

FALL 2011

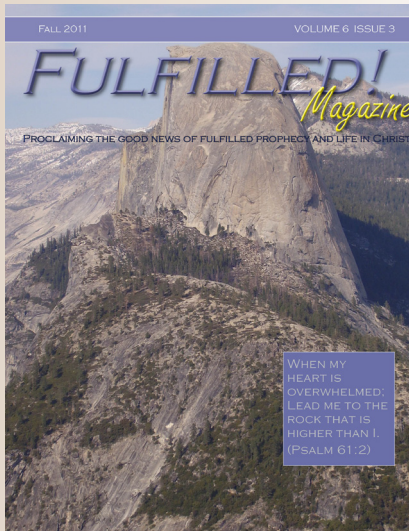
VOLUME 6 ISSUE 3

FULFILLED!

Magazine

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

WHEN MY
HEART IS
OVERWHELMED;
LEAD ME TO THE
ROCK THAT IS
HIGHER THAN I.
(PSALM 61:2)



ON THE COVER:

*Hear my cry, O God;
Attend to my prayer.
From the end of the earth I will cry to You,
When my heart is overwhelmed;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
For You have been a shelter for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.
I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.
(Psalm 61:1-4)*

Half Dome in Yosemite National Park

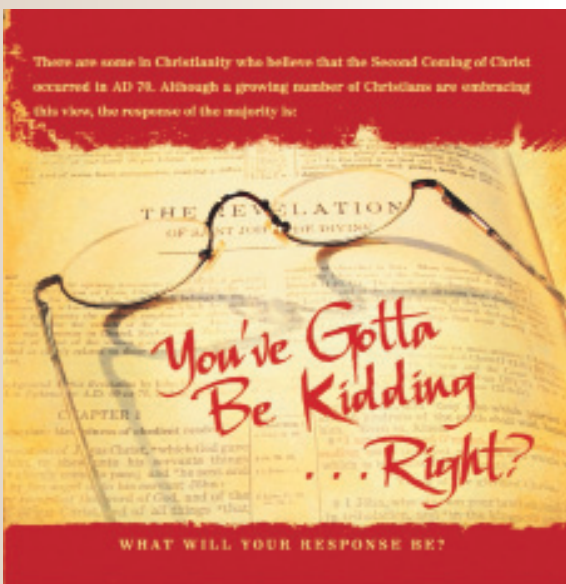


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4. Editor's Note
FCG will share a booth with IPA at the Evangelical Theological Society convention in November.

5. Mailbag
Catch some of the letters to the editor and comments on articles and features from the readers.

6. Perspectives
Is this all there is?

10. Creation to Consummation
... and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

12. Objection Overruled!
All of the prophecies that Christ fulfilled in His first coming were fulfilled in a literal, physical manner; therefore, we should expect Him to fulfill prophecies regarding His Second Coming in a literal, physical manner.

15. Preterist Bible Project
It is hoped that this collaborative effort, which is based on the *World English Old Testament* and the *King James Clarified New Testament* texts (both of which are in the public domain), will produce a valuable resource, free of futurist translation bias, to advance our Lord's Kingdom.

16. Preterism 101
Reviewing the basic scriptural foundations upon which preterism is built.

18. The Greek Column
Dig deeper into the biblical text in these Greek word studies.

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Editor's Note...

As I put the finishing touches on this issue and turn my thoughts toward the last issue of 2011, I can't help but wonder not only "where did the summer go," but "where did 2011 go?" While time keeps passing by much too quickly for me to accomplish all that I wish to do, I am encouraged by the growing number of achievements attained in the preterist community.

Dave Warren is continuing his tireless pursuit of seeing preterist videos broadcast in (seemingly) every city in America. Every couple of weeks I'll receive an email from him listing another city and its population in which our video and/or other preterist videos are being broadcast. These videos have a potential viewing audience that numbers in the millions now, and is still growing. If you are interested in seeing preterist videos broadcast in your area, or performing some basic video editing, contact Dave for more information (see the Preterist Vision ad on the inside of the front cover).

This summer also saw at least three preterist conferences—Joseph Vincent and *The Well* Kansas City hosted their first "Kansas City Prophecy Conference" in June; Don Preston hosted the annual Ardmore, Oklahoma "Preterist Pilgrim Weekend" in July; and Ed Stevens conducted a seminar in Garrettsville, Ohio during September. DVD's and MP3's are available for some of these conferences (check the ads in this issue for more information). The theme for next year's "Preterist Pilgrim Weekend" will be *What Does Covenant Eschatology Mean for Us Today?* This is perhaps the most often asked question (in various forms) within preterism, and next year's conference will surely be informative.

This year's annual Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) convention is being held near us in San Francisco, so FCG will be sharing a booth with Ed

Stevens and the International Preterist Association. Information about the convention, which runs November 16th -18th, is available at www.etsjets.org. IPA and FCG are considering hosting a get-together for preterists in the area either Friday night after the convention or the following Saturday. If you are interested in meeting with preterists in the San Francisco Bay Area let me know so we can estimate the size of the group. If you know of any restaurants in the area which have banquet or side-rooms that can be reserved please pass that along as well.

Work on our video project *A Preterist Response to John MacArthur* is progressing, albeit too slowly for my liking. I had hoped to be recording video before the summer was over, but the summer slipped away too quickly. I have transitioned from the research phase to the formulation phase, in which I am outlining the various topics, points, and details to be incorporated in the video in order to develop the flow of the material. As that comes together we will then be ready to begin recording video. Of course, that must be followed by the editing process. I won't hazard a guess on when the project will be done—that's simply too far away at this time.

Thank you for all your encouraging words and financial support. More often than you might imagine I wonder if I have "bitten off more than I can chew" as I constantly run out of week before all the items on my "to do" list are crossed off. Your letters, emails, and voice-mails remind me that the magazine provides a much needed point of contact with the preterist community for many readers, and that many of you are always awaiting the next issue. That makes it all worthwhile!

Blessings,

Brian

Thank you for all your encouraging words . . . your letters, emails, and voice-mails . . . make it all worthwhile!

Mailbag...

I want to thank you for your much needed magazine. . . . I understand people's reluctance to accept the preterist view. I was one of those people at one time myself. It helps to think back on my own difficulty and confusion at first with these views It keeps me humble and compassionate.

Robyn, Michigan

Wow! What a magazine. We have always looked forward to the next one. It is exciting and revealing. Glad to be a part of it. Send more our way . . . you are in our prayers.

Ronald & Peggy, NC

I am so excited to have found this publication! I look forward to the encouragement I know it will provide. Thanks so much!

Jerry, GA

Thank you for making this available. Being new to preterism, it's a joy to find a resource that helps address the questions that I have.

Mark, NH

I am a Progressive Conservative Christian and a "Pan tribulationist" —"Pan" meaning whatever way it pans out . . . I still keep my faith in Jesus! You share some interesting insight. Thank you.

D, WA

I'm looking for answers that the modern church doesn't provide. Hoping to find some evidence and scripturally based answers in your magazine that a friend suggested I should get.

James, MO

I really appreciate your magazine! Once I received the Summer 2011 issue and became aware there was such a mag, I quickly went to your site and downloaded all the previous issues and read them in sequential order in 18 days. It was fun watching the mag grow to what it has and is becoming in that short timeframe of what took you over 5 years to accomplish!

Clint, Ohio



It was fun watching the magazine grow to what it has become . . .

