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# FULFILLED! *Magazine*

EXPLORING AND PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST



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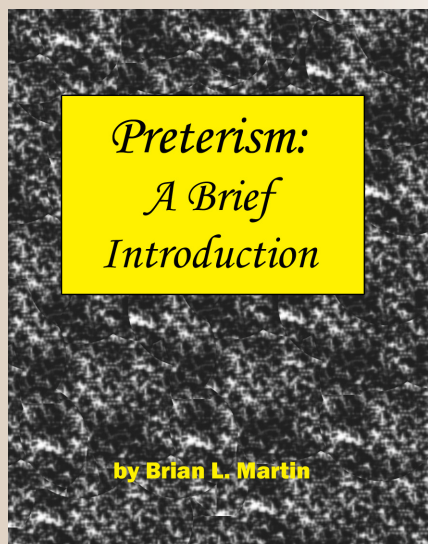


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(Please note that this booklet is currently not available from FCG.)

**4. Editor's Note**  
In this issue we are embarking on a series of articles dealing with the most divisive subject in preterism—the resurrection.

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

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**6. History of the End - Edward E. Stevens**  
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Wormwood

## *Reader Beware!*

The views expressed in these pages are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FCG or other contributors. FCG does not tell readers what to believe; rather, FCG provides readers with resources intended to aid in discovering biblical foundations informing what they believe. FCG strives to give readers something worthwhile to think about—we avoid telling them what to think. Please understand that we cannot vet every contributor's various doctrinal positions or read every advertised book. We rely on you, the reader, to be a Berean: prayerfully discuss and examine all positions presented according to Scripture to establish any truth or application as you work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

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## Editor's Note...

As I write this on November 10th, it appears that summer has finally surrendered to fall here in central California. Although the days have been getting shorter, and the shadows growing longer for months, the heat has lingered until just this week. We had a few days a week ago that only got into the 70s, but other than that we have been pushing 90 most days. Thankfully, the nights have been cooler for several weeks now. Unfortunately, when the nights first started cooling off there was still too much smoke in the air to open the windows. Things have pretty much returned to normal now—normal, that is, for a COVID-19 environment. I hope that this issue finds you well and, by God's grace, coping with the numerous issues and repercussions 2020 has dealt everyone.

not promoting any particular flavor of preterism, so you needn't be concerned your donation may be promoting "those guys." (See the ad at the top of page 2.)

I would like to present a suggestion for your consideration: many individuals, especially those of a generation younger than mine, do most, or much, of their reading digitally on a phone, tablet, or PC. If that describes you, what are your thoughts about FCG creating an email list to notify recipients when a new issue is posted for viewing or downloading. If those recipients were willing to read (or print) a digital version and have their names removed from the physical-copy mailing list, that would save the costs of both printing and mailing those issues. Let me know your thoughts at "editor@fulfilledcg.com," which is a new email address, and segues nicely to my next topic.

Our thanks to those of you who responded to my brief explanation of FCG's finances and the costs of producing an issue of *Fulfilled! Magazine*. As I surmised in last issue's Editor's Update, many readers fully intend to donate but get distracted by life. And life this year has been full of distractions! Thanks also to the handful of readers who have contributed to "The Preterist Community" portal at Samaritan's Purse. This is an excellent way to give to a Christian charitable organization while making reference to preterism. This allows nonpreterists to see that preterists are capable of caring about more than just timing statements. Furthermore, this giving portal is

I spent a good portion of my late spring and summer months, when it was either too hot or too smokey to work outside, working on a new website for FCG. Our previous site was woefully outdated, so I purchased a template and spent several months modifying the pages to serve our purposes and adding our original content. The new site is up and running and I encourage you to visit it (see also the info on page 11 of this issue). Along with the new website, I have created several "@fulfilledcg.com" domain email addresses, with the plan of bringing others onboard to help with various aspects of FCG. The separate email



accounts will allow emails to be directed to specific accounts by topic and not have everything funnel through my personal email. Please note that moving forward the contact email for Fulfilled! Magazine will be “editor@fulfilledcg.com.”

One of the foundational items we felt was necessary to prepare FCG for any further development as a ministry was the creation of a mission statement. Our Board of Directors completed that task this spring, and I shared the statement in the previous issue. In this issue I share our expanded version of our mission statement in the “Life in the Kingdom” column. I hope that you find it Christ-honoring and uplifting.

Blessings,

*Brian*

## Mailbag...

I know it was not your intent to inflict guilt, but you did! I’m so sorry—I’ve been one of those slackers expecting something for nothing. Keep up the great work sir—I so appreciate your efforts.



Thank you for your faithfulness and diligence to the Word of God.



Thank you for sending me issues of this great magazine. My interest in Preterism started over ten years ago. I started reading *The Parousia* and what I could find online. I am sorry I have lapsed in keeping my contributions up to date. Please put this contribution to good use . . . as I’m sure you will.



I wish I could donate to your magazine, unfortunately I’m incarcerated and survive on state or Institution pay. God has blessed my journey being rich in companionship of Christ and helping me with a free publication.

[It is a blessing to us to be a blessing to you! Thanks again to our donors who make this possible—editor.]



*Fulfilled!* Magazine is very helpful to me.



