

PRETERISM EXPOSED

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date of writing: 2007
Legacy Books
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(800) 269-7471
www.legacybooksandmusic.com

CHAPTER ONE

PRETERISM EXPOSED

Eschatology has developed widely divergent views in the last several hundred years. Post-millennialism, Dispensationalism, the Secret Rapture, and the 70th week of Daniel are just a few of the new terms prophecy commentators have coined. Now we have a new prophecy craze: Preterism. This paper attempts to lay out the eschatology of Preterism, and expose its dangers and errors. As we shall see, Preterism adds nothing to the Church and takes a lot away from her.

Until recently, there was one point of agreement among the many and extremely diverse eschatological views, and that was the future return of Christ for His Church. The method, timing, and nature of Christ's return was a matter of dispute, but nobody advocated that Christ was not going to return at all, or that He had already returned. Preterism has spectacularly disrupted that harmony of belief—teaching that the return of Christ has already taken place, specifically, in A.D. 70 at the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans.

The first time I heard Preterism's claim that Christ had already returned I was beyond incredulous; I was dumbfounded. I immediately put Preterism in the category of Christian Identists, Christian Scientists, and other off-the-wall fringe groups teaching bizarre doctrines. However, I was forced to more closely examine Preterism when I encountered several well-intentioned Christians who were full Preterists, insisting that Christ had already returned and that we are now living in the new heavens and earth of Revelation 21. Not

willing to entirely write these people off as kooks, I was nevertheless mystified how anyone could possibly believe that Christ has already returned! I began to study Preterist theology to understand what Preterists really believe.

I discovered that full Preterism (sometimes called hyper-Preterism) sprang from an older view of prophecy, called partial Preterism, which does confess Christ's future coming and which bears much similarity to the Historical view. We do not want to confuse full Preterism with partial Preterism—this article is specifically concerned with addressing full Preterism's claims that Christ has already returned, that the resurrection is past, and that the heavens and earth as we see them now will exist forever. That is what we mean when we refer to Preterism. We are not disagreeing with other Preterist beliefs like the ending of Judaism in A.D. 70, and the significance of the fall of Jerusalem in fulfilling the prophecies of Jesus and the OT prophets.

In order to understand the appeal of Preterism's declaration that the Second Coming is past, I began studying its teachings and interpretations of the Scripture. I found that Preterism is an ambitious and growing view, and has a fervent following on the Internet. As with many false doctrines, Preterism is partly true, and Preterists are very good at emphasizing those points first, carefully documenting from the Bible their meaning and truthfulness. But then they make subtle side-extensions to their Scripture interpretation that precipitates the claim that Christ has already returned. An examination of their proofs on that topic shows an extremely one-sided manipulation of the Scriptures and logical progression of the facts. Generally though, Preterists are knowledgeable of the Bible and can be very persuasive in their arguments. They are especially adept at critically assessing the Futurist views of the Millennium and the coming Jewish dispensation, a talent that has recently gained them many converts.

Why has Preterism been accepted by some in the Christian community? Surely a primary reason is the spectacular failure of Futurism's many predictions and claims. Over the last century, Futurist prophecy experts have predicted a wide array of world events, almost all of which have utterly failed. Revisions and new revelations have similarly failed. An increasing number of Christians are simply through with such prophets, making Futurism an easy target for Preterist evangelists. I witnessed a Preterism/Futurism debate

that was easily won by the Preterist, who simply kept pointing out the many inconsistencies in Futurism's view of eschatology and thus was really never made to answer his own glaring interpretation errors.

My own eschatological view is historical a-millennialism, and I have studied the Revelation carefully from that viewpoint. I can understand and even agree with much of Preterism's assessment of Futurism. Like the Preterist, I also believe that much of prophecy is written in symbolic, figurative pictures. I agree with Preterists that the destruction of Jerusalem was a focal point of Biblical prophecy, and even that most Biblical prophecy has already been fulfilled.

To say that Christ's return is a past event, however, crosses the line of ordinary Scriptural interpretation and enters the realm of extra-Biblical mysticism. The Second Coming is so evidently presented in the Scriptures as an earth-changing, unmistakable event that its future occurrence has been universally accepted and acknowledged by the historical Church. Christ's coming with His angels in the clouds of heaven dealing retribution on the wicked and changing the righteous in the twinkling of an eye to glorified, heavenly bodies is just not something that could *be done in a corner*.

Prophecy has always been open to speculation and theories, and justifiably so, for the prophets wrote in veiled, obscure language in order to hide their meaning from unbelievers and the Devil. But prophecy has never been subjected to such a leap of the imagination as Preterism, which teaches that all Biblical eschatology has been fulfilled; Jesus has returned, the resurrection is past, and the heaven and earth will continue to exist forever in its sin-cursed state. As far as I can tell, not one of these teachings would pass the doctrinal statement of faith held by any denomination in all history, and that in itself should be a warning signal concerning Preterism's truthfulness.

Why the sudden re-evaluation and interpretation of such a prominent event in the Bible? Preterism arose as an attempt to explain a difficult feature of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24: *This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled*. In fact, the whole Preterist viewpoint hangs upon a peculiar explanation of this passage and a handful of other verses which imply that the return of Christ was imminent way back during the age of the Apostles, who wrote that the coming of the Lord was near at hand, soon to come, etc.

Preterist's begin their indoctrination of new converts by asking them, "Did Jesus really mean it when He said 'I will return soon,' and 'this generation will not end before I return?' How can we be living in the 'last days' now when the Apostles wrote that they were living in the last days 2000 years ago? Was Peter wrong when he said *the end of all things is at hand*? If you believe that the Bible is inspired, you must believe with us that the end of all things has taken place, that Christ has already returned, and that the last days are now past, for that is what the Bible teaches."

Next the Preterist will point out that 2000 years have transpired since Christ walked this earth, and that He said He was going to return quickly. Either Christ and His Apostles misled us into thinking that He was going to return quickly, or He did return, but His coming was misunderstood and nobody recognized it.

Of course, nobody is going to say that Christ was being deceptive, so evidently He did return. That is the logic of Preterism, and it seems so simple and possible at first.

However, taking the side of Preterism will put one in opposition to the clear teaching of many other Scriptures, and raises a far greater "deception of Christ," (using the Preterist's words). Would it not be much worse for Jesus to mislead His people by telling them to watch and wait for Him to return visibly and powerfully (as so many Scriptures indicate) when He was actually planning to come in some invisible spiritual way that would never be perceived by anyone, including the Apostle John who lived 20 years after Christ returned? We contend that would be much more deceptive than presenting the Second Coming as an imminent event even though after 2000 years He still has not returned. The Church has appreciated the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ for centuries, and it has served Kingdom saints very well. Certainly it furnishes the important sense of urgency the salvation message requires. Would not the Christians of centuries past have lived differently if they knew that Christ was not going to return until long after they died? The knowledge that we must constantly live in readiness for Christ's return has provoked many lackluster Christians to greater commitment. Indeed, the message of many passages (the parable of the ten virgins, for example) is lost if one embraces the idea that Christ has already returned.

It is not deceitful of God to say, “The end is at hand!” Modern versions (NIV, NASB) would render it: “The end of all things is near.” This phrase and several similar ones are entirely time-relative, and it is the context that provides the appropriate time framework. At hand, soon, near, etc can vary drastically in actual time within different contexts. If you are waiting for a train to arrive, “soon” is probably measured in minutes. If you are a scientist waiting for a comet to return, “soon” would be measured in centuries. And if you are God “soon” could be thousands of years, according to II Peter 3, which, as we shall see, provides us with the correct Scriptural time context for Christ’s return.

The verses implying an imminent return of the Lord are just that—relative implications. There is no deception or dishonesty in them. Remember that Jesus often let his audience misunderstand His words—and He didn’t correct them even when He knew that they had misunderstood! He said, “Destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it up,” and then let them believe He was talking about the literal temple. My point is that the time of Christ’s return has been purposely kept vague by the inspired writers of the NT. We know that it is the best-kept secret in the universe, for even the Son does not know when that day will be (Mark 13:32). The only way to present the immanency of Christ’s return and still allow for a lengthy Gospel Age is to say that the coming of Christ “is at hand,” or “soon.” And if a thousand years is as one day to God, then He is not being untruthful.

The the logical progression of Preterism arises from the dilemma formed by the following two facts:

1. The NT writers say that the return of Christ is "imminent, at hand, near, soon to come," etc.
2. Numerous Scriptures describe His return as an unmistakable, earth-ending event that every person who has ever lived must attend.

These two facts force one to choose to believe either that: 1) Christ has already returned and the Church did not notice or, 2) Christ did not intend to return immediately, in say, 40 years after He left.

This logic forms two lines of argument, the conclusion of which should shape the basis of one’s belief as to whether Christ’s return is past or future.

The Preterist must find a way to diminish the graphic testimony of Scripture describing Christ's return, and he must be able to explain that testimony in such a way as to make the Second Coming of Christ happen in A.D. 70. The Preterist does this by postulating that all the passages describing Christ's return are highly figurative, and have been fulfilled "spiritually." In fact, they are so figurative that the only point truly acknowledged is that Christ "came" back, and even that coming was so mystical and nebulous that nobody really knows what it means, what happened, or even His purpose in returning. Preterists would no doubt dispute this assessment of their doctrine, but it is the valid conclusion to the logical progression of the argument.

We will be fair and note that the other prophecy views (Historical and Futurist) must be able to elucidate those Scriptures implying that Christ's return would be a near future event to Christ's death. We must be able to explain these passages so that their fulfillments can be in the distant future, at least 2000 years after Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly."

Following the logic of Preterism will bring one to the conclusion that Christ has already returned and that we are now living in the new heavens and earth. This paper undertakes to explore what the Scriptures have to say concerning: 1) the imminent return of Christ, and 2) the nature and timing of Christ's return. For us, the first point is primarily a defensive position. We must explain why the Scriptures designate Christ's return as imminent and near at hand during the days of the Apostles. Two thousand years is a long time for Christ to tarry, and we must be able to defend our position that the Scriptures allow for Christ's return to be extended to a yet future date. The second point is primarily an offensive position for us. We will show and explain why the descriptions of Christ's return demand a future realization, no matter how much one uses figurative language and spiritual fulfillments. Obviously, Preterism's weakest point is trying to explain how Christ could have returned without notice, and how those Scriptures describing His return can be interpreted differently. The burden of proof is upon them at this point. Preterism is strongest on the first point, that the Scriptures say Christ would immediately return, and here the burden of proof is on us.

