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FULFILLED! *Magazine*

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

THE ABYSS



AND I SAW A STAR FALL FROM HEAVEN TO THE EARTH.
TO HIM WAS GIVEN THE KEY TO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT.

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Editor's Update

Well, we have begun another year and, by popular perception, another decade (decades actually begin in years ending with a one, since there was no year zero). Remember when the world was going to end in 2000? Hard to believe that was ten years ago! The previous decade was particularly hard on Dispensationalists, who saw two significant dates come and go without the awaited return of Christ. Not only did Y2K fizzle, but 2007 (forty years after the 1967 war in which the temple mount was briefly recaptured by Israel) also slipped quietly into the growing list of empty predictions for Christ's return. Not to worry, though—2012 looks promising, what with the Mayan calendar and all.

As Francis Gumerlock documents in *The Day and the Hour*, every generation since Christ's has expected His return to be in their lifetime. Every generation has felt that they had witnessed a particular prophecy not fulfilled in previous generations, thus setting the stage for the Second Coming.

I'll leave the Mayan calendar and Nostradamus to the others. I prefer to stick with Jesus, who said, "*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place*" (Matt 24:34). Christ's generation did see all those things come to pass, as documented in the New Testament, Josephus, and others. But I'm preaching to the choir, aren't I . . .

This issue begins our fifth year of publishing—my how time flies! I joked recently with someone in an email that I'm waiting for PayPal to develop a "Donate Time" button, allowing donors to donate a few minutes of their day to someone else. If I could get twelve people to donate just five minutes a day, I'd have an extra hour every day! Needless to say, I don't have high hopes for that one.

Although DVD orders have slowed a bit, each issue of the magazine generates renewed interest. We have distributed two thousand DVD's so far and have ordered another thousand. We are blessed that the Preterist community views this video as a valuable resource for sharing Preterism. As our thoughts turn toward our next video project, I thought I'd ask for

your input. Which of the following video projects do you think is needed most? Send me an email or write me at the address in the sidebar.

- A shorter (20-30 minute) introduction to Preterism
- A study series that goes into more detail (perhaps for use by small groups)
- A collection of video responses to frequently asked questions (What about the new heavens and earth? What about the elements melting? What about the Millennium? Etc.)

None of these projects will be achieved soon, but before investing a huge amount of time I thought it would be wise to hear from you. Since FCG exists to communicate the message of Preterism, why not ask Preterists what kind of tools they need?

Another tool I've pondered from time-to-time is a special edition of the magazine which would be devoted to providing an introduction to Preterism. Like the DVD, you could give this special issue to friends and family and they would receive a general introduction to Preterism. We would have to charge for copies of this issue, but the cost would probably be around \$2 each. Thus you could still afford to buy multiple copies and give them away. Let me know if this is something you believe would be beneficial for sharing Preterism.

If you haven't pointed your computer's browser to AD70.net yet, I encourage you to do so. Michael Loomis is doing an excellent job with the radio station, and there is a variety of Preterist programming available for your edification. If you are unable to listen to the live broadcasts there is a growing number of podcasts available through both AD70.net and iTunes.

May 2010 be a year for you of wonderful blessing and growth in our Lord!

For Christ's Glory,

Mailbag



Please keep sending *Fulfilled Magazine*. there is something to learn from every issue. Michael Fenemore's article "What Do We Have Now" was a real blessing. Kurt Simmons article was also appreciated, especially comments on the Last Trump. Your DVD was very professional looking and well done, you did an excellent job of narration. Keep up the good work!

Marion, Nevada

Please keep me on your mailing list. I thoroughly enjoy your magazine—especially the latest series by Ed Stevens, *Apostolic Canonization of the New Testament before AD 70*. God bless you all.

Eugene, Washington

I just ordered some videos by PayPal. Thank you for these tools, the magazine and the video. I have been blessed to have come to the Preterist view and have been blessed to have taught others. Now having your tools at hand I am even more excited about the opportunities of others being challenged and being blessed.

Barry, Pennsylvania

Thank you sir for sending me the *Fulfilled Magazine*. It's a great publication. I love it! Even though I may not agree with all of its content, I do agree 200% with the eschatology message. I am a full preterist myself so I will read every single page of the magazine. Thank you and by all means keep me in your mailing list, for years to come.

Jorge, New Jersey

Thanks for doing such a great job on the "You've Got to Be Kidding . . . Right" DVD's. As per your OK, I made copies for the Elders and Pastors of my church. You and your supporters have created a splendid tool for those of us trying to get our church leaders to see what is now obvious to the few of us who have finally made sense of these scriptures. Thanks again for this resource.

Doug, Oregon

I received your video today from a friend of mine and I must say, GREAT JOB. Probably the best video on preterism I have seen. I think all questions were answered. If a person doesn't believe it is because they don't want to.

Steve, California

I am beginning my research on fulfilled theology. This view helps connect the dots more so which intrigues me. Please continue to send the magazine to me.

Gary, Maryland

Just wanted to let you know how much I have truly enjoyed the video you just put out "You've Got To Be Kidding . . . Right?" I found it online yesterday on the *Fulfilled* web site and clicked through all the chapters. I have now watched it three times already. I think it is very well done and that it is very informative. I really liked the portion of the video where you use the example of the mother with her kids to show that just because an imminent time statement isn't always used with a text doesn't mean that a different event is in view. . . Another part that really stood out was when you pointed out that the majority of evangelical scholars say that all the prerequisite prophecies have been fulfilled so that Jesus' return is always imminent. And then you stated how could this be when those same people say that the 7 churches in Revelation represent 7 different church ages and if we have only recently entered the Laodicean age how then could Christ's return have been imminent in the other 6 ages. GREAT POINT!!! That was something I had never realized or thought about before. There are several other great points of interests I found in this video. I feel that this video will go a long way in getting people thinking about their view of eschatology. My hat's off to all those involved in the making of this video! Also want to mention that I look forward to each new issue of *Fulfilled* magazine. It is a great publication!

Dave, Virginia

THANK YOU FOR
THESE TOOLS,
THE MAGAZINE
AND THE VIDEO . . .



Throughout the centuries of Church history, many writers have written from the perspective of a past fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Most of them failed to take that perspective to its logical conclusion (Full Preterism) and still applied a few various prophecies to their future. With that caveat in mind, their works contain many gems that can serve two purposes: 1) provide additional Preterist perspectives, and 2) demonstrate that, although Full Preterism may have experienced its greatest development in the last fifty years, many others have been blazing that trail through the centuries. In this issue we offer an excerpt from the Jewish historian Josephus, from his work titled *Antiquities of the Jews*. Josephus informs us that the Jews considered the tabernacle/temple to be a representation of the universe. Could this fact shed light on Jesus' statement, "heaven and earth shall pass away"?

