



The Sword & The Plow

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Urgent Corrections Preterism Must Make No. 1: The Eschaton was Essentially Local

By

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Introduction

St. Paul said, “If any man thinketh he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (I Cor. 8:2). I have been a Preterist almost 26 years. I have learned a few things along the way; one of them is how much I *don't know* and still have to learn. This last year, I have learned some new things; I have become aware of a couple areas that appear to me to need correction within the Preterist movement. The first of these has to do with the notion that the eschaton was essentially *local*; the second that it was essentially *covenantal*. In this article, I want to address the idea that the eschaton was essentially local.

Mistake Natural

It has been my observation that as Preterists we tend to focus on the fall of Jerusalem to the exclusion of other aspects of the eschaton presented in scripture. This has caused our perception of the eschaton to become out of “skew,” so that it no longer represents the actual picture represented in the scriptures, which shows it was world-wide. However, this mistake is easy to make. The scriptures treat of the fall of Jerusalem and end of the Jewish economy in almost every book of the Bible; its theme is so

common and pervasive, that seeing the eschaton in terms of Jerusalem's fall is natural.

The Jews were God's chosen people to bring Christ into the world and accomplish his soteriological purpose to redeem mankind. It is therefore natural that the termination of the Jewish nation before God as a chosen people should receive special emphasis in the scripture; the desolation of the holy city and death of almost a million and a half Jews is not something that could be passed over in silence. Moreover, the destruction of Jerusalem was a sign of the end of “world” or “age.” Not the Mosaic age, as Preterists often mistakenly conclude (the phrase does not occur in the Bible), but the end of the pre-Messianic age – the course of the world that had obtained from the time of Adam's fall; the world-epoch marked by the dominion of sin and death.

The Jerusalem temple stood as a grand object lesson to every race of people of mankind's fallenness; its system of worship epitomized the sinful condition of the fallen race and its estrangement from God. Sequestered in the Holy of Holies, man's Maker could not be approached except through his chosen Intermediary and the sprinkling of blood. The barrier of sin, represented by the great veil before the Holy of Holies, was rent in twain in Christ's death,

showing the way back into God's presence through the blood of Christ (Matt. 27:51; cf. Heb. 10:19, 20). The blood offering of Christ carried into the temple in heaven meant that the outward and visible temple in Jerusalem had fulfilled its purpose and needs be removed. This began at the cross when the veil was rent in twain, but was completed when the temple itself was fully and finally destroyed in the war with Rome. The distinction of the Mosaic law between Jew and Gentile was removed for all time. In destroying the temple in A.D. 70, God showed that he was now dealing with men on equal terms as the sons of Adam, not as separate nations, as he had beginning with Babel and the call of Abraham. The fall of the temple was a sign that a new epoch had come. The gospel call invited all mankind to a restored relationship with God.

Examples of Universal Judgment at the Eschaton

As we have seen, the pervasive treatment of Jerusalem's fall in the Bible makes seeing the eschaton as consisting essentially in that event an easy mistake to make. Nevertheless, it is a mistake just the same, and one that must be corrected. As the following passages show, the eschaton was plainly *world-wide*.

Dan. 2:28-45 – Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

This is one of the most important prophecies of the Bible and it does not even mention the Jews or Jerusalem. The famous dream of Nebuchadnezzar depicts four *world empires* until the coming of the kingdom and Messiah; it portrays Christ's coming in terms of the *world government and inhabited earth* being reduced to rubble *in the days of the fourth world empire* and the mountain of the Lord's kingdom growing up in its place. The rubble to which the image is reduced answer the "elements" of II Pet. 3 and point to the *socio-political* fabric of the pre-parousia world.

Psa. 2:8, 9 – Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

This Psalm is about the resurrected, glorified Christ and the kingdom given him of the Father. Christ's kingdom is more than just the church; it includes all earth's nations, which he rules with a rod of iron, dashing to pieces those that disobey. The dashing here corresponds to the dashing of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream and is *eschatological*. It is also world-wide, encompassing the whole Roman Empire.

Ps. 110:5, 6 – The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

This Psalm, like the one before, speaks to the eschatological day of wrath of Christ upon the heathen; the eschaton would entail the devastation of *many countries*.

Hag. 2:6, 7; 3:21, 22 – For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts...I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen."

This verse is important because it is quoted by the Hebrew writer as about to be fulfilled in his day (Heb. 12:26). Its first application is to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple under Zerubbabel; its second and ultimate application was to the kingdom and church of Christ. Haggai foretold a time when the wealth and power of the nations would accrue to the benefit of the Jerusalem temple, by the fall of worldly powers. This became a type of the victory of the church at the eschaton. As Preterists, we have interpreted this passage as quoted by the Hebrew writer in terms of Jerusalem's fall, but, as we see, its *actual, original, and intended* scope was universal – the eschaton would be a time when *all nations* were shaken and the throne of *heathen kingdoms* overthrown. We should also note that the *heavens and earth* in this context point to higher powers and earth's governments; they have no covenantal significance themselves.

Rev. 1:7 – Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which

*pierced him: and **all kindreds** of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*

This last passage can be translated in more narrow terms to say “*all the tribes of the land shall wail because of him.*” But no translation in print does this, nor would it fit within the imagery of Revelation, which portrays the eschaton in universal terms, far surpassing Judaea and Jerusalem. Moreover, the word “also” – *they also which pierced him* – meaning the Jews, signifies that they *too* would see him in *addition* to earth’s other peoples.

*Matt. 25:31, 32 – When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered **all nations**: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.*

This passage likely refers to the great white throne judgment in Rev. 20:11-15. If so, it is “other worldly.” But, no matter what side of eternity is portrayed, it is clear that the passage refers to more than merely Palestine – all nations were to come under Christ’s judgment.

*II Tim. 4:1 - I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge **the quick** and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom*

The time for the appearing of Christ and his kingdom was within the lives of the apostles (Matt. 16:27, 28). I confess that I do not know everything that is involved with judging the quick, but I do know that the living includes more than those residing in Palestine. The eschaton was a time when *all men* came under judgment.

*Acts 17:30, 31 – And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth **all men everywhere** to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he is about to judge (melle krinein) **the world** in righteousness.*

Paul spoke these words in Athens. The time of judgment that was about to overtake the world (*Gk. kosmos*) entailed more than Jews; *all men everywhere* were about to feel the rod of Christ’s correction for rejecting his gospel and persecuting his church.

These are just a few of the passages holding out a universal coming. As Preterists, we are going to have a hard time meeting opponents in debate and persuading people of an AD 70 fulfillment if we make the argument the eschaton was purely localized in Judea, while ignoring passages showing Christ’s coming was world-wide in breadth and sweep. I would suggest that, not only do these and similar passages point to a world-wide coming of Christ, but that *cosmic language* used by the prophets carries a similar meaning and import.

