

17. The Kingdom of Heaven and the Millennial Reign

The view that is expounded in this book is called Consistent Premillennial Preterism (for want of a better description).

- The word “Consistent” highlights the consistency of the exegesis in closely observing the context and letting Scripture interpret Scripture via grammatical-historical interpretation.
- The word “Premillennial” highlights the recognition of a Premillennial pattern, which means that the Second Appearing occurs before (pre-) the millennium (the 1000 year reign). *This is not to be confused with Premillennialism as a futurist system of interpretation, particularly in the form known as Dispensational Premillennialism.*
- The word “Preterism” highlights the belief in the past fulfilment of prophecy (based on the Latin word for “past”).

Although the term Premillennial is used, this has nothing to do with the futurist systems of Historic Premillennialism or Dispensational Premillennialism. In fact, the basic hermeneutic (i.e. principle of interpretation) used in this Preterist view is very similar to that of Amillennialism. That is to say, the 1000 years of Revelation 20 are viewed as being a symbolic description of Christ’s heavenly reign over the nations of the earth, which began in the first century. In this view, the 1000 year reign of Christ is shared with his people in the spiritual dimension, but whereas traditional Amillennialism views deceased believers as being with Christ in spirit only, awaiting the resurrection, the view I hold would say that this reigning of deceased believers is not just in spirit, but involves having a spiritual resurrection body with fullness of life in an actual new creation.

In 2003 I published a book entitled *Ancient Prophecies Unveiled, The Times of the Nations* (Writer’s Showcase, iUniverse, Inc.). My major doctrinal viewpoints at the time I wrote the book were that of Premillennial Dispensationalism, along with Evangelical Universalism. During the decade since then, my understanding of Scripture has changed quite radically. I eventually rejected Dispensationalism in about 2007 as I gradually began to accept the Preterist understanding of Scripture.

More recently, at about the beginning of 2012, partly due to applying the sound interpretive principles of audience relevance and contextual exegesis (which helped lead me to my Preterist understanding of prophecy), I eventually acknowledged the errors of Christian Universalism and rejected this also. As much as I would like Universalism to be true, I don’t believe this view is truly taught in the NT – at least not without taking certain words and phrases out of context and misapplying them. In short, I am convinced that this view is a doctrinal illusion that holds out a false hope for all outside of Christ. Life is not a do-over for everyone.

Due to these major shifts in my thinking and beliefs, I requested that my *Ancient Prophecies* book be withdrawn from print. For those readers who are interested in reading about my journey to the Preterist view, I refer you to *Introduction To Prophetic Studies & A Further Introduction To Prophetic Studies* in the section *The Great Prophetic Plan Revealed* on my website at www.purposeoflife.org.uk.

The Preterist view presented in this book is very similar to that expounded by James Stuart Russell in his classic 19th-century work *The Parousia: The New*

Testament Doctrine of our Lord's Second Coming. Many "partial-preterists" (e.g. R.C. Sproul & Ken Gentry) have benefited greatly from Russell's book, though many believe that he went too far in saying that the Second Advent, the resurrection and the judgment took place in the Day of the Lord of 70 AD. Many today believe that this kind of "Full Preterism," or as some like to label it in a somewhat derogatory fashion "Hyper-Preterism," is heresy. I strongly beg to differ! In fact, Russell's Preterism was technically a partial-preterist view, because unlike the modern Full Preterist movement, Russell, like myself, *believed that the millennium began in the first century and is ongoing until a future Consummation.* I will now proceed to explain this view in a little more detail, particularly as it relates to Revelation chapter 20 and the issue of the millennium. Some of the things discussed below have already been touched upon throughout this book.

The Subjection of All

The NT reveals that, at the coming of the Son of Man to establish his kingdom (i.e. at the Second Appearing of Christ in the Day of the Lord), the spiritual powers of the heavens headed up in Satan, the Adversary, would be brought to nothing or nullified, sometimes expressed using the Greek word *katargeo*, often translated *destroy/destroyed* (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:24, 26; Hebrews 2:14). That is to say, these spiritual powers would be made a footstool for His feet and brought into full subjection to the will of God in fulfilment of Psalms 110:1-2 & 8:6.¹ (E.g. Romans 16:20; Hebrews 10:13; 12:27-29; 1 Corinthians 2:6; Mark 13:25-26; see also Isaiah 24:21).

That is not to say that the subsequent reign of Christ over the nations would be free from rebellion and sin, for it had been prophesied that the Messiah would still reign in the midst of his enemies with a rod of iron (cf. Psalms 2 & 110; Revelation 19:11-16). Even the renowned prophecy of Isaiah 65-66, which spoke of the 'new heaven & earth-new Jerusalem' reign of Christ, revealed, in old covenant language and metaphor that related to this world, that sin, death and other aspects of life on earth, such as human longevity, peaceful homes & cities, blessed produce of the land, etc, would be a part of the Messianic reign (Isaiah 65:17-25).

Nevertheless the prophecy was interlaced with language depicting something so much more than this, anticipating the end of all violence and harm, and ultimately death, with the serpent (representing Satan) eating dust (verse 25). *And of the increase (or greatness) of his power and kingdom there would be no end* (Isaiah 9:7). Jesus appeared to be addressing this topic in Mark 10:29-30 (also Matthew 19:28-30) when he spoke of the blessings to be experienced by his followers in the present age, with eternal life in the age to come. There is an element of a crossover here between the two ages & two worlds.

