

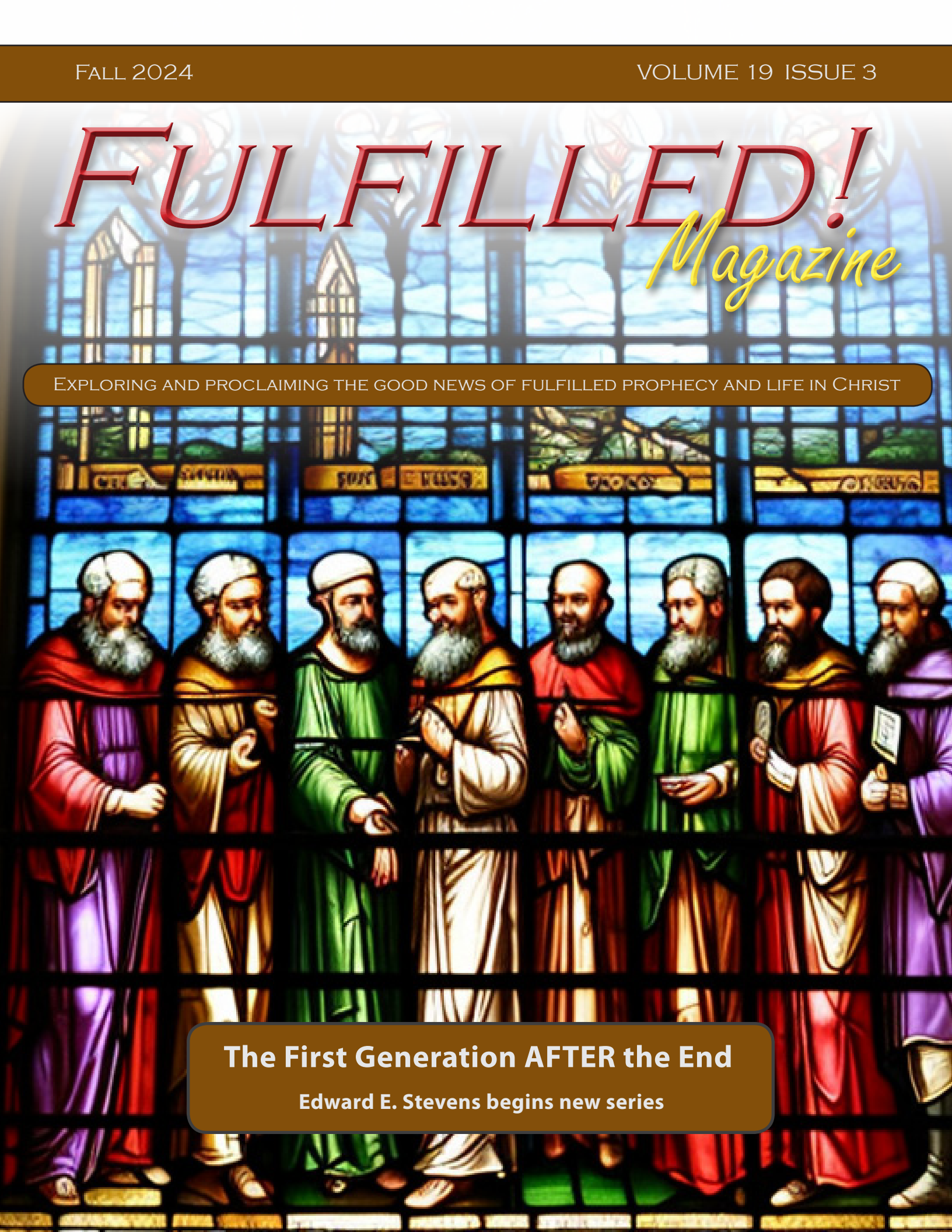
FULFILLED!

Magazine

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

The First Generation AFTER the End

Edward E. Stevens begins new series





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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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Reader Beware!

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Editor's Note...

HAPPY FALL! MY WIFE has been looking forward to this season and some of its main features: hayrides (especially for our 4-year-old daughter), pumpkins, changing colors, and cooler temperatures. Summer is my favorite season, followed closely by spring, but I will still embrace the fall season with all of its unique characteristics. Plus, we live in South Carolina. Compared to northeast Ohio where my wife and I grew up, the upcoming winter isn't so daunting.

As Brian mentioned in the previous edition (Summer 2024), I am now serving as the editor of *Fulfilled! Magazine*. It's an honor to serve in this role, and I'm grateful for the opportunity. Like many of you, I have been blessed by the contents of this magazine over the years. Brian and his wife have devoted an untold number of hours faithfully keeping up the regular production of this magazine. May God continue to be glorified through, and may many continue to be encouraged by, its production for many years to come.

In this issue, Ed Stevens returns with the first installment of a new series, "History After the End," covering events from Jewish and Christian history beyond the fall of Jerusalem and into the second century AD. In his article, "First Generation AFTER the End," Ed details his thoughts on a first-century rapture, a period of silence, what the saints were expecting to experience at the Parousia, and more. Believers in fulfilled eschatology have had divergent viewpoints on these matters, and may we be gracious toward one another as we continue to think through them.

In light of the sobering situation that has been unfolding in the Middle East with Israel and the Palestinians, Robert Cruickshank, Jr. addresses the misguided prediction that Gaza is about to be desolated according to Zephaniah 2:4. Robert demonstrates how all of the prophecies concerning ancient Gaza were fulfilled "in real time" many centuries ago. God has greater and better plans for that region of the world today, and I long to see more of the body of Christ actively partnering with Him to see those plans come to fruition.

TJ Smith's contribution to this issue is his take on Jesus and politics. How involved should we be politically while living and serving in God's kingdom, and what might that look like? TJ navigates questions about the extent to which Jesus and His disciples included "governments in their evangelistic playbook."

My contribution to this issue features the holiday, Parousia/New Jerusalem Day, which some in the preterist community have been celebrating annually in early August for nearly a decade. The date of this holiday corresponds with the time of the year that the temple fell in Jerusalem in AD 70, but we rejoice that God's dwelling place is in a new temple with Jesus as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Blessings in Christ,

Adam Maarschalk



Adam Maarschalk
Editor
editor@fulfillcg.com



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Mailbag...

Love your magazine, one of my few contacts spreading God's word of preterism. May God continue to bless your work.



I'm glad to hear that you have been able to have some help [by bringing Adam onboard as editor] in some needs and desires that you have been wanting to advance in. Keep up your good works! May He lead and guide you.



Thanks for all of the hard work that you and your staff put into making the magazine a great read! [Kayla and I are grateful that Adam has come onboard. Our staff has increased by 50%! - Brian.]



I'm in a Christian program called Prison Fellowship Academy. We are a group of seventy people inside one dormitory. The program is really excellent. There are many different views in here. I've told people about the preterist community. Nobody has ever heard of it.



MY PODCAST LISTENERS HAVE repeatedly urged me to explain the historical situation of Christianity immediately after AD 70, so this article will begin a new series focused on that *first generation after the End*.