The Day & Coming of the Lord in the Prophets

We should acknowledge at the outset that the coming of Christ in the events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 were not *completely* unique in history. As Preterists, we have *always* made appeal to Old Testament examples of the coming and day of the Lord to show the *non-literal* nature of prophetic language. We have always argued that there have been *many comings* of the Lord and *many days* of the Lord down through the centuries. We point to these to show that the New Testament day of the Lord was *not* in that sense unique, and that Christ’s NT coming would therefore accord with Old Testament examples in that it would be *providential*, not bodily and visible; and that language of the earth’s being consumed was *figurative* not literal. A favorite example of prophetic language from the Old Testament is Isaiah 34:

*The mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the **host 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 off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be **bathed in heaven**: behold, it shall come down upon **Idumea**, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. Isa. 34:3-5*

As Preterists, we correctly point to the figurative nature of the language in this passage. A typical Preterist argument has it that notwithstanding the language of cosmic proportions, the judgment was merely local, involving only Edom. We then point to passages such as II Pet. 3:10-12 as proof that the judgment contemplated there was also local, encompassing only Palestine. But our proof text is defective. A closer reading will

show that the judgment upon Edom was, in fact, *world-wide*. Here is how the *whole* passage reads:

Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of the carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host 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 off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. Isa. 34:1-5

Thus, not only is the passage in no way merely local; by its express terms it speaks to a time of wrath upon *the whole world*, upon *all nations*, and their armies. The same prophecy, stripped of the poetic imagery, was given by Jeremiah as follows:

Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them...For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee to drink it...to wit, Jerusalem and the cities of Judah...Pharaoh king of Egypt...all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines... Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, all the kings of Tyrus and Zidon...Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth.” Jer. 25:9ff.

Jeremiah speaks to the same historical period and events as Isaiah, even mentioning Edom specifically. However, what tends to get overlooked in the prophecy of Isaiah comes through loud and clear in Jeremiah: the armies of Nebuchadnezzar would visit judgment upon the *whole earth*; *all nations* were to suffer a time of divine wrath. Clearly, the language of cosmic proportions used by Isaiah cannot be understood in reference merely to Edom or any other single nation, but was indicative of the world-wide scope of divine judgment at the hands of the Babylonians. Let us look at yet another favorite proof text of Preterists, and then we are through:

Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity...I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger...This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. Isa. 13:9-13; 14:26

Again, we note the language of cosmic proportions. As Preterists, we typically argue that only Babylon is involved, with a view to arguing that II Pet. 3:10 and similar passages have only Judea in view. However, again our text betrays us. Somehow we read past that part of the passage in which God indicates he would “punish the world” through the Medes and Persians as he had punished through the Assyrians and Babylonians before them.

The point: As Preterists, we have focused upon the figurative nature of prophetic language; we have correctly identified that the language of the prophets is not intended to be taken literally; that times of judgment are often couched in language which *seems* to say the physical creation was coming to an end, but in reality described times of divine judgment upon various nations. However, we have *not* always seen the big picture, but disconnected portions of the whole.

We have *not* seen that cosmic language in which the heavens and earth are consumed is generally indicative of a time of *over-all wrath*, *not* the fall of a single nation. *To my knowledge, not a single example can be shown where cosmic language of the sort we are discussing was used to describe the isolated judgment of a single nation.* This language might occur in the description of a particular nation's fall; a whole book of the minor prophets may even deal with one nation's fall and use this sort of language (Zephaniah, for example); but when we step back and take in the larger picture, that one nation invariably was part of the larger, world-wide devastations being wrought at the same time.

World-wide nature of Eschaton in NT

This becomes important when dealing with the eschaton, because while we have recognized the figurative nature of prophetic language in the Old Testament, we have tended only to admit God's judgment upon *Jerusalem* into our view, while neglecting to take account of passages that show that the eschaton involved other nations and peoples. For example, while Titus was besieging Jerusalem, his father was besieging Italy and Rome. Yet, we talk only of the siege of Jerusalem. Why? The *actual* picture that emerges from the New Testament, and Revelation in particular, is *world-wide* in scope and breadth. There are four main characters in Revelation who are the eschatological enemies of Christ and the church:

The Dragon – This is Leviathan, imperial Rome, the world civil power opposing Christ and his church; the political embodiment of world evil; his ten horns are the ten provinces of Rome, his seven heads the ruling Caesars unto the eschaton.

The Beast – This is the persecuting power of the empire; the defining characteristic of a beast is that it devours men; the defining characteristic of *this* beast is that it makes war against the church and devours the saints. It is driven in Rome by Nero whose name it bore but elsewhere by the harlot.

The False prophet – This is the persecuting power in Palestine under the direction of the rulers of the Jews.

The Harlot – This is Jerusalem and international Jewry, driving the persecution in Asia and

throughout the world, where she is depicted in the spiritual wilderness of the Gentiles, driving the beast in a surfeit of blood and gore, waging war against the church. She is said to sit upon many waters, which the angel interprets to mean *peoples, nations, multitudes and tongues*, signifying the presence of the Jews among the world's nations, where they instigated persecution of the church (Rev. 17:15).

Europe, Asia, Palestine. The same image emerges from the epistles which show there was a time of world-wide persecution that would end with Christ's coming. For example, Thessalonians mentions specifically that their rest from persecution would come when Christ came:

II Thess. 1:6 - Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

Thessalonica is in the northern Achaia, near Macedonia. How could the fall of Jerusalem in the Middle East bring relief to the saints in Thessalonica unless the eschaton was world-wide? The epistles of I & II Peter are to the same effect. These were addressed to the saints in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia near Armenia and the southern coast of the Black Sea. Peter's epistles show that the *eschatological battle* was occurring even here, and that the saints were under a time of persecution. Significantly, it is to these churches that Peter wrote the promise of a new heavens and earth (II Pet. 3:13). If the eschaton was local and the heavens and earth of II Pet. 3:10 were symbols of things situated in Palestine, how could churches near the Black Sea receive new heavens and earth by the fall of Jerusalem? The short answer is that language of cosmic proportions was never intended to be interpreted locally or in reference to a single nation, but world-wide.

What follows is a catalogue of world disasters; a survey of the cataclysmic events that overtook the world at the eschaton. We offer these to help demonstrate that Christ's coming was world-wide and in no way confined to the fall of Jerusalem.