We are not criticizing Preterism's method of interpretation but their inconsistency in using that method. Preterism categorically rejects any figura-

tive meanings for the handful of verses that speak of immanence regarding Christ's return, but then turns around and assigns extremely figurative meanings and spiritual fulfillments to all of the many descriptions of His coming. Selectively invoking the mighty "figurative language" mantra allows Preterists to arrive at the astounding notion that the Second Coming of Christ has already taken place. The real nature of Preterism is herein revealed, for though there are a great many verses describing Christ's return, the Preterist chooses to spiritualize these passages entirely. All passages describing the return of Christ are simply understood to be non-literal, metaphoric constructs with no visible fulfillment in the natural world except the ending of the Jewish religious system in A.D. 70. Preterism teaches that Christ came back to earth at the destruction of Jerusalem and fulfilled all eschatological prophecies, even those that portray His coming as a universal, end-of-the-world event.

The implications of Preterism also bear some discussion, for under it the general interpretation of the Bible must be modified, and the reason and purpose of the Church as the Bride of Christ is diverted. Futurism postulates a different dispensation after the Church Age has expired. Preterism postulates a different dispensation during the Church Age, a dispensation that, according to them, virtually all Christianity from the time of Christ until A.D. 1850 has misunderstood.

Plainly, much of the NT does not apply to us if the Second Coming has already taken place. In fact all those passages warning of the importance of being ready for His return are stripped of their substance and value for the Preterist who insists that Christ has already returned. According to Preterism, the earth-bound Church will never end, forced to exist eternally on a never-ending, sin-cursed earth. The corrupting influences of Satan will never be undone, so the earth must labor forever under the laws of decay and chaos that were introduced in the Garden of Eden.

We cannot agree with this conclusion of Preterism because it goes against so many clear Scriptures that teach otherwise. When presented with these Scriptures however, the Preterist is able to wave the wand of figurative language and make them disappear—saying that they mean something entirely different from what they appear to say. That is our point of contention. Amazing as it may sound, one can make the Bible teach whatever one wants it to, and

we have many examples of that today. All manner of sin has been explained away, and all manner of Christ's commandments have been made to mean something different. We must be able to identify and refute these false teachings, and we firmly believe that the Spirit-filled, unbiased Christian will be able to see the errors of all false teachers and of Preterism.

Preterists admit that they believe the Church is not the intended audience of much of the New Testament. One Preterist wrote me, "It must be recognized that when a writer uses the terms 'we,' 'you,' or 'they' that there is a particular hearer or understood audience or persons/people of reference that must be considered as the primary target of the teaching, and with this in mind we must not read ourselves into the text without first considering the implications for the original audience...Before we can extrapolate any kind of theology from a passage, or exegete any principles that are generally applied, we first must come to understand what the passage meant to the original hearers." Though this hermeneutic may have some validity in OT studies, it is a very dangerous premise to take to the NT and one which Anabaptism in particular has rejected. Using this hermeneutic, one can explain away all manner of doctrine. The headship veiling was for the Corinthian church, feet-washing for the Apostles only, and on we could go. Moreover, Preterists are forced to contradict their own hermeneutic when they use the early Church writers, who universally confessed a belief in the future return of Christ. So the early Church, the "original audience" of Christ and the Apostles understood the Bible's message of Christ's return like we do.

PRETERISM IS A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM CHRISTIANITY

Todd Dennis, contending for the Preterist position writes: "Preterist theology is a radical departure from other contemporary positions. How many other systems teach that the second coming of Christ already took place? None."

This should be a little bell of warning to all interested in Preterism, which is forced into saying that the first 1800 years of Christianity were all wrong

about Christ's coming. It was only in the last couple centuries that a few in the Church finally got it right. This dangerous fact categorizes Preterism as a fringe belief of Christianity, and puts them in the unsavory company of groups like Latter-Day Saints and JW's, who also think they alone have received new insights on the Bible.

Let's provide an illustration. Preterism requires us to put on a set of glasses when we read the Bible. The glasses filter all Biblical prophecy so that it is fulfilled within 40 years of Jesus' ascension into heaven. Preterists insist that we must wear these glasses whenever the Bible is read—there are no exceptions. Christ and the Apostles said His return would be soon, within *this generation*, therefore any fulfillments afterward are disallowed. I contend that the glasses are flawed and must be cast aside, that the Bible does not require us to believe that all prophecy was fulfilled by A.D. 70. And that is not just my opinion; it has been the universal opinion of the entire Church until recently.

Preterist theology radically departs from Christianity also in its understanding of the resurrection, asserting that the general resurrection is past and that there is no such thing as a bodily resurrection of men—ever! Preterists believe that Jesus Christ experienced a fully physical resurrection, but that man's resurrection is only the spiritual resurrection he experiences at the new birth. Since the earth continues forever, there is no end-of-the-world resurrection in Preterism.

Paul warned the Church of this false teaching in II Timothy 2:17-18, saying: *of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.* Preterists attempt to avoid this condemnation by saying that the general resurrection took place at the destruction of Jerusalem, and then pointing out that Paul wrote this criticism before that time. But their idea of the general resurrection does not agree with virtually all Christian churches that the resurrection will be a single, bodily, last-day resurrection, and that belief is well-supported by the Scriptures which we list below:

Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day (John 11:24, also 6:44, 6:54). I don't know what the Preterist's response to this verse would be, but I'm sure that they would come up with

something to discredit the clear implication of this Scripture that the resurrection will take place on the last day of this earth.

Paul said *that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust* (Acts 24:15). A single resurrection of all men does not fit in the Preterist's theology, nor does this verse agree with the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. It also conflicts with Preterism's claim that the only resurrection of man is experienced at the new birth, for Paul says the unjust will also be raised.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be (resurrected). But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God...For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (I Cor 15:21-26). It takes a lot of explaining to get away from the clear meaning of this passage that the resurrection of every man will take place *at His coming* at the end of the earthly Kingdom. Only then will death be destroyed. Preterists say these events took place at the destruction of Jerusalem. If it did, not one person in all recorded history noticed—not even John the Beloved, who lived two decades past the fall of Jerusalem.

The resurrected body will be radically different, and much better than our earthly bodies. It will be made like unto Christ's resurrected body, *who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body* (Php 3:21). The Preterist's notion that the final resurrection is not bodily, but spiritual is at odds with this Scripture and others like Revelation 20:6 which implies two resurrections and two deaths: *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power*. The first death is the spiritual death of every man who commits sin; only Christ did not die spiritually. The first resurrection is the spiritual remedy for this sin—the new birth in Christ, being spiritually resurrected. All those who take part in the first resurrection will never experience the *second death* or Hell, but will be redeemed by Christ at the end of the world—the second resurrection, a glorified bodily resurrection.

Actually, a spiritual-only resurrection cannot be correct because that does not even satisfy the definition of “resurrection.” A resurrection is a coming back to life, a rebirth, a reuniting of the principle parts of man—the body, soul, and spirit. When a man dies in Christ, his soul and spirit go to be with Him but the body decays into dust. The final resurrection is a reuniting of the soul and spirit (that part of man which never dies and thus cannot be resurrected) with the dead body. The resurrection body will be nothing like our present bodies, and will vary greatly in glory. Read I Corinthians 15 for more on this subject, but suffice it here to say that a non-bodily resurrection of the saints cannot be reconciled with the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

One last passage on the resurrection: Jesus said, *and this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which he hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day* (John 6:39, 44). This is the hope of the saints of God, to remain faithful to the end and *attain unto the resurrection of the dead* (Php 3:11) at the end of time. It is then that our bodies will be resurrected *in the twinkling of an eye* into glorious bodies *like unto His*. A clear understanding of the resurrection alone is sufficient evidence that Preterism is fatally flawed, for the Bible consistently presents the resurrection as an end-time event that includes every human being that has ever lived. It could not have happened in A.D. 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things (Acts 3:21). Christ will remain in the heavens until the Day of Judgment, the end of the world, the restitution (restoration) of all things. Shockingly, Preterism says this *restitution of all things* took place in A.D. 70.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMMINENT RETURN OF CHRIST

Our next task is to examine the proof texts of Preterism—those passages that present the return of Christ as an event which would take place in the Apostles' lifetime. As already mentioned, this is primarily a defensive position for us; later we will show that there are many Scriptures hinting that Christ's return would be a long time in coming. So we will first look at Preterism's proof texts for claiming that the time of Christ's return must be in the Age of the Apostles and then we will submit those passages that imply the Second Coming of Christ would be a distant future event by human reckoning.

THE MEANING OF "ΓΕΝΕΑ"

Probably the most oft-quoted passage used in support of Preterism is found in Jesus' Olivet Discourse recorded in the Synoptic Gospels: *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled* (Matthew 24:34). Just before uttering these words Jesus had given a detailed description of *the coming of the son of Man* (v27) who would *appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. All tribes of the earth (will) mourn* when they see Him (v30), *and He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other* (v31).

Preterists strictly define *this generation* as the people born and living during the time of Christ's message, and they therefore limit His prophecy to the specific time-period of forty years—the literal time length of a generation. Since Jesus says His coming will take place before *this generation* passes away, Preterists insist that Jesus has already returned. This verse and interpretation thereof is the foundation of Preterism.

We believe, however, that *generation* has another meaning—as most words do—and we will demonstrate that meaning by researching the way *generation* is used elsewhere in the Bible.

