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FULFILLED!

Magazine

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

**ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION
What was it?**



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Editor's Update

Although I am not an authority on the history of Preterism, it seems to me that Preterism is experiencing an unprecedented growth. I recall recently hearing (or did I read it?) Ed Stevens state that when he first embraced Preterism he could count the number of Preterists he knew on one hand. He now has contacts numbering in the thousands.

When we first started publishing *Fulfilled! Magazine* only five years ago, it was not uncommon to receive comments from readers who thought that they were the only Preterist in their city—perhaps even their state! While we still receive such comments from time-to-time, we are increasingly hearing of Preterist Bible study groups and churches being established. Although there are still great physical distances between most Preterists, and a lack of fellowship, the gaps are filling in.

The internet is one tool helping to fill those gaps. While face-to-face fellowship is not always available or practical, Preterist web sites are developing online communities which cross many borders. The internet has also allowed several Preterists to produce weekly or even daily webcast radio programs, and now we have 24/7 Preterist radio at www.AD70.net, which not only broadcasts live, but also has a growing library of archived programming (Michael Loomis recently informed me that he just crossed the 25,000 count for podcast downloads).

Preterist publishing is also continuing to grow as more and more Preterists desire to explain Preterism from their particular vantage point. I recall several years ago one individual asking me, “how many more books do we need introducing Preterism—the basics have been covered for some time now?” The point is well taken. However, we each have our own particular way of grasping new concepts, just as we each have different styles of sharing concepts with others. Certain styles of communication just “click” with some, while other

styles—even though they contain quite accurate information—can’t quite bridge the communication gap. So when it comes to more books which list the imminency passages or detail why we can’t divide Matthew 24, I say bring them on! That new book, although it may contain no new revelations, may just be written in a style that makes the “light come on” for a particular type of reader.

At FCG we are honored and humbled to play a small role in spreading the awareness and understanding of Preterism. We are constantly encouraged by the readers who share with us their appreciation for *Fulfilled! Magazine* and the niche it fills. The same holds true regarding our video *You've Gotta Be Kidding . . . Right?*, the impact of which is attested to not only by the comments and reviews, but also by the fact that nearly 3,000 copies have been distributed.

In this issue, after a one-year hiatus from his Matthew 24 series, Ed Stevens returns to Matthew 24 by taking up the subject of “The Abomination of Desolation.” The fruit of his recent studies presents an interesting alternative to the commonly held Roman army scenario. I trust that you will find it thought provoking.

Don Preston had too many deadlines closing in on him to complete this issue’s article. Thankfully, William Bell graciously stepped in on relatively short notice and wrapped things up—thanks William!

Thanks again to all who have supported FCG financially. Your support has allowed us to continue to offer *Fulfilled! Magazine* without charge and to keep the DVD’s priced at a minimum.

For Christ’s Glory,

Mailbag

Wow. I just found out that you guys publish a magazine about fulfilled eschatology. I'm stoked. I have been studying preterism for about three or four years now and I'm in so deep I can never go back to futurism. I'm looking forward to the content.

Jason, Colorado

God bless you for disseminating this Truth. I have learned a lot from your teaching, changing some long-held misbeliefs.

John, Louisiana

Please continue to send me your Fulfilled Magazine. There is nothing else like it out there. I deeply appreciate all the work you

put in each issue. It is very well done.

Ricky, Virginia

I am a dispensationalist starting to seriously question what I have always heard.

Karen, Ohio

I am so thankful for your video which made me believe in preterism. I am devoting the rest of my life to sharing this with others.

Joyce, Texas

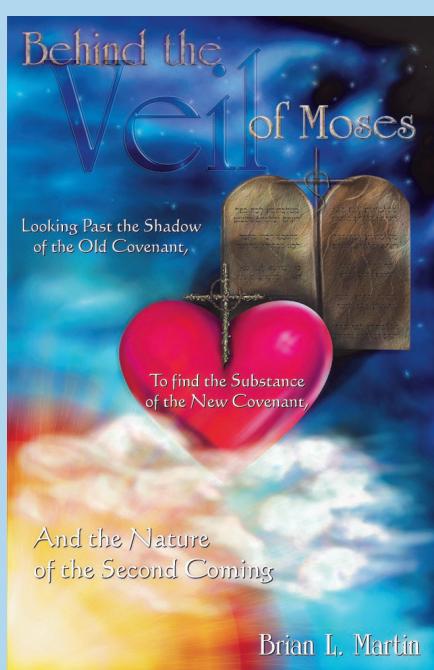
This is a wonderful magazine; I want to make sure I continue to receive it! God Bless,

Ronald, New York



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Gleanings from the Past

Josephhus

Throughout the centuries of Church history, many writers have written from the perspective of a past fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Most of them failed to take that perspective to its logical conclusion (Full Preterism) and still applied a few various prophecies to their future. With that caveat in mind, their works contain many gems that can serve two purposes: 1) provide additional Preterist perspectives, and 2) demonstrate that, although Full Preterism may have experienced its greatest development in the last fifty years, many others have been blazing that trail through the centuries. In this issue we offer an excerpt from Ernest Renan's *The History of the Origins of Christianity: Book IV—The Antichrist*, circa 1890. This passage speaks of the zealot activity during the days leading up to and during the siege of Jerusalem (see also Ed Stevens article in this issue).

