

FULFILLED!

Magazine

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF
FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST



**How do you share
Preterism? P. 12**



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Editor's Update

Many thanks to all of you who took the time to fill out our survey. We received some wonderful comments and we appreciate the insight, suggestions, and opinions (the survey is still available on our web site if you would like to fill it out). One recurring theme was that readers want more pages and more issues per year. I think of those subjects fairly often myself, and hope that we can move in that direction sooner rather than later. However, as much as I would like to add pages, I am simply juggling too many projects to be able to give more attention to the magazine at the present time. That doesn't mean that the "door is closed," so keep it in your prayers.

Once we do increase the page count we will certainly have no lack of subject matter to include. Readers indicated that they would like to see some advertising in the magazine, as well as book reviews, profiles of Preterist churches, thoughts on how to share Preterism, and more. I am contemplating how to incorporate some of these topics even before we increase the page count. If you are the Pastor of a Preterist church (or attend one), and would like others to know about your ministry, please contact me.

As our readership continues to grow there will be an ever-diversifying set of desires for the content of *FULFILLED! Magazine*. We realize that we cannot give everyone the "perfect" magazine. As the old saying goes, "you can't please all the people all the time." That being said, it was refreshing to read survey comments stating that even though certain aspects of the magazine weren't as pertinent to particular readers, they understood that others would benefit from them. With that in mind, it would perhaps be prudent for me to reiterate some of the goals and directions I have for the magazine, especially since our readership has increased greatly since my mention of these in the first issue.

First and foremost, we desire to bring glory and honor to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

not only in the subject matter, but also in the tone in which it is presented. Naturally, when diametrically opposed views are contrasted there are inevitable differences. Our desire is that these differences be presented in gracious, loving, and Christ-like tones.

Preterists are often accused of being imbalanced with their emphasis on eschatology. In fact, some have been accused of having their faith in Preterism rather than Christ. While there are fringe elements to any doctrinal position, the Preterists I know have embraced Preterism precisely because of the high esteem in which they hold the Word of God and the person of Christ. They are willing to suffer with Christ outside the camp of traditionalism in order to stay true to God's Word. Because Preterists are often maligned as having a one-faceted theology, I always attempt to have an article of a devotional nature—something which points us toward the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Another feature which readers enjoy is the variety of perspectives and contributors featured in Fulfilled!. Because the modern Preterist "movement" is still in its infancy, we endeavor to introduce readers to as many other Preterists as possible, thus strengthening the personal and informational links in the Preterist community.

Although the modern Preterist movement is fairly young, Preterism has been around since the New Testament generation. At last year's Carlsbad Eschatology Conference I learned an interesting tidbit from Todd Dennis, who had presented a synopsis of Preterist authors through the centuries. Todd told me that his study of the history of Preterism had revealed an interesting pattern: Preterism would take root for a generation and then "die out" in the succeeding generation, only to be "rediscovered" by the next generation. When



Cont. on next page

Mailbag

Thank you for the Fulfilled magazine. As a fairly recent convert to Covenantal Fulfilled Eschatology I appreciate your articles. I have never met another Preterist personally, your magazine inspires one to keep studying. It's so very important to read our bibles in their historical contexts. Praise God, our Lord has come and He did fulfill His word to those who heard His Olivet Discourse.

Scott, Alabama

I've been studying Preterism for about four years, and I just saw my friend's copy of *Fulfilled!* Magazine. I'm excited about this!

Theresa, Wisconsin

To the FCG family—we sure do like reading Fulfilled! Magazine and look forward to the next issue. We are lovers of The Truth (Jesus) and you are right on target. We thank God for those who know the truth and publish it. It is a rarity in the Church world today. God bless you all,

Ronald & Peggy, North Carolina

Just wanted you to know how much I appreciate what you are doing with Fulfilled! It does take a while to explain Preterism to folks, and your magazine helps. Thanks,

Brent, Texas



Editor's Update (cont.)

we consider that even in today's information and communication age many Preterists still feel isolated, it is easy to understand how the message failed to gain a strong enough foothold in earlier generations to be passed on.

With the advent of the internet and the ease of self-publishing, it is doubtful that Preterism will ever fade away in the foreseeable future. Although what I term the "modern" Preterist movement of the last 30-40 years can be traced back to several key figures, Preterism is not the "new kid on the block." Quite the contrary. This is the purpose for the "Gleanings from the Parousia" column. While on the one hand we wish to introduce current Preterists and their material, on the other hand we desire to establish the roots of Preterism by including historical material. In the future I hope to move away from "The Parousia" (especially since so many readers now have a copy) and introduce material from historical Preterists. I have a wealth of resources to draw from but, as always, it comes down to the time factor. I have to make time to go through and pull out material for the column.

This issue touches upon another topic

which repeated itself in the surveys—how to share Preterism. Many readers want to know how to share Preterism. If you have any tips, pointers, testimonies, etc., to share on that subject please send them to me. They needn't be a full-length article, and your name can be withheld if desired. Perhaps we can have a "sharing Preterism" tip in each issue.

As always, we are grateful for your prayers, words of encouragement, and financial support. Because our Fall issue may arrive too late, I will mention now that those of you who work for companies which "match" a certain percentage of United Way donations may be able to designate FULFILLED COMMUNICATIONS GROUP. Not only your money, but also some of your company's money will go toward spreading Preterism. As always, we are not asking that you divert donations from other worthy causes.

