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FULFILLED!

Magazine

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

*What about Baptism and
The Lord's Supper? p.6*

Two New Columns!

Ed Stevens and Don Preston join FULFILLED!

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Paradigm Shifts

We can only imagine the repercussions when Nicolaus Copernicus published his study on the motion of the planets, claiming that the earth and other planets rotated around the Sun, instead of the Sun and planets rotating around the earth. No doubt his fellow astronomers raised their eyebrows, while the typical layperson probably dismissed the whole notion. And what of the clergy? After all, everyone knew the Bible taught that the earth was the center of the universe . . . *right*? It was undoubtedly his apprehension over these very repercussions that caused Copernicus to wait thirty-six years before publishing his work.

As Preterists, we perhaps have a somewhat parallel situation with which to understand those repercussions. In the late 1800's, James Stuart Russell anonymously published his study on the Lord's Second Coming, titled *The Parousia*. Why did he publish it anonymously? Perhaps because of perceived repercussions. And why would there be repercussions? Because, like Copernicus, Russell was proposing a system which was completely opposite to the accepted standard. Russell proposed that instead of placing the *nature* of Christ's Second Coming at the center of eschatology, and forcing the timing statements regarding His coming to revolve around it, the *timing* was at the center and the nature of His coming must revolve around the timing.

As with the astronomers of Copernicus' day, no doubt many fellow theologians of Russell's day raised their eyebrows, while the typical layperson probably dismissed the whole notion. After all, everyone knew the Bible taught that when Jesus returned it would be a physical, bodily return that every eye would see . . . *right*?

Indeed, the repercussions are perhaps felt more in our day than in Russell's. In Russell's day Dispensationalism, with its emphasis on a physical kingdom and new creation, was just gaining momentum. Because of today's relative ease of publishing and the ability of the Internet to disseminate information, Russell's and similar works have enjoyed an unprece-

dent exposure. And the fact that several major dates in the Dispensational system have come and gone with no trumpet blast has caused many to question their eschatology.

Copernicus' model of planetary motion did not explain every aspect of the universe. But it did provide a key for setting off on the right foot in studying the universe. Likewise, Preterism does not explain every detail of the Bible. But I believe that it is the proper framework and foundation for studying the Bible. No doubt many astronomers had to "start over" in a sense—aligning their data to the new paradigm. They had to unlearn some things in order to relearn them correctly.

The same is true when a person makes the paradigm shift from Futurism to Preterism.

There is much to unlearn and relearn. This point came home as I was enlisting respondents for this issue's "Perspectives" column. Several individuals, after reading the question, replied that they had not yet come to a position in these matters, and had to study them further. Respectfully, they declined to participate. And I respect them for it! The Bible reflects the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, which is

unsearchable and past finding out. Therefore, I am much more trusting and respectful of someone who can say "I don't know" than of the person who "has it all figured out."

I certainly don't have it all figured out! Rather, after years of trying to bushwhack a trail through the underbrush of eschatology, I feel that I have been shown the trailhead—the entrance to the scripturally cut eschatological trail. The purpose of this magazine isn't for me to tell you all about the trail—I haven't traveled that far on it yet. Instead, I'm trying to encourage those who are on the trail, as well as point out the trailhead to others who are still bushwhacking. "Hey—look! There's a trailhead here. I think it's headed in the direction you want to go."

I'm sure that even those who are "well-traveled" on this trail would tell you that they are still exploring—still unlearning and re-



Cont. next page

Mailbag

Outstanding! Great graphics along with superb information. This is the kind of thing that's needed in order to bring fulfilled eschatology into the mainstream.

Thanks for your work & dedication in bringing the Kingdom of Christ to the light that it deserves. I hear too often that "satan is alive & well on planet earth" & that the "world is going to hell in a hand cart." This is a tired refrain & must be challenged.

Many seem astonished that the Jews misunderstood Christ's mission during His ministry & death. Yet the same folks (me included for a long time) have so skewed their expectations that they have missed Him in His 2nd appearing for 2,000 years! Seems like it would make a great movie but then again folks would think that it was too far-fetched. I guess sometimes the truth really is stranger than fiction.

Thanks again & I would count it a privilege to receive your magazine.

Chuck, Florida

Oh, praise God for the blessing of your magazine. How we enjoy it and look forward to receiving it. We don't have a computer, so we look forward to anything concerning the Preterist view. Thank you, thank you – you and your work are in our prayers.

Bob and Grace, Indiana

Great job on the latest issue of FULFILLED. I really enjoyed your comments, as well as the guest comments on the past and present activity of Satan. This is a good work Brian, and I am excited for the future of the magazine.

Jim, California

I would like to express my thanks for your work on this badly needed Magazine. I received your Summer copy very quickly after ordering it from your web site. I read it and then read your first copy from your web site. Boy, can I relate to, and I'm sure there are so many others that also relates to, your article "You Are Not Alone."

The many Preterist web sites that we have today are great; but what is needed is something which can be passed around and also seen by those who may not have the web. This Magazine is it, and is very well done!

Larry, Ohio

Thanks for the wonderful Preterist magazines. Wow, it's marvelous. I have sent some to different states in South Africa.

Philip, South Africa.



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Paradigm Shifts (cont.)

learning, trying to see where this trail leads. In the process many options and theories are put forth and tested. One of the goals of this magazine is to expose readers to different viewpoints in order to aid and challenge them in their personal studies. Thus, as the fine print to the left states, I may not agree with everything that is written here, nor do the individual contributors always agree with each other. But this is the process of "iron sharpening iron."

Two individuals who are well-traveled on this trail are Don K. Preston and Edward E. Stevens, and I'm excited to announce that starting in this issue they will each have their own column in FULFILLED! Magazine. Don will be writing *Objection: Overruled!* and Ed, *Creation to Consummation: Studies in Redemptive History*. Both are introduced in this issue's columns, and I'm sure that their subsequent articles will be edifying and informative.

Once again, we are grateful for all of you who have written to support and encourage us. It blesses us and sustains us in our labors. I would encourage you to contact our contributors as well, and let them know you appreciate their efforts.

