



The Sword & The Plow

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The End of the Single Millennium Model

Don Preston on the Millennia (Both of Them)

Kurt Simmons

Don is a great guy and good friend. We come from the same church background and hold many of the same ideas. Even so, there are several places where our views significantly differ. Don recently published a piece on his view of the 1,000-years in Revelation twenty. In the spirit of brotherly dialogue, I thought it would be useful to interact casually with a couple of Don's points.

The Millennial Reign of Christ (NOT!)

Don entitled his piece "The Forty-Year Millennium." It is Don's view that the forty-year period between Christ's ministry and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 are what is symbolized by the 1000-years in of

Revelation twenty.¹ Don sees this period as beginning with Jesus' earthly ministry (Matt. 12:29) and ending when he had put all enemies beneath his feet (I Cor. 15:24). According to Don

"The beginning of the Millennium is the beginning of Messiah's conquering work. The Millennium reign is the consolidation of Messiah's rule. The end of the Millennium is when the work was perfected."

¹ 41 years, actually: Jesus was baptized in the fall of AD 29 and Jerusalem fell in the summer/fall of A.D. 70 41 years later.

Thus, by Don's view, the Millennium has specific reference to *the reign of Christ*. We feel this is a mistake. Indeed, we feel the idea of a "millennial reign of Christ" is *the* fundamental mistake that runs throughout most millennial themes.

The scriptures are *silent* about a millennial reign of the Messiah. Not once does the concept appear anywhere in the Bible. Not a single verse can be produced that mentions or even alludes to such a concept. All notions about an "interim," "transitional," or "consolidating" reign are totally away from scripture. Virtually every passage of scripture, Old or New, which describes Christ's reign, places its beginning *at his ascension*, whence it continues without interruption...*forever*. Don, on the other hand, makes the reign begin *on earth* and last for only 1,000 years; an approach I feel is at odds with scripture:

Ps. 110-1 - "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

Isa. 9:7 - "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even forever."

Dan. 7:13 - I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

These are just a few of the more prominent passages describing Christ's reign. Notice that in each case the rule begins with Christ's ascension, not on earth as supposed by Don. Moreover, none of these delimits or otherwise qualifies Christ's rule. There is no hint of a millennial reign. Jesus ascended to God's right hand where he received a kingdom, and was proclaimed King of kings and Lord of lords; he rules the nations with a rod of iron. The reign that began at Jesus' ascension is *forever*. Period. No qualification.

Don cites Heb. 2:8 "But now we see not yet all things put under him." Don argues that, since at the end of the millennium all enemies would be put beneath

Christ's feet, therefore the millennium is *defined* by the period of Christ's conquering. Says Don,

"Christ was currently reigning, and would continue to reign until his enemies were put under Him. The time of his rule is the time of the putting down of his enemies...The end of the Millennium is when that work was perfected."

This is clearly wrong. The 1000-year internment of the dragon ended when it was loosed to persecute the new church. Don agrees with this and correctly observes that the revelation of the "man of sin" in II Thess. 2:8 equals the loosing of the dragon in Rev. 20:7. This loosing of the dragon/revelation of the man of sin began the persecution that is the subject of Revelation. Revelation was written to prepare the church for the coming persecution under Nero and the Jews. The actors in this battle (persecution) include the dragon (Rome), beast (persecuting power of the empire), false prophet (Jewish religious leaders), harlot (political power of world-Judaism embodied in Jerusalem), and kings of the earth (political power of the provincial governments). Christ's "coming" is to destroy these enemies and vindicate the saints and martyrs. Since putting these enemies beneath his feet comes *after* the 1000-year internment of the dragon is over, the millennium cannot be the consolidating of Christ's rule, as Don alleges. How can the millennium be defined by something that does not occur until it is past? Moreover, since the dragon and beast are loosed at the persecution under Nero (A.D. 64), the idea of a "forty-year millennium" comes up six years short! Thus, the idea that the millennium ended at A.D. 70 has enormous obstacles it must overcome to be viable.