. . . they delivered the letter. When [we] had read it [we] rejoiced. (Acts 15:31)

Blessings Which Are Perhaps Not Immediately Recognized

by Jim Gunter

Approximately nine years ago I came to embrace the fulfilled prophecy view of eschatology. Like many others, I pondered questions as to what we have to look forward to in life's continuing sojourn upon God's footstool.

Even though we today enjoy the *realities* of what were only *promises hoped for* prior to the Parousia, perhaps I didn't immediately recognize the depth of the richness of these *present* realities. Consequently, this spurred me on to pursue a deeper understanding of what it means to me to be *in Christ*.

For example, we recognize that when we were baptized *into Christ*, we *put on Christ*. In other words, we have been *clothed with Christ* (see Gal 3:26-27). Have we also considered that to put on *Christ* is to put on *His righteousness*? After all, the prophet Jeremiah declared that His name would be called "*The Lord our righteousness*" (Jer 23:5-6). I'm persuaded this is why Paul declared to the disciples in Corinth:

"He [God the Father] *made Him [Jesus], who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" (2 Cor 5:21).

Wow! Good folks, I must confess to you that, personally, I

don't see where I possess any righteousness whatsoever of my own! Surely I'm no better than Abraham! And Paul stated of Abraham that his faith was *reckoned to him* as righteousness, that is, it was *counted* as righteousness (Rom 4:3, 9, 22). Not that Abraham *was* righteous; Paul stated that God *justified* Abraham because of his faith, demonstrating that He *justifies the ungodly* (Rom 4:5)! Yes, God *reckoned* righteousness to Abraham! Then Paul further states in Romans 4:24 that this matter of *reckoned righteousness* was not for Abraham's sake alone,

"... *but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned [at Christ's Parousia in AD 70], as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.*" (Rom 4:23-24).

Paul further declares that the righteousness we possess is a *gift* from God. He wrote in Romans 5:17:

"For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of *the gift of righteousness* will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

My! My! What a blessing! Another blessing which I feel is sometimes overlooked is that, because of our covenant

Perspectives

Preterist-Idealist

by John Noë



One of, if not *the*, biggest objection to the full preterist position is the perception that it means everything is fulfilled and over.

This common and negative take on preterism was dramatically brought home to me in 2004 during a somewhat high-profile event, theologically speaking. I was invited to participate in a special afternoon Group Study session on the topic of eschatology at the 56th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society.

The session consisted of presentations from three speakers, which were followed by a response from Grant R. Osborn, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and author of the book *Revelation* (2002), part of Baker Books' *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* series.

After Dr. Osborn commented on the presentations, he opened the floor for questions and answers. One of the first questions was: "What do you think of the preterist view?" I braced myself for a typically dispensational and attacking response. Surprisingly, he said, "I think it makes a lot of sense."

Then, in reference to the book of Revelation, he voiced the all-too-common perception: "But I still can't believe everything has been fulfilled and it's over," at which time, I immediately raised my hand and, after he called on me, queried, "What about the idea that the whole prophecy of Revelation has been *fulfilled* and it's *not over*?"

"I've never heard of that," he responded. "What do you call it?"

Caught somewhat off-guard, I quickly quipped, somewhat off-handedly, "How about *preterist-idealist*?" That was the first time I had ever connected or spoken these two words together.

"Tell me about that," he requested.

relationship with Christ, *our sins are not charged against us*. Yes, I know! I will confess that this sounds much too good to be true, does it not? But please notice again what Paul said to the Romans:

*"There is therefore **now no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."* (Rom 8:1-2).

Someone may ask: "But how can we not be condemned if we sin? Surely we all make mistakes, right? None of us lives a perfect life! But please listen to what David wrote:

*"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord **will not take into account**."* (Rom 4:6-8).

It should also be remembered

that when we came into covenant relationship with Jesus, God took us out from under a system of *law*, and placed us under His system of *grace*. Paul wrote in Romans 6:14:

"For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace."

Because God has done this for us, you and I are *not condemned* when we make a mistake. Conversely, the man living under a system of *law* is condemned every time he makes a mistake!

O what a merciful and wise God we serve! And, O what a blessing! Some folks claim that to take such a view is but to encourage sin—that such freedom becomes a license to sin. Folks, I need to be unmistakably clear on this point. Please understand that the ones who enjoy these marvelous blessings are those who walk *after the Spirit*, and not *after the flesh* (Rom 8:5-8). In

other words, I'm not talking about the villain out there who thinks he can just live any way he pleases. No, sir! Let no man think he can pull a fast one on the Lord! Surely, He knows those who are His! And any such self-deluded person should remember that the same Lord who wrote his name in the Book of Life, also has the power to erase it (cf. Rev 3:5; 22:19)! But there's that disciple out there who loves the Lord with all his heart and whose heart's desire it is to please Him. Surely, you and I both know whether or not we want to please God, do we not?

Another blessing we presently enjoy that some seem to overlook is that just as those who are *in Christ*, we **presently** possess *eternal life*, and *do not face judgment!* Our Master said to a great throng of Jews:

...continued on page 8

Is This All There Is?

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I mentioned that this understanding was part of my doctoral dissertation, and for the next ten minutes or so I highlighted an exegetical basis to support this preterist-idealist understanding. I began by advocating that a strong case can be made (and has been made) that the book of Revelation was most likely written prior to the Jewish-Roman War of AD 66-70. As support, I cited both Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.'s book *Before Jerusalem Fell* and John A. T. Robinson's *Redating the New Testament*.

Next, I presented the time statements in both Revelation's first and last chapters. I stressed how those time statements encompassed the entire prophecy and why this total bracketing demands that the fulfillment of all of this prophecy rises or falls together and cannot be bifurcated anywhere—not at the beginning of chapter 4 (as does dispensational premillennialism), not after chapter 19 (as does postmillennialism), nor in the midst of chapter 20 (as does amillennialism). Then I emphasized that another

strong case can be made and has been historically documented that the fulfillment of this entire prophecy occurred during the first century in association with the Jewish-Roman War of AD 66-70 and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple—as according to the full preterist view.

Lastly, I laid out the exegetical basis in Revelation 10:9-11 for coupling the idealist understanding of ongoing relevancy of the entire prophecy with the full preterist understanding of its past fulfillment. Here, John was given

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John Noë
John is the author of these new books: *Hell Yes / Hell No: What Really Is the Extent of God's Grace . . . and Wrath?* and *The Perfect Ending for the World*. Available only on Amazon.com. jnoe@prophecyrefi.org www.prophecyrefi.org



Blessings

by Jim Gunter

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*“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me **has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death and into [eternal] life.**” (John 5:24).*

Just as I once did, some believe they cannot know their eternal destiny until they stand in judgment at a perceived future end of the world. However, as we see here, Jesus’s words are unmistakably clear that he who hears Him and believes The One who sent Him *has* eternal life and *does not* come into Judgment.

Finally, we should understand that “death” has been defeated for all those in covenant relationship with Jesus. Paul taught this in his discussion of the resurrection of God’s covenant people

(1 Cor 15:54-57). I also believe we can gain further insight into this “death” from what our Master told Martha when He said:

*“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me **shall never die.** Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)*

Jesus also said to the Jews in John 8:51:

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall **never see death.**”*

I think it should be obvious to us as to the kind of death under consideration in these passages. Certainly, it simply cannot be “physical” death, because of the fact that all men still continue to experience that kind of death. Good folks, it would seem obvious to me that “sin death” is the death under consideration here.