It cannot be emphasised enough that these old covenant prophecies must be interpreted and understood in the light of the New Covenant teaching of Jesus and His Apostles. All of the elements of the Old Covenant system, with its covenants & promises, rituals & festivals, must be viewed as being shadows & copies of the real substance in which they would find their fulfilment in the Messiah (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23-24; 10:1; Colossians 2:16-17). As Peter made clear in his first letter, the ancient prophets, who prophesied about the gospel of grace and salvation through Christ, came to realise that these things were to be fulfilled at a future appointed time in a manner that they could not figure out in their own generation.

And even angelic beings longed to look into these things (1 Peter 1:10-12). That is, the true nature and timing of these things were kept hidden until Christ Himself and the apostles, particularly the apostle Paul, revealed them to their generation (cf. Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:2-11).

Now it was also revealed that the true holy ones (the 'saints') of God, the chosen new covenant people of the Messiah (His Bride, the true Israel of God), would co-rule with Christ in his kingdom as royal priests for the age(s) to come (e.g. Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:10-12; Ephesians 2:6; 3:21; Revelation 1:5-6; 2:25-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:6; 22:3-5; also Daniel 7:27). They would be the ones to fulfil all of the promises and covenants promised to Israel; and they would experience this in a New Creation under a New Covenant, after Christ had come to judge His enemies, both human and angelic (Hebrews 11:39-40; 12:22-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). It is these very things that Revelation chapters 19-22 are depicting.

The Appearing, the Resurrection & the Judgment

Now let us take a moment to consider some of the relevant details contained in Revelation chapters 19-20, bearing in mind that there weren't any chapter & verse divisions in the early Greek manuscripts. Revelation 19:11-21 portrays the Second Appearing of Christ with the armies of heaven to bring judgment to both men and spiritual beings.² That is to say, the main focus here is upon the heavenly spiritual powers behind the human counterparts, yet both are included in the judgment of God within history.

The two spiritual 'beast' powers are subsequently destroyed in the metaphorical, yet very real, Lake of Fire judgment, while many humans are also destroyed in this judgment scene. Immediately after this, in Revelation 20:1-3, we are shown the binding of Satan 'the Dragon' where he is seen to be locked in the spiritual prison-house of the Abyss to be restricted from deceiving the nations any longer during the coming 1000-year-reign of Christ and his people.

That is to say, after the spiritual beast powers are judged & destroyed in the Fire, Satan himself is thrown into the Abyss for the period of 1000 years. Only after this period is he released for a short time before he subsequently receives his final punishment & destruction in the Fire, where the two beast powers had already been thrown previously.

A simple study of the Abyss (Greek *abussos*) in the NT will reveal that this place is a spiritual prison where demons/unclean spirits are (or were) confined (cf. Luke 8:30-31). Throughout the NT writings of the period before 70 AD, nowhere was it indicated that Satan was confined in the Abyss, but in contrast he was described as being quite free to roam the earth causing trouble for the people of God, and this era led to the great tribulation of 67-70 AD. Only *after* the Parousia of Christ is 'the dragon' defeated and fully subjected under Christ's feet and cast into the Abyss.

Therefore, Satan is depicted as being imprisoned in the Abyss for the same length of time Christ rules over the nations with His people (i.e. the symbolic 1000 years³). During this time he cannot deceive the nations or have any power over them like he did previously.⁴ Only after this extended period of time is Satan set free for a short while to deceive the nations en masse again for an attack against true Christianity, seeking to cause a return to how things were before Christ appeared on the stage of

human history. (And, as I already indicated some years ago in the first edition of this book, I believe that this final deceiving of the nations may have already begun). For further illustration of this, see my chart *The Three Phases of Satan's Defeat*.

Now in verses 4-6 we are told about the First Resurrection⁵ group of the followers of Christ who are raised to life to inherit the kingdom as kings and priests, pictured as rulers seated on thrones.⁶ Let me quote this important text.

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.** ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) **This is the first resurrection.** ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, **but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.**

(Revelation 20:4-6 NIV)

I don't think that there is any good reason to accept the resurrection here as being purely figurative, that is, as describing the believer's present spiritual resurrection in Christ due to spiritual rebirth. Many Amillennialists/Postmillennialists and even some full preterists take that view of this passage. On the contrary, there is every reason to interpret this resurrection as being the actual resurrection on the last day (of the age), the resurrection of the righteous, at the Parousia of Christ in the Day of the Lord (Luke 14:14; John 5:24-29; 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:23-26). This is the 'better resurrection' that all true followers of Christ were expecting imminently in their day, particularly those who were martyred (Hebrews 11:35, 39-40).⁷

This is the same resurrection that had been promised to the overcomers in Christ earlier in the vision where they were also promised co-rulership with Christ sharing his throne as royal priests (Revelation 2:10-11, 25-27; 3:21; see also Matthew 19:28-29; Luke 22:29-30; Ephesians 2:6-7). This is the same resurrection in which the servants of God are rewarded, as described in the details of the seventh trumpet, at the time of the coming of the kingdom of God and of Christ (Revelation 11:18). In fact, both Revelation 11:15-18 and 20:4-6, 11-15 are dealing with the same topic, that is, the full establishing of Christ's kingdom at his Second Appearing in glory resulting in the resurrection and the judgment, followed by the new covenant reign of Christ over the nations of the world, a reign that the Israel of God would share in.