In reality, the 1000-years have *no reference* to Christ at all. Instead, they refer to the internment of dragon on the one hand (Rev. 20:1-3), and to the martyrs and righteous dead on the other (v. 4-6). Christ reigns *forever*. The righteous dead and martyrs *share* for a time in that reign ("1000 years") from Hades Paradise. However, Don *transfers* the 1000-year periods from the dragon and righteous dead, and applies them *to Christ*. This not only creates an "interim reign" of which the scripture are silent, but also negates the "other-worldly" nature of the millennial periods and makes them descriptive of earthly time ("forty-years") and events. Peter is very clear that in the spiritual realm, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8). Thus, use of 1000-years speaks directly to the other-worldly nature of time in the spiritual realm. This is equally true of the dragon, beast, and martyrs in Revelation twenty: the dragon and beast having received a mortal wound to the head went down to Hades Tartarus for a

symbolic period of 1000-years. The martyrs having been beheaded for the testimony of Christ went to Hades Paradise for 1000-years where they waited the general resurrection. Don is mistaken to apply the symbolism of 1000-years to Christ. There is no such thing as a “1000-year reign of Christ.” The whole concept is erroneous.

Describes Two Millennia, but Supposes only One

Throughout his article, Don supposes but a single millennium, framed by the ministry of Christ (Matt. 12:29) on the one hand, and the general resurrection on the other (Rev. 20:11-15). Says Don,

“The Millennium terminated forty years later at the resurrection...the end of the Millennium is also the time of the Resurrection.”

We agree with Don that the reign of the righteous dead and martyrs ended at (by) the general, Hadean resurrection in A.D. 70. However, Don’s supposition that a single millennium is contemplated by the text is belied by the fact Don says (correctly) that the persecution of the “man of sin” (Nero) begins when the dragon is loosed.

“At the end of the Millennium we see: Satan released; his making war with the saints; his final destruction. In the New Testament we see: Satan released (‘The Devil walks around seeking whom he may devour’ I Pet. 5:8); his making war with the saints (the saints had to suffer ‘a little while’ I Pet. 1:4f; cf. Rev. 12:10).”

Thus, according to Don, the millennium is over when the dragon is loosed. The dragon is loose when the eschatological persecution under Nero begins.² The persecution under Nero began in A.D. 64. Don places the general resurrection at A.D. 70, a six-year difference. How can the text contemplate a single millennium when the binding of the dragon does not extend unto the Hadean resurrection?

Consider:

- The dragon is bound 1000 years

²A few years ago, “loosing the dragon” was generally equated with the beginning of the Jewish war (AD 66-70), a view floated by Max King, but which makes no sense at all. The dragon is bound *vis-a-vis* the saints, not the Jews, who are allied with the dragon against the Church. The *only* feasible view is that loosing the dragon marks the beginning of the persecution under Nero. We are glad to see that Don is now on board with this view.

- The martyrs and righteous dead reign with Christ 1000 years
- The dragon’s internment ends at the Neronean persecution (A.D. 64)
- The martyrs’ confinement in Hades ended at the general resurrection (A.D. 70)

Both are defined as extending 1000 years, yet one ends 6 years before the other. Clearly, it is *impossible* that the same 1000-year period apply to both!

Let us consider the case still more closely. Revelation was written to address the coming eschatological persecution under Nero and the Jews. John said the beast (the persecuting power of the Empire) was “about to” (Gk. μελλο) ascend out of the bottomless pit and begin its war against the saints (Rev. 11:7; 17:8). Don says this war/persecution is the point where the dragon is loosed, which history shows began in A.D. 64. The actors in this persecution are the dragon, beast, harlot, *etc.* Where in Revelation do we first encounter these actors; where does the persecution under Nero begin? Answer: In Revelation 13. Thus, the binding of the dragon ends where Rev. 13 begins, and the beast’s rising from the sea thus answers (in point of time) its emergence from the bottomless pit. This being so, the millennial binding of the dragon/beast was about to end when John composed the Apocalypse just before the persecution under Nero began.