The most remarkable feature of this period is the *silence* and *absence* of all true Christians. Prior to the Neronian persecution (the great tribulation), the apostles were extremely busy in missionary journeys, edifying the saints, and writing epistles to the scattered churches throughout the Roman Empire. But all of that activity abruptly ceased when the *Neronian persecution* broke onto the scene in AD 64. No more inspired New Testament writings were produced after that, nor were there any uninspired writings from any true Christians for almost 40 years.

The majority of living saints were either killed in the Neronian persecution or fell away in the apostasy, leaving alive *only a small remnant* scattered throughout the Roman world. Those remaining saints were forced into hiding as they anxiously waited for the tribulation to be *cut short* (Matt 24:22, 29; 1 Thess 1:6-10; 2 Thess 1:6-10) and for their *rescue* before the wrath was poured out (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9, 23; 2 Thess 1:5-10).

The tribulation was *cut short* by the outbreak of the Zealot rebellion in May of AD 66. And *immediately after that*, the angelic armies were seen in the sky over Judea, signaling that the Parousia had begun. Then two weeks later, on the evening of Pentecost in AD 66, those remaining living saints were *rescued* (caught up, gathered, saved) before the wrath was poured out on their persecutors (Matt 24:29-31; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9).

There Was a Silence Afterward!

Many historical theologians and patristic scholars are baffled by this *silent* and *dormant* period. Williston Walker noted that “the forty years from 70 to 110 remain one of the *obscurest* portions of church history” (*A History*

of the Christian Church, Third Edition, pp. 39ff). Wayne McCown described it as “an *obscure dark period* when [we are] not sure what was going on” (Lecture at *Northwestern Seminary*, Rochester, NY, on Sept. 16, 2004). Philip Schaff states that “there is no other transition in history so radical and sudden, and yet *so silent and secret*. The stream of [Christian history] is for a short time *lost to our view*, and seems to run underground” (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 2, electronic edition).

These scholars are at a loss to explain how and why “the original community . . . *disappeared from history without a trace*” (Hans Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, pp. 18, 111). They call it a “*gap*” (John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, p. 312).

C.F.D. Moule complained that “it is hard to believe that a Judaistic type of Christianity . . . would not have . . . *made capital* out of this signal evidence [destruction of Jerusalem] that they, and not non-Christian Judaism, were the true Israel. But in fact our traditions are *silent*” (*The Birth of the New Testament*, p. 123).

Rupert Furneaux asks: “How did Christianity record this event of epoch-making consequence to itself? The answer is by *silence, complete and absolute* . . . the fate of the original followers of Jesus went *unrecorded* in Christian literature until the fourth century” (*The Roman Siege of Jerusalem*, pp. 246-248).

Thus, it is no surprise that this silence poses a HUGE historical dilemma for all full preterists because futurists use it as evidence for a *non-occurrence of the end-time events*.

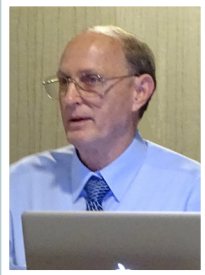
Dilemma for All Full Preterists

Of the 100-plus persons mentioned by name in the New Testament, not a single one of them ever reappeared after AD 70 to claim that the BIG THREE eschatological events had just occurred (*Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment*). We would have expected to hear from at least a few of

. . . futurists use [this silence] as evidence for a *non-occurrence of the end-time events*.

Series Introduction

Edward E. Stevens



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those who experienced those events if they were still around afterward. They should have been claiming the fulfillments with their eyewitness testimony. Instead, as Charles Hill notes, those pre-70 saints were completely *silent* after AD 70:

Perhaps we all know how things that should be at the center can slide off to the periphery. But this is not the case here. We do not even find this [full preterist] understanding of eschatology at the periphery. An early Christian writer who is even *aware* of a [full preterist] eschatology in the church *has yet to be found* (Keith Mathison, editor, *When Shall These Things Be?* p. 107).

Max King was aware of this *silence* and admitted that “we do not know what took place in the immediate post-apostolic period” (*The Cross and the Parousia*, p. 751). And Don Preston agrees that this *silence* is *perplexing* for all full preterists, and that he has “no easy answer” for it:

Stevens is correct to say that we have no [post-70 Christian] authors who point to AD 70 as the time of Christ’s final coming, the judgment, and resurrection of the dead. This silence is indeed perplexing . . . for which we have no easy answer (*We Shall Meet Him in the Air*, pp. 286, 287. Brackets added).

Thus, both major branches of full preterism (CBV and IBV) *agree* that there was a silence after AD 70, and that those *few faithful saints* who remained alive until the Parousia never showed up afterward to document the occurrence or claim the fulfillment. However, we *do not agree* about what caused that silence and absence, so let’s look at how each view explains it.

Collective Body View (CBV) Explanation of the Silence

The **CBV view**, as represented by Don K. Preston, suggests that one of the main reasons why *none* of the saints after AD 70 claimed fulfillment of the end-time events is because

“the *majority* of the church fell away” into Hellenistic error, which “resulted in a loss of understanding of Hebraic thought [CBV] before the Parousia” (*Morning Musings*, Mar. 19, 2012 and FaceBook group *Thing of the Past*, Aug. 2, 2021). In other words, “the church was so heavily influenced by Hellenistic thought that . . . the proper understanding of eschatology [CBV] was lost before the Parousia” so that “*very few faithful elect saints* were left alive at the time of the Parousia” (Facebook group *Thing of the Past*, July 31 and Aug. 2, 2021).

Preston was asked: Did any of those “*very few faithful*” remaining saints retain their understanding of CBV at the time of the Parousia, or had every one of them completely lost it before the Parousia just like *the majority* did? Preston quoted Luke 18:8 (“When the Son of Man comes, will he even find faith on the earth?”) and said “*it was doubtful*” whether Jesus found anyone faithful at His coming, much less anyone who understood the CBV view (Facebook group *Thing of the Past*, Aug. 3, 2021).

He also suggested that since all of the Christians after AD 70 were “Hellenized Greeks who did not understand the very nature of Hebraic Apocalyptic” [i.e., the CBV view], it explains why they “invented a new [Hellenistic-oriented] eschatology” (Facebook group *Thing of the Past*, April 2021; and *Morning Musings* #180. Romans 11. March 2012).

Thus, Preston seems to believe that every one of those *few remaining saints* lost their understanding of the CBV before the Parousia, and doubts whether Jesus found any faithful saints at His coming. However, this contradicts his other contention, based on Mark 9:1, that “Jesus is *patently* saying that *some* would live until the Parousia, beyond the Parousia, and look back in time [before they died] to *realize* that the Parousia had already happened” (*We Shall Meet Him in the Air*, p. 304).

. . . both major branches of full preterism (CBV and IBV) *agree* that there was a silence after AD 70 . . .

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First Generation AFTER

Edward E. Stevens

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Thus, on the one hand, CBV critics of the rapture claim that “some of those standing there” remained alive on earth after the Parousia with the ability to look back and realize that the Parousia had occurred. But, on the other hand, those same critics admit that not a single post-70 saint ever claimed that it occurred. Yet, in order for Jesus’ statements in Mark 9:1 to be true, at least some of them must have realized that the Parousia occurred. And, since there is no evidence of them realizing it on earth, we must conclude that they realized it in heaven after they were caught up to be with Christ.