And take special note that this is the resurrection that vindicates the martyrs of God and of Christ, as those who had been previously killed by the Beast powers for not bowing down in worship to them. These are the very same souls who had been crying out for justice earlier under the fifth seal. They had been told to wait a little longer because many more of their fellow brothers and sisters were to be killed like them, particularly during the great tribulation, before the Day of Christ would arrive when he would vindicate them and take vengeance on his enemies with absolute justice (Revelation 6:9-11; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10).

Therefore, it is evident that this reign of the Beast, clearly described in Revelation 12:17-13:18 and elsewhere referred to as 'the great tribulation' (cf. Revelation 7:14, Matthew 24:21 & Daniel 12:1-2, 7), is viewed as having already occurred *before* this resurrection of the vindication of Christ's martyrs takes place. These believers are then raised at the Parousia of Christ to subsequently reign with Him as king-priests, sharing in the rule of God and of Christ over the nations of the world as was promised (i.e. this reign being symbolically represented as the 1000 years; cf. Revelation 11:15-18).

The Royal Inauguration of the Son of Man

These very same things were prophesied in the vision of the beasts in Daniel 7, which is such a key chapter in biblical prophecy and eschatology. Here is the relevant portion of this vision.

⁹ "As I looked,

"thrones were set in place,
and **the Ancient of Days took his seat.**

His clothing was as white as snow;
the hair of his head was white like wool.
His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.

¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.
Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
The court was seated,
and the books were opened.

¹¹ "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. **I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.** ¹² (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

¹³ "In my vision at night I looked, **and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.** ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

(Daniel 7:9-14 NIV)

I have considered Daniel 7 in some detail elsewhere, but let me just highlight some important points here concerning the above text. A close study of this vision reveals the following scenario. At the coming of the Son of Man to be presented before the Ancient of Days (i.e. Yahweh) in the heavenly court or assembly, the 'little horn-beast' power or kingdom is judged and cast into the fire (which occurs after a three-and-a-half-year domination over the people of God in the great tribulation). It is also stated in verse 12 that the other beast-kingdoms had been spared the fire when their authority had been previously taken away, and were allowed an extension of life, although it doesn't say anything here about their ultimate judgment before Yahweh's throne.

This vision is evidently describing a coming of God that is followed by a judgment against the spiritual powers; where the heavenly divine court or assembly of God passes judgment in favour of the Son of Man (i.e. the human messianic figure), as well as the holy people of God associated with Him, while punishing and destroying the beast powers.

The Son of Man is seen approaching the divine throne-room surrounded by the clouds of heaven (that is, the glory-cloud of Yahweh). This heavenly presentation of the Son of Man (and his people) evidently occurs *after* the Second Advent itself, and is a consequence of it. *That is to say, this coming of the Son of Man is not a visible coming to the earth, but it is a heavenly presentation before God in the spiritual world or dimension.* This is key to understanding what Jesus meant when He spoke of the coming of the Son of Man in power and glory. It also needs to be noted that at the same time that this Son of Man is presented before the throne of God to receive authority, power, glory and a universal kingdom, the holy people of God (the true Israel) *are also seen to be possessing the kingdom with Him, seated on thrones in the Divine Assembly or Council.*

In the subsequent verses of the angelic interpretation, '*the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven*' becomes parallel to *the holy people of God possessing the kingdom.* Take special note of verse 27; the kingdom of the Son of Man is shared with the holy people of God.

¹⁸ **But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever**—yes, for ever and ever...'

²¹As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, ²² **until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom...**

"The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time. ²⁶ But the court will sit, and his power (*that of the little horn beast*) will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷ **Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.**'

(Daniel 7:18, 21-22, 25b-27 NIV)

This exact same scenario is revealed in Revelation chapters 19-20 as shown above, where the Second Appearing of Christ results in the defeat of his enemies followed by the First Resurrection of those who are to co-rule with Christ seated on thrones. This is the time that the holy people of God, the true bride of Israel, becomes married to Christ and fully inherits the kingdom in all its glory. This is the ultimate meaning of '*the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*' – **its fulfilment is related to the heavenly spiritual world.**

When Jesus told the Jewish Sanhedrin shortly before his execution that '*from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven*' (cf. Matthew 26:64; also Mark 14:62 & Luke 22:69) he was telling them, who were representatives of the tribes of Israel, that He was

the one who would fulfil the prophecies of Psalm 110 and Daniel 7; and as we've already seen, this was to occur in two stages within one generation; that is, it was to be experienced by those who had pierced Him (cf. Revelation 1:7). By the time of Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD, within that generation, all these things concerning the Day of the Lord had occurred as promised (Matthew 23:36; 24:34).

All Enemies Defeated

In 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, in the middle of the great resurrection chapter, the apostle Paul wrote about this subjection of all powers to God through the ministry of Christ. Here is the passage taken from a more literal rendering.