Now here one may wonder at the ill-will which men bear to us, and which they profess to bear on account of our despising that Deity which they pretend to honor; for if anyone do but consider the fabric of the tabernacle, and take a view of the garments of the high priest, and of those vessels which we make use of in our sacred ministration, he will find that our legislator was a divine man, and that we are unjustly reproached by others; for if anyone do without prejudice, and with judgment, look upon these things, he will find they were everyone made in way of imitation and representation of the universe. When Moses distinguished the tabernacle into three parts, and allowed two of them to the priests, as a place accessible and common, he denoted the land and the sea, these being of general access to all; but he set apart the third division for God, because heaven is inaccessible to men. And when he ordered twelve loaves to be set on the table, he denoted the year, as distinguished into so many months. By branching out the candlestick into seventy parts, he secretly intimated the Decani, or seventy divisions of the planets; and as to the seven lamps upon the candlesticks, they referred to the course of the planets, of which that is the number. The veils, too, which were composed of four things, they declared the four elements; for the fine linen was proper to signify the earth, because the flax grows out of the earth; the purple signified the sea, because that color is dyed by the blood of a sea

shell-fish; the blue is fit to signify the air; and the scarlet will naturally be an indication of fire. Now the vestment of the high priest being made of linen, signified the earth; the blue denoted the sky, being like lightning in its pomegranates, and in the noise of the bells resembling thunder. And for the ephod, it showed that God had made the universe of four elements; and as for the gold interwoven, I suppose it related to the splendor by which all things are enlightened. He also appointed the breastplate to be placed in the middle of the ephod, to resemble the earth, for that has the very middle place of the world. And the girdle which encompassed the high priest round, signified the ocean, for that goes round about and includes the universe. Each of the sardonyxes declares to us the sun and the moon; those, I mean, that were in the nature of buttons on the high priest's shoulders. And for the twelve stones, whether we understand by them the months, or whether we understand the like number of the signs of that circle which the Greeks call the Zodiac, we shall not be mistaken in their meaning. And for the mitre, which was of a blue color, it seems to me to mean heaven; for how otherwise could the name of God be inscribed upon it? That it was also illustrated with a crown, and that of gold also, is because of that splendor with which God is pleased. Let this explication suffice at present, since the course of my narration will often, and on many occasions, afford me the opportunity of enlarging upon the virtue of our legislator. ❧

Did you ever regret the absence of the burnt-offering, or the red heifer, or any one of the sacrifices and rites of the Jews? Did you ever pine for the feast of tabernacles, or the dedication? No, because, though these were like the old heavens and earth to the Jewish believers, they have passed away, and we now live under new heavens and a new earth, so far as the dispensation of the divine teaching is concerned. The substance is come, and the shadow has gone: and we do not remember it. (C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, p. 354, vol. 37)

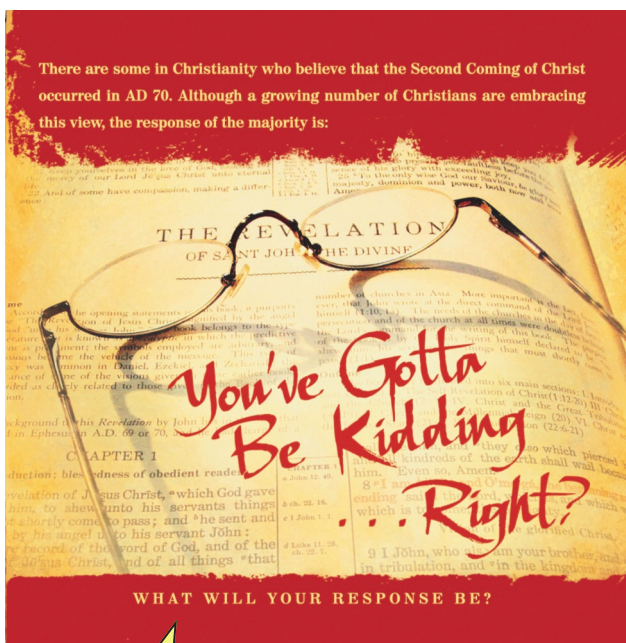
Stunning Response!

Over 2,000 copies sold in first 5 months!

Thanks for sending me the DVD. Both my wife and I viewed it. It is hands down the best introductory video on preterism we have encountered!

Your DVD is excellent. I am watching it right now and just had to write and say "job well done" brother!! I love it. I am laughing and crying at the same time. You truly did hit the nail on the head with your approach to explaining preterism.

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Studies in Redemptio

Apostolic Canonization (Part 4): Peter Certified All 27 New Testament Books as Canonical

by Ed Stevens

This is the fourth and last article in this series on apostolic canonization. Our focus will be on Peter's role in the process of producing a New Testament canon. We intend to demonstrate that Peter was the key person in the process of collecting the apostles' writings and certifying them as canonical. By canonical, we mean that a text was considered to be inspired and absolutely authoritative on the same level with "the rest of the Scriptures."

Is there any evidence that the twenty-seven books of our New Testament were acknowledged, affirmed, or claimed to have been inspired and absolutely authoritative like Old Testament Scripture? The Apostle John shows that he was self-aware of the inspiration and authority of his book of Revelation:

*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the **words of the prophecy**, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.* (Rev 1:3 NASB95; emphasis added)

*He who has an ear, let him hear **what the Spirit says to the churches**.*

(Rev 2:7 NASB95; emphasis added; see the same phrase in Rev 2:11, 17, 29; and 3:6, 13)

Because Revelation claims to be inspired and directly revealed to John by the Holy Spirit, as a book of "prophecy," Revelation thus contains things that the Spirit wanted the churches to understand and obey. This is canonical language.

Likewise, the Apostle Paul claims that his gospel was not received from other men, but by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ:

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:11-12 NASB95; cf. Eph 3:3)

Paul placed his own "gospel" on the same level as "the Scriptures of the prophets," and consequently as an authoritative source for the establishment of not only the Roman church, but for "all the nations":

*Now to Him who is able to **establish you according to my gospel** and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery** which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, **and by the Scriptures of the prophets**, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to*

all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. (Rom 16:25-27 NASB95; emphasis added)

In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul claims that the things he spoke to the Thessalonians were received by them as what they really are, "*the word of God*." The commandments Paul gave to the Thessalonians were by the authority of the Lord Jesus, and anyone who rejected those commandments was in effect rejecting God Himself (1 Thess 4:2, 8). Paul stated to the Corinthians "*the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment*" (1 Cor 14:37). These statements were claims to inspiration, direct revelation, and absolute authority for his teaching, preaching, and writing. Paul clearly claimed that he had the same kind of revelation and inspiration that the other apostles possessed. His claims, however, could not certify his own writings as canonical unless Peter, who had the authority of Christ to bind and loose (Matt 16:19) acknowledged those writings as being inspired and authoritative on par with canonical Scripture.