We Have Enough Information

When I shared the above comments with Preston for his review before publication, he agreed that it is a “valid and true” representation of his position, but then noted that “since only a small percentage of the ancient writings have been translated, we simply do not know if any ancient sources recorded the fulfillment or not” (email, July 22, 2024).

While all of us full preterists continue to cherish the hope that an early church manuscript might one day be found which claims the fulfillment of all end-time events or reveals the post-70 saints’ awareness of the full preterist view, we need to face the probability that no such document ever existed in the first place. If all of those few faithful remaining saints were raptured, then none of them would have been left on earth afterward to write any documents or claim the fulfillments.

How Many Faithful Saints Remained?

We need to know how many faithful saints still remained alive at the Parousia. Both CBV and Individual Body View (IBV) agree that the Neronic persecution and apostasy eliminated the majority of remaining saints. However, there is disagreement about how many faithful saints remained alive at the Parousia.

CBV advocates tend to minimize the number because it is easier to explain how only a very few scattered saints might have failed to notice the Parousia. Nevertheless,

there are many indications in various New Testament texts that it was a more significant number.

For instance, dozens of expectations (see the list below) were given to a broad range of churches scattered all over the Roman empire, including Judea, Galilee, Syria, Turkey, Macedonia, Achaia, Italy, Colossae, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Cyprus, Crete, Egypt, Italy, and the seven churches of Asia. Even if there were only a handful of faithful saints left alive in each of those churches, it would amount to a very significant number — far more than CBV allows, and too many to believe that every single one of them forgot their expectations (mass amnesia), missed the end-time events, and failed to claim the fulfillments afterward.

Plus, we can see from their expectations below that those saints were NOT expecting to live through the end-time events without knowing afterward that they had occurred (as the CBV wants us to believe). Instead, they were fully expecting to cognitively experience those events.

And Jesus explicitly promised that not all of the saints would be killed in the great tribulation or fall away in the apostasy (Matt 24:21-24), but rather that the persecution would be “cut short” so that some would remain alive until the Parousia to be gathered by the angels (Matt 24:29-31). So, how many “elect” saints did the angels gather? It seems to imply a significant number, not just a small handful or none.

Don Preston uses Luke 18:8 to question whether Christ would find *anyone* faithful at His coming. But this verse cannot overturn the many other verses where Jesus and the Apostles clearly teach that there would still be “some” faithful saints left alive at His coming (see their expectations below). Thus, it wasn’t just a handful (or none) as Preston seems to think. *If no faithful saints were left alive at the time of the Parousia, then there would not have been any “elect” saints for the angels to gather!*

Furthermore, if there were no faithful saints remaining alive at the Parousia, that would mean that the collective body which was supposedly raised or changed at the Parousia included no living saints. However, those “living and remaining saints” were obviously not expecting to *all be dead* at the Parousia, since Paul had told them that “we are not all going to die” (1 Cor 15:51). Was Paul wrong?

Thus, it does not solve the silence dilemma for the CBV advocates to claim that the majority of the pre-70 saints

If no faithful saints were left alive at the time of the Parousia, then there would not have been any “elect” saints for the angels to gather!

were killed in the Neronic persecution, or fell away in the great apostasy, or were confused by the Hellenists, so that *very few* (or none) of them were still around at the time of the Parousia. The *majority* is not the *totality*. It means that *some* of them did remain alive to experience the Parousia and would have still been around afterward to claim the fulfillment if there was no rapture.

Nor can the CBV explain why the *few faithful saints*, who supposedly remained alive on earth after the Parousia, did not speak up to set the record straight when their post-70 brethren started teaching that the *big three* eschatological events were still future. So, since they were silent and absent afterward, it implies that they were taken to heaven. And that was exactly what they were expecting to experience at the Parousia. Here are their expectations:

What Were They Expecting?

- Relief from the persecution (2 Thess 1:7)
- SEE Christ at His coming (Matt 16:27-28; 1 John 3:2)
- Christ would come “in like manner” as He left (Acts 1:9-11)
- The dead would be raised out of Hades (Rev 20:13-15; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16)
- The living would be changed to be like Him (Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:51-52; 2 Cor 5:2-4; 1 John 3:2)
- The living would not experience physical death (1 Cor 15:51; cf. John 21:23)
- “clothed upon with our [immortal] dwelling from heaven” (2 Cor 5:2-4)
- “give life [immortality] to your mortal bodies” (Rom 8:11)
- Both living and dead would be caught up to be with Christ (1 Thess 4:17; Luke 21:28)
- Elect saints would be gathered by real angels (Matt 24:31; 2 Thess 2:1)
- Jesus would receive them to Himself in heaven (John 14:3)
- “not destined for wrath but for obtaining salvation” (1 Thess 5:9)
- Rescued before the wrath was poured out (1 Thess 1:9-10; Luke 21:36)
- Be like the angels who cannot die (Luke 20:36)
- Dwell with Him in prepared dwelling places (John 14:3)
- Eat and drink with Him at His table (Luke 22:30)
- Sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes (Matt 19:28)
- Judge the angels (1 Cor 6:3)

- Stand in the presence of Christ (Luke 21:36; Jude 24; 1 Thess 2:19)
- *Marvel* at Christ along with all believers (2 Thess 1:10)
- Rewarded in the presence of Christ (2 John 8; Col 3:24; Rev 11:8; 22:12)
- Fullness of knowledge and face to face clarity of understanding (1 Cor 13:12)
- Obtain salvation and eternal glory in heaven (2 Tim 2:10-11)
- “I will give you the crown of life” (immortality) (Rev 2:10)
- “crown of righteousness to all who loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8)
- Rewarded with “unfading crown of glory” at the Parousia (1 Pet 5:4)
- “revealed with Him in glory” (Col 3:4)
- Remain with Him forever afterward (1 Thess 4:17)

Note the intensity of their expectations:

- “looking for and *hastening* the coming (2 Pet 3:11-14)
- “Oh, our Lord come!” (1 Cor 16:22)
- “*How long*, O Lord?” (Rev 6:10)
- “Come [quickly], Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20)
- “we *eagerly wait* for a Savior” (Phil 3:20; Rom 8:25; Jude 21; 1 Cor 1:7-8; Heb 9:28)
- “anxious longing . . . groan within . . . longing to be clothed upon” (Rom 8:19, 23; 2 Cor 5:2-4)
- “cry to Him day and night” (Luke 18:7-8)
- “Fix your hope completely on it” (1 Pet 1:13)
- “loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8)
- “be alert, stay awake, be ready, looking for it” (Matt 24:42-44; Rev 16:15; 2 Pet 3:12-14)

In view of these very explicit and intense expectations, how can anyone believe that those remaining saints (the elect) could have missed the end-time events when they occurred, or shrugged them off as unimportant, or walked away never to mention them again? This silence about the fulfillments becomes even more strange and inexplicable when we see other Christians in the late first and early second century claiming that the Parousia was still future! Why didn't those saints who experienced those events, and who were supposedly still on earth, speak up and set the record straight? Their *silence* points unmistakably to their *absence* — gone, taken to heaven, no longer on earth!

