

# You've Gotta Be Kidding . . . *Right?*

An Unconventional Look at the Book of Revelation  
and Bible Prophecy

*by Brian L. Martin*

Think that you've pretty much heard it all when it comes to end-time prophecy? Chip implants, global tracking, European Union, candidates for the Anti-Christ, etc., etc. Well fasten your seat belt, because I've got a story for you. In recent years I've been introduced to a whole new view of eschatological (end-times) interpretation that will challenge everything you've heard. But it will only challenge you if you take the time to hear it out, and more importantly, examine it. Anyone can easily dismiss it by saying *it's too far out there, I don't have time for every wind of doctrine*, etc. I thought that it was too far out there, but I had some time, so I've been examining it. Here's where the challenge comes in. What I at first wanted to reject, from an emotional basis, I found that I couldn't refute from Scripture. In fact, the more I examined it, the more that Scripture seemed to *support* it!

Don't just take my word for it. No less a theologian than **R. C. Sproul** was challenged by this view. What was the result of his examination? He wrote a book about it called ***The Last Days According to Jesus***. While he doesn't agree with the limits to which some people take this view, he says that

*“. . . what is at stake here is the authority of Jesus, and we must be consumed with maintaining his authority”.*

That's a weighty statement.

So, are you tired of the “Hollywood-ized” portrayals of the end-times, and looking for a fresh approach? Then check this out. OR, do you think that you have a pretty good handle on the end-times, and that you can line up current events with prophecy, and have a fair idea on how things are going to play out? Good, then maybe *you* can refute this.

## In The Beginning . . .

Several years ago—after a chain of events which I’m coming to believe were ordained of God—I changed jobs. To my surprise, at this new job one of my coworkers turned out to be someone I had attended church with many years ago. This is the guy who laid this whole trip on me.

He started by bringing up a mutual acquaintance of ours. This acquaintance was a retired businessman who lived in the countryside of the same town in which I lived, and he had attended the same church as I for a time. Although we used to have Men’s Retreats on his property, I hadn’t seen him for years. My friend at work asked me if I had heard of this brother’s “strange” new doctrine. Oddly enough, even though I hadn’t seen him in years, I had heard of it. You see, he owned various properties around town, one of which was a small church building, in which a newly formed church that I attended met. So he was our landlord, and our Pastor had spent some time with him. I remember my Pastor telling me that he “no longer believed in the book of Revelation”. Now I remembered this brother as being passionate for the Word of God, always studying. In fact, soon after his conversion, he bought a Bible Book Store so that he could have access to study materials. *Too bad*, I thought, *he got isolated out there in the country, and fell into some false teaching*. I was saddened by the news, because I had had some great theological discussions with him, and he had lent me many books from his personal library.

So I told my friend at work, “Yeah, I heard that he doesn’t believe in Revelation anymore.” “No”, he corrected me – “he believes in Revelation, he just believes that it’s already been fulfilled”. *WHAT? That almost sounds worse*, I thought, *poor guy*. But my friend wasn’t done with the bombshells. He continued by saying, “When I first heard about it, I figured that he had just gone off the deep-end out there by himself in the country, with no fellowship to keep him in check. But now I believe it too.”

*WHAT?* I couldn’t believe it. I could not believe what I was hearing. Now I had never really known my coworker real well, but he had always seemed like a stable believer. In fact, when we attended the same church, he was one of the elders.

“It’s called the Preterist view”, he tells me. The *WHAT* view? Why does that make me think of aliens and Arnold Schwarzenegger? “It’s one of the four major views of Revelation – Preterist, Historicist, Futurist and Symbolic (or Allegorical or Spiritual).”

Why had I never heard those terms before? Have you heard them? Preterists believe that Revelation was written prior to AD 70, and is a prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Historicists see Revelation as being fulfilled by the various events of world history, commencing with the first century church and continuing on until today. Futurists believe that Revelation depicts future events involving global catastrophe and judgment. The Symbolic view doesn’t see Revelation as depicting any actual events, but rather as a depiction of good vs. evil, with God finally conquering His enemies.

