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HAS BIBLE PROPHECY ALREADY BEEN FULFILLED?

by Thomas Ice

"The Olivet Discourse is not about the Second Coming of Christ. It is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70."

—David Chilton (Preterist)

"The Book of Revelation is not about the Second Coming of Christ. It is about the destruction of Israel and Christ's victory over His enemies in the establishment of the New Covenant Temple. In fact, as we shall see, the word coming as used in the Book of Revelation never refers to the Second Coming. Revelation prophesies the judgment of God on apostate Israel; and while it does briefly point to events beyond its immediate concerns, that is done merely as a "wrap-up," to show that the ungodly will never prevail against Christ's Kingdom. But the main focus of Revelation is upon events which were soon to take place."

—David Chilton (Preterist)

In February 1999 I attended the Ligonier Ministries National Conference with about 4,000 other people in Orlando, Florida. Ligonier is the ministry of Dr. R. C. Sproul. I attended because for the first time in 30 years the topic was on Bible Prophecy. Guess what? The predominate view, led by Dr. Sproul, was that most of what you and I believe to be future prophecies have already been fulfilled by first century events. This view now being champion by Dr. Sproul and others is known as preterism.

WHEN WILL PROPHECY BE FULFILLED?

What is preterism? Before I explain that in more detail, I want to orient you to the four views that people hold in relation to the timing of prophetic fulfillment. The four views are simple in the sense that they reflect the only four possible ways that one can relate to time: past, present, future, and timeless. When speaking of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy these four timing possibilities are called preterism, historicism, futurism, and idealism.

The *preterist* (Latin for "past") believes that most, if not all prophecy has already been fulfilled, usually in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The *historicist* (present) sees much of the current church age as equal to the tribulation period. Thus, prophecy has been and will be fulfilled during the current church age. *Futurists* (future) usually believe that almost no prophetic events are occurring in the current church age, but will take place in the following future events: the tribulation of seven years, the second coming, the 1,000 year millennium, and the eternal state. This is the view that I and those who are dispensationalists hold to. The *idealist* (timeless) does not believe either that the Bible indicates the timing of events or that we can determine their timing in advance. Therefore, idealists see prophetic passages as teaching great truths about God to be applied to our present lives.

PRETERISM VS. FUTURISM

Idealism, as an approach to Bible prophecy, is rarely followed outside of liberal scholarship and thus is not a significant factor in the mainstream of current evangelical

debate over when prophecy will be fulfilled. Historicism, once the dominate view of Protestants from the Reformation until the middle of last century, appears to exert little attraction as a system of prophetic interpretation to conservative Christians, outside of Seventh-Day Adventist circles. However, it must be noted that most historicists take a preterist view of the Olivet Discourse, but disassociate it from the tribulation as found in Revelation and some New Testament Epistles. During the last 150 years, within evangelicalism, futurism has grown to dominate and overcome historicism. At the turn of the millennium, we see an attempt to challenge futurism arising from evangelical preterism. We must await the next millennium to see where this development will lead. But the last five to ten years have seen an increase in the ranks of preterism, from hundreds to thousands, as someone as well-known as R.C. Sproul has adopted this view.

WHAT IS PRETERISM

Preterists argue that major prophetic portions of Scripture such as the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation were fulfilled in events surrounding the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Preterists believe that they are compelled to take such a view because Matthew 24:34 and its parallel passages say that “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” This means it *had* to take place in the first century, they argue. Revelation, they advocate, says something similar in the passages that say Christ is coming “quickly” or that His return is “at hand.” Having settled in their mind that these prophecies had to take place in the first century, they believe they are justified in making the rest of the language fit into a local (Jerusalem), instead of a worldwide fulfillment. Most preterists believe that we are currently living in at least an inaugurated new heavens and new earth, since all the Book of Revelation had to have a first century fulfillment.

Three Kinds of Preterism

There are at least three kinds of preterism. For lack of better terms we will call them mild, moderate, and extreme.

- **MILD** preterism teaches that the Book of Revelation was fulfilled during the first three centuries as God waged war on the two early enemies of the church: Israel and Rome. The first half of Revelation teaches that Israel was defeated in A.D. 70, while the last half of Revelation is about God’s conquest of Rome in the fourth century when Constantine declared the Roman Empire Christian. Thus, this earliest form of preterism teaches that Revelation was fulfilled in the first 300 years of the church’s history.
- **MODERATE** preterists believe that almost all prophecy was fulfilled in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. They do believe that a few passages still teach a yet future second coming (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) and the resurrection of believers at Christ’s bodily return.

- EXTREME preterists, or consistent preterists, as they prefer to be known as, hold that all future Bible prophecy was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If there is a future second coming, they say, the Bible does not talk about it. Extreme preterists believe that there is no future bodily resurrection, which place them outside the realm of Christian orthodoxy.

I have never personally encountered a mild preterist. I have only met them in books like Isbon T. Beckwith's *The Apocalypse of John*. Today, most of those calling themselves preterists would fall into the moderate camp. R. C. Sproul, Kenneth Gentry, Gary DeMar, Gary North, and Greg Bahnsen belong in this group. However, extreme preterism is growing and has made noticeable gains in recent years. Although David Chilton's books on preterism are from the moderate perspective, he did convert to extreme preterism before his death a few years ago. Other extreme preterists include: Max King, John Bray, Ed Stevens, and Walt Hibbard.

STRANGE PRETERIST IMPLICATIONS

The preterist understanding greatly affects events, personalities, and chronologies. If preterism is true, (it is not) then what a different view of the past and future there would be than what we have been led to believe up to this point.. If it is true, then what a vastly different view of Christianity it would produce. The following list includes many of the strange beliefs that preterism yields:

- ***The Great Tribulation*** "took place in the Fall of Israel. It will not be repeated and thus is not a future event."¹

- ***The Great Apostasy*** "happened in the first century. We therefore have no Biblical warrant to expect increasing apostasy as history progresses; instead, we should expect the increasing Christianization of the world."²

- ***The Last Days*** "is a Biblical expression for the period between Christ's Advent and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: the "last days" of Israel."³

- ***The Antichrist*** "is a term used by John to describe the widespread apostasy of the Christian Church prior to the Fall of Jerusalem. In general, any apostate teacher or system can be called 'antichrist'; but the word does not refer to some 'future Fuhrer.'"⁴

¹

David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: An Eschatology of Dominion*, (Tyler: Reconstruction Press, 1985), p. 224.

² Ibid., p. 225.

³

Ibid.

⁴

Ibid., p. 224.

• **The Rapture** is “the ‘catching up’ of the living saints ‘to meet the Lord in the air.’ The Bible does not teach any separation between the Second Coming and the Rapture; they are simply different aspects of the Last Day.”⁵

• **The Second Coming** “coinciding with the Rapture and the Resurrection, will take place *at the end* of the Millennium, when history is sealed at the Judgment.”⁶

• **The Beast** “of Revelation was a symbol of both Nero in particular and the Roman Empire in general.”⁷

• **The False Prophet** “of Revelation was none other than the leadership of apostate Israel, who rejected Christ and worshiped the Beast.”⁸

• **The Great Harlot** of Revelation was “*Jerusalem* which had always been . . . falling into apostasy and persecuting the prophets . . . which had ceased to be the City of God.”⁹

• **The Millennium** “is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which He established at His First Advent. . . . the period between the First and Second Advents of Christ; the Millennium is going on *now*, with Christians reigning as kings on earth.”¹⁰ “Other postmillennialists interpret the millennium as a future stage of history. Though the kingdom is already inaugurated, there will someday be a greater outpouring of the Spirit than the church has yet experienced.”¹¹

• **The First Resurrection** of Revelation 20:5 is a “Spiritual resurrection: our justification and regeneration in Christ.”¹²

• **The Thousand Years** of Revelation 20:2-7 is a “large, rounded-off number. . . . the number *ten* contains the idea of a fullness of *quantity*; in other words, it stands for *manyness*. A thousand multiplies and intensifies this (10 X 10 X 10), in order to express great vastness. . . . represent a vast, undefined period of time . . . It may require a million years.”¹³

⁵

Ibid., p. 148.

⁶

Ibid.

⁷

Ibid., p. 225.

⁸

Ibid., p. 183.

⁹

Ibid., pp. 188, 225.

¹⁰

Ibid., pp. 225, 195.

¹¹

Gary DeMar & Peter Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity* (Fort Worth: Dominion Press, 1988), pp. 41-42.

¹²

Chilton, *Paradise*, p. 225.

¹³

David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), pp. 506-7.

• **The New Creation** “has already begun: The Bible describes our salvation in Christ, both now and in eternity, as ‘a new heaven and a new earth.’”¹⁴

• **Israel** In contrast to the eventual faithfulness and empowerment by the Holy Spirit of the Church, “ethnic Israel was excommunicated for its apostasy and will never again be God’s Kingdom.”¹⁵ Thus, “the Bible does not tell of any future plan for Israel as a *special* nation.”¹⁶ The Church is now that new nation (Matt. 21:43) which is why Christ destroyed the Jewish state. “In destroying Israel, Christ transferred the blessings of the kingdom from Israel to a new people, the church.”¹⁷

• **The New Jerusalem** “the City of God, is the Church, now and forever.”¹⁸

• **The Final Apostasy** refers to Satan’s last gasp in history (Rev. 20:7-10). “The Dragon will be released for a short time, to deceive the nations in his last-ditch attempt to overthrow the Kingdom.”¹⁹ This will be “in the far future, at the close of the Messianic age,”²⁰ shortly before the Second Coming.

• **Armageddon** “was for St. John a symbol of defeat and desolation, a ‘Waterloo’ signifying the defeat of those who set themselves against God, who obey false prophets instead of the true.” “*There never was or will be a literal ‘Battle of Armageddon,’ for there is no such place.*”²¹

Preterists contend that most of the biblical passages that I would see as future have already been fulfilled in the first century. R. C. Sproul has adopted this view in his recent book *The Last Days According To Jesus*. Why are an increasing number of evangelicals coming to what I strongly believe is an erroneous conclusion?

HELPING GOD

In the introduction of his book on prophecy, Dr. Sproul believes that he is helping to save biblical Christianity from liberal skeptics like Bertrand Russell and Albert Schweitzer by adopting a preterist interpretation of Bible prophecy. “One of Russell’s chief criticisms of the Jesus portrayed in the Gospels is that Jesus was wrong with respect to the timing of his future return,” notes Dr. Sproul. “At issue for Russell is the time-frame reference of these prophecies. Russell charges that Jesus failed to return

¹⁴

Chilton, *Paradise*, p. 226.

¹⁵

Ibid., p. 224.

¹⁶

Ibid.

¹⁷

DeMar & Leithart, p. 213.

¹⁸

Chilton, *Paradise*, p. 224.

¹⁹

Chilton, *Vengeance*, p. 519.

²⁰

Ibid., p. 526.

²¹

David Chilton, *The Great Tribulation* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), pp. 144, 142.

during the time frame he had predicted.”²² Dr. Sproul, along with many other preterists, answers this charge from liberals by saying that Jesus did return in the first century. He returned spiritually through the acts of the Roman army who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70.

I do not believe you fight liberalism with liberalism. Dr. Sproul believes that he is defending the integrity of Scripture by adopting the preterist interpretation. However, in reality, I believe that he is adopting a naturalistic interpretation that too many liberals feel at home with. While Dr. Sproul sees Matthew 24 as a prophecy that was fulfilled in the first century, liberal preterists joins him in giving a naturalistic explanation even though from a different framework. But they both deny that our Lord prophesied a supernatural, bodily, visible return of Christ in fulfillment of Matthew 24.