Good folks, after examining the things our Heavenly Father has revealed to us through His precious Son, I see so much that should truly make us rejoice as Christians. Perhaps one of the greatest

of our blessings is the fact that we have no reason to fear *physical* death. Really, I mean that! Physical death is greatly overrated! Shortly before the Parousia, an angel instructed John, saying:

*“Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for **their deeds** follow with them.’”*

O what a beautiful declaration! Good folks, surely, the angel would not have called these words a *blessing* were there something in them to fear! Also, the *deeds* here are not deeds by which the righteous dead will be *judged*. No! No! These are the good deeds for which the righteous dead will be *rewarded*! My understanding is that for those who belong to Jesus, *physical death* is only a *doorway* through which we pass, being then given our new glorious body fit for heavenly existence, and immediately ushered into the very presence of the One who loves us most! So, in closing, I say to you “rejoice and enjoy your life as a disciple, and let us all count the innumerable blessings we enjoy!” †

Kansas City 2011 Prophecy Conference and Debate DVD's & MP3's

KC2011

The first Kansas City Preterist Prophecy Conference and Debate, sponsored by Joseph Vincent and Preterist Research Institute, was held in June of 2011. This was an excellent conference, featuring Alan Bondar, Dave Curtis, Ed Stevens, William Bell, and Don K. Preston.

The featured event was an exchange between highly respected local “prophecy expert” Dr. Charles Westlake, and Don K. Preston of Preterist Research Institute, who each gave two one-hour presentations supporting their view. Following the presentations, Dr. Westlake and Don K. Preston engaged in a lively, very cordial, Q & A session that lasted almost three hours—truly the highlight of the conference! This was a very enlightening exchange and one that you definitely want to see / hear!

We are pleased to announce that DVD's and MP3's of the 2011 Kansas City Prophecy Conference and Debate are now available, and can be purchased by check, money order, or PayPal.

DVD's are \$29.95 + \$4.50 shipping = \$34.45

MP3's are \$24.95 + \$4.50 shipping = \$29.45.

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Ardmore, Ok. 73401

Send PayPal funds to dkpret@cableone.net. Be sure to include a note telling us that you are ordering the 2011 Kansas City Prophecy Conference and Debate.

There is some outstanding material in this conference, and the exchange between Dr. Westlake and Don K. Preston is outstanding!

Order your set today!!

Preterist-Idealist

by John Noë

...continued from page 7

a scroll and told to eat it. That scroll was the same scroll given to Jesus in Revelation 5 and from which came the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and eventually the seven bowls of God's judgment and wrath. In a book filled with signs and symbols, I contended that John's eating of this scroll was a dramatic and grotesque act. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that his ingesting is also a sign and a symbol pointing to an actual reality, one which, I further related, is explained in the next two verses.

When John ate the scroll "it tasted as sweet as honey" in his mouth because of the seven blessings promised in Revelation. It also "turned sour" in his stomach because of Revelation's soon-coming judgment events (v. 10). In verse 11, however, John was told that he "must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." I pointed out that this group is an entirely different group of people than to whom the book of Revelation was given to in the first place, i.e., the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev 1:4, 11, 20; 2 & 3), and a much broader group than this book's original recipients. Idealists focus on very similar language used six times in Revelation (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 13:7; 14:6; and 17:15) in order to justify universalizing the ongoing and timeless relevance of Revelation. I stated that I agree with this amillennialist-idealist paradigm; however, unlike the amillennialist-idealists, I place the idealist portion *after* Revelation's fulfillment, not *before* it as they do.

Of course, like almost everything in Revelation, as well as in the whole field of eschatology, this understanding and its textual support is contested.

So I suggested that we take a quick look at this language's first use in Revelation 5:9: "And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.'" Most commentators agree that the lamb slain here is Jesus and those purchased by his blood "from every tribe and language and people and nation" applies to and includes you, me, and people all over the world from that first-century time period and onward. Not surprisingly, no one in the group objected.

Of course, some preterists do not want to admit that this same language applies in a similar manner to this prophecy's ongoing and timeless relevancy, as demonstrated in Revelation 10:9-11. They feel that such a view distracts from this book's AD 70 fulfillment. Even worse, they fear it allows for Revelation's many prophesied events to be reoccurring and its established realities to be experienced all around the world at different times and by many different groups and individuals. But the exegetical basis for this preterist-idealist understanding is plainly provided in the text.

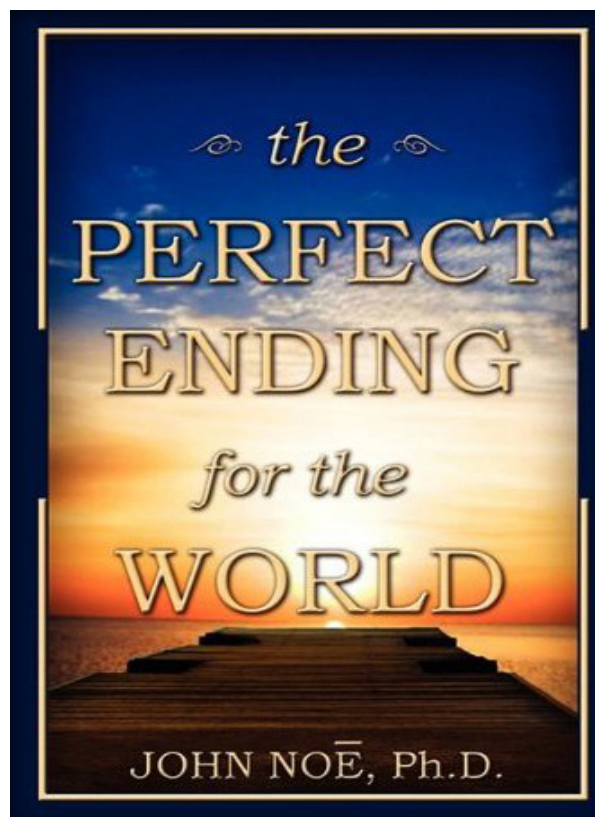
After my explanation, Dr. Osborn said this to me in front of the whole group: "I tell you what I'm going to do, John. I'm going to recommend that you write up your comments on your preterist-idealist idea and put them in the form of an article and send it to the editor of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* along with my recommendation for publication."

You could have blown me over with a feather. I thought for sure when the question about preterism was first raised, the preterist view

would be bashed and trashed. But it wasn't. Just the opposite occurred. The preterist-idealist label and its scriptural support was compelling, respectfully listened to by the group, and publicly and positively responded to by Dr. Osborn.

After the session, several participants had many additional questions to ask. Eight of them invited me to dinner for the purpose of continuing our discussion of the preterist-idealist view. When I returned home, I wrote up my comments in the form an academic journal article and submitted it with Dr. Osborn's recommendation. Two years later it was published.