God bless,

Brian

Gleanings from "The Parousia"

This ongoing series of articles is taken from *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*, by J. Stuart Russell. Originally published in 1878, Russell used an older style of English and the King James Version of the Bible. We have taken the liberty, when it does no harm to the text, to update the English and use the New King James Version of the Bible. In 1999, *The Parousia* was reprinted with a foreword by R.C. Sproul, in which he stated:

"Few books have forced me to rethink ideas or challenged my assumptions as much as this one has."

THE END OF THE AGE, OR CLOSE OF THE JEWISH DISPENSATION *Parables of the Tares*

Matt. 13:36-47: Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world [age]; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be at the end of this world [age]. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a [the] furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.... 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 the 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 [age]: 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.

We find in the passages here quoted an example of one of those erroneous renderings which have done much to confuse and mislead the ordinary readers of our English version. It is probable, that ninety-nine in every hundred understand by the phrase, 'the end of the world,' the close of human history, and the destruction of the material earth. They would not imagine that the 'world' in v. 38 and the 'world' in vv. 39-40, are totally different words, with totally different meanings. Yet such is the fact. *Koinos* in v. 38 is rightly translated *world*, and refers to the world of men, but *aeon* in vv. 39-40, refers to a *period of time*, and should be rendered *age* or *epoch*. Lange translates it *aeon*. It is of the greatest importance to understand correctly the two meanings of this word, and of the phrase 'the end of the aeon, or age.' *Aion* is, as we have said, a period of time, or an age. It

is exactly equivalent to the Latin word *aevum*, which is merely *aion* in a Latin dress; and the phrase, (Greek- coming), translated in our English version, 'the end of the world,' should be, 'the close of the age.' Tittman observes: (Greek - coming), as it occurs in the New Testament, does not denote the end, but rather the consummation, of the *aeon*, which is to be followed by a new age. So in Matt. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; which last passage, it is to be feared, may be misunderstood in applying it to the destruction of the world.' It was the belief of the Jews that the Messiah would introduce a new aeon: and this new aeon, or age, they called 'the kingdom of heaven.' The existing aeon: therefore, was the Jewish dispensation, which was now drawing to its close; and how it would terminate our Lord impressively shows in these parables. It is indeed surprising that expositors should have failed to recognize in these solemn predictions the reproduction and reiteration of the words of Malachi and of John the Baptist. Here we find the same final separation between the righteous and the wicked; the same purging of the floor; the same gathering of the wheat into the garner; the same burning of the chaff [tares, stubble] in the fire. Can there be a doubt that it is to the same act of judgment, the same period of time, the same historical event, that Malachi, John, and our Lord refer?

But we have seen that John the Baptist predicted a judgment which was then impending—a catastrophe so near that already the axe was lying at the root of the trees [Matt 3:10]—in accordance with the prophecy of Malachi, that 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord' [Mal 4:5] was to follow on the coming of the second Elijah. We are therefore brought to the conclusion, that this discrimination between the righteous and the wicked, this gathering of the wheat into the garner, and burning of the tares in the furnace of fire, refer to the same catastrophe, viz., the wrath which came upon that very generation, when Jerusalem became literally 'a furnace of fire,' and the aeon of Judaism came to a close in 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord.'

This conclusion is supported by the fact, that there is a close connection between this great judicial epoch and the coming of 'the kingdom of heaven.' Our Lord represents the separation of the righteous and the wicked as the characteristic of the great consummation which is called 'the kingdom of God.' But the kingdom was declared to be *at hand*. It follows, therefore, that the parables before us relate, not to a remote event still in the future, but to one which in our Savior's time was near.

An additional argument in favor of this view is derived



by J. Stuart Russell

from the consideration that our Lord, in His explanation of the parable of the tares, speaks of *Himself* as the sower of the good seed: ‘He that soweth the good seed is the *Son of man*.’ It is to *His own personal ministry* and its results that He refers, and we must therefore regard the parable as having a special bearing upon His contemporaries. It is in perfect harmony with His solemn warning in Luke 13:26, where He describes the condemnation of those who were privileged to enjoy *His personal presence and ministrations*, the pretenders to discipleship, who were tares and not wheat. “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.” However applicable to men in general under the gospel such language may be, it is plain that it had a direct and specific bearing upon the contemporaries of our Lord - the generation that witnessed His miracles and heard His parables; and that it has a relation to them such as it can have to none else.

We find at the conclusion of the parable of the tares an impressive *nota bene* [take notice], drawing special attention to the instruction therein contained: ‘Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.’ We may take occasion from this to make a remark on the vast importance of a true conception of the period at which our Lord and His apostles taught. This is indispensable to the correct understanding of the New Testament doctrine respecting the ‘kingdom of God,’ the ‘end of the age,’ and the ‘coming aeon,’ or

‘world to come.’ That period was near the close of the Jewish dispensation. The Mosaic economy, as it is called—the system of laws and institutions given to the nation by God Himself, and which had existed for more than forty generations, was about to be superseded and to pass away. Already the last generation that was to possess the land was upon the scene—the last and also the worst—the child and heir of its predecessors. The long period, during which Jehovah had exhausted all the methods which divine wisdom and love could devise for the culture and reformation of Israel, was about to come to an end. It was to close disastrously. The wrath, long pent up and restrained, was to burst forth and overwhelm *that generation*. Its ‘last day’ was to be a *dies irae* ‘the great and terrible day of the Lord.’ This is ‘the end of the age,’ so often referred to by our Lord, and constantly predicted by His apostles. Already they stood within the penumbra of that tremendous crisis, which was every day advancing nearer and nearer, and which was at last to come suddenly, ‘as a thief in the night.’ This is the true explanation of those constant exhortations to vigilance, patience, and hope, which abound in the apostolic epistles. They lived expecting a consummation which was to arrive in their own time, and which they might witness with their own eyes. This fact lies on the very face of the New Testament writings; it is the key to the interpretation of much that would otherwise be obscure and unintelligible, and we shall see in the progress of this investigation how consistently this view is supported by the whole tenor of the New Testament Scriptures. X

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ΙΤ’Σ ΑΛΛ ΓΡΕΕΚ ΤΟ ΜΕ!

