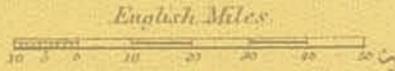


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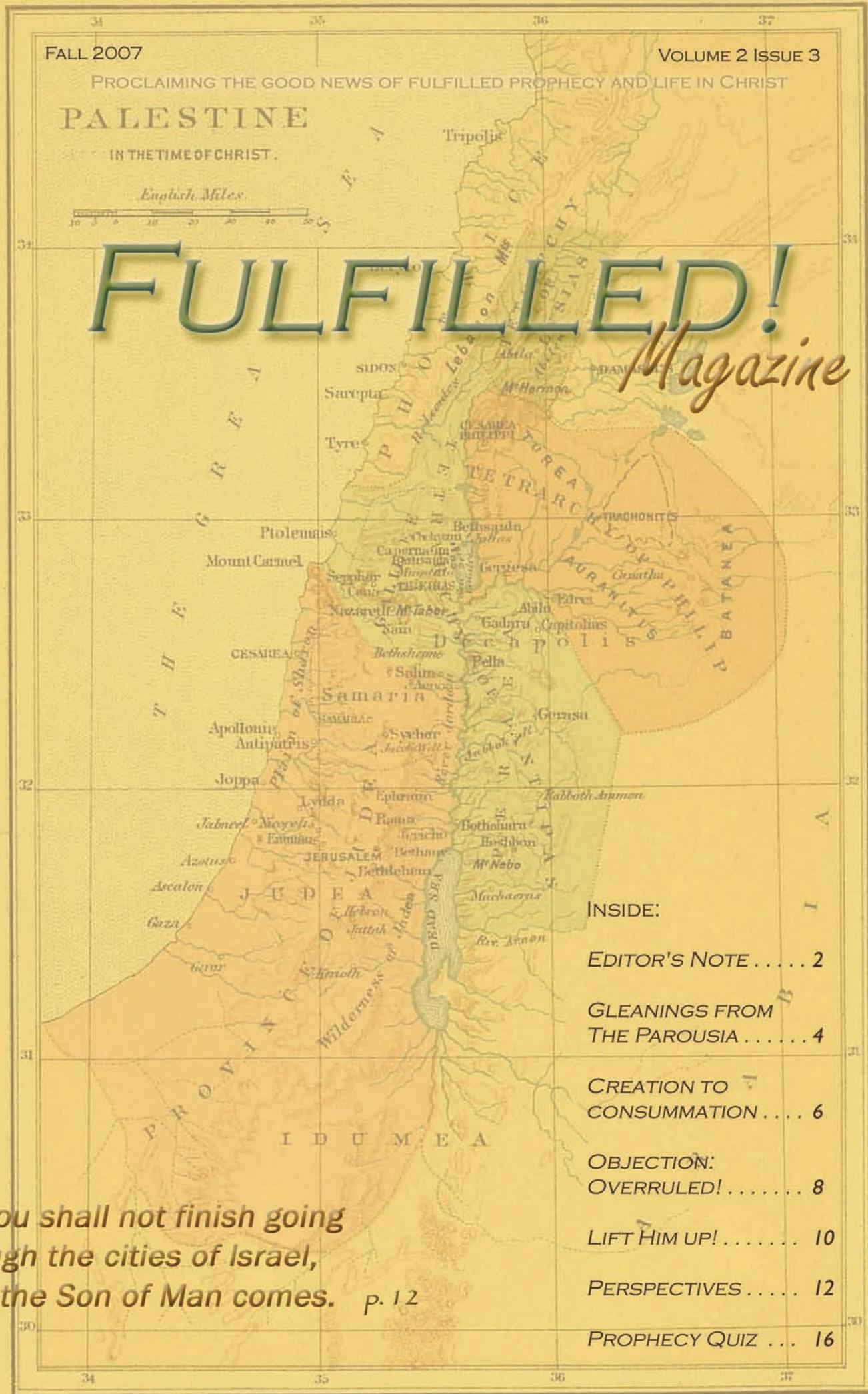
PALESTINE

IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.



FULFILLED!

Magazine



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... you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes. p. 12

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Editor's Update

This issue is getting out a bit later than I had hoped. You would think that having three months in between issues would be plenty of time, but somehow the deadlines always arrive sooner than expected. I'm beginning to suspect that there is some weird corollary of Einstein's theory of General Relativity at work in which the closer the deadline gets, the faster the time goes.

If you looked closely at the "Table of Contents" on the cover you may have noticed some changes. Some of the columns have changed positions in the magazine. Several readers have mentioned that they wish they could read the magazine articles straight through, without having to flip back and forth through the pages. So, starting with this issue we are attempting to do just that—let the text flow from one article to the next. Now the challenge will be for our contributing authors—many of whom are former Pastors—to stay within their word limits. We all know how Pastors can get long-winded!

Our grateful thanks to all who have financially supported this magazine! Your support does more than just "pay the bills." It also encourages us by letting us know that you consider *FULFILLED! Magazine* a valuable and worthwhile ministry. Indeed, some have given amounts which indicate that the donors are serious about seeing this ministry succeed.