If you would like to read this complete article, it is posted on PRI's website www.prophecyrefi.org. Or, you can check out a copy of the *Journal (JETS)* at your closest seminary library. The article title and reference information is: John Noë, "An Exegetical Basis for a Preterist-Idealist Understanding of the Book of Revelation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Dec. 2006): 766-796. †



Creation to Consummation

Times of the Gentiles Fulfilled (Luke 21:23-24)

All These Things Came to Pass (Part 8)

by Ed Stevens

*“Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies **in those days**; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and **Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**” (Luke 21:23-24 NASB95, emphasis added)*

Most premillennialists and futurist commentaries connect Luke’s “times of the Gentiles” with Paul’s “fullness of the Gentiles” in Romans 11:25, thus interpreting the “times of the Gentiles” as the entire period stretching from the desolation of Jerusalem in AD 70 until a future restoration of the Jewish Temple. This alleged restoration is to occur in the future when *all Israel* will repent and accept Jesus as their Messiah, thus removing the desolation with which Jerusalem and the Temple were cursed. Accordingly, even though the Jewish-Roman War lasted only 3½ years, and the Romans withdrew after the city was destroyed, it is claimed that we are still in “the times of the Gentiles.” (See Randall Price in Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, gen. eds., *The End Times Controversy*, Eugene Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2003, p. 397.)

However, respected commentators Heinrich Meyer and John Lightfoot both see the “times of the Gentiles” as having been completely fulfilled in AD 70. They mention several verses in Luke’s version of the Olivet discourse as indicating an AD 70 fulfillment (especially vv. 25-28, and 32):

- Luke 21:20—In the phrase “when you see,” Jesus is speaking to His contemporaries, not speaking about some generation thousands of years into the future.
- Luke 21:22-27—Jesus lists an entire series of events that had been predicted in the Old Testament, *all* of which (including the “trampling” and the “times of the Gentiles”) would be “fulfilled” during those “days of vengeance.” Josephus mentions all of these events as having occurred during the Jewish-Roman War.
- Luke 21:28—There is no distinction made that establishes two different sets of events being fulfilled during two different time periods. *All* of these events (“these things”) would occur in *their* generation.
- Luke 21:31-32—The first-century fulfillment of “all these things” (including the “trampling” and “the times of the Gentiles”) is further emphasized by the fact that Jesus told His disciples *they* (“you”) would “see these things” happening. Notice that both “fulfilled” (vv. 22, 24) and “all things” (vv. 22, 32) are used twice in this context. Jesus removes all doubt regarding the time of fulfillment when He affirms with an oath, “Truly I say to you, *this generation* will not pass away until *all things* take place.”

(Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospels of Mark and Luke* [Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1983], reprint of the sixth edition of 1884, volume 2: Mark-Luke, pp. 530-531; John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979], reprinted from the Oxford University Press 1859 edition, volume 3: Luke-John, p. 199.)

Furthermore, Jesus states in verse 22 that all of the events He listed would be fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy. So where are the “trampling” and the “times of the Gentiles” predicted in the Old Testament? When we compare Luke 21:20 with its parallel in Matthew 24:15, note that Jesus quotes the Old Testament prophet Daniel as one of His sources. Thus, the concept of Gentiles treading upon Jerusalem was not new to the first-century Jews—Jerusalem had twice been trampled in 586 and 168 BC. Consider this statement from Jeremiah:

*The Lord has rejected all my strong men in my midst; He has called an **appointed time** against me to crush my young men; the Lord has **trodden** as in a wine press the virgin daughter of Judah [Jerusalem]. (Lam 1:15; emphasis added)*

Note the past tense “trodden” here—this event transpired during the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC. However, that treading was not considered as still ongoing after 586 BC; according to Jeremiah it was a *past* event when he wrote. The “treading down” in 586 BC was an “appointed time” (or “time of the Gentiles”) against Jerusalem. The city and the land were desolate, but the continuing desolation was not referred to as a present, ongoing treading down, as many futurists view post-AD 70 Jerusalem (especially the Temple Mount).

Note that Jeremiah even calls this “treading down” an “appointed time.” Thus, all four elements mentioned in Luke 21:24 (a trampling, a mention of Jerusalem, the presence of Gentile armies, and a specified appointed time) are all implied in the context of Lamentations 1:15. We also find these same ideas in Revelation 11:2, where the “appointed time” or “times of the Gentiles” is described as a period of “forty-two months”:

Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do



Studies in Redemptive History

not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. (Rev 11:2)

As can be seen, there are many similarities between Lamentations 1:15, Luke 21:24, and Revelation 11:2. All three texts contain the same four elements: Gentiles, an appointed time period, Jerusalem, and a treading. In Lamentations, those same four elements reference Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC. Revelation 11:2 also refers to Jerusalem's fall, and the meaning is clear: the trampling would only last 42 months (3½ years), not for millennia afterwards. We also find this 3½-year period in Daniel 7, where "trampling" is mentioned three times in the immediate context:

Daniel 7:7 . . . *fourth beast . . . devoured and crushed and trampled down . . .*

Daniel 7:19 . . . *fourth beast . . . devoured, crushed and trampled down . . .*

Daniel 7:23 . . . *fourth beast . . . will devour the whole earth and tread it down . . .*

Daniel 7:25 . . . *given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.*

Notice that the fourth beast (Rome) would "trample down" the whole land, and this "trampling" would last for a time, times, and half a time (i.e., 3½ years). That is exactly what happened! The Romans, under Vespasian and Titus, trampled the whole land and fulfilled all these things during a 3½-year period in AD 67-70.

Daniel wrote of "a complete end" when "the holy people are completely shattered" (Dan 12:7). Moses predicted a similar complete end for the "perverse and crooked generation" of Israelites living in the Last Days (see Deut 28-33). The "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) was this appointed time of "complete shattering."

Both Revelation 11:2 and Daniel

7:7-25 refer to this "trampling" event as occurring over a period of 3½ years. Since Jesus was alluding to Daniel, then the "trampling upon Jerusalem" mentioned in Luke 21:24 must be pointing to that very same 3½-year period. That "time of Gentile trampling" simply cannot refer to a post-AD 70 desolation which, if futurists are correct, has now lasted almost two thousand years.

This also means that Luke 21:24 cannot be referring to the same thing as Romans 11:25. While Luke 21:24 possesses a Gentile *judgment* context, Romans 11:25 possesses a Gentile *salvation* context, as John Bray has noted: "One is talking about the duration of time during which Gentiles have control of Jerusalem; the other is talking about the performance and completion of what God is doing for the Gentiles spiritually. These are two separate things altogether" (John L. Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*, fifth edition, Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision Inc., 2008, p. 105).

The "fullness of the Gentiles" (Rom 11:25) occurred when the Gentiles were fully grafted into the Church, and accepted as being fellow heirs with the Jews. Paul labored hard to accomplish this incorporation of the Gentiles, so that both Jews and Gentiles would become ONE body in Christ (cf. Eph 4). According to the book of Acts and Paul's statements in Ephesians and Colossians, it appears that this task was accomplished just prior to Jerusalem's destruction. The kingdom was taken away from the unbelieving Jews and given to the righteous remnant of believing Jews into which the believing Gentiles had been grafted.

CONCLUSION

One may legitimately ask when the "trampling" was supposed to begin and end. If it did not begin until AD 70, then the futurists might have some support

for their view. However, the evidence we have considered here shows that the trampling was fulfilled in those days of vengeance in AD 66-70, as J. S. Russell has well-noted:

How plainly does St. Luke . . . represent the great catastrophe as falling within the lifetime of the disciples. . . . Is there anywhere even a suspicion that [these words] were meant for another audience, thousands of years distant? (J. Stuart Russell. *The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Christ's Second Coming*, Bradford, Pennsylvania: International Preterist Association, 2003. Reprinted from the 1887 edition issued by T. Fisher Unwin in London, pp. 82-83)

Milton S. Terry sums it up nicely in his incredible book on hermeneutics:

These "times" are manifestly times of judgment upon Jerusalem, not times of salvation to the Gentiles. . . . [and] does not denote ages and generations. . . . [It is] a short but signal period of woe . . . (approximating three and a half years) during which the Gentile armies besieged and trampled down Jerusalem. (*Biblical Hermeneutics*, second edition, Zondervan, p. 445)

During my research I have discovered other examples, both inside and outside the Bible, of this language about "trampling" and the "times of the Gentiles." Space prohibited their inclusion in this article; if you would like to have that fuller treatment, email me and request the pdf document titled *Times of the Gentiles*.