“  
I wish I could  
donate to your  
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# History of the End

**I**N THE PREVIOUS ISSUE, we listed many biblical statements describing what the pre-70 saints *anxiously expected* to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia. If their intense expectations were NOT fulfilled in the *experiential* way that they expected, then they should have been venting their disillusionment and outrage after AD 70. But we hear nothing but *deafening silence* coming from those saints after the Parousia.

Furthermore, when we search the historical writings for evidence that those expectations were fulfilled, we quickly discover that there were no true Christian writings for almost forty years after AD 70, and that the first true Christian writings to appear in the second century speak of the eschatological events as being still-future. This is bewildering, not only to preterists, but to futurists as well. I have dozens of quotes from patristic scholars who lament that strange period of silence right after AD 70 (email me if you would like to have a PDF file of those statements).

However, we are not left totally in the dark. We do have some non-Christian (Jewish and Roman) historical writings which indicate that the Parousia, resurrection, bodily change, and rapture did occur, so let's look at some of those sources:

## The Parousia

The historians quoted below record that Christ *did* appear with His angelic armies in the sky above Palestine. This was the beginning of His Parousia, which was NOT just a one-day event, but rather an **extended visit** to reward His saints and punish His enemies:

Now it happened **after [Passover AD 66]** that there was seen from above over the Holy of Holies for the whole night **the outline of a man's face**, the like of whose beauty had never been seen in all the land, and his appearance was quite awesome. Moreover, in those days were seen **chariots of fire and horsemen**, a great force **flying across the sky** near to the ground coming against Jerusalem and all the land of Judah, all of them horses of fire and riders of fire. [Steven B. Bowman, Translator. *Sepher Yosippon*, Chapter 87]

... a certain figure appeared of tremendous size, which many saw, just as the books of the Jews [Yosippon?] have disclosed, and before the setting of the sun there were suddenly seen **in the clouds chariots and armed battle arrays**, by which the cities of all Judaea and its territories

were invaded. [Roger Pearse (publisher 2005), Wade Blocker (translator), *Pseudo-Hegesippus*, Ch. 44, pp. 391-394 in the Latin critical text edited by Vincente Ussani.]

... a few days after that feast [Passover AD 66], on the **twenty-first day of the month Artemisius** [Jyar], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared ... for, **before sunset, chariots and troops of soldiers** in their armor were seen running about **among the clouds**, and surrounding of cities. [Josephus *Wars* 6.5.3 (6.296-299)]

Prodigies had occurred ... There had been seen [angelic] **hosts joining battle in the skies**, the fiery gleam of arms. [Tacitus, *The Histories*, Bk 5, Sect 13]

*Yosippon* mentions that an image of a man's face appeared over the Holy of Holies for a whole night, and *Hegesippus* says that "many people saw" a huge supernatural being (the glorious Son of Man?) about the same time that the angelic armies were seen in the sky. The first-century Roman historian *Tacitus* confirms that these things really happened, and *Josephus* gives us the exact **day and hour** when the angelic armies were seen (Matt 24:36).

When R. C. Sproul, Sr., quoted the above passage from Josephus in his book, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, he described it as a "most remarkable record" (pp. 123-127). And in his conference speech, he noted that this story is "corroborated by others" (e.g. Tacitus), and that it "lends credence" to the idea that there was **some kind of coming of Christ** associated with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 ["Last Days Madness" speech, *Ligonier Ministries National Conference*, Orlando, Florida, 1999].

So, it is easy to see that the Parousia, which was Christ's extended visit to reward His saints and pour out His wrath, began right there in April 66. But that raises another question: What about the *resurrection, bodily change, and rapture*?

## Resurrection, Bodily Change, and Rapture

Since the *bodily change* and *rapture* were supposed to occur in tight connection with the resurrection, it means that if we can determine when the resurrection occurred, we will also know when the bodily change and rapture occurred.

For decades I examined these historical sources searching for information about the resurrection of the dead out of Hades. After repeated treks through Josephus, I kept coming back to the following eyewitness account from the Jewish

... chariots of fire and horsemen, a great force flying across the sky . . . .

## How Were Their Expectations Fulfilled?

Edward E. Stevens

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priests about what they felt and heard in the Temple on Pentecost (June 66), not long after the Zealot rebellion began:

“... 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.**” [Josephus *Wars* 6.5.3 (6.299-300)]

When the holiday of **Shavuoth [Pentecost]** came in those days [June 66 AD], **during the night** the priests heard within the Temple something like the sound of men going and the sound of men marching in a **multitude** going into the Temple, and a terrible and **mighty voice** was heard speaking: “**Let’s go and leave this House.**” [Steven B. Bowman, Translator. *Sepher Yosippon*, Chapter 87]

Moreover in the celebration itself of the **Pentecost** the priests entering the interior of the temple **at night time**, that they might celebrate the usual sacrifices, asserted themselves at first to have felt a certain movement and a sound given forth, afterwards even to have heard **shouted in a sudden voice**: “**We cross over from here.**” [Roger Pearse (publisher 2005), Wade Blocker (translator), *Pseudo-Hegesippus*, Ch. 44, pp. 391-394 in the Latin critical text edited by Vincente Ussani.]

