

FALL 2016

VOLUME 11 ISSUE 3

FULFILLED!

Magazine

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

GEHENNA



Calling All Full-Preterists: If you, like so many out there, are looking for others of similar eschatology, this is for you. To decide if you would like to take part in a program of networking full-preterists in the US and Canada together in specific locales, please take a moment to read about a private/offline database here at:

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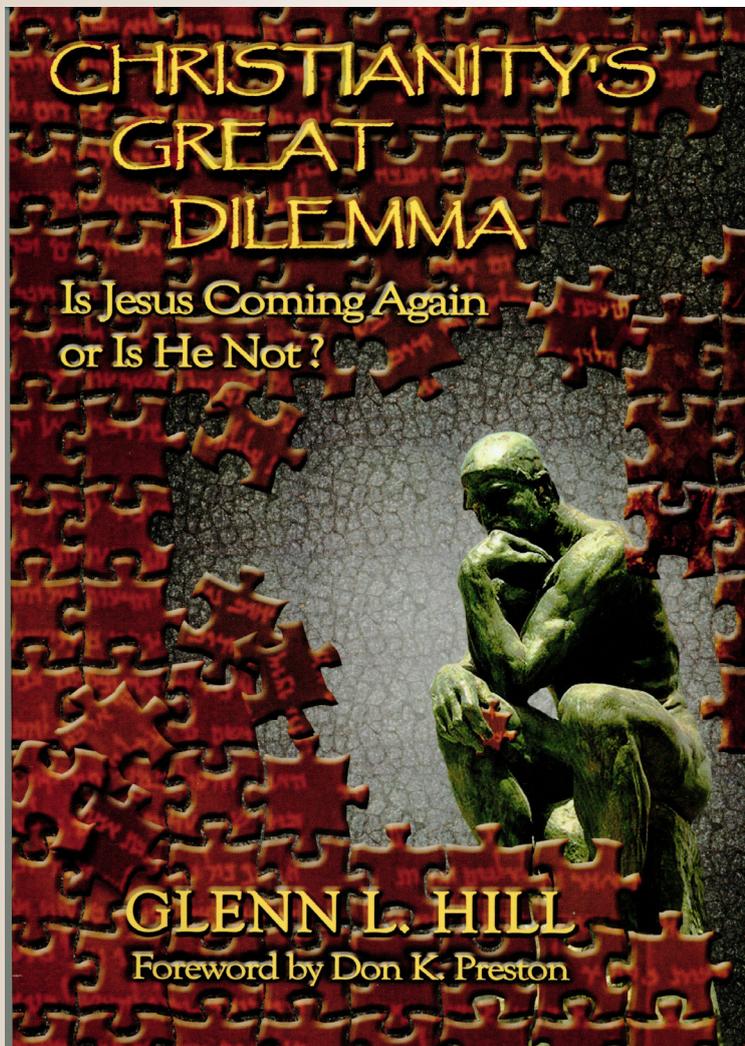
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I am a New Testament textual scholar and live in the Wash., D.C. area. I wanted to thank you for your excellent book, *Christianity's Great Dilemma*. I have seen many books on the subject, some more difficult than others, but your book is tops, I think. You really laid things out nicely and succeeded so well that nothing was lost in the message that is essential to a beginning knowledge of preterist eschatology. I will highly recommend it to my friends.

Paul D. Anderson, President and founder of The Center for Study and Preservation of the Majority Text, Washington, DC

I have just finished reading your book and it's one of the greatest books on preterism that I have ever read. The verbiage is such that anybody can understand it.

Arlo Becker, Enid, OK

Your book is the best ever. I have 70 preterist books and yours tops them all. It is perfect. Everyone needs to read it. I love the title of your book.

Johanna Thormod, Alta, CA

Contact Glenn Hill to order your copy of *Christianity's Great Dilemma* (\$12 plus \$3.90 S&H):

215 Melton Road
Rocky Mount, NC 27801
Email: glh@embarqmail.com
Phone: 252-442-7087

4. **Editor's Note**
Insights on this issue.

6. **Perspectives:**
Pastor Michael Miano - Reformation NOW!

8. **Perspectives:**
Samuel Dawson - A Response to Ed Steven's *Gehenna* Passages.

10. **Creation to Consummation**
Ed Stevens - *Grieve Not* (1 Thess 4:13).

12. **Life in the Kingdom**
Tony Denton - Christian Living in the Consummate Kingdom's continuous Age



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Copy Editors
Mike Beidler
Kayla F. Martin

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3784 Camanche Pkwy N.
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How to contact us
FULFILLED! Magazine
3784 Camanche Pkwy N.
Ione, CA 95640

fcg.brian@gmail.com
(530) FCG-AD70 [324-2370]

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Editor's Note...

I RECEIVED SEVERAL RESPONSES to Ed Steven's article on *Gehenna*, and more than one person wanted to respond to his article. Sam Dawson was the first to inquire about responding, and thus you will find his article in this issue. Sam presents some very interesting and pertinent observations about the *Gehenna* references found in the New Testament. I encourage you to get your copy of our previous issue (or find it online at http://www.fulfilledcg.com/Site/Magazine/magazine_previous_issues.htm) and your Bible, and compare Ed and Sam's presentations in light of the Scriptures.

Also in this issue, Pastor Michael Miano touches upon a theme that seems to be brewing within the preterist community—the need to actively spread the truth of preterism. You may recall that TJ Smith, in a similar vein, asked “What Now?” in the Spring 2015 issue. Although preterists remain divided over details such as the Resurrection and the Rapture, the evidence for a first-century fulfillment is firmly established. Convinced of this foundational tenet, preterists are asking one another “how do we spread this truth?”