Parousia (παρουσία),

1. *presence*: 1 Cor 16:17
2. The presence of one coming, hence, *the coming, arrival, advent* 1 Cor 7:6f (Thayer’s Lexicon—abridged)

Eschatology: (from Greek *eschatos*, “last,” and *logos*, “study”). A theological term employed to designate the doctrine of last things, particularly those dealing with the second coming of Christ and the events preceding and following this great event. (New Unger’s Bible Dictionary)



Perspectives

Walt Hibbard



Soon after studies in eschatology have led a Bible student to accept the Preterist view, the question arises:

“What about the observance of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper? Are these ordinances to be practiced today in view of the Parousia having taken place in AD 70?” This question has perplexed many Preterists and therefore we find equally sincere students on both sides of the issue. I hope this article will help to put to rest some of the confusion surrounding these important matters.

I write from the Reformed Preterist viewpoint. This means I accept as biblically correct as much of the theology reaffirmed by the Protestant Reformation as the additional insights granted to me by the Lord as a Preterist will allow. All Preterists need a strong anchor in sound covenant theology as a guard against erroneous and spurious teachings.

This article assumes that the Lord God, when proclaiming the Old Covenant

to Abraham, imposed the rite of circumcision. In addition, when God delivered the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage through Moses, He established the celebration of the Passover. Both of these signs were identified with the Old Covenant and continued as long as it was in force, terminating in AD 70 as the writer of Hebrews predicted (Heb 8:13).

Therefore, Paul, when equating circumcision with baptism in Col. 2:11-12, seemed to be showing that the latter replaces the former with the arrival of the New Covenant. Our Lord Himself at the Last Supper institutes the Communion service, with His disciples understanding this sacrament to be a replacement of the Old Covenant Passover rite.

So both New Covenant ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, had their roots in the Old Covenant signs of circumcision and the Passover. As long as the Old Covenant remained, circumcision and the Passover remained. Since virtually all Preterists believe that the Bible teaches that the New Covenant will never end, it is therefore very logical to assume that the signs and seals of that same

See *Hibbard* p. 14

David Green



Preterists are divided on this issue, although it seems that most preterists today hold to the continuation of the Lord’s Supper. Others, like me, hold to a cessation position. The following are eight arguments

why I hold to that position.

1. “Until”

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. (I Cor. 11:26) The Lord came in AD 70. This means that after that time, the Church was no longer commanded to proclaim the Lord’s death by means of “the Lord’s Supper.” The Greek word used for “until” in I Cor. 11:26 usually (though not always) implies a cessation or end. And whenever the word is

connected with the word “fulfilled,” it *always* implies a cessation. (Matt. 2:14,15; Lk. 1:20;

21:24; Matt. 5:17 & Heb. 9:10; I Cor. 11:26 & Lk. 22:16; Rev. 6:11. The Lord’s Supper was to be observed “until” (I Cor. 11:26) it was “fulfilled” (Lk. 22:16) and made “new” (Matt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25) in the Kingdom of God in AD 70.

2. “Fulfilled”

For I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. (Lk. 22:16) The Lord’s Supper was an *unfulfilled* sign/type. It was an eschatological rite that typified “Christ in you.” It was a kind of *fore-taste* of the Fellowship of Christ. Therefore it was “fulfilled” (filled full, completed) when Christ made His Dwelling in the universal Church in AD 70. (Jn. 14:23; Gal. 4:19; Eph.

How does Preterism view the ordinances of The Lord’s Supper?

Kurt Simmons



An unfortunate teaching has surfaced in Preterist circles which states that Baptism and the Lord's Supper have become obsolete and may be disregarded. Apparently, the thinking is that Jesus' coming in AD 70 somehow obviates the need to observe these commandments. This thinking is mistaken.

The Lord left two ordinances or "sacraments" for his church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, or Communion. We tend to avoid the term "sacrament" because of its association with the Catholic Church. But the term is perfectly scriptural. Scripturally speaking, a sacrament is *a rite by which the believer obtains divine grace or favor*. It is *not* a work of merit, but an act of obedience born of faith. Baptism and the Lord's Supper both fit the definition of a sacrament.

In baptism the repentant believer receives remission of sins (Acts 2:38), his sins are washed away (Acts 22:16), is received into Christ (Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 3:27), and is granted forgiveness of sins (Col. 2:11-13). Those that obeyed Peter's commandment to repent and be

baptized were added to the church: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts

2:38, 41, 47).

Since the church is "the saved", and one is received into the church by baptism, it is not difficult

to understand how Peter could say, "baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet. 3:21). Mark's gospel proclaims, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:15, 16). Baptism is an essential element of the rebirth by water and the Spirit (Jn. 3:3, 5). Baptism was the identifying mark of those entering the kingdom (Matt. 21:31, 32; Lk. 7:30). No one this side of the cross enters the kingdom of God without it. Jesus' parting instruction to his disciples was to keep up the work begun by John the Immerser by preaching among earth's peoples the message of repentance and baptism in his name (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15, 16; Lk. 24:47). And so they did. The book of Acts has ten examples of conversion; baptism was an essential part in each case. (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 13; 8:36-38; 10:48; 16:15;

See Simmons p. 15

erism view the Baptism and s Supper?

2:21-22; 3:17; Col. 1:27; II Peter 1:19; Rev. 3:20; 21:2-3) Since that day, all the saints, living and dead,

dine with Him in the Kingdom, and no longer have need of the symbolic, flesh-ordinance that was imposed only "until" it was "fulfilled" and made "new" in AD 70.