Now, that the millennial reign of the martyrs is not confined within the same time or events as the binding of the dragon is clearly seen from the fact that they are described as those who died under the beast for not receiving his mark or the number of his name or worshipping his image (Rev. 20:4). The mark of the beast refers to Nero, as every Preterist agrees (Rev. 13:14-18; *cf.* 17:10). Thus, the martyrs are those who die under Nero. Since the binding and loosing of the dragon necessarily end before the martyrs die and begin their 1000-year reign, it is impossible that the same 1000-year period be contemplated by both.

The six-year discrepancy in Don’s chronology stands in testimony that the “forty-year millennium” model is hopelessly flawed (sorry Don, no offense intended). How can there be one millennium that ends twice, once in A.D. 64 when the dragon is loosed and the persecution begins, and a second time when the reign of the martyrs ends in A.D. 70? This is sloppy exegesis folks; Preterism can and must do better!

Living Saints Involved in First Resurrection?

Here is the text of Rev. 20:4:

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

So far, we have treated only of the second group, the souls beheaded under the persecution of Nero. Who are the first group, those seated on throne to whom judgment was given? I formerly was of the same opinion as Don that this group described the “church temporal,” or living saints/church upon earth, which I saw as participating in the 1st resurrection. I learned this from Augustine *via* David Chilton, and from Max King who added the twist that the saints were not justified prior to A.D. 70. I have since, I think, learned better.

The reader should know that King, who spiritualized the resurrection equating it with justification from sin, taught that the Mosaic law remained valid until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. King thus held that the saints continued under the debt and bondage of the law, dead in sin and the “grave of Judaism” until A.D. 70 when the dead were raised, the law was supposedly removed, and the saints justified. King therefore *needed* to make the living participants in the 1st resurrection (which he defined as having died and risen with Christ in baptism) so that he could make them share in the general resurrection of A.D. 70 when the saints were purportedly finally justified. But all this is perfect folly. Nothing could be clearer than that the saints (living and dead) were in a state of justification from and after the cross (death, burial, and resurrection) of Christ. I marvel that anyone would try to deny it:

“But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Don, who follows King, says that Eph. 2:1, 6 teaches that the living were partakers of Christ’s resurrection and therefore must be deemed part of those in Rev. 20:4 sharing in the 1st resurrection. But this is wrong. The saints in Rev. 20:4 are in *Hades* where they await the general resurrection (Rev. 20:11-15). The saints in Ephesus are figuratively in *Heaven* (not Hades). This should be obvious. Since Christ descended to Hades at death (Ps. 16:10; Act 2:27; Lk. 24:43) and was raised from there, Hades cannot be the place where the saints are “seated with” Christ following his ascension!

In speaking of Christ’s resurrection and ascension, Paul says God “raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the *heavenly places*” (Gk. *επουρανοις*) (Eph. 1:20). Then, speaking of the saints participation in Christ’s resurrection, Paul says that God “hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in *heavenly places* (Gk. *επουρανοις*) in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). Clearly, therefore, the living saints are characterized as being in Heaven where Christ ascended and sat down at the right hand of God, not Hades like the souls in Rev. 20:4. Paul is not saying the saints on earth are actually in heaven (an obvious fact that should need no clarification). What he is saying is that Jesus’ humanity means that in his ascension to the right hand of God, all believers are represented there by him. Jesus is our representative and forerunner. We appear before the throne and are made acceptable to God by and through him. Eph. 2:1, 6 has no reference to the 1000-years of Revelation twenty at all.

Since Eph. 2:1, 6 does not place the living saints in Hades, there is no sound exegetical basis for treating them as partaking in the 1st resurrection.³ The better view is that the first group mentioned by John is the rest of the righteous dead from Abel onwards, who also were in Hades Paradise looking for their resurrection of eternal life. At the burning bush God told Moses “*I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*” (Ex. 3:6). Jesus quoted this passage as proof that the dead were alive in Sheol/Hades for “*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*” (Matt. 22:32). Thus, it is these John depicts as “living and reigning” in Hades pending the general resurrection, not the saints on earth.