From the above list of expectations, it is apparent that the saints living before the Parousia were anxiously awaiting His return, groaning within themselves, and longing to be clothed with their immortal bodies. They

...continued on page 13

For Gaza will be abandoned, and Ashkelon will become a desolation; the inhabitants of Ashdod will be driven out at noon, and Ekron will be uprooted.
(Zephaniah 2:4)

THOSE WHO REMEMBER THE show 24, starring Keifer Sutherland, cannot forget its classic opening sequence. With the counting of a digital clock, Jack Bauer informs the viewer that “events occur in real time.”² In like manner, the purveyors of pop-prophecy have their own clock, and the establishment of Israel as a nation (May 14, 1948) set that clock ticking.³ Since then, they continue to assure their viewers that prophetic events are occurring in real time, and the final episode of their apocalyptic thriller is soon to air.

With the recent escalation of violence in Gaza, forcing 85% of its population to flee,⁴ Zephaniah 2:4 is the screenplay for the show’s latest installment. As Maarten De Zeeuw says, “Zephaniah 2:4-5 proves to be popular whenever there are problems in and around the Gaza Strip.”⁵ True to form, a pop-prophecy article titled “Gaza Abandoned = Zephaniah 2:4 Fulfilled?” follows script. The writer starts off by saying that he is merely “chewing on the prospect that we have just witnessed the literal fulfillment of Zephaniah 2:4.”⁶ By the end of the article, however, prophetic speculation reaches full-scale escalation. With confidence, he claims that biblical prophecy ensues with every shift of today’s real-time news:

“Gaza City is a bombed out shell of its former self and the entire population has been ordered to evacuate (all 1.1 million Gazans north of the Wadi Gaza). We happen to be alive at the specific point in history when the words of the Prophets pertaining to the Day of the LORD, the Tribulation, and the Second Coming of Christ are being fulfilled in real time, literally. Tick-tock.”⁷

While we can almost hear Jack Bauer’s voice in the “real time” reference as the clock ticks, the pop-prophecy approach to Zephaniah 2:4 is more like the movie *Ground Hog Day* than an episode of 24. The truth is, the Old Testament Gaza prophecies have already been fulfilled, in real time, *in the past*.

Along with Zephaniah, three other Old Testament prophets speak of coming judgments upon Gaza. A brief look at each prophecy, in conjunction with the real-time events surrounding it, makes it clear that there’s

nothing to see here, at least not in terms of seeing these prophecies fulfilled in today’s times. There’s actually much to see in terms of their fulfillment in Biblical times.

Gaza in Amos

Following the Gaza prophecies in chronological order, the first comes to us by way of the prophet Amos. He opens his oracle against the nations with a focus on Damascus (Amos 1:3-5) and then immediately takes aim at Gaza (Amos 1:6-7). “For three transgressions of Gaza and for four” (Amos 1:6), says Amos, the Lord will “send fire upon the wall of Gaza” and “consume her citadels” (Amos 1:7).

For a pop-prophecy “instructor” like Wayne J. Edwards, this “fire” points to “nuclear weapons” in “an apocalyptic war.”⁸ However, the fire of which Amos spoke blazed strong and burned out long ago. Prophesying in 760 BC, Amos’s oracle (Amos 1:6-7) would have been fulfilled in the campaigns of Sargon II in 722-705 BC. In 720 BC, Sargon subdued and conquered Gaza—exiling its king, Hanun, to Assyria.⁹ Amos’s prophecy was fulfilled in real time, in the times of the past.

Gaza in Zephaniah and Jeremiah

Gaza makes its next appearance, by way of prophetic oracle, in the writings of Zephaniah (640 - 609 BC)¹⁰ and Jeremiah (627-587 BC).¹¹ Being contemporaries in the same timeframe in biblical history, these two prophets overlap historically. This being the case, Zephaniah’s Gaza prophecy was Jeremiah’s Gaza prophecy and vice versa.¹²

With that said, Gaza is listed among the nations that will stagger from the cup of the Lord’s hand and go mad because of the sword being sent upon them in Jeremiah



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25:15-19. Then, in Jeremiah 47:2, the prophet focuses on Gaza with real-time, chronological precision:

“The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh conquered Gaza” (Jer 47:2).

Jeremiah’s real-time reference to the headlines of his day pinpoints exactly when these events were underway. By this time, Gaza was under Babylonian control. But things were about to change. After bouncing back from a resounding Egyptian defeat by Babylon in 605 BC (the famous Battle of Carchemish), Pharaoh Neco¹³ was able to take Gaza in 601 BC—forcing the Babylonians to withdraw back to their homeland.¹⁴



Without a historical judgment upon Gaza, in real time and in their own time, Jeremiah 47:2 would have been meaningless in the original audience’s time. If Gaza’s demise (in the time of Zephaniah and Jeremiah) awaited the current Israel-Hamas crisis, Jeremiah’s time marker makes zero sense. The bottom line? We can’t ignore

real-time fulfillment for the sake of the prophecy puppets’ hopes and dreams of modern-time fulfillment.

Gaza in Zechariah

Lastly, Gaza’s final showing in the prophetic lineup comes by way of Zechariah (520 BC). Zechariah 9:5 states that *“Gaza will writhe in great pain”* and *“the king will perish from Gaza.”* A little over 200 years later, “Alexander the Great destroyed the city again in 332 BC, after a lengthy battle.”¹⁵ In short, all of the Gaza prophecies that the prophecy purveyors appeal to have been fulfilled in the pages of history’s past. Taken in context, the Gaza prophecies have nothing to do with our modern context. And this is precisely why the prophecy pundits ignore the prophecies’ historical context.

Gaza in Pop-Prophecy

Banking on the fact that the gullible Christian public is unfamiliar with the facts, the prophecy pundits routinely and conveniently ignore these facts. For example, Craig Crawford says:

“Through the prophet Zephaniah, God warned Gaza would one day be ‘forsaken’ (yes, that same Gaza you have recently been watching on the world news) . . . With today’s news and headlines, it may be a good time to start taking the Bible seriously.”¹⁶

But interpreting the Bible via today’s headlines is no way to do hermeneutics, and fear of Armageddon is no reason to study it. For all too many, however, this is all they know. It’s all they’ve been taught. And it’s all for one reason—to sell sensationalism.

Narcissism runs rampant in Evangelicalism. It’s all about us and our ticket on the rapture bus. Historical circumstance and audience relevance go out the door, in hopes that we’ll soon take flight and soar. According to pop-prophecy, any turmoil on the Gaza strip means that we’ll soon be taking the ultimate trip. This is what it’s all about for them, and this is all it’s ever been about.

Chris Lehmann puts it this way: “. . . for many in the American evangelical world, the news out of Gaza is a crucial foretaste of redemption—the prelude to the final battle for earthly power, to be followed by Armageddon and the Rapture.”¹⁷ As *Rolling Stone* reports, what should be viewed as “a humanitarian crisis” becomes “an occasion for celebration”¹⁸ for those of the pop-prophecy persuasion.

