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FULFILLED! *Magazine*

EXPLORING AND PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

A ceramic mug with a spoon resting on a wooden book, set against a background of white flowers.

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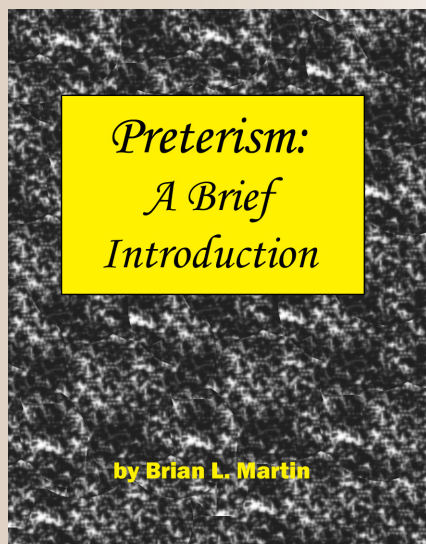


Calling All Full-Preterists: If you, like so many out there, are looking for others of similar eschatology, this is for you. To decide if you would like to take part in a program of networking full-preterists in the US and Canada together in specific locales, please take a moment to read about the database Tony Denton is compiling! Just visit this web site or email him:

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Preterism: A Brief Introduction

This concise, 20-page booklet covers the basics of preterism:

- Literal vs. Spiritual Fulfillment
- Audience Relevance
- Timing Passages
- Apocalyptic Language
- Cloud Comings

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(Please note that this booklet is currently not available from FCG.)

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Reader Beware!

The views expressed in these pages are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FCG or other contributors. FCG does not tell readers what to believe; rather, FCG provides readers with resources intended to aid in discovering biblical foundations informing what they believe. FCG strives to give readers something worthwhile to think about—we avoid telling them what to think. Please understand that we cannot vet every contributor's various doctrinal positions or read every advertised book. We rely on you, the reader, to be a Berean: prayerfully discuss and examine all positions presented according to Scripture to establish any truth or application as you work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

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Editor's Note...

REGARDLESS OF WHERE ONE'S views on COVID-19, racial protests, the Presidential election, etc., fall on the spectrum of widely disparate opinions, I'm sure that we are all glad that 2020 is in the history books. Let's pray that 2021 will be an improvement!

April will mark the completion of my first year in retirement. As I noted in our previous issue, I spent a good chunk of my time first re-designing the magazine and then updating our website. Although I still have many tweaks to make to the website, I'm getting ready to take on my next project—getting FCG's Facebook page updated and populated with regular posts. I don't have a personal Facebook account, and since it has been too long to remember since my last login to FCG's account, I'll probably have to learn the ropes all over again. On second thought, I'm sure I will have to learn the ropes again! Such is life when dealing with technology; it doesn't wait for you, you have to try to keep up.

We've had several readers respond positively to my query in the previous issue about receiving email notifications when issues are available online for viewing/downloading rather than receiving a printed copy in the mail. For those who are old-school like me, I know that I prefer reading a printed copy of any material versus reading on a screen (phone, tablet, PC). Yet many in the younger generation do most of their reading on a screen. If that's

you, and you'd like to save FCG some printing and mailing costs, I have a new link on our website's magazine sign-up page to add your name to our Mailchimp account for email notifications. For the rest of us, we will continue offering the printed version via mail.

I want to thank all of you who have made FCG your charity of choice for your AmazonSmile shopping. Based on your purchases, Amazon gave nearly \$400 of its own money to FCG last year! That's free money that Amazon gives to nonprofits and does not affect your purchase price. Thank you to those who have participated!

Thanks also to those of you who are contributing to "The Preterist Community Team" at Samaritan's Purse. We've donated nearly \$1,800 so far (it will likely be over that amount by the time you read this). Anyone can create a team and ask others to contribute to Samaritan's Purse via their team; I've seen teams in the memory of someone, workplace teams, etc. The way I read the data on the Samaritan's Purse website, "The Preterist Community" team is the top team in the category of "Where Most Needed"—thank you for sharing the vision! As a reminder, "The Preterist Community" team is not affiliated with FCG or any other preterist ministry. The only connection to FCG is that I created the team, but I have not mentioned FCG in the team's description. Nor does the team support any particular "flavor" of preterism; rather, this is simply a



Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt 11:28)

means to participate in meaningful charity work in the name of the gospel and preterism. When other Samaritan's Purse donors see "The Preterist Community" team on display, with a click they can read that preterism is one of the four major views of eschatology, and that it takes the New Testament time statements at face value. Those who may be familiar with preterism will see that preterists can do more than just argue and debate eschatology; we can also work to make a difference—to be salt and light—in the world.

Blessings,

Brian

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Mailbag...

Thank you for sending me the Fall 2020 issue of *Fulfilled!* Magazine. It has been read and re-read a few times now. Very professional looking publication. Clean and aesthetically attractive. But it's the content that is really top notch. Thanks again! I will be contributing financially after the Christmas holiday.



Count me in. I'll be happy to help save you some money with a digital version of *Fulfilled!*



I love your magazine. I like to have it in print format, but I have no problem with receiving it via digital issue. I can print it off myself.



Thanks for all of the work that you and your staff put into making the magazine a great read!



I want to thank you so very much for the magazines we have received this year. There have been many different ideas in the reading. We have enjoyed them very much.



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History of the End

FUTURISTS DISAGREE NOTORIOUSLY ABOUT whether the Parousia and Rapture will occur *before*, in the *middle*, or *after* the Tribulation and Wrath (resulting in Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib, Post-Trib, Pre-Wrath, or Post-Wrath views). And **Preterists** differ not only on how to *sequence* the Tribulation in relation to the Parousia and other end-time events, but also how to *define* it.

For instance, some preterists (e.g., Don K. Preston and others) equate the “Great Tribulation” (Matt 24:21) with God’s outpouring of wrath on the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70, and then place the Parousia and Rapture “immediately after” that wrath was poured out. That is a Post-Trib and **Post-Wrath** Parousia.