3. "New"

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that Day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. (Matt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 22:16-18) The Lord's Supper was made "new" in AD 70. The Greek word for "new" is the adjective *kainos*, and it modifies "it" (fruit/wine). In eschatological contexts, *kainos* describes something that is *new in kind*, and that is **different than/other than** that which, in comparison, is old or outdated. Thus the rite was going to be

fulfilled and *changed* in the Kingdom of God. It was made "new" in the Parousia in the same sense that Jerusalem was made "new," and in the same sense that the heaven and the earth were made "new": it "*passed away*" and was "*fulfilled*" in that which it typified, which was the "new" (*kainos*) bread and wine (*the universal fellowship of Christ*) in the Kingdom of God. (Matt. 9:17; Mk. 2:22; Lk. 5:37-39)

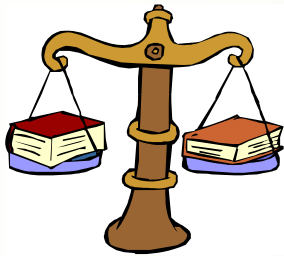
4. "Foods, Drinks and Baptisms"

. . . They relate only to foods and drinks and various baptisms, even ordinances of the flesh imposed until a time of reformation. (Heb. 9:10) This verse speaks of the flesh-ordinances of the Levitical temple-system. Though neither the Lord's Supper nor Christian Baptism were Levitical ordinances (strictly speaking), the principle laid down in Heb. 9:10 applies to both of them. Because the

See Green p. 15



Perspectives



OBJECTION OVERRULED

Don K. Preston is a popular lecturer and debater at Preterist conferences, as well as one of Preterism's most prolific authors. Even though I've read a number of his books I still have a stack of them in my "to read" pile. In addition to his sharp mind, excellent recall and quick thinking on his feet, I have been impressed by another facet of Don's work: he has taken the apologetics of Preterism to another level. Adept as he is at presenting audience relevance, apocalyptic language, imminency statements, etc., he has built upon these "general foundations" of Preterism by pulling together passages and themes that can be easily overlooked. The efforts of Don and others like him are slowly transforming Preterism from an Eschatological position into a Systematic Theology.

Don will be sharing some of the "objections" that he has "overruled" in his books and debates, as well as taking on "objections" from readers. In this issue Don introduces himself by chronicling his journey to Preterism. I appreciate his candor in sharing the negative experiences as well as the good ones—something I'm sure many readers will be able to identify with. If you are not familiar with Don's writings I encourage you to visit his website or contact him for information.

I am deeply honored that Brian has asked me to keyboard a Preterist apologetic column, entitled, "Objection: Overruled!" Brian is doing a great job with the journal, and I hope that my small contribution will honor the Lord, His Truth, and help make this journal a blessing to the readers. I think it would be good to let you know a bit about myself so, please allow me to tell you a bit of my journey to Preterism.

From my earliest recollections, I always wanted to know what others believed and why. I read the writings of other fellowships prodigiously to that end. My father was a tremendous influence on me, instilling in me a love for the Truth and a mind to examine things critically (not *negatively*, but analytically). My full time ministry began in 1975, though I had been in public speaking since I was 13. I won't feign to call that preaching though!

Raised as a fifth generation member of the Churches of Christ denomination, I was a thorough going amillennialist. However, in my first year of ministry, a ladies Bible class asked me to teach on Matthew 24-25. This was frightening, since my father as well as my seminary teachers had openly admitted frustration in their understanding of this great discourse. I was granted a year of preparation time, in which I discovered that I did not understand why there was so much confusion about the text! It became glaringly obvious to me that it was tradition and tradition *alone* that saw in Matthew 24-25 a prediction of a future coming of the Lord at a so-called

"end of time."

Based on that challenging but rewarding research,

which was eagerly accepted by the ladies class, I excitedly continued my studies, trying to ignore the sound of the train I heard coming! The next class the ladies chose was on *Revelation*, and believe me, by the time I was ready a year later to teach Revelation, the sound of the on-coming train was a lot louder!

It was during this period that I had my first formal public debate with a dispensational Baptist minister, a friend of mine. My intense preparation for that debate broke down many more of my own traditionally held eschatological views. In fact, I shocked my own brethren during that four-night debate, with statements that the texts I was examining were as troublesome for *our tradition* as to my friend!

While I was deeply troubled that my traditional views were being challenged, my love for the Truth would not allow me to stop. I wanted, desperately at times, to either stop my research or to find a way to "hang on" to the "faith of my fathers." Interestingly however, it was the early training from my father that compelled me to continue. As my father said repeatedly, "If it is in the Book, believe it, *even if it is not what I taught you!*"

With this legacy driving me, I committed myself to finding the Truth, no matter what. The more I studied, the more I tried to share with my preaching peers. I was excited to finally be seeing harmony and unity. And yet, I wanted to be "rescued" from the direction I was going! Those were deeply troubling times. I found myself broken before the Throne, with nothing left but my faith in the Lord and His Word. My friends had forsaken me, but neither He – nor my wonderful, dedicated wife – had.

I must share with you that my circle of fellowship did not, and *does not*, welcome anyone, especially "insiders" suggesting that our traditions may be wrong. Phariseeism is alive and well, as I soon discovered. I was terminated from a prominent congregation, and blackballed. I lamentably found that my "heroes of the faith" were in fact mere men, who were themselves afraid of being "put out of the synagogue." Some of my "friends" told me they did not even want to be seen speaking to me!

While the human side of all of this was deeply troubling – the word is *traumatic* – the spiritual rewards were flowing in abundance! The thrill of finally understanding God's Word, to begin to understand somewhat this marvelous thing called Grace, to be assured that the pursuit of Truth is more important than friends, "career" or anything else, is a reward above measure. What liberation!



eschatol
PROPHECY I

QUESTION: ANSWERED!



So, after literally years of struggle and painstaking, laborious research, I was finally convinced and convicted that my traditional eschatology was fundamentally, egregiously wrong. But God was true, and every man a liar. Jesus kept his word. He came as and when he promised.

I was ready to take a stand, openly, unashamedly, and have been doing so for several years now. I have defended and spread that message and challenge now in numerous formal debates, countless private discussions, many written debates, and formal radio debates on The Voice of Reason radio show, John Anderson being the moderator. I stand ready to give an answer to any man for the hope that lies within me.

With all of that said, let me say candidly that I am not the final answer. I don't have all the answers. I am not the "Preterist authority." I strive with everything in me to be a servant, a student of God's Word. I am subject to human foibles and weakness. It may be that Brian chose me for this column because I am the loudmouth keyboard of Preterism! Who knows?