Conclusion

The “forty-year millennium” as set out by Don is self contradictory. On the one hand he says the millennium (singular) ended when the dragon was loosed in A.D. 64 at the outbreak of the Neronean persecution, but he then turns around and says that it does not end until A.D. 70. Which is it? It cannot be both. Two endings require two millennia. Don may therefore be cited as an unwitting proponent of Bimillennialism. Dear reader, there is no such thing as a “millennial reign of Christ.” Christ reigns forever. The millennial periods of Revelation refer to the dragon and martyrs, not Christ.

³ The idea that the living and dead were raised together as urged by Don and assumed by his model is refuted by I Thess. 4:16, 17, which expressly states that the “dead in Christ shall rise *first*” and the living follow afterwards as one-by-one they put off the body in death.

What is the Regeneration?

Kurt Simmons

There is some confusion about the “regeneration,” so we thought a few words were in order to clarify use of this term.

The term “regeneration” (Gk. *παλιγγενεσις*) occurs twice in our English versions, once in reference to our *conversion*, and once in reference to the *resurrection*. In Titus appears thus:

*“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of **regeneration**, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7).*

The phrase “washing of regeneration” shows that the “renewing” contemplated here occurs at our obedience to the gospel, and is equal to the rebirth of faith and baptism (water and Spirit) (*cf.* Jn. 3:3-5). Ananias thus told Paul “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and **wash away thy sins**, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16; emphasis added). The “washing away of sins” here answers the “washing of regeneration” in Titus 3:5. Jesus said “except a man be born again, he cannot see [enter] the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3). Paul said that by the washing of regeneration we become “heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). The passages are thus parallel and speak to our conversion through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Regeneration = Conversion

Washing of Regeneration	“Be baptized and wash away thy sins”
Renewing of the Holy Ghost	“Born of water and the Spirit”
Should be Made Heirs	“Except he be born again, he cannot see [enter/inherit] the Kingdom of God”

The other occurrence of the word “regeneration” is in Matthew’s gospel where Jesus told the apostles:

*“Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the **regeneration** when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matt. 19:28, 29).*

I used to believe this had reference to the apostles’ government of the church during their earthly lives, but now see this in reference to our inheritance in the next life. The timing of the passage states it belongs to the time when Christ shall “sit in the throne of his glory.” Although Jesus sat down at the right hand of God at his ascension, the “throne of his glory” has specific reference to post-parousia judgment. In his Olivet Discourse, Jesus thus told the disciples

*“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the **throne of his glory**: and before him shall be gathered all nations” etc” (Matt. 25:31, 32).*

Here is the identical phrase clearly set in the context of Christ’s judging the dead, sending some to eternal punishment and others to eternal life (vv. 32-46). The “throne of his glory” thus refers to Jesus upon the throne of judgment, meting out the eternal reward of men (*cf.* II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11). Since this time of judging began at the resurrection (and continues today), the time of the apostles sitting as judges also began at the resurrection. Those that inherit eternal life share in Christ’s government of the world and nations *from heaven*. This is the meaning of the parable of the talents, when the nobleman (Christ) says to his servant, “Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities” (Lk. 19:17). Notice here that at the time of judgment, the faithful steward is given the government over *cities*. Clearly, this does not speak to anything in earthly life, for there was no reward at A.D. 70 which the saints on earth received that can reasonably answer

this description. This also contradicts the idea that the world would be destroyed by fire at Christ's coming, for there would then be no cities for the righteous to govern. The better view, therefore, is that receipt of the government of cities points to the *next life* and the saints' share in government of the earth from heaven with Christ. Jesus told the church at Thyatira

*"He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give **power over the nations**: and he shall **rule them** with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:26, 27).*

Christ's rule over the nations with a rod of iron belongs to the time of his resurrection and ascension (Ps. 2:9; Acts 13:33). Therefore, the saints' participation in this rule belongs to the time of *their* resurrection in heaven. To the church in Laodicia, Jesus said:

*"To him that overcometh will I grant **to sit with me in my throne**, even as I also overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).*

"Overcoming" imports being faithful unto death in the coming persecution. Those that abided faithful, laying down their lives in martyrdom, would be rewarded with eternal life, and share in Christ's government of earth ("sit in his throne"). Paul thus says,

*"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which in Christ Jesus with **eternal glory**. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall **also reign with him**: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (II Tim.10-12).*

"Glory" clearly signifies our inheritance in heaven. Paul says those who die with Christ would thus live with him, and those that suffer for him in martyrdom will also *reign with him*. A final passage that should cinch the point: Paul told the Corinthians

*"Do ye not know that the saints shall **judge the world**? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?" (I Cor. 6:2, 3)*

Here "judging the world" is set in apposition to judging "thing that pertain to this life." Paul argues that, as the

saints will be made judges of men and angels in the *next life*, how much more ought the church to be competent to judge matters affecting the church in this life? In all these cases, we thus see that "living," "reigning," and judging" are other-worldly, and are the reward received in the next life. And if there were any doubt, this very thing is shown in Rev. 20:4-6, where the righteous dead are in Hades Paradise and "live and reign" with Christ, seated upon thrones of judgment. Therefore, when Jesus told the apostles that in the regeneration they would share his government, seated upon 12 thrones, it seems clear that he is referring to their several rewards *at the resurrection*, and not their administration of the church during their earthly lives. This is confirmed by the closing words of Christ, saying,

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

The apostles had asked what their reward would be, seeing they had left all to follow him. Jesus answered by saying they would receive crowns and thrones in the next life, when they assumed their places next to him in glory.

Conclusion

The regeneration speaks to the resurrection of saints in heaven, where they share in the reign of Christ and participate in government of earth, helping direct the course of history for the advancement of Christ's gospel and the amendment of earth's erring nations.



Victor Suman and parents. Victor is a Christian Preterist in India. India promises to be one of the next world powers. Let everyone help advance the cause of Christ in this land historically benighted by idolatry and Hinduism.

Questions from our Readers

Question: You said that the law ended at the cross, but doesn't Matt. 5:17, 18 teach that the law would be valid until "heaven and earth" passed away?

Answer: The Old law ended at the cross. Of the many verses that might be cited, here are a few:

- "Ye are **not under the law**, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).
- "**Having abolished** in his flesh the enmity, even the **law of commandments** continued in ordinances" (Eph. 2:15).
- For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a **change also of the law**" (Heb. 7:12).
- Ye also are become **dead to the law** by the body of Christ" (Rom. 4:4).

How could it be clearer? If the writer wanted to tell us the law ended with the cross, what could he say that would make it more evident than this? But let us look at Matt. 5:17, 18

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, for the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Note first that Jesus said "**I am come to fulfill.**" This was Jesus' *first coming* to die upon a Roman cross. Jesus came to fulfill the law: he lived a perfect life in obedience to its mandates, and, being spotless, offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy the law's demand for a blood sacrifice in atonement for sin. The temple ceremonies, the feasts, and fasts of the law all pointed to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. They were shadows of the coming good things in Jesus. But a shadow ends where the body begins, and Paul says "the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:17). Either Jesus accomplished his mission and fulfilled the law, or he did not. For the law to be binding after the cross, we would have to be willing to say that Jesus failed in his mission for he expressly states "I came to fulfill." Hebrews makes the same point when it states:

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared for me: In burnth offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,)

to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:5-10).

"When he cometh into the world" signifies Jesus' first coming to give himself a ransom for all. He then says "he **taketh away the first** that he may establish the second." Could it be clearer? If you want to make a new will, you must first revoke the old. That is precisely what Christ did in his death upon the cross: he terminated the old law so that he could substitute the New Testament in its place. Peter thus calls Christians a royal priesthood built up as a spiritual temple to offer spiritual sacrifices "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). But if the Christian's sacrifice and priestly service is made acceptable by Christ, what is that but to say the Jew's continuing temple service was unacceptable, seeing they rejected Christ?

