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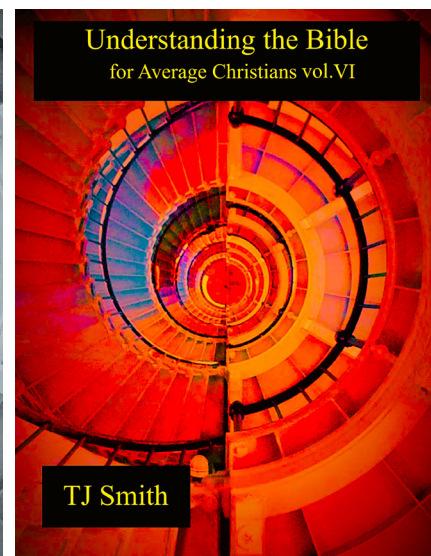
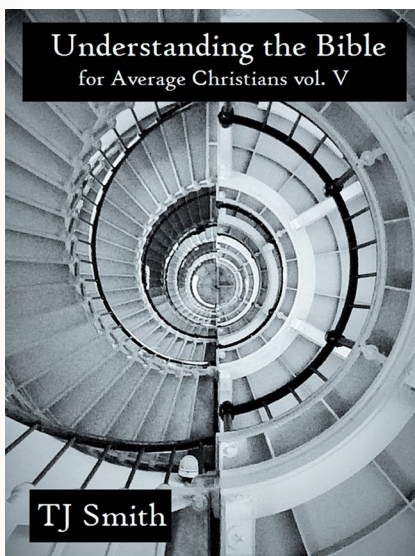
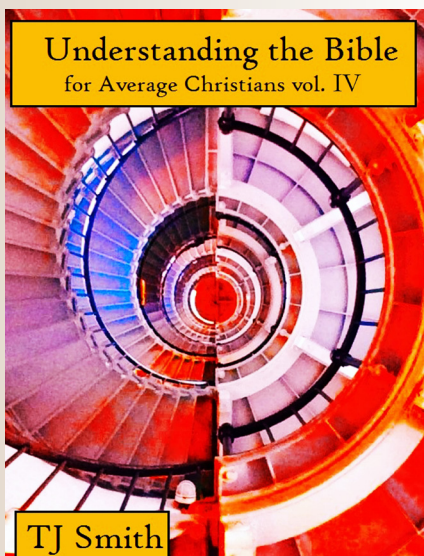
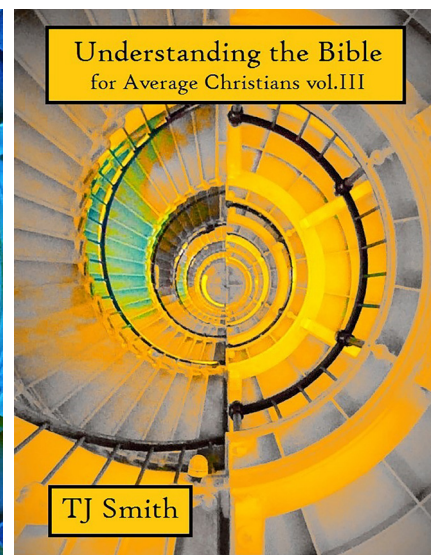
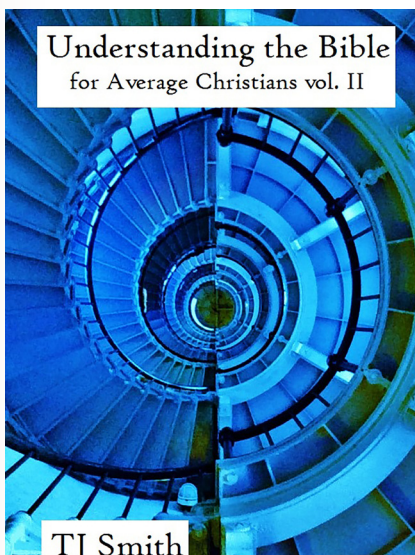
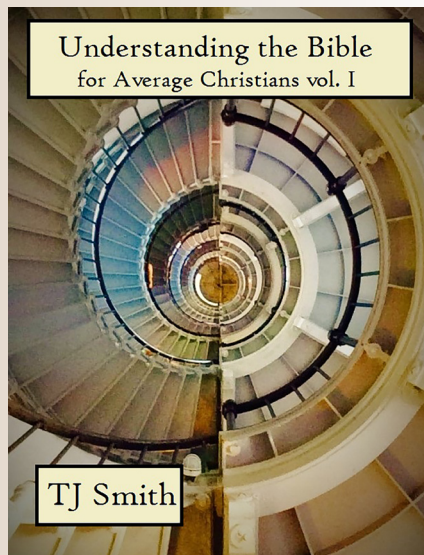
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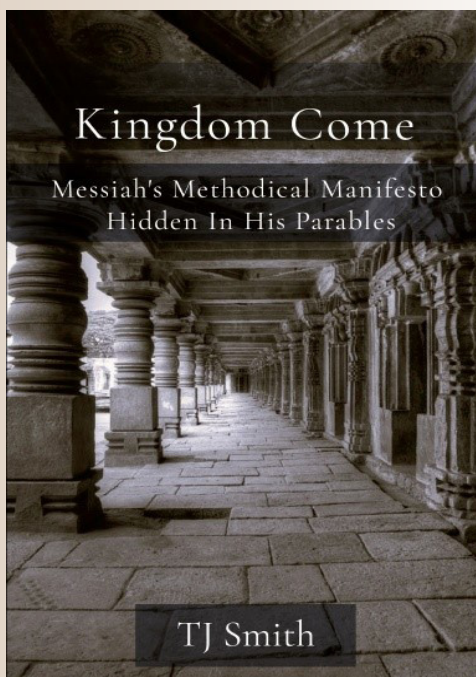
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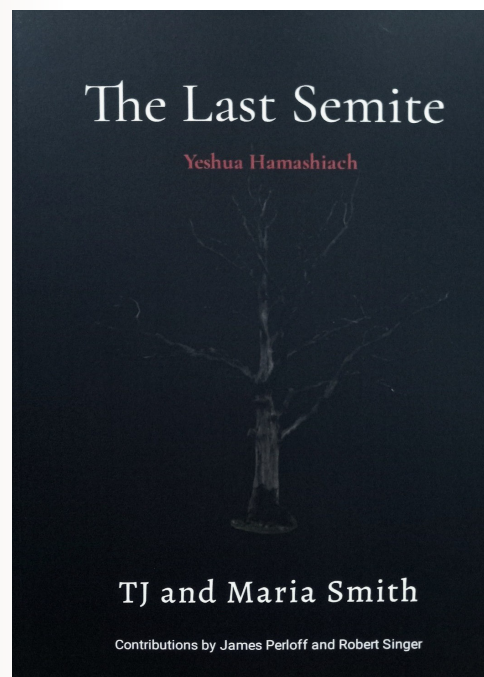
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Reader Beware!

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...

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME is behind us, and the days are getting shorter. Kayla and I both enjoy working outside, and the long days of summer provide ample time for that—even if I've had to put in several hours in front of the computer. For us, there is a touch of sadness to see the long warm days of summer disappearing in the rear-view mirror. Thankfully, our winters are mild and short, so by the time the next issue of the magazine comes out spring will be well upon us.

I don't know about you, but it seems that I can't go online without seeing some mention of the Israel-Gaza war in connection with Bible prophecy. YouTube abounds with " Hamas and Gog" videos. I'm not looking for these, they simply pop-up! In light of that, this issue's "Perspectives" column features an article by Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr., titled "Haman, Hamas, and the Headlines: Getting Gog & Magog Wrong . . . Again." Robert does an excellent job of exegeting the Gog and Magog passage, demonstrating how it was fulfilled in the distant past.

This issue also marks the final installment of Ed Steven's "History of the End" series of articles. When he resumes later next year he will be writing about "History AFTER the End"—the events of Jewish and Christian history after the fall of Jerusalem and through the second century.

Don Preston provides Part 1 of a two-part series responding to Keith Mathison's interpretation of Christ's ascension in Acts 1:9-11, and TJ Smith provides some interesting insights about Pontius Pilate of which I was unaware.