A few months ago my annual physical confirmed something I already knew; attention to health, namely exercise and diet, are something I cannot continue to put off until I have time for them. Rather, I need to make time for them now, as was illustrated by this quote I recently read: “Those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness.” Fortunately, I actually enjoy getting out and exercising; it's just finding the time to do it. I have determined to make my health a priority in life and therefore take the time necessary, rather than waiting for extra time to miraculously come my way. The downside, naturally, is that time must be taken from some other area(s) of life, and one of those areas may be time spent on producing *Fulfilled!* Magazine. At this time I still intend to publish four issues per year, but reluctantly acknowledge that I may have to settle for three. Hopefully, in the next 12-18 months my wife and I will wrap up the house renovations on our fixer-upper we bought a few years ago, which will free up a large chunk of time. In the meantime, we'll publish as the Lord enables us. That being said, due to the very late date at which I'm getting this fall issue out, I'm going to have to skip the winter issue. Hopefully I can hit the ground running next year!

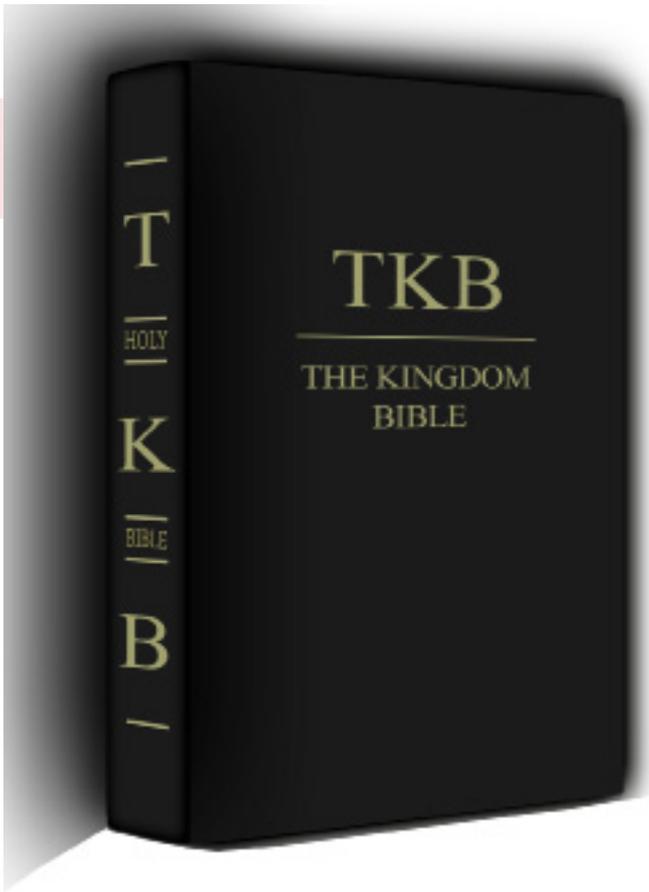
We greatly appreciate your encouraging letters and emails! In this age of social media and instant information I sometimes wonder if a printed magazine is somewhat obsolete, yet many have written to let us know that they value the printed version. Also, because of the diversity amongst preterists, it's impossible to publish a magazine that pleases all the people all the time. But hopefully everyone can find at least one article in each issue that benefits them. Again, your letters and emails encourage us that this is largely the case, and we thank you for them.

As always, we are grateful for your prayers and financial support as well.

Blessings,

Brian

*We greatly appreciate
your encouraging letters
and emails!*



Fulfilled Covenant Bible

The 4th edition of the *Fulfilled Covenant Bible* (formerly *The Kingdom Bible*) has been given a major facelift and now closely resembles Bibles found in Christian Book Stores. Numerous preterist authors, Bereans, men of God, pastors, and speakers have contributed various articles, diagrams, commentaries, as well as excerpts from Josephus' *The War of the Jews* supporting first-century prophecy fulfillment.

To order your copy contact Michael Day:

tkb1000@cox.net

Or click on the "The Kingdom Bible" link at:

www.bibleprophecy.com

Suggested donation is \$100

(Please note that the Bible cannot be ordered from FCG)

Mailbag...

Hope you are able to continue to print *Fulfilled!* on a regular basis. Topics are inspiring and help keep me on track in the preterist movement.

Dave, OR

Thank you for your magazine. I read it cover to cover first day it arrives (most of the time). Glad to have the valuable resource.

Eve, WA

Thank you for your kingdom revealing work!

Anonymous, WA

Thanks Brian - the truth cannot help but grow. The magazine is so good.

Anthony, CA

I look forward to reading *Fulfilled!* magazine. Thanks and God bless you.

John, AL

I love the *Fulfilled* magazine you send me. I am a full preterist and have been for 20 years.

Johanna, CA

I always find balance in the articles which present a firm stand for fulfillment without the need to condemn those of another opinion. The content of your magazine is confirming as well as thought provoking. I also appreciate the format in which it's presented. If each article were too long or the magazine itself contained too many of them, it might go unread due to reasoning that I'll look through it "when I have more time." I find it's just small enough to invite me to sit down a minute but I end up digesting the whole thing, edified with time to spare to pray for your ministry and offer this donation to show my appreciation. Please keep up the fine work!

Julie, WI

“The content of your magazine is confirming as well as thought provoking.”

Reformation NOW: End Time Views Matter

by Michael Miano

THE POWER OF PRETERISM

The Blue Point Bible Church conducted its Annual Bible Conference the weekend of March 18-20, 2016. This year's theme was The End Times Bible Conference—Do the “End Times” Matter? How Do We Walk Worthy of What We Now Know? Speakers included International Preterist Association president Ed Stevens (www.preterist.org), *Christianity's Great Dilemma* author Glenn Hill, Pursuing Truth blogger Adam Maarschalk (www.kloposmasm.com), as well as Daniel Colon, Apostle Johnny Ova, and Evangelist Jason DiAmbrosio. Fulfilled Dynamics founder Mr. Larry Siegle, L.I.F.T. Church Pastor Alan Bondar, and Preterist Research Institute president Dr. Don K. Preston provided video presentations. Blue Point Bible Church leaders Pastor Michael Miano, Pastor Steve Schilling, and Deacon Ed Silsbe also shared messages. (While most of these videos are available on YouTube, in weeks to come, the “Conference Resources” link at www.powerofpreterism.com will have all of the videos available.)