It was neither just coincidence, nor inserted merely to fill space, that Josephus gave us the exact *day and hour* **when** this event occurred, **where** it occurred, and **who** witnessed it. God’s providence was clearly involved here. But there were *no visuals*—the priests *heard* what was said, but did not *see* those who spoke. That great multitude was *invisible* because they were in the UNSEEN realm.

The probabilities for identifying that “great multitude” are greatly enhanced when we remember **where** they were. What group of people in the unseen realm would be leaving one part of that realm to go to another part of it, and why?

The most reasonable explanation is that it was the *resurrection* of the dead saints out of Hades (Rev 20:13-15), and the time when the mortal bodies of the living saints were *changed* into immortal bodies, and then *caught up together* with the resurrected saints to be with Christ forever

afterwards (1 Cor 15:51-52; Phil 3:21; 1Thess 4:17).

### Their Expectations WERE Fulfilled

The above historians recorded that Jesus and His angels arrived a few days after *Passover* (**April 66**). Jesus said that after His arrival He would send forth His angels to gather together His elect (Matt 24:31; Mark 13:27).

Luke’s account refers to that angelic gathering as their “redemption” (Luke 21:28). And they would know that their *gathering* (redemption, bodily change, and rapture) was “drawing near” when they saw Christ and His angels appear in the sky. So, it was perfect timing for the resurrection, bodily change, and gathering to take place at *Pentecost* about 45 days after they saw the angelic armies appear (**June 66**).

Those living saints were anxiously awaiting His return, groaning within themselves, and longing to be clothed with their immortal bodies. They were looking for and hastening the day. They had fixed their hope completely upon it. It was not something that could pass by unnoticed.

And since their *expectations* were fulfilled in the *experiential* manner they had expected, they obviously would have known that the Parousia occurred. But their bodies were *changed* and translated into the unseen realm, which explains why no Christians remained alive on earth to mention the fulfillment afterwards. *They were silent because they were*

*absent*. They were gone—no longer on the earth—taken to heaven. †

So, it was perfect timing for the resurrection, bodily change, and gathering to take place at *Pentecost* about 45 days after they saw the angelic armies appear (**June 66**).

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*Let Us Go From Here* (PDF article)

*Strange Silence After AD 70* (PDF list of scholarly quotes)

*Historical Problem for All Preterists* (PDF article)

*Where Did the Christians Go?* (PDF article)

*Why No One Noticed These Things* (PDF article)

*No Permanent Rupture in the Church* (PDF article)

# Objection Overruled!

## Keith Mathison and the Biblical Time Statements - Part 2

### Some Issues of Hermeneutic

**M**Y APPRECIATION TO ALL of you who have expressed thanks for the first article in response to Mathison. If you haven't done so, be sure to read the first article in this series.

Before examining a couple more of Mathison's attempts to escape, avoid, and mitigate the multitude of New Testament time statements indicating the nearness of the Lord's coming, the end of the age, and the judgment, I want to demonstrate that his attempts are at direct odds with his own well-documented position on time statements; that is, when he was addressing dispensationalism. Specifically, I want not only to expose his utter inconsistency, but I want to expose the fallacy of his hermeneutic that leads to his faulty attempts at exegesis.

In the first article I pointed out Keith Mathison's own words in which, seeking to negate the time statements of imminence found in the Bible, he has contradicted not only himself, but, more importantly, Scripture. So, let's look a bit closer at Mathison's position on time statements when he is not attacking Covenant Eschatology.

#### Mathison's Earlier Position on Time Statements of Imminence

The reader needs to keep in mind that historically, Mathison has argued vehemently (e.g., against dispensationalism) that to deny the objective imminence of the "at hand" time statements of the kingdom and the Lord's coming is a dangerous and false doctrine. I demonstrated this in the first article (Fall 2020 issue), but let me give here some more of Mathison's comments about New Testament time indicators. First is Mathison's concluding comment regarding 1 Thessalonians 5 and his reasons for applying the "Day of the Lord" language there as reference to the impending AD 70 judgment:

"On the basis of this evidence, we conclude that the coming of Christ for judgment in 2 Thessalonians 1 is the same as the coming of Christ for judgment

revealed in the Olivet Discourse and elsewhere." (*Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*, New Jersey; P & R Publishing, 1999, 231f.)

So, Mathison clearly appeals to the language of imminence for understanding the impending AD 70 parousia. And we have more from his own keyboard.

In responding to the dispensational argument that time indicators of imminence are essentially nebulous, timeless indicators of imminence, meaning something "could be, or could not be, at any moment" (does that even make sense?), Mathison offered this on Revelation and the dispensational claim of "non-imminent imminence":

The other texts that are used as proof of the doctrine of Christ's imminent return (e.g. Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20) do not support this doctrine (the dispensational doctrine, DKP).

The words used in these verses mean 'soon' or 'near.' They do not allow for an interval of thousands of years. They indicate that the event referred to was impending at the time of writing. They must therefore refer to first century coming in judgment

of Jerusalem, not to his personal return at the end of the age." (Keith Mathison, *Postmillennialism An Eschatology of Hope*, (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1999), 205).