I continue the "Heal Our Hearts" series of prayers with excerpts from John Winthrop's 1630 address to his fellow settlers before they arrived in New England. If you have suggestions for this series of prayers, please send them to me at: fcg.brian@gmail.com.

Regardless of your political or theological views regarding the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, the results have been devastating to those involved. Even if we are confident who the "bad guy" is (either politically or theologically), we must remember Christ's admonition to love our enemies. Thousands are in need of humanitarian aid, many lacking the basic necessities of life. Samaritan's Purse is one of many Christian organizations that are equipped to step into situations like this, providing aid that most of us could not personally supply. I write that to remind you that there is a "Preterist Community" giving portal at Samaritan's Purse. This portal was created so that preterists who wish to donate to Samaritan's Purse can do so in the name of preterism, so to speak. This is not for the purpose of boasting or even promoting preterist doctrine—it simply is a way to demonstrate to other Christians that preterists do more than debate about time statements. If we believe that we are living in the kingdom, expecting the gospel to prevail over the earth, rather than living in the last days in which things are growing continually worse, shouldn't we be actively involved in kingdom ministry? If the Lord lays it on your heart to give to Samaritan's Purse, here is the link to the "Preterist Community" portal:

<https://fundraise.samaritanspurse.org/team/295437>

I also want to remind you that Rob Mitchell operates "Kingdom Now Ministries," which ministers to the needy in Tulsa, Oklahoma. To learn more about and/or support that ministry, you can find them here:

<https://kingdomnowministries.com/>

I realize that the economy is not booming right now, and some may be struggling to make ends meet. I am not attempting to put a guilt trip on anyone, but simply remind readers of opportunities to serve the kingdom. We are continually grateful for those of you who serve the kingdom by supporting FCG—especially in hard times. You keep the magazine going!

Blessings,

Brian



THE CROSS and THE PAROUSIA OF CHRIST

Remembering Max King

A reader recently informed me that Max King passed away in February of this year. Max was one of the pioneers of the modern full preterism movement, which he preferred to call “Covenant Eschatology.” Max’s teaching was so influential in the nascent years of the modern movement that within the Churches of Christ, of which Max was a minister, the full preterist view was known as “Kingism.”

Max published *The Spirit of Prophecy* in 1971 and *The Cross and The Parousia of Christ* in 1987. *The Cross and The Parousia* is considered by many to be the standard for the covenantal/corporate view of the resurrection. He also published “The Living Presence” newsletter for fifteen years.

Max also represented the full preterist view at the 1993 Mt. Dora, FL conference, which featured the leading reformed theologians of the day.

As is true throughout preterism, not everyone agreed with Max on every detail, yet his seminal work and influence, especially in the early years of modern preterism, can hardly be overstated. I (Brian) know it was while reading *The Spirit of Prophecy* that something Max wrote about Paul’s comment comparing the gospel being veiled to the first-century Jews with the veil Moses wore (2 Cor 3:12-16) that something “clicked” for me, resulting in my book, *Behind the Veil of Moses*.



Max R. King
1930 - 2023



Oops!

In the previous issue I mistakenly listed Charles Meek’s website incorrectly, using “.org” instead of “.com.” The correct URL is:

www.ProphecyQuestions.com

“The word of the Lord came to me: Son of man set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.’” (Ezekiel 38:1-4)

PIN THE TAIL ON the Antichrist has been a favorite game of the prophecy speculators for well over a century now. Whoever makes the headlines, makes the cut as the new cosmic bad guy. Just as the identity of the supposed end-times supervillain changes with each passing newsmaker, however, so does the particular villain that grabs the fortune tellers’ attention. With the recent attack upon Israel by Hamas, the Antichrist has taken a backseat for the moment. For the time being, Ezekiel’s “Gog of the land of Magog” has stolen the spotlight.

For example, Joseph Morris, of Harrison House, wrote this within days of the Hamas attack:

“For the first time in thousands of years of history, nations that will come against Israel right after the Church is raptured are literally lining up and getting into position for the Ezekiel 38 War. This lineup makes it pretty clear that the Church leaves soon. Moreover, the nations of the world are aligning against Israel exactly as the Bible said they would. It’s not similar—it’s precise. And it’s flawless to watch.”¹

So, it seems we’re going to get a break from the Antichrist for a while as Gog takes front and center stage. True to their course, however, the sensationalist pundits are no less fickle with Gog’s identity than they are with the Antichrist’s. If past precedent is any indication, we can *predict* that their *predictive abilities* will be far from “flawless.” After all, their track record has not been very good. All we need to do is look at the *last major crisis* that was supposed to be the warmup act for Gog to make his appearance.

From Ukraine to Hamas

Last year, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was lighting up the switchboards of those who monitor world events in light of Bible prophecy.² As it turns out, the crisis in Ukraine wasn’t all that it was prophetically cracked up to be. Predictably (notice the pun), we are now being told that “the Hamas attack on Israel is threatening to be the spark that ignites the prophesied war of Gog and Magog that pits the forces of good against the forces of evil as a prelude to the Messianic

era.”³ So, as the leading candidate for Gog of the Land Magog, Russia is out, and Hamas is in. For the time being, the Antichrist has left the stage—at least for now.

As the spotlight shifts from the Antichrist to Gog, and from Russia to Hamas, our attention unfortunately shifts away from the biblical text itself. When we actually drill down on the specifics of the passage, it isn’t about modern-day Israel, Islamic terrorist groups, or anything in today’s headlines. In fact, Ezekiel was singing a completely different tune.

Same Song Different Lyrics

We all remember when MC Hammer sampled Prince’s song, “When Doves Cry,” to create his highest charting single, “Pray.” It was the same tune with different lyrics. Similarly, the new take on Gog is an older song recycled, with a slight change of lyrics. The Russian version focused on the Hebrew word for “prince,” i.e., *Rosh*. According to the original version of the song, that word *sounds* a lot like Russia. But matching sounds between languages is no way to do exegesis, and *Rosh* is not a place

name anywhere in the ancient world.⁴ Prince’s song was a hit. MC Hammer’s song was a hit. The *Rosh* = Russia theory is a flop. But the newly released version of “Gog and Magog” hopes to top the charts with the help of Hamas.

The Hamas version of the song can at least point to a concrete location within the Ezekiel text itself, namely, Persia. For example, Rabbi Jack Abramowitz says, “Well, the prophecy of Gog and Magog lists some of Magog’s allies.



Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr.

Robert is a member of the extended family of Berean Bible Church (VA) and a conference speaker and blogger at: <https://burrosofberea.com/recjr2777@gmail.com>



One of these is Persia, known today as Iran. It's no secret that Iran funded Hamas in this endeavor, so that suggests that this war might be the war of Gog u'[sic] Magog.⁵ In like manner, Bob Russel states, "Ezekiel 38-39 speaks of a great battle in Israel in the 'latter days' involving a people from the far north called 'Magog' led by a king named Gog. Among the countries mentioned as joining in the battle against Israel is Persia, which is modern-day Iran."⁶

This is closer to the money than the Russian rendition in that *all* the nations listed by Ezekiel were, in fact, part of

the Persian Empire of his day. But the Hamas version of Gog and Magog still hits a sour note. It is out of tune with Ezekiel's historical context.

The nations listed were part of the Persian Empire of Ezekiel's day, not ours! In fact, the Persian Empire doesn't even exist in our day. This being the case, why would Ezekiel's original audience have even cared about modern-day Iran—a nation 2,600 years removed from

their own time? If Ezekiel 38-39 were about the events of October 7, 2023, then the passage was completely irrelevant to the people to whom Ezekiel was writing.

Ezekiel 38-39 is by far a favorite passage of the purveyors of pop-prophecy, as the song is recycled and replayed every time there is a major crisis in the world. But they completely ignore Ezekiel's historical context. Discovering that context is an epiphany of sorts, showing just how off the mark the

popular approach really is. This is not unlike having a favorite song that you've loved for years, only to find out that you've been mishearing the lyrics all this time. To understand what Ezekiel was talking about, we need to listen to the original version of his song.

The Chief Prince of Meshech and Tubal

As it turns out, the Hebrew word *Rosh* and the nation of Persia really do play heavily into identifying Ezekiel's Gog of the Land of Magog. Ironically, they likewise play heavily into debunking the modern misidentification of this figure. In making Gog's identification, each of these textual indicators point to the far-distant past—not our future.