On the other hand, Dr. Sproul and other preterists would not have a supposed problem that they and liberals seem to think they have if they adopted the approach of dispensationalism which distinguishes between the rapture that could take place without warning at any moment and the second coming which will be preceded by the signs of Matthew 24. True, many of the post-Apostolic fathers believed that Jesus would come back soon, but the New Testament teaches that Christ’s coming in the clouds to rapture His church is imminent (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:13; Jude 21; cf. Matt. 24:45-47; Mk. 13:33-37; Lk. 12:35-40), an event that could have taken place at any time during the last 2,000 years. Thus, Scripture does not need to be rescued from the higher critics by adopting the preterist interpretation.

THREE PRETERIST PROOFTEXTS

Dr. Sproul and other preterists often teach that there are three major passages in Matthew that demand a first century fulfillment. The three verses are Matthew 10:23; 16:28; and 24:34. I will examine this triad of texts in the order in which they appear in Matthew and demonstrate why they do not support a first century, preterist fulfillment.

Matthew 10:23

“But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes.”

“Again, if Russell is correct in concluding that the coming referred to in this text is the parousia of Christ, then the primary time-frame for the parousia must be restricted to a forty-year period,” writes Dr. Sproul. “It surely did not take the disciples much more than forty years to cover the boundaries of Palestine with the gospel message.”²³ This view is not defended in his book; instead Dr. Sproul merely asserts it as a supposition, taking J. Stuart Russell’s word for it. Russell tells us, “our Lord probably intended to intimate, that the apostles would not finish evangelizing the towns of Palestine, before He should

²² R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According To Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), p. 13.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

come to destroy Jerusalem and scatter the nation.”²⁴ Does the plain reading of this passage teach us what preterists say? I don’t believe it does.

First, the time of fulfillment for this passage depends upon establishing the context for which our Lord envisioned its realization. Even J. Stuart Russell believes that there is “abundant warrant for assigning the important prediction contained in Matt. x. 23 to the discourse delivered on the Mount of Olives.”²⁵ He explains that, “It is an admitted fact that even the Synoptical Gospels do not relate all events in precisely the same order; . . . Dr. Blaikie observes: ‘It is generally understood that Matthew arranged his narrative more by subjects and places than by chronology.’”²⁶ I am in agreement at this point that the context is that of the Olivet Discourse, even though we disagree as to when that period takes place. Thus, to a large extent, a discussion of the time when Matthew 10:23 is to be fulfilled must be postponed until interpretative decisions are made concerning other passages such as Matthew 24.

Second, when consulting a harmony of the Gospels,²⁷ it becomes evident that the other uses of the vocabulary from the context of Matthew 10:16-23 parallels in the Synoptic Gospels the various versions of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 17 and 21). In fact, the *New Geneva Study Bible*, of which Dr. Sproul is the General Editor says of this passage, “The ‘coming’ is the Second Coming of Christ to judge the earth. This view fits most of the other occurrences of the phrase (24:30; 25:31; 26:64; but see 16:28).”²⁸ This information supports the conclusion from the previous point that the timing of the fulfillment of this passage is tied to the Olivet Discourse.

Third, all agree that there is no indication in Scripture that the disciples experienced the kind of persecution mentioned in this passage before the crucifixion of Christ. J. Stuart Russell admits, “There is no evidence that the disciples met with such treatment on their evangelistic tour.”²⁹ Thus, this sustains the conclusion to which we are building: that our Lord has a future time in mind when He speaks the words of this passage.

Fourth, I believe that Matthew 10:21-23 refers to events that will take place in the tribulation, climaxing in the glorious second coming of Christ because of the nature of the vocabulary. This point could not be made any clearer than has been stated by the Reformed commentator, William Hendriksen:

These explanations ignore the fact that in the other Matthew passages in which the coming of the Son of man is mentioned and described the reference is linked with the second coming. It is a coming “in the glory of his Father,” “with his angels,” “to render to every man according to his deed” (16:27, 28); a coming when Christ shall “sit on the throne of his glory” (19:28); a coming that will be “visible” (24:27); “sudden and unexpected”

²⁴ J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord’s Second Coming*, new ed. (1887; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), pp. 28-29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ I used Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of The Four Gospels*, 7th edition, (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 1984), pp. 92-94.

²⁸ *New Geneva Study Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), p. 1521.

²⁹ Russell, *Parousia*, p. 27.

(24:37.39.44); a coming “on clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (24:30; cf. 25:31; 26:64). It would be strange therefore if from 10:23 any reference to Christ’s exaltation which attains its climax in the second coming would be wholly excluded. . . . The destruction of Jerusalem is predicted not here in chapter 10 but in 22:7; 23:38; see also 24:2, 15 f.”³⁰

Fifth, the use of the title “Son of Man” “*has a definite doctrinal signification—it always refers to the (Parousia) Second Coming.*’ The phrase, so expressive of His *humanity, indicates a visible, personal Coming, which was not exhibited at the destruction of Jerusalem. Beside this, all expecting John were deceased before the city was overthrown.*”³¹

John Calvin is correct when he notes of those who suggest that Matthew 10:23 was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem “is too far-fetched.”³² Some have suggested that the coming of the Son of Man refers to Christ’s Triumphal Entry (Matt. 21:1-11; Lk. 19:39-44)³³ George Peters notes that “This took place *before* the disciples had made the tour of the cities, and *meets* the conditions of the passage”³⁴ It is noted that Matthew 21:9, speaking of Christ, says, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” While this view has much to commend, it does not handle the persecution aspects of the passage, which did not occur in relation to the Triumphal Entry. Instead, I believe that Matthew 10:21-23 refers to a still future time of tribulation and the second coming of Christ.

How should this passage be explained?

The apostles never completed their kingdom ministry before they turned to the Gentiles. This was because Israel did not receive their message. This thought is developed throughout the remainder of chapter 10 and in chapter 11, in which Jesus finally castigates Israel, withdraws the message of national deliverance and turns to individuals with an offer of salvation in Mt. 11:28-30.³⁵

Dr. Stanley Toussaint further explains,

The Messiah was simply looking past His death to the time of tribulation following. At the time the disciples would have the same message and possibly the same power. The narrow road leading to the kingdom leads through the tribulation (Matthew 10:16), and this persecution is to be of a religious and political nature (Matthew 10:16-19). . . .

³⁰ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), pp. 466-67.

³¹ George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 3 Vols., (Grand Rapids: Kregel, [1884], 1978), II:563

³² John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprinted 1979), p. 458.

³³ Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, II: 564.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, Vol. 2 (Bowling Green, Ken.: Renaissance Press, 1977), p. 160.

The Lord made no error and clearly had “the coming” for judgment in mind. However, the coming is contingent upon Israel’s acceptance of its King. Because even after His resurrection, that nation refused Him, it became impossible to establish the kingdom (cf. Acts 3:18-26). In fact, the tribulation period did not come; if it had, the promise of the soon coming of the Son of Man would have been of great comfort to the apostles.³⁶

Matthew 10:23 does not support the preterist contention that the coming of the Son of Man occurred in A.D. 70 through the Roman Army. Instead, Christ was looking ahead to another time, the tribulation leading up to the glorious second advent which I believe will be made clearer as we investigate related passages.

THE PRETERIST CONTENTION IN MATTHEW 16

I now turn to the preterist’s misguided contention that Matthew 16:28 supports a past prophetic fulfillment.

Matthew 16:27,28

“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Dr. Sproul and other preterists teach that this passage contains another “time-text” indicator supporting their contention that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 by the Romans fulfilled this prophecy in the past. Thus, coupled with a similar understand of other so-called “time-texts,” almost all of Bible prophecy—like Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation—have already been fulfilled.

The expression “shall not taste death” clearly refers to dying, so we may render the text to mean that some who were hearing Jesus’ words on this occasion would not die before witnessing some kind of coming of Jesus. . . .

If Jesus had in mind a time-frame of roughly forty years, it could also be said that during this time-frame some of his disciples would not taste death. If the Olivet Discourse refers primarily to events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and if the word *generation* refers to a forty-year period, then it is possible, if not probable, that Jesus’ reference to his coming in Matthew 16:28 refers to the same events, not to the transfiguration or other close-at-hand events.³⁷

Preterists believe that Matthew 16:28 and parallel passages (Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27) are a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem accomplished through the Roman army in A.D. 70. I believe that Matthew 16:28 was fulfilled by events that took place on the Mount of Transfiguration.

³⁶ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold The King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), pp. 141-42.

³⁷ Sproul, *Last Days*, pp. 53–55.

THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION FULFILLMENT

In setting up a proper interpretation of this passage we should begin by observing the comparisons and contrasts of the three parallel statements found in Matthew 16:27-28, Mark 9:1, and Luke 9:26-27. Since all three accounts are descriptive of the same event, it is interesting to note the vocabulary and contexts of each inspired writer.

Context

Matthew 16:27 is speaking of the future second coming, while verse 28 refers to the impending transfiguration. Why are these verses positioned in this way? Because earlier Christ reveals clearly His impending death to His disciples (see 16:21). Peter reacts to this suffering phase of Jesus' career (16:22). Our Lord responded to Peter with His famous "Get behind Me, Satan!" statement (16:23). Then Jesus provides a lesson to His disciples on denial of self (16:24-26). Christ is teaching that the order for entrance into His kingdom, for both Himself and His followers, is the path of first the cross and then the crown. Suffering precedes glory! But the glory will one day come at Christ's second advent, when each individual will be required to give an account of his actions during the time of suffering (16:27). In order to encourage His followers, who would have to suffer the bitter pill of the impending death of Jesus and their own suffering and eventual deaths for Christ's sake, Christ provides a word of the promised future glory in 16:28 about some who will "see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." "After Jesus predicted His own death, Peter and the other disciples needed reassurance that Jesus would ultimately triumph. His prediction that some of them would **see the kingdom of God present with power** must have alleviated their fears."³⁸ Thus, "verse twenty-seven looks at the establishment of the kingdom in the future, while a promise of seeing the Messiah in His glory is the thought of verse twenty-eight. They are two separate predictions separated by the words 'truly I say to you.'"³⁹

Preterist Objections

Preterists and some other interpreters say that the phrase from Matthew 16:28, "there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death," cannot be fulfilled by the immediately following transfiguration event. "But the transfiguration cannot be its fulfillment," insists Gary DeMar, "since Jesus indicated that some who were standing with Him would still be alive when He came but most would be dead."⁴⁰ DeMar misses the point of the passage in his attempt to prove too much, as noted by commentator William Lane who counters such a view by noting:

. . . it is not said that death will exclude some of those present from seeing the announced event. All that is required by Jesus' statement is that "some" will

³⁸ *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), p. 1659.

³⁹ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold The King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), p. 209.