Others have expressed an interest in supporting *FULFILLED!* on a regular basis. For those with a PayPal account we have designed a "donation email" which contains an *FCG* donation button in the body of the email. We send the email out at the beginning of each month to those who have signed up for it. This is simply offered as a reminder for those who request it and there is no obligation to respond. Recipients may respond as frequently or infrequently as they choose, and the button allows the user to pick their donation amount

each use. If you would like your name added to the distribution list simply send an email to donation@fulfilledmagazine.com.

We have been further blessed by the folks at Theo-Shirts, who are donating a portion of the proceeds from all Preterist Tee-shirt orders to *FCG*. (See page 15 for ordering information.)

Another reader is making the incredible offer of a free post-paid copy of J. Stuart Russell's book "The Parousia" to anyone who writes and requests it (see page 5).

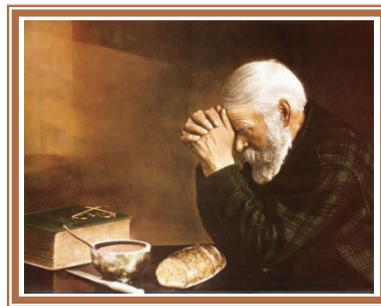
It is obvious that there are many people who desire Christianity to take a serious look at Preterism, and are willing to give of their time and finances toward that end. Christianity in general, and the Preterist community specifically, is blessed by these members of the Body of Christ.

Paul wrote that although there is one body, there are many members of that body, and that each member has a different function. Furthermore, "God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased." Maybe God has-

n't "set" you to be able to give away free books, but for every member God has "set" who *can* give away hundreds of free books, He must have "set" hundreds of members who have the talent and connections to get others to read those books.

Perhaps you can't support *FULFILLED!* financially, but you can support us with your prayers. Perhaps you can't afford to send a check, but you can send an encouraging letter or email. None of these are unimportant or trivial; rather, the body only functions properly when every member is supplying that for which it was set in place.

Another way in which diversity is manifested in *FULFILLED!* is by the variety of views expressed in its pages. While there is a growing number of Preterist newsletters being produced, they predominantly reflect the per-



Cont. next page

Mailbag



I only know of one Preterist in our area. And I have tried to locate others. I would like to receive the magazine "Fulfilled" so I can pass it on to friends. I hope to create enough interest to start an eschatology class.

Bill, Arkansas

We love the magazine and are so grateful for our friend, Roger, having told us about it. We read it cover to cover each month. My husband and I love to discuss what we read.

B and M, Texas

Thanks for sending me an issue of Fulfilled Magazine. I love it, and its about "time" someone published a truly Preterist magazine!

Dean, Texas

Very interested in learning more about Full Preterism. We would greatly appreciate receiving your Fulfilled Magazine. We would like to receive the spring 2007 issue if there are any left. Thank you very much.

T and D, Kansas

I am new to the preterist viewpoint but have found it such a blessing and God has become

so much more real to me. The amazing person and ministry of Jesus Christ has also become so much more powerful!! Blessings in Christ to you.

Tim, United Kingdom

You guys have a terrific magazine started and I hope for great success going forward.

Gerald, Indiana

I am so excited about your magazine! I believe God's really going to bless you all and use the magazine more than you can imagine. Please do not apologize for needing to fund it. Most of us will be more than willing to pay a subscription price.

Angie, Indiana

We are grateful for your special ministry and for your magazine and we believe the Lord is using your outreach in a way that can really make an impact for the furtherance of Full Preterism and the truth of it. Thank you so much. In Grace and for His Glory,

E and J, Missouri

THE AMAZING
PERSON AND
MINISTRY OF JESUS
CHRIST HAS ALSO
BECOME SO MUCH
MORE POWERFUL!!

Editor's Update (cont.)

spective of their editors. To my knowledge, *FULFILLED!* is the only Preterist publication which includes a variety of viewpoints. This is one of the features of the magazine for which we receive the most positive feedback. Readers are interested in the differing views and perspectives of other Preterist authors and speakers. Many of us, having embraced the basic concept of a past Second Coming, are still in the process of studying out all of its details and ramifications.

Furthermore, Preterism is being embraced by Christians of widely differing backgrounds, which means that we are all exploring Preterism from different "starting points," if you will. Hence the variety of views expressed within the pages of *FULFILLED!* I encourage you to be a "Berean" as you read, examining the Scripture to see if these things are true.

For Christ's Glory,



Gleanings from “The Parousia”

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 J. 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.”

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN CERTAIN AND SPEEDY.

Parable of the Importunate Widow.

Luke 18:1-8 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’” Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth [in the land]?”