If you would like to study more about the first-century fulfillments of Matthew 24 and its parallels in Mark 13, Luke 17 and Luke 21, I highly recommend my 73-page book *First Century Events in Chronological Order*, which is available from the International Preterist Association (IPA) website (<http://preterist.org>). ☩

Objection Overruled!

Literal Fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic Prophecies

by Don Preston

Objection: “All of the prophecies that Christ fulfilled in His first coming were fulfilled in a literal, physical manner; therefore, we should expect Him to fulfill prophecies regarding His Second Coming in a literal, physical manner.”

This objection is common among dispensationalists especially. Grant Jeffrey goes so far as to say: “There is not one example in the Bible of a prophecy that was fulfilled in an allegorical, non-historical manner.” (*Triumphant Return*, (Toronto, Frontier Research Publications, 2001, p. 100).

Like some other objections against preterism, this objection has the initial semblance of credibility, until one takes a closer look. In fact, it is easily demonstrated that Jeffrey’s claim is brash and specious.

Hebrews 2:9-14 tells us that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels, and, “as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

This passage establishes the necessity for Jesus’ physical appearance and work: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among men” (John 1:14). In His own ministry, Jesus spoke often of the necessity of giving Israel the sufficient signs that she needed to know that He was truly Messiah. His physical resurrection is distinctly given as a

sign of the greater spiritual reality of his Sonship (Matt 16). The physical bore witness to the spiritual.

In fact, John’s Gospel chronicles seven signs—all physical events—each of which pointed not to greater physical events, but to spiritual realities. Notice that, in chapter 20:30-31, John ends his Gospel with the chronicle of Jesus’ physical resurrection. He then says, “Many other signs did Jesus in the

presence of his disciples that are not written in this book, but, these are written that you might believe.” Again, Jesus’ physical resurrection pointed to a greater spiritual reality, not another physical reality. Thus, the need for initial physical, visible realities to point to the greater spiritual realities. Let us now revisit Jeffrey’s rather bold statement.

Consider John the Immerser

John the Baptizer was indisputably “the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘prepare the Way of the Lord’” (Mark 1:1-3). Consider the details of the voice’s ministry:

*“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make straight in the desert
A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted
And every mountain and hill brought low;
The crooked places shall be made straight
And the rough places smooth;
The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together”* (Isaiah 40:3-5).

So, according to Isaiah, the voice, i.e. John the Baptizer, would be a master *road builder*, the ultimate landscaper! Do you see the problem here for our objection?

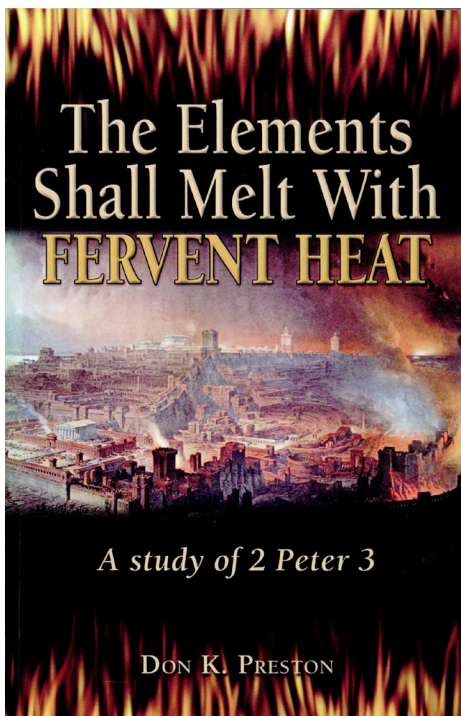
John was unequivocally the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. As such, he was supposed to fill the valleys, lower the hills, and straighten out the crooked highways! Jeffrey, and the objection under consideration, states no Old Testament prophecy was ever fulfilled spiritually. The objection is clearly proven false, however, when one considers John the Baptizer. John was totally unconcerned with physical highways, lowering literal hills, and filling up the valleys with dirt. The Old Covenant prophecy of the voice was patently fulfilled *spiritually*.

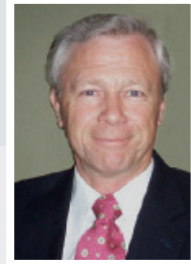
Consider Jesus’ Ministry as Well

The Old Covenant contains many prophecies of the building of the Messianic Temple. In fact, this is a hugely important topic.

Our dispensational friends insist on a yet future building of a physical temple located in the city of Jerusalem. Furthermore, they tell us that the Old Covenant never predicted the establishment of the Church as the Messianic Temple. With this in mind, consider Jesus and the Messianic Temple.

“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing; It is





marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:22-24)

This prophecy foretold the rejection of the *chief cornerstone* of the foundation of the Messianic Temple. It would be rejected by the *builders* but, after being rejected would become the chief cornerstone.

Are we dealing with a literal massive stone that at some point in the future will be initially rejected by the builders of the millennial temple but, after closer inspection, will then become the literal, physical master cornerstone? Let's allow the New Testament writers to answer that.

"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12)

Consider these critical issues:

1.) Peter stated that the Old Testament prophets did not know either the time or the manner of the fulfillment of their prophecies (1 Peter 1:10-12). Now, if the Old Testament prophets did not know the time or the manner (nature) of the fulfillment of their prophecies, this falsifies the claim that we must interpret the Old Testament in a woodenly literal way. After all, the Old Testament prophets knew what a stone was, did they not? They knew, from a literalistic perspective, what the Temple of the Lord was, did they not? So, according to the objection under consideration, when Psalm 118 foretold the rejection of the chief cornerstone becoming the foundation of the Messianic Temple, then the Psalmist knew precisely what he was predicting, right? Not

according to Peter!

2.) Consider how Peter, inspired by the Spirit, interpreted the prophecy of the rejected Stone becoming the foundation of the Messianic Temple. (For an in-depth study of the Rejected Stone motif see my book *The Elements Shall Melt With Fervent Heat*, available from my website: www.eschatology.org). Peter stated that the rejected Stone was none other than the living Christ, rejected by "you the builders!" (cf. Matt 21:42, where Jesus likewise applied the Psalm to himself).

Consider also Isaiah 28:16: "*Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.*"

This is patently a prediction of the Messianic Temple which, our premillennial friends tell us, can be nothing but a literal temple made of physical stone. And remember that they also tell us that the Church cannot be the Temple of Messiah predicted in the Old Covenant. But how do the New Testament writers interpret this prophecy? Just as in Psalm 118:22, they say that Jesus is the living foundation stone of the Messianic Temple.

In Romans 9:33 Paul cites Isaiah 28 (and Isaiah 8:14, another prediction of the Messianic Temple) and applies the prophecy to Jesus' rejection by the Jews and the fact that Jesus was the sure foundation stone that would save those who trust in him.