In Ezekiel 38:2, Gog is called the "chief (*Rosh*) prince of Meshech and Tubal." These place names stretch all the way back to the Table of Nations (Gen 10:2), and they had both become part of the growing Persian Empire by the time Ezekiel wrote.⁷ The remaining five nations listed as Gog's allies were also part of the Persian Empire of his day (i.e., Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah, in Ezek 38:5-6).⁸ The figure whom Ezekiel designates as Gog, therefore, was the "chief prince" of those Persian nations.

Rather than checking the timeline in our favorite social media app to understand whom Ezekiel could possibly be talking about, perhaps it is better to check the timeline of Scripture? Ezekiel wrote while Babylon was still the major power player in the ancient world. That was soon going to change, however. In 539 BC, the Persian Empire would overtake Babylon, and the Persian King would free the Jewish exiles and allow them to return to their homeland. Ezekiel 37 and the Valley of Dry Bones coming to life is about this rebirth of the Jewish nation. The following two chapters describe what was coming up next on the timeline.

In chapters 38-39, Ezekiel is telling his readers not to get too excited too fast. Another attack was on the horizon from the next empire to rise to power. It would fail, but it was on the way nonetheless, and it would be led by the chief prince of those Persian nations. When we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, it's not terribly difficult to know exactly who this chief prince was.

...continued on page 8



The Enemy of the Jews becomes the Chief Prince

In Ezekiel, Israel's antagonist is referred to as "Gog," and his goal was to come in "*like a storm*," "*like a cloud covering the land*," against God's People—Israel (Ezek 38:9, 16)—and his aim was to seize spoil and carry off plunder (Ezek 38:12). In the book of Esther, we're introduced to Haman, who was "*the enemy of all the Jews*" (Esther 8:1; cf. 3:10), and who "*schemed against them to destroy them*" (Esther 9:24). Haman's objective was to "*destroy, kill and annihilate*

all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in a single day: the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to seize their possessions" (Esther 3:13). If we were to do criminal profiling here, Haman

Haman and Hamas

Robert E. Cruickshank

... continued from page 7

fits the profile.

As Josh Peterson writes: "Ezekiel 38:2 refers to Gog as 'the chief prince.' This means Gog is not the actual king of an empire or kingdom, but rather is a high-ranking official. This is a fitting description for Haman, who was not the king of Persia, but rather was a high-ranking official."⁹ The book of Esther bears this out:

"After these events, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him." (Esther 3:1-2)

"Then Haman recounted the glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every instance where the king had magnified him, and how he had promoted him above all the princes and servants of the king." (Esther 5:12)

If Haman was "*over all the princes*" and "*above all the princes*" in the Persian Empire, then he was in fact the "chief prince,"¹⁰ and this coincides perfectly with Ezekiel's description of Gog. Likewise, the time of Haman's attack in Esther coincides perfectly with the time of Gog's attack in Ezekiel.

Unwalled Villages

Ezekiel tells us that Gog would launch his assault at a time when the Jews were living in "*unwalled villages*" (Ezek 38:11). We definitely cannot look to today's headlines to find the fulfillment of this verse. Modern-day Israel is protected by a 500-mile-long wall called the "West Bank Barrier."¹¹ Where we *can* look to find its fulfillment is in the book of Esther. Esther 9:19 speaks of "*the Jews of the rural towns, who live in the unwalled villages*." These are the very Jews whom Haman and his armies sought to exterminate. As such, the attack of Gog and his allies (in Ezek 38) comes at a time that accurately describes the unique living conditions of the Jews ("*unwalled villages*") in the book of

Esther, when Haman and his forces set out to annihilate them.

Just as the timing of the attack helps us identify Haman as the attacker, Haman's identity in turn helps us understand why Ezekiel would refer to him as "Gog."

Haman the Agagite

Esther tells us that Haman was an "Agagite" (Esther 3:1,10; 8:3,5; 9:24), referring to the descendants of Agag—the king of the Amalekites, whom Saul was supposed to kill back in 1 Samuel 15:2-3. As an "Agagite," therefore, Haman was part of the royal bloodline of Israel's ancient enemy—the Amalekites. Conversely, it's no small coincidence that Mordecai was a descendant of Saul—as Mordecai and Saul were both Benjamites from the line of Kish (cf. 1 Sam 9:1; Esther 2:5). As James Jordan says, "The conflict between Saul and Agag (1 Sam 15) is rejoined in Esther. What Esther records is the last great attack upon Israel by Amalek, and the final destruction of Amalek."¹²

The final destruction should have come a long time ago. Apparently, no one before them had the tenacity or the resolve to get the job done. Anne Wetter puts it this way, "Esther and Mordecai prove to be the worthiest bearers of the Jewish tradition: They have not forgotten to blot out Amalek (Deut 25:19), and, unlike their forefathers, they have actually managed to perform the deed."¹³

Unlike Saul and the others who went before, Esther and Mordecai took out the Amalekites—all of them. This included the royal descendant of King Agag himself, Haman, along with his sons (Esther 7:9-10). Like a magnet, Haman's connection to Agag takes us straight back to the book of Ezekiel and links him to the prophet's "*Gog of the Land of Magog*."

Agag = Gog

Just on the surface of it, the terms "Agag" and "Gog" appear similar at face value. And, in fact, they are equated in the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, written during the intertestamental period between Malachi and Matthew. The New Testament writers quoted the Septuagint twice as often as they quoted the Hebrew Old Testament.¹⁴ With this in mind, Numbers 24:7 is the key text here. In the Hebrew Bible, the verse reads as follows:

"Water shall flow from Israel's buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters. His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." (Num 24:7 ESV)

Next, here is the verse in the Septuagint:

"A man will come forth from his seed and prevail over many peoples, and he will be raised up higher than the kingdom of Gog, and his kingdom will increase." (Num 24:7 LXX)¹⁵

If it's accurate to refer to "Agag" as "Gog," in light of the Septuagint translation of Numbers 24:7, then it would be equally accurate to refer to an "Agagite" as a "Gogite." And in fact, some Septuagint manuscripts do just this and refer to Haman as a "Gogite," instead of an "Agagite," in Esther 3:1 and 9:24.¹⁶ Simply put, the terms are interchangeable. As Phil Kayser says: "Saying that Haman was an Agagite is (using a different national pronunciation) the same thing as saying that he is a Gogite."¹⁷

Haman the Gogite was the chief prince of the Persian nations who attacked God's people at a time when they were living in unwallled villages. The book of Esther makes Ezekiel's prophecy come alive with meaning, and it is the deathblow to the modern interpretation of Gog and Magog. With that said, Ezekiel 39:11 is the final nail in its coffin.

Gog's Burial Site

When all is said and done, and the battle of Gog and Magog is over, the Lord says, "*On that day I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block the way of those who would pass by. So they will bury Gog there with all his horde, and they will call it the Valley of Hamon-Gog.*" (Ezek 39:11)

On this passage, Gary DeMar writes: "According to Ezekiel 39:11 and 15, the place where the army of Gog is buried will be known as the Valley of Hamon-Gog . . . The word *hamon* in Ezekiel is spelled in Hebrew almost exactly like the name Haman. In Hebrew, both words have the same 'trilateral root' (*hmn*). Only the vowels are different."¹⁸ With this in mind, vowels weren't added to the Hebrew language until sometime between 700 and 1000 AD.¹⁹ In other words, Ezekiel is writing 1,600 years before Hebrew vowels even existed. This means that when an ancient Jew read the books of Ezekiel and Esther, "Haman" and "Hamon" would have been the exact same word. Accordingly, it means Ezekiel 38-39 and the book of Esther describe the exact same thing.