Here are a few quotes from the conference:

“The first-century saints prior to Christ's parousia knew that they needed to be strengthened to endure the times ahead. That strength came through obedience to Christ's commands—and that is applicable then and today.” - Ed Stevens

“The Bible is an eschatological journey from Genesis to Revelation” - Larry Siegle

“It's time for the Church to realize through Fulfilled Eschatology we have the power!” - Evangelist Jason DiAmbrosio

The conference's overarching point is that one's understanding of the “end times” surely matters in how we understand and gain clarity regarding the Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus Christ, as well as how we live our lives. Simply put, it's about time—it's about time we realize how important the concept of “timing” is and was. Preterist eschatology truly matters! There is truly “power” in Preterism!

On the opening night, I gave a presentation regarding the Preterist movement and about “growing up.” I asked

each person to consider whether they believe there is “power” is preterism, challenging each person to defend their answer. I often hear people claim that preterism is not a salvation issue. To this, I reply by asking, “Is God's faithfulness a salvation issue?” We are not saying that those who believe and heed to the notions of futurism and reject Preterism are not “saved” or are not “Christian.” We leave those details to God. However, a Christian is one who professes Jesus Christ's words to be true and every man a liar.

While noting the centuries-long (if not millennia-spanning) eschatological confusion in the Christian Church, I want to proclaim that the reformation is here. The author of Hebrews wrote, “*Christ . . . will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him*” (Heb 9:28 ESV). If Christ has not come again, what is the state of our salvation? The timing of Christ's return is and was a salvation issue! If Christ did not fulfill His ‘work’ to that generation as promised, then to what end have we been ‘saved’? It is time that those calling themselves Christians see and participate in the reforming and revitalizing work of Preterism, explaining and proclaiming our fulfilled hope, because hope deferred has made many sick (cf. Proverbs 13:12).

The transformation of Christianity's very fabric and efforts to reform the faith by means of the Preterist movement are based simply upon accepting the truth of 2 Timothy 2:15 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. This is where we take our stand. Scripture expressly speaks against man's reliance upon his own understanding. The preterist simply asserts that when we study the scriptural narrative and understand the context, all the while using proper methods of biblical interpretation, we see “time statements” pointing to a first-century fulfillment of the “hope of Israel”—which would include the ‘coming of the Lord,’ the Judgment, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the establishment of the New Heavens and New Earth.

We must be clear and bold in our proclamation that there is explanatory power in the Preterist paradigm, all the while “teaching the truth in love” (Eph 4:15). While being very bold in our position that preterism matters, and does indeed affect how we view the completeness

The Power of Preterism

Michael Miano

Michael is pastor of *The Blue Point Bible Church* (BluePointBibleChurch.org) and directs *The Power of Preterism Network* (www.powerofpreterism.com). He is committed to seeing reformation and revival in the Christian Church, and continues to publish books, articles, videos, debates, and more.



of our salvation, and thus rebuking the false teaching of futurism, we also note that having the proper view of Bible prophecy (preterism) does not necessarily make one a “Christian.” If we are truly saved, preterism should be more than simply an intellectual pursuit—our faith must be demonstrated by living a life in obedience as evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit. We declare the need for both a right belief (orthodoxy) in regard to what the Scriptures teach (as understood in their proper context), as well as a right practice (orthopraxy) of what the Scriptures teach.

All of this was being discussed and realized as many received their Spring 2016 copy of *Fulfilled!* Magazine, which contained thought-provoking questions in a similar vein as the conference topics:

What does preterism need to do moving forward to gain recognition/credibility within Christianity?

What significant milestone/event needs to be achieved by the preterist community?

While the fellowship, speakers, and ensuing discussions were all amazing, many could not help but lament the division and seeming stagnation within the preterist community. In this context, some have drawn up plans to form a preterist denomination,” some have simply declared preterist notions as “periphery issues,” some have denied the efficacy of the ‘local church’ (which was expressed in an issue of *Fulfilled!* Magazine), and others seem confused on what to do next with the truth of preterism, coming dangerously close to a universalist and/or relativism.

As the “social engineer” behind *The Power of Preterism Network’s* missional efforts, I am glad to be gifted with what I have come to call a “zeal empowered by knowledge.” I and others are happy to see Christians declaring an understanding that preterism is not just another denomination by which Christians can foster division, nor is it merely a peripheral issue. Rather, we are coming to understand that preterism is a reforming effort of the Spirit and the Church as we endeavor to “walk worthy” of all that God has given us—a call to faithfully heed the contextual teaching and proper application of Scripture. Our mantra could very well be, “There is power in preterism, and it is a salvation matter.”

It is the contention of many within the preterist movement that we need to be a bit provocative to get our points out. Dare we say, turning over the tables of ‘futurism.’ All too often it

seems that the passion of many preterists is misunderstood by others both within and without preterism. Those of us who have found empowerment and clarity through the teachings of “full preterism” see this as another aspect of worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth as He desires.

Leading people astray through false teachings or distortions of the Gospel was an issue in the first century, and it is no different today. We are not saying that people are not free to believe what they want—however, when it comes to being a Christian, those who know and put into practice what Jesus and the Apostles taught know full well there is responsibility.

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:9 ESV)

Consider Jesus’ ever-popular “table-turning” in Matthew 21. Jesus went to the Temple, which was supposed to be the place of worship of the one true God. He did not go to the sinner next door and start demolishing his home because of his sins. He didn’t go to the pagan temple and break their idols. No, what we read is that Jesus went to those who claimed to be worshipping the one true God, and He rebukes them.