For Christ's Glory,



WE THANK GOD
FOR THOSE WHO
KNOW THE TRUTH
AND PUBLISH IT. IT
IS A RARITY IN THE
CHURCH TODAY.



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.”

PROPHETIC INTIMATIONS OF THE APPROACHING CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

I. - *The Parable of the Pounds.*

Luke 19:11-27: And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, Saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art all austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith Unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was all austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and stay them before me.

It cannot fail to strike every attentive reader of the Gospel history, how much the teaching of our Lord, as He approached the close of His ministry, dwelt upon the theme of coming judgment. When He spoke this parable, He was on His way to Jerusalem to keep His last Passover before He suffered; and it is remarkable how His discourses from this time seem almost wholly engrossed, not by His own approaching death, but the impending catastrophe of the nation. Not only this parable of the pounds, but His lamentation over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41); His cursing of the fig-tree (Matt. 21, Mark 11); the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21, Mark 12; Luke 20); the parable of the marriage of the king's son (Matt. 22); the woes pronounced upon ‘that generation’ (Matt. 23:29-36); the second lamentation over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37, 38); and the prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives, with the parables and parabolic illustrations appended thereto by St. Matthew, all are occupied with this absorbing theme.

The consideration of these prophetic intimations will

show that the catastrophe anticipated by our Lord was not a remote event, hundreds and thousands of years distant, but one whose shadow already fell upon that age and that nation; and that the Scriptures give us no warrant whatever to suppose that anything else, or anything more than this, is included in our Savior's words.

The parable of the pounds was spoken by our Lord to correct a mistaken expectation on the part of His disciples, that ‘the kingdom of God’ was about to commence at once. It is not surprising that they should have fallen into this mistake. John the Baptist had announced, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand.’ Jesus Himself had proclaimed the same fact, and commissioned them to publish it throughout the cities and villages of Galilee. As patriotic Israelites they writhed under the yoke of Rome, and yearned for the ancient liberties of the nation. As pious sons of Abraham they desired to see all nations blessed in him. And there were other less noble sentiments that had a place in their minds. Was not their own Master the Son of David - the

by J. Stuart Russell

coming King? What might not they expect who were His followers and friends? This made them contest with each other the place of honor in the kingdom. This made the sons of Zebedee eager to secure His promise of the most honorable seats, on His right hand and on His left, where he assumed the sovereignty. And now they were approaching Jerusalem. The great national festival of the Passover was at hand; all Israel was flocking to the Holy City, and there was not a man there but would be eager to see Jesus of Nazareth. What more probable than that the popular enthusiasm would place their Master on the throne of His father David? As they wished, so they believed; and ‘they thought that the kingdom of God would immediately appear.’

But the Lord checked their enthusiastic hopes, and intimated, in a parable, that a certain interval must elapse before the fulfillment of their expectations. Taking a well-known incident from recent Jewish history as the groundwork of the parable—viz., the journey of Archelaus to Rome, in order to seek from the emperor the succession to the dominions of his father, Herod the Great, He employed it as an apt illustration of His own departure from earth, and His subsequent return in glory. Meanwhile, during the period of His absence, He gave His servants a charge to keep—‘Occupy till I come.’ It was for them to be diligent and faithful, until their Lord’s return, when the loyal servants should be applauded and rewarded, and His enemies utterly destroyed.

Nothing can be better than Neander’s explanation of this parable, though, indeed, it may be said to explain itself. Nevertheless, it may be well to subjoin his observations. “In this

parable, in view of the circumstances under which it was uttered, and of the approaching catastrophe, special intimations are given of Christ’s departure from the earth, of His ascension, and return to judge the rebellious theocratic nation, and consummate His dominion. It describes a great man, who travels to the distant court of the mighty emperor, to receive from him authority over his countrymen, and to return with royal power. So Christ was not immediately recognized in His kingly office, but first had to depart from the earth, and leave His agents to advance His kingdom, to ascend into heaven and be appointed theocratic King, and return again to exercise His contested power.”

Such is the teaching of the parable of the pounds. But though the kingdom of God was not to appear at the precise time which the disciples anticipated, it does not follow that it was postponed *sine die*, and that the expected consummation would not take place for hundreds and thousands of years. This would be to falsify the most express declarations of Christ and of His forerunner. How could they have said that the kingdom was at hand, if it was not to appear for ages?

How could an event be said to be near, if it was actually further off than the whole period of the Jewish economy from Moses to Christ? The kingdom might still be at hand, though not so near as the disciples supposed. It was expedient that their Lord should ‘go away,’ but only for ‘a little while,’ when He would come again to them, and come ‘in His kingdom.’ This was the hope in which they lived, the faith which they preached; and we cannot think that their faith and hope were a delusion. ☩

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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.

While Supplies Last

One of THE classics of Preterism!





CREATION TO C

Studies in Rede

All These Things . . . Came To Pass

by Ed Stevens

In this article we begin a series of studies on Matthew 24 and its parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21, as well as the closely related context of Luke 17:20-37. We intend to demonstrate that *every event* predicted by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled by AD 70. We will document the fulfillments from Yosippon, Josephus, the church fathers, and other early historical sources.