Just as Gog was laid to rest in the Valley of Hamon-Gog, it's time to lay the modern misuse of the Gog prophecy to rest. Haman's dirge was the song Ezekiel was singing in chapters 38-39. The modern approach misunderstands the lyrics along with their meaning. The technical term for misunderstanding phrases or lyrics is "mondegreen."²⁰ When the true lyrics are discovered, it often changes the entire meaning of the song. As it turns out, Ezekiel wasn't writing about modern-day Israel, Hamas, or even Russia. While the pop-prophecy pundits of our day hope the hits just keep on coming for them with every new crisis in the world, it's time for God's people to tune in to a new station. More precisely, it's time for God's people to let the modern station fade out and get back to the actual roots of the music to discover the true meaning of the song.²¹ †

1. <https://harrisonhouse.com/blog/joseph-morris-israels-war-the-prophetic-signs-of-ezekiel-38-decoded>
2. <https://www2.cbn.com/news/world/god-getting-ready-do-something-amazing-cbn-founder-pat-robertson-russia-and-its-place>
3. <https://www.israel365news.com/377442/did-the-hamas-attack-signal-the-beginning-of-gog-and-magog/>
4. <https://nakedbiblepodcast.com/podcast/naked-bible-152-ezekiel-38-39-part-1/>
5. <https://jewinthecity.com/2023/10/is-this-hamas-war-the-war-of-gog-and-magog/>
6. <http://www.bobrussell.org/are-christians-to-stand-with-israel/>
7. "Meshech and Tubal were areas of the Persian empire of Asia Minor and the northern Pontus and southern coasts of the Black Sea."
<https://shreddingtheveil.org/2020/03/29/ezekiel-in-revelation-part-vi-the-land-of-gog/>
8. See: Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-28* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p.439; Sverre Boe, *Gog and Magog* (Germany: Mohr Seibeck, 2001), p. 310; Gary DeMar, *The Gog-Magog End-Time Alliance: Israel, Russia, and Syria in Bible Prophecy* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press, 2016), p. 56.
9. Difficult Passage: Ezekiel 38, Part 2 – Providence Christian Church (providencechristiannm.com)
10. The word in Esther is שָׂר (sar) 'ruler' (H8269), whereas the word in Ezekiel is נָשִׂיא (na.si) 'leader' (H5387a). But the difference is inconsequential in that both words retain the same, basic meaning. This is merely a matter of preferred word choice among two separate authors.
11. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/background-and-overview-of-israel-s-security-fence>
12. http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/8_06/
13. Wetter, Anne-Mareike. "How Jewish is Esther? Or: How is Esther Jewish? Tracing Ethnic and Religious Identity in a Diaspora Narrative." (2011): 602.
14. See: Mogens Muller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic press, 1996).
15. Lexham English Septuagint Translation
16. Lewis B. Paton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther, page 194; Sverre Boe, *Gog and Magog*, p. 71
17. <https://kaysercommentary.com/Sermons/Old%20Testament/Esther/battle%20of%20Ezek.md>
18. *The Gog and Magog End-Time Alliance: Israel, Russia, and Syria in Bible Prophecy* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press. 2016), p. 59.
19. Bodie Hodge, *Tower of Babel: The Culture History of Our Ancestors* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2013), p. 114, fn.
20. <https://www.dictionary.com/e/mondegreen/>
21. I am indebted to Daniel E. Harden for not only his editorial work, but all of his input and suggestions on the content of this article.

History of the End

OUR PREVIOUS ARTICLE ENDED with the Roman capture of Herodium and Machaerus, as well as the Romans' suppression of two different post-war Jewish insurrections in Alexandria and Cyrene. And since the Roman General Lucilius Bassus died not long after he captured Machaerus, he was quickly replaced by *General Flavius Silva*, who then took charge of the assault on *Masada*, which was the final outpost of the Zealot rebellion [Josephus *Wars* 7:252 (7.8.1)].

In this article we will deal with the Fall of Masada, including how its wall was breached, how its Jewish defenders died in a massive suicide pact, and how its capture marked the death of the *Man of Lawlessness* (2 Thess 2:8), the end of the rebellion, and the "complete shattering" of the Jewish people.

Eleazar Was the Leader at Masada

According to Hegesippus (*Heg.* 2:10), at the beginning of the rebellion (AD 66), after *Eleazar b. Ananias* killed Menahem, forces allied with Eleazar took control of Masada and placed a garrison there.

Both Yosippon and Hegesippus claim that just before the siege of Jerusalem began in May of 70, Eleazar then fled from Jerusalem to Masada, where he subsequently led the Zealots in their fatal defense of that fortress [*Sepher Yosippon* (chs. 82, 89); *Heg.* (5.53); cf. *Wars* 5.102 (5.3.1)]. See our previous articles (Summer 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2023) for the historical and archaeological evidence supporting the presence of Eleazar at Masada after he fled from Jerusalem in May of 70.

Titus Sent Silva to Masada

According to Yosippon, when Titus learned that Eleazar had escaped to Masada, he sent *General Flavius Silva* with a large force to make sure Eleazar did not elude capture again [*Sepher Yosippon* ch. 89].

As General Silva moved his troops toward Masada, he cleared out all remaining pockets of resistance in the area, and then surrounded Masada. The Zealot defenders were now totally cut off from the outside world. They had plenty of food and water, but they had no hope of victory or escape. They were outnumbered ten-to-one [*Wars* 7:275-279 (7.8.2)].

Masada held out for almost three years against the Romans, but in May of 73 the Romans were able to get their battering ram on top of the ramp at Masada and break through the walls. Josephus, Yosippon, and Hegesippus give us a lot of details about it.

Slain by the Breath of His Mouth

Paul stated in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 that the Lord Jesus would slay the Lawless One "by the breath of His mouth." In the previous chapter (2 Thess 1:7) Paul predicted that Christ would come "in flaming fire [Gk. *puri phlogos*] dealing out retribution" to their persecutors. Here, at the capture of Masada, we see the "breath [Gk. *pneumati*] of His mouth" driving the "flaming fire" which destroyed Masada's wooden wall of defense.

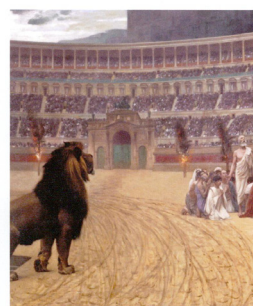
Note that the same three Greek words for *flaming*, *fire*, and *breath* are used by both Paul (2 Thess 1:7; 2:8) and Josephus [*Wars* 7:314-321 (7.8.5-6)]. Furthermore, Josephus attributed the destruction of the wall by a wind-driven fire to "divine providence [and] assistance from God":

This [wooden wall] of theirs was like a real edifice; and when the machines were applied, the blows were weakened by its yielding. . . . When Silva saw this, he thought it best to [destroy] this wall by setting fire [Gk. *puri*] to it; so he gave order . . . and when it was once set on fire, its hollowness made that fire spread to a mighty flame [Gk. *phloga*]. . . . after this, on a sudden the wind changed into the south, as if it were done by divine Providence; and blew [Gk. *pneusas*] strongly the contrary way, and carried the flame, and drove it against the wall, which was now on fire through its entire thickness. So the Romans, having now assistance from God, returned to their camp with joy, and resolved to attack their enemies the very next day . . . [but when Eleazar] saw their wall burnt down by the fire [Gk. *puros*], and could devise no other way of escaping, or room for their farther courage, and setting before their eyes what the Romans would do to them, their children, and their wives, if they got them into their power, he consulted about having them all slain. [*Wars* 7:314-321 (7.8.5-6) bracketed material and boldface added].

Hegesippus also described the burning of the wooden wall, and quotes Eleazar as admitting that it was God who caused the "breath of the south wind" to turn the fire against their wooden fortifications and completely consume them:

Final Decade Before
Jewish and Christian History Just Before

Edward E. Stone



Foreword by Michael A.

Wall of Masada in AD 73

Edward E. Stevens

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Silva diligently pursuing the task imposed upon him, destroyed the wall of Masada with the battering ram. They had constructed the interior with wood for the reason that the wall material would not readily yield to the blows of siege machines of this type. But the Romans, the manner of fighting having been changed, threw **fire**, which both easily stuck fast to the wood and **grew strong without any delay**. And so a **great roar** was produced by the **full grown conflagration of the blaze**, which at first was driven back from parts of the fortification by the breath of the north wind and instead burned the shelters of the Romans, **then**

the breath of the south wind having arisen turned itself back against the fortress, so that the material having been consumed all that wooden wall opposed burned up.