This being the case, even efforts for peace in the region are viewed as just another episode in the prophecy show’s final season. According to Lee Fang, “. . . several prominent evangelical preachers are already warning their audiences that anyone trying to broker a cease-fire or peace agreement in the Gaza war could well be the Antichrist, just like in the *Left Behind* novels.”¹⁹

The problem here is that the theology behind those *Left Behind* novels is indeed “novel”—having little to no resemblance to the biblical model. Nonetheless, the prophecy pundits keep their audience going by getting

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the apocalyptic juices flowing. In the wake of the Israel-Hamas war and the situation in Gaza, Greg Laurie goes into full-throttle Jack Bauer mode: “Fasten your seat belt . . . you’re seeing Bible prophecy fulfilled in your lifetime, in real-time before your very eyes.”²⁰

Zeph 2:4 and Gaza

Robert E. Cruickshank

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What Laurie and his ilk are doing to the word of God is truly lamentable. There is tremendous apologetic value in coupling biblical prediction with historical fulfillment. It demonstrates divine inspiration. But sadly, for the pop-prophecy pundits, the Gaza prophecies are nothing more than ever-changing plot rewrites in their apocalyptic narrative. Passages like Jeremiah 25:17–20, 47:2; Zephaniah 2:4; and Zechariah 9:5 become late-season installments leading up to the season finale—the Rapture episode. And this has the binge-watching viewers on the edge of their seats.

But these prophecies were already fulfilled, in real time, in their own time. And it’s time to change the channel on the pop-prophecy show, in real time, in our own time. Only then can we start fulfilling our role in this world, in real time, instead of waiting for the end time. This article was written in real time. †

1. Many thanks to Johannes Hildebrandt for his original question on my previous Zephaniah article, and to Michael Karris for his excellent answer which prompted this article (https://www.facebook.com/groups/PreteristDoctrine/posts/7633935466676535/?comment_id=25314677521509057&reply_comment_id=25315840894726053¬if_id=1715207626724950¬if_t=group_comment_mention). The final form of this article would not be what it is without a little help from my friends. Thanks to Eric Ogea and Brett Prieto for their feedback on the early draft. A tip of the hat to Brian Godawa for his content suggestions. Last but certainly not least, thanks to Jan Logsdon for her editorial magic.
2. <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/osHU6YSGqns>
3. For example, Greg Laurie writes: “But here’s where students of Bible prophecy should pay attention. The Bible tells us in the end times that Israel would be scattered and regathered. This has happened, and this really was the sign that set the prophetic clock ticking. On the heels of the Holocaust, who would have ever thought that these Jewish people who lost six million lives to the Nazis would somehow regather in their homeland, but it happened, against all odds. And on May 14, 1948, Israel became a nation.” Greg Laurie (October 13, 2023). *War in Israel: A Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy?* <https://harvest.org/resources/gregs-blog/post/war-in-israel-a-fulfillment-of-bible-prophecy/>.
4. <https://www.hi.org/en/news/bombings-in-populated-areas--a-new-extreme-reached-in-gaza>
5. <https://medium.com/@maartendezeeuw/zephaniah-2-4-5-proves-to-be-popular-when-ever-there-are-problems-in-and-around-the-gaza-strip-7b3decd56253>
6. <https://theblogginghounds.com/2023/12/08/gaza-abandoned-zephaniah-24-fulfilled/>
7. <https://theblogginghounds.com/2023/12/08/gaza-abandoned-zephaniah-24-fulfilled/>
8. <https://theheritagechurch.org/sermon/the-prophetic-significance-of-the-israel-gaza-war/>
9. Abraham Malamat. “The Historical Setting of Two Biblical Prophecies on the Nations.” *Israel Exploration Journal* 1.3 (1950), p. 150.
10. <https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-minor-prophets/zephaniah>
11. <https://web-japan.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-prophet-jeremiah/>, <https://www.captivefaith.org/prisoners-of-the-bible-era/jeremiah/#:~:text=The%20prophet%20Jeremiah%20was%20a,that%20could%20have%20killed%20him>. The book has its beginnings in the preaching of Jeremiah to the people of Israel during the period from 627 B.C.E. to shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E.” (Terence E. Fretheim): <https://enterthebible.org/courses/jeremiah/lessons/background-of-jeremiah/#:~:text=The%20initial%20writing%20takes%20place,much%20of%20which%20is%20poetry>.
12. Regarding the judgments on the other territories mentioned in Zephaniah 2:4-7, see <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/zeph/zeph-2/zephaniah-24-7>
13. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Necho_II
14. Eric Peels. “Before Pharaoh seized Gaza: A Reappraisal of the Date, Function, and Purpose of the Superscription of Jeremiah 47.” *Vetus Testamentum* 63.2 (2013): 308; See also: Holtz, Shalom E. “A Different Kind of Horror in Jeremiah’s Prophecy to the Philistines (Jeremiah 47).” *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 10.3-4 (2022): 286-292. <https://repository.yu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/063c7e3c-299b-4b56-952c-4eaaf20f2aab/content>
15. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Gaza-in-the-Bible.html>
16. Crawford, Craig. *Bible Prophecy: Israel Gaza & Jerusalem: God’s Ticking Time Bomb* (pp. 12, 16). Kindle Edition.
17. <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/american-evangelicals-israel-gaza/>
18. <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/political-commentary/gaza-war-evangelical-leaders-cheer-end-world-1234884151/>
19. <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/american-evangelicals-israel-gaza/>
20. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/greg-laurie-talks-potential-fulfillment-of-bible-prophecy-israel.html>

were *looking for* and *hastening the day*, and *fixed their hope completely* upon it. It was not something that those saints could miss. It was like lightning flashing across the whole sky (Matt 24:27; Luke 17:24).

They were told that they would not only be consciously aware of Christ's return, but that they would SEE the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven and sending His angels to gather them. He told the 12 apostles that all of them (both dead and alive) would be received to Himself, sit on 12 thrones, and dwell in the places He had prepared for them in heaven.

Before the saints could be caught up to be with Christ, their lowly (mortal) bodies had to be changed (transformed) into immortal to be like Christ's glorious, immortal body. The dead were raised first, then the living were changed, and together as one group they were caught up to be with Christ in heaven forever afterward.

They would not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (1 John 2:28), but rather draw near and glorify Him on that day and *marvel at Him* in the presence of all believers (2 Thess 1:10). They would rejoice with exultation when they stood before the Son of Man in His glorious presence at the Parousia, and from that time forward they would always be with the Lord in heaven above (1 Thess 4:17).

These were their great expectations, and if they were not cognitively experienced in the manner these Scriptures indicate, then they would not only have been disappointed, but disillusioned, outraged, and complaining about it. So, they must have experienced those things, or else Jesus and the apostles were false prophets.

What Are the Odds?

If anyone wishes to claim that there were a *few faithful saints* left alive at the Parousia who still retained the CBV view, or somehow recovered their understanding of it afterward, we would still have to wonder why they didn't correct the error of the Hellenists and resume their teaching of the CBV after AD 70. And if that had happened, we would know about the existence of CBV and see the controversy about it recorded in church history. But, as we all know, there is no record of either the *controversy*, or the *correction* of the Hellenistic error, or the *continued teaching* of the CBV.