20 And now, Christ hath risen out of the dead -- **the first-fruits of those sleeping he became**, 21 for since through man [is] the death, also through man [is] a rising again of the dead, 22 for even as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ all shall be made alive, 23 and each in his proper order, a first-fruit Christ, afterwards those who are the Christ's, in his presence, 24 **then -- the end, when he may deliver up the reign to God, even the Father, when he may have made useless (Gk. *katargeo*) all rule, and all authority and power** -- 25 for it behoveth him to reign **till he may have put all the enemies under his feet** -- 26 the last enemy is done away (Gk. *katargeo*) -- death; 27 for all things He did put under his feet, and, **when one may say that all things have been subjected**, [it is] evident that He is excepted who did subject the all things to him, 28 **and when the all things may be subjected to him**, then the Son also himself shall be subject to Him, who did subject to him the all things, that God may be the all in all.

(1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Young's Literal Version)

Until quite recently, I used to view this text very differently in regard to not only the timing of 'the end' or 'the consummation', but also as regards the true nature of the subjection that Paul was talking about.⁸ I was greatly challenged by the view of the nineteenth-century British theologian James Stuart Russell when I read his classic book *The Parousia*. Even at the time I wrote *A Further Introduction To Prophetic Studies* not too long ago, I hadn't accepted Russell's view of this passage & the consummation. After much study and contemplation, I now believe J. S. Russell was essentially correct – this 'consummation' and subjection occurred at Christ's Parousia in the Day of the Lord of 70 AD.⁹

One thing is very clear from verse 23; Paul connected the resurrection of believers in Christ with the Coming or Presence (Parousia) of Christ, that is, the Second Advent. Then, or 'thereafter' (Gk. *eita*), Paul says 'the end' (or consummation) would occur, which would bring about the subjection of all spiritual powers to Christ and His Father; and due to the resurrection having begun, even Death and Hades would be destroyed (or abolished or done away, having no effect; Paul uses the Greek word *katargeo* here in verses 24 & 26) — at least as far as God's people are concerned.¹⁰

I think the key to understanding what Paul was really saying here (as Russell suggested) is to grasp the idea of the Theocratic kingdom, from its birth in the OT era through the nation of Israel, and on to its NT fullness or completion in the New Covenant kingdom of the Messiah. And as James Russell showed so clearly in his book, all of the NT writers talked about *the same soon-coming Day of the Lord*, an era that would close, conclude and finish the old covenant age – which would

simultaneously introduce a coming new age and a new order in a New (Covenant) Creation in fulfilment of all OT prophecy. This would become a reality in the spiritual realm; it would consist of a radical change in the heavens and the earth. I believe this is the key to understanding these things – they are ultimately revealing a spiritual heavenly reality, which nevertheless affects the history of humanity within this time-space universe.

If Paul *were* talking about another 'end' in the distant future, this would've been the only place in his writings where he would've done so.¹¹ Be that as it may, here is a brief summation of what I presently believe Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 in relation to the then-coming Messianic kingdom.

The Kingdom of the Father & the Son

At the Parousia, the kingdom of heaven was consummated in the marriage of Christ and his Bride (the Bride being specifically that 1st century generation of Christ's followers who had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit; that is, the true Israel of God, composed of both Jew and Gentile). This was the time (Gk. *chronos*) and season (Gk. *kairos*) of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6-7). All Christ's enemies were subjected to him, in particular, His spiritual enemies, composed of Satan and his kingdom, the spiritual forces of darkness in the heavenly realm.¹² At the consummation their power and authority were annulled (or abolished or discarded; Gk. *katargeo*).

In relation to this, Death and Hades were also defeated (i.e. abolished; Gk. *katargeo*) due to the resurrection of the righteous (and possibly the unrighteous), followed by the judgment (cf. Hebrews 2:14-15; Revelation 1:18; 11:17-18). The Son then handed over the perfected kingdom to the Father and subjected himself to God so that God would be all in all (that is, in the context, would be everything in all His people; a consummation of His purpose). This fulfillment of the mystery of God, proclaimed through the prophets, had been revealed in Revelation 10:6-7 as an event that was on the verge of occurring, without any more delay, in the 60's of the 1st century, before Jerusalem had been destroyed (cf. Revelation 11:1-2).

Subsequently, the Father and the Firstborn Son (Christ), and all the redeemed sons (children) of God, who have replaced the original sons of God (the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly world), have been reigning over all the nations ever since; and they will continue to do so '*for the ages of the ages*' (meaning 'for all the ages of all the ages', commonly rendered *forever and ever*). This is what Paul called '*the administration of the fullness of the times*' (a more literal rendering; cf. Ephesians 1:9-10).

Since that time, many are invited to the wedding feast (or kingdom of God) by entering the New Jerusalem, being those of the nations who are healed, and who bring their honour and glory into the city to join with the rest of God's family who are reigning in life (cf. Revelation 21:22 - 22:6). The reign of God and his Christ, though, will never actually end (Luke 1:33), even though Christ's reign over the nations of the earth within human history will have a consummation after the 'millennium' has run its course (Revelation 20:7-10).

To have two consummations may appear a little contradictory at first, but this needn't be the case. For instance, a marriage can be consummated but this is the

beginning of the marriage and not the end. In the same sense, God's kingdom can be consummated according to His purpose, yet this is just the beginning and not the end. Yet in so far as human history on earth is concerned, there can still be a consummation in the future. It's all about the context and the perspective really.