The intensely practical and *present-day* character, if we may so call it, of our Lord’s discourses, is a feature of His teaching which, though often overlooked, requires to be kept steadily in view. He spoke to His own people, and to His own times. He was God’s messenger to *Israel*; and, while it is most true that His words are for all men and for all time, yet their primary and direct bearing was upon His own generation. For want of attention to this fact, many expositors have wholly missed the point of the parable before us. It becomes in their hands a vague and indefinite prediction of a vindication of the righteous, in some period more or less remote, but

having no special relation to the people and time of our Lord Himself. Assuredly, whatever the parable may be to us or to future ages, it had a close and special bearing upon the disciples to whom it was originally spoken. The Lord was about to leave His disciples “as sheep in the midst of wolves;” they were to be persecuted and afflicted, hated of all men for their Master’s sake; and it might well be that their courage would fail them, and their hearts would faint. In this parable the Savior encourages them “to pray always, and not to faint,” by the example of what persevering prayer can do even with man. If the importunity of a poor widow could constrain an unprincipled judge to do her right, how much more would God, the righteous Judge, be moved by the prayers of His own children to redress their wrongs. Without allegorizing all the details of the parable, after the manner of some expositors, it is enough to mark its great moral. It is this: The persecuted children of God be would surely and *speedily* avenged. God will vindicate them, and that *speedily*. But when? The point of time is not left indefinite. It is “when the Son of man cometh.” The Parousia was to be the hour of redress and deliverance to the suffering people of God.

The reflection of our Lord in the close of the eighth verse deserves particular attention. “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” We must here revert to the facts already stated with respect to the ministry of John the Baptist. We have seen how dark and ominous the outlook was of the prophet who preached repentance to Israel. He was the precursor of “the great and terrible day of the Lord;” he was the second Elijah sent to proclaim the coming of Him who would “smite the land with a curse.” The reflection of our Lord suggests that He foresaw that the repen-



by J. Stuart Russell

tance which could alone avert the doom of the nation was not to be looked for. There would be no faith in God, in His promises, or in His threatenings. The day of His coming, therefore, would be the “day of vengeance” (Luke 21:22).

Doddridge has well apprehended the scope of this parable, and paraphrases the opening verse as follows: “Thus our Lord discoursed with His disciples of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and for their encouragement under those hardships which they might in the meantime expect, from their unbelieving countrymen or others, He spake a parable, to them, which was intended

to inculcate upon them this great truth, that how distressed soever their circumstances might be, they ought always to pray with faith and perseverance, and not to faint under their trials.”

The following is his paraphrase of v. 8: “Yes I say unto you, He will certainly vindicate them; and when He once undertakes it, He will do it speedily too; and this generation of men shall see and feel it to their terror. Nevertheless, when the Son of man, having been put in possession of His glorious kingdom, comes to appear for this important purpose, will He find faith in the land?” ⚡

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ALL MEN AND FOR
ALL TIME, YET THEIR
PRIMARY AND
DIRECT BEARING
WAS UPON HIS
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In an effort to increase the awareness of Preterism, a reader of *FULFILLED! Magazine* is making the incredible offer of a free post-paid copy of J. Stuart Russell's “The Parousia” to all who request one.

This is the 2003 edition published by IPA, containing forwards by Ed Stevens and Walt Hibbard, as well as the original afterword by Russell.





CREATION TO CO

Studies in Redem

GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION

By Ed Stevens

In our last article we surveyed the big picture of redemption, giving an eight point outline which hits the high points of salvation history:

1. God's plan before creation
2. The world that God created
3. Adam's privilege and responsibility
4. Adam sinned which brought death and separation
5. Man was spiritually dead and destined to die physically
6. The disembodied souls of all the dead were held in Hades
7. The Old Testament period (Adam to Christ) was a tutor to help us recognize Christ
8. Jesus is the Promised One who came to consummate redemption

We will now look more closely at what the Bible says about the first of these points. Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are from the NASB95.

God Pre-planned Redemption

In eternity, before the world was created, God had a plan. It was an infinitely wise plan, and a mystery which was hidden and only gradually revealed throughout the Old Testament. This plan (to bring us to glory) was not a secondary plan that was invented after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, nor after Christ was crucified, but rather was God's original plan which was "predestined before the ages":

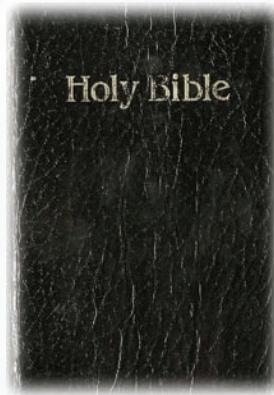
... my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of **the mystery** which has been **kept secret for long ages past** ... (Rom 16:25).

... but we speak God's wisdom in a **mystery**, the **hidden wisdom** which God **predestined** (Gk. *proorizo*, "decide upon beforehand, predetermine") **before the ages** to our glory (1Cor 2:7).

This wise plan of redemption was not only "predestined" (which means it is "unchangeable"), but also "unsearchable" and "unfathomable":

... **unchangeableness** of His purpose ... (Heb 6:17).

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How **unsearchable** are His judgments and **unfathomable** His ways (Rom 11:33)!



God knew the end before the beginning. He created the heavens and the earth to operate from the very beginning according to His predetermined plan. He did not have two or more different plans. He knew (and knows) all things, and was able to project that knowledge ahead to the end, so that he not only knew what the end would be, but used all of his power and attributes to accomplish that particular end. Because He knows all and is immutable (unchanging), God knew all the contingencies before creation and set a plan into motion that could not be defeated, and which would not need to be changed or adjusted or modified in any way for the rest of eternity.

God declared the end (the crushing of Satan's head) from the beginning, but He did not explain the details of how that redemption would be accomplished. God makes it clear that His predestined plan could not fail to be accomplished:

... *I am* God, and there is no one like Me ... (Isa 46:9).