Catalogue of World Disasters

Year	Event in Roman Empire
AD 60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revolt of Britons under Queen Boudicca; 160,000 Romans and Britons slain. Dio Cassius describes the atrocities the Britons committed thus: “They hung up naked the noblest and most distinguished women and then cut off their breasts and sewed them to their mouths, in order to make the victims appear to be eating them; afterwards they impaled the women on sharp skewers lengthwise through the entire body. All this they did to the accompaniment of sacrifices, banquets and wanton behavior, not only in all their other sacred places, but particularly in the grove of Andate. This was their name for Victory, and they regarded her with most exceptional reverence.” Dio Cassius, LXII, 7. • The Lycus valley and cities of Laodicea and Colosse were destroyed by earthquakes.
AD 61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pestilence in Asia and Ephesus
AD 62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gymnasium in Rome was struck by lightning and burned to the ground, reducing a statue of Nero which it contained to a shapeless lump of bronze. • An earthquake demolished the better part of the populous Campanian town of Pompeii. • A Great famine in Armenia and Palestine
AD 63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nero’s wife, Poppaea, gives birth to a daughter, which died in less than four months. This child represented the last of Caesarean blood. With the death of Nero, the blood of the Caesars would thus perish from earth. • On the 5th February, 63, the city of Pompeii was nearly engulfed by an earthquake. In 79 it would be completely buried by Vesuvius.
AD 64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The burning of Rome and almost the complete destruction of the city. Rome was divided into 14 regions, of which four remained intact, three were leveled to the ground, in the other seven nothing survived by a few dilapidated houses. One writer described it thus: “‘The most precious antiquities of Rome, the houses of the ancient leaders decorated yet with triumphal spoils, the most sacred objects, the trophies, the <i>ex-voto</i> antiques, the most esteemed temples—all the material of the old worship of the Romans had disappeared. It was like the funeral of the reminiscences and legends of the fatherland.’” Renan, <i>Le Antichrist</i>, p. 75 • Revolt of the gladiators in the town of Praeneste; followed by a huge navel disaster. Nero ordered the fleet to return to Campania by a given date, with no allowance for hazards of the sea. The helmsmen therefore, in spite of a raging storm, put out from port and were destroyed. • Conspiracy to assassinate Nero and place Piso upon the throne is discovered; Nero begins a reign of terror – Lucan, Seneca, and most of Rome’s leading citizens will suffer death in a general political purge.
AD 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fire at Lyons, France, destroyed most of the colony; the disaster was so pronounced, Seneca devoted a letter to the fire, declaiming the fickleness of fortune and the transitory nature of life. • Parthians at war with Rome for control of Armenia. • Pestilence decimates Rome; Suetonius gives the number of those cut down by the plague at 30,000. The pestilence was followed by a hurricane in Campania:

	<p>“Upon this year, disgraced by so many deeds of shame, Heaven also set its mark by tempest and by disease. Campania was wasted by a whirlwind [hurricane], which far and wide wrecked the farms, the fruit trees, and the crops, and carried its fury to the neighbourhood of the capital, where all classes of men were being decimated by a deadly epidemic. No outward sign of a distempered air was visible. Yet the houses were filled with lifeless bodies, the streets with funerals. Neither sex nor age gave immunity from danger; slaves and the free-born populace alike were summarily cut down, amid the laments of their wives and children, who, themselves infected while tending or mourning the victims, were often thrown upon the same pyre.” Tacitus XVI, xiii.</p>
AD 66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revolt of Jews; destruction of fifth legion under Cestius. • 50,000 Jews slain in Alexandria; Syria turned into an armed camp and Jews and Greeks slaughter one another, giving vent to long standing hatred between them. Josephus describes Syria as being filled with heaps of dead bodies. • Germans, Gauls, Sythians (Sarmatians) revolt. • Vespasian suppresses revolt in Pontus.
AD 68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This year saw five emperors in the space of 1 year 22 days – Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian. • Famine in Rome, aggravated by Nero’s use of grain ships to import sand for his arena. • Julius Vindex, governor of Gaul (France), leads revolt against Nero; Vindex offered the imperial throne to Galba, procurator of Spain. Lucius Verginius Rufus, governor of Germany, was sent against him, but the two concluded an agreement to join forces against Nero and back Galba for the throne. Ignorant of their leader’s agreement, Rufus’ forces attack Vindex’s army unawares, resulting in 20,000 deaths. Overcome with grief for his troops and unhappy fate, Vindex committed suicide. • Galba declared emperor by Roman senate; Nero decreed a public enemy; commits suicide. • Galba sentences thousands of soldiers to death for their part in a mutiny under Nymphidius, who attempted to persuade the praetorians to proclaim him Caesar in place of Galba.
AD 69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otho declared emperor by praetorian guard; Galba assassinated; troops loot, and plunder city, murdering and killing at will; Otho was described as being carried to the capital over heaps of dead bodies while the forum still reeked with blood. • Civil war between Otho and Vitellius. 80,000 die in battle between Vitellius and Otho at Bedraicum. Otho commits suicide; Vitellius declared emperor by Roman senate. The victorious troops of Vitellius plunder Italy: <p>“But the distress of Italy was now heavier and more terrible than that inflicted by war. The troops of Vitellius, scattering among the municipalities and colonies, indulged in every kind of robbery, theft, violence and debauchery. Their greed and venality knew no distinction between right and wrong; they respected nothing, whether sacred or profane. There were cases too where, under the disguise of soldiers, men murdered their personal enemies; and the soldiers in their turn, being acquainted with the country, marked out the best-stocked farms and the richest owners for booty or destruction, in case any resistance was made. The generals were subject to their troops and did not dare to forbid them.” Tacitus, <i>Histories</i>, II, lvi; Loeb. Ed</p>
AD 69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiber floods; men swept to death; tenements collapse, killing occupants; famine ensues due to general conditions and inability of grain ships to navigate Tiber. • A sudden eruption of the sea inundated Lycia, a port city in Turkey. • Pergamum destroyed by earthquake.

AD 70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vespasian declared emperor in Syria while making war against Jews. City of Cremona, Italy, burned and 50,000 slain in battle between forces of Vitellius and Vespasian. • Civil war reaches city of Rome; 50,000 slain in siege. • Jupiter Capitolinus burned. AD 70 thus saw the destruction of the two greatest temples in the world – Jerusalem and Rome. • Various uprisings in Germany; Dio Casius mentions one battle where the river was dammed with the bodies of the fallen.
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This survey, by no means exhaustive, shows that the whole Roman empire, from Britain, Spain, France and Germany, to Armenia, Palestine, and Egypt experienced times of unprecedented wrath as Christ avenged the quarrel of his covenant and the persecution of his church.

Conclusion

Did Christ come in the events marking the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70? Unquestionably, but it is equally clear that his coming was not limited to Palestine. The Psalms, Daniel, the prophets, Revelation, the epistles, language, and history all combine in one united voice to declare Christ’s coming was world wide. Admitting all this evidence into our paradigm is one of the chief challenges Preterism faces in coming years.

An Open Letter to Mac Deaver

Dear Mac,

I appreciated your debate with Don Preston and admired your command of God’s word. I respect your learning and labor in the Lord greatly. Bill Fangio showed me your letter to him. I thought it might be profitable if we could correspond a bit on the topic of eschatology. Your letter mentioned two topics, so I will try to confine myself to them: 1) the new heavens and earth; 2) the resurrection of I Cor. 15.