Before this intense fever [of the zealots preparing for war with the Romans], increasing every day, the position of the moderate party was not tenable. The bands of pillagers, after having ravaged the country, fell back upon Jerusalem, those who fled from the Roman armies came in their turn to huddle up in the town and to starve. There was no effective authority; the zealots ruled; all those who were even suspected of "moderantism" were massacred without mercy. Up to the present the war and its excesses were arrested by the barriers at the temple. Now the zealots and brigands dwelt pell-mell in the holy house; all the rules of legal purity were forgotten, the precincts were soiled with blood, men walked with their feet wet with it. In the eyes of the priest this was no doubt a most horrible state of affairs; to many devotees the "abomination" foretold by Daniel as installing himself in the holy place just before the last days. The zealots, like all military fanatics, made little of rights and subordinated them to the sacred work *par excellence*—the fight. They committed a fault not less grave in changing the order of the high priesthood. Without having regard to the privilege of the families from whom it had been the custom to take the high priests, they chose a branch little considered in the sacerdotal race, and they had recourse to the entirely democratic plan of the lot. The lot naturally gave absurd results. It fell upon a rustic whom it was necessary to bring to Jerusalem and clothe in spite of himself with the sacred garments, the high priesthood saw itself profaned by scenes of carnival. All the staid people, Pharisees, Sadducees, the Simeons, Ben

Gamaliels, the Josephs, Ben Gorions were wounded in what was dearest to them.

So much excess at last decided the aristocratic Saducean party to attempt a reaction. With much skill and courage Hanan sought to reunite the honest middle-class and all those who were reasonable, to over-turn this monstrous alliance between fanaticism and impiety. The zealots were arranged near, and obliged to shut themselves in the temple, which had become an ambulance for the wounded. To save the revolution they had recourse to a supreme effort; it was to call into the city the Idumeans—that is to say, troops of bandits accustomed to all manner of violence which raged around Jerusalem. The entrance of the Idumeans was marked by a massacre. All the members of the sacerdotal caste whom they could find were killed. Hanan and Jesus, son of Gamala, suffered fearful insults. Their bodies were deprived of sepulture, an outrage unheard of among the Jews. (p. 96)

...
We are specially struck by the death of a certain Zacharias, son of Barak, the most honest man of Jerusalem and greatly beloved by all good people. They introduced him before a traditional jury who acquitted him unanimously. The zealots murdered him in the middle of the temple. Thus Zacharias, the son of Barak, would be a friend of the Christians, for we believe that we can trace an allusion to him in the prophetic words which the evangelists attribute to Jesus as to the terrors of the last days. (p. 99) ☒



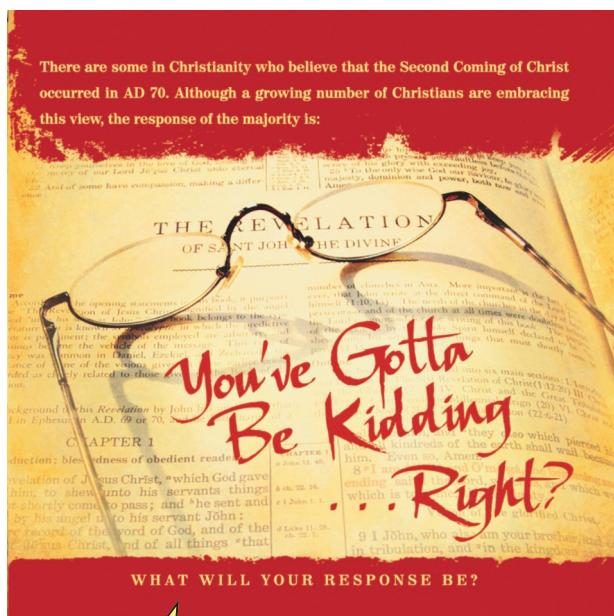
Michael Day recently gave away 75 copies of "You've Gotta Be Kidding . . . Right?" at a Preterist outreach during "Anthem Days Arizona." Thanks to your donations, we are able to keep the video pricing low, which allows individuals like Michael to help spread the truth.



Rachael Day



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Studies in Reder

The Abomination of Desolation (Matt 24:15)

All These Things Came to Pass (Part 4)

by Ed Stevens

"Therefore when you see the *Abomination of Desolation* which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place . . . those who are in Judea must flee . . ." (Matt 24:15 NASB95)

Some translations render *Abomination of Desolation* as "desolating sacrilege" or "the abomination which causes desolation." It literally means "the abominable thing which causes desolation," a horrifying sacrilege which would cause the Temple, the city, and the land to be desolated.

Thomas Ice, a Premillennial, Pre-tribulational Futurist, claims that the prophecy of the Abomination of Desolation has not yet been fulfilled. His two main arguments are:

1. No abomination of desolation occurred in AD 70; that is, no idol was set up in the temple that came to life and required worship (Dan 9:26-27 and especially Rev 13:14; cf. 2 Thess 2:4).
2. No prince who had polluted the temple was destroyed (Dan 9:27 and 2 Thess 2:4), and the Roman armies remained virtually untouched by judgment in AD 70. Despite the fact that Ezekiel and Revelation say that Gog and Magog would be utterly destroyed, Rome was not destroyed; but was, in fact, victorious (Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, *The End Times Controversy* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2003], pp. 177-183).

Ice asserts that the Abomination is an idol to be set up in a future rebuilt Temple. However, Luke's inspired account states that the Abomination would be armies surrounding Jerusalem (Luke 21:20). Let us compare all three gospel accounts:

Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. (Matt 24:15-16, NASB95)

But when you see the Abomination of Desolation standing where it should not be . . . (Mark 13:14a, NASB95)

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies . . . (Luke 21:20a, NASB95)

What can we deduce from this? When two separate things are equal to a third thing, then all three things are equal to each other. In mathematical terms, if A=C, and B=C, then A=B=C. Let us apply that logic here:

1. Matthew: Abomination stands "**in the holy place**"
2. Mark: Abomination stands "**where it should not be**"
3. Luke: The place where it will stand is **Jerusalem**

Therefore, the place was **Jerusalem**, not just the Temple.

