

The Sword & The Plow

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A RATIONAL COMPARISON BETWEEN PARTIAL PRETERISM AND FIRST CENTURY PRETERISM, IN FOUR PARTS

Part I Introduction

*'Now, I make a point of never having any prejudices, and of following docilely
wherever fact may lead me. Sherlock Holmes*

'When our theories do not fit our observations, theories must be changed.' Dr Stanley Beck.

By

Morrison St John Lee.

In this four part series I would like to compare *Partial Preterism* - part /some/ few prophecies were fulfilled in the first century - with *First Century Preterism* - all prophecy was fulfilled in the first century. (I will call it *First Century Preterism* for ease of identification.) An outline of the series looks like this:

Part I - Deficiencies of Partial Preterism (Factual) Introduction. This part explains why PP is an inadequate explanation.

Part II - The End of the Holy City (Explains meanings) This part explains how tragic Prophecy precedes the tragic History of the first century.

Part III - The End of the Mosaic age (Explains mechanics: Why?) This part shows why the end of the age occurred in the first century.

Part IV - The End of a World (Explains context) This part explains the context for the all-of-time judgment of Hades in the first century.

**PARTIAL PRETERISM vs. FIRST CENTURY
PRETERISM Article I**

**Why Partial Preterism is deficient as an adequate
explanation**

Issue - All rational disciplines (eg. Sciences, Law, Medicine) begin from observation. Observation is the basis for all objectivity. The “*Yet-Future*” view of the second coming and end times has defied this criterion for 2000 years. *Partial Preterism* is a version of *Futurism* which says *some* Prophecies were fulfilled in the first century. It is opposed to *First Century Preterism*, which affirms *all were fulfilled*.

If *Partial Preterism* is true simple observation will bear it out. There are only three choices, ***all, some, or none***. A theory that can’t be observed is mere guesswork.

Material facts - *Partial Preterism* affirms *part /some/ a few* prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus’ generation, this despite Jesus’ promise that all things would be fulfilled in His generation:

“*Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.*” Mtt 23:36

Truly I say to you this generation shall not pass away until all these things take place.” Mtt 24:34

“*These are the days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.*” Lk 21:22

“*These are My words which I spoke to you when I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets must be fulfilled.*” Lk 24:44

And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. Acts 3:24 (Peter speaking)

Partial Preterism logically denies that *all* prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus generation.

Rule - *The first rule or condition of any reliable theory is observation.* Is the theory suggested by the facts it attempts to explain? Does it look like – *or save the appearances of* - the facts it is trying to explain? If an explanation does not look like the *observable facts* as given, then it fails the first condition. *The second rule is when theories do not fit our observations, then theories must change.* (Beck, S. *Simplicity of Science* p 82)

Apply rule to fact - The first rule of any reliable theory is *observation*. The second rule is when theories do not fit our observations, then theories must change. (It is a common sense notion that it is more fitting to change our

minds than eternal facts.) What is learned by the application of these rules to *Partial Preterism*?

There are three possibilities as to the fulfillment of prophecy in that generation, ***none, all, or some*** :

- #1. ***No*** prophets were fulfilled in His generation,
- #2. ***All*** the prophets were to be fulfilled in His generation.
- #3. ***Some*** prophecy was to be fulfilled in His generation, or a *few* prophets foretold those days.

Consideration of #1. None - No fulfillment in the first century. As both *Partial Preterism* and *First Century Preterism* agree that at least *some* prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus’ generation, we may safely set aside the first alternative; ‘*no prophets will be fulfilled in this generation.*’ Such an explanation must deny more than it explains. It would have to deny the Messianic forecasts of the ancient prophets – e.g. Moses, David, Solomon, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel - and the fact-for-fact fulfillment by Jesus’ birth, life, death and resurrection in that generation. Explanations are offered to explain the facts, not to simply deny them.

If we apply the first rule of a reliable theory, observation, what is found? We find there are no observable material facts to suggest that *No* prophets were fulfilled in His generation. This view will be set aside for the rest of this review.

Consideration of #2. All - All fulfilled in the first century. A good explanation is an idea /statement that brings a large number of observations into one scheme. What do we observe in the datum? What did Jesus promise?

“*These are the days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled*” Lk 21:22

and again,

“*.. These are y words which I spoke to you when I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets must be fulfilled.*” Lk 24:44

The first condition of any reliable theory is observation. To save the appearances of the facts in the text, the simplest idea would have to read; *Jesus promised all the prophets would be fulfilled in this [Jesus’] generation.* What is found? First century Preterism says: ***all prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus’ [this] generation in the first century.***

The only objective theory of truth is a correspondence between statement and fact in the same terms. Here is a

correspondence between the statements of *First century Preterism* and the facts in exactly the same terms. Observe further: Jesus said:

**“all the prophets would be fulfilled”
in this [His own] generation**

1st C. Preterism says

**“all the prophets were fulfilled...”
in Jesus’ [first century] generation**

In this case the simplest construction of these terms is made manifest by 1st C. Preterism: Jesus said the **all** would come to pass in His own generation, which also correlates with the other passages under consideration:

*“Truly I say to you, **all these things** will come upon this generation” Mt 23:36*

*“Truly I say to you this generation shall not pass way until **all these things** take place.” Matt 24:34*

*And likewise, **all the prophets** who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. (Peter) Acts 3:24*

A First century Preterist view corresponds word-for-word with the observation of sacred fact.