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My **purpose** will be established, and I will accomplish all **My good pleasure**' ... (Isa 46:10).

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without **accomplishing what I desire**, and without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it (Isa 55:11).

We see that very "end" predicted (the first hint of a coming Redeemer) at the beginning of creation when God told Eve that one of her descendants would crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). This promise of redemption was repeated throughout the Old Testament to all the major patriarchs (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, et al.) and clearly fulfilled in the arrival of Jesus Christ. All nations would be blessed in Him (Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Isa 49:6ff; 56:6-8).

God Predestined a Redeemer

God's plan called not just for an easy gift of forgiveness, but for a Redeemer to come to earth and pay the sacrificial price for that redemption with his own blood. This Redeemer was "foreknown before the foundation of the world," and not merely introduced later as "Plan B" after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. The fall of humanity did not surprise God. The cross was foreknown and planned even before creation:

... knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things ... (1 Pet 1:18).

... but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ (1 Pet 1:19).

CONSUMMATION

Triumphant History



For **He was foreknown before the foundation of the world** . . . (1 Pet 1:20).

The purpose of this wise, mysterious, and predestined plan was to sum up all things in Christ, which he brought about at the “fullness of the times.” It happened right on schedule, according to God’s original plan that had been granted to us in Christ Jesus “from all eternity”:

He made known to us the **mystery** of His will, according to **His kind intention** which **He purposed** in Him (Eph 1:9).

. . . with a view to **an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ** . . . (Eph 1:10).

. . . who has saved us . . . according to **His own purpose** . . . granted us in Christ Jesus **from all eternity** (2 Tim 1:9).

God Predestined a People

Scripture teaches that God not only predestined a plan of redemption and a Redeemer to accomplish it, but also a “specific” group of individuals to be redeemed. The Old Testament declared that the Gentile nations would share in this redemption, so when redemption came, certain chosen ones from all the nations were enabled to hear the gospel and turn to Christ in faith and obedience. In Ephesians 3:6, Paul states that those Gentiles who believe the gospel (along with a remnant of believing Israelites - cf. Rom 9:24 and Rom 11) would be “fellow heirs, members, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.” This was in accordance with “the eternal purpose” of God (Eph 3:11):

. . . also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined according to His purpose** who works all things after the counsel of His will . . . (Eph 1:11).

. . . *to be specific*, that the **Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers** of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel . . . (Eph 3:6).

This was in accordance with **the eternal purpose** which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph 3:11).

So, it was not just a *plan* that was predestined, but also a *people* (and individuals). The best expression of this is found in Romans 9:11-24, which we do not have room here to quote, but it is summed up nicely in the following passages:

For those whom He **foreknew**, He also **predestined to become** conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren . . . (Rom 8:29).

. . . **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. . . . In love **He predestined us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself . . . (Eph 1:4-5).

Conclusion

Three attributes of God relate directly to His plan of redemption—all-knowing, all-powerful, and unchanging. We have noticed in the biblical texts above how all three of these attributes are related to His wise, unstoppable, and unalterable plan to redeem man. God foreknew that man would fall and need a Redeemer. God provided a wise plan by which redemption would occur. This plan was formed before creation, so it not only foreknew, but predestined both the fall and redemption.

In our next lesson we will look more closely at the world that God created and how He laid the foundation for the redemption of His predestined people. X



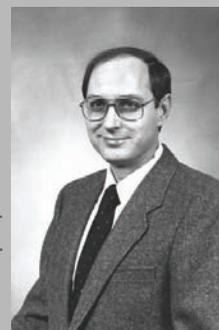
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MY EYES ARE NOT SEEING WHAT MY EARS ARE HEARING!

On March 13, 2004, in Indianapolis, Indiana, I engaged in an all day formal debate¹. My opponent insisted that Christ's coming is yet future and must be a literal, visible event. He appealed to New Testament passages that speak of Christ coming on the clouds, with the angels, etc., and asked, "What does that *sound* like? I did not see that, did you see that?" He believes that, because no one physically saw Christ coming on the clouds, it did not happen.

I responded that Isaiah said that in the *kingdom*, "they shall learn war no more," and, "they will beat their swords into plowshares" (Isa 2:4f); the wolf would lie down with the lamb, the children would play on the hole of the poisonous snakes (Isa 11). I asked him, "What does that *sound* like? Do you see that today?" My amillennial friend believes—as I do—that all of this is currently fulfilled spiritually in Christ! I pressed the point that my eyes do not see the literal/physical fulfillment of these promises, and that our dispensational friends insist that since their eyes do not see what their ears are hearing, these promises are unfulfilled.

My opponent then said, "Israel misunderstood the nature of her promises. She thought they were literal, but in fact, they were spiritual!" Actually, *this is true*, but is totally destructive to my amillennial friend's—and, I might add, the postmillennial—view of things!