1. Matthew: "when you see the **Abomination**"
2. Mark: "when you see the **Abomination**"
3. Luke: "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by **armies**"

Therefore, the Abomination was the presence of **armies** in or around Jerusalem.

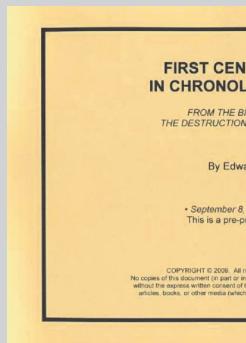
Matthew, Mark, and Luke are each giving their account of the same Olivet discourse delivered by Jesus. Luke was not introducing a completely new topic which the other two gospel writers did not address. Rather, Luke is merely providing additional details to a common topic: the Abomination of Desolation. Luke teaches clearly that the holy place was Jerusalem, and that the Abomination was armies. Evangelist and author John Bray agrees:

Certain it is that Luke (in 21:20) understood the "abomination of desolation" to be the armies surrounding Jerusalem, or he would not have used the expression about the armies in the same context and place where Jesus said "abomination of desolation" in Matthew 24:15 (John Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*, fifth edition, p. 49).

Luke has interpreted the words of Jesus for his Gentile audience, who were not familiar with the Abomination of Desolation terminology. Luke's account is an inspired commentary on the words of Jesus.

We should also note that the Jews considered the whole city as being a holy place, not just the Temple. Jerusalem could be defiled by armies pillaging and killing within its walls; or by images, idols, and other abominable things brought inside its walls. For example, Pilate had some Roman ensigns (with images of Caesar on them) smuggled by night into the city of Jerusalem (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:55-59 [18.3.1]). Even though the ensigns were not in the temple, when the Jews discovered them in the city they immediately protested, and Pilate was compelled to remove them from Jerusalem.

Jesus told His followers that when they saw armies encamped in or around Jerusalem, they were to flee from Judea, because this would be the signal that the desolation was approaching. Whoever these armies were, they had to appear in the vicinity of Jerusalem at a time when it was still possible to flee. That means their appearance had to be prior to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 70, for by that time it was impossible



CONSUMPTION

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to get out of the city alive. Note what the church historian Eusebius wrote about this:

"But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a **revelation**, vouchsafed to approved men there **before the war**, to leave the city . . . and the whole land of Judea . . . and how at last **the abomination of desolation**, proclaimed by the prophets, **stood in the very temple of God**, so celebrated of old, the temple which was **now awaiting its total and final destruction by fire . . .**" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 5, Sections 3-4; in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890].)

Eusebius wrote that the saints did not wait until they saw armies encircling Jerusalem. They received a "revelation . . . before the war." This was probably the book of Revelation, since it was written just before the war (AD 63) and contains just such a warning:

"Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues" (Rev 18:4). A similar exhortation to leave Jerusalem is found in Hebrews 13:13-14, "So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the one which is about to come." Paul (whom I believe to be the author of Hebrews) wrote this in AD 63 just as he was being released from his first imprisonment,

about the same time John wrote the book of Revelation.

Peter, in his first epistle, written from Jerusalem about this same time (AD 63-64), demonstrates his awareness of the name "Babylon" (cf. Rev 11:8) as being applied to Jerusalem (1 Pet 5:13). Evidently, Peter remained in Jerusalem until the Neronic persecution (August AD 64), in which he was arrested and killed (ca. Sept-Dec AD 64). Peter's second epistle, which indicates that his martyrdom was near (2 Pet 1:14), also seems to have been written from Jerusalem (late AD 64). Some Christians may have waited to flee until they saw the Zealot armies plundering Judea (in late AD 65 and early 66), or certainly when the Zealots took control of the temple (August AD 66).

Eusebius wrote that the Abomination of Desolation stood in the temple *before* the temple's destruction by fire. He, like many other interpreters, allowed for the possibility that the Zealots, who maintained control of the temple from the beginning of the war until its destruction, were the real abomination—not the idolatrous ensigns of the Roman army



which were not set up in the temple until *after* it was burned (and thus too late for Christians to flee). Josephus asserts repeatedly that the Zealots were the ones who polluted the temple and the city.

There are at least three scenarios which occurred in late AD 65 and AD 66 which might fit Luke's description of "armies surrounding Jerusalem": (1) the Zealot armies plundering Judea and taking control of the temple, (2) the Roman armies of Florus coming to Jerusalem, killing 3600 citizens, and attempting to gain control of the temple, or (3) the angelic armies being seen in the sky above Jerusalem (recorded by Josephus and Tacitus). Any one of these would have been a clear signal for the Christians to flee Jerusalem and Judea.

Which of these possibilities do I prefer, and why? The Zealot armies plundering the Judean countryside and camping in the temple complex would definitely be my firm choice. The angelic armies did not pollute the temple, nor did the Roman armies of Gessius Florus or Cestius Gallus. The troops of Florus and Gallus did not penetrate the Zealot defenses in the temple. It was the Zealots who took control of the temple and polluted it by their bloodshed. Josephus repeatedly points to the Zealots as the real defilers of the temple and city. It was their abominable atrocities in the temple and in the city which forced the Romans to come and destroy them. The statements in Daniel 9:24-27 and Daniel 12 agree with this. Daniel clearly states that the ones who desecrated the temple are the ones who will be destroyed. The Romans were not destroyed, neither were the angelic armies. Instead, the Zealots were completely shattered in AD 70, just as predicted in Daniel 12:7.

Space limitations prohibit me from providing the quotes from Josephus which support these conclusions. However, I explain and document all of these issues in my book *First Century Events*. I also recommend that you obtain copies of the complete works of Josephus, Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, and John Bray's *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*. All of these helpful resources are available for order on our secure website at www.preterist.org.