In preface, let me say that the church of Christ of the Stone/Campbell Movement has never been strong in eschatology. In fact, there is a tendency to avoid it. Few congregations would feel comfortable or capable of undertaking a study of Revelation or even comparably simple passages like Matthew 24. Ask the average minister who the “man of sin” refers to and you will not receive a definitive answer. We seem to be comfortable not knowing, as if these parts of God’s word are better left alone. There is also a tendency to avoid Old Testament studies, or at least to down-play these as “unnecessary.” Most of our members are unfamiliar with the language of the prophets, if they study them at all, and are ill-equipped to make a studied judgment about

the literalness of the language they employ. When they encounter language in the New Testament about the “day of the Lord” or of a “collapsing universe” they are totally unequipped to approach it in an intelligent way. Identical language to that used by Peter in his second epistle occurs all through the Old Testament to describe times of divine judgment upon the nations. Yet our people, completely ignorant of those examples, must grope in the darkness, assuming that the language is purely literal. Any suggestion that this language is figurative is thought incredulous, not because examples cannot be brought forward to demonstrate that proof, but because our people have never heard it before. We are not the “Bible toting, Bible quoting” people we once used to be. Our people’s lack of grounding in the Old Testament is the more disconcerting when we consider that the New Testament is the Old Testament *fulfilled*. How strange that the Old Testament nowhere predicts the destruction of the earth at Christ’s second coming. Just the opposite, the Messiah was to bring in a kingdom and reign of ever-lasting righteousness, a time of renewal and unprecedented peace, when men and nations were reconciled to each other and to God. But

we teach that Jesus' ultimate objective is to destroy the whole earth! (I am reminded of Peter and John who asked if they should call down fire on the Samaritans, and the Lord's answer, the Son of Man came to save, not destroy.) Where is it ever taught by the prophets that the Messiah would destroy the earth?! The standard eschatology of our churches introduces a total disparity between the testaments when they affirm that Christ will come to destroy the earth and cosmos. Far from the New Testament being the fulfillment of the Old, it is as if there were a total break in the eschatology of the Old Testament and the New! My challenge: Identify a single Old Testament passage that unambiguously affirms the cosmos would be destroyed by Christ.

Just a short time ago it would have been deemed heretical to teach that Revelation spoke to events fulfilled in the first century. The moving figures of the Restoration Movement were not of this mind (Campbell's Millennial Harbinger thought the Millennium was near at hand, not on the basis of what the Bible taught, but upon his idea of world population and the necessity for Christ's return to save us from overpopulation!). Yet, in the 1900's we begin to witness a very definite movement toward the view that Revelation was mostly, if not totally, fulfilled by A.D. 70. Names like Ulrich Beeson and Foy E. Wallace, among countless others, began teaching a contemporary-historical fulfillment of Revelation in the mid 1900's. One brother – Clifton Voss (Chickasha, OK) – had his tombstone engraved about 1955 with a time-line affirming Christ's coming in A.D. 70, and that we are today living in the new heavens and earth (if you would like, I will email you pictures of the Voss headstone, it is a great human interest piece). Needless to say, these men (much like Campbell, and others before them) met with scorn and derision in their time from the "faithful brethren" but, lo and behold, today Sunset School of Preaching, Lubbock, TX, teaches Revelation from a fulfilled perspective! Marvels never cease. Yesterday's heresies are admitted facts today. My point in this is to show that our churches are in a state of flux on questions of eschatology. There has been a tendency to avoid these questions in the past, but as we study them we are definitely moving - *as a brotherhood* - in the direction of a contemporary-historical analysis, if not full Preterist, certainly at least partial Preterist in approach. And this movement is by no means confined to the churches of

Christ. From rejecting the "late date" of Revelation, to the significance assigned to the number of the beast as Nero's name, the trend toward interpreting eschatology in light of a contemporary-historical analysis (Preterist) is breaking out all over.

You agree in your letter that the new heavens and earth seem in some form or manner to speak to present era and church (citing Isa. 65:17). I am encouraged that you agree Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled. Certainly, this is the way Stephen must have understood it when he cited the prophecy before the Sanhedrin, when accused of saying Christ would come and destroy the temple and change the customs Moses delivered to the people (Acts 6:14; 8:48, 49). Effectively, Stephen's defense was that he was not saying anything Isaiah had not prophesied long before. Stephen's only addition was to announce that it was coming to fulfillment in their day. Isa. 66:15 specifically mentions the Lord coming in "fire" with whirlwinds and chariots to avenge the persecution of his saints and the Jews' obstinate refusal to abandon the temple service and acknowledge the sacrifice and priesthood of Christ (Isa. 65:3-6). Obviously, such language becomes enormously important when we encounter New Testament prophecies like those contained in Matthew 24, Acts 2:14-40 (*cf.* Joel 2:28-32), Heb. 10-12, II Pet. 3 and Revelation. Hebrews 12:26 specifically mentions shaking the heavens and earth; II Pet. 3 and Revelation both close with the theme of a new heavens and earth that would obtain following a time of world wrath in which the powers that be were shaken, and the thrones of kingdoms overthrown (*cf.* Haggai 2:6). Given the historical context of Isaiah's prophecy as defined by Stephen, and Joel's prophecy as defined by Peter (both in Acts), any fair analysis must own that the events of the first century claim the most probable period of fulfillment. Peter said "Save yourself from *this* untoward generation" (Acts 2:39). This day of the Lord (v. 20) would overtake Peter's generation. Must we not conclude it is the *same* day of the Lord of his second epistle? What justification could there be to look past the first century to our time and beyond? Certainly, many prominent church men down through the centuries have understood these prophecies are already fulfilled. One very early source that may be cited in proof of fulfillment is Origen:

“We do not deny, then, that the purificatory fire and the destruction of the world took place in order that evil might be swept away, and all things be renewed; for we assert that we have learned these things from the sacred books of the prophets...And anyone who likes may convict this statement of falsehood, if it be not the case that the whole Jewish nation was overthrown within one single generation after Jesus had undergone these sufferings at their hands. For forty and two years, I think after the date of the crucifixion of Jesus, did the destruction of Jerusalem take place.”¹

Another is our own Foy E. Wallace Jr, who said:

“The heaven and earth, and troubled sea, having passed away and represented as being no more, indicated the changed conditions within the existing governments and society to make them favorable for the prosperity of the cause of Christ and his church throughout the empire...the vision represented the new conditions to surround the church in the changed world.”²