Before we look at the Biblical meaning of *generation*, notice that the Preterist must interpret Matthew's vivid description of Christ's coming so figuratively that it becomes a complete non-event. The *sign of the son of Man* is not seen with the eyes, nor is the sound of the trumpet heard with the ears. Gathering the elect is not only an invisible event, it is unnoticeable, so ambiguous that it is utterly meaningless, for according to the Preterist, this gathering was done in A.D. 70, and was completely undetected by the Church, which continued uninterrupted and oblivious to Christ's coming. The mourning of *all tribes of the earth* also becomes a non-literal occurrence that simply has no meaning, for even if we grant that it was fulfilled in some spiritual sense, it happened entirely unnoticed and thus is inconsequential.

Can you see how this type of interpretation belittles the prophecies of the Bible to the point that they really have no meaning at all, or any meaning you so choose? I am not a literalist by any stretch of the imagination. I believe Biblical prophecy is filled with figurative expressions and symbolism. But one cannot simply wave the magic wand of figurativism over a Scripture passage and make it disappear or change in meaning to whatever one chooses. Figurative descriptions in prophecy are meant to add detail to the overall intent of a prophetic scene or event. In Matthew 24, that event is clearly the coming of Christ, and the description emphatically impresses us with the fact that every person will perceive His appearing—that He has truly returned to the earth. Even if we grant that the physical eye or ear will not sense His coming, at the very least all tribes of the earth will mourn His appearing, affirming that it will be an instantly recognizable and unmistakable event.

The proper interpretation method of Biblical prophecy is to read the passage, visualize the overall picture, and then allow the figurative language to add detail to the meaning. Figurative language will not conflict with the overall intent of the passage; rather, its usage is to amplify the overall meaning of the passage. Preterists like to use Isaiah 24:19-20 as an example of figurative language: *The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.* This passage never literally took place, they say, and neither will Matthew 24. The *earth* symbolizes Israel, and Isaiah 24 is a prophetic statement of judgment against the people of Israel, who had fallen away from God. We agree with Preterists on this interpretation. In Hebrew, *earth* and *land* come from the same word (*eretz*). It is actually the inhabitants of the land that suffer, but the earth, or land, is used symbolically to represent the people of the land. The overall intent of the passage, however, still conveys an identifiable, observable, literal event! No, the earth did not literally reel to and fro, but visible, perceptible judgment came upon Israel just as Isaiah prophesied. As far as Matthew 24, I don't really care how much you spiritualize the prophecy, you can't get away from the very real impression that Christ's coming is a discernable, sensory event. Invoking figurative language will not erase that conviction. The destruction of Jerusalem does not remotely satisfy the many NT prophecies describing the Second Coming. This we will demonstrate in a later chapter.

As far as *generation* is concerned, we believe Christ was referring to the Jewish family, or race—not a single, literal generation. We use the word “literal” here to make a point. Isn't it interesting how one can insist that none of the details concerning Christ's return are to be taken literally, then turn around and force a very limited, literal definition on *generation*? The Preterist chooses to ignore the plainer verses describing Christ's return in favor of strictly defining time-related words that appear to indicate Jesus would return very soon. This leads to a tremendous conflict of Scripture. The simplest and correct approach is to allow the plainer texts describing Christ's return to govern and interpret the few time-related passages so that there is no conflict.

The Greek word translated *generation* is **genea**, which according to the Online Bible Greek Lexicon is defined:

- 1) fathered, birth, nativity
- 2) that which has been begotten, men of the same stock, a family
- 2a) the several ranks of natural descent, the successive members of a genealogy
- 2b) metaph. a group of men very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character
- 2b1) esp. in a bad sense, a perverse nation
- 3) the whole multitude of men living at the same time
- 4) an age (i.e. the time ordinarily occupied by each successive generation), a space of 30-33 years

According to this, the definition of *generation* does not have only one meaning, and more succinctly, can mean “men of the same stock,” or “a group of men very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character...a perverse nation.” This is precisely what we believe is the true meaning of *generation* in Matthew 24. Here are some other verses using **genea** outside of a literal generational lifespan.

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light (Luke 16:8).

If this parable has a timeless message, that is, if it applies to us today, than this *generation* refers to “a group of men very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character.” There are only two people groups on earth—the sons of God, and the worldly men of this world; the *generation* of the children of this world, or the *generation* of the children of light. That’s pretty simple.

The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth

he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation (Matthew 12:42-45).

Here Jesus draws a picture of an unclean spirit looking for a home after it has been cast out. Finally, it goes back to its previous home and finds it bare. So he takes with him seven more spirits even more wicked than himself, and they enter into the careless man again. Then Jesus extends this picture to the Jewish generation, and predicts that the same shall happen to them. While I suppose it is still possible for the Preterist to insist that this was fulfilled before the destruction of Jerusalem, does it not much better describe the centuries-long condition of the Jewish race?

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation (Luke 11:50-51).

This should conclusively demonstrate that *this generation* does not refer to only those alive when Jesus was speaking, for they were not the ones guilty of killing prophets past, the *wicked and adulterous generation* of the Jewish race of the previous 1500 years was. How can the blood of Abel, Zacharias, and all the other prophets and men of God killed by the wicked generation of this world be hung upon the literal generation of men that Jesus was speaking to? The answer is, it can't. Abel wasn't even killed by a Jew; it is absurd and impossible to hold the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day guilty of Abel's murder. Jesus was using *this generation* in its broader sense, just as we earlier showed in Luke 16:8. The scribes and Pharisees were part of the generation of this world. They were not sons of God, the chosen generation, the holy nation. *This generation* is NOT a time-period, but a group of miscreants and rebels past, present, and future.

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38).

In light of this verse, how can one possibly suppose that *this generation* applies only to the people alive when Jesus was speaking? It is obvious that Jesus was speaking of all future living persons in the adulterous and sinful generation of the world. Otherwise, tear this verse from our Bibles, for it is meaningless to the centuries of sinners who lived after His supposed return in A.D. 70.

Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away (Mark 13:30).

Preterists say *this generation* is a time-period that will end, or pass away. Notice the exact same words (in the Greek also) are applied to the heaven and earth being destroyed. Amazing as it may sound Preterists do not believe this verse means that the visible heavens and earth will end. They assign symbolic meaning to *heaven and earth* (Judaism) to avoid the obvious. As we explained earlier, this is an egregious misuse of Biblical figurative language (see pg 10).

*Who in times past suffered all nations (**genea**) to walk in their own ways* (Acts 14:16).

Here **genea** refers to tribes, nations, languages, and people groups, not a 40 year time-period. Compare “all generations” (nations, tribes, languages) to “this generation” (the Jewish nation).

*For Moses of old time (**genea**) hath in every city them that preach him* (Acts 15:21).

Lest we have not been heard we repeat: **Genea** does not always mean a 40-year generational period.

*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (**genea**), among whom ye shine as lights in the world* (Philippians 2:15).

The sons of God (hopefully that's us) are living in a *faithless and perverse generation* (Mt 17:17). Here again it is impossible to fit **genea** into a single, 40-year generation.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people (I Peter 2:9).

Peter is speaking to the people of the Kingdom of Christ, the Church as the Bride of Christ. We are called out ones, chosen of Him for a peculiar possession. The *chosen generation* contrasts directly with the generation of this world (Luke 16:8). Detractors may complain that *generation* in this verse does not come from the same Greek word as do the previous ones. In I Peter 2:9 the word is *genos*, which is similar to *genea*, both deriving from *ginomai* which means to beget or become. This does not diminish our point—*generation* has more than one meaning in the Scriptures, and one of those meanings admirably elucidates Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:34.

Jesus used *generation* extensively in His speech, and seems to have used it based upon its OT connotations. Moses wrote: *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation...for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith* (Deut 32:5,20). See also Psalms 78:8, 24:6; Proverbs 30:11 and Leviticus 22:3 for other OT usages of *generation* that extend to nations, kindreds, and people groups of more than a single generational time-period.

In summary, Jesus' words that *this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled* cannot be forced to mean that the Second Coming would take place within 40 years. Jesus was not saying that all prophecy would be fulfilled within the lifespan of those living when He walked this earth but that the Jewish race would not disappear until all prophecy was fulfilled. This is actually a very remarkable prediction, for by all standards Jews should not be a distinct blood race 2000 years after being cast out of their homeland and experiencing more persecution and discrimination than any people-group in the history of the world. According to my understanding of Jesus' words, the Jewish race will continue to exist until the Second Coming of Christ. In contrast to dispensationalists, however, I believe that Jesus' prophetic statement bodes ill for the Jews. They are being preserved more as an example of unbelief than for the opportunity of national blessing. Read Deut 30-31 in that context.

Another very possible alternative is that Jesus used *generation* in a broad sense—the generation of this wicked and sinful world. See Luke 16:8 above.

Many of the trustworthy commentators of bygone years (M. Henry, A. Clarke, Barnes, etc) had yet another interpretation of Jesus' Olivet Discourse. They understood *this generation* literally, and said that all of Jesus' prophecy up to His statement that *this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled* came to pass at the destruction of Jerusalem, but they believed that the rest of the passage will be fulfilled much later at the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world. This is the partial Preterist position, and we have no real argument with it. Personally however, I favor the idea that *this generation* refers either to the Jewish race, or the wicked and sinful men of the world in general.

THE AGE OF THE GENTILES

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh...For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled...And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled...And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory (Luke 21:20-27).

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11:25).

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months (Revelation 11:2).

Here is one of the difficulties of the Olivet Discourse for Preterism. The Gentile Age, or Gospel Dispensation, will eventually come to an end—the *times of the Gentiles (will) be fulfilled*, and Jesus will return in the clouds of heaven. Preterism would say that the Gospel Era will never end, but that the earth and the Church will continue forever. This passage does not support that belief. Notice that in Romans 11 Paul is saying that the *fulness* of the Gentile Age had not yet arrived—the Gospel message was just beginning to

bear fruit among the Gentiles. The fall of Jerusalem marks the beginning of the *fulness* of the Gentiles. It is not until the end of the Gentile era that the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven.

Luke 21 accurately foretells the history of the Jews and Jerusalem from A.D. 70 to the end of the world and the coming of Christ. Notice the obvious time-gap between the fall of the city and the coming of the son of Man. That time-gap is called the *times of the Gentiles*, which has now stretched into 2000 years. This text is directly at odds with Preterism's avowal that the Second Coming of Christ took place at the destruction of Jerusalem.