... [Then Eleazar said] O unhappy people, to what hope of this life will we reserve ourselves... since the **displeasure of God is evident**? The fires have been turned round from the enemy against us, **the breezes of the winds** have been changed, **the flames** turned back, so that our reinforcements were burned down. **Who will be able to live with God opposing?** ... [Heg. 5.53, bracketed material and boldface added].

Furthermore, 2 Thessalonians 2:8 states that the Man of Sin would be "*slain*" (Gk. *anaireō*), a word that is used 451 times in the works of Josephus describing all the slaughters and killings that occurred during the war. This same word was used by Josephus three times in the context of the suicide killings on Masada:

So they being not able to bear the grief they were under for what they had done any longer [by slaying all their families], and esteeming it an injury to those they had **slain** [Gk. *anaireō*] to live even the shortest space of time after them ... [Wars 7:394 (7.9.1)]

... and when these ten had, without fear, slain them all, they made the same rule for casting lots for themselves, that he whose lot it was should first kill the other nine, and after all, should **kill** [Gk. *anaireō*] himself ... [Wars 7:396 (7.9.1)]

... when [the last man standing] perceived that they were all **slain** [Gk. *anaireō*], he set fire to the palace, and with the great force of his hands ran his sword entirely through himself, and fell down dead near to his own relations [Wars 7.397 (7.9.1)].

Eleazar was "the originator of the [rebellion]" (Heg. 5.53), and was one of the last to be slain. He died at Masada with 960 others in a final suicide pact, slain by his own soldiers. The mass suicide occurred on the fifteenth day of the month Xanthicus (Nisan), evidently during Passover week in May of 73 [Wars 7:401 (7.9.1); Wars 7.413 (7.10.1)].

While *Hegesippus* seems to agree with *Josephus* on this mass suicide pact of all 960 of them, *Yosippon* has a little different ending to the story. Instead of Eleazar and the fighting men killing themselves, they instead slew only their wives, children and aged elders. Then at the first light of morning the remaining fighting men rushed out of Masada, charged the Romans, and fought until every last one of them (including Eleazar) was killed by the Romans (*Sepher Yosippon*, ch. 89). We may never know which of these two scenarios is correct, but it doesn't really matter since neither of them changes the outcome.

Eleazar Fits All the Characteristics

Thus, we have seen that Eleazar b. Ananias seems to be the only one who matches all of the characteristics of the Man of Lawlessness that are mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2. He was the one who blew the shofar and started the rebellion [*Sepher Yosippon* ch. 59]. He was the only one who "sat in the temple" during the war. Ananus II never had control of the Temple during the war, and John of Gischala only gained control of it at the very end just before the siege began (May of 70), at a time when holding the Temple no longer mattered.

And although both John of Gischala and Ananus II were guilty of many lawless deeds, none were so extremely lawless as Eleazar, who violated all the laws and set himself up as the lawmaker instead of God.

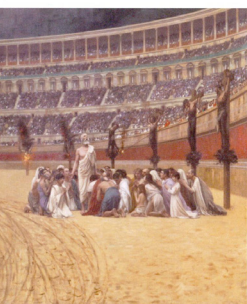
Furthermore, Ananias b. Nedebaeus, Menahem, and Ananus II were all killed during the war. Simon b. Giora and John of Gischala both surrendered to Titus and were taken to Rome to be displayed in his triumphal parade. After being dragged through the crowd and tormented by them, Simon was finally thrown over the Tarpeian cliff in sacrifice to the Roman gods, while John of Gischala was held in chains in a Roman prison for the rest of his life.

...continued on page 12

de Before the End

History Just Before the Jewish Revolt

rd E. Stevens



by Michael Alan Nichols

Thus, Eleazar b. Ananias is the only one of the Zealot leaders who was slain by his own men at Masada when their last hope of defense was *destroyed by the breath of our Lord's mouth* (2 Thess 2:8). The rebellion was crushed, and the power of the Jewish people was completely shattered (Dan 12:7). †

This ends our series on the *History of the End*. And since I am having some health issues right now and need some additional time to research the next series of articles, *History AFTER the End*, I will be taking a break from the next two quarterly issues of *Fulfilled! Magazine*. Lord willing, when I return, we will begin looking at the first generation of Jewish and Christian history after the Fall of Masada.

If you wish to have more details on the identification of Eleazar as the Man of Lawlessness, simply send me an email request for PDF copies of the following articles and charts:

- *Abomination, Rebellion, and Lawlessness* (Summer 2021)
- *The Man of Lawlessness Revealed* (Spring 2022)

Fall of Masada

Edward E. Stevens

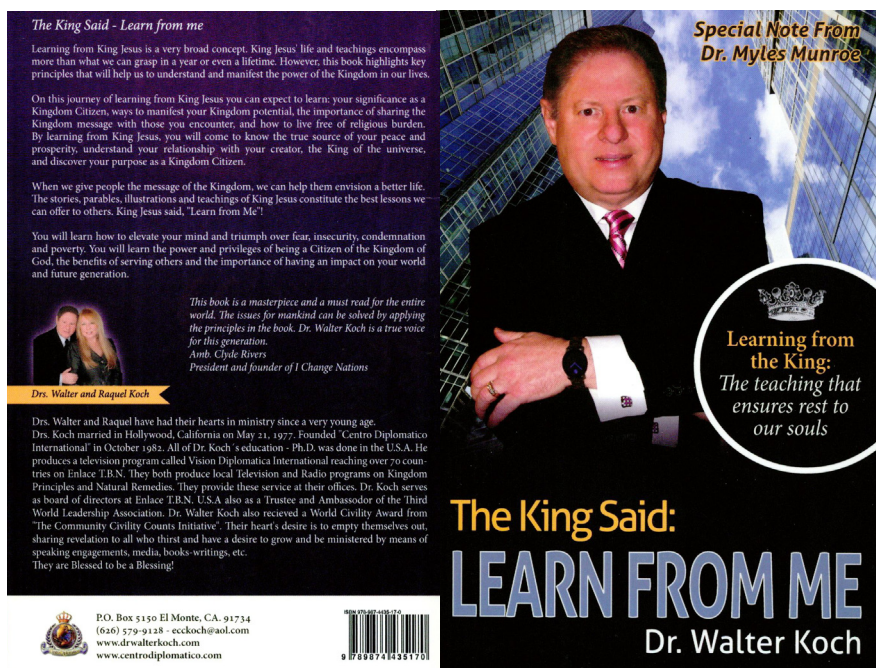
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- *Outbreak of Rebellion: The Real History*
- *Titus Laid Siege to Jerusalem* (Summer 2023)
- *Eleazar_Chart.jpg*

You might also want to check out our historical podcasts (www.buzzsprout.com/11633), and get a copy of my historical book, *Final Decade Before the End*, found here: www.preterist.org/product-cat/all/

Dr. Walter Koch is pastor of Centro Diplomatico International in El Monte, California. He is spreading the good news of fulfilled prophecy to the hispanic community, and has served as a translator at preterist conferences.

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Heal Our Hearts, Heal Our Land, Heal Our World

by Brian L. Martin

... if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chron 7:14)

In 1630, prior to embarking for the New World, John Winthrop gave a sermon to his fellow settlers, which later became known for its “city on a hill” phrase. Laying aside for the moment the negative aspects of early America, I believe that we can learn from Winthrop’s closing remarks:

Thus stands the cause between God and us. We are entered into covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission. The Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles. We have professed to enterprise these and those accounts, upon these and those ends. We have hereupon besought Him of favor and blessing. Now if the Lord shall please to hear us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath He ratified this covenant and sealed our commission, and will expect a strict performance of the articles contained in it; but if we shall neglect the observation of these articles which are the ends we have propounded, and, dissembling with our God, shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions, seeking great things for ourselves and our posterity, the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us, and be revenged of such a people, and make us know the price of the breach of such a covenant.

Now the only way to avoid this shipwreck, and to provide for our posterity, is to follow the counsel of Micah, to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. For this end, we must be knit together, in this work, as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection. We must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of others’ necessities. We must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience and liberality. We must delight in each other; make others’ conditions our own; rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, as members of the same body. So shall we keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among us, as His own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways, so that we shall see much more of His wisdom, power, goodness and truth, than formerly we have been acquainted with. We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when He shall make us a praise and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, “may the Lord make it like that of New England.” For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. We shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God, and all professors for God’s sake. We shall shame the faces of many of God’s worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going.