In my recent debate with Mr. Stephen Whitsett of Middleism.org (which claims to offer a balance or middle perspective between futurism and preterism), I made the point that despite many revivals, reformations, creeds, and confessions being drawn up, none of them bring clarity to the obviously confused and divided view of eschatology within Christendom. I also demonstrated that continuing in futurism (being obstinate to the truth of Fulfillment) does not lead a Christian into effective discipleship as it pertains to a biblical worldview and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Here are some quotes from that debate (which is now available for viewing on YouTube):

“If we fail to search and study this out, we end up ‘leaning on our own understanding,’ that which has led many astray, and we are stuck with teachings and perspectives that quite possibly someone made up or, worse yet, something we made up.”

“Full preterism establishes the faithfulness of God, the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture, as well as the

continued on p. 10

A Response to Ed Stevens’ Treatment of the Twelve Gehenna Passages

by Samuel G. Dawson

INTRODUCTION

I read with interest my friend Ed Stevens’ article explaining the twelve New Testament *gehenna* passages in the Summer 2016 issue of *Fulfilled!* Magazine. He began by saying that those of us who don’t believe in the (Roman Catholic—SGD) concept of hell as eternal conscious torment of the lost have overlooked the words *gehinnom* (Heb.) in the Old Testament and *gehenna* (Gr.) in the New Testament, the latter of which is commonly translated *hell*. Rather than overlooking these words, my study has led me inescapably to the conclusions that both terms were proper names of a well known valley just south of Jerusalem, and that they shouldn’t have been “translated” in the first place, no more than the proper names *Jerusalem* or *Bethlehem* were.

Actually, *these words weren’t translated as hell!* The Catholic scholars in the Anglican Church (that part of the Roman Catholic Church “stolen” by Henry VIII when the pope wouldn’t let him marry Anne Boleyn) who translated the 1611 King James Version (KJV) merely substituted the word *hell* for *gehenna*. *Hell* is a word loaded with theological concepts entirely foreign to the word *gehenna*. Those KJV scholars had a bad habit of that sort of thing. They translated *presbuteros* (elders) as priests, *pascha* (Passover) as Easter (once), while they transliterated *baptizo* (dip, plunge, immerse) as *baptism* (to slip their sprinkling and pouring for baptism into the Bible). Furthermore, they supplied “divine pronouns” (thee, thou, and thine) where they saw fit rather than translating the Greek pronouns consistently. In each case, they substituted theologically loaded words for the originals.

Ed’s analysis of the twelve instances of *gehenna* in the New Testament displays the same influence of such substitutions of *hell* (to him meaning eternal conscious torment in the spiritual realm) as those influenced by Roman Catholicism for *gehenna*, which never included such concepts. Had it not been for such substitutions, none of us would have concluded that Jesus taught anything about eternal conscious torment in a spiritual state.

To be fair, Catholics aren’t the only ones to pull such stunts. In Acts 8:20, where Peter said to Simon the sorcerer, “*thy silver perish with thee,*” *Today’s English Version* has him telling Simon to “*go to hell.*” The word *hell* is not found in this passage; the translators simply used a common, idiomatic phrase that, according to many, is an appropriate substitution. And that’s just the point: *Hell* is not in any of these passages. It was just substituted for *gehenna* in Bibles with Roman Catholic influence.

Contrary to this, Ed claimed “these twelve verses demonstrated that *gehenna* refers primarily (if not exclusively) to the place in the unseen spiritual realm where the souls of the unredeemed will be consciously punished forever.” It’s very easy to determine if this claim is true. We’ll just read the twelve passages and see if we find eternal conscious torment in the spiritual realm in even a single one of them.

Matthew 5:22 *But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say*

to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (NAS)

Look carefully: do you see anything in that entire verse about eternal conscious torment in the spiritual realm? There’s not a hint of it, is there? Folks just read that concept into the word *hell*, just as Roman Catholic scholars intended! Jesus didn’t define what *gehenna* was. He didn’t mention the spiritual realm, or that anyone would be punished consciously forever. Jesus just said such were in danger of the *gehenna* of fire, which is what the Jews and I understood: a fiery judgment coming on Jerusalem, whose rubble would end up in *gehenna*. That’s a far cry from the Roman Catholic doctrine of hell, which most readers just unconsciously read into what Jesus said.

The next six passages noticed are the “eye, hand, and foot” passages, which we can deal with together:

Matthew 5:29, 30, 18:9, Mark 9:43, 45, 47 *And if your right eye [or hand or foot] makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body [with two eyes, hands, or feet] to be thrown into hell.* (NAS)

Does anyone believe that people are going to have eyes, feet, and hands in a *spiritual* realm where there is eternal conscious torment? No one that I’m aware of!

Again, looking carefully at each of these passages, Jesus didn’t say *hell*—He said *gehenna*, the nearby location with which the Jews were thoroughly familiar. Impenitent Jews were going to end up with their whole bodies cast into *gehenna* at the destruction of Jerusalem (the time element will be given in another of these passages momentarily). Note carefully that Jesus didn’t mention souls being forever consciously punished in a single one of these passages, did He? Yet Ed says “these twelve verses demonstrated that *gehenna* refers primarily (if not exclusively) to the place in the unseen spiritual realm where the souls of the unredeemed will be consciously punished forever.”

In Mark 9:43, “*unquenchable fire*” doesn’t mean eternal fire, but fire that you can’t quench or put out. It’s used of national judgment on the south in Ezekiel 20:47-48, on Israel in Amos 5:5-6, on Jerusalem in Isaiah 66:15-16, and of Babylon’s burning of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 21:10-14. Of course, none of those fires were eternal—not a single one is still burning!