In order for a literary work to be included in the canon of Scripture, it had to possess certain characteristics. The most important of those characteristics was that the Holy Spirit must have filled the prophet, *inspired* him, and enabled him to speak and write those words. The Apostle Peter established this principle very clearly in his second epistle when he wrote:

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Pet 1:20-21 NASB95)

Later, in this same epistle, Peter wrote "*that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles*" (2 Pet 3:2 NASB95). Here, Peter placed the words of the apostles on par with the words of the Old Testament prophets. Thus, in this passage Peter is certifying all of the apostolic writings (e.g., Matthew, John, James, Jude, and his own writings) as being canonical.

Because some first-century Christians questioned the apostolicity (i.e., canonicity) of Paul's writings, Peter left no room for doubt. In this very same chapter, he wrote:

... our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Pet 3:15-16 NASB95)

Notice here that Peter put "all [the Apostle Paul's] letters" on par with "the rest of the Scriptures," thus certifying that Paul's epistles were indeed canonical. These two statements in 2 Peter

CONSUMMATION

Temptive History



3 place Peter's stamp of approval (canonical certification) upon all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, including the fourteen epistles of Paul (including Hebrews), the three synoptic gospels, the book of Acts, James, Jude, both of Peter's epistles, and all of John's writings).

Did the Apostle Peter have the authority to make canonical pronouncements like this? By all means! This was not the first time he and the apostles had sent out a decree. In Acts 15, the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem council composed a document which contained *decrees* (Gk. *dogmata*; cf. Acts 16:4) that were delivered to the Gentile churches in the *Diaspora*. That was an exercise of this same kind of canonical authority.

Indeed, Peter appears to have been the key leader in the whole process of deciding which books would be considered on a level with "the rest of the Scriptures." This seems consistent with what Jesus said to him in Matthew 16:17-19:

And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you [singular], Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you [singular], but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you [singular] that you [singular] are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you [singular] the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you [singular] bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you [singular] loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:17-19 NASB95; emphasis added)

Notice that all of the second person pronouns in the three verses above are singular, referring exclusively to Peter. Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom, so that whatever he bound on earth would be bound in heaven as well. I believe this grants Peter very important authority, which included the authority (and duty) to decide which New Testament writings were to be considered canonical.

In this series we have shown that apostolic canonization of the New Testament documents before AD 70 is a valid possibility, and one which deprives the Romanists of their apostolic succession argument and places the authority back into the hands of the first-century apostles (primarily Peter). The authority that Christ gave to Peter was *not* passed on to successive generations. Otherwise, writing by inspiration and certifying new books as canonical would have also continued, thus leaving the canon open forever. This means that the collection of writings approved by Peter and the apostles would have been the first and only *authoritative* canonical list. Furthermore, it means that *inspired* men, rather than later generations of uninspired men, did the writing, collect-

ing, and certifying of that canonical list. The result is a canon we can trust, and which renders any determinations by later uninspired churchmen as being secondary and subordinate.

Conclusion

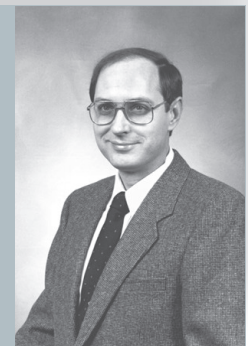
I am not saying that all, or even many, of the churches throughout the Roman Empire had copies of all twenty-seven New Testament books. Jerusalem may have been the only church that had copies of all twenty-seven books, although it is possible that the churches of Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria did as well. The distribution of the canon is not necessary to the hypothesis of apostolic canonization. All that is necessary to this theory is that Peter, the other apostles, and the Jerusalem church had copies of all twenty-seven books, and that Peter (at the very least) gave his approval of them before he had passed from the earthly scene in AD 64-65. That much seems to be indicated by the statements of Peter and Paul which we examined in this series of articles. I believe this hypothesis, which is a very conservative approach to the New Testament canon, needs and deserves broad consideration from the conservative Christian community. ✕

For a pdf copy of the complete series of these articles, along with a bibliography of my main sources, send me an email requesting the document and I will email it to you. One of my main sources was Arthur Ogden's *The Development of the New Testament*. Unfortunately, this book is out of print (although you might find a used copy by searching the internet). For a much more detailed explanation of the rationale for a pre-AD 70 dating of all the New Testament books you can order my manuscript *First-Century Events in Chronological Order*, which has been expanded recently, tripling its size, and includes substantial additions of historical detail. The revised version can be ordered on our secure website order form at www.preterist.org. In the next issue of *Fulfilled! Magazine* we will resume our studies of Matthew 24 fulfillments, focusing on the "abomination of desolation."

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OBJECTION OVERRULED

Objection Overruled! Jerusalem and the Times of the Gentiles Luke 21:24

by Don K. Preston

Objection stated: "Many futurists claim that because Jerusalem's Temple Mount is still in the possession of Gentiles, the 'times of the Gentiles' prophesied by Jesus (Luke 21:24) is still ongoing and there are prophecies to yet be fulfilled. How does Preterism address this passage?"

This claim, that before and since AD 70 Jerusalem has experienced "the times of the Gentiles," is a critical element of the dispensational world. If Luke 21:24 speaks of a future end to the times of the Gentiles and consequent restoration of national Israel, then virtually all other eschatologies are falsified. Let's take a look first at what millennialists believe about the times of the Gentiles.

Pat Robertson writes, "The year 586 BC was the time that Nebuchadnezzar took over Jerusalem, and that condition lasted . . . until the Six Day War that took place not too long ago. When did it happen? 1967. . . . The Jews took over Jerusalem for the first time since Nebuchadnezzar took it. Now what is the significance of all this? . . . At this point of time, a clock began to tick. A generation is 40 years, and a clock began to tick that said there's [sic] 40 years from 1967."

(www.patrobertson.com/Teaching/TeachingonBabylon.asp).

Clearly, Robertson has boxed himself into a "date-setting" corner. If 1967 was the end of the times of the Gentiles, and if a biblical generation is 40 years, and if Christ's coming was to be at the end of the times of the Gentiles then, patently, Christ should have come in 2007!

