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FULFILLED! *Magazine*

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

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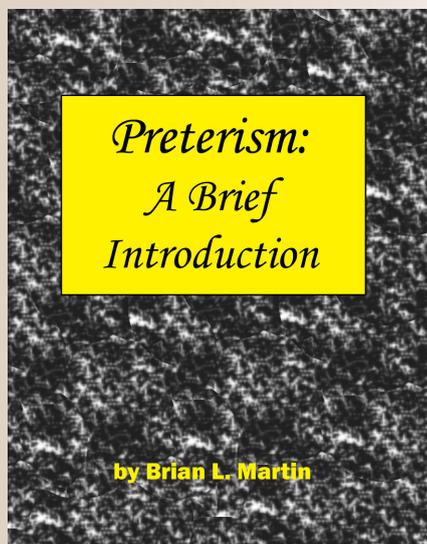


Calling All Full-Preterists: If you, like so many out there, are looking for others of similar eschatology, this is for you. To decide if you would like to take part in a program of networking full-preterists in the US and Canada together in specific locales, please take a moment to read about the database Tony Denton is compiling! Just visit this web site or email him:

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Preterism: A Brief Introduction

This concise, 20-page booklet covers the basics of preterism:

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- Audience Relevance
- Timing Passages
- Apocalyptic Language
- Cloud Comings

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

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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...



This cross on the property of Garrett & Beverly Brown was used in one of the final scenes of FCG's "Kidding" video.

As the COVID vaccine rolls out, California is slowly reducing restrictions around the state, although we may still be the most locked-down state in the Union. Hopefully, things in your area are returning to normal. Now we must hope and pray that our "new" normal turns out to be better than our pre-virus days.

The days are growing longer and warmer, and the hills are already brown in our area. No doubt by the time you are reading this we will be experiencing the heat of summer setting in. I had so much I anticipated getting done indoors during this past winter when it would be too cold or rainy to work outside, but with California entering another drought and winters in our areas being relatively mild, it was often difficult to justify staying indoors and I did not accomplish nearly as much as I anticipated. Oh well, there is always next winter, and my outdoors projects received the benefit.

Those of you familiar with our Kidding video may remember Garrett Brown, who was indirectly responsible for me coming to the preterist view, and on whose property the final scenes of walking to the cross were filmed. Garrett went home to be with the Lord March 30th, and I have written a brief memorial to him in this issue.

Also in this issue, Ed continues his series dealing with first-century history and biblical fulfillment, and Don continues his detailed response to Keith Mathison's "refutation" of preterism's interpretation of eschatological time texts. Mark Honegger provides a follow-up article to his previous issue's "Sabbath Rest" article, and T J Smith explores The Magnificat, Mary's prayer of thanksgiving after receiving the angel Gabriel's message of The Messiah's birth.

Thanks to those of you who have donated to Samaritan's Purse via "The Preterist Community" group we have exceeded our original goal of \$2,000 and are well on our way to a new goal of \$4,000. "The Preterist Community" team is the top giving team at Samaritan's Purse, and is a testimony to the Christian community that preterists can do more than just debate about time statements. If you have not done so already, I encourage you to join us in not only supporting a good cause in the name of Jesus Christ, but also shining this positive light of preterism to the Christian community.

As always, we are grateful for your prayerful and financial support; Fulfilled! Magazine would not exist if it were not for your gracious support.

Blessings,

Brian

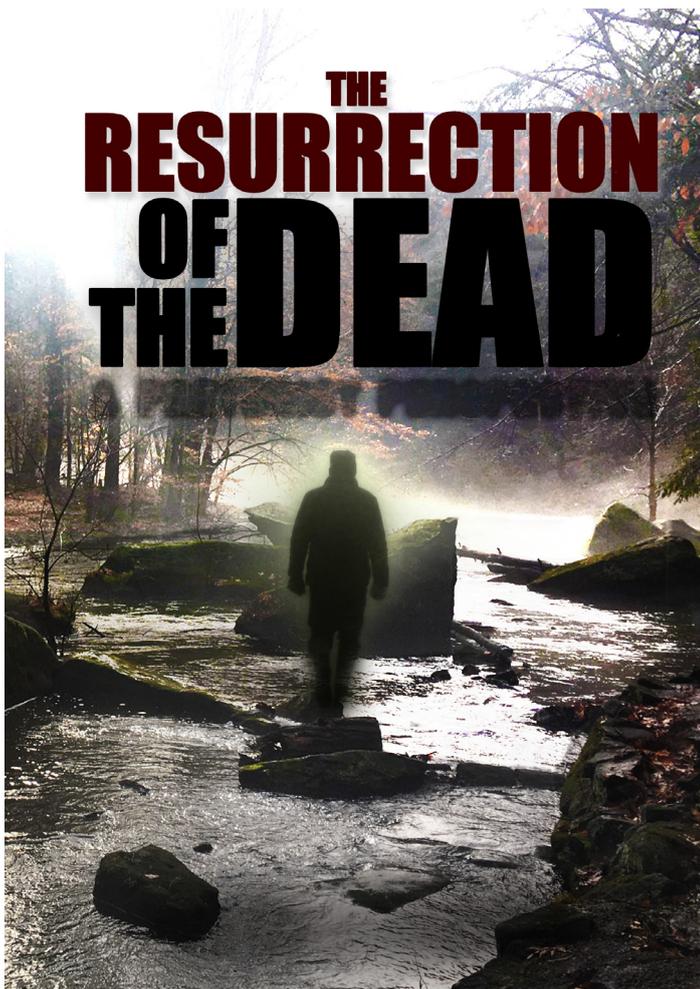
editor@fulfilledcg.com

We are saved by grace, of course, and by it alone, and not because we deserve it. That is the basis of God's acceptance of us. But grace does not mean that sufficient strength and insight will be automatically "infused" into our being in the moment of need. Abundant evidence for this claim is available precisely in the experience of any Christian. We only have to look at the facts. A baseball player who expects to excel in the game without adequate exercise of his body is no more ridiculous than the Christian who hopes to be able to act in the manner of Christ when put to the test without the appropriate exercise in godly living.