What are the chances that every single saint left alive after the Neronian persecution fell away into Hellenistic apostasy and completely lost not only their *understanding* of CBV, but also their *memory* of ever having believed it (simultaneous mass amnesia), and their *awareness* that there ever was such a view as the CBV? The possibility of that happening has to be close to zero. Yet, that appears to be what Don Preston believes. But, as Charles Hill suggests, there is an *astounding irony* here:

The dreaded and nearly fatal "Hellenization" of the gospel is supposed to have struck the church, according to [the CBV view], concurrently with the church's attainment of its ultimate state of perfection. It does not seem to me that one can have it both ways. If one wants to argue for a radical nosedive of the church [into Hellenistic apostasy] as soon as the apostles left the scene somewhere around A.D. 70, then I do not see how one can argue that it was precisely then that the church also attained the consummation of its hope, its full measure of knowledge and sanctification, [and] its final state of conformity to the image of Christ (*When Shall These Things Be?* p. 109).

Many, I trust, will find that conclusions like these place too high a demand on their credulity, especially when to read the New Testament in a way that preserves a more or less traditional [interpretation] makes infinitely better sense (*When Shall These Things Be?* p. 107).

Indeed! I could not agree more with Hill's analysis of the CBV Hellenistic apostasy theory. The traditional view of a rapture makes "infinitely better sense" in view of their *expectations beforehand* and their *silence afterward*.

And, since they *experienced* what they were expecting to experience, then *they knew* that the Parousia had occurred, and would have *claimed the fulfillment* if they were still alive on earth. But, since there were no such claims afterward, it necessarily implies that they were *taken to heaven* at the Parousia, just as Jesus promised, and just as they had expected. †

First Generation AFTER

Edward E. Stevens

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Perspectives

ALTHOUGH IT WASN'T ANNOUNCED in the average wall calendar, the 9th annual celebration of Parousia – New Jerusalem Day took place on August 4, 2024. Groups of believers celebrated in various ways in Marietta, Georgia; Long Island, New York; St. Louis, Missouri; Sharon, West Virginia; Chennai, India; and elsewhere. They hold in common a belief in fulfilled eschatology and a belief that Jesus is currently present with His people in the New Jerusalem.

The idea for this holiday came from Joshua John Trent (Iron Scepter Worldwide Ministries), and this was the original announcement in advance of the first official celebration:

Parousia — New Jerusalem Day will be celebrated for the first time on August 7, 2016 (the first Sunday in August). On August 10th, AD 70, the Second Temple fell in Jerusalem. Jesus is the cornerstone of a new temple, God's dwelling place made up of people from all nations (Eph 2:19-22). "Parousia" is Greek for "presence." We celebrate the presence of Jesus in New Jerusalem, the city of God, where Jesus dwells today with His people (Rev 21:3; 2 Cor 6:16).

Some have worn purple (representing royal dominion) and/or gold (representing purity). Other practices have included giving away something old (to charity) and obtaining something new (representing the new covenant). There was a website devoted to this holiday that was accidentally taken down, but hopefully it can be restored. In August 2016, a total of 253 people located in the United States, India, and Russia checked in at a page on that website to confirm that they participated in the first celebration.

The following is adapted from an article that Joshua John Trent asked me to write nine years ago regarding the meaning of this holiday's name (originally published on the website that is currently down):

Parousia – New Jerusalem Day is celebrated on the first Sunday of August. This is close to August 10th, the day that the Second Temple was destroyed in Jerusalem in AD 70. While the old temple and the old city of Jerusalem were desolate (Matt 23:38) and marked for destruction (Matt 22:7, 24:1-3; Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:5-7), Jesus became the cornerstone of a new temple, God's dwelling place made up of His people from all nations (Eph 2:19-22). New Jerusalem and the new covenant were chosen while earthly Jerusalem and the old covenant were cast out (Gal 4:21-31).

Definition of the Word "Parousia"

The word *parousia* (pronounced *par-oo-see'-ah*) is a Greek word which means "presence." It also means "arrival" or "official visit," and "was used in the East as a technical expression to denote the arrival or visit of a king or emperor, and celebrated the glory of the sovereign publicly."¹ The word *parousia* appears 24 times in the New Testament.² It is used to speak of the coming or presence of various individuals: Stephanas, Fortunatas, and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17); Titus (2 Cor 7:6-7); Paul (2 Cor. 10:10; Phil 1:26, 2:12); and the lawless one (2 Thess 2:9).

In the majority of instances (16 times), though, it is used in connection with the promise of Christ's coming. This word comes "from the present participle of G3918 [*pareimi*]; a being near, i.e. advent (often, return; specially, of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked); (by implication) physically, aspect: — coming, presence."³

"Parousia" in the New Testament

Here are the 16 New Testament passages (NKJV) where Christ's *parousia* is promised:

1. "Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of **Your coming**, and of the end of the age?'" (Matt 24:3).
2. "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will **the coming** of the Son of Man be" (Matt 24:27).
3. "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will **the coming** of the Son of Man be" (Matt 24:38-39).
4. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at **His coming**" (1 Cor 15:22-23).
5. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at **His coming**?" (1 Thess 2:19).
6. "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at **the coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (2 Thess 3:12-13).

Parousia — New Jerusalem Day

Adam Maarschalk

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7. “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until **the coming** of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep” (1 Thess 4:15).

8. “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at **the coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23).

9. “Now, brethren, concerning **the coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come” (2 Thess 2:1-2).

10. “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of **His coming**” (2 Thess 2:8).

11 - 12. “Therefore be patient, brethren, until **the coming** of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for **the coming** of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (James 5:7-9).

13. “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and **coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

14. “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle... that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of **His coming**? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation’” (2 Peter 3:1-4).

15. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what

*manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening **the coming** of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:10-13).*

16. “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at **His coming**” (1 John 2:28).

More than 100 passages in the New Testament declared that the events of the last days, including the Great Tribulation and the coming of Christ, were “near” and about to take place “soon” in the first century.⁴ Jesus stated that the time would come when, upon seeing all the things He predicted taking place (earthquakes, wars, famines, etc.), His listeners could recognize that He was “near, at the very door” (Matt 24:33). James recognized this very thing and declared that the Judge was “standing right at the door” (James 5:8-9).

N. T. Wright explains in his book, *Surprised by Hope* (2008), the typical use of the word *parousia* in the first century AD:

When the emperor visited a colony or province, the citizens of the country would go to meet him at some distance from the city. It would be disrespectful to have him actually arrive at the gates as though his subjects couldn’t be bothered to greet him properly. When they met him, they wouldn’t then stay out in the open country: **they would escort him royally into the city itself.** When Paul speaks of “meeting” the Lord “in the air,” the point is precisely not – as in the popular rapture theology – that the saved believers would then stay up in the air somewhere, away from earth. **The point is that, having gone out to meet their returning Lord, they will escort him royally into his domain, that is, back to the place they have come from.** Even when we realize that this is highly charged metaphor, not literal description, the meaning is the same as in the parallel in Philippians 3:20. Being citizens of heaven, as the Philippians would know, doesn’t mean that one is expecting to go back to the mother city but rather means that **one is expecting the emperor to come from the mother city to give the colony its full dignity, to rescue it if need be, to subdue local enemies and put everything to rights** (pp. 132-133, emphasis added).