Now I’m no Bible scholar, but I have read my share of prophecy books, and I can find every book in the Bible without using the index. So I figured I’d do some studying and get my friend back on the straight and narrow. Our brother out in the country was probably a lost cause, but since I worked with this guy, I could just continue to hound him with the Truth until he saw the error of his ways.

In order to find the flaws, I had to understand the doctrine, so my friend lent me a book that’s kind of the “handbook” for Preterists. When I saw the book, I stopped dead in my tracks—I had seen this book before! Years before, I had attended an Adult Sunday School class taught by a man who truly amazed me with his knowledge of the Word. Unfortunately, he didn’t adhere to the prevalent futurist view—he was an amillennialist. As with the brother who lived out in the country, this Sunday School teacher and I spent time discussing theology, and he also had lent me books. He was excited about having just received this same book, *The Parousia*, by J. Stuart Russell, which he said was supposed to support the view that Revelation had been fulfilled already.

Now all of a sudden I'm faced with two men whom I know are much deeper in the Word than I, and a former elder who are all caught up in this doctrine. I hadn't broken out in a cold sweat yet, but I was realizing the task might be a bit more daunting than first anticipated.

R.C. Sproul's book didn't come out until about a year after I had started on this journey, so I didn't know that there were actual theologians involved in this thing. I was just trying to help a brother out. So I started studying. As I started reading **The Parousia**, I found that the 1999 reprinting had a forward written by R. C. Sproul. In that forward he states

*"My views on these matters remain in transition, as I have spelled out in **The Last Days According to Jesus**. But for me one thing is certain: **I can never read the New Testament again the same way I read it before reading The Parousia.**"* pg. x  
(emphasis added)

## Symbolic Language

One of the keys to Preterism is understanding the apocalyptic language of the Jews. When describing events like the judgment and downfall of nations (as Preterists believe Revelation does regarding Jerusalem), a very symbolic language is used. Consider the following:

*"The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger."*

*"And all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; And all their host shall fall down, As the leaf falleth from off the vine, And as a falling fig from the fig-tree."*

*"When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, And the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, And bring darkness upon your land,' Says the Lord GOD. The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness."*

*"The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel."*

*"And it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord GOD, "That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight;"*

Even futurists considered all of these passages as *already fulfilled*. That's because they're all from the Old Testament, describing God's judgment on various nations. The first is Isaiah 13, concerning judgment on Babylon. The second, Isaiah 34:4 concerning the destruction of Idumea, the third; Ezekiel 32:7-8 concerning the destruction of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; the fourth, Joel 2:10; 3:15-16 The Lord judging His enemies; and the fifth, Amos 8:9 The Lord, concerning judgment against the house of Jacob.

The amazing thing is that no one, not even futurists, claims that these astronomical events were literal. Everyone agrees that it's the use of apocalyptic language. Preterists say that this also applies to Christ's Olivet discourse and to Revelation. Jesus and John were Jews, they were speaking and writing to a primarily Jewish audience, and so they would naturally use the same apocalyptic language that the Jews had used for centuries. If these styles of descriptions, which had for centuries been understood by the Jews as being symbolic, were now to be taken in a literal sense by the listeners/readers of Jesus and

John, surely they would have had to inform their listeners/readers that their language had just taken a huge paradigm shift. And there is no such indication in the Scripture.

While I wasn't ready to concede the *symbolic language* point, I had to admit that I couldn't refute it. Of course, I wasn't going to tell my friend at work that. I would find my flaws elsewhere.

## The Great Tribulation

During the course of our conversations, he pointed out that what is generally interpreted as the end of the world, is actually the end of the age—the end of the Old Covenant (the Law). In Revelation, where we read about plagues and judgments poured out upon the earth, an alternate translation (and more accurate in Preterists' view) is not upon the whole planet, but upon the land of Judea. The 1260 days (42 months, time, times and half a time) correspond to the 3 ½ years of the Roman siege between AD 66-70. During this time period, the historian Josephus records famine, earthquakes, death, etc., which fit quite nicely with the prophecies of Jesus and of Revelation.