Notice also that in his tome *From Age To Age: The Unfolding of Biblical Eschatology*, (Phillipsburg, NJ; P & R Publishing, 2009, 347), commenting on the message of John the Baptizer: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near," Mathison claims John's message meant: "When he announces that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, he is announcing the arrival of this kingdom that the faithful within Israel have been waiting for centuries." In other words, per Mathison, what had once been far off, not near, not at hand, was now, truly near! For Mathison, at hand (literally, "has drawn near") meant precisely what the words indicate.

So, when writing against dispensationalism in both 1999 and 2009, Mathison rejected the idea that language

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of imminence is to be mitigated and negated. He rejected the idea that “at hand” means that it might or might not be soon. He condemned the dispensational claims that the Lord’s coming is “imminent but not near,” but rather claims that the time indicators must be taken objectively. (It should be noted of course, that he is correct in his rejection of the dispensational word games. No lexicon, no dictionary, supports the definition of “imminent but not near” as claimed by the dispensationalists. Imminent means “near” and “at hand”).

We could multiply this kind of quote from Mathison’s writings many times over. But, since penning those words in defense of the objective imminence of “at hand,” he has—at least when arguing against preterism—decided that “soon,” “at hand,” “shortly,” etc., do not, after all, demand the fulfillment of those words imminently. After all, he now wants us to believe: “It must also be remembered that the Old Testament prophets regularly used terms implying ‘nearness’ to describe events that did not occur for centuries” (WSTTB, p 202). (We should point out that while Mathison claims that the Old Testament prophets “regularly” used terms of imminence to refer to events spanning hundreds of years, he made no effort to produce *several* of those “regular” occurrences of such usage. He posited one or two [false examples] but, that hardly qualifies as “regular” usage).

### Mathison and Misguided Hermeneutic

The reader needs to keep in mind that Mathison is employing a very dubious hermeneutic. He is seeking to destroy what is universally admitted to be *the normal meaning of time words*, and trying to make them mean the exact opposite of what they normally—and lexically—mean! Just ponder the power of that!

Mathison is arguing that if we can find examples (*no matter how few!*) in the Old Testament where these words of imminence spoke of events hundreds of years away (the claim is false, DKP), this means we can now dismiss and ignore *all* New Testament references to the imminent, soon, shortly to come to pass Day

of the Lord and “the end of all things.” Of course, if Mathison accepted his own argument this would be to totally capitulate to the dispensational claims which he condemns. This violates his comments about Revelation and the kingdom cited above.

Mathison’s argument is a prime and glaring example of the *illegitimate totality transfer* of context. What that term means is that if you can find a given definition of a word or term in one text, that you impose (transfer) that definition on *all occurrences* of that word or term. While that may *sound* legitimate, all grammarians, all linguists, all commentators recognize the dangers in such an assumptive approach. Language is a “flexible” thing, and words are always subject to context. This does not mean that the normal definition of words is meaningless, or should be ignored—*not at all!* To the contrary, it suggests that the normal definition of words is to be honored and applied UNLESS context forces us to find another definition. And that would suggest that Mathison’s attempt to impose the “exceptional” definition (which he imagines he has found) of the imminence language onto the normal definition is misguided and false.

Clearly, Mathison is trying to do just that, however. He imagines that he has found an exception to the norm and then imposes that exceptional use on all other texts that are inconvenient to his eschatology!! The rule of normal definition and consistency would suggest just the opposite. You determine the normal, usual definition of words, terms, phrases. You apply that normal, usual, customary definition on texts—UNLESS THE CONTEXT DEMANDS A DIFFERENT DEFINITION IS BEING APPLIED. Make no mistake: Mathison cannot find any lexicon that supports his aberrant hermeneutic, which claims that “at hand” means hundreds of years, that “shortly come to pass” entails centuries. Mathison turns that normal and correct linguistic and grammatical practice on its head, insisting that the exceptional usage of a word (which he thinks he has found) is in fact to be imposed on all other texts. This is truly a misguided hermeneutic. In reality, he is positing the dispensational

Make no mistake. Mathison cannot find any lexicon that supports his aberrant hermeneutic, which claims that “at hand” means hundreds of years, that “shortly come to pass” entails centuries.

...continued on page 10

## Objection Overruled!

Don K. Preston

... continued from page 9

view of the language of imminence. *He is claiming, just like the millennialists, that “at hand” means imminent but not near!*

So, Mathison is saying, “If I can find one or two passages in which “at hand,” “soon,” “shortly” did not mean objective imminence, in spite of what I have written about imminence in other books, since I am seeking to defeat preterism, I will impose that “exceptional” usage on all other contexts.”

Now, consider carefully: If one argues as Mathison does, that one or two examples of “imminent but not near language” signifies that “at hand” did not mean “soon,” what would it mean if we could (and DO!) find many, many examples, a wealth of references of “at hand,” “shortly,” “soon,” “quickly,” etc. that *did mean objective, true imminence?* Do you see the problem with Mathison’s hermeneutic? He is trying to make a few (claimed, but false) exceptions to the normal meaning of language to be the overriding definition, in spite of the

fact that the lexicons do not support this, the context of Scripture does not support it, and logic itself suggests (demands) that such a hermeneutic is fatally flawed.