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“Parousia” Is Closely Connected with “New Jerusalem”

In Revelation 21:1 - 22:5, we read that *“the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God”* (Rev 21:3). We also see that the Lamb, Jesus, is the light of God’s city (Rev 21:22-24; 22:5). New Jerusalem is filled with the presence (*parousia*) of Jesus; New Jerusalem is His dwelling place.

New Jerusalem

Isaiah prophesied that God would create new heavens and a new earth, and *“Jerusalem as a rejoicing”* (Isa 65:17-18). In those days, there would still be childbirth, death, building, and planting (Isa 65:20-23), i.e., the realities we know and experience today. There would also be joy, peace, satisfaction, glory, and comfort like a mother’s comfort (Isa 65:19, 66:10-13).

The apostle Paul likewise described *“the Jerusalem above”* as a comforting mother (Gal 4:26-28). The author of Hebrews told the first-century saints that they had already come to *“the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant . . .”* (Heb 12:22-24). These two passages, along with the book of Revelation, contrast two covenants (the old and the new), two women (the harlot and the bride), and two cities (old Jerusalem and New Jerusalem):

New Covenant

Adam Maarschalk

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Bible Passage	Two Cities/Mountains	Two Women	Two Covenants
Galatians 4:21-31	<i>“. . . and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage . . . but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.”</i>	<i>“. . . this Hagar is Mount Sinai . . . Cast out the bondswoman and her son, for the son of the bondswoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then brethren we are not children of the bondswoman but of the free.”</i>	<i>“For these are the two covenant: the one from Mount Sinai . . .”</i>
Hebrews 12:18-29	<i>“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched . . . But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”</i>		<i>“For you have not come to [Mount Sinai] . . . But you have come to . . . Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.”</i>
Book of Revelation	<i>“. . . the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified . . . standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!”</i> <i>“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”</i>	<i>“Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot . . . and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.”</i> <i>“. . . the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready . . . Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”</i>	<i>“Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” (imagery of Mount Sinai — see Exodus 19).</i>

Numerous parallels can be made between John’s vision of New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1 – 22:5) and the descriptions of the new covenant made by Jesus, the apostles, and even some of the Old Testament prophets. Among them are the following⁵:

Passage	Description and Parallels
Rev 21:2	New Jerusalem is God's holy city, pictured as a bride. Jesus said that His people are a city set on a hill, the light of the world (Matt 5:14; see also Heb 12:22-24, Gal 4:26).
Rev 21:3	God dwells with His people, He is with them, and He is their God. See Ezekiel 37:27, 43:7, 48:35; 2 Corinthians 6:16.
Rev 21:9	John sees the New Jerusalem as a bride, the Lamb's wife. He contrasts the bride with the harlot/great city of Revelation 17, old covenant Jerusalem (Rev 11:8). Paul also contrasted two women/two covenants in Galatians 4:21-31.
Rev 21:12-13	The new Jerusalem has a high wall with 12 gates, bearing the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, three gates each on the east, north, south, and west sides. Compare to Isaiah 60:18, Luke 13:29, and to Ezekiel 48:30-35 (" <i>...and the name of the city from that day shall be: THE LORD IS THERE.</i> ")
Rev 21:14	The city's foundations bear the names of the 12 apostles. Compare to Ephesians 2:20.
Rev 21:15-18	The new Jerusalem in John's vision is cube-shaped, as was the holy of holies in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:20). The holy of holies was overlaid with pure gold, and the holy city in John's vision is also entirely made of pure gold.
Rev 21:19-21	The foundations of the city walls are covered in precious gems. See Isaiah 54:11-12, and note that Paul clearly affirms that Isaiah 54 is about the church (Gal 4:26-27).
Rev 21:22-23	Jesus is the temple and the light of this city. See Isaiah 60:19.
Rev 21:24	The nations of those who are saved walk in the light of this city. See Isaiah 60:3, 10.
Rev 21:25-26	The gates of the city are never shut, and the glory and honor of the nations come in to the city. See Isaiah 60:5, 11.
Rev 21:27	Only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life enter this city. See Isaiah 60:21.
Rev 22:1	A pure, clear river of water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. See John 4:13-14, 7:37; Zechariah 14:8; Revelation 22:17.
Rev 22:2	On both sides of the river is the tree of life, which bears different fruit each month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. See Ezekiel 47:1-12.
Rev 22:5	There's no night in the city, and no need for a lamp. See Isaiah 60:1, 19-20; Daniel 12:3, Matthew 13:43, John 8:12. The citizens of New Jerusalem reign forever and ever. See Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 1:33, Revelation 1:6.

The New Jerusalem means "the new city of peace."⁶ Jesus' presence, His *parousia*, is in this city. He is the Prince of Peace, and there will be no end to His government and peace (Isa 9:6-7); He is peace (Mic 5:5). Let's rejoice and celebrate, not only annually on the first Sunday of August, but also every day that His presence is in our midst, in the city of God, the New Jerusalem. ✝

1. Gustav Adolf Deissmann (1908). *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*.
2. https://biblehub.com/greek/strongs_3952.htm
3. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3952/kjv/tr/0-1/>
4. <https://adammaarschalk.com/2013/07/23/101-preterist-time-indicators/>
5. For an expanded view of these parallels, see <https://adammaarschalk.com/2016/03/26/long-island-conference-what-was-the-purpose-of-the-end-times-part-2/>
6. <https://adammaarschalk.com/2016/05/25/the-vision-of-the-old-testament-prophets-for-this-new-covenant-age-preterist-conference-call/>

POLITICS IS HEATING UP in Facebook preterist groups. I'm reading both sides and decided to add my two cents. This is taken from Vol. 3 of my series on "Understanding the Bible for Average Christians" available at www.tjsmithministries.com.

In 2014, some members of our church gathered at the pastor's home for a small dinner with some of the young adults. One of the millennials (28 at the time) and I were having a conversation about politics. I will call this young man "Bob."

Bob did not believe Christians should be involved in politics. He maintained that we serve a King, and His kingdom is spiritual. Therefore, Bob was flippant about where the nation was heading.

I pressed him about who he voted for. He admitted he had never voted in any election. Now, he had been eligible to vote for the previous 10 years, yet never once exercised his right. That's three presidential elections, plus mid-terms, state and local. Ok, fine. His choice. Leave that to the informed, concerned citizens who care about the country they live in.

I should add a disclaimer: not all millennials think this way. All four of our adult children and their spouses vote and participate in the political process.

Bob had a college education and spent his 20's traveling in the World Race, being financed by churches, Mom and Dad. He visited foreign countries, staying in hostels, experiencing the local culture and cuisine. I got the feeling his idea of Christianity was seeing Jesus as a social justice superhero, out to right the wrongs of our society (as he interpreted right and wrong).

Bob preferred not attending church, but rather hanging out in boutique coffee shops discussing the cool things Jesus did and the principles He stood for.