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OBJECTIONS OVERVIEW

Preterism, Sin and Universalism? by Don K. Preston and William Bell

Objection: “Because the strength of sin was the Law, and the Law has been done away with, many feel that Preterism must logically lead to Universalism. How would you respond?”

Response: It seems to me that one of the fundamental errors of this objection has to do with the nature of eschatology itself. Let me frame my thoughts succinctly. I will offer some thoughts in response which, frankly, I rarely see developed. And yet, it seems to me that the concepts presented below are very much at issue in eschatology.

The Garden of Eden was a *sanctuary*. Contrary to what many people may have suggested, there was a “world” outside the Garden—after all, Adam was himself created outside the Garden! And while many people like to dismiss it as insignificant, the seeming fact that Cain found his wife outside the Garden, from the “east” as he was in “the land of wandering” (i.e. Nod) demands the existence of people and reproduction that challenges most traditional concepts of the Garden and Creation. But, for brevity sake, let me simply say that *the Garden was a sanctuary*, where man and God enjoyed fellowship.

Sin entered and broke that fellowship. Heaven and earth were separated; sin and death reigned. There was no more *sanctuary*.

Death reigned until Moses (Rom 5:14). This patently does not mean that Torah solved the problem of sin and death. To the contrary, Torah exacerbated sin (Rom 5:21) and death (Rom 7:4-14). And yet, at the same time, Israel and her temple represented something that the world “outside” did not have, i.e. the presence of God.

Scholars have long noted that the tabernacle/temple represented that God dwelt in the midst of man. However, the veil was a constant reminder that as long as that Old Covenant stood valid, there could be no access to the Presence of God (Heb 9:6 -10). So, the tabernacle/temple stood as a symbol both of the Presence of God and separation from God at the same time.

Interestingly, however (and this is critical), the temple was a *sanctuary* from the rest of the world, from those outside (see Eph 2). Clearly, Israel was closer to YHVH than the other nations, for God was “in her midst.”

The problem was that the Old Covenant temple, even as *sanctuary*, could not bring man into the full Presence of God. Sin reigned even over those in closest contact with the *sanctuary*, because of the inherent deficiency of that *sanctuary* to take away sin. That which was intended for good, turned out to be death (Rom 7:6f) for those who lived in the shadow of the *sanctuary*. So, God promised the ultimate temple, where He would dwell with man, and man would dwell with Him, in a perfect “*sanctuary*”—“I will be their God, and they shall be my people, and I will dwell among them” (Ezek 37:26f; cf. Isa 2:2f). This would be a temple without a veil! This would be a true sanctu-

ary from sin and death.

Some like to point out that Revelation says there is no temple in the city. True, *but why is this?* It is because the City itself, *which is the New Creation*, is the temple (*sanctuary*)! There is no geographically confined *sanctuary*, no limitations on where God dwells and blesses.

Unlike the old *sanctuary*, where sin and death dwelt within, in the New Creation—within this *sanctuary*—there is no sin, there is no death (Rev 21:22). But, to pointedly address the question above, notice that life is *within the city*, it is not outside. This corresponds perfectly with Paul’s statement that resurrection life—deliverance from “the sin” and “the death” of Adam—is “*in Christ*” (1 Cor 15:22).

The New Testament writers are clear that “all spiritual blessings” are found “*in Christ*” and not outside of Him (Eph 1:3f; Acts 4:11-12). There is no salvation outside of Christ or through any other way apart from faith in Him (John 14:6). This is precisely why Revelation states that outside the city, “are dogs, liars, and those who work abominations” (Rev 22:15). Life and sinlessness are within the city. Outside the city (outside of Christ) are sin and death. This is patently not describing “Universalism.”

When one considers the concept of *sanctuary* and the perfected work of Christ, the idea of Universalism is dispelled. By the very nature of the case, the *sanctuary* is a place of escape and safety *for those in the sanctuary*. It is not a place of life and righteousness for those who refuse to enter! The concept of Universalism says there is no such thing as *sanctuary*, there is no such thing as “inside” and “outside.” This is a clear violation of the concept of *sanctuary* and temple.

Consider this: Only if Covenant Eschatology is true is Universalism not true! If Paul is not talking in covenantal terms in 1 Corinthians 15 then those who deny this are faced with the following dilemma: Paul says as in Adam *all men die*, even so in Christ shall *all be made alive*.

If the focus and limitation of the resurrection is not “*in Christ*,” as opposed to those not in Christ, then Paul is affirming universal resurrection to life! However, if we understand Paul in covenantal terms, that those in Christ are raised to life (and conversely those not in Christ are not raised to life), then Universalism is not affirmed. The key is “*in Christ*.”

What about Sin, Ethics, and Morality in the New Creation?

Is it the case that sin, ethics, and morality are dispensed within the New Creation to the effect that it is impossible for one to sin? Do ethics have no place? Does morality fall by the wayside, allowing anyone to

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engage in whatever practices they may choose without impunity?

Some have adopted this view. In their mind, nothing a person can do is considered sin, sinful, or a violation of any human, moral or ethical code. Others believe that all restrictions upon behavior were only for pre-end time believers. They argue that since Christ has come and put away sin, again, there is no sin, and one cannot be judged by any standard. Others even deny that faith is necessary.

As argued above, the concept of sanctuary implied that which defines sanctuary. Therein sanctuary is limited by boundaries which include, but those same inclusive boundaries exclude that which does not fall within it.

As in the Day

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In Romans chapter 13, Paul wrote to encourage the church to remain faithful in view of the coming day of the Lord. He did not expect that day to end all life on earth as Futurists believe. Paul expressed his view that life in the new age carries the responsibility of living according to its light.