If Israel misunderstood the nature of her *kingdom* promises, then she misunderstood the nature of her *resurrection promises*. This is true because the coming of the kingdom involves *the coming of the resurrection!* Jesus said He was coming in the judgment (which is resurrection) of all men, before all of His generation died (Matt 16:27-28). The time of the judgment is assuredly the time of the resurrection in Matthew 25:31f. The coming of the kingdom and resurrection are synchronous (same time) events (2 Tim 4:1; Rev 11:15ff). Since the judgment, kingdom, and resurrection are all synchronous events,

consider that Jesus said, "The kingdom does not come with observation" (Luke 17:20f)!

If the kingdom and the resurrection are same-time events, and if the coming of the kingdom was an *unseen event*, that means that the resurrection was an unseen event! Paul, when discussing the resurrection, wrote: "We do not look on the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen" (2 Cor 4:16f).

Consider Isaiah 26:9f in this regard; in this Messianic context, YHWH promised that He was going to bring about the resurrection (26:19). This would be the time when He would descend out of heaven and walk on the tops of the mountains. It would also be the time when the earth would disclose its blood, meaning that it would be the time when the martyrs would be vindicated and their persecutors judged. Let's develop this idea from Isaiah.

Isaiah chapters 2-4 predicted the Last Days (2:2f) and the consummative Day of the Lord (2:9f; 19f). In that Day, YHWH would rise to shake the earth mightily, and men would run for the hills! Needless to say, Isaiah's description of the Day of the Lord allows no room for an earth-burning, time-ending event that would happen, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"! In chapter 3 the prophet continued his description of the Day. It would be a time of famine, warfare, and *judgment against Israel* (3:1-4, 13f, 18f). This Day would be an "in history" judgment of Old Covenant Israel.

In Isaiah chapter 4, the writer speaks of the coming of the Branch of YHWH, who would be glorified. In that Day the remnant would be saved (v. 3-4), and God would cleanse the blood-guilt of the daughters of Zion from her midst, "by the spirit of judgment and of fire" (4:4). We can definitively identify this Last Days event foretold by Isaiah! As Jesus stood in the Temple at Jerusalem, he castigated the Jews

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for their internecine history of killing the prophets (Matt 23:29f). He said they had killed all the prophets sent to them, and were going to kill the prophets that he was about to send. In doing so, they would fill up the measure of their father's guilt, and be judged in that generation (Matt 23:34f).

With this in mind, let's take a look at Luke 23:28-31. Jesus was being led to his Passion. The women who loved him wept and mourned. However, he said to them, "*Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"*" It is widely acknowledged that Jesus was citing Isaiah chapter 2 verses 9f and 19f and applying these Scriptures to the impending judgment of Jerusalem.

The reference to Isaiah chapter 26 should be obvious! Isaiah chapter 26 foretold the time of the avenging of the blood of the martyrs when YHWH descended out of heaven, at the time of the resurrection! Isaiah chapters 2-4 predicted the avenging of the martyr's blood in the Last Days/Day of the Lord, when YHWH cleansed Jerusalem of her blood guilt. Jesus applied Isaiah chapters 2-4 to the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Luke 23). Jesus said all the blood of all the martyrs all the way back to Creation would be avenged in the AD 70 judgment of Jerusalem (Matthew 23)! This means that Isaiah chapter 26 was to be fulfilled in the AD 70 coming of Christ in judgment of Israel for shedding innocent blood! And this directly impacts the "my eyes are not seeing what my ears are hearing" argument.

In Isaiah 26:9f, YHWH said that when His judgments are in the earth, the righteous learn wisdom. Remember, the judgment He is discussing was the resurrection and vindication of the martyrs at the Day of the Lord!

While the righteous would learn wisdom, the wicked would not "see" His judgments (v. 10)! Do you catch that?

Isaiah was being told that *the righteous and the unrighteous would both view the same event*, the Day of the Lord. However, while the righteous would see and *perceive* that it was YHWH's Presence, the wicked would see those identical events but would fail, or refuse, to see that YHWH was involved!

It should go without saying that if the Day of the Lord is an earth-burning, time-ending event, no one could fail to grasp what was happening—whether righteous or wicked!

The point is that the physical eyes would not see what the ears would hear! Their ears heard the prediction of the Day of YHWH when the Lord would descend from heaven, tread on the tops of the mountains, and the dead would be raised. Both righteous and wicked would see the same event. The righteous would see, perceive, and know—*through the "eyes" of faith*. The wicked, because their *physical* eyes were not seeing what their ears were hearing, would deny the reality of what was happening, until it was too late for them. And of course, Jesus' prediction in Matthew chapter 23 shows that the fulfillment of Isaiah was in the Day of the Lord in AD 70.

Yet today, the majority of Christianity denies that the Day of the Lord was in AD 70. Their eyes do not see what their ears are hearing! They are in fact making the very same mistake as the Jews who rejected Jesus as king. The Jews rejected Jesus because their eyes were not seeing what their ears were hearing about this "king Jesus!" Is it not time to open *the "eyes" of faith*, to see the reality of what occurred, right on time, in AD 70? ✘

1. DVDs of that debate (Preston-vs.-Thrasher) are available from me, \$24.95 postpaid. You can email me to order:

dkpret@cableone.net



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FULFILLED

"... that there will [Gk. Implies "about to"] be a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15).



Lift Him Up!