As touching the idea that the law was to remain valid as long as heaven and earth endured, let us note that Jesus appealed to the "heavens and earth" as something permanent and immutable. Jeremiah did the same thing when he evoked the permanence the moon and stars for God's unfailing faithfulness to save his people (Jer. 31:34, 35). Hence, Christ's appeal to the heavens and earth is not prophetic, but *parabolic*; it is a way of expressing the *impossibility* that the word of God should fail to be fulfilled. In saying "Not until heaven and earth pass away" Jesus is actually saying (as Luke words it) "It is *easier* for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail" (Lk. 16:17). Hence, there is nothing to the notion that the "heavens and earth" are metaphors the Old Testament. Nor is there anything to the idea that the law would remain valid until the "new heavens and earth," or that the "new heavens and earth" are the New Testament. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). Christ's priesthood began with his ascension to heaven (Heb. 7:24, 25). Hence, the old law "of necessity" was already annulled.

Question: Hi Mr. Simmons. I've heard many interpretations of the parable of the talents. My question to you is how can this parable be applied to our daily lives or the church since we are now living in the new covenant? Also what exactly does this parable mean? How should it really be interpreted and understood? Thanks for your help!!!

Answer: Thanks for writing!

Initially, let me say that this parable is relevant today because the basic lesson about actively and profitably employing our talents and abilities in God's service is just as critical today as it was in the first century. Jesus gave a similar lesson when he told the disciples that unless they bear fruit, they will be pruned, gathered up, and burned (Jn. 15:1-6). In other words, we are to be fruitful and productive in God's service, or we can and will lose our salvation (faith without works is dead). So, the basic lesson of the parable of the talents will always be relevant to God's people.

That aside, this parable belongs to a group of lessons and passages that I see as speaking to the judgment we each enter *as we die*. Notice that the passage says that after the nobleman returned (Lk. 19:15), he began to take account of his servants. My view is that this accounting happens at the time of death. As we depart this life, we must give account for the use of the gifts and abilities God gave us. Those who neglected them will potentially be lost; those that used them faithfully will be rewarded. The reward (government of earth's cities) I see as pointing to our share in Christ's reign from heaven. In Rev. 3:26, 27, Jesus said that those who overcame would be given power over the nations and rule them with a rod of iron. Thus, the saints in heaven help to guide the kingdoms of the earth much as angels did in the Old Testament (see, for example, Dan. 10:13, 20). In any event, the continuing nature of the judgment/accounting is like Matt. 25:31-46 and the sheep and goats. This latter parable did not end in AD 70; that is when it began! Now, as we die, each of us appears before the tribunal of Christ to be judged for the things done in the body (II Cor. 5:10). Thus, the parable of the talents continues to be relevant today in that it describes the judgment that began at Christ's second coming. Since judgment is a continuous process that occurs as men die, the parable continues to apply.

Hope that helps. Write again anytime.

Question: Many thanks for discerning the questions and/or clarifications that arise from looking into fulfilled eschatology. Your "What Happened at?" article distinguishing between fulfillments at the cross and A.D.70 is very important and helpful for grasping certain detail that must be understood.

Certain references to time of fulfillment remain somewhat puzzling as follows:

Jeremiah 31: 31-40 seems to speak of a gathering of **all** (Israel and Judah) **Jews** at yet a future time by a promise of strong words from the Lord (vs. 36, 37) into covenant with Christ. This declaration to the nation

was not an A.D.70 fulfillment. Do you see this text fulfilled, and if so, when, and what are the other texts that support such?

Is the exaltation of Christ in Phil. 2:9-11, considering "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (vs.10, 11) really a time text? If yes, when, and what are the companion texts that come to mind? Many commentators apply this reference to the appearing of Christ, yet without much explanation.

Thanks for your ministry of The Word. Many of our Christian friends wonder about the meaning and message of biblical end times, but few pursue. I look forward to your insights about these questions.