As is obvious from the record of his own life, Jesus understood this fact well and lived accordingly. Because of the contemporary bias with which we read the Gospels . . . we have difficulty seeing the main emphases in his life. We forget that being the unique Son of God clearly did not relieve him of the necessity of a life of preparation that was mainly spent out of the public eye.

. . . We then fall into the rending frustration of trying to do and be the Christian we know we ought to be without the necessary insight and strength that only discipline can provide.

Dallas Willard, "The Spirit of The Disciplines"



by Daniel E. Harden

Christians today go directly to Heaven once they are finished with their earthly existence. This is a great comfort to all believers. But that wasn't the belief of the Old Testament people of God. How is it that Christians today see it differently? What changed? When did it change? Understanding the general resurrection of the dead from the Preterist standpoint - and the fact that it has already been fulfilled - actually serves to shed light on the mindset of the modern Christian. Eternal life in Heaven, surrounded by the overwhelming love of God, is distinctly and intensely preferable to any existence on earth. This book looks at the general resurrection of the dead as the culmination of the work of Christ in the first century and provides great comfort for what it means in our understanding of the afterlife, while at the same time countering the idea that the resurrection of the dead, in Preterist thought, is relegated merely to a concept of passing from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. The resurrection of the dead also results in a great promise for us today, since we don't have to face any intermediate state to await some future resurrection, but instead go directly to be in our eternal home with our Creator, in a new body provided for us in Heaven - a body, unlike the physical body, which is suitable for existence in Heaven. Beginning in Genesis and working clear through to Revelation, relevant passages that have been attributed to the idea of the resurrection of the dead are examined, with a critical eye on what such passages meant to the original audience in their cosmic mindset, and how we should understand them today.

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IN OUR PREVIOUS ARTICLE we saw how both Jesus and Paul sequenced the Parousia immediately after the tribulation, but before God's wrath was poured out. In this article we will examine three events which "cut short" the tribulation just before Jesus came to rescue His saints: (1) the *Abomination of Desolation*; (2) the *Rebellion*; and (3) the *Man of Lawlessness*.

We will see not only where these events fit into the overall sequence of endtime events, but also how they were fulfilled in history. All three events were directly related to each other, and together combined to generate the abominable circumstances which ultimately led to the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple.

The Abomination of Desolation

According to Luke 21:20, when the saints saw armies encircling Jerusalem (like vultures circling in the sky above a dead carcass), they would then know that its desolation was near. Thus, the *Abomination* had something to do with armies defiling Jerusalem and the temple, and ultimately causing their desolation (cf. Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14).

Gessius Florus, Roman governor of Judea, AD 64-66, did everything possible to stir up a revolt in Judea, and he succeeded. In early May of AD 66, not long after Passover (Apr 10th), he provoked the Jews by demanding 17 talents of gold from the temple treasury. After some impetuous youths mocked the greediness of Florus, he retaliated by sending his soldiers into the marketplace where they killed 3600 citizens [*Wars* 2.293-315 (2.14.6-2.15.2)]. The Jews were justifiably outraged.

Florus then brought two additional cohorts of soldiers to Jerusalem in order to seize all of the gold in the temple. As they approached, the soldiers killed a great many citizens outside the gates. And when they got inside the city, they headed straight toward the temple.

However, **Eleazar b. Ananias**, captain of the temple guard, aware of their intentions, *blew the ram's horn* to rally the citizens, who then blocked the lanes of the city and prevented the soldiers' advance to the temple. Thus, frustrated in his attempt to plunder the temple, *Florus* withdrew his soldiers and returned to Caesarea [*Wars* 2.315-332 (2.15.2 - 2.15.6)]. Had he been successful, the temple would have been defiled by unclean, uncircumcised Roman soldiers.

Nevertheless, the temple was immediately afterwards polluted in a far more abominable way. On this very occasion (May 12th, 66), **Eleazar b. Ananias** took full control of the temple, and **unlawfully** used it as his fortress during the Jewish/Roman war [*Wars* 4:151 (4.3.7)].

This was the beginning of the rebellion (*Yosippon*, chs. 59 and 89 fn 538), which "**cut short**" the Great Tribulation for the sake of the elect. And it set the stage for the Parousia to occur **immediately afterward**, so that the elect could be gathered out of harm's way before the wrath was poured out on their persecutors (Matt 24:21-29; cf. 2 Thess 1:4-10).

The 'Apostasy' Was the Rebellion

Paul told the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord, including the *Parousia* and the *Gathering*, would not come "*unless the apostasy comes first, and the Man of Lawlessness is revealed*" (2 Thess 2:2-3). What was this "*apostasy*" that had to occur before the Parousia?

"Apostasy" comes from the Greek word *apostasia* which usually means "rebellion." The BDAG lexicon defines it as "defiance of established system or authority, **rebellion**, abandonment, breach of faith." Then it claims that the

usage here in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 refers to "the rebellion caused by the Lawless One in the last days."

Charles Wanamaker (NIGTC commentary on 2 Thess) goes further to note that:

"the **rebellion** referred to is a religious one directed against God . . . [and] the reference to the temple in [2 Thess 2:4] suggests that [Paul] is working with a traditional apocalyptic understanding in which . . . the Jews would *rebel against God and the Law* at the time of the end. . . . [This] *apostasy* was to come about through the activity of the [Man of Lawlessness]."