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful
face,
And the things of earth, will
grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory
and grace.*

One of the lectures that Todd Dennis presented at the 1st Annual Eschatology Conference in Carlsbad, New Mexico, was “The Progress of Preterism.” Todd has discovered on Google Books a number of older books which present, in varying degrees, a past Second Coming (now also available at www.PreteristArchive.com). He not only gave the titles of these works, but also gave a brief synopsis of many of them (how he finds the time for all that reading is beyond me).

I was particularly struck by one comment that he made. While describing the contents of a certain book, he noted that, while the first half contained material which dealt with eschatology, the second half contained a wonderful treatise on the person and work of Christ. He then stated, “Forget the first half—just read the second half of the book.”

I cannot tell you how those words spoke to me, and how refreshing it was to hear a Preterist say essentially, “Forget the eschatology—focus on Christ.” Please don’t misunderstand me here; I realize that Preterists are being called here-

tics, and are being called to answer for our beliefs.

I’m not saying that those who are answering that call have “left Christ” in favor of eschatology. But I do get concerned at times that, amidst the exegesis, explanations and refutations, there seems to be a paucity of Preterist material which simply exalts the person of Christ and exhorts us toward more holy lives.

I enjoy interacting with others regarding the various views on the rapture, the resurrection, the millennium, etc. But why do I never receive emails stating, “I feel led to discontinue my study on resurrection for now, and instead read

*I love to tell the story,
I will be my theme in
glory,
To tell the old, old story,
Of Jesus and His love.*

Yes, I enjoy reading another great exegesis from Scripture which further supports Preterism. Yes, I want to see the rapture, the resurrection and millennium brought into sharper focus. But don't neglect to tell me the old, old story of Jesus and His love. Don't allow me to just let it be my theme in glory (the afterlife)—remind me to make it my theme here and now. Exhort me to turn my eyes upon Jesus, for then the things of this earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Regardless of how much heaven you believe we have now in the New Covenant, it is one thing to have something available; it's quite another to truly realize it in our day-to-day lives. I know that I fall woefully short. Is that because, in part, that in my studies of the nature and timing of the Second Coming, I have neglected the Person who came, and who now resides in me? Remind me that the process of sanctification is not becoming a better Preterist—it is becoming more Christ-like. ❧

the Bible to see what God might speak to me about my walk with Him?" Or, "God has been dealing with me about spending less time debating with others, and more time praying for them." Or, "I've been convicted recently about poking fun at (your favorite Futurist personality here), and instead seeing them as a brother in the Lord who needs my prayer." Or how about this one, "Instead of studying to be better equipped to win Christians to Preterism, I feel compelled to study to be better equipped to win the lost to Christ?"



Jim Wade

Students of God's word should be intrigued when confronted with seeming contradictions in the Scriptures. Why? Because we know God's revelation conveys a consistent message. Conflicts in our understanding only highlight areas where we need to study and grow. When ideas appear to

clash, our interpretation of at least one of the passages is incorrect. The challenge of resolving the conflict should spur us to study, not seek comfort in the thought that others accept the traditional view with its own set of conflicts. Indeed, it is the discomfort of such conflicts which compels diligent students to dig deeper rather than retreat. That said, the seeming contradiction posed in this issue is not, as we shall see, a contradiction at all.

Jesus didn't pull any punches when he commissioned the Twelve disciples as recorded in Matthew chapter 10. He made it clear that many would not only reject their message but persecute them as well. It is in this context that the relief promised at His coming appears. The disciples were to understand that, although things would be difficult, their relief would come before they evangelized all the cities of Israel. This statement is irrefutable evidence that the disciples would still be involved in their mission when He came.

Paul was equally clear in his letters: The gospel had been preached in all the world during his lifetime. Whether one takes "the world" to be the old covenant world or the Roman Empire, the fact remains that the

gospel had been preached to the nations. (We will come back to this point shortly.)

Suggesting that these two thoughts are contradictory is based on an unwarranted and erroneous assumption, namely, that the Twelve were solely responsible for preaching the gospel in all the world. No one who believes Christians still have a part in fulfilling the Twelve's original commission can logically insist the disciples alone were responsible for it in the first century. Even a casual reading of the biblical text reveals that others were involved in fulfilling the mission. Hence, the plain text of Scripture tells us that the Twelve were not themselves responsible for completing the "worldwide" mission. Rather, the commission was fulfilled as the good news spread from person to person.

Furthermore, a brief reflection on the events of Pentecost will serve as evidence that the propagation of the gospel to all nations began that very day. It could even be said that the gospel was preached to all the world that day, even if the audience was limited in scope. We read in Acts 2:5, "*And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.*" The text is clear: Men from "every nation" were present to hear the first presentation of the gospel message.

Some commentators tell us that wealthy Jews (here

Preterism claims Matt 10:14-15 (the Son of Man goes through the cities of Man) as an immutability claim. Preterism also claims that the gospel was preached to all the world in the New Testament (Col 1:6, 23). Aren't t



William Bell

The question is asked, "Why, if the coming of the Son of Man happened in AD 70, do the Scriptures say that the apostles would not have completed preaching to the cities of Israel till the Son of Man comes?" Let's begin our response

by examining the context of Christ's commission to the apostles.