A closing thought or two: The reader needs to realize that Mathison only makes his “imminent but not near” argument about language regarding the imminence of the Day of the Lord, the judgment, and the resurrection. He does NOT make this argument when the language speaks of “mundane,” i.e., non-prophetic, language. Thus, he is, tacitly and rather quietly, telling us that when the Bible speaks of non-prophetic, non-eschatological events as “at hand” and “shortly” to come to pass, then the language is prosaic, literal, and means precisely what the words normally indicate.

Not only is he inconsistent in his application of the “imminent but not near” claim in non-prophetic texts, remember that just above we documented how he insists that “at hand” in regard to the coming of the kingdom communicated objective imminence. Thus, Mathison’s glaring inconsistency in regard to the “imminent but not

near” approach to the language of imminence is exposed for all to see. He claims to reject that very hermeneutic when the dispensationalists employ it. Yet, he employs it when seeking to counter Covenant Eschatology. He insists that “at hand,” “shortly,” etc., when used of mundane events express objective imminence, and when John said the kingdom was “at hand,” then it was truly near. And yet, when the Bible affirms, repeatedly, explicitly, unambiguously, that the coming of the Lord, the judgment, and the resurrection were near and coming soon, in the first century, he runs to the dispensational camp for help, abandoning his former arguments.

There are, according to Douglas Wilkinson, in his excellent book: *The Coming of the Lord is At Hand*, (Available at [www.donkpreston.com](http://www.donkpreston.com)) well over 200 indicators of the imminent parousia, end of the age, and the judgment in the New Testament. Words that when commonly used in everyday conversation, in literary works, and in virtually every other context are admittedly indicators of imminence of other events, are now, in Mathison’s view, to be mitigated, ignored, or radically modified as to have no

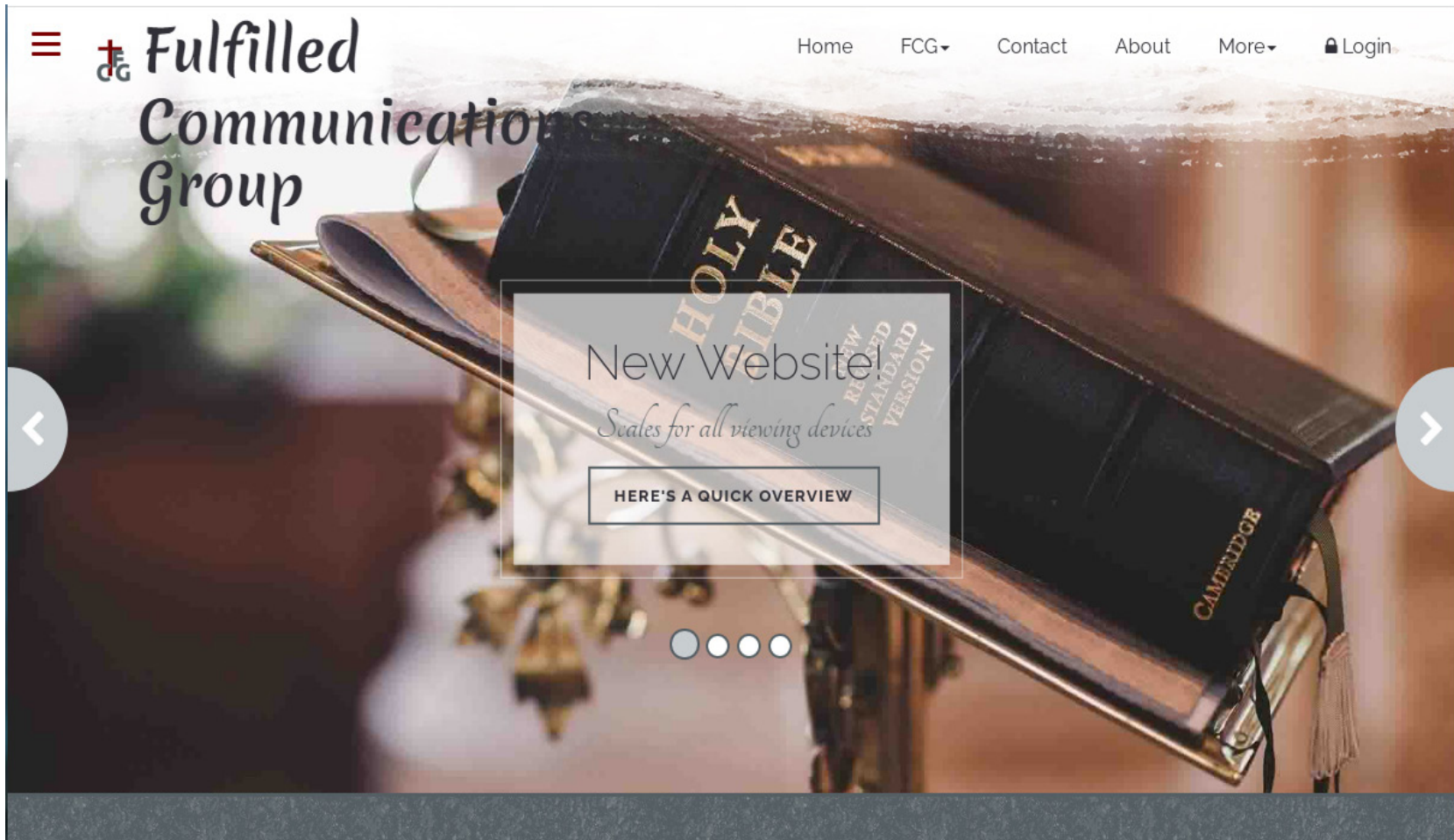
temporal significance whatsoever! Of course, as we have just seen, this is totally different from his other writings—when not attacking preterism—in which he has historically, adamantly, and correctly insisted that “at hand,” “shortly,” “soon,” and “quickly” mean, well, precisely what they normally mean!