I firmly believe that the above brief explanation is what Paul had in mind, and that this is the overall picture that the NT writers were portraying. One of the main problems here for many who are seeking to understand the preterist view is the issue of Christ handing over the kingdom to the Father (in verse 24 of 1 Corinthians 15). I believe that the giving up (or handing over; Gk. *paradidomi*) of the kingdom to the Father here is one and the same as saying that the people of God (the bride) are presented to the Father as a consummated kingdom.

The Son doesn't stop reigning at this point, as some suggest (which is how I understood it in the past); it's just that the emphasis is placed on the Father being 'all in all' in the consummated kingdom originally promised to Israel. The job is done, so to speak, and the original mission is truly accomplished or finished. And this consummation is being pictured in the New Jerusalem/New Creation of Revelation 21 and 22, which even now already exists, having been established in the events of the Day of the Lord in 70 AD.

This consummated New Covenant Messianic kingdom (synonymous with the 'millennial reign' of Revelation 20) essentially fulfils all of the OT prophecies about the Messiah's reign, with His people, the true Israel, over the nations of the world, fulfilling all that pertains to the New Messianic Temple, the New Jerusalem, the New Land, the New Covenant blessings, etc, etc – all of which ultimately have a heavenly, spiritual fulfilment.

Now let me briefly provide some good biblical evidence for the points highlighted above concerning Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, which should clarify what I have been saying here.

The Kingdom of the Heavens

The notion of the theocratic kingdom essentially begins at Mount Sinai, when the covenant of the Law was officially given to Israel as a nation.¹³ At this time, the seed of God's kingdom was initially established, with Israel being '**a kingdom of priests.**'

⁵ " 'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ **you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

(Exodus 19:5-6 NIV; see also Psalm 95:3,6-7; 145:1, 10-13)

In time, the city of Jerusalem became the capital of God's kingdom on earth, the holy city where Yahweh placed his Name and Presence. Jesus Himself made this very clear in His Sermon on the Mount.

³⁴ “But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; **or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.**”

(Matthew 5:34-35 NIV)

Subsequently, in the vision of Revelation (chapter 17 verse 18), which describes the final judgment of Jerusalem and the temple system under the old covenant, Jerusalem is symbolically portrayed as the harlot, mystery Babylon, the unfaithful wife; and at the time Revelation was written (before 70 AD) this ‘great city’ was said **to have a kingdom over the kings of the earth.**¹⁴

¹⁸ The woman you saw is **the great city that rules over the kings of the earth...**”

²⁴ “**In her was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people,** of all who have been slaughtered on the earth...”

⁸ “...Their bodies will lie in the public square of **the great city**—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—**where also their Lord was crucified.**”

(Revelation 17:18; 18:24; 11:8 NIV)

It was this kingdom of God that was taken away from the Jews in the Day of the Lord in 70 AD. As we have seen previously, Jesus had prophesied of this in his parabolic teaching during his final days of public ministry in Jerusalem.

⁴³ “**Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.** ⁴⁴ Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed...”

⁷ “**The king** was enraged. He sent his army **and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.**”

(Matthew 21:43-44; 22:7 NIV)

The OT prophecies about the coming Messiah indicated that the kingdom of God, also called the kingdom of the heavens, would be fully established in a greater more permanent sense through the coming of the Son of Man, who would also fulfil the promises given to David. This Son of David would also be the Lord himself, the Son of God (e.g. Isaiah 9:6-7; 1 Samuel 8:6-8; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Matthew 22:41-45).

The kingdom of the Son of Man (the Messiah) would become the kingdom of the Father under the New Covenant/New Creation, which would be consummated in the resurrection/transformation of the bride, the true Israel of God, the body of Christ. They would be the holy nation of God offered as firstfruits of a greater harvest to come. This consummation would occur at the Parousia of Christ and the destruction of old covenant Israel, when the living Stone from heaven would crush his unrepentant enemies (cf. Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14, 26-27; 12:2, 7b, 13; Matthew 13:37-43; 26:28-29).

The ultimate fulfilment of God's kingdom is the new nation of the Israel of God being made a heavenly royal priesthood, with Christ as the heavenly Chief Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and also the new heavenly Davidic King (e.g. Acts 2:29-36; 13:32-39; Romans 1:2-4; 9:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 7-9).

⁵ "...and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, **and the ruler of the kings of the earth.**

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ **and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father**—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen..."

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased for God
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

¹⁰ **You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."**

(Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10 NIV)

These king/priests are also pictured as the First Resurrection group in Revelation 20:6.

Blessed and holy are those who share **in the first resurrection**. The second death has no power over them, **but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.**

In Philippians 2:6-11, Paul spoke about Christ's earlier position as the Son of God ruling over the old covenant kingdom (i.e. as Yahweh in the theocracy of Israel), as well as describing his role as Messiah/Son of Man, and his subsequent exaltation back to the right hand of God (see also John 17:1-5 and Hebrews 1:8-13).