Be that as it may, in regard to this column, here is my pledge to you:

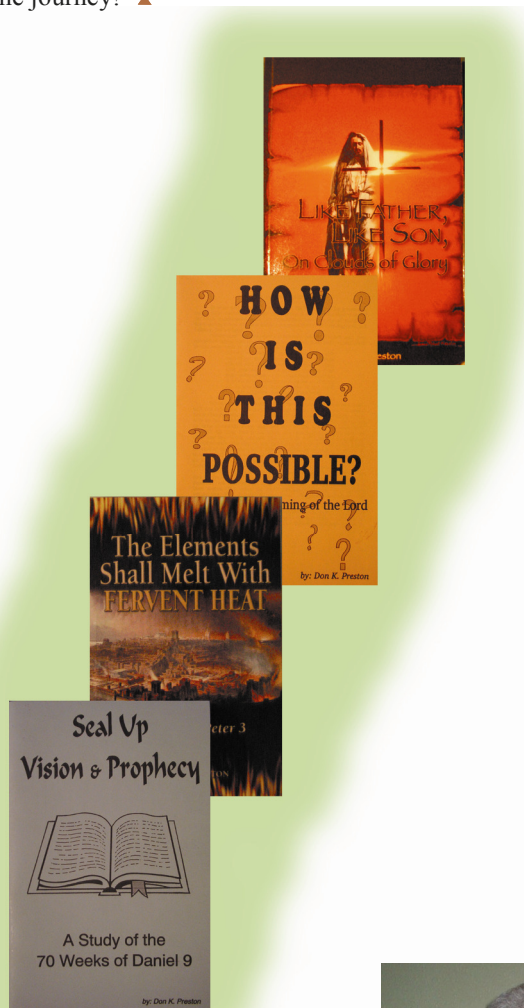
I do not think there are any dumb questions, so, ask away!

I will honor and assume the integrity of each questioner.

I reserve the right to say, "I don't know!" I will do my best to exemplify 2 Timothy 2:24f. I will not insult you. I will not demean questioners. I will not deal with personalities at all. Truth matters, personalities must be subsumed to that pursuit.

I expect the same Christian respect and common courtesy in your questions to me.

and lets you know that I understand the struggles of questioning dearly held traditional beliefs. I know the trauma of friends turning their backs on you. I know what it means to be fired from a loved and respected position. If you are experiencing any of these things, and want some Biblical answers, please send them to me. I promise that I will do my best to give you the solid, sure, sound Truth of God's Word. Take it, test it, stand on it. Come join the journey! ✕



I FOUND MYSELF
BROKEN BEFORE
THE THRONE, WITH
NOTHING LEFT BUT
MY FAITH IN THE
LORD AND HIS
WORD. MY
FRIEND'S HAD
FORSAKEN ME . . .



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FULFILLED

Okay, there you have a snippet biography of my journey to Covenant Eschatology. I hope this is helpful

Some Heard Thunder

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." John 12:28-32 NKJV

I find this scene in the life of Christ fascinating. Here's why: Jesus specifically says that the voice which came from heaven was for the sake—the benefit, of those around Him. And yet some of them, if not most of them, did not even understand what the voice had said. Some of them thought that an angel had spoken to Jesus. Some heard thunder.

Surely the voice of God is not so unintelligible—so ambiguous—that many who hear it are unaware of its divine origin or message. No, the problem lies not with the Speaker, but with the hearer. Sometimes it might be our misperception of how we think God will reveal Himself to us. If, like Elijah, we expect Him in the strong wind, the earthquake or the fire, we are liable to miss the still small voice (1 Kings 19:11-12). And then there's the fact that *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (1 Cor 2:14 NKJV).

When it comes to spiritual discernment, we are all at different levels of maturity—different phases in our spiritual lives. Jesus told His disciples that He still had many things to tell them, but they couldn't bear them at the time (Jn 16:12). While it is true that the next verse states that the Spirit would teach them these things because He would guide them into all truth, we mustn't forget that guiding is a process. And that process wasn't always fully embraced by believers, as the writer of Hebrews demonstrates:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb 5:12-14 NKJV

Some of the original readers of Hebrews were not as mature as they should have been. Likewise, Peter claimed that not everyone could understand Paul's teachings:

... as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all

his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 2 Peter 3:15-16 NKJV

I wonder if, when the less mature heard or read Paul's deep spiritual truths, it was not unlike hearing thunder. They may have recognized the divine origin, and somewhat grasped the magnitude of the teaching (that it was beyond them). But for all intents and purposes, the message was as clear as thunder.

It is very easy for us, and perhaps natural, to conjure up a picture of certain individuals or groups when we see the term "less mature believers." Rarely, if ever, do we place ourselves within that group. Yet if we are honest with ourselves, we know that our own spiritual development is far from finished—it is, in fact, a life-long process. This is no less true within the ranks of Preterism. Regardless of one's position on "the perfect" having come, and "knowing as we are known," our different levels of understanding are evidenced by our various views of the resurrection, rapture, immortal body, etc. Thus, it is still possible for us to "hear thunder," regardless of how mature we are. How many of us, for example, when first introduced to Preterism, heard thunder?

To be honest, sometimes as I read Preterist material, I still hear thunder. In fact, there are still many parts of the Bible that echo of thunder to me. Having come to a *basic* understanding of Preterism, I've found that I need to restudy most of what I've learned about the Bible. I could spend the next twenty years doing that, and then write from a position of knowledge—or, I could invite others to explore the validity of Preterism with me, introducing them to other more mature Preterists. Then, twenty years from now, there will hopefully be a host of Preterists available to share their knowledge. As John Anderson stated on one of his internet broadcasts, "Preterism was not the end for me—it was the beginning!"