Thus, in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul is saying that some Jewish leader would lead a *rebellion* against God and the Law. That explains why Paul calls him a *Man of Lawlessness*—he has forsaken the Law and leads others to do the same. And as we shall see below, this perfectly describes the activity of **Eleazar b. Ananias**.

Moreover, it needs to be noted that Jesus used the phrase "Abomination of Desolation" to label the event which Paul here describes as the "rebellion" instigated by the Man of

Thus, the *Abomination* had something to do with armies defiling Jerusalem and the temple . . .

Edward E. Stevens

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Lawlessness. Two different terms, but both referring to the same event. We know this because both the *Abomination* and the *Rebellion* are found at the same place in the sequence of end-time events—i.e., just before the Parousia began.

The Man of Lawlessness

Paul's description in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 provides numerous clues to help identify the *Man of Lawlessness* ("the son of destruction"). Paul portrays him as being a very arrogant and lawless Jewish leader who initiated the *rebellion*, took control of the temple, was initially under the influence of some restraining force, but ultimately engaged in deception using satanic power, signs, and false wonders.

When we compare that description to the historical account recorded by Josephus, there is only one person who meets all of those qualifications—**Eleazar b. Ananias**. *Hegesippus* (5:53) says that **Eleazar was the "originator"** (instigator) of the rebellion when he **blew the shofar and took control of the temple** from that day onward (May 12th, 66). Thus, "*the war began with the revolt against Florus*" [*Sepher Yosippon*, Chs. 59; and 89 footnote 538, cf. *Jos. Antiq.* 20.257 (20.11.1)].

So, it appears that the encounter between Florus and Eleazar in early May of 66 was the time when the *Abomination* was set up, the *rebellion* began, and the identity of the *Man of Lawlessness* was first revealed. That was when Eleazar seized control of the temple to use as his "*shop of tyranny*" [*Wars* 4:151 (4.3.7)]. He brought his soldiers into the temple and committed many other **lawless actions** which **invalidated** all of its sacred ministrations.

From that time onward, the temple was constantly *deseccrated, defiled, and polluted* by bloodshed and other lawless atrocities which Eleazar allowed to occur both inside the temple, and in Jerusalem. Josephus condemned and lamented all of those "abominations" [*Wars* 2:455 (2.17.10); 4:162-163 (4.3.10); 4:201 (4.3.12); 4:323 (4.5.2); 4:388 (4.6.3); 5:14-19 (5.1.3); 5:402 (5.9.4); 6:110 (6.2.1); 6:126 (6.2.4)].

The Restrainer Was Removed

The former high priest, **Ananias b. Nedebaeus**, father of **Eleazar**, was probably the most powerful ruler of the Jews at that time. He was a moderate and a pro-Roman loyalist. And he was a **restraining influence** both upon his son Eleazar, and

against the Zealot cause. That is why the Zealot rebels killed him soon after the rebellion began [*Wars* 2:441 (2.17.9)]. His death not only fulfilled Apostle Paul's prediction from eight years earlier in AD 58 (Acts 23:1-3), but also his prophecy in AD 52 about the *restrainer being taken out of the way* (2 Thess 2:7).

Paul characterized Ananias as being a **law-breaker** (Acts 23:1-3), so it is no surprise to see his son Eleazar become an **even worse law-breaker** after his father's **restraining influence** was removed. Then Eleazar's **true lawless character was further revealed**. Almost immediately, Eleazar avenged his father's death by killing Menahem, the Zealot leader who had murdered his father [*Wars* 2:442-448 (2.17.9)]. This temporarily consolidated most of the Zealot forces underneath Eleazar's control. And now that he was **free from his father's restraining influence**, his **lawless conduct** rapidly escalated, and his identity as the Man of Lawlessness was fully revealed.

Conclusion

We have not only historically identified the *Abomination*, *Rebellion*, and *Man of Lawlessness*, but have also seen the **sequence** in which they actually occurred. Studies like this clearly illustrate why a knowledge of first-century history is so vitally important.

Without knowing the history, we would be left to guess and speculate like the futurists. Since futurists do not believe these events have occurred, history is not relevant to them. But it is supremely relevant and absolutely essential for preterists. We can never be certain that we are correctly *identifying* and *sequencing* these events unless we match them with historical accounts, as we have done here. I hope this helps you in your studies, as much as it helped me. †

Hegesippus says that Eleazar was the originator of the rebellion when he blew the shofar and took control of the temple from that day onward.

If you would like to see more of the historical details about these things, simply send an email request for the following PDF document: *Outbreak of Rebellion: The Real History*. Here is my email address: preterist1@preterist.org

Objection Overruled!

Keith Mathison and the Biblical Time Statements - Part 4

Mathison's confused eschatology, and attitude toward time statements

AS WE EMBARK ON our fourth installment in our response to Keith Mathison, there is something else the reader should know about Mathison's eschatology and his view of time statements. Commenting on Hebrews 11-12, Mathison says this about the subject of "Zion" in Hebrews 12:

Christians are now experiencing the fulfillment of the eschatological hopes of Israel (Keith Mathison, *Age to Age: The Unfolding of Biblical Eschatology*, Phillipsburg, NJ; P & R Publishing 2009, 625).

Mathison chronicles the promises listed in Hebrews 12:21f and insists:

"Under the New Covenant we *have come* to Mt. Zion. We *have come* to the heavenly Jerusalem. We *have come* to the church of the firstborn. We have come to Jesus, the mediator of this glorious New Covenant.... That which the Old Testament believers looked for in faith has come, and they have now received what was promised" (*Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*, 1999, 135; his emphasis).

However, in the very next paragraph Mathison affirms, "the fullness of the blessing is yet future, because we await the consummation."