⁴⁰ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church* (Atlanta: American Vision, Inc., 3rd edition, 1997), p. 34.

see a further irruption of the power and sovereignty of God before they experience the suffering foreseen in Ch. 8:34-35.⁴¹

Some opposing the transfiguration interpretation say that a week is too short of a time frame to make proper sense of the statement. Ken Gentry says, “It was not powerfully to evidence itself immediately, for many of His disciples would die before it acted in power.”⁴² George N. H. Peters quotes a Dr. Kendrick who says that the disputed phrase “refer not to length of life, but to *privilege*; *some* shall have the privilege of beholding Him in His glory *even before they die*.”⁴³ When we consider the force of the preceding context leading up to our Lord’s statement, our view makes the best sense. Randolph Yeager explains, “That Jesus should have suggested that some who had been standing there might die within the next week is in line with what He had been saying about taking up the cross, denying oneself, losing one’s life, etc.”⁴⁴

A further problem with the preterist view is that our Lord said “*some* of those standing here. . . .” It is clear that the term “some” would have to include at least two or more individuals within the scope of its meaning, since “some” is plural and coupled with a plural verb, “to be”. The word “some” nicely fits the three disciples, Peter, James, and John (Mt. 17:1) who were the participants with our Lord at the transfiguration. On the other hand, Peters notes that “John only survived”⁴⁵ among the 12 disciples till the destruction of Jerusalem.

Further Support

In all three instances of this parallel passage (Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27) they are all immediately followed by the account of the transfiguration. This contextual relationship by itself is a strong reason to favor our interpretation and shifts the burden of proof on those opposing this view. In other words, Jesus made a prediction about a future event and in each instance, Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the fulfillment of that prediction in the passage that follows. The contextual fact is supported by the grammatical construction that connects these passages. Alva J. McClain notes that “the conjunction with which chapter 17 begins clearly establishes the unbroken continuity of thought between 16:28 and 17:1, as also in the accounts of Mark and Luke where no chapter division occurs.”⁴⁶

All three accounts of the prophesied event speak of seeing and the kingdom. Matthew says they will see “the Son of Man coming in His kingdom,” emphasizing the person of the Son of Man coming. Mark says, “they see the kingdom of God” and he adds that it will come “with power.” Luke simply says that “they see the kingdom of God.” The transfiguration fits all aspects of the various emphases found in each of the three precise predictions.

⁴¹ William L. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 313.

⁴² Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Tyler, Tex.: 1992), p. 216.

⁴³ Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, II:555.

⁴⁴ Yeager, *Renaissance New Testament*, II:569.

⁴⁵ Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, II: 562.

⁴⁶ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of The Kingdom* (Winona Lake, Ind.: B. M. H. Books, 1959), p. 336.

Matthew's stress upon the actual, physical presence of the Son of Man is clearly met in the transfiguration because Jesus was personally and visibly present. Matthew says, "He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light" (17:2). The preterist interpretation does not meet Matthew's criteria, since Jesus was not personally present in the later destruction of Jerusalem.

Mark's emphasis upon a display of the kingdom with "power" was certainly fulfilled by the transfiguration. No one could doubt that the transfiguration certainly fit the definition of a "power encounter" for the disciples. That Jesus appears dressed in the Shekinah glory of God upon the Mount (Mk. 9:3) is further evidence to the disciples that He was God and acted with His power.

Luke's simple statement about some who will "see the kingdom of God" is vindicated also by his account (17:28-36). Twice Luke records our Lord describing the transfiguration with the term "glory" (17:31,32). "Why exclude the reference to Jerusalem's destruction? Because Luke does not associate the kingdom's power with this event. . . . Also, Jesus is not associated with Jerusalem's destruction directly, so it is not in view."⁴⁷

PETER'S SUPPORT

The transfiguration made such an impression upon John and Peter that both provided a description of the glorified Christ in later writings (Rev. 1:12-20; 2 Pet. 1:16-21). Both describe the risen and glorified Christ in relation to His second advent (Rev. 1:7; 2 Pet. 1:16). No one doubts that Peter has in mind the transfiguration in 2 Peter 1:16-18. I believe that Peter restates in his final epistle the same pattern established by our Lord in the passages we have been discussing above (Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27). When encouraging believers to remain faithful to the faith (2 Pet. 1:12ff), Peter, like our Lord, reminds his readers of "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:16). Peter follows Jesus' pattern of supporting the future Second Advent by citing the past transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:16-18). In this way, Peter's second epistle supports the futurist understanding of Matthew 16:28, etc.

George Peters says that 2 Peter 1:16-18 "is unquestionably, then, linking it with the still future Advent as a striking exhibition of the glory that shall be revealed—which is confirmed by Peter introducing this allusion to prove that Christ would thus again come."⁴⁸ William Lane further explains that "Peter made known to his churches the power that was to be revealed at Jesus' coming in terms of the glory which had been revealed in the transfiguration. This expresses precisely the relationship between Ch. 8:38 (parousia) and Ch. 9:1 (transfiguration). The transfiguration was a momentary, but real (and witnessed) manifestation of Jesus' sovereign power which pointed beyond itself to the parousia, when he will come 'with power and glory' (Ch. 13:26)."⁴⁹

The preterist contention that our Lord's prophecy in Matthew 16:28 predicts the destruction of the Temple in the first century has been proven to be off base. Instead,

⁴⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1—9:50* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), p. 859-60.

⁴⁸ Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, II: 560.

⁴⁹ Lane, *Mark*, p. 314.

we have found that Matthew 16:27 refers to a yet future second coming of Christ, while 16:28 was fulfilled only a week after the prophecy was uttered by our Lord through His transfiguration before Peter, James, and John. “The immediate sequel to Jesus’ solemn promise is the account of the transfiguration (Ch. 9:2-8),” explains Lane. “This indicates that Mark understood Jesus’ statement to refer to this moment of transcendent glory conceived as an enthronement and an anticipation of the glory which is to come. . . . The fulfillment of Jesus’ promise a short time later (Ch. 9:2) provided encouragement to the harassed Christians in Rome and elsewhere that their commitment to Jesus and the gospel was valid. The parousia is an absolute certainty. The transfiguration constituted a warning to all others that the ambiguity which permits the humiliation of Jesus and of those faithful to him will be resolved in the decisive intervention of God promised in Ch. 8:38).”⁵⁰

THE PRETERIST CONTENTION IN MATTHEW 24

The most widely used verse in the Bible by preterists in their attempts to establish their thesis concerning Bible prophecy is Matthew 24:34. The much debated passage says, “*Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.*” (see also Mk 13:30; Lk 21:32).

THE PRETERIST INTERPRETATION

R. C. Sproul says in his recent book, “I am convinced that the substance of the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in A.D. 70 . . .”⁵¹ Ken Gentry, in a recent book where he and I debate this issue, declares of Matthew 24:34: “This statement of Christ is indisputably clear—and absolutely demanding of a first-century fulfillment of the events in the preceding verses, including the Great Tribulation.”⁵² Gary DeMar believes “that all the events prior to Matthew 24:34 referred to events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.”⁵³ In fact, DeMar dogmatically declares: “An honest assessment of Scripture can lead to no other conclusion. The integrity of the Bible is at stake in the discussion of the biblical meaning of “this generation.”⁵⁴ Why does DeMar make such a polarizing, though misguided overstatement? I think it can be understood by Dr. Sproul’s framing of the issue from the following explanation:

The cataclysmic course surrounding the parousia as predicted in the Olivet Discourse obviously did not occur “literally” in A.D. 70. . . . This problem of literal fulfillment leaves us with three basic solutions to interpreting the Olivet Discourse:

1. We can interpret the entire discourse literally. In this case we must conclude that some elements of Jesus’ prophecy failed to come to pass, as advocates of “consistent eschatology” maintain.

⁵⁰ Lane, *Mark*, pp. 313-14.

⁵¹ Sproul, *Last Days*, p. 158.

⁵² Thomas Ice and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), pp. 26-27.

⁵³ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church* (Atlanta: American Vision, Inc., 3rd edition, 1997), p. 75.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

2. We can interpret the events surrounding the predicted parousia literally and interpret the time-frame references figuratively. This method is employed by those who do not restrict the phrase . . . to Jesus' contemporaries.

3. We can interpret the time-frame references literally and the events surrounding the parousia figuratively. . . . All of Jesus' prophecies in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during the period between the discourse itself and the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70.

The third option is followed by preterists.⁵⁵

Dr. Sproul's framing of the possible interpretations of "this generation" distorts the first possibility with the perspective of liberalism. How so? Many interpreters, such as myself, interpret the entire discourse literally, but we dogmatically reject any notion "that some elements of Jesus' prophecy failed to come to pass." This does not mean that we have abandoned literal interpretation, nor does it "logically lead" to a failure in the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy.

A FUTURIST INTERPRETATION

Those of us taking a consistently literal interpretation of the entire Olivet Discourse take a *different* literal interpretation of "this generation" than supposed by Dr. Sproul's suggestion. I believe that the timing of "this generation" in Matthew 24:34 is governed by the related phrase "all these things." In other words, Christ is saying that the generation that sees "all these things" occur will not cease to exist until all the events of the future tribulation are literally fulfilled. Frankly, this is both a literal interpretation and one that was not fulfilled in the first century. Christ is not ultimately speaking to His contemporaries, but to the generation to whom the signs of Matthew 24 will become evident. Dr. Darrell Bock, in commenting on the parallel passage to Matthew 24 in Luke's Gospel concurs:

What Jesus is saying is that the generation that sees the beginning of the end, also sees its end. When the signs come, they will proceed quickly; they will not drag on for many generations. It will happen within a generation. . . . The tradition reflected in Revelation shows that the consummation comes very quickly once it comes. . . . Nonetheless, in the discourse's prophetic context, the remark comes after making comments about the nearness of the end *to certain signs*. As such it is the issue of the signs that controls the passage's force, making this view likely. If this view is correct, Jesus says that when the signs of the beginning of the end come, then the end will come relatively quickly, within a generation.⁵⁶

In spite of the preterist chorus that "this generation" has to refer to the first century, an alternate *literal* interpretation relates it to the timing of the fulfillment of other events

⁵⁵ Sproul, *Last Days*, p. 66.

⁵⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), pp. 1691–92.

in context. While it is true that other uses of “this generation” refer to Christ’s contemporaries, that is because they are *historical* texts. The use of “this generation” in the Olivet Discourse in the fig tree passages are *prophetic* texts. In fact, when one compares the use of “this generation” at the beginning of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 23:36 (which is an undisputed reference to A.D. 70) with the prophetic use in Matthew 24:34, a contrast seems obvious. Jesus is contrasting the deliverance for Israel in Matthew 24:34 with the predicted judgment of Matthew 23:36.

ALL THESE THINGS

When challenged or threatened about the veracity of other interpretative details, preterists almost always fall back to what Gary DeMar calls the “time texts.”⁵⁷ Their understanding of “this generation” (Matthew 24:34) in the Olivet Discourse becomes, for them, the proof text that settles all arguments and justifies their fanciful interpretation of many other details referred to by Christ as “all these things” in verse 34. Dr. Gentry explains:

We find the key to locating the great tribulation in history in Matthew 24:34: . . . This statement of Christ is indisputably clear—and absolutely demanding of a first century fulfillment of the events in the preceding verses, including the great tribulation (v. 21)..⁵⁸

Yet “all these things” of Matthew 24:3-31 are allegorized to fit into their first century fulfillment scheme. Since “this generation” is controlled by the meaning of “all these things,” it is obvious that these things did not occur in and around the events of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70.