Matthew 10:28 *And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* (NAS)

While this passage is popularly used to prove that the soul of man cannot be destroyed, Jesus plainly affirms that God can (and imminently would, as we’re about to see) destroy both soul and body in *gehenna*. Note that He didn’t say, “I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed the body, will punish your soul consciously eternally,” as many read it. Though

Sam Dawson

Sam is a retired physicist, pastor, and author.
Email: a-samd43@sbcglobal.net
www.sgdpress.com



the concepts of *consciousness*, *eternity*, and *torment* are not in this passage, I'm afraid many people are picturing those very things as they read these verses!

Readers of *Fulfilled!* can sympathize with such people, for as we preterists studied 1 Corinthians 15 to discern a first-century fulfillment, just reading the chapter no doubt still flooded our minds with all the futurist resurrection sermons and illustrations we had heard. Just as our minds applied preconceived concepts to the resurrection, so many readers of Matthew 10:28 (and perhaps yours) apply the preconceived concepts of *consciousness*, *eternity*, and *torment* to Jesus' use of *gehenna*. I encourage you to be a diligent reader and take a few moments to read Joshua 10:35, 39 and 11:11. Here we see that the Jews conquering Canaan *destroyed the souls* of its inhabitants with the sword. This was national judgment, not eternal conscious torment in a spiritual realm, such as many imagine in Matthew 10:28. When Ed asserts, "The physical valley of Hinnom did not affect the soul," surely he's forgotten these occurrences of this very thing in Joshua. Therefore, his conclusion that "*gehenna* must be a spiritual place in the unseen realm in which souls are brought to everlasting ruin in the afterlife" doesn't follow at all. The Jews listening to Jesus in Matthew 10:28 would have understood such language. They knew from their Old Testament background that God could, and many times had, destroyed both bodies and souls in various national judgments. In Luke 12:4-5 (Luke's account of Matt 10:28), Jesus spoke of the fiery judgment coming on the Jews when He said in v. 49, "*I came to cast fire upon the earth* (Gk. *ge, land*); *and what do I desire, if it is already kindled?*"

Matthew 23:15 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.* (NAS)

In this eleventh *gehenna* passage, Jesus doesn't mention eternal conscious torment in the spiritual realm—not in one syllable. With the help of our Roman Catholic substitution for *gehenna*, many just read those things into these verses. It's quite a testimony to the power of the human mind to do such a thing, isn't it?

This passage gives us the time element of the punishment of *gehenna*. In Matthew 23:36, Jesus said, "*Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.*" Not only was Jesus' generation of Jews going to experience the judgment of *gehenna*, but in the next chapter, Jesus said it would happen in their generation: "*Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished*" (Matt 24:34). I'm sure we agree that Jesus is speaking of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, but that's precisely when the judgment of *gehenna* took place, isn't it?

We now come to the final *gehenna* passage, the only one not spoken by Jesus.

James 3:6 *And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire*

body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. (NAS)

Like Jesus, James does not use the terms *eternal*, *conscious*, *torment*, or *spiritual realm*. He merely used *gehenna*, with which his first-century Jewish audience was familiar. James is addressing the misuse of the tongue just like Jesus did in the first inspired use of *gehenna* (Matt 5:22). He says their tongue can set on fire the course of their lives, and their lives are going to be set on fire by *gehenna*.

Conclusion

We have now closely examined the twelve *gehenna* passages. Again, Ed asserted: "these twelve verses demonstrated that *gehenna* refers primarily (if not exclusively) to the place in the unseen spiritual realm where the souls of the unredeemed will be consciously punished forever." Did you see any evidence of that? Ed is a mighty good man, but there's not one syllable of eternal conscious torment in a spiritual state in a single one of these passages. Those concepts are included in the Roman Catholic concept of hell, but not inherent at all in the term *gehenna*.

False theories of eternal punishment of the wicked have done unfathomable damage in the religious realm. Untold millions of people have obeyed God purely out of fear of a false concept of hell. Other untold millions have turned their backs on God because of a false sense of hell, as described by Roman Catholic sources and their followers in most denominations.

In summary, Jesus threatened the Jews in the environs of Jerusalem (and no one else: not people in Ephesus, Rome, or people of our time) that they were headed for the valley named *gehenna*. There would be unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43) *upon* His generation (Matt 23:36) *in* His generation (Matt 24:34), when God would destroy the souls of those of Jesus' generation after killing their bodies (Luke 12:5, Matt 10:28).

None of these *hell* passages say that anyone of our day can go to hell. None of them associate hell with Satan. None of them say that Satan's domain is hell. Though they speak of men being killed and destroyed in *gehenna*, none of them speak of men being tormented there.

Ed is correct when he affirms that we shouldn't overlook the words *gehinnom* and *gehenna*, but neither should we blatantly read into them entirely foreign concepts. I appreciate very much his challenging our thinking on this subject, and I thank you for reading and considering another perspective on the *gehenna* passages. †

Note: The fate of the wicked in general, and after AD 70 in particular, is beyond the scope of this article. For detailed essays on this subject, please see Chapters 14-16, "Jesus' Teaching on Hell," "Lazarus and the Rich Man," and "Immortality and the Afterlife" in *Essays on Eschatology: An Introductory Overview of the Study of Last Things* by Samuel G. Dawson, available at Amazon.com.

Reformation NOW

by Michael Miano

... continued from p. 7

truthfulness and wisdom of Jesus Christ's teachings in regards to 'end times.'"

"Church history is littered with councils, reformations, and revivals that challenged the Church to change their views in many areas—which highlights the 'ever-reforming' nature of the Christian Church. Yet there has never been a council, a reformation, nor a revival that squared away the details of 'the last things'—that which is known as eschatology—which we are debating tonight. I wouldn't simply limit this to 'eschatology' though—every word and teaching of Scripture must be understood in the Hebraic context from which it comes to us. This has been noted by many New Testament scholars such as Mark Nanos, Tom Holland, and John Walton, to name a few."