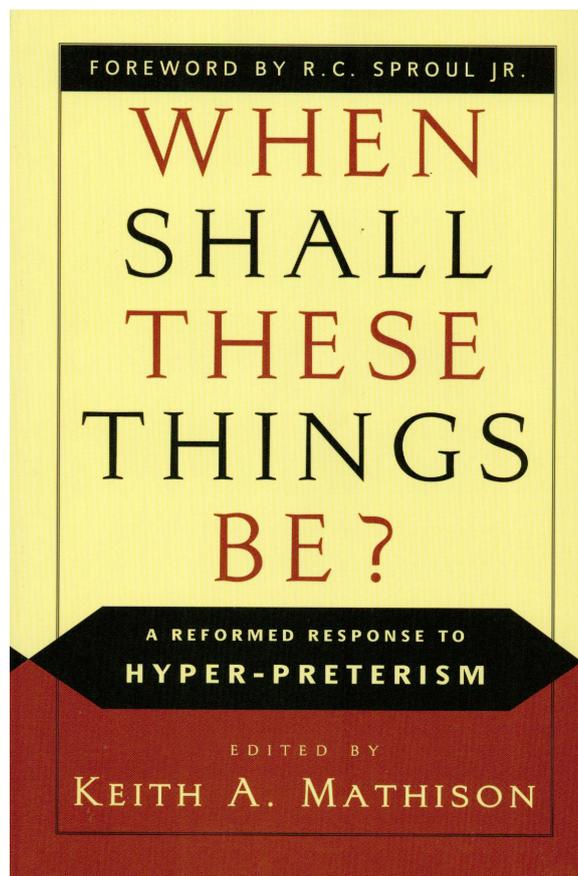
Just think about that. The eschatological hope of Israel, according to Hebrews 11 was the heavenly New Jerusalem whose builder and maker is God. What is fascinating—perhaps more than a little revealing—is that included in the eschatological hope delineated in Hebrews 11

was "the better resurrection"! Yet, Mathison did not list that as part of the eschatological hope that "Christians are now experiencing." Does Mathison expect us to understand the terminology—the time statement—of "now" and "has come"? How does he determine the actual temporal proximity of "now" and "has come" yet then try to convince us that "at hand," "soon," "shortly" and "quickly" are to be ignored?

How can Mathison (consistently) emphasize the "now" of the blessings, honoring the temporal statements, but then insist that "the fullness of the blessing is yet future, because we await the consummation"? There are no New Testament passages that, properly understood, would ever suggest, hint, or imply that the "fullness of the blessings" were not to come for two

millennia.

It appears that on the one hand Mathison uses time words to emphasize what Christians have NOW. He even explains how those promises were once *far off* from the patriarchs, but again, emphasizes that they



Responding to Keith Mathison

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are now given to the saints. But, after emphasizing the temporal contrast between the Old and New Covenant saints, he immediately turns around and does his best to negate and mitigate the inspired texts of the imminence of the end.

More from Mathison

In his *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*, (Phillipsburg, NJ; P & R Publishing, 1999, 167), Mathison has this to say about time statements:

Telescoping - telescoping occurs when the prophet describes events that are now known to be widely separated in time, but does so without giving any indication that they are so separated. For example, Daniel 11-12.

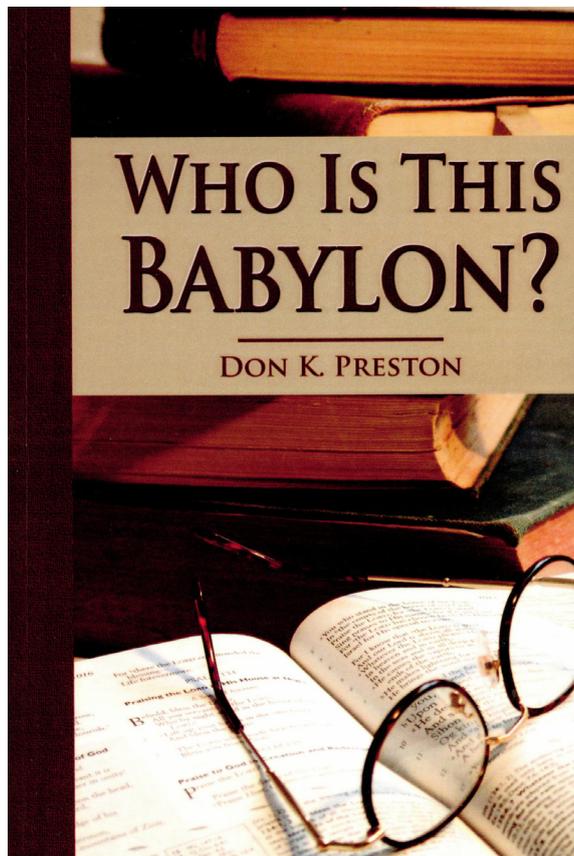
The problem with this quote/claim is that it is based on presuppositional theology. Notice that Mathison says, "the prophet describes events that are now known to be widely separated in time, but does so without giving any indication that they are so separated." What does Mathison mean by claiming, "It is now known" that the fulfillments of the prophecies were "widely separated in time"? What he means by this is that since his concept of the nature of the fulfillment of Daniel was not fulfilled imminently, he therefore "knows" that the ultimate fulfillment lies in some other

time, far removed from the textually stated time frame. What is to be noted about his reference to Daniel 11-12 is that the background for the vision is given in chapter 10 (to which Mathison conveniently omits any reference). There Daniel was told:

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, *but the appointed time was long*; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision." Then in verse 14 Daniel was told by the angel: "Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come" (v. 14).