Both of these writers thus affirm the new heavens and earth are a present reality. To these may be added famous names like Bishop John Lightfoot, John Owen, Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, and others. All this to say, the burden of proof must be *very heavy* indeed for those that would argue, as you do, that there is some further fulfillment of these prophecies remaining. Peter mentions a promise. What and where is that promise, if not Isaiah? If Isaiah is applied by Stephen to his day, by what process or justification do we apply it to our future? Is it the “sound” or “feel” of the language Peter employs? What of it? This kind of language has a long history in the prophets, who consistently use it figuratively. Sir Isaac Newton said this about the *usus loquendi* of the prophets regarding the “heavens and earth”:

“The figurative language of the prophets is taken from the analogy between the world natural and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly, the world natural, consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the

whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people, or so much of it as is considered in prophecy; and the things in that world signify the analogous things in this. For the heavens and the things therein signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them: and the earth, with the things thereon, the inferior people; and the lowest parts of the earth, called Hades or Hell, the lowest or most miserable part of them. Great earthquakes, and the shaking of heaven and earth, are put for the shaking of kingdoms, so as to distract and overthrow them; the creating of a new heaven and earth, and the passing of an old one; or the beginning and end of a world, for the rise and ruin of a body politic signified thereby. The sun, for the whole species and race of kings, in the kingdoms of the world politic; the moon, for the body of common people considered as the king's wife; the stars, for subordinate princes and great men; or for bishops and rulers of the people of God, when the sun is Christ. Setting of the sun, moon, and stars; darkening the sun, turning the moon into blood, and falling of the stars, for the ceasing of a kingdom.”³

Before we cast aside long, established usage and treat Peter’s language literally, we ought to require a solid exegetical basis. I put forth my challenge again: name one Old Testament prophet who taught the Messiah would come and destroy the cosmos. And if this is not what the prophets taught, why do we put these words into Jesus’ and the apostles’ mouths?

Regarding the resurrection, there does appear to have been some misunderstanding in the debate, as you suggest. Most people probably felt you believed in the resurrection of physical bodies or seemed to change positions midway in the debate. I am glad to see (and will pass along to others) that what you actually believe is a resurrection *from* physical death. In this you and I are wholly agreed. However, I fail to see how you can postpone man’s deliverance from the power of sin and death to the future. The deliverance of man from Hades was, perhaps, the most urgently looked-for promise of the Messiah. Isaiah and Hosea spoke specifically to this work; it is also implicit in many of the

¹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, IV, xxi-xxii; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV, p. 505, 506.

² Foy E. Wallace Jr., *The Book of Revelation* (1963, Wallace Publications, Ft. Worth), p., 426.

³ Isaac Newton, *Observations on the Prophecies*, Part i. chap. ii

Psalms; the “sure mercies” of David looked to the ransom of the soul from death. Certainly, resurrection was the great object of the apostle’s preaching. What is redemption from sin if our only hope is to molder away in the grave or languish forever in Hades?

Daniel 12:2, 7 makes very clear that the resurrection of the multitudes who “slept” would occur at the time of Jerusalem’s fall. The fall of the city and temple appears thus to have been a sign that man’s banishment from God’s presence, as typified in the ceremony of the temple, where God was remote from the worshiper and could be approached through a mediator and the blood of sprinkling, was done away in the cross and that man can now approach “boldly” the throne of grace (Heb. 6:19; 10:19). But if the *legal* barrier of sin is done away in Jesus’ cross (signified by the veil being rent in twain at his death Matt. 26:51), what claim does Hades still have over the dead? Jesus quotes Daniel 12:11 regarding the abomination of desolation in Matt. 24:15; he quotes Dan. 12:2 in John 5:28, 29. The whole thrust of the latter text is that the resurrection predicted in Daniel was *imminent*. When Daniel 12, Matt. 24, and John 5 are read in each other’s light, what is to put off the resurrection from Hades? I can only conclude that it is bare tradition. We have already seen that Foy E. Wallace Jr., Origen, and many others teach Revelation is all or nearly all fulfilled, and that we are in the new heavens and earth, the government of the Messiah. Rev. 21, 22 both make very plain that the imagery is not of heaven; the new Jerusalem is going the wrong way! New Jerusalem comes down *out of* heaven, not goes up! Outside the city are lost, unregenerate men (Rev. 22:15). The nations bring their glory into the church as they obey the gospel (Rev. 21:24; 22:2); the gates are open night and day, in every direction, inviting men to come in and partake of the waters of life (gospel of Christ) (Rev. 21:25; 22:17). The point of the imagery is that the believer is in restored fellowship with God through Christ; God tabernacles with us through the church (Rev. 21:3; Eph. 2:21). It would be difficult to miss the meaning of the symbolism. But - *and here is the point* - Rev. 20:11-15 portrays the resurrection as happening *before* the new Jerusalem descends and the new heavens and earth come about. Affirming as you do that Isaiah’s promised new heavens and earth are a present reality would seem to require that the resurrection be an

accomplished fact. If not why not? What is there in scripture or logic to postpone the resurrection from Hades? How is the believer today better advantaged by the blood of Christ than the saints of old if all are still waiting for the resurrection from Hades these two thousand years?

Perhaps a friendly rematch between you and I is in order. I would propose a written debate, four affirmatives, four negatives apiece, 20 page limit, single spaced, Times New Roman. The debate can be published in our respective newsletters, on the web, and in book form. Think it over; let me know; I am certain it would be profitable for all.

Excerpts from Great Preterist Books

“War was declared between the Empire and the Church...yet the defeat is the first victory in this warfare, and the Roman dimly apprehends it. ‘You slay us, and we conquer by your slaying,’ cried the fierce African [Tertullian]. ‘The cloak of suffering is our robe of victory, the axle, stake, and faggots form our triumphal car.’ The first page of the ‘epic of Christian martyrdom’ is written at Rome. The epic shall embrace the warfare of more than two hundred and fifty years. Rome shall become the ‘second holy city’ of the new religion. But now on this summer night Christ’s Advent of a surety seems sore delayed. Rome and her Empire are powerful and endure. The Christians have joined battle, but their leader tarries. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and ever free man, these wage the war, and fear not the coming of the great day of His wrath, which shall destroy them which corrupt the earth. ‘And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice...saying, ‘Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.’” Henderson, Bernard W., *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero* (Oxford, 1902), p. 253.

“The theory of an extensive Domitianic persecution has rested chiefly on a late date for the Apocalypse; modern criticism now prefers a date about A.D. 70.” Henderson, Bernard W., *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero* (Oxford, 1902), p. 304.

C.S.I. AND A BIBLICAL STATE OF AFFAIRS

Rational Preterism and Tractatus

By Morry Lee

Summary.

Rational Preterism critically tests the idea that all biblical prophecy was fulfilled in the first century. Here a unique CSI conception of a state of affairs is adapted to the bible, as far as it goes.