As such, many of us are beginning again our study of God's Word. Some are further along than others, yet I can't help but wonder if even the most seasoned Preterist is not still nearer the beginning of the journey than the end. That being considered, one would think that there would be more acceptance and encouragement amongst Preterists as we explore different paths and consider different options along our journey. And yet, especially in Internet forums, it seems that many are just as willing to deride their fellow Preterists' doctrine and call



by Brian L. Martin

them names, as the Futurists and Partial Preterists are. This is especially puzzling to me since, from my perspective, the differences amongst Preterists pale in comparison to the difference between Futurism and Preterism. It reminds me of the parable of the unforgiving servant:

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii;

and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to

him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” Matt 18:23-35 NKJV

What if God were to require of me to settle accounts for all of the errant Bible teaching I espoused as a Futurist? I could never repay Him. Thankfully, every errant word is under the blood of Jesus! How, then, can I not “forgive” my Preterist brother or sister who holds to a different view of the resurrection, rapture, immortal body, etc.? Having not even perceived the prospects of Preterism in Scripture until it was thrust in my face, and even worse, having never asked the “tough” questions of my Futurism, I can’t help but wonder—what else am I missing? How do I know that it’s not that view of the resurrection, rapture or immortal body that doesn’t make sense to me (yet); that it’s not that detail of Preterism that still sounds like thunder?

I’m not saying that there is not an ultimate truth in all of these issues, or that we should just put doctrine aside so that we can all get along. I believe that we should continue to search the Scriptures, study and pray as we continue in our journeys. I also believe we need to sharpen one another, just as Proverbs says that iron sharpens iron. However, we need to realize that the iron is sharpened only if the steel and the blade are brought into contact with each other in the proper manner. If one were to forcefully drag the steel across the cutting edge of the blade, the blade would be severely damaged—perhaps irreparably. Likewise, the way in which we interact with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and the way in which we bring our various views into contact with each other, will determine whether our doctrines, as well as individuals, are sharpened or damaged.

For those of us who “aren’t the sharpest knives in the kitchen,” those of us that still hear thunder rumbling in the distance—be patient and gracious with us. We’re trying to catch up! ⚡

WHEN IT COMES TO
SPIRITUAL
DISCERNMENT, WE
ARE ALL AT
DIFFERENT LEVELS
OF MATURITY—
DIFFERENT PHASES
IN OUR SPIRITUAL
LIVES.





CREATION to C

Studies in Rede

Earlier this year I purchased the complete audio library available from Ed Stevens' *International Preterist Association*. Over the summer I listened to dozens of hours of these lectures, seminars and radio programs while commuting to and from work. I was impressed with not only the depth of Ed's understanding of the Bible and Preterism, but also the breadth of his knowledge, which included the Early Church Fathers, Talmudic writings and secular history recorded by Josephus and Tacitus. Aware of how little most of the Church knows about the events of AD 70, and the theology leading up to it, the idea of having Ed do a column centered on these themes began to germinate. I am excited that Ed responded to the idea with enthusiasm!

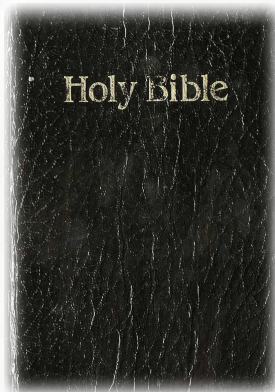
As students of the Bible, we realize that we use Scripture to interpret Scripture. However, Christianity has always benefited from non-Biblical sources to provide information regarding the backdrop upon which the Bible is written. Readers who are familiar with Ed's teachings know that they are anchored squarely in the Bible. Readers unfamiliar with his teachings will soon find that to be the case.

By way of introduction, Ed was born and raised in Texas by devout Christian parents in a Southern Baptist Church. During his college years he switched over to the Church of Christ denomination, and also became involved in Campus Crusade for Christ. It was while in college at Texas Tech University (1971) that Ed learned of the Preterist view, through Foy Wallace's commentary on Revelation and by reading Josephus. In 1975, Ed graduated from *Sunset School of Preaching* in Lubbock, Texas, an intense two-year Church of Christ seminary. He also took their additional six-month Domestic Missions program (*Sunset School of Missions*). Two of the instructors there at Sunset School of Preaching (Richard Rogers and Jim McGuiggan) taught a Partial Preterist view of eschatology. After graduation he moved to Long Island, New York, where he served as minister for a Church of Christ congregation from 1975 to 1980. It was right after his move to Long Island in July, 1975 that Ed switched over to a fully consistent Preterist position.

While in the New York City area, Ed engaged in significant studies of Eschatology, Judaism, and Biblical Creationism. He also studied Hebrew, Talmud and Jewish History under Orthodox rabbis in the West Hempstead orthodox synagogue (Rabbi Silver) and at Adelphi University (Rabbi Milton Markovitz). He has lectured on Eschatology, Judaism and Creationism in various churches and seminaries. In 1978, Ed received a *Bachelor of Arts* degree in religious studies at Adelphi Univer-

sity in Garden City, New York. While ministering in Long Island, Ed met his wife, Beth, who had grown up in a devout Church of Christ home in Tennessee. God has blessed their marriage with two daughters (Rachel and Leah) and a son (James), all of whom are faithful Christians.

After ministering in Long Island, Ed and Beth moved to Ashtabula, Ohio, where Ed served as both the Director and one of the instructors for the *North East Ohio Bible Institute*, a Church of Christ leadership training school, from 1980 to 1982. There he taught seminary level courses on Hermeneutics, Jewish History, Church History, Eschatology, Biblical Creationism, Church Planting, Church Growth, Personal Evangelism, and many other subjects.



From Ohio, Ed and Beth moved to Bradford, Pennsylvania, where Ed again was minister for a Church of Christ congregation, from 1982 to 1984. Then Ed had the opportunity to work for an Apple Computer store where he learned desktop publishing and accumulated the equipment, software and skills to begin a part-time Preterist publishing ministry with his wife in 1984, which developed into a full-time ministry by 1990.