The second rule is when theories do not fit our observations, then theories must change. Is there a need to alter 1st C. Preterist theory to fit the facts here? We find there is no necessity to do so. Both facts and logic are in its favor.

First century Preterism claims to be able to explain all of the prophets in the first century. In reply *Partial Preterism* argues because it cannot explain all of the facts in the first century, therefore a *First century Preterism* cannot either. This commits the fallacy of *Ignoratio Elenchi*, or irrelevance: it misses the point by suggesting no other explanation can do what it cannot do. This is like saying no one can know more than ourselves. This is untrue.

Historical accuracy is determined by the state of our historical knowledge at any time, and develops in detail equal to the state of an individual’s knowledge - more information results in more meaning. In the brilliant words of C.S Lewis:

“The positive historical statements made by Christianity have the power ...of receiving without intrinsic change, the increasing complexity which increasing knowledge puts into them. (C.S. Lewis. God in the Dock p.36)

Most simply this says Christian history is capable of more meaning by adding more information. For example the Egyptian hieroglyphs were once thought to be simple pictures without meaning, but later held to be an undecipherable language. The discovery of the Rosetta stone in 1799 did not change the hieroglyphs, but added increasing complexity of meaning by adding more information. This is just what *First Century Preterism* does. It asks to be measured not by creeds, prejudices or prior beliefs, but by objective tests of rationality like those given above. (In Parts, II, III and IV of this series we will supply the *historical /semantic, causal and contextual* information that *Partial Preterism* lacks.)

Consideration of #3. Some - Some scripture fulfilled in the first century. *Partial Preterism* denies that all scripture was fulfilled in Jesus’ first century generation. Why? because it cannot explain all things in the first century. *Partial Preterism* implies that Jesus promised;

‘Part of all things will be fulfilled,’ in Jesus’ time or;

‘These are the days when some /a few of the prophets will be fulfilled.’

The terms *part* and *some* suggest the notion of incompleteness. In other words *Partial Preterism* affirms *part /some* non-completion of what the prophets wrote in the first century, and denies *all* would be fulfilled. Observing the evidence we find rather the opposite is found. If any part of the prophecy was fulfilled in the first century, then perforce *all* had to be fulfilled in the first century.

*“These are the days of vengeance, so that **all things** which are written will be fulfilled” Lk 21:22*

*“ These are My words which I spoke to you when I was still with you, that **all things** which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets must be fulfilled.” Lk 24:44*

Logic is unrelenting. It can only break down when units of fact break down. Here the units, *some, a few or part* are missing facts. Hence the logic of *Partial Preterism* breaks down. The term *all things*, implies completeness, especially a complete fulfillment. In context this relates to the complete fulfillment of prophecy. This is simple and unambiguous. Logic does not imply the necessity to wrestle simple words understandable in context into ambiguity. In all cases cited either Jesus or an apostle said *“all would be fulfilled.”*

*“Truly I say to you this generation shall not pass away until **all these things** take place.” Lk 21:22*

However if the logic of a *P.P.* view breaks down, the logic of a *First Century Preterist view* does not suffer

from the same problem. Consider the following syllogisms. -

Jesus said the days in which He was living were the days in which all things in the Law and prophets would be fulfilled. (Lk 24:44)

Those days were located in the first century.

Conclusion: Therefore the fulfillment of all things in the Law and prophets was in first century

All the prophets from Samuel include: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah et al. All these announced the days in which Peter was then living. (Acts 3:24)

Conclusion: Therefore Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,- Jonah et al. all announced things in which Peter was living. Eg: Resurrection of dead: Dan. 12:2, 7 and Rev 11:11; Raised from hades: Hos 13:14 and 1 Cor 15:55 and Rev 20:13-14. (Also cf: Mk 13:30; Lk 18:31; Lk 21:32; Lk 24:45; Acts 3:21 restitution of all things, Rom 14:10; 16:26 now made known to all nations, 1 Cor 10:11)

Partial Preterism denies all things were fulfilled in Jesus' generation because *it cannot explain* all things in Jesus' time, and therefore denies He meant 'all' things. This will not suffice. It must keep trying to explain all the facts. When theories do not explain facts, theories must change.

Partial Preterism cannot cite any biblical fact for its partialism. This is understandable because *P.P.* is a version that tries to save another theory that has no facts - *Futurism* - from its weaknesses by marrying it to *Preterism*. In this *Partial Preterism* justifies *Futurism* by the contextual strengths of *First century Preterism*: it stands between them like a man with the ends of a rope in each hand, unwilling to renounce the old paradigm, but unable to accept the new. In the history of science this double-mindedness, (according to Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*) is standard procedure to save a *Futurist* theory in crisis.

Though [followers] may begin to lose faith and then begin to consider alternatives, they do not renounce the paradigm that has led them to crisis...and do not treat anomalies as counter-instances, though in the vocabulary of the history of science, that is what they are. (Kuhn. Structure p.77)

The choices are *all, some or none*. *Futurism* once claimed *all* end time prophecy was future. *Partial Preterism* explains *some fulfillment* in Jesus' generation. If someone wants to be literal, let's be literal. All things were to be fulfilled in Jesus' generation, Acts 3:24.

