teaching the Second Coming as an earth-burning, heaven-melting, globe-changing event, all he would have had to say to the Thessalonians was, "Hello, look out your windows, the earth is not on fire, the sky is still blue." Paul never corrects their idea of the *nature* of the Second Coming—he simply says it has not happened yet.

They must have viewed the nature of the Second Coming differently than we do.

Until January, 1997, I had never heard of the Preterist (meaning past in fulfillment) view of eschatology, so, I obviously could not believe what I didn't know. When a friend first shared it with me, I thought he was MAD. As I began to study this view, I saw that although it went against what the majority of the Church was teaching, it was what the Bible was teaching. I had to make a choice between **tradition** and the **Scripture**—the choice was easy. If this view is new to you, I would ask that you would openly and honestly look at what it is saying. Almost every book in the New Testament talks of a "soon" return of Jesus Christ, and it is very hard to make 2,000 years "soon," by any hermeneutic. The major issue to me in all of this is the **Inspiration of Scripture**. Don't let tradition rob you of the precious truths which our Lord taught. I challenge you to be a Berean and daily search the Scripture to see if these things are so. ❧

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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*

Noë (from p. 7)

First, the “lake of fire” is a major sign and symbol in a book filled with signs and symbols. So, it should not be surprising that the “lake of fire” *symbolically* points to something literally real. Unfortunately, the book of Revelation does not decipher this imagery as it does some of its other signs and symbols (for example: Rev. 1:20; 17:15; 19:8). But by using the analogy of Scripture—letting Scripture interpret Scripture—we can gain some insight.

The book of Revelation contains both this lake and a river (Rev. 22:1). Generally speaking, a lake is a large body of water—larger than a river. Hence, a lake of fire would be a lot of fire. From other Scriptures we know that Jesus is spoken of as the “living water” (John 4:10-12) and the Holy Spirit as “streams (or rivers – KJV) of living water” (John 7:38-39). In a similar manner, the writer of Hebrews wrote, “for our God is a consuming fire.” In the New Testament, “fire” is commonly used as a reference to God or his messengers (Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 10:1; 15:2; 19:12; Matt. 3:11; Luke 12:49; Acts 2:3; 7:30; 1 Cor. 3:13, 15; Heb. 1:7; also many such uses in the Old Testament). Therefore, the “lake of fire” is probably a symbol for God. Satan was thus thrown into God—i.e., into a binding. That should not be too surprising, since Satan has always been bound by God to one degree or another.

Second, all during this time of binding Satan also has been active in the affairs of men. As far back as Job, Satan was bound by God (Job 2:6), yet operative. Jesus and his disciples demonstrated that Satan was bound by casting out demons from AD 26 through the early 60’s (Matt. 12:28-29; John 12:31; Rev. 12:10-12). Jesus further bound him at the cross (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14). Binding, therefore, does not mean the elimination of his person, power, or activity. It only means a limitation, a reduction, or a lessening. William Hendrikson referred to Satan’s being bound as “his influence on earth is partly paralysed [*sic*].”⁴ David Chilton commented “That Satan has been bound does not mean that all his activity has ceased. The New Testament tells us specifically that the demons have been disarmed and bound (Col. 2:15; 2 Pet. 2:4: Jude

6)—yet they are still active. It is just that their activity is restricted.”⁵

Even during the 3½ years of Jesus’ earthly ministry and the subsequent ministries of the Apostles, and while Satan resided in “the bottomless pit” and was bound with “a great chain” (Rev. 20:1-3), he was still active. But being thrown into the “lake of fire” in AD 70 (after the end of the 40-year millennial period – AD 26-66), was his permanent binding. We are not told, however, how extensive or how much greater this binding was (and still is) in comparison with some of his previous bindings.

Third, Satan’s loosing (AD 63-70) does not necessitate a complete, unbound release, nor the giving of complete and absolute freedom. Neither does it demand a prior, non-operative status or no-involvement period. Loosing means the giving of more leash, more chain, or greater freedom. In regards to the 1,000-year period in Revelation 20, Satan was loosed specifically to “deceive the nations” and “to gather them for battle” (Rev. 20:3, 8). This was accomplished.