Contextual surroundings determine the nuance of a specific word or phrase. It is true that every other use of “this generation” in Matthew (11:16; 12:41,42,45; 23:36) refers to Christ’s contemporaries, but that is determined by observation from each of their contexts, not from the phrase by itself. Thus, if the contextual factors in Matthew 24 do not refer to A.D. 70 events, then the timing of the text would have to refer to the future. This is the futurist contention, that the events described in Matthew 24 did not occur in the first century. When were the Jews, who were under siege, rescued by the Lord in A.D. 70? They were not rescued, they were judged, as noted in Luke 21:20–24. But Matthew 24 speaks of a Divine rescue of those who are under siege (24:29-31). This could not have been fulfilled by the first century. In fact, the Jewish Christian community fled Jerusalem before the final siege.⁵⁹ Matthew 24 speaks about the deliverance of Jews who are under siege. This did not happen under the first century Roman siege.

The statement just preceding Christ’s “this generation” statement says, “even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door”

⁵⁷ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, p. 72.

⁵⁸ Ice and Gentry, *Great Tribulation*, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Merrill C. Tenney, editor, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), vol. 3, p. 486.

(Matthew 24:33) The point of Christ's parable of the fig tree (Matthew 24:32-35) is that all the events noted earlier in Matthew 24:4–31 are signs that tell those under siege that help is coming in the Person of Christ at His return to rescue His people. In contradiction to this, preterists teach that "all these things" refer to the non-bodily, non-personal, coming of Christ through the Roman army in the first century. They are forced to say that the whole passage speaks of a coming of Christ via the events leading up to what Christ actually says, will be His return. Yet, contra preterism, Christ says in the fig tree parable that preceding events instruct the reader to "recognize that He is near, *right* at the door." Had a first century reader tried to apply a preterist understanding to Matthew 24, it would have been too late for him to flee the city. Instead, they were told to flee the city when the siege first occurred, as noted in the first century warning of Luke 21: 20–24. Instead, the Jewish generation that sees "all these things" will be rescued as noted in Luke 21:27–28. Once again the question arises, "When was Israel rescued in A.D. 70?" They were not. Neither were "all these things" (Matthew 24:33, 34) fulfilled in the first century. These will all be fulfilled in the tribulation, which will take place in the future.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

I do not believe that Christ's Olivet Discourse (Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 21) contains a single sentence, phrase, or term that *requires* a first century fulfillment, except for Luke 21:20–24. Since the timing of "this generation" is not innate in the phrase itself but is governed by its immediate context, then I believe it refers to a future generation because the events depicted have yet to take place. This can be seen most clearly in Luke's account of our Lord's Discourse since he answers all three of the disciples questions. I believe that Matthew and Mark only deal with the future questions.

Luke's account includes the answer to the disciple's question (Luke 21:20–24) about when there will come a time when "there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down" (verse 6). Multiple time references are necessary. This is evident in the wording of the question in verse 7.

The first part of the question—"when therefore will these things be?"—relates to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. This explains the first century section in verses 20–24. Christ's answer to their second question—"what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?"—relates to "signs" preceding His Second Advent. This is a different event than that of their first question, and the event is still future to our day. The second question is answered in verses 25–28, which follows the long period of time described in the second half of verse 24—"Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Thus, verse 32, ("this generation will not pass away until all things take place") will be fulfilled in the future, for the scope of "all these things" refers to verses 25–28, not verses 20–24. Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains:

Then Jesus stated that the generation that sees this event, the abomination of desolation, will still be around when the second coming of Christ occurs three-and-a-half years later. . . . Verse 34 is intended to be a word of comfort in light of the

world-wide attempt at Jewish destruction. It must be kept in mind that the abomination of desolation signals Satan's and the Antichrist's final attempt to destroy and exterminate the Jews. The fact that the Jewish generation will still be here when the second coming of Christ occurs shows that Satan's attempt towards Jewish destruction will fail, and the Jewish saints of the second half of the tribulation can receive comfort from these words.⁶⁰

As we leave behind key passages from Matthew's Gospel, I will now shift gears and turn to the preterist interpretation of the Book of Revelation. It should come as no surprise to learn that preterists believe that John's Revelation from Jesus Christ has already been fulfilled. Why do they take such a strange view?

THE PRETERIST CONTENTION IN REVELATION

"The closer we get to the year 2000, the farther we get from the events of Revelation," says preterist Ken Gentry. "Preterism' holds that the bulk of John's prophecies occurred in the first century, soon after his writing of them. Though the prophecies were in the future when John wrote and when his original audience read them, they are now in our past."⁶¹ Dr. R. C. Sproul apparently agrees with Dr. Gentry's basic understanding of Revelation as fulfilled prophecy.⁶² In his commentary on Revelation, the late David Chilton, a preterist, said,

The Book of Revelation is not about the Second Coming of Christ. It is about the destruction of Israel and Christ's victory over His enemies in the establishment of the New Covenant Temple. In fact, as we shall see, the word *coming* as used in the Book of Revelation never refers to the Second Coming. Revelation prophesies the judgment of God on apostate Israel; and while it does briefly point to events beyond its immediate concerns, that is done merely as a "wrap-up," to show that the ungodly will never prevail against Christ's Kingdom. But the main focus of Revelation is upon events which were soon to take place.⁶³

As with the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24; Mk. 14; Lk. 21), the preterist view does not view Bible prophecy as "things to come," but rather as "things that came." Why do they come to such an errant conclusion?

⁶⁰ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio: Ariel Press, 1982), p. 446.

⁶¹ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., "A Preterist View of Revelation" in C. Marvin Pate, ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p. 37.

⁶² Sproul, *Last Days*, pp. 131-49; 179-89; 200-03.

⁶³ Chilton, *Vengeance*, p. 43.

PRETERIST “TIMING” ARGUMENT

Preterists believe they are driven to a first century fulfillment of Revelation because, like the Olivet Discourse, they believe it says it will be fulfilled soon. What arguments do preterists appeal to in an effort to support their understanding of Revelation?

Dr. Gentry begins his argument for a first century fulfillment of Revelation by noting its similarity to the Olivet Discourse.

It is an interesting fact noted by a number of commentators that John’s Gospel is the only Gospel that does not contain the Olivet Discourse, and that it would seem John’s Revelation served as His exposition of the Discourse.⁶⁴

If, as seems likely, Revelation is indeed John’s exposition of the Olivet Discourse, we must remember that in the delivery of the Discourse the Lord emphasized that it focused on Israel (Matt. 24:1,2, 15-16; cp. Matt. 23:32ff.) and was to occur in His generation (Matt. 24:34).⁶⁵

Thus, since preterists believe that there is a parallel between what is taught in the Olivet Discourse and Revelation (I agree that both refer to the same events), they naturally would have to believe that Revelation was fulfilled in the first century (I disagree that either has been fulfilled).

“One of the most helpful interpretive clues in Revelation is . . . the *contemporary expectation of the author* regarding the fulfillment of the prophecies. John clearly expects the *soon* fulfillment of his prophecy,”⁶⁶ says Dr. Gentry. Preterist Gary DeMar has collected what he calls the “time texts” in Revelation, which lead him to believe that the fulfillment of the Apocalypse had to occur during the first century. These are:

- 1) The events “must *shortly* (táchos) take place.” (1:1).
- 2) “For the time is *near*.” (eggús) (1:3).
- 3) “I am coming to you *quickly* (tachús).” (2:16).
- 4) “I am coming *quickly* (tachús).” (3:11).
- 5) “The third woe is coming *quickly* (tachús).” (11:14).
- 6) “The things which must *shortly* (táchos) take place.” (22:6).
- 7) “Behold, I am coming *quickly* (tachús).” (22:7).
- 8) “For the time is *near*.” (eggús) (22:10).
- 9) “Behold, I am coming *quickly* (tachús).” (22:12).
- 10) “Yes, I am coming *quickly* (tachús).” (22:20).⁶⁷

It appears presumptuous at the outset of the interpretative process that these verses are labeled “time texts” by DeMar. The timing of a passage is determined by taking into account all factors in a given passage. I hope to show that these terms are more

⁶⁴ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), p. 130.

⁶⁵ Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 131.

⁶⁶ Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 133.

⁶⁷ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, pp. 344-45. Numbers and Greek transliteration added.

properly interpreted as *qualitative indicators* (not chronological indicators) describing how Christ will return. How will He return? It will be “quickly” or “suddenly.”

Without a doubt, the exegetical survival of the preterist position revolves around the meaning of these passages. When they arrive at passages which do not appear to harmonize with their view, if taken plainly, they commonly revert to their “timing” passages and say, “Whatever this passage means, we have already established that it had to be fulfilled within the first century.” In accordance with this belief, they search first century “newspapers” for an event that comprises the closest fit to the passage and usually cite it as a fulfillment of the biblical text in discussion.

PRETERIST THEME OF REVELATION

Revelation 1:7 says, “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.” This passage is often recognized as the theme verse of Revelation. Preterists believe that “Revelation’s main focus of attention (though not its only point) is this: God will soon judge the first-century Jews for rejecting and crucifying his Son, their Messiah,”⁶⁸ notes Dr. Gentry. “John states his theme in his introduction at Revelation 1:7,” Dr. Gentry continues, “just after he declares the nearness of the events (1:1,3), a theme that is directly relevant to the first-century circumstances.”⁶⁹ Not surprisingly, Dr. Gentry believes that “in its contextual setting verse 7 points to the destruction of Jerusalem and her temple in A.D. 70.”⁷⁰ Preterists do not believe that this verse speaks of Christ Second Coming. Instead they see it as another reference to the A.D. 70 destruction. Thus, in usual fashion, preterists turn the perspective of Revelation 1:7 from a global to a local perspective, from a Gentile to a Jewish outlook, and from a future to a past fulfillment. All these are reversals of its actual meaning.

As with the Olivet Discourse, when one sifts through the details of Revelation it is clear that preterism fails to prove its claims when compared with the totality of Scripture. Preterists attempt to work their exegetical voodoo on the Book of Revelation as they have done with the Olivet Discourse.

REBUTTAL OF PRETERIST INTERPRETATION

Now I will turn to a dissection of the above stated preterist approach to Revelation. After that is completed, I will provide reasons why the Bible teaches that the events of Revelation, which include the tribulation, second coming, and millennium are yet future events. But first I will deal with their false understanding of Revelation 1:7.

Revelation 1:7

As noted above, Preterists believe that Revelation 1:7 speaks of only the land of Israel and was local. On the other hand, if it refers to Gentiles and is global, then their view is impossible and it has to be future. We can analyze the passage by dividing it

⁶⁸ Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” p. 46.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

into the following four interpretive elements: 1) Christ's "coming," 2) "with the clouds," 3) "every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him," and 4) "all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him." Since I will be discussing later the meaning of Christ's "coming with the clouds," I will defer commenting on this first two elements until then. However, I, like almost all interpreters of Scripture before me, these believe it to be a clear reference to the bodily, personal return of Christ at a yet future time. This is supported by the final two items in the passage. Items number three and four include clear allusions to Zechariah 12:10-14.