In contrast to that, this author (and others) defines the Tribulation as having two phases—tribulation on the church, and wrath on the Jews, with the Parousia and Rapture occurring “immediately after” the tribulation was “cut short,” but before the wrath was poured out. This is a Post-Trib and **Pre-Wrath** Parousia.

Thus, here is how each of these two views sequence the Tribulation and Wrath in relation to the Parousia. Note the placement of the **Parousia** in each view:

[Post-Wrath view]

“Great Tribulation” (Wrath on Jews) ⇒ **Parousia** and Rapture

[Pre-Wrath view]

Tribulation on saints ⇒ **Parousia** and Rapture ⇒ Wrath on Jews

These two views (*Post-Wrath* versus *Pre-Wrath*) are mutually exclusive, which means that only one of them can be right. Therefore, in order to properly *sequence* the **Great Tribulation** in relation to the Parousia and other end-time events, we need to *identify* what it was and when it occurred. There are three key texts here in Matthew 24 which will help us do that (verses 9, 21-22, and 29).

‘Tribulation’ in Matthew 24:9

“Then they will **deliver you to tribulation** [persecution], and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name” (Matt 24:9 NAS95).

Here in Matthew 24:9-13, 20-25 (and its parallel in Mark 13:12-13) Jesus warned His first-century disciples about the coming persecution, including its intensification during the Neronic **persecution** (AD 64-66). There is no hint that this “tribulation” included the wrath-outpouring. It is **persecution** on the saints only.

‘Great Tribulation’ in Matthew 24:21-22

“For **then there will be a Great Tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been **cut short**, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be **cut short**.” (Matt 24:21-22 NAS95).

These two verses are key to determining the **identity** of the “great tribulation” and its place in the **sequence** of end-time events. At first glance, the *great tribulation* seems to refer exclusively to the *wrath-outpouring* upon the Jews during their war with Rome (AD 66-70). And since Luke’s parallel account (Luke 21:22-23) describes this great tribulation as being “days of *vengeance*, *great distress* upon the land, and *wrath* to this people,” it means that the *great tribulation* has to include the wrath-outpouring.

However, we will show that the *great tribulation* also includes the **Neronic persecution**. We know this because verse 21 says that the great tribulation

was already happening “then” (Gk. *tote*, “at the time”) when they saw the Abomination of Desolation. And this is further confirmed in Luke’s parallel account (Luke 21:12-19) where he says that the persecution of the saints would occur “**before**” all the other signs that Jesus predicted (Luke 21:8-11), including the Abomination of Desolation (Luke 21:20), and the Parousia (Luke 21:25-28). Thus, Luke sequences the persecution phase of the great tribulation “before” the Abomination and the wrath-outpouring.

Apostle Paul likewise teaches these **two phases** of the Great Tribulation, and sequences them the same way, when he says that the saints were **destined for tribulation** (1 Thess 3:3), but **not for the wrath** (1 Thess 5:9). Then he promised that they would be *rescued* and *saved* from the wrath **BEFORE** it was **poured out** on their Jewish persecutors at the Parousia (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9; 2 Thess 1:6-8).

This means that the persecution phase of the great tribulation did not begin **after** they saw the Abomination in AD 66, but instead was **already** ongoing and intensifying by the time of the Abomination and would be **cut short** so that some of the elect would remain alive until the Parousia (Matt 24:22).

Thus, it was the persecution that was *cut short*, NOT the wrath. And this reveals the fatal flaw of the **Post-Wrath** view. Since it identifies the great tribulation as the wrath-outpouring only, and does not include the Neronic

These two views are mutually exclusive, which means that only one of them can be right.

Sequencing the Tribulation

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persecution, it is forced to conclude that the wrath was **cut short** and not allowed to run its full course!

But the wrath-outpouring was NOT **cut short**. On the contrary, Daniel 12:7 says that the Jews were to be *completely shattered*. Likewise, both Jesus and Paul said that the wickedness of the Jews *filled up the cup of wrath* which was *fully* (not partially) poured out on Jerusalem (Matt 23:32-36; 1 Thess 2:16). The Jews fully drank the cup of wrath down to its dregs. And the book of Revelation repeatedly shows how ALL of the wrath was poured out in full strength (Rev 14:6-11; cf. Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 12:12; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15). None of God's wrath was held back or **cut short**.

Therefore, the Neronic persecution had to be included in the great tribulation so that it could be **cut short** by the outbreak of the Zealot rebellion in AD 66, when both Jews and Romans had to turn their attention away from killing Christians to fighting their own war. This is further reinforced when we see the same phrase "Great Tribulation" used in **Revelation 7:14**, where it refers to the same Neronic persecution that killed many saints from every nation in the Roman world, and which was cut short **before** the wrath was poured out.

This confirms that the Great Tribulation had **two phases**. The first was *persecution* on the saints, which intensified under Nero, and was then **cut short** so that some of the elect would remain alive until the Parousia. Then the second phase was the *wrath-outpouring* upon the unbelieving Jews who had persecuted the Christians. And we see both phases alluded to here in the Olivet Discourse, in Apostle Paul's epistles, and exhibited in the **real history** as it was recorded by the first-century historians.

This is why a knowledge of first century history is so vitally important. We cannot be certain that we are correctly *identifying* and *sequencing* these events without matching them to the actual history. This is why futurists must speculate and guess at all of this. But we preterists have the real history with which to nail it down with certainty.

'Tribulation' in Matthew 24:29

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Matt 24:29 NAS95).

This third mention of "tribulation" cannot refer to Christ coming "immediately after" the wrath was poured out, since that would imply that *the wrath had already been poured out before Christ came to pour it out!* Thus, the phrase "immediately after the tribulation" only makes sense if it is referring to the Neronic persecution being **cut short** just before Christ came to rescue His saints and pour out His wrath on their persecutors.