Well, maybe it sounded good to him, but I wasn't going to take his word for it. I was, however, intrigued by the parallels that were suggested. So I find out the Greek word that is translated "world" is not kosmos, from which we get our cosmos—the physical heavens and earth—but aion, from which we get eon, or age. *Hmmmm . . .* And the Greek word for "earth", ge, can be understood to mean the local area, like, say Judea. *Hmmmmmm . . .* again.

Then I start looking at some of the quotes from Josephus, and was amazed at the atrocities that took place during that war. Space prohibits me from listing them here, but there was famine, wholesale death, earthquakes, etc, of a . . . well, . . . of Biblical proportions. Literally! Josephus even talks about false prophets, false messiahs, family members turning on one another, and so on. He talks about the Roman armies desecrating the Temple by the presence of the eagles on their shields and standards, and how the Jews considered it an abomination just to have their armies in the environs of Jerusalem, which they considered a holy place. *Hmmmm . . . abomination and desolation in the Holy Place—that couldn't be what Jesus . . . nah.*

Now keep in mind that this whole dissertation is a "Reader's Digest Condensed Version" of several years of conversations, study, and reading. Each one of these subtopics could easily have a book dedicated to them.

Like the topic at hand. Josephus actually records that there were supernatural occurrences witnessed by many during this war—like armies of chariots racing across the sky. And the doors to the Temple, which took 20 men to close each night, opening on their own in the middle of the night. And the night being lit so brightly that it seemed as if it were noon. He says that the priests took these signs to mean that God was bringing judgment upon the Jews.

Now if someone was to pretend, just pretend mind you, that Revelation was written prior to AD 70, and that it and Jesus' prophecy on the Mount of Olives were to be interpreted in the same manner as every other Old Testament prophecy with similar language—then there certainly seems to be a lot of details of those prophecies that fit with the destruction of Jerusalem. Just pretending, though . . . *right?*

Not to worry, though. I had an ace up my sleeve. You see, I was fairly familiar with all of this AD 70 stuff, from a Bible teacher on TV. He taught from a Messianic Jew perspective, and revealed all of the typology in the festivals, the Tabernacle, the Temple sacrifices and ceremonies, etc. And he had covered this AD 70 stuff. It was a type, a rehearsal, a foreshadow, a partial fulfillment of the ultimate fulfillment to come at the end of the world. I had hours of video tape on this stuff. No problem.

This seems as good a place as any to mention one of the books that I read during this whole expedition. The book *Before Jerusalem Fell*, by Kenneth Gentry, Jr. In it he attempts to establish that the book of Revelation was written prior to AD 70. Well, in my opinion, he did—convincingly, unquestionably,

resoundingly . . . you get the picture. Lest you think that I was just a pushover, consider these quotes used by Sproul in ***The Last Days According to Jesus***:

*"The burden for preterists then is to demonstrate that Revelation was written before A.D. 70. This burden became the thesis of Gentry's doctoral dissertation. His book **Before Jerusalem Fell** has been welcomed both by advocates of preterism and by its opponents. Jay E. Adams says of **Before Jerusalem Fell**: "Here is a book some of us have been awaiting for years! Now that it is here we can rejoice. Mr. Gentry convincingly demonstrates the fact the book of Revelation was written, as it in so many ways declares, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It should receive a wide reading and ought to rattle many windows."*

*George W. Knight, who is not a preterist, says this: "**Before Jerusalem Fell** is a thorough and outstanding statement of the case for the early date of Revelation. The book makes one aware of the evidence from within the book and from early church sources, and surveys the arguments of New Testament scholars of this century and previous centuries concerning the question. No stone is left unturned to resolve the question." Pg. 140"*

I now had to admit that Preterists were right on one point—Revelation was written prior to AD 70. But thank goodness that doesn't establish a whole doctrine. Just because it was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem doesn't mean that it is necessarily describing that event . . . *right*? Once again, a quote from Sproul:

*"Even if Gentry has dated Revelation correctly, that still does not exclude the possibility of a future manifestation of the beast in accord with a primary [Nero—added] and secondary [future Anti-Christ—added] schema of prophetic fulfillment. **But is such a schema necessary if the events foretold in Revelation concerned the imminent judgment of the Jewish nation and the destruction of Jerusalem?**" Pg. 189 (emphasis added)*

## **Audience Relevance and the Imminent Return of Christ**

If there is a cornerstone, a starting point, to the preterist doctrine, it is audience relevance and what are known as the imminency passages. Audience relevance dictates that we must view the Scriptures from the perspective of when and to whom they were written. The words of Jesus were not spoken to you or I, but to His followers. The New Testament wasn't written to you or I, but to believers at Ephesus, Galatia, etc. When read from that perspective, it becomes obvious that the first century church expected the return of Christ in their generation. Here are a few imminency passages, with the pronouns in a **bold** font, denoting a first century audience, and what *they* were expecting underlined:

"Truly I say to **you**, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until **they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.**" Mat. 16:28

"Behold, I tell **you** a mystery; **we** shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed,**

". . . in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and **we shall be changed.**" 1 Cor. 15:51-52

"Let **your** forbearing *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near." Phil. 4:5

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify **you** entirely; and may **your** spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Th. 5:23

"For **you** have need of endurance, so that when **you** have done the will of God, **you** may receive what was promised. FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY." Heb. 10:36-37

"**You** too be patient; strengthen **your** hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." James 5:8

"Children, it is the last hour; and just as **you** heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour." 1 John 2:18

"And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." 1 John 2:28

"I am coming quickly; hold fast what **you** have, in order that no one take **your** crown." Rev. 3:11

These are just a few of the imminency passages. Every New Testament author wrote from this perspective, and my friend stressed this point—these things were written to them, not to us. They expected Christ to return in their lifetimes. Jesus said that *this* (His) generation would see all the things of His Olivet prophecy. All the things of the Olivet discourse and Revelation refer to Jesus judging His enemies (the apostate Jews), ending the Old Covenant by destroying it's Holy City and Temple (thereby transferring the Kingdom from Israel in a physical sense, to the church in a spiritual sense), delivering His saints from their persecutors (primarily the apostate Jews) and gathering them to Himself.

*I'm sorry, could you say that again? It sounded like you're saying (chuckle) that the Second Coming happened in AD 70.*

I believe that it did!

*W . . . H . . . A . . . T????? How do you respond to something like that? I didn't know if I should laugh in his face, or cry at the severity of his deception. He was obviously beyond my help. He needed some serious, Godly counseling—maybe even an exorcism (okay, maybe exorcism is a bit extreme). But how could I turn my back on someone that I worked side-by-side with, especially a Christian brother? *I wonder if he's even still a Christian!**

Now the verses listed above are just a *small* sample of what the New Testament contains. Have you ever considered how often the New Testament speaks of an imminent judgment/deliverance upon the sinners/saints? I didn't, until it was pointed out to me. It's amazing how many there are—from John the Baptist's "the axe is already laid at the root of the tree" to Jesus' "behold, I come quickly" in Revelation. I have one document that lists 101 of them.

You know, a funny thing happened after I became aware of the audience relevance/imminency issue. Every time I read the New Testament, I kept coming across one of those passages. And I kept asking myself, why is it that I used to think that *I* was included in the "we, you and us" pronouns? That's not proper exegesis. And yet for years I had read right over those texts and never asked myself, *why did the first century saints expect all of this, if it was referring to our last day's generation?*

As I continued to read the New Testament, **The Parousia** and other Preterist propaganda, I came to realize that this relevance/imminency issue was going to be a force to be reckoned with. I didn't see a way to work it into the double/partial fulfillment scenario that came in so handy earlier. . . *wait a minute.* . . something was coming into focus!