"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." (Rom 13:11-14)

We must see the corporate and covenantal goal to which they were striving. When he says cast off the works of darkness, he speaks of the Old Covenant way of life in which sin predominated through the works of Satan. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan was the god of "this present [Jewish] age" in which he had blinded the minds of those who did not believe. He elsewhere calls the Old Covenant a ministration of death (2 Cor 3:7), not because the age was not good, but because of man's inability to keep Torah (the Law) with sinless perfection (James 2:10) it became a covenant or ministration of death. However, Jesus kept the law fully (Rom 10:4), proving that it was not inherently evil (Rom 7:7-12).

The Roman Christians who knew the Law (Rom 7:1) were to abandon the Old Covenant world of darkness by putting on the New Covenant armor of light. There cannot be any question that the church was urged to demonstrate godly behavior in their daily walk with Christ prior to the end of the Jewish age. Paul said, "Let us walk properly, as in the day."

The word *euschemon* means of good appearance, pleasing to look upon, becoming, decent, decorum, propriety, honorable, reputable, of high standing and influence (Mark 15:43; Acts 13:50, 17:12). The adverb *euschemonos*, used in Romans 13:11,

tells us how to model the behavior of the Christian age. It means to act decently, gracefully and in a becoming manner with propriety. Webster says propriety means "to conform to what is socially acceptable in conduct and speech, and to avoid offending against conventional rules of behavior, customs or manners of a polite society." This is especially true when visiting or in the company of others.

So, there is a proper, God-prescribed way to walk in "the day." This is the eternal day in which we now live resulting from Christ's return. Paul delineates this in Romans 13:11-14 by showing what that walk is not. In other words, these are the negative, ungodly, unrighteous, sinful things which must be avoided in that walk:

Revelry - lascivious feasting, drinking and drug parties.

Drunkenness (Gk. *methais*) - intoxication from strong drink, to make drunk, to be a drunkard.

Lewdness (Gk. *koitais*, coitus) - meaning the conjugal bed, sexual intercourse, consensual sex between unmarried persons, whoredom.

Lust (Gk. *aselge*) - meaning intemperance, licentiousness, lasciviousness (Rom 13:13), insolence, haughty, insultingly contemptuous in speech or conduct: overbearing, exhibiting boldness or effrontery (without shame, Webster) outrageous behavior, (Mark 7:22)—Bagster's Analytical Greek Lexicon.

Strife (Gk. *eridi*) - altercation, contentious disposition. The verb *eridzo* means to quarrel; to wrangle, to use the harsh tone of a wrangler or brawler, to grate on one's nerves.

Envy (Gk. *zelo*) - jealousy, envy, malice (Acts 13:34; Rom 13:13); indignation, wrath (Acts 5:17).

The import of the command to walk properly "as in the day" means that at the time Paul wrote, they were to walk each day as though they were already living in the eternal day. This is their post-Second Coming walk, i.e., how to behave after Christ came. There is no question that walking disorderly, i.e. out of step with the apostles teaching would bring condemnation and discipline.

(cont. on page 15)

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Perspectives



Parker Voll

Epairō and Acts 1:9-11

by Parker Voll

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9–11, NASB95)

This passage has been utilized repeatedly as a proof text that demonstrates the impossibility of Jesus having returned in the first century. The logic usually goes something like this: “Clearly, since Jesus visibly ascended, this passage is indicating a visible return of Jesus to the earth in bodily form. Nothing like this has ever been attested to in history, so it simply cannot have happened. Therefore, we still await the day of this promised Second Coming.”

On the surface, this passage seems like an insurmountable hurdle to a serious consideration of the Preterist view. I believe, however, that a close analytical reading of the words and flow of this passage demonstrates that what we read here is not only supportive of a Preterist reading, but also reveals that this passage has been generally misunderstood by many evangelical interpreters. As the title suggests, I will need to do some analysis of the Greek words in order to “rightly divide” this passage. I will also include some inter-textual and historical analyses as well.

What's in a Word?

My basic thesis regarding this short but powerful passage is quite simple: I suggest that Luke is not so much describing our witnesses’ account of Jesus’ “ascension” (although this is certainly something they witnessed), but rather of their seeing Him move from His *mode of living* as an earth-dwelling human person to a heaven-dwelling divine (albeit still human) person.

Crucial to the foundation of this thesis is an analysis of the Greek word *epairō*, translated as “lifted up” in the first sentence of our passage. In the instance of Acts 1:9–11, the word takes the form *epērthē*, which is a third person, singular, aorist, passive, indicative form of *epairō*¹. This word is not used often in the New Testament—only nineteen times—which means we can look at every occurrence without too much difficulty. *Epairō* is an augmented form of *airō*, a verb meaning *to pick up or to carry off*². The Bauer-Danker lexicon (BDAG) definition³ of *epairō* is:

to cause to move upward, *lift up, hold up*
to offer resistance to, *be in opposition, rise up*

to suggest that one is better than one really is, *be presumptuous, put on airs*

These definitions suffice, but we must remember that words find their nuanced meanings in *the way they are used* in sentences. I would contend that *epairō*’s main function in the New Testament is to indicate more of a *change of status* from a lower state into a higher one. To determine if this really fairs as a better working definition, let us examine the New Testament uses of *epairō*:

1. Matt 17:8; Luke 6:20, 16:23, 18:13; and John 4:35, 6:5, 17:1 all use *epairō* in the idiomatic expression “lift up the eyes.” The idea in each case seems to be that a person is described as moving their gaze from a lower state to a higher state, usually *metaphorically*, as in John 4:35.
2. Similarly, Luke 11:27 and Acts 2:14, 14:11, 22:22 refer to “lifting up the voice,” that is, to move from normal volume to a louder one.
3. Luke 21:28 uses “lift up your heads” in the metaphorical sense of “start paying attention.” Again, the idea is to move into a more attentive state.
4. Luke 24:50 describes Jesus as lifting up His hands to bless His disciples. Although the picture is one of Jesus’ moving into a more formal posture that would be in line with his activity, the basic idea of “lifting up” is certainly in view here.
5. John 13:18 describes Jesus indicating that someone has “lifted up his heel against me.” This is in line with the second definition above, and is the first time we see this verb used in this sense of an *exaltation of stature or power*, albeit in a negative sense.
6. Acts 27:40 is a bit unusual in that it is describing sailors “having lifted up the foresail to the wind” during Paul’s shipwreck journey. The idea here is that the sail was moved from a folded state into a hoisted state in order to catch the wind.
7. 2 Cor 10:5 and 11:20 both use *epairō* in a *middle voice*, and are clearly referring to individuals who are exalting either doctrines or themselves in a negative sense (e.g., to the detriment of others). The point is that the doctrines or individuals being described are being exalted to a higher status.
8. In 1 Tim 2:8, Paul exhorts Timothy that men in every place should pray, “lifting up pious hands” As in Luke 24:50, we see a change of posture indicated for

*In this issue, Park
the Greek word “
use in Acts*





purposes of religious activity.

The preceding list comprises every use of *epairō* in the New Testament, apart from the passage we are examining. Note that many uses are describing movement of a more *metaphorical* nature. What I hope is becoming evident is that when a Greek writer desired to communicate the idea of *a raising of status or stature*, the verb *epairō* is quite appropriate.

Also of interest is the fact that *epairō* occurs in the non-active voice only three times—the two verses in 2 Corinthians and in Acts 1:9. In both occurrences in 2 Corinthians, the sense is clearly one of a self-exalting arrogance, which makes sense because the middle voice quite often works to indicate a *reflexive* activity, that is, an activity the subject performs on itself. In Acts 1:9, I propose that Luke's usage of the *passive* is doing double-duty. One purpose is to use a deft literary device that, when a passive verb is used, one can *hide the agent* that is performing the activity. So, while an agent is *implied* here (i.e., someone is doing the activity of “lifting up”), we don't have an explicit reference to that agent (and so the scholarly debate continues as to whether Jesus or the Father (or both?) is doing the lifting up). Additionally, the passive form of *epairō* is used to indicate *exaltation*⁴, that is, the movement from, as it were, a lower to a higher *status or stature*. I propose that this was Luke's primary intention. I am not

suggesting here that Jesus was changing into God; there is no mistaking that it is the *man* Jesus who is in view, as “this Jesus” in v. 11 indicates. However, the disciples did experientially witness Jesus, as a historical man, moving through an exaltation process in this ascension narrative.

Jesus as Divine Cloud-Rider

The idea that exaltation is being communicated here is strengthened by the following words: “. . . and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (more literally: “and a cloud assumed him from their eyes”). The **first point** to

be made here is this: It is quite clear that Jesus was *invisible* to the disciples during His ascension into heaven. The testimony of the “two men” in verse 11 was that He would come in the *same manner* in which the disciples had seen Him traveling into heaven. What manner was that? He was in a cloud, *hidden* from them. The point being that, even if Jesus should return in our future (which He won't), He would be *riding in a cloud* and would be *hidden* from us; that is, He would be invisible! If someone wants to make a case for the visible, bodily⁵ return of Christ, this is not the verse to support such a claim. Furthermore, I can find no evidence anywhere in the New Testament that Jesus has any

plans of leaving His heavenly cloud-dwelling for an earthly one. He exists now in the clouds of glory, and He is there to stay. For instance, in John 14:3, Jesus says He is coming to receive the disciples so that they will end up *where He is*, not vice versa (Also see John 17:11).

This leads to my **second point**—a point that is important to a *biblical* understanding of this passage. It is quite clear from both the Old and New Testaments that there is really only one person who inhabits, or rides, or is hidden, in clouds—and that is Yahweh God himself⁶. Indeed, what the disciples were privileged to witness at the ascension was nothing other than the *Divine Presence*. Their friend and leader was being unmistakably revealed to be none other than God—the *Exalted One*. And the testimony of the “two men” was that *this same* Jesus, manifested to the disciples as *Yahweh the cloud-rider*, would be arriving in a similar manner in the future. This helps us understand the later testimony of Josephus even more clearly:

Besides these [signs], a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month of Artemisius (Jyar - May 21) a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor *were seen running about among the clouds*, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, “Let us remove hence.”⁷

I propose that this was no mistaken report. As Luke transmitted a matter-of-fact account of what the disciples saw and heard at Jesus' exaltation, we are here getting a matter-of-fact account of a fulfillment of the testimony of the “two men.” Jesus was literally assembling His cloud-riding army above Jerusalem in the days just prior to His coming to effect her ancient demise. Those people *saw* that divine company of heavenly cloud-dwellers, just as the disciples *saw*⁸ Jesus ascending as the hidden cloud-rider. We need not look for another fulfillment. △

- To break this down a bit, the third person singular indicates that the reference here is to Jesus. Aorist is the “tense” of the verb, which in Greek

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has a lot more to do with the *perspective* of the action; aorist means the action is seen as a *whole entity*. For instance, I could simply say “I drove to the store” using an aorist tense verb, whereas if I wanted to give more details I would use different tenses to say something like “I got my keys, put on my shoes, opened the door, walked to the car, got in and started it.” Passive voice typically means action is performed upon the subject (but see my following analysis for this particular usage). The indicative mood indicates that the action is to be thought of as an actual activity as opposed to, for instance, a desired or conditional activity.