"...Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ **And being found in appearance as a man,**
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹ **Therefore God exalted him to the highest place**

and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ **that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (NIV)

This exaltation of Jesus Christ as Lord encompasses all creation and all sentient beings (human beings and spirit beings), resulting in the subjection of all to Christ for the glory of God the Father. The emphasis on God as Father indicates that all the sons of God will share in this process of subjection through the rule of the kingdom of the Father and the Son (cf. Matthew 13:43; Romans 8:18-21).

Yet the fullness of the kingdom in a New Creation could only begin when the people of God were to be resurrected and transformed as the New Humanity at the Parousia of Christ. *And the whole message of the NT writers points to this occurring in the 1st century Day of the Lord, all in relation to the judgment upon Jerusalem, the temple and the Jewish nation.* As the old disappears, the New begins (cf. Hebrews 8:13; 9:10). Spiritually speaking, we are now in the age of the New Covenant kingdom, in a New Creation; the old has gone and the new has already come!

I am firmly convinced that this is the best, and most accurate, way of understanding the NT teaching concerning the nature (& arrival) of the kingdom of heaven and Christ's 'millennial' reign. This is Consistent Premillennial Preterism. I do not intend to deal with Revelation 20:7-10 in any further detail here concerning Satan's loosing & the 'Gog and Magog' gathering of the nations. I plan to consider this topic in more detail in my upcoming book tentatively entitled *The Royal Appearing & Paradise Restored: A Preterist Understanding of the Second Advent & New Creation*. In the meantime, I direct the reader to an article of mine from 2009 available on my website entitled *Gog of the Land of Magog and the Battle for Jerusalem: Fulfilled or Unfulfilled?*

For further illustration of the main themes talked about above, see *Table 2: Two Ages/Two Realities/Two Qualities* & the chart *Two Ages/Two Realities*; also the chart *The Three Phases of Satan's Defeat*.

Endnotes

¹ The NT appears to support the idea that Christ would reign at the right hand of God, by Himself, as the King-Messiah (in fulfilment of the promise to king David), as sole ruler of the Kingdom of God, ruling over Israel and the nations, until the time of restoration (or salvation) when all of God's people as the true Israel of God would share in this rule with Christ as co-heirs (see e.g. **Acts** 2:29-36; **3:17-26**; 7:54-56; 13:32-39; Romans 8:16-18; **Hebrews** 1:3; **9:26-28**; **10:12-14**; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 2:26-27; **Ephesians 1:19-23**; 2:6-7; 3:10-11; **Colossians 3:1-4**; & Matthew 26:64; cf. Daniel 7:13-14, 21-22, 26-27).

This 'preliminary' reign of Christ was viewed by the NT writers as being already underway in that first century generation, during the 40-year transition period, while they awaited the Second Appearing of Christ to bring them into the promised land of their eternal inheritance in the kingdom of the heavens. It is not without significance that Moses led the Israelites for 40 years in the wilderness before they entered the Promised Land under Joshua; and that David reigned for 40 years before the golden era of Israel's kingdom took place under Solomon with the building of the Temple. In fulfilment of these types, Jesus, as the greater

Moses and the greater David, ruled over his people Israel for 40 years before leading them into their eternal inheritance in 70 AD — the inheritance of the new Temple and the new Jerusalem in the heavenly Promised Land. It is interesting to note that even the Jewish rabbis held differing views on the length of the Messiah's reign over the nations, some viewing it **as a 40-year period**, while others suggested 400 years or 4000 years (source: George R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation, The New Bible Commentary*, 21st century edition, 2008, Inter-Varsity Press).

² The common partial-preterist interpretation of this text in Revelation usually views this 'coming' of Christ as applying to the judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 AD, although this view rejects the notion that this is also one and the same as the Second Advent. If this view were correct, then the Second Advent would not be portrayed in detail at all in the vision of Revelation! On the other hand, the 'premillennialist' interpretation views this passage (correctly in my opinion) as picturing the Second Advent, but they then apply it all to the future, often in a worldly, literalistic manner. If this view were correct, then Christ's kingdom reign would not as yet have been established! Yet the NT nowhere teaches that Christ's kingdom, which was 'near' or 'at hand' in the 1st century, was to be postponed for thousands of years. The only satisfactory conclusion that takes seriously all of the imminent time statements in the NT, and especially in the vision of Revelation itself (see *Table 3: Time Indicators in the Book of Revelation*), is that Christ has already established his kingdom over heaven and earth, which means that the Second Appearing has already occurred, **because it is this very Appearing/Advent that fully establishes the Messianic reign.**

The common Amillennialist interpretation — which accepts Revelation 19:11-21 as depicting the Second Advent, while viewing the events of 20:1-6 as having already occurred spiritually — tries to get around this dilemma by suggesting that there is a recapitulation occurring in-between Revelation chapters 19-20. Although cyclical recaps or patterns do occur within the vision, which is really a series of smaller visions, I don't see that there is any good reason to place one in-between chapters 19 & 20, effectually causing a separation between them. These paragraphs should be viewed as continuous.