Before we begin, it is important to understand how some of the current leaders in the Premillennial camp interpret the Olivet Discourse. A prime example is Thomas Ice, who, in *The End Times Controversy*, writes:

The disciples' question in Matthew 24:3 is divided into two parts. The first question relates to the destruction of the Temple, which took place in AD 70. The second question, composed of two parts but related to one another, refers to events that are still yet to come. The disciples apparently thought that all three elements—the destruction of the Temple, the sign of Christ's coming, and the end of the age—would occur at the same time. (p. 155)

However, in the preceding paragraph, Ice states that the disciples' perception on these matters was wrong:

However, they were wrong to relate the impending judgment upon Jerusalem and the Temple with the return of Messiah. (p. 155, *ibid.*)

Ice realizes that "all these things" (Matt 24:34) refers to all the events mentioned in the Matthew 24 context. He rightly affirms that the whole chapter of Matthew 24 cannot be divided into two different time periods. To be consistent, he cannot allow any of it to have been fulfilled in AD 70, but must apply "all these things" to a yet future "end of the age" and "coming of the Son of Man."

His main argument to support this approach to Matthew 24 is to say that not all of the events ("all these things") mentioned in Matthew 24 actually occurred by AD 70. Therefore, AD 70 cannot be the correct time of fulfillment for *any* of them. It is an "all or nothing" proposition ("all these things"). If any of the events mentioned in Matthew 24 did not occur by AD 70, then they all must be future. How is Ice able to admit that the disci-

ples' first question relates to the AD 70 destruction of the Temple and yet not divide Matthew 24? By claiming that neither the Matthew 24 or Mark 13 accounts deal with the destruction of Jerusalem! (p. 156, *ibid.*)

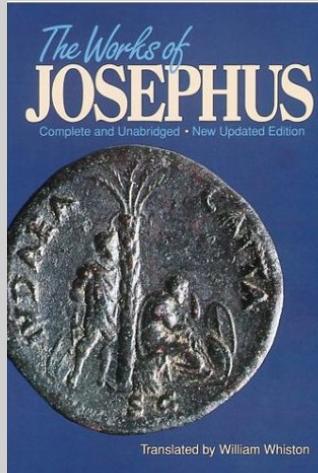
Ice admits that the phrase "all these things" (Matt 24:34) occurs in the preceding context (Matt 23:36). He agrees that this phrase in Matthew 23:36 refers to AD 70, but still insists that its usage in Matthew 24:34 is referring to events yet to come. Do you see any problem with that logic?

Ice goes even further by accusing the inspired disciples (one of whom was writing this very account in Matthew 24) of being wrong in their assumption that "all these things" would indeed occur by AD 70. This is actually imputing the error to Christ Himself, since it was Christ's own words in the preceding context (Matt 23:36) which caused them to associate "all these things" with the destruction of the Temple.

This is why liberals, skeptics, and other critics of Christianity accuse Christ of being a false prophet, since He clearly taught He would return in the lifetime of some of His disciples (Matt 16:27-28). If Christ was wrong about the time of His return, we cannot trust anything else He has to say. Futurism discredits both Christ and Christianity. This is why the Preterist view is so important for us to share with the world. It also stops the liberals, skeptics and critics dead in their tracks. Jesus *did* come back in the lifetime of His disciples, exactly as He had promised. To teach otherwise overthrows the faith. Our goal in this series of articles is to show that "all these things" *did* occur by the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. We will focus most of our attention on those events for which Futurists reject a first-century fulfillment. Although Futurists admit there

were earthquakes, famines, and plagues in the first century, they say that those events were only indicative of the beginning of the Church age, and not signs that the "end" was near.

For those events which Futurists admit *could* have had a first-century fulfillment, we will merely list the citations of historical sources which document their fulfillment. But for those events which Futurists believe are still future, we will provide more detailed analysis and quotes of the sources. Following is a list of Matthew 24 events (and a few from Luke) for which Futurists see no first-century fulfillment:



1. (Matt 24:3) The Parousia (visible bodily return) and the "end of the age" (end of the Church age) have not occurred.