And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. Cf. Mt 23:36, 24:34; Lk 21:22, 24:44.

Conclusion - The bible facts are plain and not in dispute:

"These are My words which I spoke to you when I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets must be fulfilled." Lk 24:44

The beginning and principal measure of an objective explanation is *observation*. The second rule is when our theories do not fit our observations, then theories must change. The two possible constructions of Jesus' words considered here are:

All were fulfilled in that generation
Some were fulfilled in that generation

What do we conclude from this comparison?

1. *Partial Preterism* fails the first rule for a good explanation, that of *observation*. *First Century Preterism* meets the first rule for a good theory in the same terms.

2. If *Partial Preterism* fails the first rule, then it should follow the second rule: If theories do not fit observations, theories must change. therefore *Partial Preterism* must change.

Another major weakness of *Partial Preterism* is that it fails the test of logical consistency. Logic can only fail when units fail. Here the logic fails because the terms, *part /some/ few* are not observable in the evidence. Other problems are the reliance on special rules invented - like the epicycles and deferents of the old astronomy - to compensate for its inability to explain the facts, especially the:

1. *entire absence of 2,000 year time facts in the bible*
2. *absence of facts Jesus will return; personally, physically and visibly.*

None of these three terms appear at all in the bible. Source: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance)

3. *claim Jesus was delayed is without a 'Why?' & contrary to Heb 10:37*
4. *entire absence of multiple 'comings.'*
5. *entire absence of gaps of thousands of years between verses*
6. *inability to prove the truth of an 'always literal' semantic*

A first century *First century Preterist* theory remedies the six problems inherent in a *Futurist /Partial* view. A first century view -

1. *doesn't need 2,000 year facts*
2. *doesn't need thousand year gaps between verses*
3. *doesn't need multiple 'comings'*
4. *doesn't need extra-biblical terms: personally, physically and visibly*
5. *doesn't need a 'delay'*
6. *doesn't need a rigid methodology of literalism*

We have lived with these inventions for so long we believe they are a part of scripture, but observation tells us they are not.

Factual observations are vital to rational belief. If Jesus' coming is future to 2009 it will be mirrored in facts, if untrue then the facts will be absent. Here the evidence is conspicuously absent. On the other hand *First century Preterism* everywhere operates by observation. It says simply:

- *all things occurred in Jesus' age*
- *one single explanation: what was promised and written to them came to pass.*
- *based on a simpler premise: bible words have bible meanings*
- *preserves bible facts*

The three bases of *First Century Preterism* are semantic, causal, and contextual. It says;

1. *Bible terms are always **biblical and learned by bible usage.***
2. *there is a **CIst mechanism** to explain the end of the age. 1Kgs 8-9*
3. *there is a **CIst context** for the Hadean end-time judgment and resurrection.*

The rule is that when our theories do not fit our observations, then theories must change. *Partial Preterism* has no observable facts to demand loyalty. The Christian's first loyalty is to the statements of scripture. By this measure *Partial Preterism* fails.

Conversely any explanation that attempts an objective description of *all prophecy* must look back to the first century for its natural context. I recommend a consideration of the *First Century Preterist* view to the candid Christian reader.

In these four articles I will explain the whole basis of a First century Preterist explanation beginning with Part II, *The End of the Holy City*. (Next issue)

The Rising Cost of Christian Complacency

Culture Continues to Disintegrate Under the Government of Wicked Men

Unmarried Childbirths in U.S. Reach Record Levels

WEDNESDAY, March 18 (HealthDay News) -- The number of unmarried women who are having babies has reached a record level in the United States, and Cesarean delivery rates continue to hit new highs, a government report shows.

The total number of births, birth rate and proportion of births to unmarried women all increased by 3 percent to 5 percent from 2006 to 2007. The estimated 1,714,643 babies born to unmarried women in 2007 accounted for **39.7 percent of all births in the country.**

The total number of births rose to 4,317,119 in 2007, the highest number of births ever registered in the United States. The Cesarean delivery rate increased by 2 percent, to 31.8 percent, in 2007 -- the eleventh consecutive year of increase and another record high for the nation, said the report from the National Center for Health Statistics at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Among the other findings:

- The birth rate for teens rose 1 percent between 2006 and 2007, from 41.9 to 42.5 births per 1,000 females aged 15-19.
- Birth rates for females aged 10-14 remained unchanged but increased for women in their 20s, 30s and early 40s.
- The U.S. fertility rate increased 1 percent in 2007, to 69.5 births per 1,000 females aged 15-44. That's the highest rate since 1990.
- The percentage of low birth-weight babies (less than 2,500 grams) decreased, from 8.3 percent in 2006 to 8.2 percent in 2007. Over the past few decades, low birth weight rates have steadily risen; this is the first decline since 1984.

The report is based on an analysis of nearly 99 percent of birth records reported to 50 states and the District of Columbia as part of the National Vital Statistics System.

Revelation Explained

Chapters 15-17

Editor's Note: The following is taken from a draft of the manuscript of a booklet-length commentary on Revelation we have written and will publish in a couple months. The whole booklet should be about 45-50 pages in length, and is written with the idea of encapsulating the Preterist message of Revelation in a pithy, easy-to-read format for inexpensive, mass distribution.

Rev. 15 – The Blessed State and Security of the Martyrs

This chapter provides a window into the fate of the martyrs, who have crossed to the other side and sing praise to God for his salvation.