In our next installment we will examine Mathison’s appeal to what is known as the “telescoping of events” (sometimes called the “Mountain Peaks” argument). We will also examine and refute his claim that there are “multiple fulfillments” of prophecy.

In the meantime, get a copy of my book, *Who Is This Babylon?*, in which I have an extensive, in-depth response to the efforts like those of Mathison to counter the time statements of the Bible. If you order the book, mention that you read this article in *Fulfilled!* Magazine, and I will refund your shipping and I will also give you a free copy of my smaller book *Can God Tell Time?* absolutely free. You can order my book at [www.donkpreston.com](http://www.donkpreston.com). †

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# New Website!



We have finally updated our website! Gone is the obsolete Adobe Flash component and the cumbersome layout that didn't adapt to various viewing devices. Our site now scales for all viewing devices—PCs, Tablets, and Smartphones! Lord willing, what we have is just a foundation, upon which we will continue to add content (pages for various preterist author/speakers, books, articles, etc.). Of course, all the back issues of *Fulfilled!* Magazine are available for viewing and printing, along with an Excel index of all magazine articles, created by Robert Kukla (thanks Robert!). Please visit our site and let us know what you think. Our “Contact” page has links for providing feedback.

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## Our mission:

*Exploring and proclaiming the good news of fulfilled prophecy and life in Christ, equipping and encouraging everyone in our journey toward biblical truth, enabling each of us to better discern and develop our roles in the kingdom of God*

**A**LTHOUGH I HAVE BEEN the “name” or “face” associated with FCG and *Fulfilled!* Magazine over the years, that was never my intent, nor is it something that I am particularly comfortable with. FCG is not intended to be “*Brian Martin Ministries*.” I simply wanted to give scattered preterists a sense of community, share various resources, and perhaps give their futurist contacts some bite-sized articles to make them think more deeply about their end-time views. Starting a preterist magazine seemed like a timely and worthwhile project.

After a couple of test issues it appeared that the preterist community was receptive to the idea, so my wife and I, and our friend Bill (from the “Kidding” video), formed the FCG nonprofit corporation. While we certainly haven’t pleased all the readers all the time, I believe that we have been moderately successful in those goals. We chose the name *Fulfilled Communications Group* because we envisioned more than just a magazine. “Fulfilled” referred to the past fulfillment of preterism, “Communications” spoke to what we hoped to do with the fulfilled message, and “Group” allowed

for expansion in any of a number of avenues (content, media, personnel). Our first “expansion” was the *You’ve Gotta Be Kidding . . . Right?* video, which was very well received. After completing that I thought that we might be able to produce a video every 1-2 years. But life often doesn’t bend to our desires.

Kayla and I began a multi-year stint of house remodeling projects, and I put in extra hours at work, in an effort to help prepare us for retirement. By God’s grace we retired in April of this year. Since then I have spent quite a bit of time working on FCG-related projects: revamping the magazine layout, and creating a new website. I also tapped the expertise of one of my brothers, Scott, who has a Masters in *Organizational Leadership*, to help FCG develop as a ministry. Our first task was to develop a mission statement, which we shared in the previous issue. In the previous issue’s Editor’s Update I mentioned that I would be sharing more details about our mission statement. On the facing page is the exposition of our mission statement, which provides a brief commentary on each of the statement’s key terms. †

*I’ve yet to meet someone who found their way to faith by being criticized. When I graduated from a Christian college, I knew everything: who were the “real Christians” and who were the fakes, which theologians were orthodox and which were heretics, what behavior was spiritual and what was not. Every year since graduation I’ve gained a better sense of how little I know. I’ve had to come to terms with my false pride and learn humility—a prerequisite for grace. At the same time I have learned to embrace mystery, an outlook I find in such biblical books as Job, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms. And I’m trying to add, in spirit if not in words, the line, “Of course, I could be wrong.”*

**Philip Yancey, *Vanishing Grace***

## FCG's Mission Statement

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**Exploring:** Understanding truth is an ongoing process. FCG's position is not that we have "arrived" and are now in a position to tell others how to get to where we are. Rather, as Bereans, we too are continuing to explore the view of fulfilled prophecy and "search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things are so" (Acts 17:11).

**Proclaiming:** What we have discovered, we share with others in a spirit of grace, humility, and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

**The Good News:** We believe that fulfilled prophecy and life in Christ are, in comparison to unfulfilled prophecy and life without Christ, good news.

**Fulfilled Prophecy:** We believe that preterism (past fulfillment) is the most accurate interpretation of the biblical "last days" and end-time events. We believe that God is not a God of gaps and delays, but a God who fulfills His promises and prophecies when (*this generation, soon, near, at hand*) He promised.