Thus, twice at the introduction of the vision that extended all the way through Daniel 12, the prophet was told that the events were NOT NEAR, but in fact "refers to many days yet to come." Now, notice that the only thing that was truly near Daniels' day was the receiving of the vision—the consummation of the vision was not near, and the angel clearly said so. We have the right to ask therefore, just exactly where in that vision,

that was emphatically said to extend over a long period of time, do we get the idea that some things were near but in fact they were far off. Mathison is patently grasping at straws. His objection is overruled. †



In Memory of Garrett Brown (1923-2021)

Preterism recently lost someone whom I consider to be one of its founding fathers. Within the preterist community, Garrett Brown isn't a household name like Max King, Don Preston, or Ed Stevens. He never spoke at a preterist conference. However, it was Garrett, along with his wife Beverly, who organized and funded the 1993 Mt. Dora, Florida eschatology conference which brought Max King together with R. C. Sproul, Kenneth Gentry, Jr., and several other leading reformed theologians to discuss preterism.

Garrett never wrote a book, but he got R. C. Sproul to write one. Garrett challenged R. C. with preterism, and on occasion when Kayla and I would visit Garrett and Beverly, he would read excerpts from personal letters that R. C. had written to him. I once heard it said that R. C.'s book *The Last Days according to Jesus* "put preterism on the map" within Christianity. Garrett was the reason that R. C. wrote that book, and he dedicated it to Garrett (see picture on opposite page).

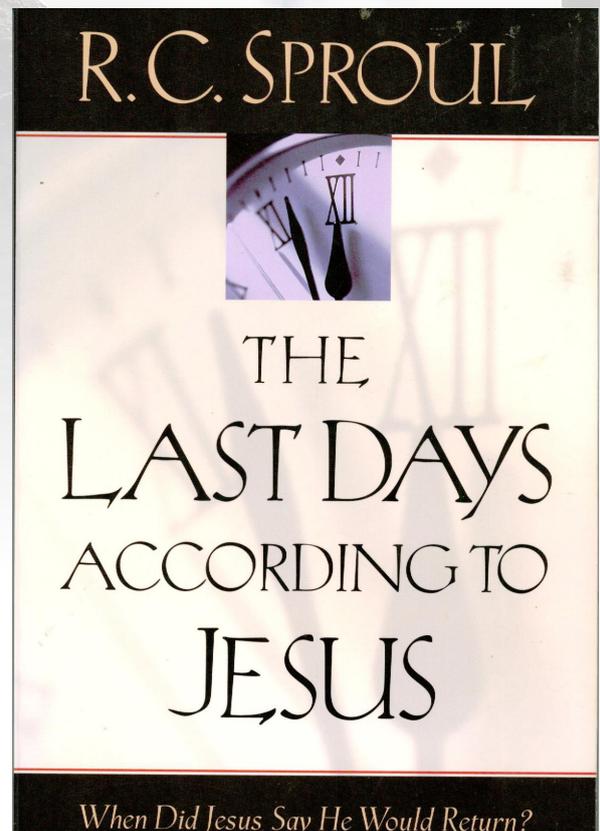
Likewise, Ed Stevens mentions Garrett in the "Acknowledgments" of his *What Happened in A. D. 70?* booklet, and his *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture* is dedicated to Garrett and Beverly.

You wouldn't be reading this magazine if it weren't for Garrett and Beverly Brown. First, because I can trace my "conversion" to preterism back to Garrett, as portrayed in our *You've Gotta Be Kidding, Right?* video. If Garrett had never embraced preterism, it is very likely that I would never have heard the term. Second, Garrett and Beverly financed the first couple years of producing the magazine, allowing our readership to grow to the point that we could become self-sustaining (although they remained faithful contributors to FCG).

After screening a rough draft of our *Kidding* video, Garrett and Beverly supplied funds for us to buy a decent camera (this was before the high-def days) and some other equipment to enable us to produce the final product. The comments and reviews we received regarding the video attest that it has reached hundreds, if not thousands, with the message of preterism. Some of the latter segments of the video were filmed at Garrett's place, where I walked up to a cross that he had erected on a hill many years ago. (A couple of weeks after Garrett's passing, I had the privilege of walking up to that cross for perhaps the last time, and took a few photos. The watermark on this spread and this issue's cover are two examples.)

All of the above is credited to the accounts of Garrett and Beverly Brown, whose behind the scenes impact on preterism we will only truly know when we join Garrett in our heavenly home. Whether or not this qualifies Garrett as a founding father is a trivial technicality. He was from my perspective. Likewise with my former coworker Bill (also introduced in the *Kidding* video), who affectionately called Garrett the "GOP"—the "Godfather of Preterism."

I wouldn't be surprised if Garrett has found R. C. Sproul and is enthusiastically ironing out the wrinkles in R. C.'s eschatology. And as the rest of us work out our own eschatology with fear and trembling in this life, we will be forever grateful for what Garrett and Beverly have done, mostly behind the scenes. For those of us who got to see glimpses behind the scenes, and know Garrett personally, he will be missed.



Quoting Ephesians

reprinted from Volume 1 Issue 2



[Although not mentioned by name, Garrett was the “patriarch” mentioned in this article from our second issue of the magazine.]

A while back my wife and I had the pleasure of spending an afternoon of food and fellowship with three other couples—all of whom were preterists. In fact, everyone at the table could trace their preterist roots—either directly or indirectly—to one man at the table. In a way, he was our preterist “patriarch.” As the meal wound to a close, one of the men asked the “patriarch”—a man in his eighties—if he could still recite the first chapter of Ephesians. The patriarch replied that he thought he could, and proceeded to recite the first half of chapter one. Jumping abruptly ahead he said, “this is my favorite part,” and started quoting chapter two, where Paul wrote to the Ephesians that “*you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sin*”.