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against their parents and cause them to be

put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes." (Matt 10:16-23)

In the larger context, Matthew 10:1-4 describes the call of the apostles, followed by the commission of the Twelve to go preach. Beginning in verse 16, the instructions shift to the subject of persecution. The disciples would face severe trials preaching a gospel which would "turn the world upside down."

Observe that Jesus sends them out as harmless sheep in the midst of devouring wolves. While there is a concern for the safety of the apostles, Christ makes no effort to conceal the persecution they will face.

Legal difficulties and trials before the Sanhedrin Council, and before governors and kings, are all detailed vividly in the Acts of the Apostles. The trials would involve betrayals by close family relationships; brothers,



Perspectives

used in the broader sense to include the *Diaspora*) maintained homes in Jerusalem for the express purpose of having a place to stay when they came to keep the feasts. They were among those assembled on Pentecost who “were pricked in their hearts” (Acts 2:37). They were among the distraught who learned that they had crucified their Deliverer. They experienced the grace and forgiveness which answered the question of every heart, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*”

Are we to think that these men returned to their homes and remained silent about what they heard and experienced? Anyone who has been brought to Christ, especially as an adult (or who has witnessed such a conversion), can relate to the pure joy and excitement that overflows at every opportunity. Surely those who received Peter’s message carried it with them to their family and friends throughout the Roman Empire. The bottom line is that the Twelve had help! They did not have to go through all the cities of Israel personally for the message to be heard.

Beyond that, Jesus’ commission does not demand that every individual or every city had to be taught before the end would come. The commission of Christ, properly understood, never required that every individual was to hear the gospel before the end came. There never has been (and never will be) a time when every living individual has heard the gospel message. Children are born every minute and they will not be able to effectually hear the message for years to come. To

Matthew 10:23 (you will not have finished the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes). How then will the gospel be preached in the New Testament generation if not these contradictory?

fathers, mothers and children all would set one against another even to the point of death. The apostles would be hated of all men for Jesus’ name sake, yet were instructed to endure or labor under such trials until the end.

Amidst this formidable opposition and distress, Jesus offers the apostles comfort and reprieve from persecutions through flight to other cities for refuge. According to Acts chapter 17, Paul did not remain in Thessalonica when he met with persecution there. Rather, he fled to Berea, a place where he not only found refuge for a time but also favorable response to his message. Later, his persecutors followed him to Berea.

Jesus assured the apostles that throughout their apostolic ministry, they would always find some city of refuge in Israel to which they could flee. They would not exhaust those available cities before the Lord returned. In this, Jesus assured the apostles that they could protect themselves as much as possible by fleeing to the next city.

This was practical wisdom for their self-preservation. They were not to recklessly run into harm’s way, but were

anticipate such a day is without biblical (or logical) foundation.

Paul was not only trained in the Scriptures, he was personally taught by our Lord through special revelation. To say he “knew his stuff” would be an understatement. Yet, we find no evidence he thought the completion of the world mission contradicted the Master’s words in Matthew. If he noted no conflict, we are hardly in a position to disagree.

In conclusion, it is expected that those who reject the Scriptures will always see contradictions in the text, and no explanation will ever satisfy them. However, those who honor the text should be willing to set aside faulty assumptions and let Scripture speak for itself. When we attempt to force the divine text to conform to our human understanding, we end up confusing (or deceiving) ourselves and providing additional fodder for those who point to our faith as failure.

We have been entrusted with a glorious message. May we be diligent students and faithful witnesses of the glory revealed to us in the Christ. ✕

(Recommended reading: “Into All the World: Then Comes the End,” Don Preston, www.eschatology.org)

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to do everything reasonable to protect themselves against unreasonable and violent men.

Hence, the text is teaching that the Lord’s coming would occur during the lifetime of the apostles. Jesus promised to come before they would have gone through all the cities to which they could flee for refuge. It was a comforting assurance that amidst their trials, they would always find some relief.

Matthew 10:23 does not demand the fulfillment of the world-wide preaching of the gospel prior to Christ’s Second Coming. However, it does affirm that the gospel was in fact preached in the lifetime of the apostles. Jesus said, “*And this gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations then shall the end come*” (Matt 24:14).

This is the same end found in Matthew 10:22, referring to the end of the Jewish age, which concluded before the first-century generation passed away.

The reference to the Holy Spirit’s ministry also confirms the first-century pre-Parousia time. The apostles were assured of the miraculous powers of the Spirit



Bell (from p. 13)

until the consummation of the Jewish age (Matt 29:20; 1 Cor 1:7, 8).

No one today can fulfill this commission as they would not be equipped with the powers of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit was poured out for the last days of Israel (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-20).

Mathew 10:23 is, therefore, a text which teaches an imminent coming. The lifetime of the apostles, the persecutions, and the ministry of the Spirit within the last days of Israel support this conclusion.

The fact that the Son of Man would come before the apostles exhausted all the cities of Israel demonstrates that

soon-to-come Parousia was the same *coming* taught elsewhere in the New Testament. It came to pass at the end of the Jewish age in the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, when all things written were fulfilled (Luke 21:20-32).