Since the **Post-Wrath** view teaches that the Parousia did not occur until *immediately after* the siege of Jerusalem, it would mean that Jesus was NOT present during the siege when the wrath was being poured out. But that contradicts **2 Thessalonians 1:4-10**, which teaches that the purpose of the Parousia was to **give relief** to His saints and **deal out retribution** (pour out wrath) to their persecutors. So, the **Post-Wrath** view has Jesus coming to pour out the wrath **AFTER** it had already been poured out during the siege! *Do you catch the fallacy of that?*

Conclusion

We have seen that there were **two phases** to the Great Tribulation (Neronic persecution and wrath-outpouring).

The persecution was **cut short**, and then Christ came to pour out the wrath. This not only establishes the *identity* of the Great Tribulation, but also properly *sequences* it in relation to the Parousia and the other end-time events.

Thus, immediately after the persecution was cut short, Christ came with His angels to gather the elect (Matt 24:29-31). Those saints were **relieved** from the persecution, **rescued** by

Christ, **taken to heaven**, and **rewarded** in His presence—**BEFORE the wrath** was poured out upon the unbelieving Jews. This shows that the Parousia and Rapture occurred **AFTER** the tribulation on the church was cut short (**Post-Trib**), but **BEFORE** the wrath was poured out (**Pre-Wrath**). So, it was a **Pre-Wrath** Parousia and Rapture. ✚

We have seen that there were two phases to the Great Tribulation (Neronic persecution and wrath-outpouring). The persecution was cut short, and then Christ came to pour out the wrath.

More detailed information about "Sequencing the Tribulation" will be presented in my ongoing "Rapture" debate with Don K. Preston. If you wish to receive it, simply send an email request to: preterist1@preterist.org

Objection Overruled!

Keith Mathison and the Biblical Time Statements - Part 3

The shaking of the heavens and earth in a 'little while'

THIS IS OUR THIRD in a series of responses to Keith Mathison's attempt to negate the time indicators of the imminent parousia and the end of the age in the New Testament corpus.

In his book, *When Shall These Things Be?*, Keith Mathison appealed to Haggai's promise that the Lord would "shake heaven and earth" in a "little while." He claimed that this prophecy was not fulfilled for 520 years (p. 165, 3rd paragraph) in Hebrews 10:37.

As usual, Mathison actually falsifies his own theology when he attempts to make an argument against true preterism. Consider that if Haggai 2 was fulfilled in AD 70, then "heaven and earth" was shaken (removed), at that time, and, *this is critical*, it means that the Lord came, as promised, in Hebrews 10:37! And if 10:37 is fulfilled as Mathison's words demand, that means that the temporal imminence of 10:37 must be taken as objective, not elastic. It also means that Christ's "second appearing" of 9:28 is fulfilled and Mathison's futurism is destroyed! Mathison has inadvertently destroyed his own argument.

Of course, Mathison's entire point is that in Haggai it says that "in a little while" the Lord would shake heaven and earth and that the wealth of the nations would be brought to build (rebuild) the temple. What Mathison, and many commentators, commonly ignore is that the Lord did shake the nations, and the wealth of the nations did contribute to the rebuilding of the temple.

As R. A. Taylor writes:

In Haggai's day this enrichment took place as a result of the decision on the part of the Persian rulers, beginning with Cyrus, to facilitate the rebuilding of the temple by extending financial resources for that purpose. This language also envisages an apocalyptic breaking in of the divine presence in sudden and violent terms and as such seems to have eschatological dimensions. This is the significance attached to Haggai 2:6 by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who sees here an anticipation of the messianic age. In Hebrews 12:26-

29 he says: At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."¹

Taylor is clearly correct, based on Ezra 1:2-4:

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

... Mathison has argued vehemently that to deny the objective imminence of the "at hand" time statements of the kingdom and the Lord's coming is a dangerous and false doctrine.

It may be rejoined that Ezra 1 is to be dated circa BC 539 while Haggai chapter 2 is circa BC 520, thus apparently putting Haggai's prophecy after the fact. But this objection does not negate the facts. Cyrus (Ezra 1) authorized the giving of gold and silver for the rebuilding. And those gifts were given (Ezra 1:6f). The Jews began the project, but got discouraged, due to nearly 20 years of opposition by the Samaritans (Ezra 4:24) before Haggai appeared and rejuvenated their enthusiasm and desire to do the work (Ezra 5:1-2). In fact, at that time the enemies of the rebuilding project were actually commanded to contribute to that work out of their royal treasuries (Ezra 6:8-12). The work proceeded and the temple was rebuilt and dedicated in circa BC 515 (Ezra 6:14-15). Thus, the work of Haggai

Responding to Keith Mathison

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to rebuild the temple was in fact financed by the gifts from the nations—just as he had prophesied—and it was done quickly.

So, there was an imminent “shaking of the nations” that brought the wealth of the Persians—and, as the dominant world empire of that time, the wealth of all the nations under Persian control—to Jerusalem. It did not take 520 years for that to be fulfilled, and thus, Mathison’s objection is overruled!

So, what about the fact that Hebrews cites Haggai? When the writer of Hebrews cited Haggai, he was essentially saying, “Just like God acted imminently to fulfill His word in the days of Haggai, so He was about to act “once more” to shake the heaven and earth. Hebrews may even be employing a form of type and anti-type. But the fact is that Mathison is simply ignoring the testimony of both Scripture and history in his desperate attempt to negate biblical time words.

What is so fascinating, and counterproductive to Mathison, is that in Hebrews 12, the writer was reminding his readers how the Lord had acted “in a little while” to fulfill the words of Haggai. Therefore, with that reminder he was likewise indicating the imminent shaking, not of material creation (just as Haggai was not referencing the shaking of material creation), but the removal of the Old Covenant world. The fact is that in both Haggai and Hebrews, the promises of imminent actions by the Lord were fulfilled.