I really like crime scene investigation shows. A man is done to death. Plastic ribbon is thrown around the house to isolate the crime scene from contamination. A young detective sleuth arrives on the scene with hair gel and a magnifying glass. Aha! There is an inconspicuous piece of chewing gum on the carpet beside the body. It has an odd mark on it. With tweezers he delicately places the ordinary item in a plastic bag and seals it. The cigar-chewing inspector notices him picking up the gum and rolls his eyes. “What! Chewing gum??” “We’re wasting time here. It could be anybody’s...forget the gum,” says our fall-guy Inspector, “and find real evidence, like a knife. Jeez.. give me a break!” and stalks off impatiently to find *real* evidence. However the hero is not put off by his overbearing boss. He knows that every crime scene is individual and unified by one combination of facts – each fact is unique to the scene, and every fact is interconnected to every other fact.

Every crime scene, plane crash, or historical event is a *state of affairs*.^{4, 5, 6} The rules of the game are the same. Each state contains affairs

peculiar to it, and every event is the totality of its parts. The parts are its facts. The parts are a combination of unique facts of; *time, place, description, context, cause, identity, means, and motive*. Who killed who, when, where, how, and why? Our dashing sleuth knows in a state of affairs objects [facts] fit into one another like the links in a chain.⁷ The existence of facts is a positive fact, and their non-existence is a negative fact.⁸ They exclude fictitious excuses and eliminate improbable and fanciful guesses. Facts ‘speak’ to us of what really is. They describe the clothing of the killer, the facts whisper cause and motive.

Our hero has a dinner date with his gorgeous blonde fiancée. He has to pass by the forensic lab on the way to pick her up. To hurry along the investigation he drops off his small gleanings from the crime scene, including the plastic bag with the gum. He attaches little importance to the gum...but its existence at the crime scene is connected to the crime. Who knows? He gets back into his Honda Civic and chugs off to his date.

The next day he gets a call at the police station. He’s told the gum has a tooth indentation in it – an odd shaped molar, with a bridge. A plaster cast is taken off the gum and photographed. Dental records are cross-checked for a match.

Two days drag by. The inspector is fuming at the lack of progress in the murder. The media demands answers and the police Chief is on his back. There are no suspects and only two vague witnesses. His desk phone rings. It’s Records. They found a **dental match** on the gum. Now they have an **identity**. The suspect (a known felon) is questioned as a person of interest. His alibi can’t fully explain his whereabouts at the

⁴ Tractatus Logico Philosophicus. Ludwig Wittgenstein. 1922 Keegan Paul.

⁵ Wittgenstein.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Wittgenstein

⁶ Online Tractatus text available at

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5740/5740-pdf.pdf>

⁷ Tractatus 2.03

⁸ Tractatus 2.06

time of the murder. A knife is found. They look into his circumstances. They find he knew the victim and has a conviction for stabbing. Now they have **context**. They find he was owed money by the victim. Now they have **motive**. The gum connects the owner of the gum to the **time and place** of the killing. Now he's the chief suspect. He is placed squarely in a criminal state of affairs with opportunity and motive. His alibi fails. The absence of facts is a negative fact. The positive fact of the gum places him at the scene. The villain is trapped in a web of cross-connexions; **dental, identity, time, place, context, motive, and means**. Under interrogation the suspect finally confesses.

He is tried and found guilty. Justice is served, the inspector sacked, our sleuth gets a promotion and drives off into the sunset with the blonde, but the chewing gum is the real hero of our tale. Another CSI case successfully solved. Let us now consider the biblical end-time and treat it with the same rules we would apply to a crime scene.

ISSUE

When is the end-time state of affairs of which Jesus was speaking? What clues can we observe at the scene in the first century?

FACTS

Consider a limited sample of end time facts from the Olivet discourse Matthew 23-24.

- *The end of the holy city Jerusalem in this generation Matt 23:35-37*
- *The end of the holy temple in Jerusalem Matt 24:1*
- *The end of the age Matt 24:3*
- *Jesus coming in clouds (parousia) at the end of the age Matt 24:3*
- *Abomination in the holy temple in the holy city Jerusalem Matt 24:15*
- *Flight into the Judean mountains Matt 24:16*
- *All these things [prophetic signs] fulfilled in this generation. Matt 24:34*

RULE

In a biblical state of affairs, the totality of bible facts determines what is the biblical case, and also determines what is not the case.⁹

APPLY RULE TO FACT

Facts of **IDENTITY** tie the end time quite naturally to a first century state of affairs in Judea. Observations:

- *The end of the holy city Jerusalem Matt 23:35-37*
- *The end of the holy temple in the holy city Jerusalem Matt 24:1*
- *Jesus coming in clouds (parousia) at the end of the age Matt 24:3*
- *Abomination in the holy temple in the holy city Jerusalem Matt 24:15*
- *Freedom and flight into the Judean mountains Matt 24:16*
- *All these things [prophetic signs] fulfilled in this generation. Matt 24:34.*

Facts of **CHRONOLOGY** tie the end time naturally to a C.1st state of affairs. Observations:

- *The end of the holy city Jerusalem in this generation Matt 23:35-37*
- *All these things [prophetic signs] fulfilled in this generation. Matt 24:34*

Facts of **CONTEXT** tie the end time naturally to a C.1st state of affairs in AD 70. Observations:

- *THE END of the holy city Jerusalem Matt 23:35-37*
- *THE END of the holy temple in Mosaic Jerusalem Matt 24:1*
- *THE END of the Mosaic age Matt 24:3*
- *THE END of all things [prophetic signs] in that C.1st generation. Matt 24:34.*

Facts of **CAUSATION** tie the end of the age naturally to a C.1st Mosaic state of affairs.

- *THE END of the holy city Jerusalem Matt 23:35-37*
- *THE END of the holy temple in Mosaic Jerusalem Matt 24:1*

⁹ Tracatus 1.12

- *THE END of the MOSAIC AGE in Mosaic Jerusalem Matt 24:3*

Q. What is the *gum* that connects **the end of the age** with **the end of the holy city Jerusalem**, the **end of the temple**, and **that generation** – and **why?** What is the connection between the temple and the end of the age? And why does the **end of the age** (24:3) occur between the judgment on the Jerusalem temple (24:1) and Jesus coming in clouds?(24:3)

A. The **end of the Mosaic age** occurs between the judgment on the Jerusalem temple and Jesus coming in clouds **because the Mosaic covenant was in the Holy temple**. The evidence for this is found in 1 Kings 8:1,8-10. Simply, the Mosaic age depended on the Mosaic temple for its continuance. The temple was the central organizing idea of the Mosaic world – end the temple, and you end the age. It was Solomon who placed the Ark of the Covenant and Mosaic Law in the temple. Consider the account of the opening of the Jerusalem temple.