CONSUMMATION

Redemptive History



2. (Matt 24:14) The entire globe was not evangelized by AD 70 (America, Australia, etc.).
 3. (Matt 24:15) No abomination of desolation occurred in AD 70 (no idol was set up in the temple which came to life and required worship—Dan 9:26-27; Rev 13:14-15). No prince polluting the temple was destroyed. The Romans were not destroyed in AD 70. No judgment upon the Roman armies in AD 70 (according to Ezekiel and Revelation, the Gentile armies of Gog and Magog who fight against Israel at the final battle were supposed to be destroyed—Rome was not destroyed, but was instead victorious).
 4. (Matt 24:21) Because it was merely localized on the Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 could not have been the Great Tribulation on the whole world.
 5. (Matt 24:22) Only the Jews, not “all flesh” on the planet, were in danger of being eradicated in AD 70. Therefore, the Great Tribulation has not occurred.
 6. (Matt 24:24) There is no evidence that anyone claimed to be the Messiah at AD 70, nor any record of anyone being set up as King of the Jews.
 7. (Matt 24:27) The Parousia of Christ was not globally and instantly witnessed “as the lightning which flashes from one side of the sky to the other.”
 8. (Matt 24:29-30) The visible signs which were to accompany the return of Christ did not occur in AD 70 (sun darkened; moon not give its light; stars fall from the sky; powers of the heavens shaken; sign of the Son of Man appears; all twelve tribes of Israel mourn in repentance and conversion to Christ, and they see Christ coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory). The visible bodily return of Christ has not occurred. It is supposed to occur immediately after the desecration of the rebuilt temple (some Futurists do not believe
- that the new temple will be destroyed, but merely desecrated [polluted]).
9. (Matt 24:31) The worldwide regathering of Israel back to the land did not occur in AD 70. Instead, they were scattered among the nations. The pre-tribbers do not apply this verse to the rapture, as do post-tribbers. But both pre-trib and post-trib agree that this gathering (rapture) or regathering (restoration back to the land) has not occurred. The angels were to regather Israel from the four corners of the globe. This did not happen in AD 70.
 10. (Luke 21:24) The “times of the Gentiles” (when Jews regain the Temple mount and rebuild the Temple) were not fulfilled by AD 70.
 11. (Luke 21:25-28) These events have not happened yet: the Tribulation, signs in the sun, moon, and stars; powers of the heavens shaken; see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
 12. (Luke 21:28) The redemption of “all Israel” has not yet occurred. All Israel repents and accepts Christ, returns to the land, and calls for His return (Rom. 11; Rev. 20). All Israel is supposed to be redeemed and rescued at the final battle, not destroyed (Rev. 20:8). At the final war, Israel would be rescued from a multitude of foreign nations who have come against them. There was only one nation who came against Israel in AD 70 (Rome). But Ezekiel, Zechariah and Revelation mention a multitude of nations. This has not happened yet.
- In our next article we will begin to document the fulfillment of these very events. Stay tuned! X



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Objection Overruled!

by Don K. Preston

Objection: “Revelation 7:9, 14 states that there was a multitude, the number of which no man could count, that had come out of the great tribulation. How could such a multitude have come from a tribulation that only encompassed the first-century Roman Empire?”

We appreciate the question. I would suggest that there are several presuppositions that underlie it. As is the case with any topic, if our presuppositions are false, then our doctrine built on those presuppositions will be skewed. The first presupposition that underlies the objection is the idea we must read the text of Scripture within the framework of a modern cosmology. In other words, the modern concept of the “world” includes China, Russia, South America, etc. This is *our* “world.” Yet, so very often, the biblical authors use the term “world” or even “whole world” within the framework of *their* cosmology. This is evident when we read that Augustus Caesar passed a decree that the “whole world” (Greek: *pasan ten oikoumenen*) was to be taxed (Luke 2:1-2). Likewise, Agabus the prophet foretold that a famine was about to come on the “whole world” (Greek: *holen ten oikoumenen*). Very clearly, the global “world” is not in these texts.

In a similar vein, when we read of a “great multitude” that was to come out of the great tribulation, if we impose modern concepts of global population numbers on the ancient text, we do a disservice to inspiration. If we assume, based on our knowledge of modern global events, that the ancient texts could not, and do not, match our concept of what would constitute “a great multitude,” then we will again overlook or reject what the text is telling us. Honoring the original readers’ context is critical to proper biblical interpretation.

Another problem that faces those attempting to deal with Revelation is that they fail to comprehend the incredible significance of the Jewish War. There are two concepts that demonstrate the awesome, “world-wide” meaning of that conflict. The first concept, or theme, which is tragically overlooked by most commentators is the covenantal meaning, context, and framework of the Jewish War. That conflict was not merely an internecine military conflict; it was the end of the Old Covenant age! YHVH and Israel had maintained a distinctive covenant relationship for 1500 years, and now that relationship was coming to a cataclysmic end. To miss the awesome significance of that terminus is to ensure that we miss the message of much of the New Testament. Boettner wrote, “One reason it is so difficult for some people to realize the Great Tribulation had its fulfillment in the siege and fall of Jerusalem is that they do not fully appreciate what a tremendously important event and what a landmark in history the break-up and abolition of the Old Testament economy really was.”¹ Likewise, Coffman—no Preterist to be sure—wrote, “The fall of Jerusalem was the

greatest single event of a thousand years, and

religiously significant beyond anything else that ever occurred in human history.”² More importantly, remember that Jesus himself said of those days, “Then shall be great tribulation such as has never been, nor ever shall be” (Matt 24:21). To suggest that the fall of Jerusalem was a strictly localized, insignificant event is a denial of scripture.