Rev. 15:1-4 – The Song of Moses and the Lamb

John sees another wonder in heaven: the seven angels having the seven last plagues. In them, the eschatological wrath of God is fulfilled. Here in particular, God's wrath upon the Roman world will come into view, whereas until now only his wrath upon the Jews has been addressed. John also sees those that had gotten victory over the beast stand upon a sea of glass mingled with fire, having the harps of God in their hands; they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

The imagery here is taken from Exodus, when the children of Israel stood upon the shore of the Red Sea and returned songs of praise to God for his triumph over Pharaoh and his army (Ex. 15:19). As elsewhere in Revelation, many scenes draw from the heavenly antitype upon which the temple was modeled. The sea here may thus answer the brazen sea in Solomon's temple, which at the time of the Exodus was originally made from the women's looking glasses (Ex. 38:8). If so, it probably signifies the gulf separating fallen man from his Maker, and man's need for cleansing before he can draw nigh unto God. The sea is mingled with fire, signifying the fiery persecutions that refined and purified the saints, and which they had to endure before crossing over and receiving the crown of life (*cf.* I Cor. 3:13; I Pet. 1:7; 4:12).

Rev. 15:5-8 – Admission into the Temple and Resurrection of the Dead

John sees seven angels issue from the temple of God in heaven. One of the four living creatures gives them seven vials full of the seven last plagues. The temple of God in heaven is filled with the smoke of his glory; no man is to be admitted into the temple until the seven last plagues are through.

In Hebrews, the writer states that Christians may boldly enter the presence of God within the veil (Heb. 6:19; 10:19). However, it is understood that this is merely the legal and covenantal presence of God entered by the blood of Christ and adoption of sonship. The legal barrier of sin that separates man from God is done away in the cross of Christ; the veil is rent in twain and we are given access to God's presence in and through Christ. Although legally restored to a "face to face" relationship

through the gospel, it is not until death that we enter the presence of God actually and spatially. Although cleansed and made pure in contemplation of law, we still retain the corruption of our fallen nature as long as we have our dwelling in the flesh. In the present scene, the martyrs, though having won the crown of life, must wait until the resurrection of the last day before they leave the Hadean realm to enter the presence of God in heaven. This would occur when the seven final plagues are through, signaling that all enemies are now firmly beneath Christ's feet.

Rev. 16 – The Seven Last Plagues

This chapter portrays the last plagues containing the eschatological wrath of God upon the Jewish and Roman world. With it, the world-crisis associated with the second coming concludes. The material in Rev. 17-20:11 is merely recapitulatory, developing in further detail events already expressed. Not until we reach the general resurrection in Rev. 20:12 does the narrative advance again.

Rev. 16:1-9 – Plagues upon the World Elements

The seven angels having the seven last plagues are told to pour them out upon the earth. The "earth," when set in contradistinction to the "sea," typically means Palestine-Judea. It is unclear whether this distinction is intended here; the better probably is that it is not. The fifth angel pours his vial out upon the kingdom of the beast, which is manifestly Rome. Moreover, the sixth vial brings forth deceiving spirits like frogs that become lying spirits in the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and false prophet, which also clearly involves Rome. Together these argue against the more restrictive sense of "earth" or "land" in this chapter. Unlike the second vision, which was confined to Palestine, the third (present) vision expands to include the Gentile world and the persecuting power of Rome. Hence, it is natural that the plagues here extend beyond Palestine. Additionally, we note that there is a close affinity between the plagues here and those under the trumpets in chapter 8. For example, the first four trumpets afflict the earth (vegetation), sea, rivers and springs, and celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars). So here, the first four vials afflict the earth, sea, rivers and springs, and celestial bodies. Since the plagues here tend to mirror or duplicate upon Israel detailed in chapter 8, those here are best explained as falling upon the larger Roman Empire, so that what before overtook the Jews, now enfolds the habitable earth.

Peter prophesied that the “elements” would melt with fervent heat (II Pet. 3:7-12). These elements are best interpreted as the world socio-political powers that suffered dissolution in the years preceding the death of Nero, and the Roman civil wars that followed, when catastrophes rolled like breakers across the length and breadth of the empire. It is probably to these and similar disasters that John alludes in the plagues poured out by the angels here upon the world elements of the earth, air, sun, and waters.

The first vial – The first vial is poured out upon the earth and there falls a noisome and grievous sore upon those that received the mark of the beast and consented to worship its image. This is patterned on the boils that broke out upon the Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex. 9:8-12). It likely refers to the ulcers and sores that broke out upon the body of the empire as the subject peoples grew restive under Roman rule. Among the afflictions the empire suffered at this time include a war with Parthia over the Armenian throne, even while the city of Rome lay in ashes from the great fire and its inhabitants were displaced from their homes and suffered want of common necessities.