**Life in Christ:** We believe that salvation is found in Christ alone (Acts 4:12) and that "he who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12). Having life in the Son of God is truly good news!

**Equipping:** We desire to produce and provide resources that will aid others in their study of Scripture and eschatology.

**Encouraging:** We desire to encourage those feeling isolated in their pursuit of biblical truth and those struggling in that pursuit to not grow weary or lose heart in doing good (Gal 6:9).

**Everyone:** We are all in this together. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "... that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me" (Rom 1:12). The apostle Paul was encouraged by the faith of the Romans; we in the preterist community can certainly be encouraged by one another (Heb 3:13).

**Our Journey:** As stated under "Exploring," this is an ongoing process; we are all in this journey together.

Some have been on the path for many years; others have just begun the journey. Mindful of this, we need to interact with grace, humility, and respect as we each *work out our salvation with fear and trembling* (Phil 2:12).

**Biblical Truth:** This, rather than preterism, is the ultimate goal of FCG. We espouse preterism because we believe it to be the most accurate interpretation of biblical end-times. Should preterism be refuted by Scripture, we will follow biblical truth. While some may see this as preterism losing the "preterism vs. futurism" debate, we would see it as a win-win situation because both sides come out with a better biblical understanding. Preterism would be proved to be an errant doctrine, and futurism will be forced to shore up the holes in its position that allowed preterism to become established. No one loses if we all gain a better understanding of biblical truth and become more Christ-like.

**Enabling Each of Us:** Although we are all in this together as a community, we each have individual responsibilities to not only search out biblical truth, but to then apply that truth to our lives.

**Better Discern and Develop our Roles in the Kingdom of God:** It is not enough to understand the "nuts and bolts" of biblical prophecy (or any facet of biblical knowledge, for that matter). Paul wrote, "though I . . . understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). We must apply these truths to our daily walk with God. The end goal of our biblical journey toward truth is not simply to discern a list of correct biblical data and doctrine, but to then develop our personal roles in the Kingdom of God. How are we to live in the light of fulfilled prophecy?

**Continuing the Mission:** As we better discern and develop our roles in the kingdom of God, we become better equipped to further explore and proclaim the good news of fulfilled prophecy and life in Christ, and to equip and encourage others in their journeys toward biblical truth.

## Parting Thoughts

**I ADMIT I DERIVE** a small amount of guilty pleasure anytime I confront my futurist friends about highly anticipated prophecies that failed to come to fruition. Don't get me wrong, I put on my concerned face with my lowered eyebrows, tilt my head slightly to one side, and speak in my soft "Mister Roger's" voice, empathetically sharing their disappointment. "How does this make you feel?" But on the inside, I'm laughing my head off that acquaintances of mine, that I thought were pretty darn smart, once again end up believing in the Easter Bunny.

I have a close friend I've known for over 30 years now. We attended the same futurist church back in the late 1980s. He stayed, and I moved on. He knows my beliefs and doesn't call me crazy, doesn't call me a heretic. However, Last month he called me to relate an episode of a Sid Roth television program where some "profit," uh, I mean prophet, predicted that an asteroid named *Apophis*, (wormwood) is going to strike the Earth in 2029. With his new-found inspiration (from science, not Scripture), he informed me that his mind was now made up! He believes that that asteroid will bring the rapture and, though he appreciates my views, he no longer needs me to share the fulfilled view with him.

I told him I was happy for him and we are still friends. That was last month. Just this week I read an updated article on the "prophetic" asteroid. Now those same scientists, astronomers, and researchers (you know-the experts), have retracted their initial prediction. **IMAGINE THAT!** They now believe the closest it will come is 19,000 miles. But heck, even that's cool too! That would be fun to look at through a telescope. I read about six more articles, all confirming the same thing. I forwarded the link to my friend and asked him (as sincerely as possible) "Hey bro, what are your thoughts on this? Must be disheartening?"

I believe my friend is smart enough to read between the lines because he has yet to reply, though we've spoken and texted several times since. These same experts that gave my friend the ammo to "hope against hope," are the same experts that have now stripped it away from him. ("Hey, don't steal my hope of glory!")

I have included the email I sent him before the "wormwood disappointment," as I hoped this study would inform him on how to do simple word studies, understand figures of speech, and apocalyptic language. Yeah . . . I guess not.

Here is that email:

. . . we have looked at every use of the Hebrew word for "wormwood," and see that in EVERY instance it meant a divine curse from YHWH . . .

Dear 'friend,'

Looking at the use of Wormwood in the Old Testament, gives a vastly different viewpoint worth studying:

*Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood (a curse);* (Deut 29:18 KJV)

The Hebrew word for wormwood is *la'anah*: From an unused root supposed to mean **to curse**.

*But her end is bitter as wormwood (a curse), sharp as a two-edged sword.* (Prov 5:4 KJV)

*Therefore thus said יהוה of hosts, the Elohim of Yisra'el, "See, I am making this people eat wormwood, (not literally feed them but put a curse on them) and I shall make them drink poisoned water."* (Jer 9:15 The Scripture 2009)

*Therefore thus said יהוה of hosts concerning the prophets, 'See, I am making them eat wormwood, and shall make them drink poisoned water. For defilement has gone out into all the land from the prophets of Yerushalayim.'* (Jer 23:15 The Scripture 2009) Here God is going to curse the prophets for giving false prophecies. The writer compares affliction to the word "wormwood" and gall to "misery."