Answer: Thanks for the encouraging words! They are much appreciated!

I see Jer. 31:35-40 as speaking to the regathering out of captivity in Babylon. There is a paragraph break at verse 35, which the translators of the KJV insert, which impressed me as correct. Although vv. 31:34 talk about the New Testament, vv.35-40 seem confined to the return out of captivity. God is promising Israel that his covenant to return a remnant of them to the promised land is just as certain and immutable as his ordinances of the moon and stars. The wrath that took them into captivity did not mean he was casting them off forever. A remnant would return and the city would be rebuilt. For a parallel passage, see Isa. 27:12-13 and Ezekiel 37 and the prophecy of the Valley of Dry Bones, which portrays the return of the captivity. (Parenthetically, Jeremiah's appeal to the moon and stars serves the same purpose Jesus' appeal to the "heavens and earth" in Matt. 5:17, 18 ["Until heaven and earth pass away, etc.']. God's word and the prophetic types in the law were just as immutable as the ordinances of the heavens and earth. Hence it was easier that they should pass away than the law to fail in its promises).

I do not see Phil. 2:9-11 as a "time" text. I see it as a "glory throne" text. That is, I see it in reference to Jesus seated upon the throne of his glory, judging men as they die and come before him. Matt. 25:31-46. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." II Cor. 5:10. Every knee will therefore bow to Christ, for all judgment has been given to him (Jn. 5:22-27). No man comes to the Father but by the Son. He is our judge who "opens and none can shut, and shuts and none can open" (Rev. 3:7).

Hope that helps! Write again any time.

National Geographic's and Nature Magazine's Agenda to Promote False Science

The following letter from the Curator of Birds at the National Museum of Natural History, criticizes National Geographic magazine for having an agenda to foist evolution upon the public without scientific support for its assertions. Too bad millions of American school children never get to hear the other side.

“The hype about feathered dinosaurs in the exhibit currently on display at the National Geographic Society is even worse, and makes the spurious claim that there is strong evidence that a wide variety of carnivorous dinosaurs had feathers. A model of the undisputed dinosaur Deinonychus and illustrations of baby tyrannosaurs are shown clad in feathers, all of which is simply imaginary and has ***no place outside of science fiction.***”

“The idea of feathered dinosaurs and the theropod origin of birds is being actively promulgated by a cadre of zealous scientists acting in concert with certain editors at Nature and National Geographic who themselves have become outspoken and highly biased proselytizers of the faith. ***Truth and careful scientific weighing of evidence have been among the first casualties in their program,*** which is now fast becoming one of the grander scientific hoaxes of our age---the paleontological equivalent of cold fusion. If Sloan's article is not the crescendo of this fantasia, it is difficult to imagine to what heights it can next be taken. But it is certain that when the folly has run its course and has been fully exposed, National Geographic will unfortunately play a prominent but unenviable role in the book that summarizes the whole sorry episode.”

Sincerely,

Storrs L. Olson
Curator of Birds
National Museum of Natural History

<http://www.bible.ca/tracks/archaeoraptor-fraud-piltdown-bird.htm>



“There Shall Be Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth” (Matt. 25:30)

Table of Rulers in Israel's Last Days

Roman Emperor	Rulers & Procurators in Palestine																																												
Julius Caesar (49-44 B.C.)	Judea – Samaria – Galilee Herod the Great (34-1 B.C.)																																												
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THE PAROUSIA IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

By

James Stuart Russell

Editor's Note: The writer here mistakenly applies the "end" to the Jewish age, rather than the world-epoch marked by the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (which naturally included the Jewish nation and economy), but he is quite correct in noting that the time of the end was upon that generation.