Likewise, in 1 Peter 2:6f the apostle cites almost every Old Testament prophecy of the foundation stone and applies them directly to Jesus, His rejection, and ensuing exaltation. Peter likewise stated that his audience consisted of "living stones," and were "being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ" (2:5).

So Christ was the precious chosen foundation stone, and the living people were living stones built on

that spiritual living foundation stone of Jesus the Messiah, and they were offering up spiritual sacrifices in that spiritual house!

How then did Peter, inspired by the Spirit, interpret the Old Covenant promises and prophecies of the Messianic Temple? He interpreted them as *spiritually* fulfilled in Christ the living foundation stone!

It is undeniably true therefore, that we have here the spiritual fulfillment of Old Covenant prophecies, and they were fulfilled in Christ's body, the Church. On this point alone the objection is falsified, but of course, there is much more.

The Son of Man Shall Come In the Glory of the Father

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." (Matt 16:27-28 NKJV)

The emphatic time element of the text demands that we re-examine our concepts of the nature of the parousia. Jesus said He was coming in judgment in the lifetime of His audience. And, He said He was coming "in the glory of the Father." This highly significant term is commonly overlooked, but is vital to a proper understanding of the nature of Christ's coming.

Jesus was saying that He was coming in the same way the Father had come! In John 5:19f Jesus basically reiterates this claim by saying that the Father had given Him the judgment prerogative and that He would judge as He had seen the Father judge.

The question of course, is how had the Father come before—how had Jesus seen the Father act in judgment? The answer is that the Father had

...continued on page 14

Literal Fulfillment

by Don Preston

...continued from page 13

come many times in the past, and, He had never come literally, visibly, or bodily. Let's take a look at just one verse that has a direct bearing on our understanding of the nature of Christ's parousia, and His promise to come as the Father had come.

*Oh, that You would rend the heavens!
That You would come down!
That the mountains might shake at
Your presence—
As fire burns brushwood,
As fire causes water to boil—
To make Your name known to Your
adversaries,
That the nations may tremble at
Your presence!
When You did awesome things for
which we did not look,
You came down, The mountains
shook at Your presence. (Isaiah 64:1-3)*

For brevity I will make the following observations:

- Isaiah (Israel) prays for YHVH to come, to come down out of heaven.
- The coming of the Lord here is the coming of the Lord to bring in the New Heaven and Earth of 65:17f.
- Isaiah asks for God to rend the heaven and earth, to essentially destroy creation. He wants God to make His *presence* (LXX, *prosopon*) known to the nations.

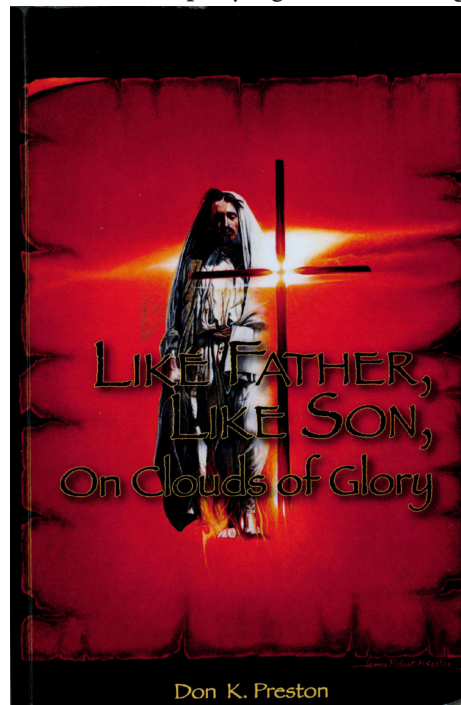
Now, notice the key to understanding the text:

- Isaiah is asking YHVH to come, *as He had come in the past*: "When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, The mountains shook at Your presence."
- So, God had come in the past. He had come down out of heaven. He had shaken the earth. He had manifested His name to the nations. And, this is the kind of coming that would take place in order to bring in the New Heaven and Earth!

What Isaiah is describing is a *historical* Day of the Lord. It had been, and it would be, a time in which YHVH exercised His sovereignty by utilizing one nation to judge another. Clearly, the language is challenging to anyone unwilling to allow the biblical writers to express themselves metaphorically and spiritually. However, the fact that Isaiah says that God had come in the past, that He had shaken the earth in the past, demands that we submit to this metaphoric use of language.

So, what we have here is clear-cut, undeniable biblical teaching that the coming of the Lord to bring in the New Creation—the New Creation of 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21—was not to be a *literal* physical coming of Jesus out of heaven to physically shake the earth and destroy the cosmos.

Now, were there to be physical events accompanying that coming



of the Lord? Undoubtedly! This is not the issue. What we are affirming, however, is that the *physical* events of the Day symbolized and signified a greater *spiritual* reality. The physical events appeared to be *normal* events of human experience, i.e. war! But on the spiritual level, since the prophets had foretold it, and since YHVH was directing the matter, it is called the Day of the Lord.

This is what Jesus said of His coming in Matthew 24:29-31, when He said that the first-century generation would see the sign of the Son of Man

in the heavens and they would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven in power and great glory.

It is often claimed that AD 70 could not have been the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, because all the tribes of the earth did not see him, *every eye* did not see him. However, this misconstrues the linguistic meaning of *the sign of the Son of Man in heaven*. As Gibbs, and a host of Greek commentators, demonstrates "the sign of the Son of Man in heaven' is not a sign in the sky, but, that the fall of Jerusalem was the sign of Christ's enthronement in the heavens" (Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia*, St. Louis, MO, Concordia Academic Press, 2000, 198f). This is precisely what Isaiah 64 foretold! So, what have we seen?

We have demonstrated that the claim that all of the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus' ministry were fulfilled in a literalistic, physical, literal manner is false. John the Baptist was not a literal road-builder. Jesus was not a literal, physical foundation stone of a material temple.

We have shown that the Old Testament foretold that the coming of the Lord to establish the New Creation would be of the same nature as God's previous Old Testament comings. Yet God had never come literally, visibly, bodily. Thus, the coming of the Lord to bring in the New Creation would not be literally, visibly, or bodily.

In perfect harmony with this, we have shown that Jesus defined his parousia as a coming like the Father had come in the past, and that the Father had never come literally, visibly, or bodily.

We have, in other words, shown that the objection is based on faulty claims, and conflicts with the express statements of Scripture about the nature of the parousia. The claim also directly conflicts with the very emphatic statements as to when Christ was coming—the first century. The objection is, therefore, overruled!

For a more in-depth analysis of this entire issue see my book *Like Father Like Son, On Clouds of Glory*. This book, available on my websites, has been called one of the most comprehensive and definitive works on the nature of the parousia that has been produced. †

Preterist Bible Project

View the current progress at www.BibleProphecyFulfilled.org

For more information or to participate in the project, contact Michael Day
mday20@cox.net

A Preterist Bible (not the final title—suggestions are welcome) is in the latter stages of production, and portions are currently being posted for review.

It is hoped that this collaborative effort, which is based on the *World English Old Testament* and the *King James Clarified New Testament* texts (both of which are in the public domain), will produce a valuable resource, free of futurist translation bias, to advance our Lord's Kingdom.

A host of preterist pastors, authors, and speakers are contributing various articles, diagrams, etc., and excerpts from Josephus' *The War of the Jews* supporting first-century prophecy fulfillment will also be included in the updated version. Lord willing, this final version will appear on www.BibleProphecyFulfilled.org. It will also appear in print form, Lord willing, no later than August, 2012 (hopefully sooner). In keeping with the attitude of the Bereans in Acts 17:11, please consider reviewing the third draft of this work on the web site. Correction, input, and suggestions are very welcome as we utilize the input of Bereans to fine-tune this project.