3) "every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him:" This element plays a key role in determining whether this passage has a global or local intent. The first part of this element ("every eye will see Him") does not appear in the Old Testament reference. The other element, "even those who pierced Him," is the part from Zechariah. It is clear that those who pierced Him in Zechariah are a reference to the Jewish people. This, both preterist and futurist would agree. The debate arises over whether "every eye" is a reference to just the Jewish nation (the preterist contention) or to the people of the whole earth (the futurist understanding). The way to resolve who is intended in the scope of the reference is to compare it to the subset "even those who pierced Him." If the larger group of "every eye" refers to the Jewish nation, then it does not make sense that the smaller group "even those who pierced Him," would be a reference to the same exact people, as preterists contend. Their reading of the passage would be as follows: "every eye (Israel) will see Him, event those who pierced Him (Israel)." There would be no need of have a sub-group if both mean the same thing. If "every eye" refers to all the peoples of the world as the larger group, then the qualifying phrase "even those who pierced Him" would be emphasizing the Jewish element as the smaller sub-group. Thus, it is not surprising that virtually everyone, other than preterists, take this element of this passage in a global sense. It appears that bias, not the clear meaning of the text, is the only reason the preterist takes this part of the passage in a restricted manner.

4) "all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him:" The Greek word for "earth" can refer to either the "earth," as in "heavens and earth" (Gen. 1:1), or "land," as in the "land of Israel" (1 Sam. 13:19). The problem with taking this to refer to the land of Israel is that every other usage of the exact phrase "all the tribes of the earth" in the original language always has a universal nuance (Gen. 12:3; 28:14; Ps. 72:17; Zech. 14:17). This supports our futurist interpretation.

Preterists have to restrict the meaning of clear universal language in the Bible in order to make their system appear to work. However, as we are demonstrating, they have to force the biblical text into such a meaning time after time. Revelation 1:7 is another example of a passage that speaks of the global scope of God's future judgment upon mankind. I will continue dealing with these items.

CLOUD COMING IN REVELATION 1:7

I will now deal with the theme verse of Revelation which reads as follows: "*Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen*" (Rev. 1:7).

Preterists believe that this passage supports an A.D. 70 fulfillment of Revelation.

“John states his theme in his introduction at Revelation 1:7,” claims Dr. Gentry, “just after he declares the nearness of the events (1:1,3), a theme that is directly relevant to the first-century circumstances.”⁷¹ Not surprisingly, Dr. Gentry believes that “in its contextual setting verse 7 points to the destruction of Jerusalem and her temple in A.D. 70.”⁷² Preterists do not believe that this verse speaks of Christ Second Coming as the church has historically understood this passage. Instead they see it as another reference to the A.D. 70 destruction. Thus, in usual fashion, preterists turn the perspective of Revelation 1:7 from a global to a local perspective, from a Gentile to a Jewish outlook, and from a future to a past fulfillment. All these are reversals of its actual meaning.

I have now dealt with all of Revelation 1:7 except the part that deals with Christ coming on the clouds. Dr. Gentry attempts a most strained interpretation when he calls this “a providential coming of Christ in *historical judgments upon men*.”⁷³ He provides the following forced explanation:

In the Old Testament, clouds are frequently employed as symbols of divine wrath and judgment. Often God is seen surrounded with foreboding clouds which express His unapproachable holiness and righteousness. Thus, God is poetically portrayed in certain judgment scenes *as coming in the clouds* to wreak historical vengeance upon His enemies.⁷⁴

Dr. Gentry cites the following passages as examples: 2 Sam. 22:8,10; Ps. 18:7-15; 68:4,33; 97:2-39; 104:3; Isa. 13:9; 19:1; 26:21; 30:27; Joel 2:1,2; Mic. 1:3; Nah. 1:2ff; Zeph. 1:14,15. He then concludes, “The New Testament picks up this apocalyptic judgment imagery when it speaks of Christ’s coming in clouds of judgment *during history*.”⁷⁵

REFUTATION OF DR. GENTRY’S VIEW

There are many problems with Dr. Gentry’s declaration that Revelation 1:7 is the same as the Old Testament passages he cites. First, he cites no reasons from the context of Revelation 1:7 why it should be understood as a parallel to these Old Testament passages. He just declares them to be similar. Dr. Robert Thomas has made the following insightful observation:

Gentry interprets a reference to clouds in Revelation 1:7 as a nonpersonal coming of Christ. Christ never returned to earth in A.D. 70 personally, so explaining the fall of Jerusalem as his coming violates the principle of literal interpretation. All contextual indications point to a literal and personal-coming of Christ in that verse. Gentry calls this a “judgment-coming” of Christ, but

⁷¹Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” p. 46.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, p. 273.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 274.

the criteria of Revelation also connect a deliverance of the faithful with that coming. Preterism nowhere explains the promised deliverance from persecution that is associated with the coming, for example, in 3:10-11. Gentry's interpretation of 1:7 simply does not fulfill the criteria of literal interpretation of the text. The fact is, the church did not escape persecution in A.D. 70, but continued to suffer for Christ's sake long after that.⁷⁶

Second, some of those Old Testament passages most likely are speaking of Christ's second coming. Dr. Gentry often assumes that because they are in the Old Testament they must have already been fulfilled. Such is often not the case. I believe that Isaiah 26:21; 30:27; Joel 2:1,2 and Zephaniah 1:14-15 are second coming contexts. This means that these passages also look for a yet future, not a past fulfillment. Nahum 1:2ff, although less clear, could also refer to an eschatological time.

Third, I do not think that a single one of the Old Testament passages cited by Dr. Gentry parallels Revelation 1:7. As you examine them, they describe the Lord as "riding" upon a cloud in judgment against the Lord's enemies, much as Dr. Gentry has said. However, when compared to Revelation 1:7, there are too many differences. As Dr. Thomas notes above, Revelation 1:7 speaks of a coming to rescue someone, while those Old Testament references are all descriptive of judgment. Revelation 1:7 provides a different atmosphere than we see in the Old Testament passages. Christ's coming in Revelation 1:7, and in its parallel passage Matthew 24:30, builds upon the Old Testament fact that the Lord established His identity in cloud comings. But, in these passages we have a description of the Lord returning to the earth. This is not found in the Old Testament citations noted by Dr. Gentry. There are too many differences between the two concepts as noted by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes:

The clouds intended here are not dark storm-clouds which presage divine judgment, . . . but the bright clouds of his transcendental glory. They stand for the *shekinah* glory of God's presence which caused the face of Moses to shine with supernatural brilliance . . . and they are to be identified with the 'bright cloud' of Christ's divine glory witnessed by Peter, James, and John on the mount of transfiguration (Mt. 17:5), and with the cloud which received him out of the apostles' sight at his ascension. . . .⁷⁷

Fourth, the preterist view of Revelation 1:7 confuses a global event for a local event. Dr. Thomas has noted in the following:

Another hermeneutical shortcoming of preterism relates to the limiting of the promised coming of Christ in 1:7 to Judea. What does a localized judgment hundreds of miles away have to do with the seven churches in

⁷⁶ Robert L. Thomas, "A Classical Dispensationalist View of Revelation" in C. Marvin Pate, ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p. 225.

⁷⁷ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Book of The Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 20-21.

Asia? John uses two long chapters in addressing those churches regarding the implications of the coming of Christ for them. For instance, the promise to shield the Philadelphian church from judgment (3:10-11) is meaningless if that judgment occurs far beyond the borders of that city.⁷⁸

Fifth, even if there were the types of parallels between the cloud comings of the Old Testament and the text of Revelation 1:7, which I do not believe there are as Dr. Gentry has suggested, they would be meaningless because of what happened at Christ's ascension as described in Acts 1:9-11. Notice what it says,

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

The whole focus of Christ's cloud coming after this event is defined by the ascension. The next time Christ comes on the clouds, it is clearly said here to be bodily, personal, and coming with clouds. This is what Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:9 refer too. All of the New Testament, because of this event, looks to Christ's return in this way. Thus, any future cloud coming from this point on would have to be seen in light of this glorious promise.

Finally, to take Dr. Gentry's preterist interpretation of Revelation 1:7 creates many more problems with the rest of the Book of Revelation. This has been most clearly noted by Dr. Thomas.

This preterist view of 1:7 . . . creates several unsolvable interpretive dilemmas within the verse itself, not to mention elsewhere in the book: inconsistency regarding the identity of "those who pierced him," "the tribes of the earth," and "the land [or earth]." Are they limited to Jews and their land, or do they include Romans and the rest of the world? A preterist must contradict himself on these issues to have a past fulfillment of 1:7. They cannot limit "those who pierced him" to Jews only and elsewhere include the Romans as objects of Christ's "cloud coming." They cannot limit "the tribes of the earth [or land]" to Israel only, because in this case Zechariah 12:10ff. would require the mourning to be one of repentance, not of despair (as their interpretation holds). Their acknowledged worldwide scope of Revelation as a whole rules out their limitation of "the land" to Palestine in this verse.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Thomas, p. 225.

⁷⁹ Thomas, p. 186.

The preterist interpretation of Revelation 1:7 in relationship to Christ's coming is necessary if Revelation was fulfilled in the first century. However, the torturous interpretation of otherwise plain and clear language must be distorted beyond clear recognition in order to attempt such a devious view. When Revelation 1:7 is combined with Revelation 19:11-21, it is more than clear that such a reference is of a global, future, bodily and literal return of Jesus the Messiah from heaven to planet earth. While the preterist notion that this passage had to be fulfilled in the first century is required of their view, they are not able to provide actual exegetical support for such a position. When examined in the light of letting Scripture interpret Scripture, it becomes most clear that these are yet future events.

“QUICKLY”: HOW OR WHEN?

We are beginning to see that the current error known as preterism is based upon the misinterpretations of a few key passages. While Matthew 24:34 and the phrase “this generation” is their central passage, their dependence upon the so-called “time text” of Revelation becomes important in their attempts to “preterize” most of end-time Bible prophecy. Thus, the terms “quickly” and “near” become the basis for their insistence that the Book of Revelation was fulfilled in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Now I will deal with the term “quickly.”

What Bible verses do preterists appeal to in an effort to support their understanding of Revelation? “One of the most helpful interpretive clues in Revelation is . . . the *contemporary expectation of the author* regarding the fulfillment of the prophecies. John clearly expects the *soon* fulfillment of his prophecy,”⁸⁰ says Dr. Ken Gentry. I hope to show that these terms are more properly interpreted as *qualitative indicators* describing how Christ will return. How will He return?; it will be “quickly” or “suddenly.”

A form of the Greek word for “quickly” (*táchos*) is used eight times in Revelation (1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6; 22:7; 22:12; 22:20). *Táchos* and its family of related words can be used to mean “soon” or “shortly” as preterists believe (relating to time), or it can be used to mean “quickly” or “suddenly” as many futurists contend (manner in which action occurs). The *táchos* family is attested in the Bible as referring to both possibilities. On the one hand, 1 Timothy 3:14 is a timing passage, “I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you *before long*.” On the other hand, Acts 22:18 is descriptive of the manner in which the action takes place, “and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem *quickly*, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’”

The “timing interpretation” of the preterists teaches that the *táchos* word family used in Revelation (1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6, 7, 12, 20) means that Christ came in judgment upon Israel through the Roman army in events surrounding the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. But how would the “manner interpretation” of the futurist understand the use of the *táchos* family in Revelation? Futurist, John Walvoord explains:

⁸⁰Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 133.

That which Daniel declared would occur “in the latter days” is here described as “shortly” (Gr., *en tachei*), that is, “quickly or suddenly coming to pass,” indicating rapidity of execution after the beginning takes place. The idea is not that the event may occur soon, but that when it does, it will be sudden (cf. Luke 18:8; Acts 12:7; 22:18; 25:4; Rom. 16:20). A similar word, *tachys*, is translated “quickly” seven times in Revelation (2:5, 16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 20).⁸¹

Dr. Gentry is correct to note universal agreement among lexicons as to the general meaning of the *táchos* word family,⁸² but these lexicographers generally do not support the preterist interpretation. Dr. Gentry’s presentation of the lexical evidence is skewed and thus his conclusions are faulty in his effort to support a preterist interpretation of the *táchos* word family. We now turn to an examination of how the *táchos* word family is used in Revelation.