## Coming in the Clouds

One of the chapters in Gentry's book talked about God coming in the clouds, usually in judgment, during the Old Testament. I didn't realize how many times the Lord "came down" in the Old Testament. This first example isn't necessarily with the clouds, but it specifically says that He came down. Now we understand that this is not a "physical" appearance of God, but a coming in power to destroy His enemies.

*"LORD, when You went out from Seir, When You marched from the field of Edom, The earth trembled and the heavens poured, The clouds also poured water; The mountains gushed before the LORD, This Sinai, before the LORD God of Israel. **The LORD came down** for me against the mighty. They fought from the heavens; The stars from their courses fought against Sisera.  
Judges 5:3-5, 15, 20*

These next passages describe God as coming in clouds in judgment upon His enemies.

*Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils, And devouring fire from His mouth; Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and **came down** With darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; **He flew upon the wings of the wind**. He made darkness His secret place; **His canopy around Him was dark waters And thick clouds of the skies**. From the brightness before Him, **His thick clouds** passed with hailstones and coals of fire. The LORD thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire. He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe, Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, The foundations of the world were uncovered At Your rebuke, O LORD, At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. Ps 18:7-15 NKJV*

*He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters,  
**Who makes the clouds His chariot,**  
**Who walks on the wings of the wind,** Ps 104:3 NKJV*

*The burden against Egypt.  
**Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud,**  
And will come into Egypt;  
The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence,  
And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. Is. 19:1 NKJV*

*Blow the trumpet in Zion,  
And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble;  
**For the day of the LORD is coming,**  
**For it is at hand:**  
**A day of darkness and gloominess,**  
**A day of clouds and thick darkness,**  
Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. Joel 2:1-2 NKJV*

*God is jealous, and the LORD avenges;  
The LORD avenges and is furious.  
The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries,  
And He reserves wrath for His enemies;  
The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,  
And will not at all acquit the wicked.  
**The LORD has His way**  
**In the whirlwind and in the storm,**  
**And the clouds are the dust of His feet.** Nah 1:2-3 NKJV*

*The great day of the LORD is near;  
It is near and hastens quickly.  
The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter;  
There the mighty men shall cry out.  
That day is a day of wrath,  
A day of trouble and distress,  
A day of devastation and desolation,  
A day of darkness and gloominess,  
**A day of clouds and thick darkness,** Zeph. 1:14-15 NKJV*

Now I don't have a problem believing that God did all those things in the Old Testament, and that He did *come down*, in a manner of speaking. So now I'm thinking, what is there between Malachi and Matthew that says He couldn't have done the same thing in AD 70? Especially when you compare the apocalyptic language of the above Old Testament passages with that of Jesus' and John's prophecies. The partial fulfillment idea was starting to take shape.

### **Partial Preterist**

Before we continue, let me recap where I was at this point. Remember that what you have read in a few pages represents months of study and hundreds of pages of material.

- Revelation was written prior to AD 70. I was convinced of this, so chalk one up for the Preterists.
- Jesus' prophecy and Revelation were most likely written in the same literary style of the Old Testament prophets. It's very symbolic, with national judgment being depicted in terms of astronomical phenomena. I could find nothing that indicated to me, let alone the people to whom it was spoken, that this literary style had suddenly changed. Certainly a change of this magnitude would had to have been communicated to the audience, or they would have had a completely wrong understanding of the message. If Revelation was supposed to "reveal" to the first century church the things that were to come, and at face-value appeared to be written in the same style as their prophets had written for centuries, wouldn't John (and Jesus on the Mt. of Olives) have needed to explain to his readers that this prophecy was to be understood differently? Earlier I was not ready to concede this point to the Preterists. That was just emotion on my part. I couldn't refute it—in fact scriptural precedent was on their side. So, Preterists—two; me—zero.
- AD 70—finally, a point that I didn't have to fully concede. I had to admit that the events of the fall of Jerusalem answered the prophecies of Jesus and John in too much detail to be coincidences. The partial fulfillment scenario was not just looking plausible, but likely. The bulk of both Jesus' prophecy and Revelation foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, but they both contained portions that referred to the Second Coming yet to come.
- This partial fulfillment interpretation also explained the imminency passages. I couldn't deny that God had "come in/with the clouds" in judgment many times in the Old Testament. And just as with the symbolic language, I didn't see anything in Scripture that would preclude Him from fulfilling similar New Testament prophecies in the same manner.