"Studying to show yourself approved, rightly understanding the context and the narrative found in Scripture, should enable you to see that a yet future coming, an oddly physical but spiritual (again, whatever that may mean) resurrection, and a new reality offered somewhere else in our future is not necessary, and does harm to the biblical view of the Kingdom of God."

"We have a whole lot of confused Christians, and many are lamenting this. Futurism—as a view of eschatology within the Christian community—in its failure to demonstrate a fulfillment of the jots and tittles, leads many Christians to 'lean on their own understanding' and become comfortable in their presuppositions about the Gospel."

A cursory glance at Christian books and messages regarding the success of the Church and the Gospel in the world is weak at best. Preterism holds wisdom to "heal the nations," since essentially that's the message itself: Christ has fulfilled all things, leading us into covenant through Him and with Him—"life to the full."

PRETERISTS WITH VISION

Sadly, Proverbs 29:18 highlights a problem we see within the preterist movement: "*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*" While so much has been done and is still continually being done to establish the foundation, information, and resources, The Power of Preterism

Network (TPPN) seeks to be a blessing to the Body by stimulating the preterist movement to build upon the foundation we have and accelerate the much-needed reformation in modern Christendom with clarity, healing, & strategy.

Just as Jesus Christ went into the Temple to rebuke those who claimed to worship God through their work and teachings, and the ill effect it had on the people of God, so we aim to follow Him through our efforts. His effort was an effort of love, done with zeal but in love, as should our efforts be.

We encourage you to visit The Power of Preterism website (www.powerofpreterism.com), study the Scriptures, begin praying about how and where you can be a blessing to the Body, and get on the Networking List by emailing your name, city/state/country, and email address to: ChristianityGoneWild@yahoo.com.

The Power of Preterism Network intends to be a strategic 'think tank' and resource site within the Preterist movement. The continual resources being offered in regards to the truth of Full Preterism are great, however we need to mature to the point of strategy. The Power of Preterism Network seeks to bring forth the reality of "mission" regarding the truth of preterism through various strategic efforts. Not only bringing resources from our annual conferences at The Blue Point Bible Church (the fellowship is truly something you have to experience in person—perhaps, God willing, it will come to a city near you), we also have ideas for a ministry called 'Reformation NOW,' which began in Fort Myers, Florida, and seeks to bring and encourage preterism's reformation efforts in your city and state, as well as our international outreach work through 'It Is Finished Organization' (IIFO). And lest we forget, let us not give up gathering together, all the more as we witness the reformation and revival currently taking place in the Body of Jesus Christ.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Michael Miano

Blue Point Bible Church

(www.bluepointbiblechurch.org)

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Is it possible that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to planet Earth took place almost 2,000 years ago? Could it be that the early Christian church failed to recognize the grandest event in all of human history, just as the majority of Jews failed to recognize their long-awaited Messiah? If the prophecies of Jesus' Second Coming were fulfilled nearly 2,000 years ago, how is it that so many believers throughout history did not realize this amazing fact?

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Follow along in this riveting presentation as biblical scholars, teachers, and students present their case for fulfilled prophecy.



Creation to Consummation

Not Grieve As Those Who Have No Hope

by Ed Stevens

WHAT WAS THE COMPOSITION of the Thessalonian church? Did it include Jews as well as Gentiles? In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he addressed their concern for some of their fellow saints who had "fallen asleep in Jesus" (1 Thess 4:13). *Who* were those "fallen asleep" folks, and *where* were they? Were they in Hades, waiting to be raised from there at the Parousia? *Why* were the Thessalonians so concerned about them, and *how* did Paul comfort them in their grief? These are the questions we will consider in this article.

Both Jews and Gentiles

Thessalonica was a free city in the Roman province of Macedonia, and had a Jewish synagogue (Acts 17:1). Luke says that Paul preached Christ in that synagogue, and that "some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women" (Acts 17:2-3). Thus we can deduce that the Thessalonian church was originally composed of "some" Jews and "a large number" of uncircumcised Greeks, plus several of the leading women of the city.

When some of the Jews from that synagogue "joined Paul and Silas," it made the unbelieving Jews jealous (Acts 17:5-9). They stirred up a persecution against the Christians, forcing Paul and Silas to leave and go to nearby Berea, where they repeated this scenario of preaching in the synagogue, making converts of both Jews and uncircumcised Greeks, and suffering persecution as a result (Acts 17:10-15).

"Fallen Asleep in Jesus"

We know that the Thessalonian Christians were subject to frequent harassment from that time onward, since Paul, in his second letter, speaks proudly of their "perseverance and faith in the midst of all their persecutions and afflictions which they were enduring" (2 Thess 1:4-10). Some of them were undoubtedly killed in that persecution, and it is to those martyrs that Paul seems to be referring when he describes them as having "fallen asleep in Jesus" (1 Thess 4:13-15).

Paul wrote these two epistles to the Thessalonian Christians (AD 52-53) less than a year after he had started the church there, so there were likely very few, if any, Thessalonian Christians who had died a natural death during that short interim. It is more probable that the "fallen asleep" ones mentioned here were martyrs.

Both Christians and Jews believed that martyrs had a special reward awaiting them in the afterlife, and they were treated differently at death than non-martyrs. This is demonstrated in the book of Revelation, where the martyrs were under the altar *in heaven* (Rev 6:9-11), and the great multitude of martyrs who came out of the great tribulation (Neronian persecution) were standing before the throne *in heaven* (Rev 7:13-17). They did not go to the underworld (Sheol or Hades) out of which the rest of the dead were waiting to be raised.

What was the Thessalonians concern?

The Thessalonians were grieving over the loss of some of their fellow Christians, and were worried that those martyrs might miss the blessings that the living saints would experience at the Parousia. The living saints were afraid that they might not ever see their departed brethren again.

However, Paul reassured them that those martyrs would not miss those blessings, but would instead be the *first* to receive them, and would then be *reunited* with their loved ones who remained alive at the Parousia.