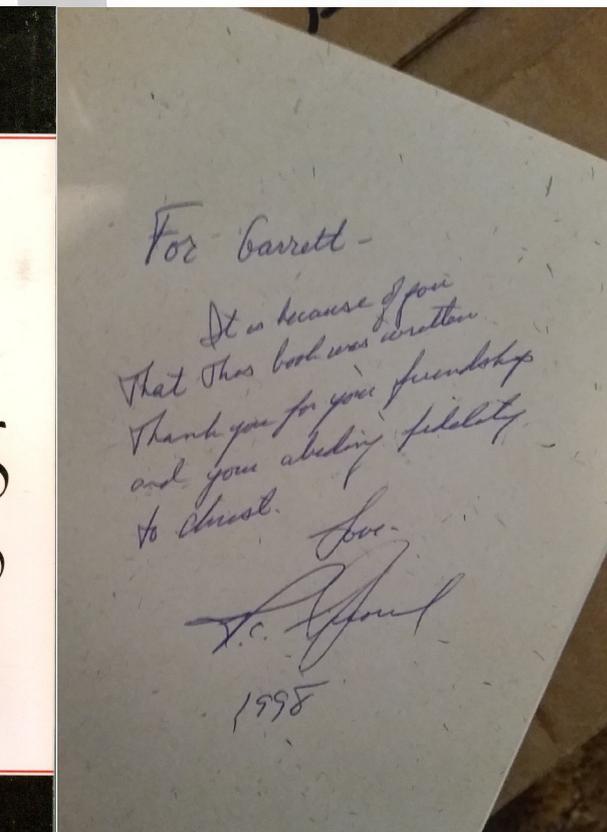
The power of those verses as he spoke was moving beyond words. The inflection and emphases he placed on particular words and phrases went beyond a mere recitation of memorized text. And it’s not as though he is trained in recitation or oratory, for he is not. No, the power of those words did not come just from the mind which had memorized them, but also from the heart which had felt their impact. Here was a person who knew what it was to be dead in trespasses, and yet to be made alive in Christ. He knew that he had been saved by faith—and that not of himself. Nor was this just “shallow” emotionalism, for when this individual begins talking theology, the average Christian, including me, is quickly left in the dust.

I said all of that to say this: the opponents of preterism often insist on continuing to “swallow camels” until we can answer every single last gnat at which they strain. Therefore, many preterists must spend an undue amount of time engrossed in eschatology. But there is a subtle danger to this. We can get to the place that when we read the Bible, the only thing that “jumps off the page” at us is another point that supports preterism, or another verse that disagrees with futurism. Our search of the Scriptures can turn into an exegetical exercise, like a lawyer preparing a case, rather than a heartfelt cry to know more of God. In short, we can become modern-day Pharisees, able to define, defend, and debate our position, but all the while growing more and more distant from the One who is the very focal point of the Scriptures. Jesus told the Pharisees, “*You search the Scriptures—you do well, for they speak of Me.*”

If we find in our Bible study that the only thing that “moves” us is finding another “gem” for preterism, or finding another refutation of futurism, then perhaps it is time to lay down our eschatology for a while. Perhaps it is time to rekindle our first love with the One who bought us with His imperishable blood; the One who, while we were yet sinners, gave His life for us that we might pass from spiritual death into life.

Yes, it is important (and biblical) to be able to define, defend, and debate our position. But as Jesus told Martha, “*you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*” Have we chosen the good part?

In Acts chapter 4, the Pharisees, who were the bastions of defining and defending their faith, viewed Peter and John as “uneducated and untrained men.” But they also recognized that they had been with Jesus. When all is said and done, I would rather that the “Pharisees” of my day not acknowledge me as a defender of preterism. Instead, by His grace, I would much rather be recognized as “uneducated, untrained” and “as having been with Jesus.”



I CONCLUDED MY PREVIOUS article with the following caveat:

Some people may hear the word “Sabbath” and the words “the work is done” and conclude that there is nothing left for them to do, so they can fold their hands together and do nothing. Nothing could be further from the truth. God’s idea of Sabbath does not mean inactivity or laziness, but I will have to leave the biblical explanation for this to a follow-up article.

Why does the Sabbath require that we lead a life of actively doing good rather than a life of inactivity?

One of the many areas where the church has followed the spirit of law rather than the spirit of grace is in the area of the Sabbath. Similar to the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, Christians primarily have treated the Sabbath as one day of the week during which we go to church but otherwise practice inactivity. However, the New Testament teaches us that the Sabbath means spiritual rest, not inactivity. What also might surprise people is that spiritual rest is a life filled with doing good deeds. It is not simply that we are permitted to do good, but Sabbath rest means we must do good. The Sabbath is a life filled with the highest activity of doing good and blessing the world.

In all four gospels, we see Jesus deliberately doing miracles on the Sabbath in order to confront the Pharisees and their misunderstanding of God’s holy day, thus showing them, and us, what its true meaning is. In this article, I will concentrate on the account in Mark 2:23-3:6.

The story begins with Jesus’ hungry disciples plucking grain as they made their way through a grainfield on a Sabbath.

One Sabbath [Jesus] was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

The Pharisees, as self-appointed guardians of the Sabbath, call this to Jesus’ attention, believing it to be an infraction of the Law. Jesus responds by recalling to them the story in 1 Samuel 21:1-6 where hungry David and his men entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which only the priests could eat, an actual violation of the Law of Moses.

Jesus tells this story, because just as David was not condemned for eating the holy bread, so also Jesus’ disciples should not be condemned for plucking heads of grain. His reason is given in v. 27,

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

If the inactivity of the Sabbath was harmful for people, as in a case of hunger, then the day meant picking grain

to meet their needs. The Sabbath is not a hoop to jump through. It is not a hardship. It is not something that we serve, which would mean that we would observe the Sabbath in order to obtain some other benefit. Instead, Sabbath is the core principle at the root of human wellbeing. It is God’s plan to bring divine rest into every nook and cranny of our being.