Robertson expresses the dominant dispensational view that the times of the Gentiles began in BC 586. Thomas Ice, however, says the times of the Gentiles *began* in AD 70. (Makes you wonder about the Gentile domination from BC 586 until AD 70, does it not? Per Ice's view, *that* Gentile oppression had nothing to do with the *real* times of the Gentiles!) He says: "Clearly, Luke 21:20-24 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70. The second half of verse 24 says, 'and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.' Equally clear is that the last half of verse 24 is descriptive of a period of time that commenced after the Roman vanquishing of Jerusalem in the first century. That phrase has a beginning point, which began after AD 70. It has a time interval described by the expression, 'Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles.' That verse also provides an ending point when it says, 'until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled'" (www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/an-interpretation-of-matthew-24-25-part-25). Ice says the times of the Gentiles will end at Christ's parousia, when "the times of the Gentiles will come to an end and the focus of history will again turn to the Jews" (Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *Prophecy Watch*, Eugene, OR, Harvest House, 1998, p. 264; Note: Be aware that Ice does not agree with everything in

Prophecy Watch. He stated this in a debate with me. So, while we ascribe the quote to Ice, he may actually disagree with Demy, his co-author.)

Ice's position is self-defeating, however. Notice what he says about the events of AD 70: "Those first-century days are called 'days of vengeance' for Jerusalem is under the divine judgment of covenantal sanctions recorded in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Luke records that God's vengeance upon His elect nation is 'in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled.' Jesus is telling the nation that God will fulfill all the curses of the Mosaic covenant because of Israel's disobedience. He will not relent and merely bring to pass a partial fulfillment of His vengeance." (Thomas Ice and Kenneth Gentry, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1999, p. 103). So, according to Ice, the AD 70 destruction was the *complete*, not *partial*, fulfillment of God's covenantal wrath on Israel. There is a huge problem here.

Millennialism says that during the seven year period following the rapture, i.e. what they call the Great Tribulation, *fully two thirds of the Jewish nation is destroyed!* Thus, there is, per the millennial view, even *worse vengeance* coming on the Jewish nation than that which fell in AD 70!

Ice seeks to deflect the problem by claiming that the future tribulation is not a covenantal judgment on Israel: "The language of Matthew 24, with the exception of Luke 21:20f does not speak of Israel under God's judgment, but of Israel under the threat of Gentile nations and God's rescue of the Jewish people" (Thomas Ice and Tim LaHaye, *End Times Controversy*, Eugene, OR, Harvest House, 2003, p.161). This is specious to say the least.

The problem for Ice is that in God's dealings with Israel, which included Gentile nations threatening Israel, it was the *direct result of Israel's violation of the Mosaic Covenant*. Thus, the abomination of desolation and the persecution of the Jews flowing out of that must be viewed as *covenantal wrath*. YHVH never, ever, allowed the desecration of the temple and persecution of Israel unless it was as a *result of her apostasy from the covenant!* This is the covenantal wrath of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28! There is no basis for delineating between covenantal wrath against Israel and a mere "Gentile threat."

By admitting that AD 70 was the complete, not partial, fulfillment of covenantal wrath on Jerusalem, Ice has tacitly defeated his view of the times of the Gentiles. (His view actually suggests that in AD 70 Israel ceased to be God's covenant people. No covenant wrath means *no covenant*!) If Ice is correct in stating that AD 70 ended God's covenant wrath on Jerusalem, then this means—per Ice's definition of the times of the Gentiles—that the Gentile oppression of Jerusalem ended in AD 70! Remember, Gentile oppression of Israel was always covenantally

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connected. This is indisputable. In other words:

Premise 1: Gentile oppression of Jerusalem (i.e. the times of the Gentiles) equaled covenantal wrath (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28f).

Premise 2: But, covenantal wrath on Jerusalem terminated in AD 70 (Thomas Ice).

Conclusion: Therefore, the times of the Gentiles terminated in AD 70!

Ice says that the AD 70 trampling of Jerusalem was covenantal judgment (*at the hands of the Gentiles*). However, following AD 70, Jerusalem is being trampled down by the Gentiles, but this—and the yet future, even *worse* tribulation—is *not* covenantally related! This is patently false.

Now, how do Preterists specifically explain the times of the Gentiles? I can't speak for all Preterists, but here is how I would respond:

1) by noting the millennial difficulties iterated above.

2) by noting that Luke 21:22 forbids any fulfillment of prophecy post AD 70. Notice Jesus' words as he described the AD 70 events: "These be the days of vengeance in which all things that are written must be fulfilled." (See my article in the Spring 2008 issue of *Fulfilled Magazine*, in which I examine

ine Luke 21:22.)

3) by noting that the times of the Gentiles equates to the "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel 12:6, and to the 42 months of Revelation 11:2—which is a direct allusion to Luke 21:24. (It is also related to Daniel 9:24f, but we cannot discuss that here). This means that the times of the Gentiles *is the time allotted by God for the Gentiles to accomplish the shattering of the power of the holy people*.

Per the millennialist, you have the following: the oppression of Israel (from AD 70 until the present), then the end of the times of the Gentiles at Christ's coming to establish the kingdom.

In Daniel 12, we have the following: the great tribulation and the resurrection at the end of the age when the righteous shine forth, i.e., the establishment of the kingdom (cf. Matt 13:39-43).

Now, in Daniel 12:6 one angel asks another "When shall these things be, and when shall all of these things be fulfilled?" Another angel answers: "It shall be a time, times, and half a time." Virtually all scholars agree this enigmatic term equates to the equally enigmatic reference of 42 months, and to the 3½ years found in Revelation. For our purposes, we want to examine the parallels between Luke 21 and Revelation 11.

In Daniel 12, we have the tribulation, the end of the age, and establishment of the kingdom—all assigned to fulfillment within and

by the consummation of the time, times, and half a time.

In Luke 21, we have the times of the Gentiles, the coming of the Lord (v. 25f), and the establishment of the kingdom (v. 28-31).

In Revelation 11, we have the trampling of the temple by the Gentiles. This trampling lasts *for 42 months*, which is the time, times, and half a time of Daniel 12. The city "where the Lord was slain" is shaken and destroyed (11:8f), then the kingdom of God is established at the resurrection (11:15f). Let me bring these passages together:

Premise 1: Jerusalem would be trampled down until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

Premise 2: Jerusalem was to be trampled down *for 42 months* (Revelation 11:1-2).

Conclusion: The times of the Gentiles would last for, and end, at the end of the 42 months.