2. So *epairo* is formed with *epi* + *airo*. *Epi* is a preposition that carries a basic meaning of “upon.”
3. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “*epairō*,” 357. This work is commonly referred to as BDAG.
4. This is obviously an important point for supporting my thesis. Since this is the only passive form of the verb in the New Testament, it is helpful to look at other examples outside of the New Testament. BDAG (p. 357) quotes 1 Clement 45:8: “But they who with confidence endured these things are now heirs of glory and honor, and *have been exalted* and made illustrious by God in their memorial for ever and ever. Amen.” 1 Clement 39:1 also uses a passive form: “Foolish and inconsiderate men, who have neither wisdom nor instruction, mock and deride us, being eager *to exalt themselves* in their own conceits.” (Quotes are from the Apostolic Fathers English Translation; italics mine).
5. I have no doubt Jesus still inhabits His resurrection body, but see my following comments regarding the significance of the cloud-covering and its relevance to a *heavenly* mode of existence.
6. For instance, see Exod 16:10; Lev 16:1; 2 Sam 22:12; Ps 104:3; Is 19:1; Lam 3:44; and Eze 10:3–4. Some additional qualifications: 1 Thess 4:17 has the “raptured” saints meeting in clouds, but this clearly indicates the Lord is *also* present in the clouds. Rev 11:12 depicts the “two witnesses” going up to heaven in a cloud; however, I propose that, given the consistent witness of God’s riding in clouds throughout Scripture, this can help us understand this enigmatic passage—that is, we should be thinking along the lines that the two witnesses are yet one among many symbolic representations of Jesus in Revelation, although I admit this is certainly a possible exception to the rule. Finally, Heb 12:1 speaks of a “cloud of witnesses,” which I propose does not alter the idea that only God inhabits clouds since it is witnesses who *are* the cloud here. For a fuller survey of the usage of “cloud” in Scripture, see Randall E. Otto, *Coming in the Clouds: An Evangelical Case for the Invisibility of Christ at His Second Coming* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994).
7. *The Jewish Wars*, 6:5:3. Found in William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 742.
8. There are five verbs of “seeing” in our passage—an unusually high amount, indicating Luke’s intention to highlight this message.

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FCG has been sending copies of Fulfilled Magazine and Preterist books to K. Prabhu Das for several years now, in support of his efforts to spread the truth of Preterism in India.

Prabhu is a third-generation church of Christ believer in India. In 2002, Prabhu began preaching, teaching, and sharing the Preterist message in India. He has been labeled a heretic and has lost the financial support of his former denomination. As you can imagine, his ministry, which includes publishing a free monthly newsletter, Bible studies, house visitations, and an annual Indian Preterist Meet, has suffered greatly as a result.

In addition to the above responsibilities, Prabhu also has a desire to establish a Bible training center and public Christian library to help train and equip nationals to reach their own people with the gospel.

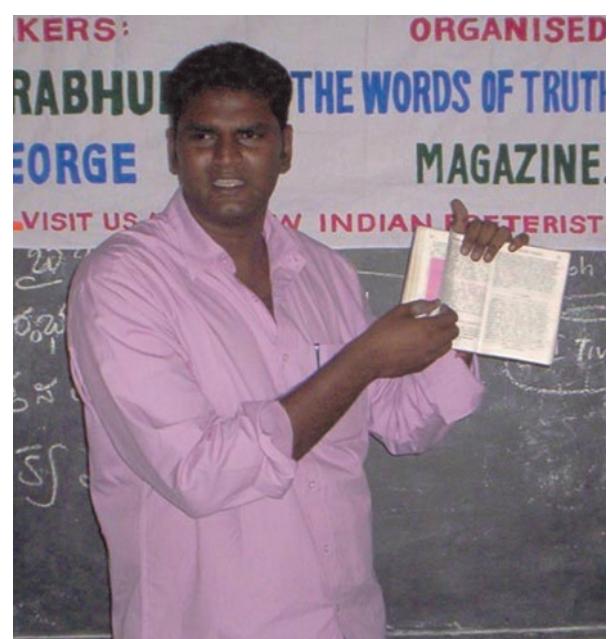
Sam Frost recently posted a written interview with Prabhu, which can be read at:

<http://theraignofchrist.com/preterists-around-the-world-india/>

If you would like to help support Prabhu, or learn more about the grass-roots Preterist work in India, he may be reached at:

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Brian L. Martin

Outsourced Theology

Dictionary.com defines “outsource” as “to obtain goods or services from an outside source.” Some companies, rather than spend the time and effort necessary for certain portions of its business (such as bookkeeping, manufacturing particular parts, etc.), may outsource those tasks to other companies which specialize in those particular areas. This frees the main company to focus on its primary business, whatever that may be.

How many of us, without even realizing it, have “outsourced” our theology? Rather than spending the time and effort required to develop a personal theology, we have outsourced that task to those who specialize in theology—pastors, authors, speakers, etc. Naturally, these other sources of theology have their merits. However, just as there is a huge difference between a company which takes advantage of outside resources while handling its own bookkeeping, and the company which completely outsources its bookkeeping to another company, so there is a difference between using the theological sources available to us as we develop our personal theology, and having those sources actually provide our theology.

Even if we consider ourselves students of the Word, we may have outsourced more theology than we realize—after all, outsourced theology is almost inevitable! Whether or not we were raised in church, we likely grew up with some concept of God, religion, and the Bible. Those of us who were raised in church were indoctrinated with a theology from early on. This is not necessarily a bad thing; however, those early foundations may either help or hinder us once we mature to the point of seeking to develop our own theology.

Because it is virtually impossible to erase all preconceptions from our mind, we cannot begin to develop our theology with a clean slate. Therefore, as we study the Word, we are often times simply shoring up the beliefs with which we grew up, rather than seeking to determine what the Bible truly teaches. We can liken this to a house built on a crumbling foundation; because the house is already erected, and we are quite comfortable in it, we do not entertain the thought that we should tear it down and start with a new foundation. Instead, we keep shoring up the crumbling foundation and patching the cracks in the wall which result from the shifting. Similarly, the doctrines we grew up with are comfortable to us; therefore, we do not consider starting over by allowing the Bible to speak for itself. Rather, when challenges or weaknesses to our views are presented, we patch our doctrines with scriptural interpretations that will allow us to continue inhabiting our comfortable dwellings.