³ I think there are very good scriptural reasons for interpreting the thousand years of Revelation 20 as being symbolic of a long, yet indefinite, period of time. In texts such as Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 50:10; 84:10 & 90:4, it is evident that even the OT has examples of the number 'one thousand' or 'a thousand' being used in a metaphorical or symbolic sense, representing a large yet complete number or period of time. This symbolic understanding would apply even more strongly in an apocalyptic vision full of signs and symbols such as the vision of Revelation. Many biblical scholars have understood the number 1000 as representing completeness or quantitative perfection. I totally agree with the conclusion of James Stuart Russell in his book *The Parousia* — "*but it seems, on the whole, most in consonance with the symbolical character of the Apocalypse to understand the thousand years as significant of a long but indefinite period.*" (*The Parousia*, p. 518, Baker Books, 1999). This in fact has been the common 'Amillennial' understanding of the 1000 years since the earliest centuries of Christianity.

⁴ Due to the continuing presence of sin, evil and deception in the world, many find it hard to accept that Satan has been subjected and imprisoned since the events of 70 AD. Yet consider the following points. This spiritual entity or angelic being known as Satan the adversary is not the sole cause of sin and evil in the world of humanity. Jesus made it clear that all sin, evil, moral depravity, immorality, deception and murder come from inside the human heart (Mark 7:20-23). Due to the power of the gospel message contained in the apostolic writings of the NT, and the spiritual authority of Christ Jesus himself, which is also shared with His people, the spiritual powers of darkness could no longer hold the world in the bondage of ancient primitive idolatry and mythology after 70 AD. The truth of Christianity contained in the Bible has gone out to all nations, to the utmost ends of the earth. Christ and the revealed Sons of God have now replaced the ancient spiritual powers of

darkness that were once under Satan's authority. Nevertheless, a short revival of Satan's power will be allowed before the final consummation of earth history, although this 'permitted' insurrection will be put down by Divine judgment before the wicked plan can fully reach its intended goal.

⁵ The phrase 'the First Resurrection' is probably related to other NT phrases such as 'the assembly of the *firstborn*' (Hebrews 12:23) and those who were '*firstfruits*' (Romans 8:23; James 1:18 & Revelation 14:4). These descriptions were especially applicable to that 1st century generation of believers who were the 'first' among many to follow.

⁶ There is a dilemma with verse 5a of Revelation 20. Most versions put this sentence in parenthesis like so: (*The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.*) This appears to be saying that the Great White Throne judgment of verses 11-15 occurs *after* the 1000 years (that is, when 'the rest of the dead' come to life to be judged), implying two resurrections, one at the beginning of the 'millennium' and one at the end. Nevertheless, this would appear to contradict all of the other biblical texts that speak of this subject in relation to the judgment, where the resurrection & judgment of the righteous *and* the unrighteous are viewed as occurring at the same time (e.g. Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Romans 2:5-11, 16). Some scholars have pointed out that it is possible that verse 5a may not have been included in the original vision written down by John, because some earlier manuscripts do not contain this sentence. I have yet to do further research on this, but omitting this sentence from verse 5 would help the text to flow much better without causing any contradiction with other passages, but I am very cautious about coming to such a conclusion when the vast majority of NT scholars accept the above rendering. Either way, there are two possible alternative interpretations, which I have briefly touched on in this chapter.

Duncan W. McKenzie deals with this issue in his book *The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination – Volume II: The Book of Revelation*, pp. 374-392, (Xulon Press, 2012). McKenzie, who has clearly researched this in some depth, cites David Aune, G. K. Beale, R. H. Charles, and James Parkinson among those who have highlighted this apparent discrepancy.

⁷ It is evident that throughout the NT both Jesus and the apostles taught the principle commonly referred to as 'the already/not yet' principle, which should be more accurately termed 'that which now is & that which is coming or yet to come'. There are many texts that speak of the believers' present position in Christ in this life, which is accepted by faith and viewed as a spiritual reality. Nevertheless, the full reality of experiencing eternal life in the kingdom of God is viewed as a future event after death. For those in that first century generation prior to 70 AD this principle had a unique application for they were living through a unique period in biblical (and world) history, waiting for the end of the old covenant age.

It could be said that in spirit these believers in Christ were positionally already ruling with Christ in the kingdom of God, yet they still awaited the soon-coming Day of the Lord when they would corporately, as a body, fully enter into these things beyond this world – which occurred in the events of 70 AD. There were many spiritual things that had already begun to occur through the ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus (including even the binding of Satan, and also spiritual resurrection) but the full manifestation of these things associated with the coming of the kingdom of God would only transpire at the Second Appearing of Christ at his Parousia within that generation, once the time of transition was complete. I am convinced that the details revealed in Revelation chapter 20 were prophesying the soon-approaching events of the Parousia of Christ, that is, the fullness of the resurrection and the kingdom, which was near and soon to occur. The ultimate focal point of the vision was not on the preliminary transitional stages, but on its fullness at the Parousia.

⁸ I plan to expound on this passage in detail in an upcoming series of articles entitled *Is Universal Salvation Explicitly Taught in the NT?* In my previous writings, particularly those found in the Archives, I accepted the common 'universalist' interpretation of verses 22 & 28 - "for even as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ all shall be made alive" and "...that God may be all in all" - where 'the all' here, in both these verses, is viewed as referring to all mankind, i.e. every single human being. I now question this interpretation due to the over-arching context; Paul was clearly focusing on the totality of *believers*, those in covenant relationship with God, and he never once mentions the rest of humanity - not here anyhow. His meaning here is similar to Ephesians 1:22-23 & 4:6, with the context being believers in Christ.