The second vial – The second vial is poured out upon the sea, which became as the blood of a dead man, killing every living soul. A possible historical referent here is the destruction of the imperial navy. Shortly after Nero’s persecution began, he ordered the fleet to return to Campania by a given date, with no allowance for hazards of the sea. The helmsmen therefore, in spite of a raging storm, put out from port and much of the fleet was destroyed.¹

The third vial – The third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and springs, turning them to blood. A voice proclaims the righteous judgment of God in giving them blood to drink for they were bloodthirsty for the lives of the saints and prophets. This draws upon the plagues visited upon Egypt. Pharaoh had caused the Jews to cast their sons into the Nile. In recompense, Moses turned the Nile to blood giving the Egyptians blood to drink (Ex. 7:19-25). Rivers are sources of life to nations and peoples; kings and governors are sometimes symbolized by the great rivers of their realms, as the king of Assyria by the Euphrates by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 8:7). If so, a possible referent here is the Nero’s reign of terror, following the conspiracy of Piso (A.D. 65), during which Nero killed many leading Romans, including Seneca, Lucan, many senators and members of the nobility.

“Meanwhile, however, the city was filled with funerals, and the Capital with burnt offerings. Here, for the killing of a son; there, for that of a brother, a kinsman, or a friend; men were addressing their thanks to Heaven, bedecking their mansions with bays, falling at the knees of the sovereign, and persecuting his hand with kisses.”²

The fourth vial – The fourth angel pours his vial upon sun, causing men to be scorched with searing heat and to curse God who had power over these plagues. The sun is one of the ruling orbs and may point to the relentless, punishing heat of Roman rule. At this time, Rome lay in ruin and Nero was scouring Italy

and the provinces for money to rebuild the city and his own “golden house.” In what may link him with the sun here, Nero placed before the house a 120 foot statue of himself haloed with rays of the sun like Phoebus Apollo.

“Meanwhile, Italy had been laid waste for contributions of money; the provinces, the federate communities, and the so-called free states, were ruined. The gods themselves formed part of the plunder, as the ravaged temples of the capital were drained of the gold dedicated in the triumphs or the vows, the prosperity or the fears, of the Roman nation at every epoch. But in Asia and Achaia, not offerings lone but the very images of deity were being swept away.”³

The fifth vial – The fifth angel pours out his vial upon the kingdom of the beast and its domain is turned to darkness, causing men to gnaw their tongues for pain. This passage again evokes the plagues upon Egypt (Ex.10:21-23). As the end grew near, the condition of the empire deteriorated; calamity followed calamity. A fire at Lyons, France, destroyed most of the colony; the disaster was so pronounced, Seneca devoted a letter to the fire, declaiming the fickleness of fortune and the transitory nature of life.⁴ A pestilence decimated Rome (A.D. 65); leaving thirty-thousand cut down behind it. The pestilence was followed by a hurricane in Campania:

“Upon this year, disgraced by so many deeds of shame, Heaven also set its mark by tempest and by disease. Campania was wasted by a whirlwind, which far and wide wrecked the farms, the fruit trees, and the crops, and carried its fury to the neighbourhood of the capital, where all classes of men were being decimated by a deadly epidemic. No outward sign of a distempered air was visible. Yet the houses were filled with lifeless bodies, the streets with funerals. Neither sex nor age gave immunity from danger; slaves and the free-born populace alike were summarily cut down, amid the laments of their wives and children, who, themselves infected while tending or mourning the victims, were often thrown upon the same pyre.”⁵

The sixth vial - The sixth angel pours out his vial upon the great river Euphrates and the waters thereof are dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east. This alludes to Cyrus the Great and the capture of Babylon. Babylon’s walls were virtually impregnable and its store of food so great that the city was largely indifferent to the siege outside. To the contrary, as if to show how little concern they had, Darius was feasting a thousand of his lords when the city fell (Dan. 5). However, Cyrus was able to gain entrance to the city by diverting the Euphrates, allowing his soldiers to gain entrance by the city water courses. In the present case, Jerusalem is Babylon and the Romans stand in the position of the Medes and Persians. The larger point of the imagery is to show heaven’s assistance so the Romans can capture Jerusalem. However, if there was a single

³ Tacitus, *Annals*, XLV; Loeb ed.

⁴ Epistle XLI

⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, XVI, xiii; Loeb ed.

¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, xlvi

² Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, lxxi; Loeb ed.

event in the course of the war that acted to facilitate the city's capture the way diverting the Euphrates did for Cyrus, undoubtedly it was the destruction of the city's store of grain. Josephus states that but for the loss of the city's store of provisions, Jerusalem could not have been taken.

*"Accordingly, it so came to pass, that all the places that were about the temple were burnt down, and were become an intermediate desert space, ready for fighting on both sides; and that almost all the corn was burnt, which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years. So they were taken by the means of famine, which it was impossible they should have been, unless they had thus prepared the way for it by this procedure."*⁶

John next see three spirits like frogs go forth from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet to gather the kings of the earth and the whole world together to battle of the great day of God almighty. The place of the battle is Armageddon, which signifies the "hill of Megiddo." Megiddo became a place of symbolic importance for the decisive battles the Lord won there for his people. Announcement of this battle is followed by the assurance "Behold, I come quickly," signifying Christ's imminent return as captain of the Lord's host to win the day. The battle is the persecution under Nero, the war the beast was given power to make against the spirits for 42 months (Rev. 13:4, 7; 19:19; 20:7-10). The spirits are the lies and slanders against the church that caused the Roman world and provincial governors to combine together for its destruction; like frogs, they catch men with their tongues. Called by Paul the "man of sin" and "son of perdition, Nero was destroyed by the coming of Christ to avenge his saints and establish his kingdom and dominion in the earth (II Thess. 2:3; cf. I Jn. 2:18; Dan. 7:8, 21). Thus, like John, Paul specifically links the coming of Christ to the destruction of the "man of sin":