PRETERISM IN THE GOSPELS

Preterists use the following words of Jesus as support for the idea that Christ believed His return was imminent, and that He so taught. We will examine these passages individually, but first let it be said that Jesus verbally acknowledged that He himself did not know the time of His return. *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father* (Mark 13:32). Christ spoke what God told Him to speak (John 12:49), so He still could have given the date of His return, but that would have wrecked the whole point of keeping it a secret – the greatest secret in the universe. The sudden, unexpected nature of Christ's return was intended as a motivation to live in constant readiness for that day. Indeed the very next verse in Mark convinces us of this truth: *Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is* (Mark 13:33). Jesus is saying, "If even I don't know the date the Father has set for Me to return and end the world, there is no possibility that you will. Be careful, watch and pray so that day will not overtake you as a thief."

It is our firm belief that the following verses were not intended to be used as a time marker for the Second Coming of Christ, and we base this conviction primarily on the above information. A warning sign given just before His return would ruin any attempt at using the sudden, unexpected return of Christ in judgment as a means of provoking Christians to keep their lamps always burning.

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:63-64).

Preterists evidently believe that the high priest “saw” Jesus at the destruction of Jerusalem. We believe that this verse will be fulfilled when Jesus returns in the clouds of heaven, when every eye shall see Him and every knee shall bow before Him, when the heavens depart as a scroll being rolled up, and when the earth melts with fervent heat. That is when the high priest and those who pierced Him shall truly recognize the One that they put to death. This verse adds nothing to the Preterist position, for there is no proof or indication that the high priest lived another 40 years, much less that he saw Christ coming in the clouds.

Moreover, Preterism completely misses the reason and importance of Jesus’ words to the high priest, which were surely given as an affirmation that He was the Messiah, the Son of God in fulfillment of prophecies like Daniel 7:13-14, and Psalms 110. Peter’s declaration, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Mt 16:16) is called the great confession, but Jesus’ declaration before the high priest has been called “the greater confession.” In it, He affirms, under oath, that He is the Messiah, that He is the Son of God, that He will be King, and that He will come with God in the clouds of heaven. Certainly the high priest did not miss the meaning and implications of Jesus’ declaration, for he rent his clothes and judged Him guilty of immediate death on grounds of blasphemy.

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come (Matthew 16:27-28). For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Matthew 10:23).

Preterists have misapplied both of these verses to the Second Coming of Christ when they actually are primarily concerned with His first coming—

the beginning of the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, which began when Jesus died and rose again. Now He reigns over heaven and earth at the right hand of the Father, having taken the throne of David as God had promised (Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30).

Matthew 10 is the “kingdom mandate” of Jesus to His people, similar to God’s mandate to Adam (Gen 1:28) and Noah (Gen 9). The passage is too long to quote in its entirety. It begins by Jesus sending out His disciples into the cities of Israel to announce the coming of “the kingdom of heaven” (v7), and then describes the growth of the Kingdom and ending with a warning of how difficult and divisive the Kingdom message would be. The first half of the chapter describes the sending forth of the 12 to proclaim that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand and concludes with the statement that they will not have gone through all the cities of Israel before Christ came into His kingdom reign. Some details may have secondary reference to the continuing Kingdom message down to our present day, but this in no way clouds the statement in verse 23 that the disciples would not conclude their kingdom announcement before Christ came with power into that kingdom. Here is an excerpt of the passage in question.

(Matthew 10:5) *These twelve Jesus sent forth...to the lost sheep of the house of Israel...saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses...neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

- 16 *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*
- 17 *But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;*
- 18 *And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.*
- 19 *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*
- 20 *For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*
- 21 *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child... And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*
- 23 *But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

The present, literal reign of Christ in His spiritual Kingdom compassing heaven and earth (Eph 3:14-15) is not accepted by Futurists, though they do believe there will be a future such kingdom. Preterists, however, do confess the present kingly reign of Christ. They should have no problem with the above interpretation of Matthew 10. Their motive for objecting is only to prove a most difficult point – that Jesus' returned A.D. 70.

Futurism's rejection of the present Kingdom reign of Christ is shocking in light of the following verses:

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence (John 18:36).

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God (Hebrews 12:28).

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (I Corinthians 15:24).

Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (Hebrews 8:1).

Set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Ephesians 1:20).

These verses will also make it easier to understand Matthew 16:27-28, for it is clear that this passage also speaks of Christ's spiritual Kingdom, marking both the beginning and ending of its earthly aspect. *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.* Jesus came into His Kingdom reign only a couple years after He said this, and all but one of His disciples did see Him conquer death and ascend into the heavens from where He rules at the right hand of God, *far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion* (Eph 1:20-21). He will come at the end of the age in the glory of His Father with the holy angels (II Thes 1:7f), and then He will reward every man according to his deeds.

The fact that Jesus first speaks of His final coming and then His first coming is not an inconsistency, but is a common feature of speaking. He describes the Kingdom and its end, then says, "Some of you standing here will actually see the beginning of this Kingdom, and witness My coming into power and authority."

Significantly it would seem, the Greek word for "coming" is not *parousia* (the most common word for the Second Coming), but *erchomai*, and according to Strong's its usage includes "to come into being, be established, become known, to come into or unto."

The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me (John 12:23, 31-32).

This also describes the coming of the Son of man into His Kingdom, and

speaks most gloriously of the triumph of Christ over Satan at His resurrection. It predicts that His death will begin this mighty spiritual Kingdom—that men will be drawn to Him, and that the power of Satan on the earth will be severely limited. See Revelation 12, Matthew 12:29, and Hebrews 2:14 for more on this subject.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20-21).

There is no more important event than the first coming of Christ. It is the focal point in the history of the world, and it began the great and mighty spiritual Kingdom of Christ which shall never end. Contrary to what Futurists believe, the Kingdom of Christ is not an earthly, fleshly entity. The Kingdom of God is within—it is a spiritual matter of the soul and spirit (Rom 14:17). The Kingdom reign of Christ began at His ascension into heaven, and that event was not observable by the human eye. The effects of that event however, are observable by all. The Kingdom of God is counted in human hearts, not in outward cities and thrones—that is the intent of this verse.

Thus, though this passage really has nothing to do with the Second Coming, it is cited by Preterists as a means of proving that Christ returned in A.D. 70. Their thinking is that Jesus' return could also have been an unobservable event. There are two insurmountable problems with this theory. 1) Jesus cannot have meant that His coming would not be noticed, for He continues in this passage by relating many earthly signs that they should look for and recognize it by! 2) If Preterists really believe Jesus is saying that His coming would not be observed, why do they say He returned at the destruction of Jerusalem? Preterists go to great lengths to prove from the observations of Josephus that Christ came back in A.D. 70. Those observations cannot be used as proofs if Christ truly returned "without observation." We will have more to say about Josephus later. Let it simply be said here that the summoning of Luke 17:20 as a proof-text for Preterism illustrates the Scriptural paucity of their position.

THE END OF ALL THINGS

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (I Peter 4:7). The Preterist will insist that this verse be taken in its strictest sense, and they focus entirely upon the time element. Peter warns his audience to be sober, watching, and prayerful. Why and for what? Nothing happened to the Christians, the Church, or even the world at large in A.D. 70. There was no sign in the heavens for the people of God to know that Christ had returned, nobody even felt it in their hearts, if we are able to agree on the testimony of the early Church writers. This verse is pointless, futile, and even insincere if it is supposed to refer to Christ's "coming" at the destruction of Jerusalem. One secular writer, Josephus, mentions chariots appearing in the sky around Jerusalem, and the Preterist immediately finds the coming of Christ. But this verse had no acceptance amongst those under siege in Jerusalem. In fact, history indicates that few if any Christians were even close to Jerusalem at the time of her desolation. By all appearances, Christians understood from Luke 21:20 that it was time to flee that city under judgment, and few if any were casualties in the Jewish punishment.

The end of all things? In A.D. 70? It's preposterous to propose such an idea. No, all doesn't mean all in this instance, says the Preterist, it really means "the end of some things related to Judaism." It is simply incongruous to be told by a Preterist that we do not believe the Bible when we read this verse and delay the end of all things to, um, the end of all things. We don't take Jesus' admonition to *take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself* (Mt 6:34) to mean only tomorrow, nor do we strictly understand Ephesians 5:16, *redeeming the time, because the days are evil*. To say "the end is at hand" is no less a time-relative phrase.

What did Peter mean when he said *the end of all things is at hand*, that we should be *sober and watch unto prayer*? If the *end of all things* took place at Jerusalem in A.D. 70, why *be sober and watch unto prayer*? The judgment of the Jews at Jerusalem did not affect the Christians, so who is supposed to be sober? On the other hand, could it be possible that Peter was warning the people of God to keep their souls at all times because the end of all things was inevitably and most certainly coming? Of course! That is the consistent

message and warning of the NT regarding the return of Christ. The plan of God was that all people of all ages would live in anticipation of that momentous event, and I know of no other way that could have been done other than the way this verse is worded—“the end of all things is approaching so be sober, prayerful, and ever watching.”

The thinking that Christ has already returned is an error that affects the way Kingdom saints live today. It takes away the incentive to live always in readiness, to keep one’s life constantly pure and definitely prepared to meet Christ. Instead, one only needs to repent at the end of life, for surely one can live a few gratuitous, selfish years before getting serious with God. I think we deceive ourselves and do the people of God a great disservice by giving them that idea.

II PETER 3 TO THE RESCUE

II Peter 3 holds the Scriptural key to understanding the verses implying that Christ’s return was at hand, and the passage demonstrates that Preterists are completely misunderstanding the time issue.

(II Peter 3) Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

This passage provides multiple lines of evidence against the Preterist claim that Christ has already returned. First, Peter begins by warning ahead of time that there would be people questioning Christ's return: *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.* Peter predicts that Christ would tarry so long that people would begin to question the promise of His return! Some say He never will come back, and others say that He already has. This passage anticipates the Preterist's questions, and it provides the Biblical answer to them.