The times of the Gentiles would only last for the 42 months! (Note how Ice's view demands that it has now lasted for 2000 years!) Significantly, the Jewish War lasted for approximately 3½ years, i.e., 42 months, the very time foretold by Daniel and Revelation! Notice now the following:

- Daniel said the time, times, and half a time—including the resurrection and end of the age—would be finished, "When the power of the holy people is completely shattered" (Dan 12:7). This inspired statement should control our understanding of Luke and Revelation.
- In Luke the trampling of the city consummates in the parousia and establishment of the kingdom. Jesus unambiguously posited fulfillment of all of those things in his generation: "This generation will by no means pass until all of these things are fulfilled" (Luke 21:32).
- In Revelation the trampling of the city would *last for 42 months*, but would climax in the resurrection and establishment of the kingdom. The fulfillment of John's prophecy was "at hand" and, "these things must shortly come to pass" (Rev 1:3).

So, we have identical constituent elements in Daniel 12, Luke 21 and in Revelation 11. We have the strictly limited, di-

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Lloyd Dale

The Abyss: Defined by its Usage in the New Testament and Selected Passages from the Old Testament

by Lloyd Dale

Technically speaking, *abussos*, *abyssos*, *abyss* is not an Old Testament term, however, the concept of the Greek word *abussos* (bottomless) exists in the Hebrew word *tehome* or *tehom*.

The English word *abyss* is a transliteration of the Greek word *abussos* or *abyssos*, which means literally “without bottom,” hence the KJV translation “bottomless” in certain parts of Revelation. In the Greek documents which we call the New Testament, the Greek word or lexeme [a lexical unit in a language, as a word or base; vocabulary item] *abussos* is only used nine times—seven times in Revelation and once each in Luke and Romans. The literal translations of these verses are transcribed below:

... and they [many demons] were calling on him [Jesus], that he [Jesus] would not command them to go away into the **abyss**. . . . (Luke 8:31)

... ‘Who shall go down to the **abyss** [of the earth; translated “deep” in KJV and others], (that is, Christ out of the dead to bring up [from the grave]). (Romans 10:7)

... and the fifth messenger did sound, and I saw a star out of the heaven having fallen to the earth, and there was given to it the key of the pit of the **abyss**. . . . (Revelation 9:1)

... and he did open the pit of the **abyss**, and there came up a smoke out of the pit as smoke of a great furnace, and darkened was the sun and the air, from the smoke of the pit. (Revelation 9:2)

... and they have over them a king—the messenger of the **abyss**—a name to him in Hebrew, Abaddon, and in the Greek he has a name, Apollyon. (Revelation 9:11)

And when they may finish their testimony, the beast that is coming (ascending) up out of the **abyss** shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. . . . (Revelation 11:7)

The beast that thou didst see: it was, and it is not; and it is about to come up out of the **abyss**, and to go away to destruction, and wonder shall those dwelling upon the earth, whose names have not been written upon the scroll of the life from the foundation of the world, beholding the beast that was, and is not, although it is present. (Revelation 17:8)

And I saw a messenger coming down out of the heaven, having the key of the **abyss**, and a great chain over his hand. . . . (Revelation 20:1)

... and he cast him to the **abyss**, and did shut him up, and put a seal upon him, that he may not lead astray the nations any more, till the thousand years may be finished; and after these it behooves him to be loosed a little time. (Revelation 20:3) (emphases added)

Let’s take a closer look at each of these passages. In context, Luke 8 records a conversation that Jesus apparently had with many “demons.” According to verse 29, Jesus commanded the demons to come out of a man of Gadarene, then, according to verse 28, the demons, apparently speaking through the man, asked of Jesus, “what have I to do with you, torment me not.”

Why would the demons think that Jesus might torment them? Could it possibly be that these demons understood that torment was a product or result of the judgment of God? In this context it is clear (at least to this writer) that these demons were talking about judgment.

Verse 31 records that the demons requested that Jesus “not command them to go out into the abyss.” Now in the full context of this passage the abyss equates to the torment of judgment (v. 28); it is used here as a metaphor for judgment and punishment/torment. The source of John’s metaphor was Psalm 36:6 (see commentary below).

In Romans 10:7, Paul used the word *abyss* as a metaphor for the grave. The source of Paul’s metaphor was Psalm 71:20:

O God, who is like unto thee—who has shown me great and sore troubles—[who] shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the abyss [tehome, Strong’s 08415 depths] of the earth. (Psalm 71:20)

Thus, Paul used *abyss* as a metaphor for the grave. We know this for certain because Paul knew that the body of Jesus was not to see decay (*corruption*, Ps 16:10; cf. Acts 2:22-32). Death and the grave are the products of God’s judgment upon man as a result of Adam’s sin in the garden.

Before examining the seven uses of *abyss* in Revelation, let us take a look at the Old Testament concept of *abyss*. In the Hebrew Old Testament, the Hebrew word *tehome* is the equivalent of the Greek word *abussos*. We know this, in part, because the Hebrew rabbis usually translated the Hebrew *tehome* into the Greek *abussos* when they translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (Septuagint).

The Hebrew word *tehome* is used 36 times in the Old Testament. In the vast majority of those (33), *tehome* is translated *great deep*, *depths*, etc. These are in

In this issue we offer
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reference to deep water (oceans, seas, rivers, wells, etc.) as in the following examples:

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep [tehome, 08415]. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep [tehome, 08415] broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. (Genesis 7:11)

*[Yahweh] covered [the foundations of the earth] with the **abyss** (great deep) [tehome, 08415] as with clothing . . . (Psalm 104:6; emphasis added)*

Of the 36 occurrences of *tehome* (abyss), none are a metaphor for decay and death. The two notable exceptions to this are Psalm 71:20, which is quoted and applied above, and Psalm 36:6:

*Your [Yahovah's] righteousness is like the great mountains; **your judgments are an abyss** [tehome, 08415] O LORD, you preserve man and beast. (Ps 36:6; emphasis added)*

In this Psalm of David to the chief musician, David sets forth the vices of the wicked and extols the virtues of Yahweh. In verse 6, David compares the righteousness and judgments of

Yahweh using two metaphors: Yahweh's righteousness is like the great mountains (i.e. expansive and wondrous) and His judgments are like an abyss (i.e. deep, powerful, destructive, apocalyptic, etc.)

As Paul went to the Psalms for his metaphor for the grave in Romans 10:7, John, in a similar manner, went to the Psalms for his metaphor for the judgment of God in Revelation 9, 11, 17, and 20.

Let us now consider the Revelation passages. In Revelation 9, John used the lexeme *abussos* three times, once each in verses 1, 2, and 11. Chapter 8 is a rendition of the “trumpet” judgments on the land of Judaea, homeland of the Jews (Judahites). In verse 7 John wrote, “*The first angel sounded [the first trumpet], and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the land [of Judaea]: and the third part of trees was burned up, and all green grass was burned up.*” Then, in verse 13, John wrote, “*And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the land [of Judaea] by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!’*”

Continuing with these trumpet judgments upon the land of Judaea, John wrote, “*And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the land [of Judaea]: and to him was given the key of the shaft (pit) of*

the abyss.” (Rev 9:1) This “*star falling from heaven to the land*” of Judaea, and the presentation of the key to this star, are of very special importance for the people of the land as well as for John's primary audience of readers in the seven churches of Asia.