⁹ J. S. Russell was not technically a 'Full Preterist', and neither am I. The modern full preterist position may seem very similar, but there are some marked differences. Yes, Russell viewed the Second Advent as occurring in 70 AD (which many would label as a 'full preterist' position), but contrary to the full preterist position, he saw this as *the beginning* of the 'millennium' and not its end. All spiritual powers are subjected to Christ at the beginning of his reign with his people. Nevertheless, in relation to earth history, there is yet a consummation event after the symbolical 1000-year-reign has finished (cf. Revelation 20:7-10). This view is termed *Consistent Premillennial Preterism*; although it would be more accurate to say Premillennial/Amillennial Preterism; for it recognises the 'premillennial' pattern of Revelation 19-20 (i.e. Second Advent → First Resurrection → 1000-year-reign → Consummation), while at the same time largely accepting the 'amillennial' hermeneutic of a current *heavenly* reign of Christ and his people over the nations, viewed as a *symbolic* '1000-year-reign' leading to a future consummation of world history. For further illustration of this, see my chart *Two Ages/Two Realities*.

¹⁰ According to Revelation 20:5a & 11-15, Death and Hades are destroyed when 'the rest of the dead' are raised at the 'second' resurrection at the Great White Throne Judgment, which is viewed as occurring *after* the 1000-year-reign (if verse 5a is authentic; see note 6 above). This would be in accord with the NT writers describing believers as being raised 'out of' or 'from among' the dead ones (e.g. Philippians 3:11). This would indicate a prior resurrection of believers *before* Death and Hades are actually destroyed completely.

¹¹ It is still possible that 'the consummation' (Grk. *teleo, telos*, 'finish') of 1 Corinthians 15:24 is referring to the period of the 'finishing' of the 1000 years, and Satan's final judgment in the Lake of Fire revealed in Revelation 20:7-10. Nevertheless, Satan was previously subjected to Christ at the Parousia, *before* the 1000 years, as it was then that he was imprisoned in the abyss (Revelation 20:1-3). This was also the time when the spiritual 'beast and false prophet' were judged and cast into the fire (cf. Revelation 19:19-21; also Daniel 7:11). I believe that all the biblical data, from a consistent preterist viewpoint, points to AD 70 for the consummation - at least that of the consummation in the heavenly realms in relation to the establishing of the promised kingdom of God. The consummation in the earthly realm, as far as human history is concerned, is still future. It is still possible, maybe probable, that a few 'day of the Lord' texts could indeed be referring to the ultimate day of judgment and wrath for the whole world when God 'consumes all his enemies with fire from heaven' at the consummation of world history, an event that Revelation 20:9 appears to be predicting (e.g. 2 Peter 2:6; 3:7; Zephaniah 1:18). This would not conflict with the biblical usage of prophetic patterns sometimes repeating themselves.

In my previous writings, particularly those in the Archives, I saw a three-staged element to the resurrection order of 1 Corinthians 15:23-24: a) Christ the Firstfruits, b) those who are Christ's at (or in) his Presence (that is, all believers at the Parousia), and c) the rest of humanity at a distant Consummation. I have recently had to seriously reconsider this view. Even though it is not impossible that 'the consummation' may refer to a third stage of resurrection, it is not explicitly revealed in the text, and is therefore unlikely. On the other hand (as stated above), if Revelation 20:5a is authentic (see note 6 above) then *'the rest of*

the (unbelieving) dead’ could be this third stage, at the end of which, Death and Hades are destroyed in the ‘Lake of Fire’, as are all those who enter ‘the Second Death’.

¹² Paul often spoke of the ‘rulers (*archai*), authorities (*exousiai*), powers (*dynameis*), thrones (*thronoi*), lordships or dominions (*kyriotētes*)’ in his writings, which clearly refers to the spiritual, heavenly beings or entities in the spiritual world or dimension who were in opposition to the true God, Yahweh. These ‘powers’ are being referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:24. See also Ephesians 1:21; 3:10 & 6:11-12; Colossians 1:13 & 16; 2:10 & 15; Romans 8:38-39; cf. Philippians 2:10. It was these spiritual powers or rulers who were coming to nothing in the 1st century (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-8).

¹³ Even though the Hebraic covenants & promises began with Abraham, the outline of the kingdom began to unfold under Moses at the giving of the Law.

¹⁴ A popular interpretation of ‘mystery Babylon’ in Revelation is that it symbolised Rome, but there have been many others who have shown the weakness with this position. They in turn have put forward the view that this ‘Babylon’ initially represented Jerusalem and the old covenant temple system. I totally concur. For example, see J. S. Russell, *The Parousia, Part III – The Parousia in the Apocalypse, The Sixth Vision*; David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Dominion Press, 1987), pp. 170-185; Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Book of Revelation Made Easy*, (American Vision Press, Second Edition 2010), pp. 73-89; also Duncan W. McKenzie, *The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination – Volume II: The Book of Revelation*, (Xulon Press, 2012), pp. 203-286. See also my archived article *Who is Secret Babylon the Great? When I originally wrote it, I had begun to see something of this interpretation, that Jerusalem was mystery Babylon, from my own personal study.*