The reason why the Lord has been delaying is because He *is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness* (v9). Ever since Christ left this earth, Christians have been looking forward with great anticipation to His return, and Peter encourages them not to lose faith in waiting for that great event. Not only does this verse tell us that Christ's coming is an instantly recognizable occasion, it warns us that the Lord would be so long in returning that some people would no longer believe His promise. Yet surely it will be unmistakably fulfilled.

Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (v8). This verse directly explains how we should understand those passages that present an imminent return of Christ. Peter is saying that God doesn't keep time the same way that humans do! To God, who exists outside of time, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day. Christ has not been *slack concerning His promise, as some men* (preterists) *count slackness*. He is waiting for as many as possible to come to repentance, enter the Kingdom, and inherit eternal life. Preterist teaching opposes II Peter 3, and forces the words of Christ into a very limited human definition. All agree that II Peter 3 is speaking of Christ's return, which according to Preterists took place only 4-5 years after Peter wrote this epistle.

The last day scoffers would be saying *all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation* (v4). This implies that the Coming of Christ will be an observable and powerful event unlike any in all creation. It will be something that all will agree upon, and its occurrence will silence forever these scoffers. The destruction of Jerusalem, while a terrible event for the Jewish nation, does not satisfy the intimation of this thought. Things continued just as they had since the beginning of creation. Day and night, seedtime and harvest—nothing changed. When Jesus really comes back, the earth will be burned up and destroyed.

Peter says that Christ was waiting to return so that *all should come to repentance*. What does this have to do with the destruction of Jerusalem? The time for repentance was past for Israel after the flesh, even the time for judgment was over-ripe. The phrase is simply an ambiguous mystery if one believes that Christ returned in A.D. 70. Moreover, if II Peter 3 is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish religion, where does the Church appear in the passage? Nowhere? Surely Peter was writing to the Church, not the Jews.

Conclusive testimony of Peter against Preterism can also be seen in his parallel of Christ's return to the Flood (II Peter 3:6-10). The Flood was an earth-changing event that not one person failed to experience, and Peter likens this to the Second Coming, which will *come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned*

up (v10). Spiritualizing this passage discombobulates it from any analogy to the Flood.

The Preterist says the heavens, earth, elements, and works of II Peter 3:10 are figurative terms describing the spiritual essence of the nation of Israel. If this be true, why did Peter liken their destruction to the earthly, literal, observable destruction of the Pre-Flood world? Figurative language does not detract from the overall message of any prophecy, and the clear overall intent of Peter is to warn the saints of the certainty of *the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men* (v7) so that they would not become lazy in their spiritual life. *What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?* (v11). The passage is intended for the Church, inspiring them to live godly lives. Why, we ask the Preterist, does Peter warn them to be looking so intently for an event that manifestly does not concern them? Preterism's interpretation of this passage makes Peter's point unnecessary and superfluous.

PRETERISM AND THE REVELATION

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand (Revelation 1:1-3).

Preterism insists that all of the prophecy in the Revelation was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, a belief they base primarily on this passage. And indeed, the Revelation was given "to show the servants of Christ things which must soon take place" (v1). As an a-millennial Historicist, I take this verse almost the same as the Preterist. I believe the prophecies of the Revelation began to be fulfilled very soon after it was given but that fulfillments continued throughout the Church Age to the present. Notice that it does not say **all** of the prophecy would be shortly fulfilled. The Revelation is a last charge from Christ to His people, telling them what to expect during the intervening time until His glorious appearing in the clouds.

Even more significantly, this passage tells us that the Revelation contains things that are to be kept—instruction and warning for the Church during her earthly sojourn. “Blessed is he that heeds this prophecy and keeps the things written herein, for it applies to the time at hand.” This idea does not agree with either Preterism or Futurism, but it is the foremost intent of the passage. I believe that the Book of Revelation is deeply misunderstood in our day. It is not simply a prophecy of the end-time without application to the Christian as Futurists claim—they say the Church is gone by Chapter 4 and does not reappear until Chapter 20—nor is it a prophecy that was immediately fulfilled only 5 years later at the destruction of Jerusalem as Preterists claim. Those interested more in the Book of Revelation are referred to “The Mystery of Christ in the Revelation,” which explains the Book from the viewpoint that Christ’s message as recorded by John was written for His purchased possession, the Church.

The Revelation is for now, to be read and kept today—that is what these verses are saying. This thought agrees with another verse in the Revelation that Preterists like to use: *Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand* (Rev 22:10). Daniel was told to seal his prophecy, for it applied to a future dispensation, the Age of Grace. On the other hand, John is told not to seal the Book, for it applies to the Church Age, from the time of John to the Second Coming of Christ. Again, this verse is only a problem for the Futurist—the Historical view of the Revelation takes it literally.

On these two passages of the Revelation Preterism really has issue only with the Futurist, who puts all of the Revelation in the future, at the end-time of the earth and after the Rapture of the Church. Historicists do not, however, agree with Preterism’s claim that all of the Revelation was fulfilled only 5-6 years after it was written, a notion that we will discuss later.

There is one more phrase in the Revelation that Preterists use to advance their theory that Christ has already returned, and it is in my opinion their best argument. Three times in the last chapter, Jesus says “I come quickly” (22:7, 12, 20). Preterists say this verse requires a return of Christ “soon” after it was given. While this is certainly a valid interpretation, it must be said that it is not the only meaning of the passage. Quickly (Greek - *tachy*) can be either a reference to the manner of His coming, or to the time of His coming.

Strong's Greek Dictionary defines *tachū* as:

shortly, i.e. without delay, soon, or

(by surprise) suddenly, or

(by implication, of ease) readily:--lightly, quickly.

We believe that in light of other Scriptures, *tachū* refers to the manner of His coming—suddenly, as a thief in the night, by surprise, in an hour that men are unprepared (Mt 24:44; Luke 12:40; Mark 13:36; Mat 24:43; I Thes 5:2; II Peter 3:10; Rev 16:15; Mark 13:35). Jesus also warns that He will “come quickly” in punishment of those who have strayed from following Him. Three times in the messages to the churches the statement is repeated, and there also it implies suddenness and surprise (see Rev 2:5, 2:16, 3:11; compare 3:3).

A FEW MORE VERSES PRETERISTS USE

There are a few more verses some Preterists use to support the idea that Christ's return would be within 40 years of His departure. These verses are simply misunderstood by Preterists; they do not even apply to the issue of when Christ will return. We will go through them verse by verse and give the Historical interpretation.

Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth (Romans 9:27-28).

This is a quote from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 10:22-23, and refers not to the Gospel Age, but to Israel under the Old Covenant. Paul is describing the transition of the people of God from OT Israel to the NT “Israel of God” consisting of Jews, Greeks, and every other nationality under heaven.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand (Php 4:5).

This is not a statement about the Lord's coming, nor is it a reference to nearness in time at all; rather, it speaks of nearness in respect to location

(compare the identical Greek in John 19:42). Another translation renders it: “Exhibit gentle behavior to everyone, for the Lord is watching.”

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry (Hebrews 10:36-37).

This verse could just as well be added to our list in the next chapter that supports a long Age of Grace. The intent of the passage is to encourage patience in waiting for the coming of the Lord and the full reward of eternal promise. It will be a little while before He returns—it is not immediate. The verse is a quote from Habakkuk 2:3-4, and we would interpret it in light of II Peter 3.

DISPENSATIONALISM’S MEANING OF ΓΕΝΕΑ

Perhaps by now you are wondering why Preterism, in spite of its glaring errors, is a growing view. Surely much of the blame must be laid upon the radical ideas and claims of Dispensationalism, many of which go beyond speculation into complete absurdity—vultures laying two eggs instead of one in the land of Israel to fulfill Revelation 19:17-18, the Russian military developing wooden rifles that can be burned to fulfill Ezekiel 39:9-10, Saddam Hussein rebuilding the city of Babylon in fulfillment of...I’m not sure what passage. These are easy targets for Preterism’s arrows.

As we have said, Preterists begin their argument with Jesus’ Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, and hinge everything upon Jesus statement that *this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled*. We have shown how Preterists and Historicists define generation (*genea*). Now we will show how Dispensationalists explain this verse, which, true to character, is so unsatisfactory and illogical that it invites criticism.

The Dispensationalist interpretation is that *this generation* refers to the generation living when the prophecy is fulfilled, thus forcing all of the prophetic details of Matthew 24 into one generation of time at the end of the world. As we shall see in the next chapter, this is an impossible interpretation

because the prophecy of Matthew 24 has its fulfillment in events throughout the Church Age—it cannot be squashed into 40 years. Moreover, the Dispensationalist interpretation is irrational and circular—the generation that sees the fulfillment of the prophecy shall not pass away until the prophecy is fulfilled. The statement is a redundancy. To more clearly illustrate the differences, we will give the three views:

- Historicist: *This (generation, the Jewish people), shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled.*
- Preterist: *This (very generation of men to whom I am speaking) shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled.*
- Dispensationalist: *(The generation that sees these signs) shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled.*

The Dispensationalist interpretation of Revelation 1:1 and 22:10 also lacks credibility. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass, becomes “things which must quickly take place once they begin to come to pass.” This rendering cannot be supported by the text, but it is the only way to put all the fulfillments of the Revelation into the very last era of the world, where Futurists insist that they belong. Again, Futurism’s weak arguments are Preterism’s gain.

CHAPTER THREE

A LONG AGE OF GRACE

There are at least as many Scriptures implying that Christ would not be returning soon as there are implying that He would, and we will now demonstrate that. This fact compels all Bible students to consider both sides and examine which interpretation best fits the intent of all Scripture. The idea that Christ has already returned is diametrically opposed to any belief in His future return—the two are mutually exclusive, only one can be right. The following verses give some additional positive arguments why Christ's return would be many years future to the writing of Bible.