John marks this special occasion by switching his terminology from *land* to *abyss* right in the middle of this verse. However, John not only changes his terminology, he adds a very important new element, “the shaft (pit)” of the abyss. It should be apparent to most readers that the lexeme *land* in verse 1a parallels the term *abyss* in 1b, but what is this “shaft (pit)” of the abyss?

In verse 2, John tells his intended readers that the star, identified as *him* in 1b, used the key and “opened the shaft (pit) of the abyss.” Did you notice that? The star opened the shaft (pit) to the abyss—he did not open the abyss. What is this shaft to the abyss? Could it possibly be the land of Galilee to the north of Judaea?

Moving on to 1:11, John wrote, “And they (the locusts of verse 3ff) have a commander over them, the messenger of the abyss, whose name is Abaddon (Hebrew)—Apollyon (Greek)—Destroyer (English). In this verse, as in other apocalyptic Scriptures (cf. Joel 2:25), the locusts are the soldiers of invading armies, and their commander is the messenger of destruction (judgment) to the abyss (land of Judaea, v. 1). Therefore, John is using *abyss* as a metaphor for the land of Judaea in chapter 9.

John's next reference to *abyss* is in Revelation 11:7, where he writes “*the beast that comes (ascends) out of the abyss.*” Who is this beast that is going to come (ascend) out of the abyss? The answer is found in the next reference to the *abyss*—Revelation 17:8. Here, John explicitly states that the “*beast is about to come (ascend) out of the abyss*” and finish the work of destruction that is his destiny. Without going into detail here, this is a living, breathing, beast doing the work of destruction. In verse 11 of this same chapter, John tells us exactly who this beast is—he is “an eighth king” of the Roman Empire. Thus John uses the lexeme *abyss* as a symbol of the land of Judaea here as well. It is the apocalyptic symbol for the judgment and destruction of Judaea by the armies of the beast and the ten kings (Rev 17:12-18:24; and 19:15-21).

I believe I have shown you the true meaning of the lexeme *abyss* in the New Testament and pray that you will be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11).

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Kurt Simmons

The Bottomless Pit by Kurt Simmons

Among the imagery of Revelation, the bottomless pit (the abyss) holds a prominent place. The locust army bearing the image of “scorpion-centaurs” emerges from the pit (Rev 9:1ff). Also, the beast and dragon are shut up in the pit and rise from thence to make war on the saints (Rev 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3; 7-11). Because the pit is central in the imagery of Revelation, particularly to the millennial binding of the dragon and beast, it is important that we understand aright the meaning of this symbol.

Historical Antecedents and Associations

The bottomless pit first occurs in Revelation 9:1, 2 where it is portrayed as a great smoking cavern, discharging smoke and fumes from the bowels of hell:

*And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the **smoke of a great furnace**; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. (Emphasis added)*

The basic imagery of the *smoking furnace* hales from Genesis 19 and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Scripture records that God rained fire and brimstone upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, turning them to ash. In the morning, Abraham rose up and viewed the place where the cities had been “and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the **smoke of a furnace**” (Gen 19:28, emphasis added).

Sheol & the Pit

The overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah made a permanent impression upon the human psyche; all subsequent literature, pagan and divine, portraying hell as a place of sulfurous fumes and continuous burnings probably derive from this source. Fire and brimstone become synonymous with the fate of the wicked. The basic imagery of Sodom’s overthrow is picked up and developed in the prophets where it becomes identified with *sheol* (the place of the dead), the *pit*, and *destruction*. Concerning the king of Babylon, Isaiah writes:

*Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations . . . Thy pomp is brought down to the **grave**, and the noise of viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee . . . all the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house [sepulcher]. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the*

*stones of the **pit**. (Isa 14:9-19, emphasis added)*

Here, we see that hell (*sheol*), the grave, and the pit are closely related and involve the idea of a subterranean realm to which the dead descend. There seems implicit in the language of a “pit” and covering of worms the notion of a mass burial site, similar to the *puticuli*—corpse-pits—of the Romans, where the bodies of criminals and those killed in the arena were carelessly flung to rot and putrefy. In other passages, the image of a mass funeral pyre is employed. Concerning the destruction of 185,000 soldiers of the Assyrian host by the angel of the Lord, Isaiah wrote:

*For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod . . . For **Tophet** is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it **deep** and large: the pile thereof is **fire** and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of **brimstone**, doth kindle it. (Isa 30:31-33, emphasis added; cf. Isa 37: 36)*

Gehenna, Fire & Worms

Tophet is another name for the valley of Hinnom (*gehenna*) and answers to the *lake of fire* and *second death* (Cf. Matt 10:28; James 3:6; Rev 19:20; 20:14, 15). (The Old Testament makes no distinction between the temporary place of the lost in *sheol* and their permanent destruction in *gehenna*.) *Tophet/gehenna* was a place outside of Jerusalem’s walls where the Israelites sacrificed their children to Molech (2 Chron 28:3, 33:6; Jer 7:31; 19:2-6); it was later polluted by Josiah (2 Kings 23:10) and afterwards made a place in which the refuse of the city was burned. It was here that the Israelites buried and burned the 185,000 corpses of the Assyrian host, and for that reason *Tophet/gehenna* became identified with the destruction and place of the lost. In a subsequent chapter, Isaiah refers to *Tophet/gehenna* and the mass burial and cremation of almost one million Jews who starved to death during the siege by Titus, saying, “their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched” (Isa 66:24; cf. Mark 9:44). The bodies of those who died in the siege were cast into *Tophet* beyond the city walls where they were eaten of fire and worms.

In Ezekiel, *casting down* to the pit (*sheol*) is a poetic reference to the destruction of an enemy army or nation. Ezekiel describes the fall of Tyre thus: “*They shall bring thee down to the **pit**, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas*” (Ezek 28:8, emphasis added). Concerning Assyria, Ezekiel wrote: “*I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I **cast him down to hell** with them that descend **into the pit***” (Ezek 31:16, emphasis added). Other nations described by Ezekiel as being cast down to the pit also include Egypt, Elam, Meshec, Tubal, Edom, and Zidon (Ezek 32:18, 22, 24, 26, 29, 30; cf. Isa 14:9-23; 30:27-33).