There is strong scholarly support, throughout history, for the idea that Hebrews 12:25f was not predicting the dissolution of material creation demanded by Mathison’s argument.

The noted Reformed scholar John Owen, commenting on Hebrews 12:25ff on the shaking of heaven and earth, took the position that it referred to the removal of the Old Covenant world.² In modern times, William Lane says, “The explicit association of ‘the earth’ with Sinai and the old covenant (v. 25b, 26a) implies that ‘the heaven’ is to be associated with the new covenant (25ac). ‘Earth’ and ‘heavens’ are symbols of the revelation at Sinai and of the new covenant revelation to the writer’s generation, respectively.”³ Similarly, even Kenneth Gentry sees that Hebrews 12:25-28 was not predictive of any future cosmological catastrophe. He wrote: “The change of the age is finalized and sealed at the destruction of Jerusalem.” He cites Mark 9:1; Galatians 4:25f; Hebrews 12:18-29.⁴

Gentry offers this as well on Hebrews 12:18-28:

The writer of Hebrews contrasts the old covenant and the new covenant (Hebrews 12:18-28), pointing out that the new covenant recipients are currently receiving (*paralambanontes*, pres. act. prtcp.) ‘a kingdom which cannot be shaken’ (Hebrews 12:28). This kingdom will ‘remain’ after God shakes down the old covenant order at the temple’s destruction in AD 70 (Heb. 12:26-27; cp. 8:13), destroying those temple implements made with hands (9:11, 24; Mk 14:58; Acts 7:48).^{5,6}

Thus, Mathison’s attempt to deny, to negate and to mitigate the temporal imminence of Haggai is specious and untenable. We have much more to say in response to Mathison, but must leave that to subsequent articles. †

1. R. A., Taylor, & E. R Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, Vol. 21A, (Nashville; Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004, 159).
2. John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, W. H. Gould, seven Vols., Grand Rapids, Baker, 1855 / 1980, Vol. 7, 366f, cited in David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, (Ft. Worth; Dominion Press, 1987, 413).
3. William Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary, Hebrews 9-13*, Vol. 47b, (Dallas, Tx.; Word Publishers, 1991, 480).
4. Kenneth L. Gentry and Thomas Ice, *The Great Tribulation Past or Future?*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999, 63).
5. Kenneth Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, (Draper, VA., Apologetics Group, 2009, 259).
6. For more on this issue of the end of the Mosaic age—at the destruction of the temple—as the shaking of heaven and earth, I suggest reading Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Lewis, “Jesus, the Temple and the Dissolution of Heaven and Earth” in “Apocalyptic in History and Tradition,” edited by Christopher Rowland and John Barton, “Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha,” Supplement Series 43, 117f.

Start a revival! With essays, blog posts, and the book *Bamboozled Believers*, I am adding my voice to a growing chorus of ordinary Christians who are calling for a new reformation. Christians of all denominations have wandered far from Biblical truth, so we need to swallow our collective pride and admit an error. We have incorporated an error into our creeds and confessions of faith. That error is on an important though non-essential point of doctrine. Here are three simple, undeniable facts:

- The writers of the New Testament repeatedly express their eager expectation of Jesus' imminent return. (Heb 10:37; James 5:8, 9; 1 Peter 4:5, 7; 1 John 2:18; Heb 1:2; John 21:23; and many more . . .)
- Jesus told His disciples that He would return before all of them had died. (Matt 10:23; Matt 16:27, 28; Matt 24:3, 34; Matt. 26:64; Mark 8:38-9:1; Mark 13:30; Luke 9:26, 27; Luke 11:50, 51; Luke 20:16, 19; Luke 21:32)
- The book of Revelation clearly states that it deals with events that were about to happen 2,000 years ago (Rev 1:1, 3; Rev 3:11; Rev 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20)

If Jesus didn't return as promised, then the Bible is nonsense. And if he did return, then all of our end-of-the-world doctrines are nonsense.

Jesus never predicted the end of the "world." He predicted the end of the Old Covenant "age." The age of temple worship and animal sacrifice ended in AD 70. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said that he was living in the "*last days*" before the "*day of the Lord*." He said: ". . . *the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the day of the Lord comes*" (Acts 2:20). We know that Peter was not predicting the end of the world because he was quoting the prophet Joel and if you read Joel 2:30-32 you will see that after the sun goes dark and after the moon turns to blood, there are survivors in Jerusalem. So life goes on after the day of the Lord. The "sun going dark" and the "moon turning to blood" are poetic language. We call prominent athletes and actors "stars." That is a metaphor. The Bible uses the same metaphor when it says that the stars will fall before Jesus' return. The "stars" that fell before Jesus' return in AD 70, were the religious leaders (the stars) of Israel. The futurists' end-time delusions are fueled by metaphors that they take literally.

The "last days" of the New Testament are not the last days of the planet, they are the last days before Jesus' second coming in AD 70. He returned as he promised, and he took "vengeance" on apostate Israel in AD 70 (Luke 21:20-22). The "day of the Lord" in the New Testament is not the end of the world. It is the day when God used Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem and Old Covenant Judaism. Throughout the New Testament there are many references to that impending day of disaster; that day was imminent 2,000 years ago. It is not imminent today.