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' households of the sons of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the city of David, which is Zion But the poles were so long that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place before the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen outside; they are there to this day. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10 It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the CLOUD filled the house of the LORD (1 Kings 8:1,8-10)

The Mosaic Age and Solomon's temple were woven to Jerusalem *locationally* in the first century. The Mosaic covenant was located *in* and *with* the millennial temple in Jerusalem. The temple was the House of God's dwelling. Jehovah lived there. It was the theological, legal, and juridical centre of the nation. The promises were there and judgment. It was the covenantal centre for sacrifice and blood offerings. The remembrance of sin, forgiveness and vengeance were there. It doubled as the collection centre for tithes, the national treasury and bureau of weights and measures. The temple police executed the law there, the king was crowned

there. The temple gave national identity, purpose and focus. Three times yearly every male from every city visited Jerusalem to pay their respect to Moses and to the God of Moses -gravitated to Jerusalem like rivers to the sea. The central organizing idea of Jesus' age, in a real sense, was the temple.

TYOPOLOGY

Solomon's temple and Jesus are combined ***typologically*** in the first century. Is this a coincidence? Consider-Solomon (1000-931 BC) placed the Mosaic tablets in the newly constructed temple. As king, he made a temporal covenant with JHWH on behalf of the people. He prophesied of the end of the earthly temple. (1 Kings 9:6-9) Typology weaves Jesus the son of David into the very fabric of the temple. Jesus' law is written on the undivided tablet of the human heart. Jesus, the '*greater than the temple*' constructed a spiritual temple. As spiritual king, he made an eternal covenant with JHWH on behalf of the people. He prophesied of the end of the earthly temple in that generation. (Matt 24:1-3)

Solomon's temple and Jesus are united ***prophetically*** in the first century. Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24 was fulfilled in that generation forty years after his death in AD 70 – completion. Thus from the death of Solomon in 930 BC to the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy in AD 70 was one thousand years – totality. The first temple was destroyed on the 9th day of the month of Ab, a summer month. The second temple was destroyed on the same day, same month, and same season as the first temple; 9th day of the month of Ab, a summer month. Was this all an accident? Both Josephus and the Romans believed this was no accident, but divinely appointed justice.¹⁰ We know the Mosaic age ended with the end of the temple and the holy city in Jesus' own generation in 70 AD.¹¹

Solomon's temple and Jesus are combined ***terminally*** in the first century. The end of the temple brought the end of the end of the Mosaic

¹⁰ Wars 6:4:8 ; 6:9:1. "Surely we have had God as our helper in this war...who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications." General Titus.

¹¹ Siege of Jerusalem.
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_\(AD_70\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(AD_70))

age. The end of earthly Jerusalem led to the consummation of Jesus' spiritual temple, New Jerusalem. The two temples – earthly Jerusalem and spiritual New Jerusalem – were essentially connected and mutually dependent as type and antitype, shadow and substance, day and night, for

*The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the **OUTER TABERNACLE** is still standing, which is a **SYMBOL** for the present time. Hebrews 9:8*

All this says is that the way into the heavenly holy place had not yet been consummated when Hebrews was written. (About 64 AD) Throughout Hebrews we know the temple was still standing and operating even while the Old Covenant system was disappearing and being taken away. (Heb 8:4-5, 13; 9:7-8; 10:4-9; 12:28; 13:10-11) It means that the New Jerusalem of 'Day' was near, and the old Jerusalem of 'Night' was far spent. Paul writes;

*10 Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law. 11 Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 **The night is almost gone, and the day is near.** Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Rom 13:9-11*

Peter echoes the same thought:

19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 2 Pet 1:19.

The rule we are applying is: In a biblical state of affairs, the totality of bible facts determines what is the biblical case, and also determines what is not the case.

We affirm thus far that a first century state of affairs integrates many kinds of bible facts; **IDENTITY, DESCRIPTION, GEOGRAPHY, CHRONOLOGY, CONTEXT, CAUSATION,** and **TYPE**. Here a twenty-first century hypothesis is unnecessary and superfluous. It does not arise from observation, is suggested by no biblical time fact, does not look like the facts, and predicts no new facts. It is not simple, not

causal, not systematic, and not rational, and marries a deduction of 'therefore yet future' to an assumption of 'it's always literal'. The true basis of futurism commits the fallacy of circular reasoning. Theories are offered to explain a set of facts. The issue is time. In this case there are no 2000 year time facts to explain. In fact the futurist theory actually *denies* first century time facts that it can't explain. All these are near-fatal shortcomings to the futurist theory.

But the final and fatal blow to futurism is the fulfilment test. Can a first century explanation tie first century prophecy to first century history? Is there a fulfilment of Jesus' Olivet prophecy in that generation? The answer is in the affirmative. The eye-witness and historian Josephus recorded the apocalyptic event in his AD 75 work titled *Wars of the Jews*.¹² Following are excerpts from this work of history that parallels Jesus' Olivet prophecy.

A PROPHETIC STATE OF AFFAIRS FULFILLS AN HISTORICAL STATE OF AFFAIRS¹³

The end of the holy city Jerusalem in that generation. Mtt 23:35-37

***FULFILLED.** All this burning came upon Jerusalem...a city that had been liable to so many miseries during the siege that, had it always enjoyed as much happiness from its first foundation, it would have been the envy of the world. Nor did it...deserve such misfortunes, as by producing such a generation of men as were the occasions of this its overthrow. Wars 6:8:5 p.748*

PROPHECY. The holy temple in Jerusalem demolished stone by stone in that generation. Mtt 24:1-2

***FULFILLED.** Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple..but for the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither*

¹² Josephus. **Wars of the Jews**. Translated by Whiston (1667-1752). Hendrickson, 16th printing 2001

¹³ Jewish, Christian, and secular historical sources agree on these broad facts

believe it had ever been inhabited.
Wars 7:1:1,3 p.750-751

PROPHECY. Jesus coming in clouds with signs at the desolation of the age in that generation. Mtt 24:3

FULFILLED. Thus were the miserable people ...did not attend nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation, but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, ... the denunciations that God made to them. Thus there was a star (20) resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Wars 6:5:3

PROPHECY. Abominable sacrifice and idols in the holy temple in that generation. Mtt 24:15

FULFILLED. And now the Romans after the flight of the Jews from the holy house brought their ensigns [eagles] into the temple and set them up at the eastern gate..and did make sacrifice to them and made Titus Imperator. Wars 6:6:1 p.74

PROPHECY. Jews freed and left to flee into the Judean mountains in that generation. Mtt 24:16

FULFILLED. Titus himself relaxed the order to kill, and made an announcement that deserters could leave if they brought their families out with them..and the number that were sold [as slaves] were about 40,000. Wars 6:8:2 p.747

"The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella. Here those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and his apostles finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole

generation of these evildoers form the earth. Eusebius. History 3:5.