After several years of study in systematic theology, Ed embraced the doctrines of sovereign grace and Reformed covenant theology. He states, "I am totally committed to the conservative fundamentals of our Christian faith and Reformed theology. I believe in the Deity of Christ, the Trinity, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, a literal six-day creation, a global flood, eternal conscious punishment for unbelievers, and all the other conservative 'fundamentals' of the Christian faith." Ed also pastored the *Reformed Christian Fellowship* (a Reformed Preterist church) in Groveland, New York for two years (1995-1997). Since then, he and his family have attended a conservative Presbyterian Church (PCA).

Ed has been interviewed on radio programs and lectured on Preterism at seminars in many states across the nation. He has participated in two written debates (Balyeat and Gentry) and two oral debates (Olan Hicks, and Hartley/George). He is also the author of five books, *What Happened In AD 70?* (an introduction to the Preterist view), *Who Do You Say I Am?* (a defense of the deity of Christ against Unitarians), *Stevens Response to Gentry* (a written debate on Preterist eschatology), *Questions About The Afterlife* (a response to Gary DeMar's five questions about the resurrection), *Expectations Demand a First Century Rapture* (advocating a literal rapture in AD 70), and numerous articles for publication in magazines, newsletters and websites.

CONSUMMATION

Emptive History



Ed is the President of *International Preterist Association*, which grew out of his Preterist publishing ministry. IPA publishes and distributes Preterist books and hosts a website with numerous Preterist articles and an online store with over a hundred different Preterist books, tapes, CD's and DVD's available for purchase. IPA has published numerous books for other Preterist authors, including Ken Davies, Dan Harden, Tim James, Ron McRay, Arthur Melanson, Jessie Mills, John Noë, Randall Otto, and Al Pigeon; as well as twice reprinting J. Stuart Russell's 600-page classic work on Preterist eschatology, *The Parousia*.

For the past eight years IPA has set up an exhibit booth at the annual meetings of the *Evangelical Theological Society*, where 2000 of the top conservative theologians in the world gather to collaborate and present the fruits of their research. This is a major part of IPA's work, introducing the Preterist view to, and debating it with, the movers and shakers of the conservative evangelical world.

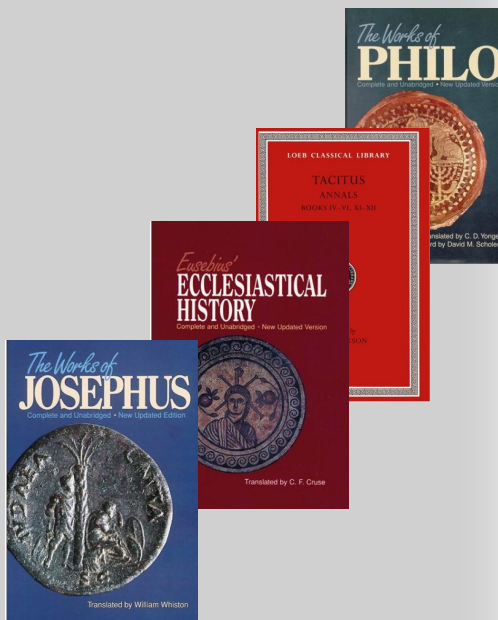
Currently, Ed is involved in a written debate with Sam Frost on the AD 70 literal rapture issue. (As a side note, having read some of the comments posted on various web sites concerning the rapture issue, I want to commend both Ed and Sam for the spirit in which they are conducting this debate. They are not pulling any punches on the issue, but they are respecting each other as brothers in Christ and fellow Preterists while doing so.) Ed is also in the process of editing a multi-authored response book to Keith Mathison's *When Shall These Things Be? A Reformed Response to*

Hyper-Preterism, as well as expanding three of his present books for new editions.

I would encourage readers who are not already familiar with the ministries of *International Preterist Association* to visit their website and take advantage of all the excellent resources that are available there. Their web address and other contact information are listed in this column.

As you can see, Ed brings a wealth of training and experience to both this column and Preterism in general. We look forward to what he has to share in the coming issues. X

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Our Mission:

To glorify Jesus Christ and serve the Christian community as the leading publisher and distributor of conservative Christian Preterist information.



Hibbard (from p. 6)

New Covenant would always remain.

The ongoing and continuous nature of the New Covenant is one of the strongest arguments in support of the ongoing and continuous signs and seals attached to that covenant. Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted during the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ or soon after. Since both relate to a covenant that would continue in force forever, would the signs and seals of that covenant be limited to only a very brief period from approximately AD 33 to AD 70? How much more reasonable to simply conclude that the covenant signs and seals should be coexistent with the time frame embraced by the covenant which they represent. To suggest otherwise only places the burden of denial upon the shoulders of those who oppose it, a difficult task indeed.

The passage in I Cor. 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes," has caused some Preterists to discontinue both baptism and the Lord's Supper, since Jesus did come a second time in AD 70. However, this argument ignores the all-important interpretative principle of audience relevance.

Paul was writing to the Christians in Corinth in that first century and directing them to follow a clearly defined practice until a clearly defined event would take place. His words were not written to Christians living beyond that first century. This observation is extremely important in the support of the continuing sacrament viewpoint.

We find, therefore, that these believers obeyed Paul's words and did continue to observe the sacraments until the moment they were caught up into the heavenly realm at the Parousia of AD 70, as taught in I Thess. 4:13-18 (ref. John 14:2-3). These believers had no further need to celebrate the Lord's Supper (or practice Baptism) since they beheld Jesus face to face in glory! They were then inhabitants of Heaven, not of the earth.

Christians living today, in this 21st century, are not yet in Heaven. Only when believers today are called home at the time of their physical death should their individual observance of the sacraments cease. In the meantime, from one generation to the next, we should continue to "do this in remembrance of Me."

The covenant signs were given to minister to the frail and weak faith of all God's children in all ages, commensurate with the covenant administration that they would then be under. The sacraments are a means of grace, intended to strengthen Christ's church as we battle against remaining sin in our lives. We dare not discard what God has taught us to be important. We continue to need the initiatory rite of Baptism as we unite with a local church body and all that this symbolizes, and we continue to need the strength provided only by sitting at the Lord's Supper with Him, a practice latent with the deepest of theological meaning. This is especially true for Preterists who are able to recognize the accomplished fulfillment of all that had been written!