*Remember my affliction and my anguish, The wormwood and the gall.* (Lam 3:19 The Scripture 2009) Again, the writer compares affliction to "wormwood" (curse) and gall to "misery." This theme is present throughout the Old Testament.

*O you who are turning right-ruling to wormwood and have cast down righteousness to the earth!* (Amos 5:7 The Scripture 2009) This would be correct, as God's judgments typically resulted in a curse against Israelites for their disobedience.

Now that we have looked at every use of the Hebrew word for "wormwood," and see that in EVERY instance it meant a divine curse from YHWH, let's look at the only use in the New Testament. Note that the Jews, familiar with the Old Testament context, would have connected the dots and known exactly what John meant.

*. . . and the name of the star (not a real meteor) is called Wormwood (a divine curse). And a third of the waters*

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became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter. (Rev 8:11 The Scripture 2009)

We read the Old Testament verses which used many figures of speech still recognized today: “double-edged sword,” “I will feed them,” “make them drink,” “a root that bears from you.” None of these phrases were meant to be understood as literal swords, eating, drinking, or roots—they were just figures of speech. But in 21st-century America that suddenly goes out the window.

**Let’s look at the word “star.”**

. . . wild waves of the sea foaming up their own shame, straying stars (Reference to Jewish leaders) for whom blackness of darkness is kept forever. (Jude 1:13)

The writer was not speaking of a celestial light from a distant galaxy. In context, he was referring to Jewish leaders and teachers. Here are two verses that help establish this interpretation:

And he had in his right hand **seven stars**: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength. (Rev 1:16 KJV)

The **mystery of the seven stars** which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. (Rev 1:20 KJV)

Here we see John getting the INTERPRETATION of the figure of speech. Not real stars at all, but messengers/angels/pastors over those seven churches. So yes, for those people to understand an exalted individual, they had to be given a reference point. That was the star. Now they could communicate deeper meanings and comparisons.

The New Testament speaks of stars in the heavens. At Jesus’ birth for example. But whenever you read that they fell from the sky, that is your clue the author has shifted into apocalyptic language and now referencing men in powerful positions. The same with the Sun and Moon. Think of this: The Sun=Herod or Rome, the Moon=High Priest in Jerusalem. Stars=the Sanhedrin, Scribes, Pharisees, teachers of the law. Since Israel was under submission to Rome, there was no sun in Jerusalem. Only a moon. Remember Joseph’s dream also, where the sun, moon, and stars represent authority figures (Gen 37).

Finally, to get a brain-wrap around the wormwood in Revelation 8, follow the actions of the remaining seals and bowls being poured out AND the following results.

Finally, to get a brain-wrap around the wormwood in Revelation 8, follow the actions of the remaining seals and bowls being poured out AND the following results. If the angels were being obedient and following God’s ORDER, then it was sequential. There was order and not chaos. No angel went out of turn. What vision did the 7th (final) angel show John after the 7th bowl was poured out? The kingdom had come down. Read Revelation 21:3-4, where those same benefits spoken of are the same ones we now claim. But how can that be if we are still waiting for a fulfillment of Revelation 8?

The angel, who had already completed his work by chapter 21, was showing John glorious things. Judgment was over. Good stuff now. Remember, these are figures of speech. Hebraic poetic language was designed to let the reader, or listener, know how glorious the New Covenant would be. New Covenant = Grace = New Jerusalem = Kingdom of God = God in Man = eternal life = everlasting covenant. They’re all just adjectives for the same subject: the New Covenant.

Just a thought on relying on some translations and concordances: Here’s the definition of the Greek word for Wormwood: Rev 8:11 “the name of a star which fell into the waters and made them bitter.”

Wow, this makes no sense. They couldn’t read the Old Testament verses where it’s understood the writer

was using figures of speech, comparisons, and synonyms for things like “make them drink the water of gall”? God wasn’t going to make them drink anything. He compared His wrath to drinking gall. There was no physical drinking of gall that occurred in those chapters, but there were a lot of curses that were invoked. Sometimes even the translators were using their Western Europe or American interpretation bias to understand Hebrew mentality. Get your definition from the Old Testament use of a word. That’s where John Eliezer got it. [End of email]

As you can see, it was a very basic study which should have given my friend some comfort and a gentle introduction into basic biblical Interpretation. But thanks to the dispensational claws of futurism, my friend was raptured back into the cave of despair (don’t ya love my figures of speech?). Until next time! Blessings. †

## In This Issue:

The History of the End

*How Were Their  
Expectations Fulfilled?*

Objection Overruled

*Response to Mathison, pt 2*

Parting Thoughts -

*Wormwood*

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## Preterism . . . *it's about time!*

*It's about the time Jesus told His disciples that He would return—this (His) generation!*

*It's about the time the New Testament authors told their readers Jesus would return—soon, near, at hand, shortly!*

*It's about time for a scriptural explanation other than delay!*

*It's about time for a “last days” view that doesn't conjure up gaps and parenthetical ages!*



**Preterism**  
Preterism

*. . . maybe it's about time you looked into it!*