We begin by using Preterism's primary proof text, Jesus' Olivet discourse. An objective reading of this passage requires a long period of time for its fulfillment. Preterism's over-emphasis and exegesis of one verse (v23) is inconsistent with normal Bible interpretation rules. We must rightly divide the Word of truth (II Tim 2:15). Note the following excerpt:

Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

5 For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

7 *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*

8 *All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

9 *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*

10 *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*

11 *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*

12 *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

13 *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

14 *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

Wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecution, affliction, betrayal, hatred, iniquity, and deception—yet these are only *the beginning of sorrows!* The Preterist would have us believe this prophecy was entirely fulfilled just 40 years after it was given. We contend that flies in the face of common sense, that these details require at the very least centuries of time. The period of history in which Jesus was speaking was noted for its absence of war—historians call it the Pax Romana, the Roman peace—and the martyrs of the Church were very few compared to the years soon following the judgment of Jerusalem.

Jesus says not to be troubled by the wars and rumors of wars, for *the end is not yet*. Then He lists many other things that must come to pass first. The

whole passage greatly impresses us with the idea that many centuries of time would elapse before the complete fulfillment of His prophecy, and this we will let the Berean reader judge for himself.

THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL

Another passage that speaks just as directly about the timing of the Second Coming is found in II Thessalonians 2, where Paul corrects those who were teaching that Christ's return was very imminent. Paul significantly delays the Second Coming, saying that a great apostasy must first take place, and that a "man of sin" must be revealed who will attempt to put himself in the place of God. Scholars believe II Thessalonians was written A.D. 51-65, which is only 5-17 years before the siege of Jerusalem. There is just not enough time for this great apostasy.

Additionally, who is the man of sin that sits in the temple of God, pretending to be God? Preterists have no good answer to this puzzle at all, though they try to make a case for Nero. Historicists identify him as the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, which rose out of the great apostasy of the early Church in the 4th century. The facts not only fit this prophecy perfectly, they totally contradict Preterism's notion of the Second Coming of Christ coinciding with the destruction of Jerusalem.

II Thessalonians 2:1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. (NKJV)

Let no man deceive you! Do not be soon shaken in mind or troubled. That Day will not come (until) the falling away comes. The import of this passage is crystal clear. Certain events must precede the coming of Christ. We believe those events have been fulfilled in the centuries of time after the destruction of Jerusalem, not before.

Notice two statements associated in this passage with the coming of Christ. *Our gathering together to Him*, and that *the Lord will consume (the lawless one) with the breath of His mouth...with the brightness of His coming*. These are surely perceivable events, things that will be manifestly fulfilled. Preterists must diminish these important details—insisting that they somehow took place at the destruction of Jerusalem. We cannot agree with such manipulation of the words of Scripture.

As if the problem wasn't bad enough, Preterism's "man of sin," Nero Caesar, never came close to "sitting in the temple of God," and died more than two years before the "coming of the Lord" in A.D. 70—that by suicide, not "the breath of His mouth."

Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians evidently provoked the misconception that Christ's return was imminent. Note in this next passage the clear

language describing Christ's return, and how irreconcilable it is to the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem.

(I Thessalonians 4:13) *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The dead in Christ will be resurrected at the coming of Christ, which will be announced by a shout and *the voice of the archangel*. All those alive will be caught up to meet Christ in the air, *and so shall we ever be with the Lord*. It is only by employing figurative language to the highest degree that Preterists are able to escape the clear teaching of this passage. For example, Preterist Todd Dennis says, "The great "rapture" passage in I Thessalonians 4 is about redemption, not just simply physical eschatology." Not only is this pure absurdity, it illustrates how great of a problem the passage holds for Preterism. We will let the words of Paul speak for themselves, and ask the reader to judge whether they describe "redemption," or the end-time resurrection of the saints of God.

Preterists also attempt to make this passage indicate that Paul expected to be alive when Christ returned, for verse 17 says, We *which are alive and remain*. However, Paul uses the pronoun "we" loosely in his writings (i.e. II Cor 3:1; Heb 2:1), and its usage here does not imply that he expected to be

raptured. On the contrary, other Scriptures written about the same time as I Thessalonians would indicate that Paul knew that he was going to die (see Acts 20; I Tim 4:6).

The Thessalonian epistles reveal that some within the early Church thought Christ was going to return very soon, but that the Apostles were quick to correct this misconception. John also took pains to correct the mistaken belief of some that he would not die before Christ returned (John 21:23).

Several of Jesus' parables allude to a long Age of Grace, in which many will grow tired of waiting for His coming, and fall away. The ten virgins, for example, waited so long for the bridegroom to come that some of their lamps went out. In the parable of the talents (Mt 25), the lord went into *a far country* for *a long time* before he returned. And in the following parable, the Son of man takes *a far journey*.

(Mark 13:32) *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

36 Lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping.

37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Not even Christ knows the time of His return—only God the Father does, and He has purposely shrouded the time of Jesus' return in mystery. This design has well served the Kingdom of Christ, for Christians of every era have lived with a watchful eye for Christ's return. The urgency of the Gospel has always been, *Behold, now is the day of salvation. Watch ye therefore...lest coming*

suddenly He find you sleeping. Plainly, this warning can have no relation at all to the fall of Jerusalem, which was well announced by visible signs just as Jesus had foretold. Christ is here teaching the extreme importance of keeping our souls pure and ready for His sudden and unexpected return.

THE LAST DAY AND THE END OF THE WORLD

The Scriptures speak of a “last day,” which Christianity has universally understood to signify the end of the world. Not so according to Preterists, who insist that “the last day” is a figurative expression that has nothing to do with the earth, which according to Preterism will never end. Because of this, Preterists are forced to find another meaning for “the last day,” so they imagine that these Scriptures are speaking of the end of the Old Covenant. There are, however, some verses describing the end of the physical world that simply defy these figurative interpretations, and we list some below.

*And the world (**kosmos**) passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever* (I John 2:17).

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10).

And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them (Revelation 20:11).

Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail (Hebrews 1:10).

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day (John 6:39).

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44).

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

Surely these verses directly teach that there is coming a day in which the Lord will end the history of earth and man, finishing the *mystery of God* (Rev 10:7) and ending time forever (Rev 10:6). I have heard Preterists say, “How long must time continue before people finally realize that Christ has already come back. Another 100 years?”

This illustrates the foundational philosophy of Preterism. Preterists allow time and the delay of Christ’s coming to necessitate a re-interpretation of the Bible. The fact that Christ has not yet returned forces them to look for His coming in the past. Our faith that Christ is going to return is not based on present beliefs and ideas of time—it is based on what the Word of God says! And we will go on believing what God has promised in His word for as long as Christ tarries, even if that is another thousand years.

Peter has already warned us of these very people! *There shall come in the last days scoffers...saying, Where is the promise of His coming?* We are abundantly convinced by the Scriptures that He will unmistakably return to this earth with both judgments and rewards. Every human soul who has ever lived will recognize Him as the Creator and Lord of the Universe, and will acknowledge that He only is worthy of praise.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

What is the purpose of Christ's Return? Answering this simple question reveals the error of the Preterist notion of an A.D. 70 return of Christ. What is the reason for Christ's Second Coming? Why must He return to this earth? The Bible answers that question plainly. *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also* (John 14:2-3). The sincere followers of Christ are at the very heart of Christ's return. He is coming back to receive them into *everlasting habitations*.

We repeat, the reason for Christ's return is to end the earthly aspect of the Kingdom of Christ, and inaugurate the eternal Kingdom. This concept is directly opposed by Preterism. We have received a Kingdom which cannot be moved (Heb 12:28), a Kingdom over which Christ now reigns (Heb 1:3,8), and we reign with Him in life (Rom 5:17) and in death (Eph 3:15). Over this Kingdom, Christ will *reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet* (I Cor 15:25). *Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father* (I Cor 15:24). Christ's return forms the conclusion of the earth-bound Church, the great culmination of the mystery of Christ in the reconciliation of God and Man.

There are two aspects to the mighty Kingdom of Christ. The earth-bound, temporal Kingdom of Christ, and the heavenly, eternal Kingdom—this

comprises *the whole family in heaven and earth* (Eph 3:15). The earth-bound Church and all creation groans under the curse of sin, waiting for the momentous return of Christ which signals its deliverance from the laws of decay and death (Rom 8:18-23; Acts 3:21). At the appearing of Christ, the whole family will be united into one eternal Kingdom of the Father. This is clearly stated in Ephesians 1:10, *That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.*

It is then that Christ *shall judge the (living) and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom* (II Tim 4:1). How could this have happened at the destruction of Jerusalem? Jesus described this same event: *When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another; as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you* (Mat 25:31-34). The revealing of the son of Man in the clouds of heaven will be such a momentous event that not one person who has ever lived will fail to experience it. The earth and the works therein shall be burned up, and the *mystery of God (shall) be finished* (Rev 10:7).

Our firm conviction is that Christ did not return in A.D. 70, and we base this on the features and nature of the Second Coming as described by the writers of the New Testament. Preterists say Christ returned at the end of the Old Covenant. We say Christ will return at the end of the earthly dimension of the New Covenant. Only one of these two ideas can be right, and we offer the following verses to demonstrate that the NT describes the Second Coming of Christ as judgment upon all evil, the final ending of the mystery of Christ in saving mankind, and the “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21).

These verses form the offensive part of our argument against Preterism.

And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

While the Preterist spiritualizes this passage away, we believe that it actually describes the manner in which Christ will return—visibly, and in the clouds, for if He truly will return *in like manner*, surely these two features must be present. The rest of Scripture agrees closely with this account, saying, *Behold, He cometh with clouds (Rev 1:7)* and, *look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:28)*.

Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in His times He shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (I Tim 6:14-15).

We are commanded to keep Christ's commands completely and honestly **until** the appearing of Christ. If this happened in A.D. 70, then those of us living today are no longer required to keep His commandments—we are free to anyway we please. This is obviously incorrect, and again illustrates the severe problem Preterism has with corresponding Christ's Return to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (I Peter 5:4).

When Christ truly returns, we shall receive our eternal reward—this looks forward to a future day, it did not happen at the destruction of Jerusalem

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come (I Cor 11:26).

According to this verse, the Church is to observe Communion *till He come*. If He came in A.D. 70, Communion is no longer required. Every Preterist taking Communion contradicts his own eschatology.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat 28:20).

If the “end” was in A.D. 70, Jesus is no longer with us. Ichabod.

So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor 1:7-8).