Therefore, the text does not demand that preaching must continue in Israel today until Christ returns. The apostles fulfilled this mission in the first century by carrying the gospel to all, even in the midst of severe opposition. ✕

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Larry D. Siegle

The Message and the Meaning: Matthew 10:23

While attending a theological school some years ago, one of the very first verses that attracted my attention to the Preterist paradigm was Matthew 10:23, “*But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.*” What an incredible statement! Could the “Second Coming” of Jesus have **actually** been so close at hand?

Other statements in the New Testament affirm what is called “the nearness of expectation” as it relates to **that generation** and not to those who would live thousands of years in the future (Matt 23:36; 24:34; Mark 8:12, 38; 9:19; 13:30; Luke 7:31; et al.). History also records the marvelous fulfillment of “*all things written*” as having been consummated with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Luke 21:22).

Regarding the “great commission” given by the Lord Jesus to His disciples following His resurrection from the dead, the scope and magnitude of the outreach would be “*all the world*” (Mark 16:15), and “*all the nations*” (Matt 28:19), even to the extent of “*all creation*” (Mark 16:15 NASB), or “*every creature*” (KJV). Other references in the New Testament point to the grand fulfillment of the commission over an approximately forty-year period during which time the message had been proclaimed “*in all creation under heaven*” (Col 1:23) and “*made known to all the nations*” (Rom 16:26).

If these statements are true, then how could Jesus have said that His “coming” would take place before His disciples could “*finish going through the cities of Israel*”—a **seeming** contradiction. Students of the Word should keep in mind the contextual circumstances from which the statement arises. Matthew 10:1-42 depicts Jesus sending out His disciples on a mission limited to “*the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (v. 6), after which they would return and report the results of their preaching efforts (Luke 9:10). Scholars are in

agreement that not **all** of what Jesus had foretold took place within that short span of time before they returned with their report. During this journey, the disciples did not encounter “*governors and kings,*” nor were they beaten “*in the synagogues*”—events that would unfold **following** the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Acts 16:22, 37; 2 Cor 11:23-25). Although Jesus’ prophetic statement reached into the future, it was restricted to the limitations of the “nearness of expectation” of **that generation**.

The statement of Jesus was a call to **urgency**—a message that time was soon running out and the kingdom of heaven was “*at hand*” (Matt 10:7; 16:28). Before the disciples would have the opportunity to “*go through the cities of Israel,*” the end would occur. It must be understood that the preaching to “*all creation*” or “*all the nations*” does not necessarily imply that the disciples were compelled to **personally** travel to every single city in the “*world*” for the work to be accomplished. The Bible reveals that, following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, thousands responded to the message of salvation (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 11:24; 13:48 et al.).

Even though the apostles themselves would not have had time to travel “*into all the world*” during the short span of forty years, the multiplying principle of preaching, teaching, and ministry would propel the message far and wide. There is no contradiction between Jesus’ statement in Matthew 10:23 and those later recorded by the Apostle Paul as an inspired commentary and testimony of **how** the fulfillment of those words took place. Both Jew and Gentile were brought together into the “*one body*” as predicted (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21). The amazing dissemination of the gospel took place just as had been predicted and the end came right on time, “*This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come*” (Matt 24:14). ✕

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ΙΤ'Σ ΑΛΛ ΓΡΕΕΚ ΤΟ ΜΕ!

A very fruitful source of confusion and error in the interpretation of the New Testament is the capricious and uncertain way in which *ge* is rendered in our Authorized Version. Sometimes, though rarely, it has its proper meaning, *the land*; but more frequently it is translated *the earth*, and our translators never seem to have given themselves any trouble to inquire whether the word should be taken in its widest or in a more restricted sense. (pp. 493-494, *The Parousia*)

Strong's Dictionary NT:1093

γη *ge* (ghay); contracted from a primary word; soil; by extension a region, or the solid part or the whole of the terrene globe (including the occupants in each application):

KJV - country, earth (-ly), ground, land, world.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon—earth:

1. arable land: Matt 13:5,8,23
2. the ground, the earth as a standing-place Matt 10:29
3. the main land, opposed to sea or water: Mark 4:1
4. the earth as a whole, the world
 - a. the earth as opposed to the heavens: Matt 5:18,35
 - b. the inhabited earth, the abode of men and animals: Luke 21:35
5. a country, land enclosed within fixed boundaries, a tract of land, territory, region; Luke 4:25

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Prophecy Quiz

*Be diligent to come to me **quickly** . . . (2 Tim 4:9)*

In the above verse Paul:

- A. wants Timothy to join him as soon as possible
- B. doesn't care when Timothy comes, he just wants Timothy to travel rapidly once he departs

Without doubt, Paul desired Timothy to join him as soon as possible. In fact, the second option appears laughable and not really an option at all. But is this not exactly how some want us to understand the following?

*He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming **quickly**." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

Both instances of "quickly" in these verses come from the same root in the Greek. Yet, in order to avoid the obvious implication that Jesus claimed He was coming *soon*, there are those who would have us believe that Jesus was not proclaiming *when* He was coming, but *how*—rapidly. His Second Coming might not occur until centuries after He spoke these words, but once it commenced it would not be a drawn-out affair—it would occur rapidly! Would we accept that meaning for *quickly* in Paul's request of Timothy? If not, then perhaps we should question that meaning for Jesus' statement in 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!*