This is not to say that all of our early teaching and resulting preconceptions are erroneous, or that we all need to abandon our current theology and start from scratch. However, I have come to realize that the majority of my theology

is outsourced, or hand-me-down, theology. Does this mean that my theology is bad? Not necessarily. For example, I believe in the trinity, which is a basic tenet of orthodox Christianity. However, my understanding of the trinity is not the result of my personal wrestling with the biblical text in order to resolve the “oneness” of God with the fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each described as God. Rather, I accepted what the church, through centuries of such wrestling, had articulated. In that sense my theology is hand-me-down.

Now I am not advocating that we all must personally reinvent the theological wheel, so-to-speak. However, I believe that at some point we each need to at least review the historical developments of the doctrines we hold. We may find that we do indeed have a sure foundation—or we may find portions that need to be leveled to the ground and completely rebuilt.

Having recently read Louis Berkhof’s *The History of Christian Doctrines*, I was amazed at the time and struggle the church has invested in articulating its doctrines. Some doctrines literally took centuries and several councils to coalesce. Interestingly, the one major area of theology which the church has never formally articulated is that of eschatology, or last things. In his book, Berkhof wrote: “*The doctrine of the last things never stood in the centre of attention, is one of the least developed doctrines, and therefore calls for no elaborate discussion*” (p. 259).

If the church in general has never fully developed a doctrine of last things, may I ask what your views are founded upon? Does the Bible truly teach that there is about to be a rapture of the saints, to be followed by a seven-year tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ. Is Daniel’s seventieth week separated from the sixty-ninth week by nearly two thousand years? You may be surprised to learn that this view, called Dispensationalism, has only existed for about two hundred years. Even during this short time span several supposed dates for the rapture or Second Coming have come and gone uneventfully. The foundation is shored up, the cracks in the walls are patched, and a new date is promulgated (currently 2012 seems to be a favorite).

Many Christians have become weary and even disillusioned with Dispensationalism. Some have given up hope. Others have decided to tear down their crumbling eschatological foundation and examine the biblical texts anew. This fresh examination has led many to what they consider to be a sure foundation—Preterism. No longer must they redefine terms like *this generation, shortly, at hand, and near*. Now Jesus and the inspired New Testament authors can be taken at their word.

This is not to say that Preterism has solved all the eschatological issues and stands as completed structure. On the contrary, many Preterists are still struggling with how much of their old structures must be removed, or how

much of their foundation can be retained. We all come from different backgrounds and traditions, and therefore we each have certain parts of our eschatology that are more difficult to let go of. "Certainly this wall is still sound," we tell ourselves.

Preterists are not even agreed on the shape of the foundation—to be sure, it is founded on the bedrock of AD 70 fulfillment. But just how were certain things fulfilled? Many of these issues are still in flux, still being struggled through, just as the Church through the centuries has struggled through various doctrines in order to articulate a final position. An excellent example is the issue of the corporate body view v. the individual body view, currently being debated by Don Preston and

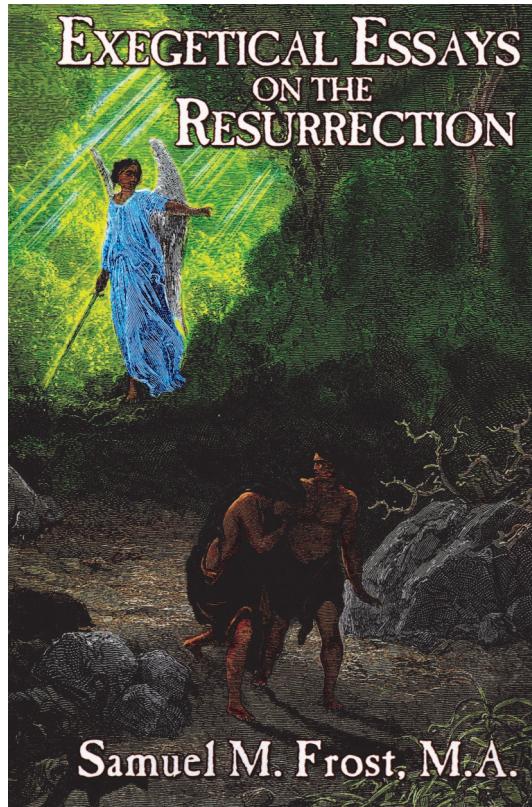
Kurt Simmons. As you ponder the foundation of your own eschatology, I encourage you to read their debate, available on their web sites (www.preteristcentral.com for Kurt, and www.eschatology.org for Don), or email Kurt for the pdf version: preterist@pvtnetworks.net

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Preston and Bell

Was that behavior sinful in the Jewish age? Was it wrong? Was it unrighteous? Was it ungodly and unethical? Was it condemned? Yes, to all the above. Would it be the same in the day of the Lord? Yes.

In conclusion, we have argued for sanctuary as the realm of life, righteousness, and no sin for the people of God. As such, those outside of that sanctuary, i.e. outside of Christ are excluded and thus Universalism is negated by the term "in

Christ."

We also demonstrated that Paul's eschatological model of behavior in the new age was already being enjoined upon Christians in advance of the age, preparing them to live in conformity to the life of sanctuary. Those who did not walk "as in the day," but continued in the "works of darkness" did so because they had not put on Christ, and were therefore not recipients of salvation. The objection is overruled. ☒

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Preterism . . . it's about time!

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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!