The Day of Christ will be a day of confirmation for the Church, of eternal victory and reward. Why is Paul advising them to “eagerly await” (NIV) Christ’s coming if it was only a coming in judgment of the Jewish nation? There was no new benefit to the Church upon the destruction of Jerusalem.

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ... That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ (Philippians 1:6,10).

The day of Christ is for the unique and glorious benefit of the Church first and foremost. If Christ came in A.D. 70, the *good work* within us does not exist, for according to this passage that will end at the day of Christ.

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God (I Cor 4:5).

There is no way to reconcile this verse with an A.D. 70 coming of Christ. The Coming of Christ will reveal the secrets of every heart and the judgment of all sin.

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Philippians 3:20-21).

And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (I John 2:28).

The Second Coming will reveal the resurrection of our earthly body as it is changed *like unto His glorious body*. We are to “look for the appearing of the Saviour” for the fulfillment of this event.

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the

riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: Who will render to every man according to his deeds. . . In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel (Rom 2:3-10, 16).

The “day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” will reveal every man rewarded according to his deeds—whether Jew or Gentile. How could this have happened at the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a Jewish only judgment? This passage describes not only the event of the judgment, it also explains why it must take place.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:3-7).

Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day (John 11:24).

At the appearing of Christ, the faith of Christians will be examined for its fruit. The righteous will be resurrected to an incorruptible and eternal inheritance. This did not happen in A.D. 70—spiritually or otherwise. It will happen *at the last day!* Notice also that Peter taught persecution and trial

would end at the appearing of Christ. Why then does affliction and turmoil continue to plague the people of God, if, as Preterists maintain, Christ has already appeared? The righteous are *kept by the power of God unto salvation to be revealed in the last time*. Preterists put *the last time* at the destruction of Jerusalem. That effectively ends the *power of God* in A.D. 70.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (II Thessalonians 1:7-10).

Surely this passage teaches that the coming of Christ will see both the punishment of the wicked and the glorification of the saints. It is an event that, according to Paul, the Church should eagerly anticipate, and which they would immediately and unquestionably recognize. There is no record of this ever happening. Moreover, if Christ did return in A.D. 70, He left John the Beloved behind. John died two decades later.

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (James 5:7-8).

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (II Thessalonians 3:5).

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is (I John 3:3).

The Christian is told to wait patiently for Christ to return, to establish and keep his heart pure until the coming of Christ. Why? Because it is an event of supreme importance for all those who are expecting to be like Christ at His appearing. The destruction of Jerusalem cannot satisfy the import of this passage.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Pet 1:13).

To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (I Cor 5:5).

As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus (II Cor 1:14).

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (II Peter 2:9).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (II Cor 5:10).

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Heb 10:25).

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

In all these passages, the Day of Christ is presented as something essential and fundamental to the Christian's eternal destiny. They describe a punctiliar event, an event of consummation and finality. They just do not fit with an A.D. 70 return.

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry (Heb 10:36-37).

Preterists focus on the last part of this verse, forcing an immediate return of Christ out of this passage. But why then the need for patience? Paul tells them to wait patiently for the receiving of the promise.

And what *promise* is he talking about? Did the people of God receive some special *promise* at the destruction of Jerusalem? No, but according to other Scriptures, this *promise* is a transcendental fulfillment of all history and time, as Jesus Christ delivers up the earthly kingdom to the Father and the heavenly eternal kingdom begins. This passage entirely agrees.

But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you (Mat 11:22).

Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him (Rev 1:7).

These verses prove that there is a future Day of Judgment wherein the past wicked will be resurrected and judged. The wicked men of Tyre and Sidon will rise at the Judgment to give an account of their wicked deeds, and Jesus says that the Pharisees of His day will experience an even greater punishment than the Sodomites.

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him...In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph 1:10, 13, 14).

At some point in time, Christ will culminate the earthly aspect of His kingdom. Those who have been sealed with the Spirit and are part of His purchased possession will experience eternal redemption. Notice that the Spirit is given as the “earnest,” or proof that we will be part of that great marriage of the Lamb described in Revelation 19. The purpose of the Second Coming is to *gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.*

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory (Col 3:4).

How could this have happened in A.D. 70? It didn't!

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (I Thes 1:10).

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the

day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light (Rom 13:11-12).

Notice that Paul uses the Second Coming of Christ as a means of urging the Church to live in constant readiness for His appearing, to wait for His coming. For what purpose, if Christ only returned at the fall of Jerusalem?

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? (I Thes 2:19).

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

The Second Coming of Christ will be a time of great rejoicing, happiness, and reward for every saint that has ever lived. What blessed hope was received at the destruction of Jerusalem?

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me (Paul) at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also (that's us) that love His appearing (II Tim 4:1).

To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints (I Thes 3:13).

The appearing of Christ will see the saints rewarded, and the wicked judged. Not just the living saints—the quick (living) and the dead will be judged.

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him (Jude 6,14,15).

The Great Day Judgment will reveal the judgments of all sinners and all the rebellious angels of Satan. This didn't happen at the destruction of Jerusalem, it awaits a future day.

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (I Cor 15:51-53).

This will take place at the last trump (see I Thes 4-5), and describes the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection is a uniting of the body with soul and spirit—a “spiritual” resurrection is a contradiction of terms.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Mat 13:47-50).

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Mat 25:31-34).

There is a very real “end of the world!” The wicked and righteous will be separated one from the other and eternity will begin. The net is drawn up at the end of the New Covenant Kingdom of Christ on earth, and this directly contradicts Preterism's notion that Christ came at the end of the Old Covenant.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient

to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was (II Tim 3:1-9).

The Preterist will say this passage does not apply to us today, that it was written for those “in the last days” which was that period of time between Jesus' resurrection and the destruction of Jerusalem. We cannot accept such—the NT was written specifically and crucially for the entire New Covenant Church. Christ's teachings and the rest of the Holy Spirit's inspired writings were written with the universal Church in mind. They did not apply first to Christ's original audience and secondarily to the Church (II Tim 3:16).

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and

godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (II Peter 3:1-14).

We have already discusses this passage in Chapter Two. There are multiple problems for the Preterist in this passage. See page 30.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief (I Thes 4:13-5:4).

According to this passage, the return of Jesus Christ will see the souls of the saints of ages past coming with Lord. They shall descend from heaven with a great shout and the sound of a trumpet, and the great resurrection will begin—the reuniting of the never-dying soul with the new, spiritual, never-dying body. Those who are alive at the coming of Christ will not die, but will be changed in the twinkling of an eye into a glorious, resurrected body (I Cor 15:51-52), and all the redeemed of Christ will meet the Lord in the air. Spiritualize this as much as you wish, one cannot avoid the fact that this never took place in A.D. 70. The words of Paul speak for themselves, though the Preterist will explain them away with the mighty weapon of figurative language.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body (Rom 8:18-23).

The whole universe groans under the curse of sin that Satan introduced to God's perfect creation. At some point in time, (at the redemption of the body!) all creation will be delivered from the effects of sin, and the earth will be "resurrected" in a new and glorious state. Note: a resurrection requires a death—this earth will be destroyed utterly (see II Peter 3).

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (II Thes 2:1-12).

Again there are multiple and severe problems for Preterism in this passage. Evidently there were Preterists in the pews in Paul's day too, saying "*the day of Christ is at hand!!!*" I'm sure the die-hard Preterist will find some fulfillment for this passage, but it cannot stand the test of scrutiny.

Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring...Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away (Luke 21:7f).

This passage is extremely difficult to explain from a Preterist viewpoint. Much more than 40 years of time is required for a fulfillment. There are going to wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. The Jewish rebellion notwithstanding, this historical period was one of the most peaceful of all time, one that historians call the Pax Romana—the Roman Peace. There will be many false christs, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. *But the end is not by and by*—it is still a ways off. To us, an A.D. 70 fulfillment is out of the question.

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rev 6:12-17).

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped (Rev 14:14).

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean...And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh (Rev 19:11-14, 21).

Here are three pictures of the Coming of Christ. Yes, we believe much of the fulfillment will be in the spiritual realm—but not all. It will be an event of unspeakable magnitude and terrifying reality. See also the parable of the tares in Matthew 13:24-30 and explained in 13:38-50. The power of this passage is clearly directed at a single, end-time event.

Our point in listing these verses is to refute once and for all the notion that the Second Coming of Christ took place in A.D. 70. I do not deny that Christ is pictured as “coming” at other times in history (Rev 2:16; 3:20). But there is an unassailable body of Biblical evidence pointing to a colossal, future, final, coming of Christ. Then this sin-cursed world will be ended, and we will live in a new Garden with Christ eternally.

CHAPTER FIVE

VARIOUS PRETERIST ARGUMENTS

WHEN WAS THE REVELATION WRITTEN?

Preterism trusts entirely that the Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. Obviously, if it was written after A.D. 70 it could not be prophetic of the Jewish judgment. Preterists have submitted long arguments on why they believe the tradition and testimony of the early Church is wrong about the date John wrote the Revelation (A.D. 96). For Historicists, it matters not when the Revelation was written, but the whole idea of Preterism collapses if the Revelation was written after the fall of Jerusalem. Many scholars think it is possible that John's Gospel was also written after the fall of Jerusalem, as it is the only Gospel without the Olivet discourse containing the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Most scholars today believe the Revelation was written in A.D. 96, during the reign of Domitian, the first Roman Emperor to persecute the Christian churches of Asia. All agree that the Revelation was written during a time of persecution, but Preterists say it was written during Nero's persecution. However, Nero's persecution is not thought to have extended into the provinces, nor is he known to have used banishment as a means of punishment; history

records that Domitian did both. According to the testimony of Irenaeus, an early Church writer, John wrote the Revelation “towards the end of Domitian’s reign.” Irenaeus was a close friend of Polycarp, and Polycarp knew the Apostle John personally. If anyone should have known details about John, it would be Irenaeus. Preterists, however, dispute his testimony, along with that of Clement of Alexandria, who confirms Irenaeus’ statement (Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.* b. iii. chap. 23). Certainly, Irenaeus had no reason to lie about the time the Revelation was written, and seems to be just mentioning it in passing.