Bob did enjoy worship and I admired him for that. Yet, his preferred choice of worship was to go to the church by himself and worship alone. Again, nothing wrong with that. We all need quiet time with God. However, most Sunday mornings he would arrive either late to corporate worship or walk in after worship time was totally over. I know because I was leading worship and would see him shuffle in.

I do see the same attitude among other millennials. This ideology has been bred into this age group by Rockefeller's public education system and radical leftist factions that have us currently sitting at #31 globally for best education. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo even stated on August 15th, 2018, "America has never been that great."

I'm sorry if you disagree, but you can read more about this in my book "Where Now? The Church and Homosexuality" (www.tjsmithministries.com). In it, I describe how Critical Theory has undermined our freedoms and patriotism.

Bob's only reference point to this magnificent and majestic exceptionalism of America was shaped during his formative years under the Obama Administration and the most liberal,

anti-American educational system in history. It was no surprise that he held the concept of American pride and nationalism at such an appallingly anemic level of indifference. It just didn't matter to him what was going on in his country. He served a much higher King.

The next day I chatted with the pastor about the conversation, and he too was surprised to hear Bob nonchalantly express disdain for the political system.

This got me thinking about Yeshua. What did the Messiah really believe about the Good News? Sure, He taught that they should give honor to Caesar and to God, but neither of those episodes should inspire a millennial to reject casting a vote. Maybe Bob took his cue from the events that arose while Jesus was standing before Pilate? Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world . . ." (John 18:36 MLV).

Building a belief about politics, using the statements that Christ gave about His kingdom, does not affirm political dodging.

A major reason for the decline and reversal of victories won and bestowed on America via Christianity can be directly linked to the vacuum created by Christians snubbing politics. You may have been taught that we should just sell flowers at the airport and leave the democratic process to the wicked.

Ok, enough about the current problems. Did Yeshua and His disciples include governments in their evangelistic playbook? I hope you will conclude that your child or grandchild could serve God by running for office and continue cleaning the swamp for future generations. Here we go!

The following verses are from the MLV Bible:

"And you will also be led in front of governors and kings because of me, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles" (Matt 10:18).

If Jesus wasn't concerned about leaders ruling under the influence of Yahweh, why would He care one way or the other? Why would He be concerned with earthly governments? Here is what John Gill commented about this passage:

Meaning Roman governors; as Paul was taken before Gallio, Felix, and Festas; for judgments relating to life and death were to be taken away, and were taken away from the Jewish Sanhedrim; and as they themselves say. As Herod, Agrippa, Nero, Domitian, and others, before whom one or other of the apostles were brought; not as thieves, or murderers, or traitors, and seditious persons, or for having done any wrong or injury to any man's person or property; but purely for the sake of Christ, for the profession of their faith in him, and for preaching his Gospel; of all which they had no reason to be ashamed, nor were they.

Here is Albert Barnes' commentary on this same passage:

Peter is said to have been brought before Nero, and John before Domitian, Roman emperors; and others before

Jesus and Politics

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Parthian, Scythian, and Indian kings. They were to stand there to bear a testimony against them; or, as it might be rendered, to them. That is, they were to be “witnesses to them” of the great facts and doctrines of the Christian religion; and if they rejected Christianity, they would be witnesses “against” them in the day of judgment. The fulfillment of this prophecy is a signal evidence that Christ possessed a knowledge of the future. Few things were more improbable when this was uttered than that the fishermen of Galilee would stand before the illustrious and mighty monarchs of the East and the West.

Let’s look at some more passages:

“But the Lord said to him, Travel on, because this one is a chosen vessel for me to bear my name in the sight of the gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel, for I will be showing him how much it is essential for him to suffer on behalf of my name” (Acts 9:15-16).

Why did Jesus have to go to such extremes just to prove to Paul how much suffering he would have to go through? And why kings? Again, what’s up with Jesus and governments? Lighten up, bro!

“For there stood beside me this night a messenger of the God, whose I am, to whom I also am giving divine service to, saying, ‘Do not fear, Paul; it is essential for you to stand-before Caesar. . . .” (Acts 27:23-24).

“And from thereon, they asked for a king. And God gave to them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And having removed him, he lifted up David to be king to them; to whom he also testified and said, I found David the son of Jesse, a man according to my own heart, who will be practicing all my will” (Acts 13:21-23).

Wait! Hold on! Why is God concerned about some government leader who would “practice all HIS will?” I thought YHWH didn’t want us involved in politics? Yet, here He is, interfering and giving the people Saul, then taking him out and placing David on the throne.

“But Paul said, ‘I am standing in front of Caesar’s judicial-seat, where it is essential for me to be judged. I did not wrong the Jews, as you also fully well know. For if I indeed am wronging anyone, and have practiced anything worthy of death, I do not renounce to die, but if there is nothing of what these are accusing me; no one is able to grant me to them. I myself am appealing to Caesar.’ Then Festus, having spoken together with the council, answered, “You yourself have appealed to be in front of Caesar, then you will be traveling to Caesar.” (Acts 25:10-12).

“King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.’ But Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Are you persuading me to become a Christian in few words?’ But Paul said, ‘I would pray to God, that both in a few words or in many words, not only

you, but also all who hear me today, are to become such: what sort of person I am, except-for these bonds.’ And after Paul said these things, the king and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting together with them stood up” (Acts 26:27-30).

Here is yet another example of Paul’s understanding of the call to influence those in charge.

“Greet every holy-one in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are together with me greet you. All the holy ones greet you, especially those who are from the house of Caesar” (Phil 4:21-22).

This passage shows that Paul was doing everything possible to reach those considered influential to policy making, leadership, and cultural shaping.

Let’s move to John’s understanding and the instruction he was given:

“And they are saying to me, ‘It is essential for you to prophesy again over many peoples and nations and languages and many kings” (Rev 10:11).

Why would “kings” be a point of focus for John to witness to if it weren’t important to the Father?

In conclusion, it appears governments are pretty important to God as a place for the Gospel to be shared and dominate. Maybe God knows something we don’t. Maybe He expects us to get involved and make a difference. Maybe the fact we have been horse-whipped by the anti-Christian agenda to stay out of politics is the very reason we have lost the battles of prayer in schools, education, movies, entertainment, morals, the right to life, trans “equity,” homosexual preference and protection, cake bakers, and the list grows.

Maybe taking a raincheck on responsible civic duties (e.g., voting) has given us exactly what we deserve: an ungodly nation. The ungodly love it when young people don’t vote, unless they vote for socialism and anything anti-Christ. To ignore, withdraw from, and avoid politics is the equivalent of futurists “circling the wagons” and praying the mothership raptures them out of this. “Let them have it all! The worse it gets, the closer Jesus is to splittin’ that eastern sky on that there White Horse.”

As believers, we should be inundating every career field possible: legal, law enforcement, military, retail, medical, construction, IT, television broadcasting, news networks, entertainment, education.

The next time someone pipes up and says they don’t get involved in politics because they serve a Higher King, remind them that the Higher King has always been concerned with who runs governments.

“The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will” (Prov 21:1).

Jesus and Paul were convinced of God’s power over government. Are we? †

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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
Preterism

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