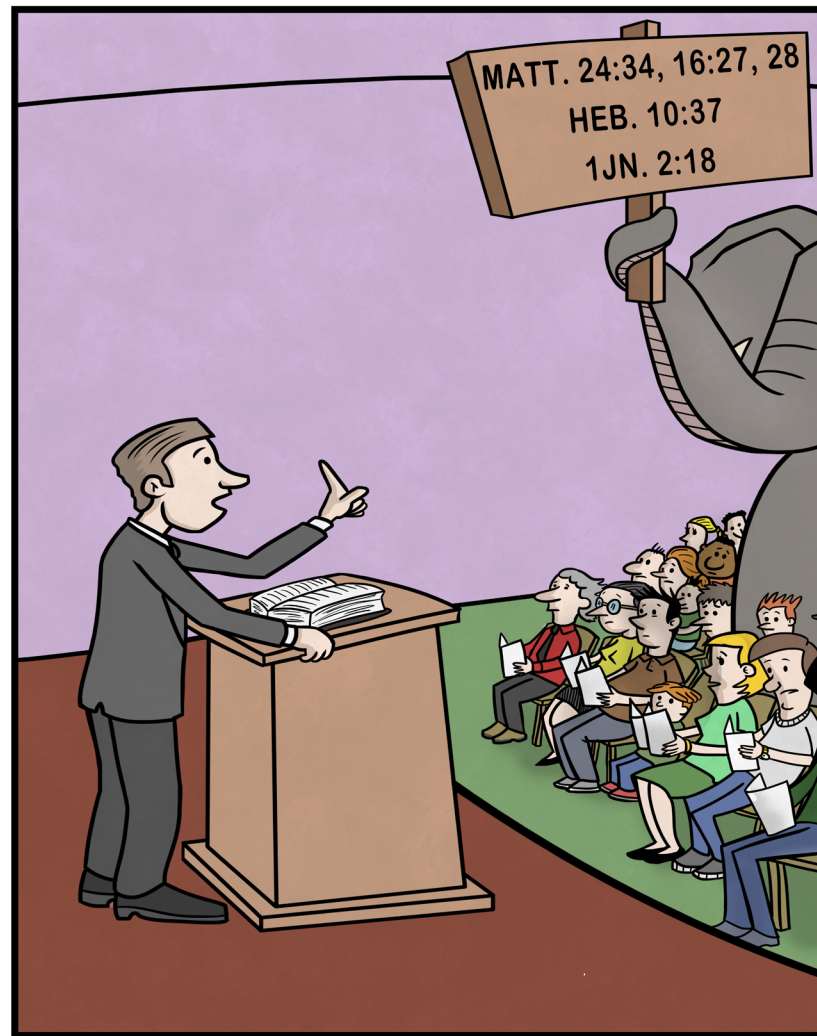
Perhaps you are thinking: "Surely, God would not let the vast majority of Christians and Christian leaders be wrong on such an important issue." But you will soon see that we have

been wrong on very significant issues . . .

Can Orthodoxy be Wrong?

According to the dictionary, heresy is "doctrine that is at variance with orthodox or accepted doctrine." By that definition, the teaching that Jesus' second coming happened in AD 70 certainly is heresy. But by that definition, Martin Luther was a heretic too. When Luther spoke out against the sale of indulgences, he opposed "accepted doctrine" so he was a heretic. But we ask, "How can the acceptance of Bible

BAMBOOZLED



**"Do not read those verses and do not
Biehler is a heretic; that book should**

truth and the rejection of error be heresy?"

Modern day Protestants do not call Luther a "heretic." In fact they applaud him for correcting church error. This shows that we need a better definition of heresy. In Titus 3:10 Paul tells Titus that after two warnings, he should reject a man who is a heretic. According to Strong's Concordance,

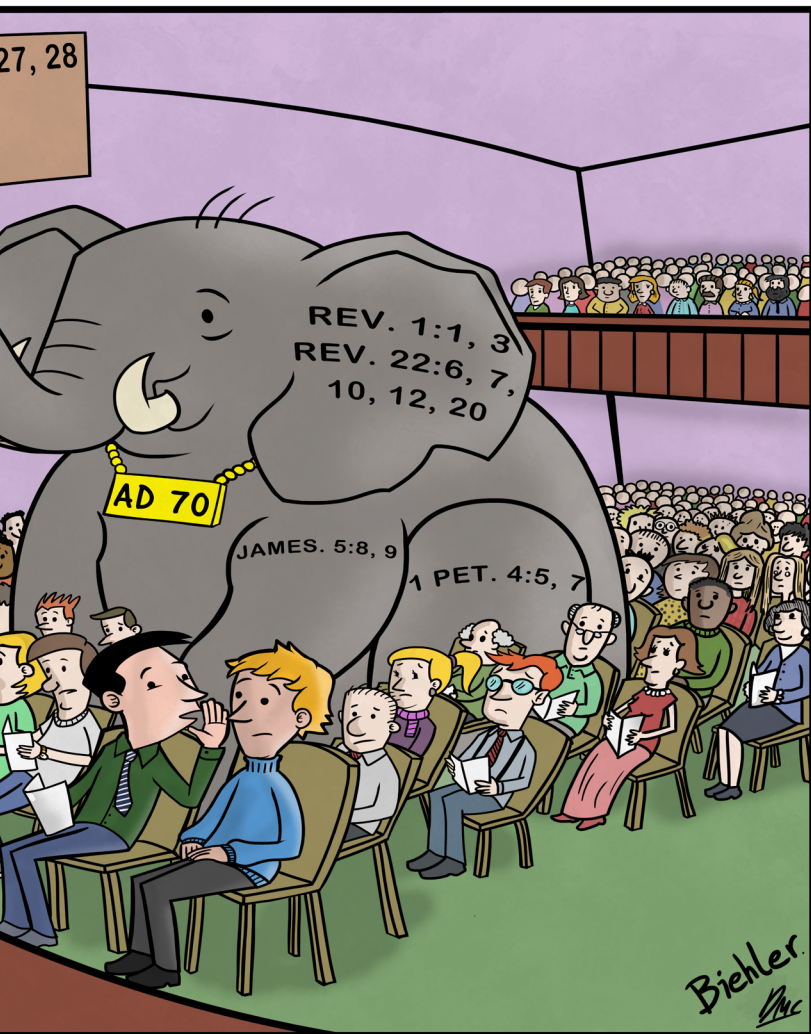
Fulfilled . . . an Overview

the word that is translated “heretic” in this passage means “a schismatic follower of false doctrine.” Modern Protestants say that Luther was not a heretic because the church’s indulgence doctrine was false doctrine... in this case the orthodox church of his time was following false doctrine and as such the church was heretical! So yes, orthodoxy can be wrong.