The second concept, or theme, that is overlooked is that the Jewish War was not merely the “localized” event that some would like to make it! In my public debate with Mac Deaver (March 2008 in Carlsbad, New Mexico), Deaver attempted to argue, as many do, that the Athenians could not have cared less about the fall of Jerusalem or the fulfillment of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9. In response, I noted that *far fewer people knew of Jesus’ passion than the fall of Jerusalem*. And, from a geographical perspective, the scope of suffering in the fall of Jerusalem far exceeded in size the events of Golgotha! I also noted that the Athenians could have cared less about the death of another rabble-rousing Jew at the hands of the Romans. It is not the geographical size of an event that makes it important; what makes an event important is *the meaning that God places on it!*³

It must not be overlooked that Scripture positively states that the end of the Old Covenant age and fall of Jerusalem was a “universal” event—even keeping in mind what we just noted above. In highly metaphoric, apocalyptic language, Jesus himself described that event in terms of cosmic destruction: the darkened sun, the moon turning to blood, the stars falling from the sky (Matt 24:29-31). And, take note that in Luke 21:25ff, Jesus also says that the days of the end would be when distress would come on the *nations*. Men’s hearts would fail for all of the things coming on the earth (*oikoumene*), and “the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” Undeniably, Jesus wanted his audience to realize that this was a cosmically important event, not merely the destruction of a Jewish outpost sitting in the middle of nowhere!

So, to see Jerusalem as *YHVH saw her*, and

OBJECTION OVERRUL

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forces us to reevaluate the objection above based on these few facts alone. However, there is much, much more, that demands that we see Revelation 7 as fulfilled in the first-century events and the end of the Old Covenant age.

The 144,000 and the Great Tribulation

To focus on the “great multitude” to the exclusion of the 144,000 is misplaced. Whoever the great multitude is, they must be seen within the identical temporal framework as the 144,000. The two groups are inseparably linked.

Of course, our dispensational friends tell us that during the supposedly future Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will be Jewish “super-evangelists” who will help turn the nation of Israel to Jesus. However, any futurist application of the 144,000 or the great multitude is misplaced and violates the inspired text. Notice Revelation 14:1-4:

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

Notice that John was told that the 144,000 were the *first fruits to God and to Christ*. This is incredibly significant, for it demands that they were the *very first generation of Jewish Christians!* Furthermore, we learn from Revelation 7:14 that these “are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.” So, here is my argument:

The 144,000 were first-generation, first-century Jewish Christians.

But the 144,000 experienced the great tribulation.

Therefore, the first-century generation experienced the great tribulation!

This is incontrovertible. In my formal debate with Messianic millennialist Michael Bugg (Memphis, 2007), Bugg tried to say that, unless we know the specific identity of the 144,000, then we cannot know when these events were to occur! This is specious at best. The text is emphatic that the 144,000 were first-generation Jewish Christians. We do not have to know the *names* of these believers to know *when* the Great Tribulation occurred. Whatever their names were, they were the first fruit of those redeemed to God from men. *They were the first Christians!*

For the record, however, James, writing to “the twelve tribes scattered abroad” (James 1:1), writes to them, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). Likewise, the author of Hebrews writes to his Jewish audience, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:22ff). Notice the perfect correlation between the concept of the first fruit, the approach to Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a great demonstration of the unity, both thematically and temporally, between Revelation and Hebrews.

Most of all, this unity shows that the first fruit of those redeemed to God from among men were alive, under persecution, in the first century. Moreover, this demands that we see Revelation chapters 7 and 14 within that context. Since John was told that the fulfillment of the Apocalypse was near and coming quickly, we must honor that. When we couple those time statements with the emphatic and irrefutable fact that the 144,000—and, thus, the great multitude—were first-century, first-generation Jewish Christians, it is impossible to rightly extrapolate the fulfillment of Revelation into a present, or even distant, future.

Cont. on next page

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Overruled! from p. 9

A great deal more could be said about Revelation 7 and 14, but space forbids. However, let me recommend that you examine my book *Who Is This Babylon?*⁴, in which I comment extensively on the significance of the 144,000 as martyrs of God and the connection with Matthew 23. This connection demands irrefutably a first-century application and fulfillment of Revelation.

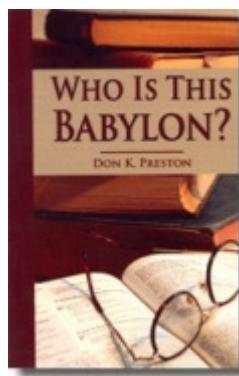
So, the objection that John's mention of a great multitude of people ostensibly demands a future fulfillment of Revelation is shown to overlook the covenantal context of the fall of Jerusalem. It overlooks the spiritual meaning of the fall of Jerusalem. It overlooks the fact that the New Testament—indeed, the Old Testament as well—describes the fall of Jerusalem in “universal” language. It overlooks the meaning of first fruit in reference to those redeemed to God in the first century. We cannot overlook or ignore these contextual markers and expect to rightly apply the text. Objection overruled! ☒

¹ Lorraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Press, 1957), p. 203.

² Burton Coffman, *Commentary on 1, 2 Peter* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing, 1979), p. 246.

³ My opponent never raised the “local judgment” argument again. MP3s of this debate are available from my website: www.eschatology.org.

⁴ Available at www.eschatology.org. This 300-page book thoroughly examines the identity of Revelation’s Babylon and its application to the impending fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.



Preterist Pilgrim



Don, William and Larry



Weekend 2006



GAP Evangelising

Jerry and Darlene Bowers of GAP Evangelising are committed to spreading the awareness of Preterism. They are currently promoting Preterism via a number of avenues, including:

- Organizing local seminars
- Hosting an online Paltalk chat room
- Producing an email newsletter
- Hosting a Yahoo message board

For more information, visit their web site at www.freewebs.com/gapevangelising, or contact them at the following:

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Last year while on vacation, my wife and I visited a church in which the pastor taught from the fourth chapter of Revelation. (I don't know if he had been working through Revelation from the beginning or was using it simply as text for that particular Sunday.) He began by stating that, while many teachers and commentators had devised elaborate charts and timelines illustrating the structure and timing of the events of Revelation, he was going to take a different approach.