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. II Thess. 2:8

The seventh vial - seventh angel pours out his vial upon the air, and a voice from heaven announces "it is done." There follow thunders, lightening, and a great earthquake. This earthquake almost certainly refers to the Roman civil wars (A.D. 68-70), which were like nothing the world had ever seen before, nor has since. There were five emperors in the space of one year and twenty-two days, dividing the Roman people and laying waste the empire. Plutarch describes the empire following Nero's death, saying,

*"Many terrible events, especially those that befell the Romans after Nero's suicide...show in exemplary fashion that a state should fear above all armed forces subject to untrained and irrational impulses...The Roman empire was overtaken by disasters and upheavals like those caused by the Titans of mythology, at one and the same time being torn into many pieces and collapsing in on itself in many places."*⁷

The great city is also divided into three parts - This refers to the three warring factions of the Jews, John of Gischala, Simon son of Gioras, and Eleazar the son of Simon, who together did more to destroy the nation than the Romans.⁸

Babylon came up in remembrance before God - Josephus describes the final fall of the city thus:

*So the Romans being now become masters of the walls, they both placed their ensigns upon the towers, and made joyful acclamations for the victory they had gained, as having found the end of this war much lighter than its beginning; for when they had gotten upon the last wall, without any bloodshed, they could hardly believe what they found to be true; but seeing nobody to oppose them, they stood in doubt what such an unusual solitude could mean. But when they went in numbers into the lanes of the city with their swords drawn, they slew those whom they overtook without and set fire to the houses whither the Jews were fled, and burnt every soul in them, and laid waste a great many of the rest; and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is, of such as died by the famine; they then stood in a horror at this sight, and went out without touching any thing. But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood. And truly so it happened, that though the slayers left off at the evening, yet did the fire greatly prevail in the night; and as all was burning, came that eighth day of the month Gorpheus [Elul] upon Jerusalem, a city that had been liable to so many miseries during this siege, that, had it always enjoyed as much happiness from its first foundation, it would certainly have been the envy of the world. Nor did it on any other account so much deserve these sore misfortunes, as by producing such a generation of men as were the occasions of this its overthrow."*⁹

Rev. 17 - Portrait of the Persecutors

Chapters 17:1-20:10 are recapitulatory; they retrace ground already covered in order to flesh out various particulars about the identity and destruction of the church's enemies. The vision will not advance again until Rev. 20:11-15. The purpose of the present chapter is to provide further descriptive material identifying the beast and harlot.

Rev. 17:1-6 - Babylon the Harlot

⁶ Josephus, *Wars*, V, i, 4; Whiston ed.

⁷ Plutarch, *Life of Galba*.

⁸ Josephus, *Wars*, V, i, 1-6.

⁹ Josephus, *Wars*, VI, viii, 5; Whiston ed.

An angel invites John to see the judgment upon the great whore, which sits upon many waters. The waters are defined as “peoples, nations, multitudes, and tongues” (v. 15), and point to the pervasiveness of the woman’s presence throughout the empire. John sees the woman riding a scarlet colored beast. She holds a goblet in her hand filled with the filthiness of her fornications, and is drunk with the blood of the saints. She wears a name upon her head MYSTERY: BABYLON THE GREAT; THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATION OF THE EARTH.

Her name is prefaced with the word “mystery,” signifying that her identity presents something of a spiritual wonder and enigma. Rome would be too obvious to qualify as a mystery symbol of this woman’s identity, for almost every mind leaps immediately to this conclusion. The better view is that Jerusalem is signified. In chapter 16, Babylon is called the “great city” (Rev. 16:19; cf. 18:10, 18). Yet, in chapter 11, the “great city” is spiritually called “Sodom and Egypt where also our Lord was crucified” (Rev. 11:8). The common factor in all of these cases is the “great city.” If A = B and B = C, then A = C. If the “great city” equals Jerusalem, and the “great city” equals Babylon, Egypt, and Sodom, then Jerusalem equals Babylon, Egypt, and Sodom. She is specifically called Sodom in Isa. 1:10 and is made equal to Egypt by Paul in his analogy of the two covenants, where he equates fleshly Jerusalem with the Egyptian slave Hagar (Gal. 4:21-31). What wonder, therefore, that she is here called Babylon? The name is upon her brow because she has a harlot’s forehead and refuses to repent or be ashamed (Jer.3:3).

John says the beast carries her, but the idea is that she *drives* the beast. In other words, Jewish hatred for Christ and the gospel is the driving force behind the persecution. We see this all through the book of Acts; everywhere Paul went, the Jews persecuted him and sought to suppress the gospel of life, even stirring up the Gentiles against him when they could. It was only Roman law that protected the gospel at first and prevented the Jews from taking the apostles’ lives. With the rise of Nero, whose wife, Poppaea Sabina, is widely believed to have been a Jewish proselyte,¹⁰ the *religio licita* was annulled and the church was made an enemy of the state and scapegoat for the great fire. It is a common surmise among historians and theologians alike that the Jews suggested pinning the fire upon the Christians, moved by their great hatred for Christ and the gospel. This was the “mystery of iniquity” Paul said was already at work, but would break out in the battle (persecution) of the end time. Bishop Lightfoot agrees:

“The mystery of iniquity was already working, when the apostle wrote this Epistle, which cannot possibly be understood but of the Jewish nation; and so it is explained again and again.”¹¹

Rev. 17:7-18 – The Beast

John next describes the beast. The following are the pertinent points:

¹⁰ Josephus calls her a “religious woman.” *Antiquities*, XX, viii, 11.