Jesus brought those martyrs with Him when He descended from heaven at the Parousia (1 Thess 3:13; 4:14-16). This confirms that the Christian martyrs did not go to Hades, but were instead in heaven with Christ. When He descended at the Parousia,

He *brought them with Him*. Then the rest of the dead (those who were not martyred) were *raised* out of Hades, the living saints were *changed* (1 Cor 15:51-52), and both were caught up together as one group to meet Christ and the martyrs in the "air" (mid-heaven) of the unseen realm above (1 Thess 4:14-17). Although John 3:13 states ". . . no one has ascended to heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man," we must recall that Christ made this declaration prior to the Cross. Both Matthew 27:52-53 and Ephesians 4:8-9 indicate that the Old Testament martyrs were released from Hades and ascended with Christ at His Ascension.

So there was a *reunion* of both the living and dead saints at the Parousia. But none of the dead reappeared on earth. Instead, both the martyrs and the rest of the dead remained in the unseen realm, while the living saints were *changed* into their new immortal bodies

In order for there experiential reunion one of two things happen. Either the dead to be raised back into bodies and live again realm on earth, or they have to be translated realm to be where they

Eternal Conscious Punishment

Studies in Redemptive History

Edward E. Stevens

Ed is President of the
International Preterist
Association

email: preterist1@preterist.org
website: www.preterist.org



and translated into the unseen realm where they were reunited with their departed loved ones.

What Did This Reunion Imply?

This reunion scenario must have been very comforting to those grieving Thessalonians, since it motivated them to the very kind of faithful endurance that Paul boasts about in his second letter (2 Thess 1). Those living saints at Thessalonica wanted that reunion with their departed loved ones, and were willing to go through all kinds of tribulation on earth to obtain it.

Such a reunion of the living and dead saints implies that the living saints would have to be changed (without physical death) to enter into the unseen realm, where they could join the resurrected dead, and be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, where they would remain with Him forever afterwards.

If they thought that they would have to wait until their physical death years later to be reunited with their departed loved ones, this language about a reunion at the Parousia would make no sense. Rather than bringing them comfort, they would likely have found it quite disturbing. They were under the impression that they (those who remained alive till the Parousia) were going to experience some great things at the Parousia, and were worried that their departed loved ones would miss

out on those blessings. If Paul had told them that only the dead saints would experience those blessings at the Parousia, and that the living saints would have to wait until their death to get those things, there would have been a stampede to the exits. That would not have been comforting to them at all. Nor would it have provided the strong motivation they needed to endure the heavy persecution that they were under. In fact, it could have mistakenly motivated some to actually seek martyrdom in order to receive the blessing at the Parousia.

In order for there to be a real experiential reunion at the Parousia, one of two things would have to happen. Either the dead would have to be raised back into their physical bodies and live again in the visible realm on earth, or the living would have to be translated into the unseen realm to be where the dead were. Since there is no historical evidence that the dead were brought back

into the seen realm at the Parousia (such as we have at Christ's resurrection, Matt 27:52-53), it means that the living must have been changed and taken into the unseen realm. This bodily change and snatching away into the unseen realm appears to be exactly what Paul is teaching in his letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians (1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:17-18).

This concept is further reinforced in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, where Paul prayed that the believer's entire spirit, soul, and body would be preserved complete at the Parousia. Why would it matter whether they remained alive until the Parousia or not, if nothing was going to happen to their bodies at that time? Paul had twice already indicated in this very letter what would happen to them at the Parousia if they were found righteous and holy on that day: they would stand before Christ in His presence (1 Thess 2:19; 3:13). The *Pillar New Testament Commentary* explains that Paul's prayer for them here in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 "is that God will keep them blameless so that they can stand before him without shame or guilt" at the Parousia. That necessarily implies that they would see Christ at His coming and stand in His presence (cognitively and experientially).

In Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, he further augments this image of standing in Christ's presence at the Parousia by saying that Christ would be "marveled at by all those who had believed," including the living and remaining Thessalonian saints, "for our testimony to you was believed" (2 Thess 1:10). How could those living saints stand in His presence and marvel at Christ, along with all of the resurrected dead saints, without being aware of it? Obviously, they could not. This is nothing short of an astounding promise of a very experiential Parousia. It would not occur without the living and remaining saints standing in His presence and marveling at Christ in all His glory and splendor. That reunion with their departed loved ones at the Parousia must have been an incredibly encouraging thought for those Thessalonians to contemplate. Only such a great hope as this would strengthen and motivate them to endure until the Parousia.

If you would like to know more about this change of the living and their reunion at the Parousia with the martyrs who had "fallen asleep in Jesus," simply email me and request our PDF articles entitled the *Change of the Living and the Explanation of 1 Thess 4:13-17*. †

there to be a real reunion at the Parousia, blessings would have to be brought back into their physical realm again in the visible realm, or the living would have to be translated into the unseen realm where the dead were.

Life in the Kingdom

Christian Living in the Consummate Kingdom's continuous Age

by Tony Denton

IN 2011, BRIAN MARTIN asked if I would provide an article for the “Perspectives” column on the topic of how the core preterist view of biblical end-times should affect our daily Christian walk. Since that is a pretty generic and broad topic, and I was limited on space, I chose to focus on one specific aspect of our lives following the consummation of all things. (Since that article sets the stage so well for this article, you may wish to read it before continuing. The article is available online at Fulfilled-CG.com/Site/images/Issues/2011_Summer/Fulfilled-Summer.2011-small.pdf.)