“Biblical Prophecies Fulfilled”... is it heresy?

In Titus 1:9 Paul tells Titus how to deal with heresy. He says that an elder should “refute” those who contradict sound doc-

LED BELIEVERS



I do not read *Bamboozled Believers*
should not be available on Amazon!”

trine. Now, since sound doctrine comes from God’s Word, the only way to refute false doctrine is by reference to Scripture. So I invite you to be like the Bereans. Examine the Scriptures to see if the doctrines pertaining to “Biblical Prophecies Fulfilled” align with Scripture. If they do, then they are not heresy

and the church’s orthodox teaching concerning “end times” is heresy.

If you look up all of the verses listed at the beginning of this essay, you will know that Jesus promised to return before all of his disciples had died. And you will probably agree with my assertion that if Jesus returned as promised, then all of our end-times doctrines are nonsense. You probably wonder; “What exactly did happen in AD 70?”

What Happened in AD 70?

What about the last days? . . . the end of the world? . . . the rapture? . . . the tribulation? . . . judgment day? . . . the anti-christ? . . . the resurrection? . . . Armageddon? This little essay cannot deal with all of those questions; but I’ll concisely tell you what I think happened . . .

The Mosaic age ended when Roman armies destroyed the temple. When Jesus returned in AD 70 the very few Christians who had survived the great tribulation were raptured. Those who had died while the Old Covenant was in effect were resurrected and “rewarded according to their works.” The “last days” of the Bible are the last days before the stars fell (a metaphor) and the old heaven and old earth passed away (also a metaphor). Today, Christians belong to a spiritual kingdom (the kingdom of God) that is metaphorically called “the new heaven and the new earth.” There is no future judgment day for Christians because they have already passed from death into life... when their lives on earth end, they go to be with their resurrected Lord. Absent from the body is present with the Lord.

No evil boogiemer called “the antichrist” is about to burst onto the world scene and take over the “one-world government.” The antichrist myth is part of an elaborate edifice of eschatological absurdity that is built on bad translations, bad assumptions and metaphors that are taken literally.

So there you have it. “Heresy” that is solidly supported by Scripture. Do you want to see how Scripture supports those assertions? Read *Bamboozled Believers*.

Check out the essays available at:
www.bamboozledbelievers.com

Bamboozled Believers
by Mike Biehler

Available at
amazon

IF JESUS HAS ALREADY returned, how should Christians live today? That is the pressing question of our time. Preterists have become very adept at proving from the Scriptures when the second coming had to have taken place, but they haven't fully entered into the spiritual significance of how it changes our life, and this hinders the rest of God's church from entering into preterism.

One of the obstacles holding back futurists from accepting preterism is the uncertainty of what it means for how we live today. When I talk to futurists, they ask a very good question—if Jesus has already returned, why isn't the world a better place? Life on our present earth doesn't match the fabulous descriptions the Bible gives of a time when righteousness and love rule the planet. Part of the answer I would like to suggest is that God is aiming for something very different than what we are aiming for and therefore we aren't truly on the same page as God is.

The page that God is on is our salvation, a salvation that is too amazing for words. When we understand eschatology aright, the great benefit is that it opens our eyes to see this salvation for what it really is. Futurists can't fully embrace its greatness because of the cloud that hangs over their heads. Because they are waiting for a mighty judgment to happen, they tend to underestimate the power and character of grace, and so they long for God to use force to usher in a better world. I find that futurists by and large have a poverty mindset, and this for a very good reason. They do not believe that the work Jesus has already done is enough to change the world. Is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by itself sufficient to achieve God's ultimate goals for this world? Or is there something else God has to do? Their answer is yes, God has to do something more. Namely, there must be a second coming that takes away all the bad people. That is how God reaches his ultimate goals. Needless to say, this option is not available to preterists. For us, the "only" thing we have is our salvation, and we need to grasp its significance.

One example of this poverty mindset in the church is that it is weakened by the burden of incessant waiting for God to act and do something that will shake up the world. Among evangelicals, it is considered to be a great virtue to wait and wait for God to "show himself in a mighty way." After all, evangelicals are waiting for him to come back and right the wrongs plaguing our world. This is reflected in one of the current praise songs that the church sings, called "Take Courage." One verse goes like this,

So take courage my heart
 Stay steadfast my soul
 He's in the waiting
 He's in the waiting
 And hold onto your hope
 Watch your triumph unfold
 He's never failing
 He's never failing

This song acknowledges that Christians are not at rest, hence its admonition to "take courage." It is an example of how Christians ever romanticize the struggles they go through as

they endure long waiting. One can hear many a heroic tale of how a believer was threatened by doubts within and desperate circumstances around him, yet he grimly held on. What is wrong when pastors and teachers praise people for having a profound sense of waiting in their spirit? The problem is that it introduces a serious disquiet into our spiritual life. The world is like an ocean full of storms and pounding waves. This world inherently is given to instability and disquiet, and now we have Christians who are taught to expect that something is missing from God's work and that they have to wait for God to supply that missing something. The church has cultivated Christians with waiting spirits that now match the lack of rest in the world around them. However, God has promised us something much better than the waiting that drags down many Christians today.

It starts with this simple idea—God has finished all his work. Therefore, we are not waiting for anything to happen. More precisely, there is no waiting in our spiritual life. Of course, we wait for many things in world—in lines at the store, for the birth of a child, for a new job, for a spouse, for a cure to COVID-19—but I am talking about spiritual waiting. We are not waiting for anything in our spiritual life. We are not waiting for God to do something. This might seem like a small matter, but it is one of the most radical things a person can experience on planet earth, because it means that even in a world like we have today, the Christian life should be one filled with rest.