¹¹ John Lightfoot, *Complete Works, Harmony of the New Testament* (A.D. 1684), Vol. III, p. 232.

“Was and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit” –

This is best understood in reference to the persecution that arose over Stephen, depicted in Rev. 12. The dragon and beast suffered defeat when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the flood of persecution the dragon spewed forth. In chapter 13 the same defeat is characterized as a mortal wound to one of the beast’s heads. This mortal wound sent the beast and dragon (symbolically) down to Hades Tartarus (the bottomless pit), where they were chained and interred. But the mortal wound would shortly heal (Rev. 13:3, 14); and the beast (and dragon) would ascend from the pit to persecute the church anew (Rev. 11:7; 20:7-10). This battle is the crisis Revelation was written to address, to provide the saints guidance and encouragement when called to lay down their lives for the name of Christ.

Seven Heads – The beast has seven heads, which answer to seven mountains. This is typically taken in reference to the seven hills of Rome. If so, it identifies the beast as a Roman power, and says nothing about the identity of the woman who rides it. However, the fact John expressly says mountains argues against this interpretation, for Rome was *not* known as the city of seven mountains, but seven hills (*urbs septicolis*). Moreover, given that one of the heads received a mortal wound, which could not happen to an actual hill or mountain, we prefer the interpretation that takes the mountains demographically in reference to population centers where the persecution had a head. In prophecy and scripture, mountains and hills represent nations. This hales from the time when cities were built on hillsides because of their natural defensive position. Isaiah thus speaks of a time of coming judgment, saying, “the day of the Lord of hosts shall be...upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall” (Isa. 2:12-14).¹² If this is correct, the head that was wounded likely answers to the persecution in Palestine-Judea; the remaining heads to places in Europe and Asia where the persecution under Nero broke out.

The seven heads have a double meaning. They also represent seven kings: five are fallen (Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius); one is (Nero); the other is not yet come, and when he comes he must continue a short space (Galba, who ruled only seven months). The beast itself is called an eighth king (v. 11), meaning that it commands a certain power of its own, which men dare not resist or refuse at risk penalty of death.

Ten Horns – Rome began as a republic, with representative government. So attached to republican and democratic forms of government were the Greeks and Romans that they equated liberty with them, holding monarchy in abhorrence. When Julius Caesar made himself sole monarch of Rome (in fact, if not in name), he was killed for it. Augustus, who followed Caesar in the sole government of Rome, wisely saw that to settle the empire on a permanent foundation with himself at its head, he had to preserve the forms of government the people’s affections and sensibilities required. Hence, in 27 B.C. he gave ten provinces to the senate, and retained the others.¹³ Those

¹² “Mountains symbolize seats of power and political and governmental resources.” Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypstics*, (1898; reprinted by Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR) p. 431

¹³ “In 27 B.C. the provinces had been divided into two classes, Imperial and Senatorial, ‘provinciae Caesaris,’ and ‘provinciae Senatus’ or ‘populi.’ The latter were ten in number, Africa, Asia, Bithynia, Achaea,

Review of Adumbrations: The Kingdom & Coming of Christ in the Book of Daniel

By Marty Angelo

given to the senate were in a settled and peaceful state and had no legions. Those retained by Augustus were on the empire's borders and thus required legions to keep their people in subjection. This arrangement meant that Augustus held the military power of the empire, while the senate held only the empty form of republican government. "His professed motive in this was that the senate might fearlessly enjoy the finest portion of the empire, while he himself had the hardships and the dangers; but his real purpose was that by this arrangement the senators will be unarmed and unprepared for battle, while he alone had arms and maintained soldiers."¹⁴ The ten senatorial provinces became a permanent, identifying feature of the Roman Empire, and answer to the ten toes in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2), weak among the members, but distinct and obvious. The ten horns stand for *all* the provinces, the part being put for the whole.

"No kingdom as yet" – John says the horns (provincial governments) "have received no kingdom as yet," but receive power as kings one hour with the beast (v. 12). This means that the *religio licita* was still being enforced when John wrote; the provincial governments have no power against the church yet, but shortly will. Hence, Revelation was almost certainly written before A.D. 64, probably sometime shortly before Paul's second trial.

"Hate the harlot" – Although compelled by the example and authority of the emperor to persecute the church, the tens horns *hate* the harlot. The Jews were hated throughout the empire; they were perceived as haughty, bigoted, and sanctimonious. When the Jews revolted from Rome, they lost the protection of law in many places and were mercilessly slaughtered. 50,000 were slain in Alexandria, Egypt, alone. The provincial powers of the empire thus combine to help in the war against the Jews. Legions, auxiliaries, and mercenaries were contributed from many quarters, consisting of peoples from every part of the world. They "hate the whore, and shall make her desolate" (v. 16).