Some examples of futurist translation bias being addressed in this project include the following:

The blatant omission of the Greek word *mello* (about to), which is an imminent time indicator, from the KJV 106 times. The NIV and NASB omit *mello* "only" about 85 times.

not subsequent generations.

Revelation 9:16 refers to a 2,000,000 man army from China—or does it? In the Greek it is actually *myriads upon myriads*. The number could just as readily be translated 20,000 or 200,000 instead of 2,000,000. Why was 2,000,000 chosen instead

"In keeping with the attitude of the Bereans in Acts 17:11, please consider reviewing the third draft of this work on the web site. Correction, input, and suggestions are very welcome as we utilize the input of Bereans to fine-tune this project."

Mello has now been re-inserted back into the Word of God, where it has always belonged.

The Greek word *stoicheion* is used seven times in the New Testament. It is usually translated *elements*, as in 2 Peter. In reality, this word is not talking about physical materials, but principles or ideas (cf. Gal 4:3). In 2 Peter, *stoicheion* is describing the principles of the Old Covenant being destroyed in a fiery judgment, and not a future nuclear holocaust.

In the Greek, *ge* can mean *earth* or *land*. The superior translation, particularly in the book of Revelation, should be *land*. For example, Revelation 1:7 should not read *nations of the earth*, but *tribes of the land*.

The Book of Revelation, written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, describes events that were coming primarily upon the land of Israel in the first century—

of simply myriads upon myriads?

In some versions of the KJV Matthew 24:3 reads . . . *end of the world*? The Greek is actually *end of the age*? The Greek words *aion* (age) and *kosmos* (world) are not synonymous.

Likewise, *oikoumene* is poorly translated as *whole world*. This Greek word is actually referring to the Roman world. Luke 2:1 is one example of fifteen. In addition to the Bible, which clearly and repeatedly illustrates *oikoumene* as the Roman world, Josephus' *The War of the Jews* and other first-century writings further illuminate the accurate meaning of the Greek word *oikoumene* as the Roman world.

In the Preterist Bible, the futurist translation bias has been removed. It makes reading the Bible so much clearer. The fog of futurist translation bias has been thoroughly dissipated, and the distorting carnival mirrors replaced. Now we can see more clearly! ✚



Preterism 101

The What and When of Prophecy

by Brian L. Martin

(Much of the material contained in this series of articles can be found in “Behind the Veil of Moses,” available at online retailers)

If I were to predict that San Francisco would be destroyed by a future earthquake, but placed no time constraints on my prediction, I wouldn't be making much of a prediction. Given the fact that San Francisco is adjacent to seismic faults, and that it has been struck by major quakes in the past, the odds are relatively high that at some point in the future, be it near or distant, the city will be destroyed by an earthquake. On the other hand, if I predicted that San Francisco would be destroyed by an earthquake in our generation, that is an entirely different story—the prediction is now quantifiable.

The same holds true for biblical prophecies regarding Christ's Second Coming. Generally speaking, there are two main aspects to biblical “last days” prophecies: *what* is predicted to take place, and *when* it is predicted to take place. In order for Christ and the New Testament authors to be considered inspired biblical prophets (Deut 18:21-22), *what* they predicted must take place *when* they predicted it to take place.

I stress the *when* of the New Testament prophecies because I feel that, as modern Christians, we have been conditioned to downplay the New Testament timing statements regarding the Second Coming and its accompanying events. If the *what* of the Second Coming is global catastrophe, ending with Christ reigning bodily in Jerusalem, it is quite obvious that this has not yet occurred. That creates an obvious contradiction with the *soon*, *near*, and *at hand* statements in the New Testament which seemingly place the Second Coming during the first-century generation.

Here is what I mean by being conditioned to downplay the timing statements: if you now, or in the past, believe that Jesus' Second Coming is yet to occur in our future, you have somehow justified removing the *soon*, *near*, and *at hand* statements from their first-century contexts, and applied them to our current day, just as I did at one point. We successfully “fudged” the New Testament timing statements to fit with a future Second Coming. On the other hand, if we are told that we must take the timing statements at face-value, and “fudge” the global catastrophes and bodily reign of Christ in order to find first-century fulfillments, most would immediately balk at the idea. Why is it so easy to fudge the *when* aspect of the prophecies but not the *what* aspect? Because that is how we've been conditioned within our various eschatological traditions. Our religious upbringings have provided us

with various explanations and devices to help us apply these first-century time statements to a yet-future Second Coming.

Unfortunately, because we have been conditioned to downplay the timing statements, it becomes easy to minimize the role they play in New Testament prophecy. That is why I feel that it is so critical to examine the extent and import of these statements. If the New Testament prophecies are reliable, we cannot “fudge” either aspect, but must search the Scriptures to find established precedents for interpreting both the *what* and the *when* of the Second Coming prophecies.

In our previous article we listed a few of the New Testament timing passages, and demonstrated their first-century context. I want to stress that those were only a few of the scores of available passages; in fact, there are over *one hundred* passages in the New Testament which indicate a first-century context for the Second Coming and/or the events accompanying it. As you read the New Testament, try to place yourself in the sandals of a first-century Christian, a new convert in Jerusalem, or perhaps a member of the church at Corinth or Ephesus. Would you view the followings texts as applying generally to all Christians down through the ages, or would you find specific comfort in them for yourself, your friends, and family?

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels . . . (2 Thess 1:3-7 NKJV—emphasis added)

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. (Rom 13:11-12 NKJV—emphasis added)

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. (1 Cor 4:5

The *What* and *When* of Prophecy

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NKJV—emphasis added; does this not intimate that the Lord would come within the lifetimes of the Corinthians, whom Paul exhorted to withhold judgment?)

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Pet 4:17 NKJV—emphasis added)

In these passages we see that every aspect of the first-century saints' lives was permeated with the concept of impending judgment and deliverance. Did the Thessalonians receive the promised relief in their lifetimes? If the night was far spent when Paul wrote the Romans, why does it appear that we have waited nearly two thousand years for the day to dawn? Did the judgment truly begin with Peter and his contemporaries, or are we still waiting for it? I encourage you to put yourself in the place of a first-century saint when reading the New Testament. Imagine yourself arriving at a house church and having someone exclaim, "We have a letter from the apostle Paul!" How you would understand that letter as it was read?

There is something else to watch for as you read the New Testament—statements indicating that certain end-time events are *not* near or *not* soon, as in these Old Testament examples:

*I see Him, but not now;
I behold Him, but not near;
A Star shall come out of Jacob;
A Scepter shall rise out of Israel . . .*
(Num 24:17 NKJV—emphasis added)

*And the vision of the evenings and mornings
Which was told is true;*

*Therefore seal up the vision,
For it refers to many days in the future.*

(Dan 8:26 NKJV—emphasis added)

It is obvious from the above passages that God is quite capable of communicating when an event is not near. Yet I cannot find one such statement in the New Testament regarding end-time events that indicates an outrageously long delay. So we see that, both directly and indirectly, every aspect of timing in the New Testament indicates a first-century return of Christ. Here is yet another example of an indirect time indication:

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

*Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness*

Like the stars forever and ever.