And to shut this discourse with that exhortation of Moses, that faithful servant of the Lord, in his last farewell to Israel, Deut. 30. “Beloved, there is now set before us life and death, good and evil,” in that we are commanded this day to love the Lord our God, and to love one another, to walk in his ways and to keep his Commandments and his ordinance and his laws, and the articles of our Covenant with Him, that we may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may bless us in the land whither we go to possess it. But if our hearts shall turn away, so that we will not obey, but shall be seduced, and worship other Gods, our pleasure and profits, and serve them; it is propounded unto us this day, we shall surely perish out of the good land whither we pass over this vast sea to possess it.

*Therefore let us choose life,
that we and our seed may live,
by obeying His voice and cleaving to Him,
for He is our life and our prosperity.*

Objection Overruled!

Keith

KEITH MATHISON HAS RECENTLY (2023) posted a lengthy article written in 2004 on Acts 1:9-11 in an attempt to refute Covenant Eschatology, i.e. Full Preterism. He spends a great deal of ink citing liberal and skeptical scholars, causing one to wonder if it is an attempt to “poison the well” against full preterists by tacitly connecting preterists with those skeptics.

He also cites a number of preterists who have addressed Acts 1. Interestingly, he does not mention me or any of my works in which I address the text, even though he is familiar with my works. (He has actually been challenged to meet me in formal debate but has consistently rejected those invitations).

Mathison strives to establish that the apostles actually saw Jesus ascend, as if this point somehow refutes preterism. It does not. Since I do not dispute that the apostles saw Jesus ascend in the cloud, I will not respond to this aspect of Mathison’s article. The question of course, is what did the angel mean by “in like manner”?

In his writings, Mathison engages repeatedly in the logical fallacy called the Negative Fallacy. Notice Mathison argues that since Acts 1 contains no time indicator such as found in Matthew 10:23 / 16:27-28 / 24:34, etc., this means Acts 1 cannot be speaking of the same time and events as those texts. In the book, *When Shall These Things Be?* Mathison argues,

The first thing to be observed when we examine this account is that no reference to time is connected with the prediction of the return of Christ. All that is affirmed is that Jesus will come again in the same manner as he went into heaven. The second thing that must be noted is that Luke does not refer to Jesus’ return as ‘the coming of the Son of Man.’¹

Yet he also states,

The *ascension* of Christ described in Acts 1 is probably connected with the coming of the Son of Man that is described in Daniel 7:13-14, since Daniel speaks of a coming of the Son of Man up to the Ancient of Days to receive his kingdom. But the return of Jesus described by the two men in white is not described with the language drawn from Daniel 7. . . Luke has used that language in his account of the Olivet Discourse (see Luke 21:27), so

we know that he is familiar with the imagery, *but he does not use it here in Acts 1*. This means that even if such texts as Matthew 10:23; 16:27-28; and 24:30 refer to something that happened in the first century, we cannot automatically assume that Acts 1 is referring to the same thing.²

This is a seriously flawed claim. If, as Mathison claims, Daniel 7 lies behind Acts 1, then it proves that the coming of Acts 1 had to be fulfilled *in the days of the fourth empire*, i.e. Rome. You cannot admit that Acts 1 is connected to Daniel 7 without thereby delimiting the time of Christ’s parousia to the days of Rome. More specifically, if Acts 1 does, as Mathison posits, echo Daniel 7, then it must be conflated with the other texts promising the coming of the Son of Man in judgment, in the first century coinciding with the fall of Jerusalem.

My approach in response to Mathison’s objection will be exegetical, based on the context of Acts 1—a context that Mathison, in my view, gives insufficient focus, although he wrote a lot of words about it (his article is 50+ pages long). Let’s begin now with an examination of Acts 1.

Unless one can divorce those eschatological tenets from the predicted judgment of Jerusalem, it is undeniable that these eschatological “particulars” would be fulfilled at that judgment.

The Old Testament Prophetic Background for Acts 1—Isaiah 43 “You are My witnesses”

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

One of the most commonly overlooked elements of Acts 1 is the prophetic background and source. When Jesus told the apostles “*you shall be my witnesses*” this is a direct citation from Isaiah 43:10-12 (and probably 44:8):

“You are My witnesses,” declares the Lord, “And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. I, only I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you are My witnesses,” declares the Lord, “And I am God.”

“For I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, And My blessing on your descendants; 4 And they will spring up

Keith Mathison on Acts 1:9-11 - Part 1

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*among the grass Like poplars by streams of water. This one will say, 'I am the Lord's'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to the Lord,' And will give himself Israel's name with honor. This is what the Lord says, He who is the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of armies: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me. Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; And, let him confront Me Beginning with My establishing of the ancient nation. Then let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place. Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And **you are My witnesses**. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.'* (Isa 44:3-8)

Space limitations prevent an in-depth exegesis of both passages, but pay particular attention to some of the critical themes of both passages:

- Isaiah 43 is a recognized prophecy of the Second Exodus. The language of verse 2 is very clear:

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.

To say that the theme of the Second Exodus permeates the New Testament, and even Acts 1, is an understatement.³

- Notice how Isaiah 44 describes the time of promised redemption (the time of the gathering of God's people, 43:5-6), *"For I will pour water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring"* (v. 3). Likewise, in Acts 1 we find Jesus promising His apostles that as they go witnessing to Him, the Spirit would be poured out: *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth."* Thus, as in Isaiah, the witnessing is linked to the reception of the Spirit (see Isaiah 63:11-3 for more on the connection between the Second Exodus and the outpouring of the Spirit).

So, the promise of the Spirit would have been, to the apostles, a powerful echo of God's promises of the last days redemption. (It is almost certain that they would have been reminded also of Ezekiel 37:12f, the promise

of the outpouring of the Spirit to raise Israel from the "grave" of captivity).

- Focus now on the emphasis point of the "witnessing" in both chapter 43 and 44. What were the witnesses to bear witness to? Chapter 43: *"Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. I, only I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me."*⁴ Chapter 44:6 continues that: *"This is what the Lord says, He who is the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of armies: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me'";* note verse 8 as well: *"And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none."*

In other words, YHVH's witnesses were *to bear witness that He is the true God!* That means that in Acts 1 Jesus was sending his apostles out to declare that He is, "King of kings and Lord of lords." *He is God*, just as John 1:1-3 and a host of other passages affirm. He is not, from henceforth, to be seen simply as a man who is to one day descend on a literal cumulus cloud.

Interestingly, Gregory Beale misses a key issue. He acknowledges that Acts 1 draws directly on Isaiah 43 & 44, but claims that in those Old Testament passages, "the role [of the witnesses, DKP] is a fairly general one of witness to God, his reality, his power and ability to announce beforehand what he is going to do; in Acts the witness is more specifically to the career of Jesus and in particular to his resurrection."⁵ This is almost diversionary, in my estimation.

Look at the citations from Isaiah given just above. The witnessing to be done in those texts is the witnessing to the reality that, *"Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. I, only I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me."* The testimony certainly would include the goodness and the power of YHVH, but the central, the core issue is, "I am God and there is no other!" And we cannot fail to note that the witnessing about Jesus was the testimony that he was *"declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection out from the dead"* (Romans 1:4). Thus, the witnessing was not some "generic" testimony, but the declaration of the Deity of Christ.

While others have taken note of the "cloud motif" as significant, I am unaware of anyone tying this in with Isaiah 43 & 44, and the incredible Christological significance

...continued on page 16

of Jesus' citation of these texts in saying, "*You are my witnesses.*" Mathison does not touch on this correlation.

This needs to be fleshed out, by an examination of other passages that link Christ's coming, His parousia, and Christology. By focusing on Jesus' ascension in the clouds, (more on this below) along with his declaration "*You are my witnesses*" I am convinced that we have direct insight into the true nature of, "*in like manner*" in Acts 1.

Objection Overruled!

Don K. Preston

... continued from page 15

Matthew 16:27-28

One of the most commonly cited prophecies of Jesus, ostensibly predicting His return at the end of human history, and thus a direct parallel with Acts 1:9-11, is

Matthew 16:27: "*The Son of Man will come, in the glory of the Father, with his angels, to reward every man.*"

The problem with citing Matthew 16:27 as an "end of human history" event is the fact that it is grammatically linked with verse 28: "*Verily I say unto you there are some standing here that shall not taste of death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.*"⁶ Mathison actually suggests that v. 27 is the end of time while v. 28 was fulfilled in the first century (2009, 366). This violates the grammar of the text.