As the pastor spoke, I thought to myself, "*the key to Revelation is in the first three verses: 'things which must shortly take place' and 'the time is near.'*" Those texts establish the timeframe for the entire book. It is amazing how often someone teaching on Revelation will gloss over those terms and jump right into the fancy charts and timelines.

The pastor continued his introduction saying he wanted to focus on the grand worship service taking place around the throne in heaven. He spoke only briefly about the different interpretations of the identity of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures around the throne, focusing instead on how they worshipped the Lamb. The four living creatures never ceased crying, "*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come.*" And whenever the four living creatures gave glory to God, the twenty-four elders fell down before Him and worshipped Him, casting their crowns before the throne saying, "*You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.*" Slowly but surely, that little voice in my head crying out "*Time texts! Time texts!*" began to quiet as I tuned into what the pastor was saying. It wasn't until the worship team returned to the platform and began singing, however, that the "light" finally came on:

*Holy, holy, holy,
All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns
Around the glassy sea;*



*Cherubim and seraphim
Falling down before Thee,
Who wert, and art, and
Evermore shall be*

The key to Revelation is not the first three verses—it is the very first phrase: "*The revelation of Jesus Christ!*" Yes, the time texts establish when Revelation's events took place, but the purpose of the book is to reveal **Christ**. And what a privilege it is for us to whom He has revealed Himself as Savior rather than Judge:

*Holy, holy, holy,
Tho' the darkness hide Thee,
Tho' the eye of sinful man
Thy glory may not see,
Only Thou art holy;
There is none beside Thee
Perfect in pow'r, in
love, in purity.*

Although the eye of sinful man does not recognize the glory of God, the same God who commanded light to shine out of darkness during the creation of the cosmos has shone the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ into our hearts, making us a new creation (2 Cor 4:6; 5:17).

Undeniably, the time texts in Revelation establish *when* the described temporal things occurred—those events which happen within space and time of earthly history. Yet, those temporal events were only outward manifestations of greater things taking place in the spiritual realm. The unveiling of those events in the spiritual realm is the main purpose of the book: the revelation of the Mediator of a new, better, and everlasting covenant. A Mediator who transcends space and time—the eternal Lamb of God who lives to make intercession for His saints (Heb 7:24). The key to Revelation is *the revelation of Jesus Christ!* ☩

*Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity*



Jimmy Henry

I grew up in a denomination that makes this doctrinal statement: “We believe in the premillennial return of Christ to earth, after which He shall reign in peace upon the earth for a thousand years.” I accepted this as absolute truth until a serious study of Scripture forced me to reject this as a flawed interpretation based on human opinion and not on sound exegesis of the Word of God.

It is not easy to find yourself in disagreement with men you love and respect, nor is it easy to have to unlearn a way of interpreting Scripture in order to be true to oneself. With what I began to see as I compared Scripture with Scripture, I had to reject not only premillennialism but also its futuristic approach to eschatology.

As I began to share the teachings of fulfilled eschatology, I encountered severe opposition. While some wrote me off as a crank, others were so bold as to denounce me as a heretic. To say the least, this was not easy to take; nevertheless, I had to be true to myself and to what I found in God’s Word. This transformation took place after more than thirty years of preaching futurism and premillennialism. It is now a joy to share what the Lord has taught me about His glorious return as a fulfilled event.

So, how do I share Preterism with those who tend to turn a deaf ear? Some totally reject this system of interpretation of eschatology by arguing, “My mind is made up; don’t confuse me with facts!” However, to those who are willing to listen, the most important thing to me in sharing the truths of Preterism is to maintain the attitude Paul directed Timothy to have in



dealing with those who disagreed with Paul’s teachings. Paul instructed Timothy, *“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility*

correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim 2:22-26). It is important to be gentle and never argumentative. Peter wrote to his readers, *“Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty”* (2 Pet 1:15-16).

At the risk of sounding arrogant, I believe that much of what is set forth by many futurist teachers is nothing more than “cunningly devised fables.” Most of the material they produce is designed in such a manner so as to make a profit off man’s natural curiosity about the future. Paul told Titus to be alert to the ways of the Jewish teach-

Charles Coty

Many Christians today are basically practical pan-millennialists, believing that all of what they perceive as a “last days” apocalyptic cornucopia of confusion will *pan* out with or without their commitment to a particular eschatological system. However, it is my contention that although the majority of Christ-followers may not understand every nuance and machination of the main eschatological flavors, they have been significantly influenced by the major futuristic tenets of the most dominant of them all—Dispensationalism. I believe that the faulty presuppositions behind the curtain of this position:

1. unwittingly challenge the faithfulness of God and the inspiration of Scripture
2. compromise the expectations of the Gospel’s potential effectiveness
3. perpetuate a short-term “The end is near” men-

tality, creating a “Why polish brass on a sinking ship?” paradigm

4. wreak havoc on the potential for peace in the Middle East

Most assume that because eschatology is not a foundational issue, and one’s conclusion about it has little appreciable impact on their lives, the study of eschatology is a colossal waste of time. Furthermore, many assume that since the intelligent, theologically educated and scripturally adept have not formed a consensus for nearly two millennia, there is little reason to believe that we as laypersons have a remote chance of accomplishing what our forefathers could not. Therefore, eschatology has gained the ill-fated reputation of being a rather useless withering appendage, profiting only those astute enough to help the rest of us negotiate the treacherous roadmap

Once they get the
many people tu
How do you sh



ers in his day. He wrote of them, “*For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth”* (Titus 1:10-14).