Continuing on to Mark 3.1-6, we read the story of Jesus healing the man with a withered hand. It is not just a miracle of physical restoration; like all of his miracles, it is also a teaching, because Jesus deliberately did it on the Sabbath, knowing that the Pharisees were watching for his action:

And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. (v. 2)

Jesus sets up the miracle with a question to the Pharisees (and to us!):

Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill? (v. 4)

Notice in v. 4 the options that Jesus gives for the Sabbath. He does not give three: to do good, to do harm, or to do nothing. I think Christians implicitly read that third option into the verse, because they think of the Sabbath as one day of inactivity during the week. Instead, Jesus treats the Sabbath as having two possibilities—to do good or to do harm. Sabbath is not first and foremost doing nothing but rather doing good.

Presumably, the Pharisees wanted to answer Jesus’ question with that hypothetical third option: “It is lawful on the Sabbath to do nothing.” However, the Pharisees kept silent, and v. 5 tells us that Jesus “looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.” The Pharisees were content to have a Sabbath which was a day of inactivity. They were not prepared to embrace the life of utter and complete goodness that Jesus brought them.

When Jesus healed on the Sabbath to teach us that it is intrinsically filled with doing good, he also taught us that the Sabbath is not only my individual rest. It is also rest we bring to other people. Jesus brought Sabbath to the man with the withered hand. Before the healing, he was a man with a handicap on a day of inactivity. Afterwards he had a wholeness and rest he could only experience because Jesus did good to him. We are to live the Sabbath in the same way Jesus did; it is to permeate our entire lives and spill out to bring rest to everyone around us. Blessed are the peacemakers!

In this miracle, Jesus is teaching us something crucial about the nature of goodness: it is inherently connected to rest because true goodness is based on grace. If my good

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deeds are not done from a heart of rest, then the deeds are not truly good. They are transactions, things I do because I want something in return. True goodness gives without seeking anything in return, which means the giver is at rest. This is how an active life of goodness and a restful life are one and the same, when all my actions are done in grace, free gifts of love to everyone around me, because God has already given me everything in Jesus Christ. Likewise, just as goodness requires rest, rest requires good deeds. I cannot be at rest without being good, and I cannot be good without doing good to those around me.

Let me raise two implications of Sabbath for the spiritual life of preterism. First, this is the kind of issue where preterists should start their conversations with futurists. Preterists tend to start with dates, which can be an unfortunate starting point for anyone to consider preterism. The second return of Jesus Christ in the first century can seem so outlandish to many believers that sometimes an open conversation cannot even get started. The date can also seem to be of minor importance to people compared to the pressing needs they face. I meet Christians today who are besieged by living in a society that increasingly is moving away from the righteousness of Jesus Christ in its public life, and to them arguing about the date of Christ's return seems rather irrelevant to their more pressing concerns. A better starting point is to ask your fellow futurist brother or sister, "Are you living in complete rest today?" with a focus on passages like Mark 2:23-3:6 and Hebrews 4-5.

Second, what is God doing on the earth after the second coming of Christ? What is his goal? According to futurists, God's goal for the earth is to use force to usher in a (kingdom) government, and then Christians will be able to live lives of rest as they ought. Until the second coming happens, we struggle because God has unfinished work to do. There is an implicit message woven through futurist teaching about the Christian life today, and it goes like this. Yes, our salvation is really great, but the world is so hostile to our faith that we are limited in how far we can go spiritually. However, once Jesus returns and sets up a perfect government and a set of external circumstances that are friendly to Christians, then we will be able to be at rest. I hope you see that this sort of rest is based on external circumstances, the exact opposite of what God is doing. The world believes that rest is based on favorable circumstances, and at this point futurists are really no different from the rest of the world.

In contrast, I commend to you a radically different goal. God's intention is for his children to live in Sabbath rest in the midst of the world we have today. Sabbath rest is made possible not because God uses force to take away all

the bad people, but because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, God's purpose is not for you and me to live in Sabbath 24/7 in order to achieve some other goal—world peace, governments with no faults, universal perfection. In that case, rest cannot be rest, because I am trying to achieve something, which is contrary to the Sabbath as the last day of creation. If I am trying to live in rest and constantly looking at the world to see if peace has increased between nations, then I am not really at rest and cannot be at rest.

God is doing the impossible thing that is so hard for us to believe. He is demonstrating to the universe that his children can live lives of grace and love that result from hearts of Sabbath rest based on our salvation alone, even in the midst of a perverse and crooked world around us. The world is terrible. Therefore, how good can we be? The world is terrible. Therefore, how at rest can we be? Answer: the death and resurrection of Jesus is so powerful that it can enable us to lead restful lives overflowing with good works in the face of the lostness and sinfulness of the world around us. It is a supernatural life, what Paul describes in Philippians 4:7 as the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, because it is not based on our circumstances. The world understands rest that comes from having plenty of money, good health, loving family and friends, protection from crime. God's peace surpasses the world's understanding because God's rest is not based on external circumstances.

What should we say about observing a Sabbath day on Sunday as most Christians do? It is a good thing to rest from the demands and cares of the world, but this is only one manifestation of the Sabbath God has given us. A person who doesn't know Sabbath rest could easily be compelled to work at their job seven days a week, but at the same time, a believer could observe a Sunday Sabbath but not really be at rest because they were worrying about money or politics on that day. Sunday is not really a Sabbath for the person whose heart is not resting in God throughout their entire week.