Support for the Futurist Interpretation

1. The lexical use. The leading Greek lexicon in our day is Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich (BAG),⁸³ which lists the following definitions for *táchos*: “speed, quickness, swiftness, haste” (p. 814). The two times that this noun appears in Revelation (1:1; 22:6), it is coupled with the preposition *en*, causing this phrase to function grammatically as an adverb revealing to us the “sudden” manner in which these events will take place.⁸⁴ They will occur “swiftly.” The other word in the *táchos* family used in Revelation as an adverb is *tachús*, which all six times occurs with the verb *érchomai*, “to come” (2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 20). BAG gives as its meaning “quick, swift, speedy” (p. 814) and specifically classifies all six uses in Revelation as meaning “without delay, quickly, at once” (p. 815). Thus, contrary to the timing assumption of preterists like Gary DeMar and Ken Gentry, who take every occurrence as a reference to timing, BAG (the other lexicons also agree) recommends a translation *descriptive* of the manner in which things will happen (Rev. 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 20).

A descriptive use of *táchos* is also supported by the over 60 times it is cited as the prefix making up a compound word according to the mother of all Greek lexicons, Liddell and Scott (p. 1762). G. H. Lang gives the following example:

tachy does not mean *soon* but *swiftly*. It indicates rapidity of action, as is well seen in its accurate use in the medical compound *tachycardia* (*tachy* and *kardía=the heart*), which does not mean that the heart will beat *soon*, but that it is beating *rapidly*. Of course, the swift action may take place at the very same time, as in Mt 28:7-8: “Go *quickly* and tell His disciples . . . and they departed *quickly* from the tomb”: but the thought is not that they did not loiter, but that their movement was swift. Thus here also. If the Lord be regarded as speaking in the

⁸¹John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 35.

⁸²Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 138.

⁸³Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, a translation and adaptation by William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957).

⁸⁴Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1992), s.v. 5034, p. 1369.

day when John lived, then He did not mean that He was returning *soon*, but swiftly and suddenly whenever the time should have arrived . . . it is the swiftness of His movement that the word emphasizes.⁸⁵

2. The grammatical use. Just as BAG is the leading lexicon in our day, the most authoritative Greek grammar is one produced by Blass, Debrunner, and Funk (Blass-Debrunner).⁸⁶ Blass-Debrunner, in their section on adverbs, divides them into four categories: 1) adverbs of manner, 2) adverbs of place, 3) adverbs of time, 4) correlative adverbs (pp. 55-57). The *táchos* family is used as the major example under the classification of “adverbs of manner.” No example from the *táchos* family is listed under “adverbs of time.” In a related citation, Blass-Debrunner classify *en táchei* as an example of “manner,” Luke 18:8 (p. 118). Greek scholar Nigel Turner also supports this adverbial sense as meaning “quickly.”⁸⁷

Not only is there a preponderance of lexical support for understanding the *táchos* family as including the notion of “quickly” or “suddenly,” there is the further support that all the occurrences in Revelation are adverbs of manner. These terms are not descriptive of *when* the events will occur and our Lord will come, but rather, descriptive of the *manner* in which they will take place when they occur. These adverbial phrases in Revelation can more accurately be translated “with swiftness, quickly, all at once, in a rapid pace [when it takes place].”⁸⁸

3. The Old Testament (LXX) use. It is significant to note that the Septuagint uses *táchos* in passages which even by the most conservative estimations could not have occurred for hundreds, even thousands of years. For example, Isaiah 13:22 says, “. . . Her (Israel) fateful time also will *soon* come. . .” This was written around 700 B.C. foretelling the destruction of Babylon which occurred in 539 B.C. Similarly, Isaiah 5:26 speaks of the manner, not the time frame, by which the Assyrian invasion of Israel “will come with speed *swiftly*.” Isaiah 51:5 says, “My righteousness is *near*, My salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands will wait for Me, and for My arm they will wait expectantly.” This passage probably will be fulfilled in the millennium, but no interpreter would place it sooner than Christ's first coming, at least 700 years after it was given. Isaiah 58:8 speaks of Israel's recovery as “speedily spring(ing) forth.” If it is a “timing passage,” then the earliest it could have happened is 700 years later, but most likely it has yet to occur. Many other citations in the Septuagint from the *táchos* family can be noted in support of the futurist interpretation of the usage in Revelation.

4. The date of Revelation. Dr. Gentry, followed by almost all preterists have to date the writing of Revelation before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. I think this is a very weak view that I will deal with below.

⁸⁵G. H. Lang, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Selected Studies* (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1945, 1985), pp. 387-88.

⁸⁶F. Blass & A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated and revised by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961).

⁸⁷Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. by James H. Moulton, Vol. III, *Syntax* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 252.

⁸⁸Mal Couch, Unpublished notes on Revelation, n.d., s.v. Rev. 1:1.

5. A “timing” interpretation would require an A.D. 70 fulfillment of the entire book of Revelation. Revelation 22:6, “And he said to me, ‘These words are faithful and true’; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must *shortly* (*táchos*) take place.” This is passage #6 from Gary DeMar’s list of “time indicators” for Revelation as noted above. However, Dr. Gentry cites Revelation 20:7-9 as a reference to the yet future second coming.⁸⁹ This creates a contradiction within Gentry’s brand of preterism. Since Revelation 22:6 is a statement referring to the whole book of Revelation, it would be impossible to take *táchos* as a reference to A.D. 70 (as Dr. Gentry does) and at the same time hold that Revelation 20:7-9 teaches the second coming. Gentry must either adopt a view similar to futurism or shift to the extreme preterist view that understands the entire book of Revelation as past history and thus eliminating any future second coming and resurrection.

DATING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

One important issue relating to the preterist interpretation is the date of the writing of the Book of Revelation. The interpretation of no other book in the canon of the Bible is affected by the date in which it was written as much as the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Preterist Ken Gentry declares, "if it could be demonstrated that Revelation were written 25 years after the Fall of Jerusalem, Chilton's entire labor would go up in smoke."⁹⁰ Dr. Gentry refers to fellow preterist David Chilton's commentary on Revelation. Thus, if Revelation was given after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 then it could not have been a prophecy about that event as preterists have to contend. I will seek to demonstrate that it was written around A.D. 95 thus rendering the preterist interpretation impossible.

DR. GENTRY'S ARGUMENT

The date of Revelation is so important to preterism that Dr. Gentry wrote his Th.D. dissertation defending a pre-A.D. 70 date.⁹¹ Preterism requires an early date for Revelation, otherwise the view would be impossible. For futurists, like myself, the date does not matter since these events are still future to our own time. The importance of the date for futurism would be that if it was written late then preterism would be impossible. The crux of Dr. Gentry's Neronian date rests upon three basic arguments.

First, since John refers to Jerusalem's temple in Revelation 11:1-2, then it must have been standing at the time of writing. If still standing, then Revelation was written before the temple's destruction in A.D. 70.⁹² Second, the seven kings of Revelation 17:1-6 refer to a succession of Roman kings in the first century. Dr. Gentry explains, "'one is.' That is, the sixth one is *then reigning* even as John wrote. That would be Nero Caesar, . . . The seventh king was 'not yet come.' That would be Galba, . . . Thus, we see that while

⁸⁹ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, pp. 254; 276; 418.

⁹⁰ Kenneth L. Gentry, "The Days of Vengeance: A Review Article," *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, Vol. IX, No. 4., p. 11.

⁹¹ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta: American Vision, [1989], 1998).

⁹² Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., "The Date & Theme of Revelation," *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, Vol. XV, Nos. 5 & 6., pp. 21-22.

John wrote, Nero was still alive and Galba was looming in the near future.¹⁹³ Finally, Dr. Gentry believes that the relationship of the Jews to Christianity, as pictured in Revelation, is not yet distinct. He believes that the two entities became distinct during and after the destruction of the Temple. Yet he contends that Revelation reflects a situation where they are still together. He concludes that "When John writes Revelation, Christianity is not divorced from Israel. After A.D. 70 such would not be the case. This is strong socio-cultural evidence for a pre-A.D. 70 composition."¹⁹⁴

REBUTTAL OF DR. GENTRY'S ARGUMENT

While there are a number of other issues that can be studied in determining the date of Revelation, these are the three that Dr. Gentry believes makes his case. I will take them in the order listed above.

The Temple in Revelation 11

In the Book of Revelation John is receiving a vision about future things. He is obviously transported in some way to that future time in order to view the events as they will unfold. This is why the word "saw" is used 49 times in 46 verses in Revelation because John is witnessing future events. It does not matter at all whether the temple is thought to still be standing in Jerusalem at the time that John sees the vision, since that would not necessarily have any bearing upon a vision. John is told by the angel accompanying him during the vision to "measure the temple" (Rev. 11:1). Measure what temple? The temple in the vision. In fact, Ezekiel, during a similar vision of a temple (Ezek. 40—48) was told to measure that temple. Dr. Gentry would agree, that when Ezekiel saw and was told to measure a temple, that there was not one standing in Jerusalem. Thus, there is no compulsion whatsoever, that just because a temple is referenced in Revelation 11 that it implies that there had to be a physical temple standing in Jerusalem at the time. Frankly, this is not only a weak argument from Dr. Gentry, it is no argument at all.

The Seven Kings in Revelation 17

This argument is polluted by the same assumption that underlies Dr. Gentry's previous contention about the temple. Dr. Gentry assumes that "the sixth one is *then reigning* even as John wrote. That would be Nero Caesar, . . ."¹⁹⁵ Once again Dr. Gentry begs the question. John is seeing, recording, and commenting on a vision of the future. Thus, the time frame that he is referencing would be of that time in which he was viewing the future. This cannot then be used as a proof that he was viewing a particular time frame, without having previously, in some other way, established the period of time that he views. Dr. Gentry has not previously established such a time frame. That is why he cannot then turn around and assume a certain time frame that he then presents as an internal proof for a Neronian date for Revelation. In fact, we are

⁹³ Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 23.

⁹⁴ Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 24.

⁹⁵ Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 23.

finding that Dr. Gentry's proofs all presuppose a preterist interpretation, which certainly has not been established.

Regardless of the interpretation of this passage, it cannot be used as a proof for when Revelation was written. I believe that the kings referred to in this passage provide us with a landscape of biblical history. The five which are fallen refer to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. The sixth empire that was reigning at the time which John wrote was Rome. The seventh that is to come will be the future kingdom of the antichrist, known in Revelation as the Beast.⁹⁶ Robert Thomas provides an additional reason why Dr. Gentry's whole interpretation is not likely.

The future leader and his empire will have a short life according to the words, . . . "when it comes, it is necessary for it to remain for a little [time]". The adjective . . . "little" has the idea of brevity as it does in Rev. 12:12. This is a limitation of God's will (Lenski) and indicates among other things that its time will be shorter than the six previous empires (Seiss). This factor alone would eliminate the possibility of the seven kings being first-century Roman emperors.⁹⁷

The Jews in Revelation

This argument is built upon Dr. Gentry's replacement theology belief that the church has forever replaced national Israel as an instrument through which God works. Typical of this mentality is Dr. Gentry's reasoning that, "In Revelation the Jews are represented as emptily calling themselves 'Jews.' They are not true Jews in the fundamental, spiritual sense, which was Paul's argument in Romans 2. This would suggest a date prior to the final separation of Judaism and Christianity."⁹⁸ This is hardly an argument based upon a clear-cut historical observation. Instead, this argument, like the two previous ones, is based upon Dr. Gentry's interpretative bias. The language in Revelation is not such that one could draw some kind of conclusion that would impact when Revelation was written.