"Reigneth over the kings of the earth" – This verse (v. 18), combined with the ascription of seven mountains to the beast, is the most forceful for interpreting the harlot as the city of Rome. However, reigning here should not be taken in an absolute *de jure* sense, but in the *de facto* context of the persecution where she is the driving power controlling the beast, and therefore reigns over the ten horns, which are inveigled in her plot against the church. Alternatively, "kings of the earth" may be taken in the more restrictive sense of Palestine, signifying the dominance of Jerusalem over her neighbors. (See also Rev. 16:14, where "kings of the earth *and* of the whole world" are set in contrast, suggesting Palestine over against heathendom.)

Illyricum, Macedonia, Crete and Cyrene, Sicily, Sardinia, and Hispania Baetica...The Imperial provinces in 27 B.C. were Gaul, Syria, Cyprus and Cilicia, and Hispania Citerior. The number was increased subsequently by the division of single provinces into two or more, and by the inclusion of all provinces constituted after 27 B.C., e.g. Moesia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia." Thomas Marris Taylor, *A Constitutional and Political History of Rome* (Metheun & Co., London, 1889), 464.

¹⁴ Dio Cassius, LIII, ii-xii; Loeb ed.

It is not everyday I am asked to review a book. Usually I just absorb myself in reading two or three books per week not thinking about having to make comments about what I've read to others. Therefore, when Kurt Simmons sent me an email asking me if I would like to review his new book, "Adumbrations" I was humbled.

Having stumbled into "fulfilled eschatology" back in the mid-1980s I always kept my beliefs to myself. The very few people I shared my beliefs with looked at me like I was some kind of kook. "You have to be kidding," was the usual response. So I learned to keep my end-time comments to a minimum. I never thought I would meet people who believed the same way.

God did prompt me to write down my thoughts in a manuscript entitled: "Vision of New Jerusalem: Now" so as not to forget what He clearly taught me.

The invention of the Internet in the 1990s changed the way we communicate with each other. Through it I began finding people of similar end-time beliefs and everything started to fall in place. Authors such as Max King, John Noe, Don Preston, Ed Stevens and Kurt Simmons kept springing up in my Google search results when I queried for "fulfilled eschatology ". I began purchasing every book these gifted authors published. They all confirmed what God revealed to me back when He guided me into the truth of His statement, "this generation shall not pass away till all these things are fulfilled."

So when Kurt asked me to review his new book I was taken back. "This has come full circle," I thought to myself. Now is the time to give back to a scholar who has richly blessed me since I first laid eyes on his first publication and excellent monthly newsletter. However, I wanted to be honest without bias. Not just write a review for a newfound friend but also look at this new work as someone who knew nothing about "end-times" doctrines.

This was no easy task because I am a very fast reader and when I started "Adumbrations" I was so blessed from just the first few pages that I had to slow myself down to a crawl, taking in word for word like a little child.

Simmons' new book is the best book I ever read on the Book of Daniel. In fact, it is one of the best books I've ever read. There are so many proven facts in this book

that if it was given to a non-Christian the person would have to convert halfway through it because the gospel screams out in capital letters each and every chapter.

No one can walk away from this book without knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior of the world. His spiritual Kingdom message is declared loud and clear. I never thought the Book of Daniel could be such an evangelist tool. Usually people tell new believers to read the Gospel of John to learn more of Christ. Not with Kurt's book. Kurt guides you through the Book of Daniel explaining each chapter and verse perfectly, all leading to understanding beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is not only the prophesized Savior and Messiah but King and understanding His "everlasting Kingdom."

After reading "Adumbrations" the debate ends in anyone's mind regarding whether Christianity is real.

Thought: "Salvation is of the Jews ... ". People do not take seriously the importance of "this generation" Christ's statement. They do not take the time to actually study what happened "historically" during the 40 years after Jesus' ascension leading up to the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem.

With futurist teachings streaming throughout Christianity for the past few generations people have moved away from understanding "Salvation is of the Jews" and replaced it with "Salvation is of my denomination". Church buildings, attendance, and parroting modern man's prophetic teachings have sidetracked and imprisoned entire major denominational congregations.

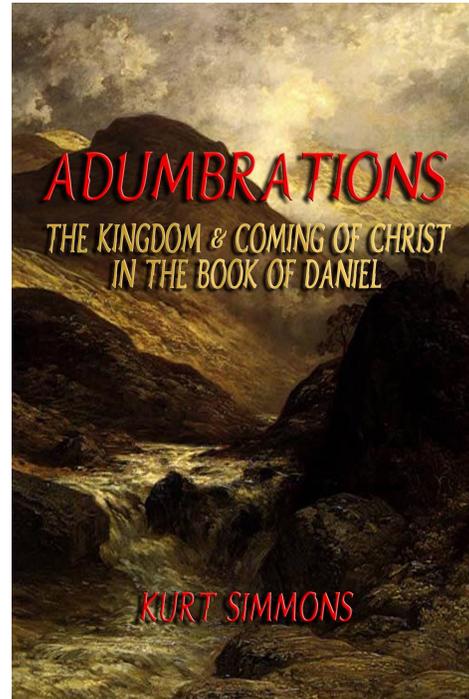
However, the book "Adumbrations" has the ability of steering curious seekers of the truth to a complete and thorough understanding of exactly what Jesus meant when He made His famous statement to the lady by the well, "Salvation is of the Jews."

One has to get serious about deciding just who and where our salvation truly does come from. "Adumbrations" will handle each and every argument right down to the last letter.

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