Hebrews 3:7-4:11 describes this rest; it is not a human rest but a divine rest that God himself lives in. Much of this section is a stern warning to listeners to heed its admonitions, but I want to focus on three verses, Hebrews 4:3a and 4:9-10. The first verse says that the generation Moses led out of Egypt did not enter that rest, but as for us,

... we who have believed enter [present tense] that rest.

The entering of rest is now according to Hebrews 4:3, but the implications of a future second coming keep futurists from enjoying this rest today. For them, God's work is not done. There is a cloud hanging over the horizon, because any day the sky will start to fall. Secondly, verses 9-10 explain how that rest applies to us,

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

These two verses tell us that this rest is the same as the Sabbath rest God experienced on the seventh day of creation. To appreciate this truth, we must go back to the story of creation. We find there the surprising teaching of Genesis 2:1-3, which says,

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

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When we hear the word “rest,” we think of fatigue, and we ask, did God get tired from creating the heavens and earth? Yet we know that God does not grow weary, and even here there are clues that this rest is not the rest of recharging one’s batteries. Rather, it is the rest that comes from the joy and contentment of a work done perfectly because it corresponds to God’s plan for righteousness. Rest teaches us about the nature of God’s goodness. In creation, God did exactly what he needed to do to achieve all his spiritual purposes for creation. Nothing could be added and nothing could be taken away from his work (Eccl 3:14). The measure of God’s righteous work is that there is nothing missing from it. That is why he made the Sabbath rest holy, completely inhabited by every fiber of his moral being. We don’t understand what it is to be good if we do not understand the Sabbath rest that is connected to God’s good work. Goodness is inherently complete in its nature.

Verses 9-10 tell us not only that God has rested from his work but also that we rest from our own work. This is even more astounding. What can this mean that we rest from our works? Don’t we have lots to do on this planet? It is a mess, after all.

Today, God has given us the same Sabbath rest that he experienced on the seventh day of creation. This changes the way we view what we do. For example, every good deed and act of obedience we carry out in this life is not filling in the holes of something missing from God’s work. It is not achieving something that needs to be achieved. This last statement is especially important for American Christians. American culture worships achievement, and American Christians follow American culture by worshipping spiritual achievement, but achievement is excluded from the Sabbath! If I have a need to achieve, I am really saying that something is missing from the work of God. Instead, our work is our experience of God’s goodness. Even more, when we do good, we begin to experience heaven, just as Revelation 21 teaches us that heaven has come down to earth. We experience God’s completed work when we do what he did, and the clinching test is that every deed is accompanied by a divine rest in our souls. When we help a brother, when we bless our families, when we give to the poor, we feel the peace of God’s finished work. However, if we do something good for God and don’t feel rest in our souls, then there is something wrong with our obedience.

Now we can see how little we understand God’s plans for us. For example, suppose you have an opportunity to share preterism with a fellow futurist brother or sister in Christ. You faithfully share good biblical teaching but unfortunately the other believer does not accept or maybe even understand the powerful points you have made. At that point, are you at rest? It seems to me that most often we are not at rest. It breaks our heart when people don’t respond the way we want them to, and we pray and pray and ask God to “help them get it!” In fact, Christians often do acts of obedience that are

not accompanied by the rest of Hebrews 4, and their hearts anguish as they look for some results in this world from what they have done. Our deeds don’t lead to rest because we don’t see them result in the changes we want to see, and we feel that our labor in the Lord is in vain (1 Cor 15:58). This is what God delivers us from. We are forever delivered from the burden of trying to achieve things in our spiritual life, of trying to change the world, because God’s perfect work has completed the achievement process. That means we can rest in our obedience. God has guaranteed that every good thing that Christians do achieves his eternal purposes regardless of what we observe with our eyes. It doesn’t depend on other people and their responses and it doesn’t depend on what does or does not happen in this world. When we speak aright the message of the Bible, we can rest assured that God is fulfilling his good purposes no matter how people respond to us. Let me summarize four points:

1. God is in his Sabbath rest, because his work is complete and it will achieve everything his heart desires.
2. We are in God’s Sabbath rest. This means our work is the opportunity for us to experience God’s goodness and achievement.
3. If we believe Hebrews 4, we will be in complete rest when we do anything for God.
4. If we obey but our hearts do not feel rest, then that shows we have not rested from our works and have failed to enter into God’s Sabbath rest.

The Sabbath rest ends creation and is the end state of God’s plans and timetable. Today, we live with God in a permanent Sabbath! Note that because our rest is a Sabbath rest, there is no waiting for anything. The work is done. There is nothing left to accomplish, and because preterists are the only ones who know that God has finished his work, we are the only ones who can truly see Hebrews 3-4 for what it really is and apply it with full gusto to our lives today. Preterists should be the most restful people in the universe.

Let me circle back to my earlier question. If God has finished all his work, then that means he has already done everything he needs to do to accomplish his goals for this world. I do not mean that the world is perfect. I do mean that what God intends the world to become will be the fruition of his already accomplished work.

Let me add one caution to this article. Some people may hear the word “Sabbath” and the words “the work is done” and conclude that there is nothing left for them to do, so they can fold their hands together and do nothing. Nothing could be further from the truth. God’s idea of Sabbath does not mean inactivity or laziness, but I will have to leave the biblical explanation for this to a follow-up article.

What do you think, reader? Are preterists the most restful people in the world today? ✚

Parting Thoughts

BILLY GRAHAM ONCE REPLIED to the question of having regrets. His answer is paraphrased as: “My regret is that I did not take the time to train young men how to do what I have done.”

I wholeheartedly agree. As I approach my sixties (58 at the present time) I see the need to raise up younger believers and give them a platform to share the gospel and, specifically, the view of fulfilled prophecy. The older men who are “leading” the charge were once young and would be wise to start mentoring younger men and

... I see the need to raise up younger believers and give them a platform to share the gospel and, specifically, the view of fulfilled prophecy. . . .

women. I would add that mentoring is only part of this equation: I am going to start giving literal “stage time” to those who will lead this truth into the future.