In my previous article I mentioned the terms “light” and “walk” (this latter term referring of course to our conduct in life). When it comes to our current topic, I know of no better concordance search terms for finding teachings related to Christian life in the age of “all things fulfilled” (something we fulfilled prophecy believers are asked for quite often). I am certain that if you were to check a concordance for the terms “light” and “walk,” one of the main passages that normally comes to mind (Rom 13:11-14) would be right there at the top—and rightfully so, for Paul wrote to the first-century saints just prior to accomplished soteriological-eschatology:

“Knowing the appointed time, it is already [i.e. past] the hour for you to be awake from sleep. [Why?] Because our salvation is now nearer than when we [first] believed. The night is far spent, and the day has drawn near. We should put off therefore the deeds of the darkness, and we should put on the weapons of the light. As [though living] in the day, we should walk well-behaved: not [involved] in revelries and drunken bouts, not [involved] in acts of licentiousness and lewdness, not [involved] in strife and envy. Rather put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not be making provisions for the lusts of the flesh.” (Westcott and Hort Interlinear; brackets added)

Wow! What a passage, chock full of sermon material! Note the three main contrasts: *asleep vs. awake; dark vs. light; and night vs. day*, and the preeminent topic of “*the day*.” And what was “*the day*” Paul had in mind? “*The day*” is a reference to “*the appointed time*” or the “*hour*” of their “*salvation*” (v. 11). And what did Paul mean by “*salvation*”? Well, the answer seems pretty obvious, because Paul was encouraging them to live “*as in the day*,” or as though they had already attained to that age of salvation. Since Paul correlated holy living with that age of salvation, this was a salvation of/in/to the genuine, perfect,

everlasting righteousness prophesied in Daniel 9:24 and 2 Peter 3:13. This is the righteousness of Jesus that was credited to His people (cf. Rom 4:24 & Gal 5:5) at His return from the true most holy place, into which He had gone to fulfill His high priestly duties, thereby completing salvation (Heb. 9:28) and thus the purified, consummate kingdom-temple in which our holy God resides. So . . .

With the fulfilled kingdom being a purified place (or state) of residence, Paul could (and did) therefore juxtapose that (eternal) “day” or age of the kingdom—in which its people would (and do) walk in the light—against the preceding (temporal) age of the kingdom when people walked in darkness. The implication seems clear: Since we now live in the consummate kingdom age (which Paul, in Romans 13, claimed was then upon our first-century brethren), then it is obviously presumed that we today who have been credited with the righteousness of Christ are walking “in Him” as He Himself walked, and should therefore walk “*well-behaved: not [involved] in revelries and drunken bouts, not [involved] in acts of licentiousness and lewdness, not [involved] in strife and envy,*” and so on.

In our continuing attempt to discover what God was (and is) expecting of those who claim to be His and in His kingdom today, a further search of New Testament passages with the terms “light” and “walk” would likely reveal another passage by the same apostle, namely Ephesians 5:2-14 (found in the greater context of 4:17 - 5:21). Note that just as Paul talked about “love” immediately prior to the Romans passage considered above, he did the same here in Ephesians 5:2-14: “*Walk in love as Christ has loved us . . .*” True, we don’t see the word “light” until verse 8, but we do see the word “walk” immediately here (as well as six other times in this epistle), and it is directly connected to the greatest word of all—“love.” In fact, I firmly believe the term “love,” along with “light” and “walk,” constitutes the top three search terms for teachings regarding life in the consummate kingdom. God is light, and God is love; so if we are in (fellowship with) Him, then we, citizens of His kingdom, are (to be) walking in light and love. Though in this age kingdom living may no longer be about ceremonialism and ritualistic forms of individual or corporate worship, it is still all about our treatment of others, and living a virtuous life out of gratefulness to our Savior-God who, through His Son, made us truly righteous in His sight, thereby restoring our relationship to our Creator.

Present day living in light of past fulfillment

Tony E. Denton

Tony, a full-time minister since 1982 with a preterist commentary on Hebrews may be reached via www.ASiteForTheLord.com



Paul also wrote in Ephesians of completed salvation being in his readers' near future, most notably in 1:13-14: "*Having believed in Him, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.*" In 2:22 and 4:15-16 (all in the present tense for the original readers), Paul wrote of their being built up into the Lord's residence, for (as Paul wrote in 5:23ff) they were in the process of being purified for (to be) God's dwelling. This would occur only after they, as His temple (2:21), were anointed as His most holy place (cf. Dan 9:24) once the old temple, with its temporal most holy place, was demolished for all time in AD 70. So, after writing to the Ephesians about being and acting like children who walk in love toward one another (5:2-7), Paul also wrote to them about being and acting like children of the light instead of the darkness, and being awake instead of asleep (5:8-14). And just as Paul admonished the Romans to turn from a life of indulgence (cf. Rom 13:14) in the context of the "appointed time" that was upon them, so he admonishes the Ephesians to live in such a manner as to redeem the short time they had left (5:15-18; cf. 1 Cor. 7:29 & Rom. 9:28). So . . .

I want to encourage all who read this brief article to consider it only a springboard for getting you started in a more comprehensive study of this topic. Please feel free to share with me any other passages you find relevant (because there actually are quite a few more passages than those touched on here) and/or conclusions you make in the process. I also encourage you to finish off this article by reading, if not all of Ephesians, at least 4:17 - 5:21, from this light-love-walk perspective of life after all things fulfilled. ✚

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T. Everett Denton

Eschatology is the study of last things, specifically the last events of the time of the end of the age about which so much is spoken and written in the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation. Then there's the associated topic of soteriology, the study of everything related to the biblical doctrine of salvation. These themes are so interwoven with the parousia (the Greek word most often translated "coming" in relation to the "presence"—its actual meaning—of the Messiah at and following His return) that they cannot be divorced from each other without doing an injustice to both of them, a reality that's fully established in The Epistle to the Hebrews. Although this volume is a conglomeration of New Testament passage studies that may appear to concern only matters of eschatology, I assure you that matters of soteriology are a very integral part of them; this means that, even if you aren't of the opinion that the topic of biblical eschatology is of enough import to spend your time reading a work like this, well, I believe this work will change your mind about that!

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