Internal evidence has also been mustered to lend support to an early or late date for the writing of the Revelation, but almost all of these “internal evidences” are prejudiced to the writer’s interpretation of the book, and thus are invalid. For instance, when the Preterist cites Rev 11:1 as proof that the temple was still standing in Jerusalem it means that he takes that part of the vision literally. We disagree with this interpretation, and would point out that we must stick to internal historical facts to determine the timeframe in which the book was written. Of course, such facts are few in the Revelation.

Only the letters to the seven churches contain indisputable historical hints as to the time John penned the Revelation. The contents of these letters reveal that the churches were under persecution and pressure to compromise with the world around them. Antipas had been put to death, and others would soon follow. Only two of the churches merited praise; the others were failing—two were on the very point of being rejected altogether. Could this really be the desperate state of the Church so early on? Could it be that Ephesus, praised by the Apostle Paul in A.D. 63 for their *faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints* (Eph 1:15) had lost that love only 5 years later? And Laodicea, who had fallen most spectacularly by the time of John’s writing, is included favorably in Paul’s letter to the Colossians (2:1; 4:13-16) which was written between A.D. 57-62, just 6-10 years before Preterists suppose that John wrote the Revelation. Surely that is an incredible fall from grace.

A full treatise on when the book of Revelation was written has been done by others, and is beyond the scope of this paper. Plainly, it is a difficult argument for Preterists, putting them in the awkward position of rejecting the record of an otherwise accepted early Church writer.

THE RECORD OF JOSEPHUS

Preterism's primary source of proof that Jesus returned in A.D. 70 are the writings of Josephus, a Jewish historian who was present at the fall of Jerusalem and who wrote a full description of it. That Preterists must use Josephus, a non-Christian writer, instead of the works of Christian writers from the same time-period illustrates the deep problem they have in substantiating their claim that Christ returned at the destruction of Jerusalem. All the writers of the early Church, none excepted, confess a belief in the future return of Christ. Surely John the Beloved, author of the Revelation, would have recognized the fulfillment of his own prophecy and alerted his fellow Christians to the fact that Christ had returned. But no, he lived on another 25 years with no hint that he thought Christ had come back, and thus the whole Church, without one exception, missed that transcendent event. And 2000 years later we are told that, voila, new revelations now show that the world will continue forever, that Christ has already returned, and that we just need to get used to these facts!

We dare not let this insult continue—the Second Coming of Christ has not taken place! We must not, cannot, spiritualize the clear and powerful pictures of Christ's return to the point that it will never happen! When Jesus ascended into heaven, two angels told the disciples that *this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11). Jesus is going to return visibly to this earth with His angels and judge all wicked men! His coming will be an unmistakably identifiable event, or prophecy has no purpose or meaning.

The writings of the early Church fathers clearly demonstrate that they not only did not believe Christ had already returned, but that they were looking for the fulfillments given in the Revelation to take place first—the mark of the beast, Antichrist, etc. Their testimony on this is absolutely consistent, not one advocated a teaching even remotely similar to Preterism. This point is important because Preterists are famous for trying to use historical writings to prove that Christ returned in A.D. 70. They cannot, however, point to a single Christian writer—they must turn to Josephus, the Jew.

We do not discount the writings of Josephus, they contain valuable information and confirmation of the Biblical record. But Josephus was not a Christian. Moreover, he makes no mention of a resurrection occurring at the destruction of Jerusalem, a gathering of the elect, the son of Man appearing in the clouds, etc. He does make reference to chariots appearing in the clouds surrounding Jerusalem, and this is all the proof the desperate Preterist needs.

THE LAST DAYS

Preterists make much of *the last days* mentioned in the NT, and insist that in each occurrence they refer to the last days of the Jewish Covenant. This not only makes every one of these passages inapplicable to the present-day Church, it makes them useful only for those living in the 40 year space between the crucifixion of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem, warning the Christians then living of an event that made no difference to the way they lived. This is pure absurdity. Here are some verses of the last days.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams (Acts 2:17).

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (I Cor 15:52).

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come (I Tim 3:1).

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb 1:2).

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1:5).

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (I Peter 1:20).

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts (II Peter 3:3).

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time (I John 2:18).

How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts (Jude 1:18).

The following quote from Albert Barnes' commentary on the New Testament further elucidates the Scriptural usage of the last days and the last day.

"The expression *the last days*, however, occurs frequently in the Old Testament. Gen. 49:1, Jacob called his sons, that he might tell them what should happen to them in the last days; that is, in future times. Hebrew, *in after times*. Micah 4:1, "*In the last days*, (Heb. *in after times*,) the mountain of the house of the Lord," etc. Isaiah 2:2, "*In the last days*, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains," etc. The expression then properly denoted *the future times* in general; but, as the coming of the Messiah was to the eye of a Jew the most important event in the coming ages, the great, glorious, and crowning scene in all that vast futurity, the phrase came to be regarded as properly expressive of that. And they spoke of future times, and of the last times, as the glad period which should be crowned and honoured with the presence and triumphs of the Messiah. It stood in opposition to the usual denomination of earlier times. It was a phrase in contrast with the days of the patriarchs, the kings, the prophets, etc. The last days, or the closing period of the world, were the days of the Messiah. It does not appear from this, and it certainly is not implied in the expression, that they supposed the world would then come to an end. Their views were just the contrary. They anticipated a long and glorious time, under the dominion of the Messiah, and to this expectation they were led by the promise that his kingdom should be for ever; that of the increase of his government there should be no end, etc. This expression was understood by the writers of the New Testament as referring undoubtedly to the times of the gospel. And hence they often used it as denoting that the time of the

expected Messiah had come, but not to imply that the world was drawing near to an end. Hebrews 1:2, God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." I Peter 1:20, "Was manifest in these last times for you." II Peter 3:3; I Peter 1:5; I John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time," etc. Jude 1:18. The expression, the last day, is applied by our Saviour to the resurrection and the day of judgment, John 6:39,40,44; 11:24; 12:48." (Albert Barnes for Acts 2:17)

THE NEW COVENANT

Preterists like to make grandiose statements about the transition of the Old Covenant to the New Covenant and try to make the point that this had to happen at the destruction of Jerusalem. This is both impossible and imaginary, and we will not spend much time in exposing the fallacy.

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away (Heb 8:13). Preterists assert that this verse proves that the Old Covenant was not yet finished—it was only *ready to vanish away*. Frankly, this has no bearing on whether Christ returned in A.D. 70, no matter how hard Preterists try to link the two. However, even if they are successful in making the connection, which part of the verse is time-accurate? *He hath made the first old*, or *is ready to vanish away*? We believe they both are. The first covenant was old, finished, and fulfilled at the time of the writing. The form still existed in Jerusalem, and even that was ready to vanish away.

Preterists use Hebrews 9:8 to make the same point, *The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing*. (NASB) Again they make the verb tense the issue, saying that as long as the temple stood, the way into heaven was not open. This is an obvious misinterpretation. Jesus told the thief on the cross that very day he would be in Paradise with Him. The way to heaven was opened up when Jesus died and rose victorious from the grave and ascended

into heaven taking the souls of the righteous dead with Him! That did not happen at the destruction of Jerusalem.

We have shown several times that Preterism misses the deeper meaning of a passage in its attempt to lend validity to the assertion that Christ has already returned. This happens again here in Hebrews. The deeper and more important meaning to the passage is lost when Preterism focuses on the verb tense. Matthew Poole has this to say in his commentary of Hebrews 9:8:

"While as the first tabernacle was yet standing; while the Mosaical covenant administration was to continue, till the coming of Christ in the flesh, and perfecting the work by his death, for the space of near one thousand five hundred years, was the true, right, and proper way for entering into heaven, darkly, and obscurely, and typically revealed unto the church; when by the death of Christ the veil of the holy of holiest was rent asunder, heaven laid open to be seen, and entered into by all penitent believing sinners through Christ, every day in their duties, and then in their persons (Mt 27:51)."

Thus the answer is found in chapter 10, *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh* (Heb 10:19). The sacrifice of the Son of God opened the way to heaven for the people of the New Covenant. *The vail is done away in Christ* (II Cor 3:14), not by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It was the positive work of Christ that brought about our salvation and the opening of heaven's doors; not the negative work of judgment upon the people that rejected His first covenant. It should be self-evident that Jesus did not ascend into heaven with unfinished business on earth.

*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the **second time** without sin **unto salvation*** (Heb 9:27-28). Amazingly, Preterists are able to make this verse, which so clearly describes the Second Coming of Christ, support their idea that Christ's "appearing" as taught in the Scriptures is simply a spiritual "coming" at the new birth expe-

rience. They ignore the parallel structure of the passage: “As men all die and await the Judgment, so too Christ died, and His appearance at the Judgment will result in eternal salvation for the resurrected bodies of those who look for Him.”

These examples illustrate how Preterism is often guilty of emphasizing one or two words of Scripture for the sole purpose of negating its plain, face-value meaning. *Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end* (Eph 3:21). Only a Preterist could construe this verse to teach that the earth will never end. Clearly, Paul is ascribing glory to Christ in His Church forever and ever. The Greek word for *world* is *aion* (age) not *cosmos* (tangible earth), and is rendered by the NIV, NASB, BBE, ASV, RSV, and NKJV: “to all generations forever and ever.” That there is a *world to come* is clearly shown in many verses like Luke 18:30 and Heb 2:5.

In conclusion, Preterism’s theological claim that Christ has already returned and that eschatology in general has been fulfilled centuries past is a Scripturally bankrupt position and must be categorically rejected. Preterists say their theological worldview is more spiritually satisfying than other people’s experience, saying, for instance, that now in this life we see God face to face (I Cor 13:12). They say we should rejoice in the fact that we are now living in the new heavens and earth—which even the Apostles did not live to see. “Paradise has been restored in Christ and we live in the eternal land now.” (Todd Dennis). This kind of thinking may appeal to some people, but the vast majority of us have confidence in a much fuller experience of God’s promises. We look for a glorious appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven and being caught up to meet Him—thus ever to be with Christ.

Maranatha!