This is good advice for those of us who seek to share Preterism. We need to realize how difficult it is for a person to “unlearn” the things one has been taught about eschatology. Before one can embrace the teachings of Preterism, he must be willing to “unlearn” many things that he has heard for many years from teachers he trusts and loves.

We will make no headway with those who are averse to fulfilled eschatology if we try to overwhelm them with our “superior” knowledge about “end times” teachings. We must share the message in love and pray for the Holy Spirit to open their spiritual eyes that they might understand the things set forth by Jesus and the apostles regarding the nature and time of His Kingdom.

I was convinced of the truth of Preterism when I could not find an answer to the many “time texts” scattered throughout the New Testament. I concluded that either Jesus and the apostles were guilty of misleading those to whom they

spoke and wrote, or they were tragically mistaken. Since neither of these conclusions were acceptable, I had to agree that they knew what they were saying and that Jesus did indeed return within the lifetime of some of those to whom He spoke when He said, “*For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*” (Matt 16:27-28).

The best place to begin sharing the truths of Preterism is with the “time texts.” In love, seek to show that the time texts speak of the imminent return of Jesus only to those who were His contemporaries. We must not lift them out of their biblical context and force them into some far-distant age, 2000+ years in the future from the time they were spoken.

If and when the Lord opens the hearts of those with whom we share these truths, and they are convinced that Jesus did indeed return as and when He said, we will see a joy come over them that will make all our efforts worthwhile. Many may never come to embrace these truths, but as some do we will be able to say with John, “*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth*” (3 John 1:4). ☩

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of our near-term earthly demise. I’ve shared Preterism with many people, and the truth of the matter is that I first have to alert them to the above problems before they will listen and certainly before they will take the time to investigate.

For the first 33 years of my Christian life I would have agreed wholeheartedly with the presumption of eschatology’s uselessness as it relates to my walk with Christ. However, after considerable study and an increased sensitivity to things eschatological, I now believe this premise to be grossly inaccurate. I have found that eschatological conclusions have a great deal to do with our short and long term expectations and I contend that these presuppositions play a significant role not only in our understanding of God’s faithfulness in real-time historical events, but also in the way in which we process the redemptive story of Christ throughout Scripture.

I believe the predominant theology of our day does not adequately lead us to the faithfulness of God either through recognizing His timely prophetic fulfillment or by the corresponding validation of His inspired Word. Therefore, when I share Preterism I build the foundation on two key ingredients:

1. God’s faithfulness
2. Biblical inspiration

Many of those that immerse themselves in the finer points of Futurism (prophetic events fulfilled in our future) seem somewhat imbalanced and in a sense possessed and overcome by their own conclusions. However, it is the less eschatologically rabid that must be challenged. Put your ear to the ground and listen to the daily conversations. Every natural disaster, skirmish or school shooting becomes proof positive that we are living at the end of times’ “last days.”

*gist of Preterism,
rn a “deaf ear.”
share Preterism?*

Perspectives

Coty (from p. 13)

Negativity and failure earmark our glass-half-empty perception. An earth tremor, disease outbreak, or a morally depraved act of violence, cause most to respond with, “It’s a sign of the times” or “The end is near.” I believe this strikes at the heart of the Gospel and thus generates my fervency in attempting to stem the ever-increasing eschatological tsunami of chaotic expectations.

Try as you might, you cannot escape the ramifications of Left Behindology. Its tentacles flavor the perceptions of every newscast and newspaper headline. Whether you buy into every facet or not, you simply



cannot stray far from the sea of corroborating negativity.

So, tired of being captivated by this pessimillennial obsession, I removed myself as far from the discussion as possible. But what was I to do? Where was I to hide? Since 1972, when I first read *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Premillennialism has become so dominant that today most believe it to be the centuries-old orthodox position of the Church.

In 1982, my wife was pregnant with our first child. She was confronted by an overly zealous Dispensationalist who nearly scared the wits right out of her with “*And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days*” (Matt 24:19). For goodness sakes, what was she to do?

Even in my confused scriptural understanding of thing’s eschatological, something seemed askew in this interpretative formula. Wasn’t Jesus speaking directly

to His disciples? Weren’t any of these prophetic words meant to be understood by the original recipients? Why would Peter, who had denied Jesus less than two months prior, stand up with thundering conviction and proclaim the miraculous Pentecostal events to be proof positive that they were living in the “last days” (Acts 2:16-21)? It seemed rather oxymoronic to assume that the “last days” (Heb 1:1-2) era would span more time than that of the entire Mosaic economy.