"For when the city was about to be captured and sacked by the Romans, all the disciples were warned beforehand by an angel to remove from the city, doomed as it was to utter destruction. On migrating from it they settled at Pella, the town already indicated, across the Jordan. It is said to belong to Decapolis." [Epiphanius](#). 375 AD On Weights and Measures 15

These historical fulfilments; in the last days of Jerusalem, the temple, and the end of the age in the first century, explain Jesus' Olivet prophecy. But let us cast a wider net. Did the biblical authors expect all prophecy would be fulfilled in their generation? Did they believe they were living in the days of vengeance – the last days? Did they hold the view they were living at the ends of the ages? Did they believe their hour was the last hour? Did they believe the outer temple was a symbol for their present generation, as Jesus prophesied on Mount Olivet?

What did Jesus and the biblical writers; Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul, James, Peter and John say?

PROPHECY

Matthew. Mtt 23:36 Truly ALL THINGS [signs] shall come on THIS GENERATION

Matthew. Mtt 24:34 THIS GENERATION shall not pass till ALL THESE THINGS [signs] FULFILLED

Mark. Mk 13:30 THIS GENERATION will not pass till ALL FULFILLED

Luke. Lk 18:31 Going to Jerusalem where...ALL THINGS ACCOMPLISHED

Luke. Lk 21:22 THESE are the DAYS OF VENGEANCE when ALL THINGS WRITTEN FULFILLED

Luke. Lk 21:32 THIS GENERATION will not pass till ALL THINGS occur

Luke. Acts 3:24 ALL PROPHETS from Samuel foretold THESE DAYS

Paul. 1 Cor 10:11 **US upon whom the ENDS OF THE AGES have come.**

Paul. Heb 9:8 *The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the **OUTER TABERNACLE is still standing, 9 which is a SYMBOL for the present time.***

James. James 5:8-9 *You be patient. The (parousia) **COMING OF THE LORD IS NEAR...the judge standing RIGHT AT THE DOOR.***

Peter. 1 Pet 1:12 *Spirit of Christ **NOW ANNOUNCED TO YOU***

Peter. 1 Pet 4:7 *The **END OF ALL THINGS IS NEAR.***

John. 1 John 2:18 *Children, it is the **LAST HOUR;** and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; **FROM THIS WE KNOW** that it is the **LAST HOUR.***

John. Rev 22:10 *Do not seal up prophecy [Revelation] – the **TIME IS NEAR***

The terms ‘fulfilled’ and ‘accomplished’ signify *completion in totality.* On each point there is a uniform agreement that: *all prophecy was fulfilled, they were in the last days of the temple, it was the end of the age in the first century, in their generation; they believed they were living in the days of vengeance, at the ends of the ages, and it was the last hour, when the outer temple was a symbol for their present generation in 70 AD. Between Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and Peter there is no disagreement.*

Only three fulfilment-options exist: ALL, SOME, or NONE. To deny ALL is to deny the appearances of the facts and confound the very words of Jesus and the biblical writers.¹⁴ Futurist theory damns a first century conclusion as ‘heresy,’ yet the facts remain. It was a maxim of the ideal reasoner Sherlock Holmes, that

¹⁴ See Appendix. Jesus Signs of Matthew 24:1-34 and their first century fulfilment.

“We must look for consistency [patterns in facts] and where there is want of it, we must suspect deception [or error].”¹⁵

No two truths contradict. Here there is a clear observable pattern of facts of chronology, context, and causation. The facts cannot be altered. The remedy to inconsistency is to alter ones point of view, for

“When once you change your point of view, the most damning evidence becomes a clue to the truth.”¹⁶

In this case all the facts indicate the fulfilment of all things lies in Jesus’ own generation. It is a simple truism that when theories do not fit facts, theories must change. We can do nothing against the truth, only for it.

CONCLUSION

A rational explanation to the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 23-24 must cover a broad complex of facts. It must explain end-time facts of: **IDENTITY, GEOGRAPHY, CHRONO-LOGY, CONTEXT, CAUSATION, TYPOLOGY, and finally HISTORY.** Here we have demonstrated a first century state of affairs has scope and range to cover these facts. This is called explanatory power. We have found the theory consistent with Dr. Wittgenstein’s analytic principles. The theory allows facts to:

fit into one another like links of a chain.
Tractatus 2.03

stand in determinate relation to one another.
Tractatus 2.031

reflect the natural structure of a [biblical] state of affairs. Tractatus 2.032

Conversely twenty-first century notions of end time; ignore history, lack chronology, context, causation, typology, and ignore biblical semantics.

¹⁵ The Problem of Thor Bridge.

¹⁶ Ibid

Futurism has no 2000 year time facts, no reason for a 2000 year delay, no 'literal /physical /visible terms, and no 'gaps.'

Futurism is a time theory with no time facts to support it, cannot be observed, tested, proven, nor falsified.

Futurism is a theory that has no simple premise, yet its proof is too simplistic. It is based on the logical fallacy of assuming its literal premise, is not causal, not explanatory, not systematic, and not rational. Most tellingly, its 'prophets' have failed in every generation for 2000 years.

Having established the end time by biblical observation and confirmed it by history, there is no need for a hypothetical futurist scenario, for...

This state of affairs also determines which states of affairs don't exist. Tractatus 2.05

PREDICTIONS FOR REVELATION

Also, if a first century theory is seen in the 'mini apocalypse,' (a slice of the Apocalypse) then we predict the major theme of the 'Apocalypse' is also first century:

the end of *the Holy City Jerusalem*, Rev 11:1-2, 8

the end of *the Holy Mosaic temple* Rev 11:1-2

the end of *came in 42 months, 3 1/2 years, 1260 days, 66-70AD* Rev 11:1-2

the end of *biblical civilization in a judgment 'in clouds'* Rev 1:7

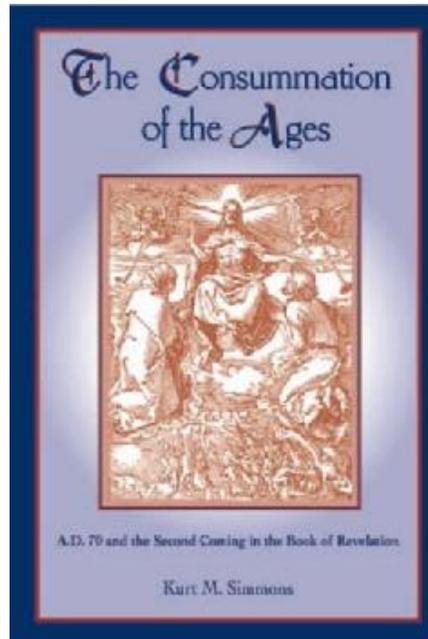
the end of *seen by those that pierced Him* Rev 1:7

It follows that what is true of the *prophetic slice* in Matthew 24 must also hold for the *fulfilment of all scripture in that generation*. This then forms the basis of a wider search consistent with simple observation fact-for-fact, and corresponds to the state of affairs that existed at the time of writing in the first century

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