I had arrived at what is known as Partial Preterism. Just as in all other sectors of Christianity, there are different interpretations on the details of the Preterist doctrine. Although many labels are used to distinguish the two main camps within Preterism, the most prominent are Partial- and Full-Preterism.

Partial-Preterists believe that most of the Olivet discourse and the book of Revelation refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, and that Jesus came with the clouds in judgment (similar to the Old Testament passages listed earlier) upon the apostate Jews at that time. They still believe in a future, physical Second Coming of Christ. This was, as much as I hated to admit it to my friend, where my studies had led me. I was now a Partial Preterist.

Full Preterists believed that all eschatological prophecies, *including* the Second Coming, were fulfilled in AD 70. Not only did Christ come in judgment, he also came to gather His saints and establish His

Kingdom, which is spiritual and not physical, as Futurists teach. This was my coworker's (and our mutual friend's) position.

In his conclusion to *The Last Days According to Jesus*, Sproul states the following:

*"The great service preterism performs is to focus attention on two major issues. The first is the time-frame references of the New Testament regarding eschatological prophecy. **The preterist is a sentinel standing guard against frivolous and superficial attempts to downplay or explain away the force of these references.**"*

*With respect to partial preterism, Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. has done excellent work in forcing reconsideration of the date when the Book of Revelation was written. If he is correct in arguing for a date prior to A.D. 70, **then sweeping revisions must be made in our understanding of this book's content and focus**". (emphasis mine)*

## The Kingdom

Having pulled me partially into the Preterist camp, my friend continued working, now on the differences between Partial and Full Preterists. *What was the nature of the Kingdom? How did Jesus describe the Kingdom?*

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?"

Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." John 18:36-37

Notice all of the present tense verbs—*is, am, now*. Jesus was a King when Pilate questioned Him, yet not of a physical kingdom, else His servants would have fought a physical fight. Paul echoes this in Eph. 6 " . . . for we wrestle not against flesh and blood . . ." *How can you resolve a physical Kingdom with this passage, I was asked?*

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20-21

The Kingdom cannot be observed?! How does *that* fit in with a literal, physical kingdom?

"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." Matt 12:28

"The law and the prophets were proclaimed **until** John. **Since that time** the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it." Luke 16:16 (emphasis added)

"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." Mark 10:15-16

Again, present tense. The Kingdom was present in Christ's generation! In light of these passages, mustn't we re-examine those other passages which we assumed spoke of a literal, physical kingdom?

Knowing my track record for not scoring points against Preterism so far, I didn't have a lot of confidence on this issue. How can you argue against what's right there in the Bible in black and white—or, harder yet, in red?

## Double Fulfillment

Although my friend was continuing to raise questions (like the nature of the Kingdom) about Partial Preterism, I was fairly comfortable with it. It answered a lot of questions that Futurism had to twist passages (in my opinion) to get around, yet it wasn't as radical (borderline heretical) as his position.

Then I read this from ***The Parousia***:

*There is another theory, however, by which many suppose that the credit of the apostles is saved, and yet room left for avoiding the acceptance of their apparent teaching on the subject of the coming of Christ. This is, by the hypothesis of a primary and partial fulfillment of their predictions in their own time, to be followed and completed by an ultimate and plenary fulfillment at the end of human history. According to this view, the anticipations of the apostles were not wholly erroneous. Something really did take place that might be called 'a coming of the Lord,' 'a judgment day.' Their predictions received a quasi fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem and in the judgment of the guilty nation. That consummation at the close of the Jewish age was a type of another and infinitely greater catastrophe, when the whole human race will be brought before the judgment seat of Christ and the earth consumed by a general conflagration. This is probably the view which is most commonly accepted by the majority of expositors and readers of the New Testament at the present day. The first objection to this hypothesis is, that it has no foundation in the teaching of the Scriptures. There is not a scintilla of evidence that the apostles and primitive Christians had any suspicion of a twofold reference in the predictions of Jesus concerning the end. No hint is anywhere dropped that a primary and partial fulfillment of His sayings was to take place in that generation, but that the complete and exhaustive fulfillment was reserved for a future and far distant period. The very contrary is the fact. What can be more comprehensive and conclusive than our Lord's words, 'Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till ALL these things be fulfilled'? What critical torture has been applied to these words to extort from them some other meaning than their obvious and natural one! How has γενεα been hunted through all its lineage and genealogy to discover that it may not mean the persons then living on the earth! But all such efforts are wholly futile. While the words remain in the text their plain and obvious sense will prevail over all the glosses and perversions of ingenious criticism. The hypothesis of a twofold fulfillment receives no countenance from the Scriptures. We have only to read the language in which the apostles speak of the approaching consummation, to be convinced that they had one, and only one, great event in view, and that they thought and spoke of it as just at hand.*

The wind had just been knocked out of me. It wasn't just this statement from Russell, but he included several quotes from other theologians who soundly renounced the double fulfillment theory, for *any* portion of Scripture. Then I read in Milton S. Terry's ***Biblical Hermeneutics***, considered by many a classic on the principles of interpreting the Bible, that there are no double fulfillments.

Double fulfillment is just basically not liking the fulfillment that happened—you didn't see what you were expecting—and therefore calling for another future fulfillment where everything happens according to the way you think it should.

I was back to square one—no, worse. Because now I believed that Revelation was written prior to AD 70, in symbolic language, and that Jesus had come in judgment upon national Israel, who had rejected Him as their Messiah. I couldn't go back to Futurism, and I had just lost my foundation for Partial Preterism. I was between a rock and a hard place.

## Imminency Revisited

Somewhere during this time, I was forced to concede another point to the Preterists. The Kingdom was spiritual, not physical. It is Jesus living in His saints, and the New Covenant of the gospel being spread throughout the world. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. It's not Jesus physically sitting on a throne in Jerusalem.

I also had to reevaluate the imminency passages. Not just the time frame of *when* the first century saints expected Christ to return (in judgment upon Jerusalem, as I now believed), but *what* they expected at that coming.

They expected to be changed in the twinkling of an eye. They expected to be caught up together with the dead in Christ. They expected Jesus, after having gone to prepare a place for them, to come and take them to that place. They expected to be like Him at His appearing. They expected to always be with the Lord. It was these expectations with which they comforted one another, and encouraged one another all the more as they saw the day approaching.

I had no principle of exegesis or hermeneutics with which to assign these expectations to some future generation. *They* expected them. I had already conceded that Christ came in judgment in AD 70, fulfilling part of these passages. Now that the double fulfillment rug had been pulled out from under me, it seemed that the only logical conclusion was . . . *I didn't want to say it . . . it didn't feel right, not emotionally . . . but from the arena of logic and deductive reasoning . . . Okay, I'll say it—I think that the Scriptures teach that Christ promised His generation that He would come back for them, and that He did just that, in AD 70.*

## The New Beginning

So now, as I'm sure you saw coming, I'm a full Preterist. As I stated earlier, this is a highly condensed version of my journey. I threw up every roadblock that I could think of, but the Scriptures kept knocking them down. I didn't go without a fight.

Even when I was trying to refute Preterism, I was amazed at how the New Testament made so much more sense according to the Preterist interpretation. That has not ceased, and though there are still many unanswered questions, the Bible has never been as cohesive and unified in my mind as it is now.

As brief and condensed as this testimony is, I hope that I have walked you over some of the major hurdles, and softened the "shock" factor enough that your curiosity is raised to the point of beginning your own investigation.

God Bless you as you study His word.

*Now these were more noble-minded . . . examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Acts 17:11*

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