Some of the things that Dr. Gentry brings out about a rift between Judaism and Christianity were going on since the inception of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. But a different understanding is just as plausible. Hebrew Christian scholar and expert, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, paints a different picture than that of Dr. Gentry.

But even during the controversies after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Hebrew Christians continued to live in the midst of other Jews. . . . The rift caused by the desertion of Jerusalem proved to be a temporary one, and a partial reconciliation did come about despite Hebrew Christian opposition to the new Judaism of the rabbis.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ For an in-depth presentation of this view see Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), pp. 291-300.

⁹⁷ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 299.

⁹⁸ Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 23.

⁹⁹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History, & Philosophy* (San Antonio: Ariel Press, 1983), p. 41.

Dr. Fruchtenbaum goes on to note that the kind of rift that Dr. Gentry contends does not really start taking place until the A.D. 90s, with the real break coming as a result of the Hebrew Christian non-support of the Bar Cochba revolt around a.d. 135.¹⁰⁰

IRENAEUS' STATEMENT

Early Church father Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202) made a statement about the date of Revelation. Writing around A.D. 180 Irenaeus said the following:

We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by *him who beheld the apocalyptic vision*. For that was seen not very long time since, but *almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign*.¹⁰¹

This is why a majority of scholars date Revelation around A.D. 95. Dr. Gentry dismisses the clear statement from Irenaeus through a complicated web of sophistry that fails in his attempt to explain away this testimony. He suggests that it was John who was seen, rather than John who saw the revelation.¹⁰² If such were the case, it seems odd that Eusebius, who was a theological opponent of Irenaeus in the area of Bible prophecy, clearly thought that it was John who saw the apocalyptic vision.¹⁰³ So desperate is Dr. Gentry's attempt to suppress Irenaeus' clear statement that one scholar observes: "Despite the lack of any extant textual evidence, Gentry argues that the Latin text has been corrupted and was originally constructed so that John would have been understood as the subject of the verb."¹⁰⁴

Since a preterist interpretation of Revelation requires an early date of the final book in the Bible, preterists go to great lengths in their attempts to make their view appear viable. For those of us who are futurists, the date of Revelation does not affect our interpretation of the book. The Domitianic date is the overwhelmingly accepted view of scholarship in our day. The only exception, as a class of interpreters, to the late date advocates are preterists. It is not surprising to realize that while their view is short of solid reasons for a pre-A.D. 70 composition, preterists make a heroic, but inadequate effort for their view. It appears to me that the major reason that preterists believe in an early date for Revelation is that their system requires it.

SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR PRETERISM

All doctrine has practical implications. What are the practical implications of those who hold to the view that most, in some cases all, Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled? This is the question I want to explore now.

¹⁰⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity*, pp. 42-44.

¹⁰¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, v.xxx.3 (emphasis added).

¹⁰² Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, pp. 45-67.

¹⁰³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III. xvii & xviii.

¹⁰⁴ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 20, f.n. 112.

PRETERIST IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

“The overwhelming majority of the eschatological events prophesied in the Book of Revelation have already been fulfilled,” declares preterist Dr. Gary North.¹⁰⁵ Since subjects relating to prophecy dominate virtually every page of the New Testament (NT) this would logically mean, for the preterist, that most of the NT does not refer directly to the Church today. Since so much of the NT is written to tell believers how to live between the two comings of Christ, it makes a huge difference if one interprets Christ's coming as a past or future event. If preterism is true, then the NT refers to believers who lived during the forty-year period between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Therefore, virtually no part of the NT applies to believers today according to preterist logic. There is no canon that applies directly to believers during the church age.

Preterist advocate, Dr. Kenneth Gentry, actually believes that current history is identified as the new heavens and new earth of Revelation 21—22 and 2 Peter 3:10–13.¹⁰⁶ This is a common preterist viewpoint. Dr. Gentry provides four major reasons why “the new creation begins in the first century.”¹⁰⁷ It stretches credulity to think of the implications of the details of such a conclusion. If we are currently living in any way in the New Heavens and New Earth then this means that there is no Satan (Rev. 20:10), no death, crying or pain (Rev. 21:4), no longer any unclean, nor those practicing abomination and lying (Rev. 21:27), no curse (Rev. 22:3), the presence of God the Father (Rev. 22:4), just to name a few. Amazing!

Implications Of The 40 Year Interval

I will now provide an example of how the preterist position would practically impact a believer today. Many preterists believe that passages like Titus 2:13 refer to the coming of Christ in A.D. 70. This would mean that it was a hope only for those Christians living between the time the Epistle was written and the destruction of Jerusalem—A.D. 65-66. Paul says that Christ's appearance the first time impacts the lives of believers in the “*present age*.” Titus 2:12 says, “*instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age*.” The grammar of the next verse (2:13) relates the activities of 2:12 to the activity of “*looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus*.” If 2:13 is a reference to A.D. 70, as preterist generally believe, then the “*present age*” in 2:12 would have ended when 2:13 was fulfilled. Therefore, the total admonition of 2:12 was temporary and applicable only to Christians up until A.D. 70. This would mean that the instruction “*to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age*” would not directly apply to the current age, but to the past age which ended in A.D. 70 when “*the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior,*

¹⁰⁵ Gary North, “Publisher's Preface” in Ken Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), p. xi).

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., “A Preterist View of Revelation” in C. Marvin Pate, gen. ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), pp. 86–89.

¹⁰⁷ Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” p. 87 and pp. 86–89.

Christ Jesus” occurred in the destruction of Jerusalem. Sadly, such logic would have to be the practical implication of the preterist view as applied to this passage and to most of the NT.

The clear implication for preterists would be that Titus no longer relates directly to the current age in which we live. Instead, it applied for three or four years, since Paul wrote Titus around A.D. 65. There is no way that a preterist can use this or similar passages as doctrine, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness for believers, who are living in the New Heavens and New Earth. Yet, hypocritically, preterists regularly use and apply these passages in a way that practically denies their theoretical belief that Jesus returned in A.D. 70 and we are now in some form of the New Heavens and New Earth. Preterists need to develop some consistency between their theory and practice.

The Opening of Pandora’s Box

The story of Pandora’s Box is an apt illustration of how one act can have a wide, multiplying effect upon many other issues. The belief, that there “are no major eschatological discontinuities ahead of us except the conversion of the Jews (Rom. 11) and the final judgment (Rev. 20)”¹⁰⁸ has a wide and great impact upon NT prophecy, especially the Epistles. It is clear that the application of the preterist interpretation virtually wipes out the *direct* application of the teaching of the Epistles to our current age. Just as the Law of Moses was given by God to Israel to be the focus of their dispensation, so the NT Epistles are the focus, giving vision and direction to the church during “this present age.”

Satan: Bound or Loose?

The preterist view relating to the current work of Satan and the demons should reflect their theology on the subject. According to the preterist view, Satan is currently bound (Rev. 20:2-3) and crushed (Rom. 16:20). The enemy was not just defeated *de jure* (legally) at the cross, but has been crushed *de facto* (in fact). Therefore, the spiritual road blocks of the world and the devil have been removed and only the enemy of the flesh remains that would obstruct believers from reigning and ruling now in the New Heavens and New Earth. On the other hand, if the binding and crushing of Satan and his company is still future, then the commands in the Epistles make sense in this present age. Commands such as “*resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7b). “*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world*” (1 Peter 5:8-9). “*Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity*” (Ephesians 4:26-27). “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly place*” (Ephesians 6:12). These are instructions which are the very tactics

¹⁰⁸ North, "Publisher's Preface", p. xii.

to be applied by the believer in this present age because we are not yet in the New Heavens and New Earth. If Satan is bound and crushed, as the preterist interpretation insists, then they are unfaithful to their understanding of Scripture to apply the above passages to the Christian life today, as they so often do. A crushed and bound enemy does not prowl, or wage war, etc. This becomes crystal clear when one realizes that Satan resumes his war with God only after he has been “*released from his prison*” (Revelation 20:7b).

Similar thinking could, even should, be applied from the implications of preterism to many passages and subjects in the Christian life. Just think. No more suffering. If no suffering, then no need for endurance. No need for the sanctification process which involves suffering, endurance, faith and hope. No hope, because Christ returned in A.D. 70 and ushered in a new day. No apostasy of the church. No pain, suffering, or death. Therefore, since we are obviously not living under such conditions it means that preterism is also wrong.

The Sufferings Of This Present Time

The New Heavens and New Earth is to be a time of peace and rest for God’s people. The era preceding this time will be one of suffering and struggle. Again, if the preterist interpretation is correct, then the instruction of the NT Epistles on the issue of suffering only directly applied to believers until A.D. 70, because we would now be in the time of peace, not “*the sufferings of this present time*” spoken of by Paul (Rom. 8:18).

Endurance of unjust suffering is a major theme in the Epistles. In fact, the NT paints it as one of the major ingredients which God brings into our life to produce Christ-like character in His children (Heb. 12:1-17). Peter notes, “*For this [unjust suffering] finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. . . . But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God*” (1 Pet. 2:19-20). Revelation promises a future reward of co-rulership with Christ to believers who have remained faithful and loyal to Christ during this present age of humiliation (Rev. 3:21; see also 2:25-28). Revelation 3:21 not only promises future rule with Christ after this current age of humiliation, but notice it also makes a distinction between Christ’s future kingdom and the Father’s current rule. “*He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*” These passages do not make sense and certainly would not apply to today if we are in the New Heavens and New Earth of the preterists.

Present and Future Apostasy?

“If preterism is true,” says Gary North, “then most of the prophesied negative sanctions in history are over”¹⁰⁹ I would say, if futurism is true, then great apostasy lies ahead. Does the current church age become increasingly apostate concluding with “the Great Apostasy” during the Tribulation, or were the scores of passages speaking about apostasy fulfilled in A.D. 70, as preterism demands? “The ‘Great Apostasy’ happened in

¹⁰⁹ North, Ibid.

the first century. We therefore have no Biblical warrant to expect increasing apostasy as history progresses; instead, we should expect the increasing Christianization of the world,"¹¹⁰ declares preterist David Chilton.

This is another area where large sections of the NT, especially the Epistles and Revelation, would have to be adjusted away from the meaning Christians have historically seen in those passages. An example of this is seen in how the different approaches would handle Paul's warning in 2 Timothy 3. Paul begins by saying that "*in the last days difficult times will come*" (3:1). The "last days" likely refers to the whole of the current Church age, or perhaps it is a general reference to the final portion of the current Church age. Either way, it is a reference to the period of time before the final phase of history which preterists say we are not in. Paul goes on to describe how these times will be characterized by men who "*will be lovers of self,*" . . . (3:2) "*rather than lovers of God*" (3:4). The general course of "the last days" are described as a time when "*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived*" (3:12-13). Therefore, if "the last days" have already come and gone, we should expect that the persecution of the godly should be absent and "evil men and impostors" should not "proceed from bad to worse." According to preterism, this would directly apply to the events before A.D. 70, but not after that time.