Among the pagan poets and writers, the similarity of Revelation's image of hell as a great smoking, cavernous, furnace is equally pronounced. Thus, Virgil's *Aeneid*, an epic poem of the legendary founding of Rome, describes the underworld (*infernus*) as a pit, a deep cave, whose mouth gapes enormously, fuming up from its black throat lethal fumes to the vault of heaven, killing any bird that flies through its vapors. Hell itself has a place of blessing (Elysium) and a place of torments (Tartarus), engirdled by a burning stream and flaming torrent (see generally, lines 219-622). That the Greeks and Romans had partially correct conceptions about the after-life testifies that all men are derived from a common stock, which, at its genesis, received certain basic truths about life-after-death; truths that were handed down and later corrupted by pagan writers.

In any event, it seems clear that both Jew and Gentile would have quickly recognized the imagery of Revelation's bottomless pit as referring to sheol or hades.

New Testament Testimony

The phrase translated "bottomless pit" is from the Greek *phreatos tes abyssou*, literally, "pit of the abyss." Where the term "abyss" occurs elsewhere in the New Testament it refers to *Hades*. Thus, in Luke 8:31, the unclean spirit in the Gadarean demoniac implored that he not be expelled into the abyss, or Tartarus, translated in our versions as "deep." Similarly, Paul speaks of Christ's death as involving a decent to the abyss, writing, "Who shall descend into the deep? [Gk. *abyssos*] (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)" (Rom 10:7).

Peter, in language very similar to Revelation's binding the dragon in the pit (Rev 20:1-3)—indeed, John's probable source—speaks of "angels" (probably the sons of Seth that sinned by marrying unbelieving women, Gen 6:1-4), cast down to Tartarus, reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the last day (2 Pet 2:4; cf. Jude 6). These same individuals Peter elsewhere refers to as spirits in *prison* (1 Pet 3:19). Therefore, Hades Tartarus was not only represented by the image of a smoking cavern or pit, but a prison for the lost pending final judgment.

Finally, Revelation 9:11 describes the king of the locust army by the names of *Apollyon* (Greek) and *Abaddon* (Hebrew), which mean *destruction* or *perdition*, also plain references to sheol. The eighty-eighth Psalm demonstrates best the relative identity of the pit, sheol, with abaddon, or destruction:

I am accounted with them that go down into the pit . . . free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave . . . Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the

deeps . . . Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave [sheol]? Or thy faithfulness in destruction [abaddon]? (Ps 88:4-11, emphasis added)

Thus, by both Old and New Testament sources, the bottomless pit is a clear reference to sheol or hades.

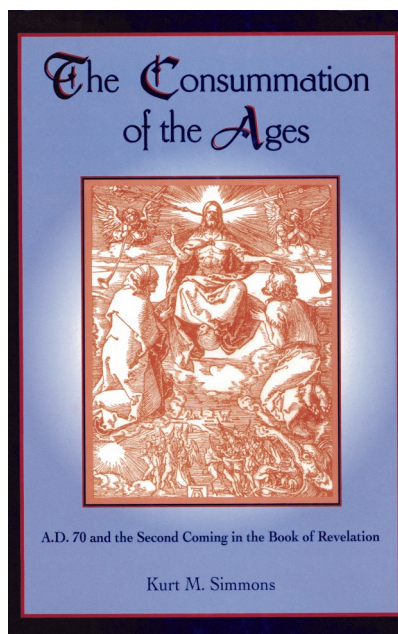
Significance of Symbolism in Revelation

So much for the historical sources, what about the symbolism of Revelation? What is the meaning of the great smoking cavern depicted in Revelation 9, and the army it belches forth: Who is the king of the bottomless pit, and what are the keys he holds? And, finally, what is the meaning of the dragon and beast being bound in the pit, and what historical reference is alluded to by their being loosed?

We believe that John's symbolism of the bottomless pit has a dual meaning. First, it is a *spiritual* symbol pointing to the *realm of heathendom*, or the *kingdoms of the panim* (pagan nations). These people, who are also symbolized by the Mediterranean Sea, are associated with hell because they are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). They have citizenship in hell in the same way believers have citizenship in heaven (Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20; Col 1:13). John therefore depicts the forces of heathendom as a vast army rising like smoke, discharged from the bowels of hell.

Keys are a symbol of power and authority. Jesus has the keys of hell and of death (Rev 1:18), pointing to His power over the grave. He also possesses the key of David (Rev 3:7; cf. Isa 22:22), which signifies exclusive power to admit believers into the presence of the Father in heaven. In the same way, the key of the bottomless pit (Rev 9:1)

refers to authority over heathendom embodied in the Roman Empire. The king (angel) of the bottomless pit (Rev 9:11) is the Roman emperor, Nero. Nero looses the *abomination of desolation* in the form of the Roman legions. It was under Nero that the Jews' 3½-year war with Rome began. Nero commissioned Vespasian to undertake the campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion, which John portrays here as an invading army of locust-like men who devastate the land with sword and famine. The locusts are charged to hurt only those men that have not the seal of God in their foreheads (Rev 9:4). This seal was placed on the 144,000 remnant sealed from the Jews by obedience to the gospel (Rev 7:2ff), and therefore specifically points to God's wrath



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Kurt Simmons (from p. 13)

upon the Jews for refusing his offer of grace in Jesus Christ. The locusts have power to hurt men *five months* (v. 5). This seems to anticipate the siege of Jerusalem, which lasted from March/April to August/September, AD 70.

The second meaning attached to the bottomless pit points to Tartarus as a prison for the dead, the place where the defeated enemies of God were cast down, as we saw above in Ezekiel. Revelation 13:3 describes the beast (the persecutor of God's people) as having received a mortal wound (death-blow) to one of its heads. This death-blow caused the beast to be cast down into the bottomless pit, together with the dragon (Rev 20:1-3). There are two persecutions portrayed in Revelation, each lasted 3½ years, or 42 months. The first is in chapter twelve and followed fast upon the heels of the ascension of the Man-child (Christ) to the throne of God. The second begins in Revelation 13 when the beast's mortal wound heals and he ascends anew from the abyss. It was to strengthen and prepare the Church against this latter persecution that Revelation was written. The first persecution was already past when John wrote. We submit that the first persecution refers to the one that arose over Stephen's martyrdom, and that the mortal wound to the persecuting beast was received upon this persecution's collapse. This occurred by the removal of Caiaphas from the high priesthood, Pilate's departure from Palestine, and the conversion of Paul circa AD 37-38. After Paul's conversion, Luke reports "*Then had the churches rest throughout Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied*" (Acts 9:31).