The point here is that Jesus said he was going to come "in the glory of the Father." Here is an excerpt from my book *Like Father Like Son, On Clouds of Glory*⁷ that helps us understand Jesus' words⁸:

Heinrich Meyers says, "in the glory of the Father" means, "in the same glory as belongs to God."⁹ Floyd Filson says the phrase means that Christ will come "with the splendor that surrounds the Father in heaven. He will appear as divine judge, and act for the Father."¹⁰ R. T. France provides insight into the force of Jesus' words:

In the Old Testament, judgment is God's prerogative, and the words from Psalms 62:12 (cf. Prov.24:12) which form the second part of this verse are words about God. Taken together with the ascription of a kingdom to the Son of Man in the next verse, this is quite a remarkable assumption of a divine role for Jesus in his future glory. His coming will be in the glory of the Father, in the sense that he shares that glory and authority.¹¹

These scholars are saying that Jesus was promising that His coming in judgment was to be His coming as God. He was promising to come in the same manner as His Father had come so many times. It goes without saying that the Father had never come out of heaven literally, visibly, "physically." In His sovereignty He had employed one nation to judge another and in so doing He was said to come on the

clouds, with the angels, in flaming fire, in the destruction of "heaven and earth" (cf. Isa 19; 24; 34; Ezek 30-32, etc.).

So, we have an apparent conflict concerning the nature of Christ's parousia. Tradition tells us that in Acts 1 the angel promises that Jesus will come again to be revealed as a man. On the other hand, we have Jesus saying His parousia would be of the same nature as the Father's comings in the Tanakh. To say the least, those are two radically different concepts of the nature of the parousia. Perhaps it is time to rethink the concept of "*in like manner*" as an expression emphasizing Jesus' human body.

Matthew 24:30

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

This passage is commonly misunderstood, but a proper understanding helps with Acts 1. Mathison recognizes that this text, "is connected in some way to the destruction of Jerusalem." (2009, 377). He realizes that Jesus was not predicting the appearance of some visible celestial event, but rather: "The Greek text of this verse does not state that the Son of Man will appear in the heavens. Rather, what appears is the *sign* of the Son of Man in heaven. In other words, the destruction of Jerusalem will be the sign that the Son of Man, who prophesied this destruction, is in heaven."¹² In other words, the fall of Jerusalem was to be a sign of the enthronement of Christ acting as sovereign, "in the glory of the Father." As the Father had committed all judgment to the Son, the Son would then act in the same way that the Father had always acted, "so that they may know that I am God"¹³ (cf. John 5:19f). We thus have another text that speaks of the purpose and nature of Christ's judgment coming, which in no way can be defined as the manifestation of Jesus coming out of heaven in a physical body, at a proposed end of time.

1 Timothy 6:14-16:

That you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

As a direct correlate, take a look at 1 Timothy 1:17: "*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*"

There is a great deal of controversy about who Paul was calling, "*the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever.*" Was he speaking of the Father or the Son? Perhaps such questions are out of order.

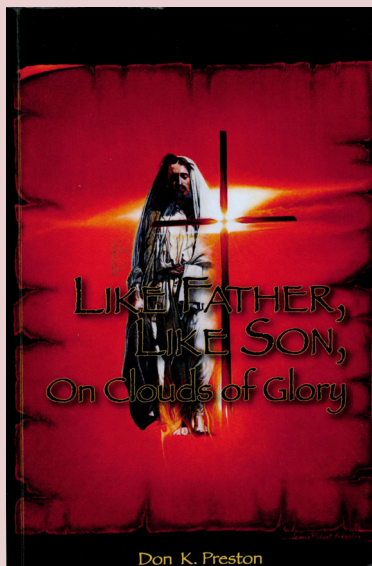
Is Jesus not King?
 Is Jesus not eternal?
 Is Jesus not immortal?
 Is Jesus not wise?
 Is Jesus not worthy of honor and glory for ever and ever?

Objection is immediately raised by those who insist on an end of time physical return of Christ as a man riding on a cloud, that Paul could not refer to Jesus as “invisible.” But this objection assumes a great deal and, I suggest, ignores the proper answers to the questions above? If Paul was in fact speaking of Jesus in this text, then he was indeed affirming that he is invisible.

We will conclude this article in the next issue. ✚

1. Keith Mathison, *When Shall These Things Be? A Reformed Response to Hyper-Preterism* (Phillipsburg, NJ; P&R Publishing, 2004), 185.
2. Ibid, 185.
3. For an excellent study of the Second Exodus in Acts see, David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2000).
4. Note that in Acts 4:12, Peter and John, witnessing to the Sanhedrin, said of Jesus, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” This is a direct echo of Isaiah 43.

5. Gregory Beale, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, Apollos, 2017), 528.
6. See my *Can You Believe Jesus Said This?* for a discussion of the grammar of these verses that falsifies any attempt to posit verse 27 as an end of time, while positing verse 28 as a first-century event, something that Mathison suggests in his *Age To Age*, (2009, 366).
7. This book is an in-depth analysis of the nature of Christ’s parousia and has been called “groundbreaking.” It is available on my websites, Amazon, Kindle and other retailers.
8. Don K. Preston, *Like Father, Like Son, On Clouds of Glory*, (JaDon Productions, LLC), 1.
9. Heinrich Wilhelm August Meyers, *Meyers Commentary on the New Testament* (New York; Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), 304.
10. Floyd Filson, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, (London; Adam and Charles Black Publishers, 1971), 190.
11. R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Leicester, England; Inter-Varsity, 1985), 261.
12. Keith Mathison, *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*, (Phillipsburg, NJ; P&R Publishing, 1999), 114.
13. Throughout the Tanakh, God sovereignly used one nation to judge another. When He did that, He said it was done “so that they may know that I am God.” This is stated over 80 times in the book of Ezekiel alone. Thus, for Jesus to act as the Father had acted was so that man can know that he is God.
14. See William Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 46, *Pastoral Epistles*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2000), 60.



Available on Amazon and
 Don's websites:

www.eschatology.org
www.bibleprophecy.com

Like Father, Like Son, On Clouds of Glory

The nature of Christ’s coming is being hotly debated, *at last*. Did Christ predict a return in a literal fleshly body, as most modern believers suggest? Or, Was Christ’s coming to be an event in which he would come in the same way His Father had come many times, in the Old Covenant? The latter is the *clearly stated truth*, yet, this essential truth is greatly ignored by most Bible students today.

The preterist view of prophecy is growing rapidly, across all denominational boundaries. The Gordian Knot problem of the New Testament time statements of the nearness of the end is unraveling in light of a better understanding of the nature of Christ’s *parousia* (*presence*). In short, Jesus did not promise to come back in a physical body! He promised to come *as the Father had come*, and that precludes a visible, bodily coming!

But, This convincing explanation is not welcomed by all, and preterism is being labeled as heretical. Undaunted by such charges, Don K. Preston candidly confronts the leading critics of preterism today. Responding in-depth to the writings of John MacArthur, Kenneth Gentry and others, showing that their paradigm is false and that their accusations are misguided.

In this comprehensive and definitive work, Don K. Preston, shows with powerful, persuasive evidence, that Christ’s second coming was not to be bodily, physical, visible, but a manifestation of His Sovereignty as He came, *In the Glory of the Father!*

[Please note that this book is not available from FCG.]

WELL, HELLO ALL YOU Cool Cats and Chilly Chicks (Ok, that was a phrase from legendary radio personality Wolfman Jack... Ok, Wolfman Jack was a DJ in the 60s-70s... a "DJ" was a... oh, never mind)

It's good to be back and thanks to Charles Meek for his enlightening column last issue.