*"But you, Daniel, shut up the words,
and seal the book until the time of the end;
many shall run to and fro,
and knowledge shall increase."*

(Dan 12:2-4 NKJV)

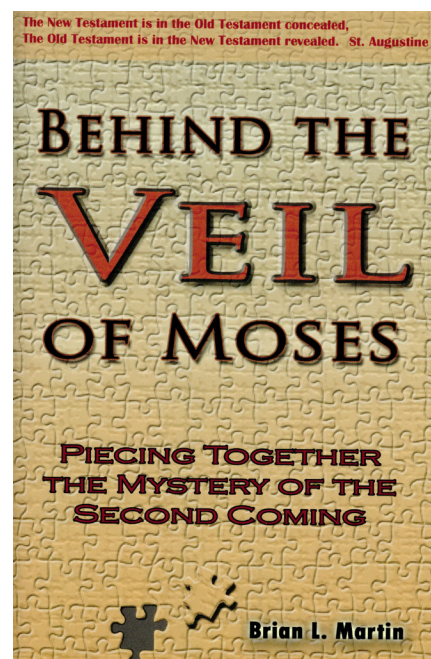
*And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book,
for the time is at hand."*

(Rev 22:10-11 NKJV)

The context of Daniel's passage is the end-time resurrection, which is also one of the topics of Revelation. Although both prophecies have the same event in view, Daniel is told to seal the words of the prophecy while John is instructed to *not* seal the words of the prophecy. Daniel received his prophecy approximately 2,500 years ago, while John received his about 2,000 years ago. Why seal the prophetic words when the event is

2,500 years away, but *not* keep them sealed when it is supposedly still 2,000 years away? What real difference could those 500 years have made? On the other hand, if the events prophesied truly took place in ca. AD 66-70, then those events were only but a few years away when John wrote, whereas their fulfillment was still a half-millennia in the future during Daniel's era. Looking at the prophecies from this perspective, the acts of sealing/not sealing make perfect sense!

I hope that you are beginning to realize just how pervasive the timing issue is regarding New Testament prophecies, and that the *when* of the Second Coming is not so easy to downplay or "fudge." Just as all the structural strands of a spider's web meet in the middle, so every aspect of timing in the New Testament—direct inferences, indirect inferences, lack of *not*-near statements, sealing and not sealing, etc.—meets in an anticipated first-century fulfillment. †



The Greek Column

Parousia

by Parker Voll

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming [Gk. parousia] . . . (2 Thess 2:8 NASB95)

I have a little story I like to tell regarding an experience I had while attending the University of Illinois. I was walking along the Quad one day when, approaching the auditorium, I noticed several physically fit, emotionless young men dressed in dark suits and ties and wearing dark sunglasses. I looked immediately to the side of the building and noticed several large, conspicuous, black limousines parked nearby. I also noticed that these men in dark suits were staring me down; they were giving me a very uneasy feeling. Something in me was saying, “Don’t make any sudden moves right now, Parker—it might be detrimental to your earthly existence.” I finally asked someone what was happening, and I was told that Senator Ted Kennedy was making a presidential campaign stop. (Okay, I’m dating myself now.) That piqued my interest, so I hung around and finally caught a glimpse of the senator as he made a short stump speech on the auditorium steps before going inside, after which I went along on my way . . . cautiously, of course. Now, what I experienced that day was nothing short of a *parousia* of Ted Kennedy.

I want to point out something about this experience, namely, that even if I had not physically *seen* the Senator, I still *perceived* his *presence*. And this is what I want to point out—the ancient Greeks reserved the word *parousia* for denoting a presence (or an arrival) of a person or persons (or even a thing), and *typically* the presence of someone who

has significant standing or influence among a larger group of people. There also existed a technical usage of the word that denoted the arrival, in the guise of a special visitation and/or an abiding presence, by a deity, some sort of governmental dignitary, or a military commander. Both BDAG and TDNT include several examples in Greek literature to demonstrate this technical usage.¹ There is also a verbal form, listed as *pareimi*, but this verb tends to simply denote someone or something as being present.²

The usage of *parousia* in the New Testament is basically two-fold, following the pattern just described. Paul used it to describe the presence of himself or another minister serving amongst a church body in the sense that their presence is weighty, substantive, and influential (1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6-7; Phil 1:26, 2:12). (Second Corinthians 10:10 is a bit odd in that it describes the Corinthians

as thinking Paul’s bodily presence is weak. However, the point Paul makes in the next verse is that his presence is actually *not* weak, despite the Corinthians’ assumption that Paul’s physical presence should be as weighty and substantive as his non-physical presence would lead one to believe.) By and large, however, the term is used to denote an anticipated event that, along the lines of the “technical usage” described above, has come to be known in theological parlance as the “Second Coming” of Jesus Christ. Of the 24 times *parousia* is used in the New Testament, 17 refer to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus (or “of God”; cf. 2 Pet 3:12). They include Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1





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Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8; James 5:7, 8; 2 Peter 1:16, 3:4; and 1 John 2:28. There is an unusual usage of *parousia* in this second sense that refers to the coming of the “lawless one” who would subsequently be “revealed” and then slain by the Lord during His own *parousia* in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9. We notice a cluster of usages in the eschatologically laden Matthew 24 and the two letters to the Thessalonians, with an additional two occurrences in Peter’s short second epistle. This lends strong support to the idea that we are indeed justified in connecting Jesus’ *parousia* with the New Testament “end times.”³

While Jesus did not disclose exact details when His disciples asked about the *timing* of His *parousia*, (Matt 24:3), He did tell them that it would occur sometime before the passing away of their contemporary generation (Matt 24:34). We also sense from the discussion in Matthew 24-25, as well as Matthew 16:28, that His *parousia* would occur toward the *end* of Jesus’ generation, after many of the disciples had already died, which fits well with the timeframe of Jerusalem’s destruction. However, it is the *nature* and *duration* of the *parousia*, along with the resurrection that was to accompany it (cf. 1 Cor 15:23), that continues to spark debate amongst students of Scripture. I would argue that our Lord’s *parousia* began around the time that the Romans surrounded Jerusalem, lasted 3½ years, and was marked by Jerusalem’s self-destruction as described by Josephus in Books 4-7 of *The Wars of the Jews*. Jesus’ *parousia* ended when the city was finally overrun by the Roman armies during the summer of AD 70. Thus, Christ’s presence, or *parousia*, marked a specific time in redemptive history during which He took vengeance on his enemies by means of Rome’s armies. Christ’s enemies had not only rejected Jesus as God’s fulfillment of His promise to their father Abraham, but, more importantly, had persecuted His new bride being readied for Him (Titus 2:12-14) and whom He would receive at the “end of the age.” It should also be pointed out that the Lord’s *parousia* was to be a one-time event. The Scriptures don’t speak of His *parousia* as being an event marked by multiple fulfillments. It was to be a singular event that served as an age-changing historical marker to which we who live beyond it can look back upon as a time when God’s covenantal dealings with humanity would be forever transformed—a time in which the reign (or kingdom) of God would be forever established and begin to grow and cover the land as the waters cover the sea. †

1. 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. “*parousia*,” 780-1. This work is commonly referred to as BDAG. Also, Kittel & Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), s.v. Oepke, “*parousia, pareime*,” 5:858-71. This work is commonly referred to as TDNT.

2. See BDAG, s.v. “*pareimi*,” 773-4.

3. See TDNT, 5:865-6. But note that Oepke’s presuppositions regarding canon formation are strongly rooted in the 19th-century German liberal tradition.

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