The period of peace and stability represented by the dragon and beast's confinement in the pit was enforced by Claudius Caesar's policy prohibiting persecution of the church, affording it protection of law (the *religio licita*; i.e., legally recognized religions). This same period is represented by the four angels holding the winds of heaven until the 144,000 were sealed, after which the Great Tribulation ensued (Rev 7). The four angels are probably Claudius, the Roman president of Syria, the procurator of Judea, and King Agrippa II, who acted to restrain Jewish persecution and keep the peace against those who were for rebellion and war. Claudius is "he who lets" and "what withholdeth" of 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7. As long as Claudius was upon the throne, the church enjoyed the protection of Rome and the law. Claudius even banished the Jews from Rome for rioting against Christians (Acts 18:2; Suetonius, *Claudius*, XXV, 4). As mentioned previously, in Revelation 9 we see that Nero had the keys of the pit and loosed the Roman legions to make war against the Jews. In Revelation 20:1-3, however, the keys (powers) of heathendom are held by another angel who restrains the dragon, binding the dragon in Tartarus. Claudius is the angel of Revelation 20:1, who has the key of the bottomless pit to bind the dragon (the world civil power,

imperial Rome), preventing the dragon from persecuting the Church. The thousand years speaks to the timeless nature of the spirit/hadean realm (cf. Ps 90:4), and represents the period between the persecutions. Greco-Roman notions about hades had it that the dead remained there a thousand years, after which they were reincarnated to earthly life.

This is exactly what happened with the dragon and beast. Claudius would be removed and the "man of sin" and "son of perdition" (Apollyon/Nero) would come to the throne, subjecting the Church to an empire-wide persecution. This is represented by the beast's deadly wound being healed (Rev 13:3, 14). The beast (and dragon) would rise anew from the pit to persecute God's people and make war against the saints; a sort of antithesis of Christ's resurrection to save his people from sin. The period during which the dragon and beast were confined to the pit is described by saying the beast "*was and is not and yet is and shall ascend out of the abyss*" (Rev 17:8; cf. 11:7). "Was" points to the earlier persecution under Caiaphas, Pilate, and Saul (Paul); "is not" points to the period when John wrote during which the beast/dragon were not allowed to persecute the Church; "yet is" points to the fact that Jewish hatred for the Church had not ceased to exist, but was merely repressed—"the mystery of iniquity" was restrained, but still at work (cf. 2 Thess 2:7). "Shall ascend out of the abyss" points to the coming eschatological crisis when the beast would revive in the persecution under Nero. If Peter and Paul are the two witnesses (Rev 11:3-10), then their deaths speak (v. 7) to their martyrdom at the conclusion of the 3½-year period beginning with Paul's imprisonment and trial before Nero. Peter and Paul's deaths marked the outset of the persecution, which would last 3½ days (years), 42 months, or 1,260 days, or AD 64-68, when Nero died.

Conclusion

The bottomless pit is a reference to the hadean realm of the lost dead (Tartarus). In Revelation, the pit is a spiritual symbol of the realm of heathendom over which the Roman emperors sat as kings, holding the keys to the abyss. The pit is also a symbol of death and defeat of the Church's enemies during the period they are restrained to persecute the church; viz., from Claudius to Nero. ✕

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Arthur Melanson

Answering Some Harsh Criticism of Preterism

by Arthur Melanson

Preterist eschatology (Second Coming fulfilled) has many critics. The harshest of these critics try to make Preterism appear to be non-Christian. Incredibly, they frame this claim not on the Word of God, but on the faulty traditions of men. Here are four of their so-called objections:

Objection: Jesus returned once and for all in the first century (AD 70).

Yes, He did. That is what the Bible teaches. To those who hold to a yet future coming of Christ we ask, “Where are those verses that tell of another coming after Christ’s coming in AD 70?”

Objection: The resurrection of believers took place “spiritually” in the first century.

Only tradition says a decomposed carcass has to come out of a literal grave to satisfy resurrection requirements. Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 for a biblical perspective regarding the source of our new resurrection bodies. Jesus Christ has completely destroyed the works of the devil. In the resurrection, you will be as if you had *never* sinned. Praise the Lord. Nothing material in this sin-soaked earth is worthy of heaven. Your inner (heavenly) man is *spiritual*.

Objection: The judgment of the wicked and righteous happened in the first century.

Of course! The Bible teaches throughout that the dead rise at the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus returns having the keys of Hades and of Death (Rev 1:18). The souls of all who lived and died from Adam on were in Hades. Christ emptied that nether world at His appearing. Some came forth to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Objection: There is no end of sin, no culmination of God’s plan for earth.

“*Wisdom is in the sight of him who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth*” (Pro 17:24). The traditions of men say the earth must end someday. The Bible says quite the opposite. “*One generation passes*

away, and another generation comes, but the earth abides forever” (Eccl 1:4). Here is another reference: “*And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has established forever*” (Ps 78:69). Or, how about this evidence: “*You who laid the foundations of the earth, so it should not be moved forever*” (Ps 104:5). It is enough to make us wonder if our critics have read the Bible. Sin finds its end in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The everlasting Gospel of Christ belongs to each generation. Each succeeding generation needs to hear of God’s mercy through Jesus. Those who heed the gospel will live forever. God loves people; His kingdom ever increases as He calls out a people for His namesake out of each generation—of the increase of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Our critics say we differ from traditional Christian beliefs on these issues and are, therefore, heretics. Let us look at the dictionary: *Heretic—a dissenter from established church dogma.* (Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition.) Our critics do not mention, nor can they afford to admit, that there is a world of difference between “established church dogma” and biblical truth.

Are we heretics? As far as established church dogma is concerned, yes we are. We are *not* heretics, however, regarding Christian beliefs as revealed to us in Scripture. We are not followers of the traditions of men, which can make the Word of God of no effect. We refuse to believe the cunningly devised fables of men that lead away from the truth. *Thy word is truth* (John 17:17).

Here is a quote from Charles H. Spurgeon of which I am especially fond: “*I will follow Scripture wherever it may lead me, and I will renounce the most cherished opinion, rather than shape or alter a single syllable of God’s book.*”

“*The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*” (Ps 119:130) ✕

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Don Preston

vinely assigned duration of the time for the Gentiles—42 months. Daniel informs us that the climax of the vision would be when Israel’s “power” (her Old Covenant relationship with YHVH) was shattered. And Jesus said fulfillment of all of these things would be in His generation.

Much more could be said, but this will suffice. In summation, Luke 21:24, when joined with the corollary passages,

positively identifies the duration and the termination of the times of the Gentiles—in the first-century destruction of the power of the holy people in AD 70. Thus, Luke 21:24 is no *objection* to true Preterism—rather, it is a powerful support! The objection is overruled! ✕

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

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

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

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

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



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