God is gracious; He knows our shortcomings; He loves us with an everlasting love. He has placed us in a sinful world that needs the "everlasting Gospel" (Rev. 14:6) that is administered through His "everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20). We continue to need the means of grace and the strengthening power that God has provided for His people as we live for Him in our covenant communities. May all of us as Preterist Christians be careful to show our love for Him by keeping His commandments and observing His appointed church sacraments. ✕

WALT HIBBARD WAS THE FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF GREAT CHRISTIAN BOOKS FOR MANY YEARS. HE CURRENTLY HOSTS A MONDAY NIGHT CHATROOM ON PALTALK. HE CAN BE REACHED AT:

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Simmons (from p. 7)

16:33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16) Ten is a perfect number (for example, see E. W. Bullinger's, *Number in Scripture*). Could it be the Lord is telling us something here? Given the integral part of baptism in the gospel, it seems incredulous that anyone could argue it has somehow lost its efficacy in AD 70.

The same is true regarding the Lord's Supper. Paul said that the Lord's Supper is a participation in the body and blood of Christ (I Cor. 10:16, 17). Therefore, we share in the benefits of Christ's atoning sacrifice *each time* we partake. Observing the Lord's Supper is a serious responsibility. More than merely a memorial is involved; the Lord's Supper is something that can be *desecrated*. Failing to approach the Lord's Table with discernment caused some at Corinth to come under judgment by God, even to the point of striking some with sickness and death (I Cor. 11:27-30). Paul's statement, "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), does not imply that observance was to cease at the eschaton (the coming of Christ). Rather, Paul is merely saying the *reason* for the wrath that would be poured out on the Jews and Romans was being reenacted each Lord's

Day when they gathered around his table (cf. Heb. 10:25-29). Far from ceasing at Christ's coming, Jesus said that he would partake of it "anew" with us in his kingdom (Matt. 26:28; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 22:16, 18). The kingdom is the church; the terms are used interchangeably (cf. Matt. 16:18, 19; Heb. 12:23, 28). The apostolic church observed the Lord's Supper each first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:17ff; 16:2). We are charged to keep the traditions set in the church by Christ and the apostles (I Cor. 11:2; II Thess. 2:15).

Abandoning Baptism and the Lord's Supper is a precarious position to take. "This persuasion cometh not from him that calleth you" (Gal. 5:8). ❌

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Green (from p. 7)

Lord's Supper (food and drink) and Christian Baptism were ordinances for the flesh (i.e., ceremonial rites), they were, like the Levitical flesh-ordinances, imposed only until the time of reformation in AD 70. God did not replace old flesh-ordinances with new flesh-ordinances. Rather, He "*fulfilled*" *all* the flesh-ordinances (including the two eschatological ordinances) and made them "*new*." They were imposed only "*until*" they were realized in the heavenly glories they typified.

5. Manna

The Manna that the Israelites ate and the drink that they drank in the wilderness represented the Lord's body and blood. (Jn. 6:31-56; I Cor. 10:3-4) The Lord's Supper also represented the Lord's body and blood. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the representative food and the representative drink ceased. Likewise, when the Church entered the spiritual Promised Land in AD 70, the representative food and drink (the rite of "the Lord's Supper") ceased.

6. Passover

"The Lord's Supper" could not have been the fulfillment/antitype of the Passover, because the Passover was not *fulfilled* until AD 70. (Lk. 22:15,16) Paul taught that the Passover would be fulfilled through *non-ceremonial* means, i.e., by means of sincerity and truth: *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the [Passover] feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* (I Cor. 5:6)

7. Gentiles

The Lord's Supper was a "transition ritual," just like the revelatory gifts (tongues and prophecy) were "transition gifts" that were given to both Jews and Gentiles, until the gifts were fulfilled and done away with in AD 70. "The Lord's Supper" was a sign of covenant-confirmation given to the Jew-Gentile Church in anticipation of the impending New Covenant world. It was also a sign to the Jews, to "*proclaim the Lord's death*" in all nations until He came and destroyed the hand-made, Old Covenant temple. (I Cor. 11:26)

8. Sign and Seal

The New Covenant is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. The "sign" of that covenant (circumcision) was fulfilled and replaced with *spiritual circumcision* (i.e., "*the circumcision of Christ*" in Col. 2:11), not with "the Lord's Supper" and ritual baptism. Christ Himself came to dwell in and among all the saints in AD 70 in fulfillment of *all* the "signs" and of *all* the flesh-ordinances (including "the Lord's Supper"). He Himself is now our Bread (flesh) and Wine (blood). The New Covenant is the covenant of substance and fulfillment, not a covenant of more God-imposed covenant-signs. ❌

(Due to space limitations, we could not print David's article on Baptism. It is available on his web site.)

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Prophecy Quiz

Jesus coming in the glory of His Father, the angels with Him and rewarding every man according to his deeds.

The above items are prophetic descriptions of what event:

A. The Second Coming

C. The Resurrection of Christ

B. The Transfiguration

D. The Ascension of Christ

If you picked "A" you might be shocked to learn that most commentators disagree with you. Strangely enough, they can't seem to agree on what the correct answer is, but they all agree on what it's not. Why? Because of the time indicator in the verse which follows that description:

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. Matt 16:27-28

Jesus told His listeners that some of *them* would not taste death until *they* saw the event He had just described. This, according to most commentators, rules out the Second Coming. Although all of the other options have their proponents, the majority favor The Transfiguration as the fulfillment because it immediately follows the prophecy in all three synoptic Gospels. Jesus said that only *some* of them would not taste death, which implies that most of them would die before the event occurred. Even by the time of The Ascension only one of the disciples (Judas) had died! Since The Transfiguration occurred only about one week after Jesus made this prophecy, we feel compelled to ask: who died in that week?

Preterism . . . *it's about time!*

It's about the time Jesus told His disciples that He would return—*this (His) generation!*

It's about the time the New Testament authors told their readers Jesus would return—*soon, near, at hand, shortly!*

It's about time for a Scriptural explanation other than delay!

It's about time for a "last days" view that doesn't conjure up gaps and parenthetical ages!



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