For the reasons above, I maintain that Satan’s being cast into the “lake of fire and brimstone” does not necessitate his being annihilated or rendered inoperative in the lives and affairs of humankind. The Preterist position that Satan was annihilated, or rendered inoperative, after AD 70, is totally assumptive. If it were correct, it would render obsolete many other Scriptures, such as: Eph. 4:27; 6:10-12; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; John 14:12; Matt. 28:20. I think not. The analogy of Scripture and the conditions of our world today argue against it. ❌

1 Russell, *The Parousia*, p. 518

2 Ibid, pp. 518, 519, 522, 531

3 Ibid, pp. 522, 35

4 William Hendrikson, *More That Conquerors*, p. 190

5 David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 503

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“THE NEW
TESTAMENT TELLS
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Frost (from p. 6)

to know if a sickness was from “demonic possession” or just a sickness. Only by the spiritual gifts enabled directly by the Spirit could one know this. If, as some today claim, the spiritual gifts have ceased, then how can one tell if the devil or demons are committing each specific act?

5. “Satan’s” role was to accuse according to the transgression of the law given to Adam, and this role increased in the giving of the law to Israel. Now that the law has been fulfilled for those in Christ Jesus, mankind can receive reconciliation with God through Christ. Those who have not received such reconciliation are still dead in their sins and their hearts still contain the “knowledge of the law” (good and evil) with which they were born. Prior to Christ, eternal life could not be given, but now in Christ it can. The *effects* and *residue* of the reign of the Death, the Sin and the Law by the justly appointed angel called “Satan” are still very much with us today, though decreasing as the gospel spreads over time. However, “Satan” himself, and the rule of the Death, the Sin and the Law are no longer powers or principalities that rule in the heavenlies. They have all been vanquished. God justly rules over all things, being all in all, having filled all things, having destroyed all of his enemies. This, however, does not alter the fact that, in spite of the destruction of these powers, man is born with a heart of *only* the knowledge of good and evil. It is through Christ, having faith in Christ, which is a gift of God, that he can come and eat of the Tree of Life in the restored King-

dom. Until he eats of the Tree of Life, he, like Adam, only has a knowledge of good and evil, and though he performs good occasionally, “even the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel” (Prov. 12.10) since it is not linked to faith and worship in Christ.

In conclusion, Satan was appointed by God to carry out the judicial sentence against *all men*, including the righteous. All who were truly “of Israel” by faith in God were equally condemned “in Adam” and under the curse of “the Death and the Sin.” Because of the reconciling work of the Incarnate One, these, along with “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord” were and are given eternal access to the Tree of Life, which Adam and *all men* were originally cut off from. In order to be given access, “the Death, Satan, the Sin and the Law” had to be vanquished. Their time was served, and their defeat was sure. “Satan” is no longer necessary in the affairs of God, and thus his appointment was ended with the *parousia*, the consummation of all things that occurred in the generation upon which His Son descended. ✕

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PROPHECY QUIZ

And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. John 11:55 NKJV

The people went to purify themselves because:

- A. the feast of Passover was about to commence.
- B. the feast of Passover was the next festival on the calendar, though it might be months away.
- C. God always wanted His people to be ready for the Passover, even though it may not be celebrated in their generation.
- D. even though the Passover wouldn't be celebrated for at least 2,000 years, it was *possible* for it to be celebrated at anytime.

Even though answers B, C and D may seem to be a bit outlandish, aren't they some of the very "explanations" given for the term "near" in the following verse?

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. Rev 1:3 NKJV

Surely the most feasible, plausible—indeed, the most natural—reading of John 11:55 is that the feast of Passover was about to commence. Otherwise, the people ran the risk of becoming defiled (losing their purified status) while awaiting its arrival. Why, then, don't we allow the same natural understanding of the same Greek "near" for the events of Revelation?

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!