Through the years I had been haunted by the Bible’s barrage of Second Coming “time statements” (*at hand, shortly, soon, in a little while*) that seemed to strike at the heart of the ever-present imminency of Christ’s assumed 21st century return. Have you wondered, like I did, why Jesus and His canon-writing followers would use such imminent language if the prophesied events were thousands of years future? Why would Jesus commit to a “*this generation*” (Matt 24:34) parousia (return with a consequential presence) while some of His followers were still alive (Matt 16:27-28)? Why would Jesus, in His Olivet Discourse, warn His beloved disciples to “*flee to the mountains*” (Matt 24:16) and away from the heavily fortified city of Jerusalem, if *they* were never to be in any imminent danger? Is this not cruel given the presupposition that His return was still at least two millennia removed? Are we to assume that in order to produce a generational expectancy Jesus deliberately misinformed His avid followers? Are there no consequences of failed expectations?

Consider the psychological impact the following language would have had upon the first-century brethren: To be exhorted to have patience “*for the coming of the Lord is at hand . . . the judge is standing at the door*” (James 5:8-9); challenged to be self-controlled because, “*The end of all things is near*” (1 Pet 4:7); encouraged to endure the horrific persecution knowing that, “*In a very little while He who is coming will come and will not delay*” (Heb 10:36-37); cautioned to stay as they were, free from added anxieties, because, “*the time is short...the form of this world is passing away*” (1 Cor 7:29-31); warned to be vigilant because of the ever-present antichrists proving that “*it is the last hour*” (1 John 2:18). And when they received their edition of John’s Revelation they were heartened to know that these “*things that are to take place shortly...for the time is near*” (Rev 1:1,3).

But doesn’t Peter make it clear that God’s infiniteness proves time irrelevant since “*with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like*

one day" (2 Pet 3:8)? Isn't it possible that Jesus was speaking in some sort of a code that would be understood in due time? The truth is that Jesus inexorably tied the veracity of the Gospel to the timely execution of that which He and His followers prophesied. This is the reason for the writing of Peter's second epistle. It had been approximately 37 years since Jesus' "this generation" proclamation and the troops that had been promised vindication (2 Thess 1:5-9) were growing restless. Time was running out! Was this Jesus ever to come in the glory of His Father in His cloud-coming wrath?

Truthfully, it matters less what we think Jesus and the New Testament writers meant and a great deal more what the direct recipients who received the revealed mysteries understood. Their faith depended upon it. The survival of Christianity hung in the balance. Did Jesus and all the New Testament authors in fact write in code, sealed and only viably understood by the likes of Scofield, Lindsey and LaHaye? Could the Church have survived the first century if they "realized" that Jesus either had no clue or was intentionally deluding them? Faithfulness is predicated upon timely execution, therefore I believe it is absolutely necessary to focus on the time statements when sharing Preterism.

Could the early church have survived if Christ did not return to the first-century generation as promised? Would not their hopes and dreams have crumbled and crashed to the ground? Are we to ignore the relevance of these time statements to the first-century recipients, whose eager anticipation was created solely by Jesus and the inspired New Testament authors? Could not God have inspired His writers to speak in more hazy, imprecise time phrases like "a very long time from now" or "that generation" instead of "in a very little while" and "this generation?" We cannot simply discount the imminent language in the Bible in order to meet our eschatological expectations. I believe it is incumbent upon us to allow the full weight of scriptural evidence to force our worldview into conformity.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

However, be forewarned that forming scripturally accurate conclusions can in fact be hazardless to your paradigm. It sure was to mine. As you share Preterism you are highlighting the faithfulness of God and the inspiration of His inerrant Word. At costs oftentimes undesirable, Futurism must be challenged within the context of a gentle and loving spirit.

Lastly, sharing Preterism must be done with graciousness and respect. I realize that we each need our space and we all come to the truth at varying paces. In my opinion, too many Preterists are less than loving as they viciously attack their opponents. We need to realize that we are attempting to share the truth of God's word not prove intellectual prowess. To me, this mindset has no place—especially when arguing that the consummation of the New Covenant has given us access to all spiritual blessings found in the person of Christ. *We* ought to be the most loving, kind and forgiving Christians on the planet! But even when we fail, which we will, that does not disprove Preterism—it only proves our depravity and magnifies his bountiful mercy and grace. ☩

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Do you have tips you would like to share on what does or does not work in sharing Preterism? If so, please send me an email:

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FULFILLED

MAGAZINE

Prophecy Quiz

After Jesus announced that He would be betrayed by one of His disciples, John asked Him, "who is it?" Jesus replied,

"It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." (John 13:26-27)

When Jesus instructed Judas, "What you do, do quickly," did He mean:

- A. I don't really care when you do it, just do it quickly once you start
- B. It doesn't matter when you do it, just be *certain* that it gets done
- C. Go, take care of this matter and don't delay

Most would agree that Jesus' statement to Judas did not refer to the rapidity of Judas' actions once he finally decided to begin his task; nor was Jesus telling Judas to be certain it was carried out, regardless of when. No, Jesus was instructing Judas that his task was at hand and it was to be carried out without delay. How, then, should we interpret the following use of "quickly" by Jesus, which shares the same Greek root as "quickly" in the above passage?

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.
(Rev 22:20)

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!