Apostasy increases, not decreases, during the current church age. Because preterism is errant, then they have to take a theoretical interpretation on this and most other NT doctrine that is so far out that even the inventive minds of preterists cannot apply them in our current age. It is clear that the preterist interpretation of NT prophecy is so far removed from what the Bible teaches because it is impossible to practically apply their teaching in our current age.

WHY FUTURISM IS THE BIBLICAL POSITION

In answering the challenges of Preterism I want to give a brief defense of Futurism. Futurism is the view that understands prophetic events like the rapture, the tribulation, the second coming and the millennium as future to the time in which we are now living. In fact, D. H. Kromminga notes that "preterist and the futurist methods, or approaches stand at opposite extremes."¹¹¹ Indeed they do! I believe that it can be demonstrated that futurism is the approach intended by God when He gave us His Word.

LITERAL INTERPRETATION

Consistent literal interpretation of the Bible leads any interpreter who applies this approach to the futurist understanding of prophecy. By "literal," I mean a normal reading of the text that allows for figures of speech, the historical and contextual understanding of a passage. E. R. Craven explains:

¹¹⁰ Chilton, *Paradise*, p. 225.

¹¹¹ D. H. Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945), p. 295.

The Literalist is not one who denies that figurative language, that symbols, are used in prophecy, nor does he deny that great spiritual truths are set forth therein; his position is, simply, that the prophecies are to be normally interpreted (i.e. according to the received laws of language) as any other utterances are interpreted—that which is manifestly literal being regarded as literal.¹¹²

Preterists, on the other hand, while interpreting passages that appear to fit their scheme literally (i.e., Luke 21:20-24), overall tend to allegorize key texts (i.e., Matt. 24:29-31). Allegorization occurs when an interpreter brings into a text a meaning (based upon ideas) from outside the text. Thus, their interpretation cannot be supported from a normal reading of the words and phrases. A preterist example is seen when they make the word "coming" (i.e., Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7) to mean a non-physical, non-bodily event. This is done, not by demonstrating that "coming" must mean that from the context, but by importing foreign concepts from other sources into a given passage. This is not a valid form of interpretation. Further, E. W. Bullinger tells us in his book, which is the most extensive analysis of biblical figures of speech in English, that "Allegory is always stated in the past tense, and never in the future. Allegory is thus distinguished from prophecy. The allegory brings other teaching out of past events, while the prophecy tells us events that are yet to come, and means exactly what is said."¹¹³

A. J. Gordon, reporting on the views of a converted Jew named Joseph Rabinowitz wrote over 100 years ago the following:

Without a clear proclamation of the second advent, Christians have no common ground on which to meet the Jew; that to spiritualize this doctrine, as many do, is fatal, since the predictions are so clear of a glorious and conquering Messiah as well as a suffering Messiah. If you spiritualize the second advent, you must allow the Jew to spiritualize the first, as he is always ready to do, and you have no basis on which to reason with him.¹¹⁴

Futurism is the natural outgrowth of the consistent literal interpretation of Scripture. This is the accepted approach to hermeneutics by all orthodox interpreters, except when some come to Bible prophecy. Thus, literal or natural interpretation is a support for futurism.

GOD'S PROPHETIC ROAD MAP

Deuteronomy provides a prophetic road map covering the whole of history before Israel started down the road about 3400 years ago. As the nation of Israel sat perched

¹¹² E. R. Craven, in J. P. Lange ed., *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Revelation*, reprint ed., Vol. 12. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [1872] 1960), p. 98.

¹¹³ Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in The Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), p. 749.

¹¹⁴ A. J. Gordon, "Three Weeks with Joseph Rabinowitz" in A. C. Gaebelien, *"Hath God Cast Away His People?"* (New York: Gospel Publishing House, 1905), p. 277.

on the banks of the Jordan River, before she ever set one foot upon the Promised Land, the Lord gave an outline of her entire history through His mouthpiece Moses.

Deuteronomy is this revelation and it is like a road map for where history is headed before the trip got underway. While different segments of the historical journey have been updated with more details being added along the way, not a single adjustment from the earlier course has ever been made.

In the process of Moses' exhortation to the nation of Israel, he provides in Deuteronomy 4:25-31 an outline of what will happen to this elect nation once they cross over the Jordan River and settle the promised land. A summary of these events would be as follows:

- 1) Israel and her descendants would remain long in the land.
- 2) Israel would act corruptly and slip into idolatry.
- 3) Israel would be kicked out of the land.
- 4) The LORD will scatter them among the nations.
- 5) Israel would be given over to idolatry during their wanderings.
- 6) While dispersed among the nations, Israel would seek and find the LORD when they search for Him with all their heart.
- 7) There would come a time of *tribulation*, said to occur in the latter days, during which time they would turn to the LORD
- 8) "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them" (Deuteronomy 4:31).

If the first five events have happened to Israel—and no evangelical interpreter would deny that they have—then it is clear from the text that the final events will also occur to the same people in the same way as the earlier events. This is most clear from the context. The Bible does not “change horses in midstream” so that suddenly Israel, who has received the curses, is dropped out of the picture and the church takes over and receives the blessings. Despite various systems of the theology, the Bible nowhere teaches that God has forsaken Israel (cf. Rom. 11:1). Any reader of the text will have to admit that the same identity is referred to throughout the whole of the text under examination. If it is true that the same Israel is meant throughout the text, then the last three events have yet to be fulfilled for Israel in the same historical way in which the first five events are recognized by all to have taken place. Thus, a fulfillment of the final three events in the life of Israel will have to happen in the future. This passage in Deuteronomy 4 pictures a return to the Lord after Tribulation, not judgment. This means that a futurist view of prophecy is supported from this early passage and throughout the rest of Scripture.

As significant as Deuteronomy 4 is in establishing the prophetic history of God's elect people, an expanded narrative of Israel's future history is provided in Deuteronomy 28—32. “The last seven chapters of Deuteronomy (28–34),” says David Larsen, “are

really the matrix out of which the great prophecies of the Old Testament regarding Israel emerge.”¹¹⁵ Dr. Larsen provides the following breakdown of Israel’s future history:

26:3–13; 28:1–14	The conditions of blessing to follow obedience
31:16–21	The coming apostasy
28:15–60	The affliction that God would bring upon Israel, while still in the land, because of her apostasy
28:32–39, 48–57	Israel will be taken captive
27; 32	The enemies of Israel will possess her land for a time
28:38–42; 29:23	The land itself will remain desolate
28:63–67; 32:26	Israel will be scattered among the nations
28:62	The time will come when Israel will be “few in number”
28:44–45	Though punished, Israel will not be destroyed if she repents
28:40–41; 30:1–2	Israel will repent in her tribulation
30:3–10	Israel will be gathered from the nations and brought back to her divinely given land ¹¹⁶

The final few events summarized above by Dr. Larsen certainly did not take place during the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, nor at any time in history yet past. It appears to be shaping up that while the A.D. 70 incident was indeed a prophesied event, the remaining items in Israel's prophetic roadmap have not yet been fulfilled. What is sad about the preterist interpretation is that it recognizes on the curses upon Israel, but not the future blessings that God has also promised. Preterism says that Israel gets the curses but the church gets Israel's blessings. That's not what the Bible says. And in order for the blessings for Israel to literally occur, just as the past and present curses have occurred literally, they must take place in the future. Dr. Harton concludes: “Inasmuch as Deuteronomy 28–30 is merely a restatement and amplification of this same promise in Deuteronomy 4, it may be concluded that Deuteronomy 28:15–68 will have an eschatological fulfillment.”¹¹⁷

DEUTERONOMY 28 AS PROPHECY

After having enumerated the relatively short list of blessings that God would bestow upon Israel in the land (Deut. 28:1–14), Moses commences to enumerate the much longer list of curses that God will inflict upon His people when they would inevitably disobey (vv. 28:15–68). The Lord would start inflicting the nation with mild curses at the

¹¹⁵ David Larsen, *Jews, Gentiles, & The Church* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1995), p. 23.

¹¹⁶ Larsen, *Jews, . . .*, pp. 23-24.

¹¹⁷ George M. Harton, “Fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28—30 in History and in Eschatology,” Th.D. Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, August 1981, p. 233.

inception of disobedience and gradually turn up the heat as insubordination persisted. The most severe chastisement the Lord would inflict upon His wayward people would be expulsion from their land mediated through the agency of a foreign invader (vv. 49–68). The Lord’s logic is something along the line that if Israel did not want to obediently serve Him in their own land then they could go and serve other gods outside the land (vv. 47–48).

Interestingly, verses 49–68 record two specific instances of removal from the Land. The first reference is clearly to the Babylonian captivity, which took place in the sixth century B.C. (vv. 49–57). For example, when verse 49 speaks of “a nation” that the Lord would bring against Israel in judgment. This is followed by a second statement of dispersion (v. 64) which says, “Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth.” This was undoubtedly fulfilled by the Romans when they destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Luke 21:24, which speaks of the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, says that the Jewish people “will be led captive into all the nations;” a statement which reflects the language of Deuteronomy 28:64. Thus, we see two different instances of the judgment of God’s covenantal curse being worked out in history. But neither of them means that predictions of all future prophecy have already been fulfilled.

We have seen thus far, from our prophetic road map, that Deuteronomy 28 has predicted two different instances when the ultimate covenant curse of expulsion from the land will be applied to national Israel. However, we have also noted that Deuteronomy 28–30 indicates that some future events will come after Israel has been regathered back into the land and Jerusalem; then God will bring to pass the tribulation. Thus, since the second covenantal dispersion in A.D. 70 by the Romans led to Israel’s scattering among the nations, then that could not have been the tribulation which is to take place after a regathering. This would make the tribulation and other prophesied events to still be future eschatological events.

FUTURISM IMPLICATIONS

If we could take the time to study the rest of the Old Testament we would find that it is an expansion, consistent with the early prophetic roadmap, of God’s prophetic plan. Dozens of passages predict a glorious future for Israel. If these texts are taken literally and historically then they have to have a future fulfillment. Jesus, in the Olivet Discourse and in the Revelation, in concert with the Old Testament, also expands upon, but is consistent with, that prophetic roadmap begun in Deuteronomy. Our Lord predicts a literal and thus future time of glory and blessing for Israel. Unless one just arbitrarily imports the theology of the church replacing Israel into many key texts, it is clear that hundreds of prophecies still speak of a literal and thus future fulfillment. I think it becomes clear that futurism is the only approach that makes sense of the Bible and its prophecies. While the Bible speaks of a wonderful past, we cannot hide the fact that the best is yet to come!

CONCLUSION

Like many of the arguments presented by preterists, they appear to have some initial merit when looked at by the biblically uneducated, but upon closer examination prove to be without merit. Preterists falsely built upon the misguided assumption, that they attempt to “prove” from various prooftexts, that Bible prophecy *had* to have its fulfillment within about 40 years of Christ’s first advent. There are many implications, both theological and practical, that would require a major adjustment to the Christian faith if they are right. Since their arguments are incorrect, so are the implications that flow from such thought. Because of the recent spread of Preterism, pastors and teachers need to be prepared to defend orthodox eschatology from this attack. Those who believe that Christ came in A.D. 70 will certainly not be found looking for our Lord's any-moment return when He does rapture the church without any signs or warning before this blessed event. Are we looking back at the past or forward to the future?
Maranatha!