Let me say for the record that if the body of Christ actually started living individually and corporately in Sabbath rest, I do believe this would change the world, but it is very important that we treat the Sabbath not as an achievement to be won but as the realization of God's precious salvation to us. As I look back at two thousand years of church history, I don't really see where she lived in Sabbath rest, and I think the primary reason is because she got her eschatology wrong. It is very hard to live in Sabbath rest when you think God's work is not completed and you are waiting for imminent judgment that will ravage the world. ✝

Parting Thoughts

IN MARCH, AS THE POPE scrambled to assure everyone the mother of Yeshua is not a co-redemptor, I started thinking about Mary and her role in all this co-redemptor business. That led me to study her prayer and throw out some ideas that I found insightful. I believe she was speaking in terms of a future event. Though Scripture does not tell us her prayer was a prophecy, we can use internal evidence to determine that everything she said came to pass. I underlined the idioms and commented in parenthesis (Literal Standard Version; LSV).

“My soul doth magnify the Lord,” (Luke 1:46)

“And my spirit was glad on God my Savior.” (Luke 1:47)

“Because He looked (anthropomorphism) on the lowliness (tapeinosis) of His maid-servant, For, lo, henceforth call me happy shall all the generations.” (Luke 1:48)

“For He who is mighty did to me great things, And holy is His name.” (Luke 1:49).

*“And His kindness is to generations of generations, To those **fearing Him**.”* (Luke 1:50; the explanation of “those” to whom His kindness is directed. Not the whole world.)

“He did powerfully with His arm (poetic idiom and anthropomorphism), He scattered abroad the proud in the thought of their heart.” (Luke 1:51; the only proud to whom Mary is referring were Jewish leaders: Pharisees and Sadducees and certain high priests. Recall Jesus’ harsh words towards them.)

“He brought down the mighty from thrones, And He exalted the lowly.” (Luke 1:52; This would include not only Jewish leaders who opposed him but possibly the entire Roman Empire, which would eventually see an end within the next 140 years. The lowly who were exalted included Gentiles and humble Jews who kept the commandments and were faithful.)

“The hungry He did fill with good.” (not food as the Greek word shows, but a figure of speech to the humble in spirit and those seeking after truth.) *“And*

the rich He sent away empty.” (Luke 1:53; not only as depicted in the rich young ruler, but also the proud and rich in tradition.)

“He received again Israel His servant, To remember kindness,” (Luke 1:54)

Mary’s song was a response to what she just heard Elizabeth say.

“As He spoke unto our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed—to the age.” (Luke 1:55; read what Paul wrote about this: *“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises spoken. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your*

Seed’, who is Christ” [Gal 3:16 EMTV]. Mary was prophesying about Jesus being the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham’s “seed” was not the natural born children of Israel, but those who were, and are, in Christ.)

Mary’s song was a response to what she just heard Elizabeth say. Here are the events:

1. Elizabeth’s baby jumped in her womb upon Mary’s presence
2. Elizabeth recognizes, acknowledges, and states out loud that Mary is the mother of her Lord
3. Mary’s fruit was blessed
4. Mary was blessed because she believed what God told her would be fulfilled

Let’s look at that encounter to learn more:

(v. 46) Mary enlarged (magnified) her image of God, she saw God in a ‘big’ way (magnified), and no doubt had been magnifying Him since Gabriel’s pronouncement to her; she began praising and worshipping!

(v. 47) she then took to rejoicing in Him and the knowledge of what He had done up to this point.

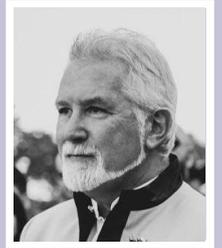
(v. 48) she knew she was chosen for a task, the most important task in the universe, in spite of her low humble state (perhaps exactly for that reason).

Mary's Prayer

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(v. 49) *“For the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”*

Interesting how this was worded, as it reads: *“has done great things for me.”* I’m not sure if she’s speaking of herself or in a prophetic manner for mankind as a whole.

This brings us current with Mary delivering her prayer. She takes on a knowledgeable tone as she spoke the words the prophets had foretold (vv. 50-55). Mary was reiterating all she knew as truth about God based on these verses, which confirmed her knowledge of Tanakh:

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” (Gen 17:7)

“And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, keeping my commandments.” (Exod 20:6)

“Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee among the sons of men!” (Ps 31:19)

“Surely his salvation is near them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.” (Ps 85:9)

“For as the heaven is high above the earth, great is his mercy toward them that fear him.” (Ps 103:11)

“But the Mercy of the LORD from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children” (Ps 103:17)

“To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” (Ps 103:18)

“He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. (Ps 115:13)

“Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth forever.” (Ps 118:4)

“He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry and will save them.” (Ps 145:19)

“Yahweh takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.” (Ps 147:11)

“Then they that feared the Yahweh spoke often one to another: and Yahweh hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared Yahweh, and that thought upon THE NAME.” (Mal 3:16)

“And they shall be mine, saith Yahweh of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.” (Mal 3:17)

How did Mary gain such a command of the Tanakh, being a young girl? This would have been highly unusual for a female. There is one possibility for which I have zero evidence, so take that into consideration: Since Zachariah, Mary’s brother-in-law, was a priest, could it be that Mary was raised by Elizabeth and Zachariah? Or at the least had spent a lot of time with them and learned from Zachariah? Something to ponder.

Mary’s prayer was so much more than just a young teenage girl thanking God for choosing her to be the mother of Yeshua. This prayer resonated with the knowledge of a young woman who had a deep grasp of the Tanakh and could recite it at will. She was prophesying over not only her Son and the people of her generation, but to all generations . . . who fear Him.

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Until next time, Blessings. TJ ✚

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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!