I finally published *The Last Semite* on my new website (www.tjsmithministries.com) along with my 6th volume of *Understanding the Bible for Average Christians*, so it was a busy 45 days. *The Last Semite* has been surprisingly popular. Maria handles all the shipping, and she has been filling orders every week. One order was for a copy of all my books, (*Understanding* vol. 1-6, *The Last Semite*, and *Kingdom Come*). So it's been nice. [See the ad on page 2 - BLM]

My column this issue is from *Understanding the Bible for Average Christians*, volume 6, chapter 4. I was studying Pilate's statement to Jesus of "What is truth?" and wondered why Jesus never answered him. I wrote the chapter about how Pilate answered his own question through his own words. This short chapter sets up the history behind Pilate and helps explain why he was perplexed and struggling with the Jews and Jesus.

Pontius Pilate (from the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia)¹

"Fifth Roman procurator of Judea, Samaria, and Idumæa, from 26 to 36 of the common era; successor of Valerius Gratus. According to Philo ("De Legatione ad Caium," ed. Mangey, ii. 590), his administration was characterized by corruption, violence, robberies, ill treatment of the people, and continuous executions without even the form of a trial. His very first act nearly caused a general insurrection. While his predecessors, respecting the religious feelings of the Jews, removed from their standards all the effigies and images when entering Jerusalem, Pilate allowed his soldiers to bring them into the city by night. As soon as this became known, crowds of Jews hastened to Cæsarea, where the procurator was residing, and besought him to remove the images. After five days of discussion, he ordered his soldiers to surround the petitioners and to put them to death unless they ceased to trouble him. He yielded only when he saw that the Jews would rather die than bear this affront. Later, Pilate appropriated funds from the sacred treasury in order to provide for the construction of an aqueduct for supplying the city of Jerusalem with water from the Pools of Solomon; and he suppressed the riots provoked by this spoliation of the Temple by sending among the crowds disguised soldiers carrying concealed daggers, who massacred a great number, not only of the rioters, but of casual spectators.

Despite his former experience of the sensitiveness of the Jews with regard to images and emblems, Pilate hung up in Herod's palace gilt shields dedicated to Tiberius, and again nearly provoked an insurrection. The shields were removed by a special order of Tiberius, to whom the Jews had protested. Pilate's last deed of cruelty, and the one which brought about his downfall, was the massacre of a number of Samaritans who had assembled on Mount Gerizim to dig for some sacred vessels which an impostor had led them to believe Moses had buried there. Concerning this massacre the Samaritans lodged a complaint with Vitellius, legate of Syria, who ordered Pilate to repair to Rome to defend himself. On the participation by Pilate in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus (see Crucifixion; Jesus of Nazareth).

The end of Pilate is enveloped in mystery. According to Eusebius ("Hist. Eccl." ii. 7), he was banished to Vienna (Vienne) in Gaul, where various misfortunes caused him at last to commit suicide; while the chronicle of Malalas alleges, with less probability, that he was beheaded under Nero. A later legend says that his suicide was anticipatory of Caligula's sentence; that the body was thrown into the Tiber, causing disastrous tempests and floods; that it afterward produced similar effects in the Rhone at Vienne; and that, finally, it had to be consigned to a deep pool among the Alps".

What you just read is from a Jewish viewpoint and, as we know, the winners get to write history. I'm not saying there are lies in this Jewish encyclopedia, I'm just saying there are always presuppositions to everything. This also holds true for the Christian church. Catholics and Protestants believe in the same Savior, but there are numerous differences that keep us from unity. How much more so between Jew and Christian. So, here is another article from the *Encyclopedia Biblica* from 1902²:

Pilate, Pontius – 5. Legends.

Pilate has won notoriety through his connection with the trial and sentence of Jesus (Mt 27:2 f; Mk. 15:1f; more fully in Lk. 23:1f. Jn. 18:28f. adds much to the Synoptics accounts.) See further, Roman Empire.

Of Pilate's end nothing is known. Before he reached Rome Tiberius was dead (Jos. Ant. xviii 4.2). Various traditions were current. Eusebius (*Chron* and *HE* 2:7) asserts, on the authority of unnamed Greek or Roman chroniclers, that he fell into such misfortunes under Caligula that he committed suicide. In the apocryphal *Mors Pilati*, his suicide follows upon his condemnation to death by

Did Pontius Pilate
to Christian

Pontius Pilate

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Tiberius for his failure to save Jesus. His body was cast into the Tiber; but evil spirits disturbed the water so much that it was carried to Vienna (Vienne) and cast into the Rhone, and after various vicissitudes, ended in the recesses of a lake on Mt. Pilatus, opposite Lucerne (for this legend and its origin, see Müller, *Pont. Pit.* 82 f.; Ruskin, *Mod. Paint.* 5:128). In the apocryphal *Παράδοσις Πιλατου* it is related that Tiberius called Pilate to account for the crucifixion of Jesus and condemned him to death; and both he and his wife died penitent, and were assured of forgiveness by voice from heaven (see Tisch. *Evang. Apocr.* 449 f.). According to other accounts, Pilate's execution occurred under Nero (so Malalas, ed. Dind. 250 f.; and authorities quoted by Schürer. *op. cit.* 88 n.). The tendency of the tradition to represent both Pilate and his wife as embracing Christianity is easily understood, and is in contrast with the unsympathetic estimate of later times (cp Tertull. *Ap.* 21. *jam pro sua conscientia Christianus*, "already in conviction a Christian," at or immediately after Jesus' death; *Gosp. of Nic.* 2; *Orig. Hom. on Mt.* 35; Stanley, *East. Ch.*) Tradition gives the name of Pilate's wife as Claudia Procula or Procla, and by some she has been identified with the Claudia mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:21 [Underline added]

us Pilate convert Christianity?

Whether the underlined comments are true, it is interesting to consider. Claudia told Pilate about the dream she had that Jesus was innocent. We know she was considered a Roman Princess, being the granddaughter of Emperor Augustus. We read this in Matthew 27:19:

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

Keep these dynamics in mind as we ponder how Pilate wrestled for truth that day. That's it for this issue. Next issue, I will present the chapter "What is Truth" to show how Pilate got his answer.

Before I sign off, I want to address a Facebook issue that seems to be getting worse among the preterist groups. Recently I posted a chapter from my WordPress blog (victorynow2020) and posted it on FB. It was on the use of "*and this is*" by John. The thrust of the article was that every time the phrase was used, there was a cool blessing tied to Christ and the Kingdom. Here are three verses showing this:

John 17:3 "***and this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.***"

1 John 2:25 "***and this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.***"

1 John 5:4 "*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. **And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.***"

The second line of my post reads: "**This assumes the expression was based on the actual Greek words with none added for clarity**"—I even stated my conditions. I posted a link on Facebook and within five minutes I got this reply: "Way too many bad assumptions. The New Testament was not originally written in Greek. It was translated to Greek from Aramaic. Who the author is does nothing to change what was written."

What struck me as odd was he never mentioned the content of the chapter, and there was no recognition that I started the article with "this assumes." Only an immediate confrontation. Ironically, his reply also "assumes" every book in the New Testament was written in Aramaic. Further, if a particular author was the only one to use this phrase, then yes, it absolutely affects the meaning of what was written. A textual critic would argue the same author wrote the Gospel of John, the 3 Epistles of John, and The Revelation, thus strengthening the concept that Lazarus (John Eleazer) wrote all 5 works.

I tried to converse with the person, attempting to focus him back to the content and subject matter, but it got so out of hand I finally stopped replying. I get tired of this type of passive aggression from those just wanting to blast something out there before even reading the article, replying with a rebuttal as long as the original post. As if insulting me will create a desire to read their position.

As believers, we need to stop attacking and posting replies to things that miss the point. I know I've done it and have made enemies, so I guess that when the shoe is on the other foot, I don't like it so much! Ha. Tim Martin and I had a few heated replies on another topic, but somehow in the middle of sparring, the energy changed, and we suddenly found respect for each other. I really enjoyed his book *Beyond Creation Science* which I read back in 2013. Although I don't agree with everything in the book, we were able to connect on that and his rural Montana lifestyle.

Let's just practice civility and respect. If you don't like a post, move on. It does no good to argue with each other. Better yet, as I replied to this poster, go write your own book. Till next time! TJ ☙

1. <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12147-pilate-pontius>

2. https://archive.org/details/Encyclopaedia_Biblica_Vol_I_to_IV/EncyclodaediaBiblica_Vol_III/page/n3/mode/2up?q=pilate

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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!