My wife and I hosted the Texas Conference in 2018. I was excited

to meet those of whom I had read about, spoke with in emails or on the phone. In fact, it’s funny now, but I wanted this to be a “Mega-conference,” with all my favorite speakers. I ended up with about twelve. No problem I thought, until I realized I had to provide travel, hotel, and food! OUCH! Reality set in and I scaled back my invite list. It pained me to have to wait for a future conference to invite the others.

We older chaps need to start looking to raise up the next generation of teachers to lead into the future. Those I admire, like Jerry Wayne Bernard, Don Preston, Ed Stevens, Sam Dawson, aren’t getting any younger.

I am impressed with the ministries of Dwayne Stevens, Sam Stevens, Ward Fenley, and others. One of the younger teachers I see making a difference is Micah Stephens. He is a family man from the Dallas/Fort Worth area and stays active promoting preterism. He has written a book (described in the following paragraphs) and has a Facebook page and a YouTube channel.

I like Micah’s book cover. It has that “Preterism for Dummies” look to it. Very unassuming. Friendly

looking. Good choice for a cover. The foreword was written by Cindye Coates, another gifted teacher who would round out any preterist conference weekend.

There are a handful of books I recommend to those just getting into fulfilled prophecy. Charles Meek’s *Christian Hope through Fulfilled Prophecy*, Glenn Hill’s *Christianity’s Great Dilemma*, Brian Martin’s *Behind the Veil of Moses*, a couple of early John Noë books, and now I can add Micah’s. It’s an easy read, thoughtful, informative, direct. He ends each chapter with “Let’s Recap!,” which I think is a good strategy in writing: tell them what you just told them. Micah covers all the bases without getting into boring minutia (not that any of us do that . . .). Any newcomer to the faith, or even to preterism, will benefit from this book.

I contacted Micah to ask a few questions so you can get to know him as well.

TJ: Micah, thanks for answering some questions. Your fans are dying to know! Ok, how long have you been a Christian and when did you start seeing the truth of fulfilled prophecy?

Micah: I was raised in a Christian home and was taught Christian beliefs as soon as I was old enough to understand. I started learning at 3 or 4. I discovered partial preterism via Jonathan Welton’s teachings at age 29, and through my own Bible study became a full Preterist about a year and a half later.

TJ: Tell us about your family life, career, whatever else you think makes you boring or fascinating.

Micah: I am a big family man. I find most of my fulfillment and purpose in being a husband and dad. I try to be kind to everyone, but only keep a few close

Foreword by Dr. Cindye Coates

HOW TO
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MICAH J. STEPHENS

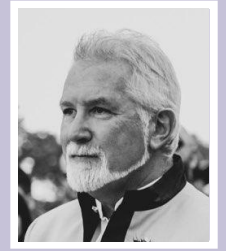
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Interview with Micah Stephens

T. J. Smith

TJ Smith writes an ever growing series of books on Interpreting the Bible, and contributed commentary to the Fulfilled Covenant Bible.

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friends. I worked for a while in a manufacturing plant making trucks, and because of the physical problems that made me need to quit, I realized my passion is counseling, so I'm currently pursuing that. I've always loved teaching and helping people, especially with their inner world (a.k.a. emotionally and spiritually).

TJ: Who have been some of your influences in your study of preterism?

Micah: A good friend of mine named Ryan, who used to be the worship pastor at the church I grew up in. He was always very solid and sensible, so if he said he was leaning towards something I paid close attention to it, because he was usually right. As far as online teachers, I have learned a lot from Don Preston, but have tried to simplify what he teaches.

TJ: If you could meet anyone besides Elvis or myself, who would it be?

Micah: Who else would I want to meet? But if I had to meet someone else, it would be President Trump, John Maxwell, and Henry Cloud.

TJ: You are continually on Facebook posting your teaching videos, what type of feedback do you get and how do you see it growing?

Micah: From the people that usually follow, I normally get good and encouraging feedback. From most of the Christian population not familiar with or adhering to preterism, I get disagreement ranging from sincere questions to messages in my inbox filled with foul language telling me I'm a false prophet.

TJ: Finally, where do you see the preterist movement heading and how would you define the best method for spreading the full truth of Scripture? I know at the 2018

conference, everyone filled out questionnaires and the top response was 'relationship first.' Your thoughts?

Micah: I would agree with 'relationship first.' I have taken advantage of social media, which has the potential to reach a lot more people, but often I wonder how many I have convinced or how many watched my videos to reaffirm what they already believed. I think relationship has much more potential because of the trust that is there. I might have shut off what I believe now if I heard it said on the internet, but because a trusted friend said it, I gave it much more thought. I would caution anyone against building relationships for the sake of "converting them." I will normally share this with friends if I believe they are open, and I think it would help them in their spiritual journey.

TJ: Micah thank you for your time.

Before I sign off, I want to plug a few other preterists and their resources. Alan Bondar has written three books that have a place on your shelf. *Reading the Bible through New Covenant Eyes*, *The Journey Between the Veils*, and his newest work, *Unpredictable*, which I had the honor of editing. Of course, Don Preston (the Cal Ripken of preterism) always has new books coming out, and Ed Stevens has always been a great source of historical data regarding the end times.

Also, one last guy: Pastor David Curtis. I'm calling him out! He taught a series on the Seven Feasts. I enjoyed it so much that I offered to turn his sermons into book form, which I did. Now I'm just waiting for him to get it in print! Hello, David. Come on man, let's go!!!!

Until next time, Blessings. TJ ✚

"I think relationship has much more potential because of the trust that is there. I might have shut off what I believe now if I heard it said on the internet, but because a trusted friend said it, I gave it much more thought."

Dr. Cindy Coates

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

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

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

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

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



Preterism
Preterism

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