Commentators are much divided on the questions, When, where, by whom, and to whom, this epistle was written. There is no evidence on the subject except that which may be found in the epistle itself, and this gives ample scope for difference in opinion. Lange, who doubts the authenticity of the epistle, says that it 'has quite the air of having been composed before the destruction of Jerusalem;' and Lücke, who maintains its authenticity, is also of the opinion 'that it may have been written *shortly before* that event.' We think any candid mind will be satisfied, after a careful study of the internal evidence, first, that the epistle is a genuine production of St. John; and, secondly, that it was written on the very eve of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is impossible to overlook the fact, which everywhere meets us in the epistle, that the writer believes himself on the verge of a solemn crisis, for the arrival of which he urges his readers to be prepared. This is in harmony with all the apostolic epistles, and proves incontestably that their authors all alike shared in the belief of the near approach of the great consummation.

THE WORLD PASSING AWAY: THE LAST HOUR COME.

1 John ii. 17, 18.---'And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof. . . . Little children, it is the last time' [hour].

We have frequently in the course of this investigation had occasion to remark how the New Testament writers speak of '*the end*' as fast approaching. We have also seen what that expression refers to. Not to the close of human history, nor the final dissolution of the material creation; but the close of the Jewish aeon or dispensation, and the abolition and removal of the order of things instituted and ordained by divine wisdom under that economy. This great consummation is often spoken of in language which might seem to

imply the total destruction of the visible creation. Notably this is the case in the Second Epistle of St. Peter; and the same might also be said of our Lord's prophetic language in Matt. xxiv. 24.

We find the same symbolic form of speech in the passage now before us: 'the world passeth away' [ο κοσμος παραγεται]. To the apprehension of the apostle it was already 'passing away;' the very expression used by St. Paul in 1 Cor. vii. 31, with reference to the same event [παραγει γαρ το σξημα του κοσμου τουτου] 'the fashion of this world is passing away.'

The impression of the Apostle John of the nearness of 'the end' seems, if possible, more vivid than of the other apostles. Perhaps when he wrote he stood still nearer to the crisis than they. In this view it is worthy of notice that there is a marked gradation in the language of the different epistles. The last *times* become the last *days*, and now the last *days* become the last *hour* [εσξατη ωρα εστι]. The period of expectation and delay was now over, and the decisive moment was at hand.

THE ANTICHRIST COME, A PROOF OF ITS BEING THE LAST HOUR.

1 John ii. 18.---'And as ye have heard that [the] antichrist cometh, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know it is the last hour' [ωρα].

In this passage for the first time 'the dreaded name' of *antichrist* rises before us. This fact of itself is sufficient to prove the comparatively late date of the epistle. That which appears in the epistles of St. Paul as a shadowy abstraction has now taken a concrete shape, and appears embodied as a person,---'the antichrist.'

It is certainly remarkable, considering the place which this name has filled in theological and ecclesiastical literature, how very small a space it occupies in the New Testament. Except in the epistles of St. John, the name antichrist never occurs in the apostolic writings. But though the *name* is absent, the *thing* is not unknown. St. John evidently speaks of 'the antichrist' as an idea familiar to his readers,---a power whose coming was anticipated, and whose presence was an indication that 'the last hour' had come. 'Ye have heard that the antichrist cometh; even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour.'

We expect, then, to find traces of this expectation---predictions of the coming antichrist---in other parts of the New Testament. And we are not disappointed. It is natural to look, in the first place, to our Lord's eschatological discourse on the Mount of Olives for some intimation of this coming danger and the time of its appearance. We find notices in that discourse of 'false christs and false prophets' (Matt. xxiv. 5, 11, 24), and we are ready to conclude that these must mean the same evil power designated by St. John the antichrist. The resemblance of the name favours this supposition; and the period of their appearance,---on the eve of the final catastrophe, seems to increase the probability almost to certainty.

There is, however, a formidable objection to this conclusion, viz. that the false christs and false prophets alluded to by our Lord seem to be mere Jewish impostors, trading on the credulity of their ignorant dupes, or fanatical enthusiasts, the spawn of that hot-bed of religious and political frenzy which Jerusalem became in here last days. We find the actual men vividly portrayed in the passages of Josephus, and we cannot recognise in them the features of the antichrist as drawn by St. John. They were the product of Judaism in its corruption, and not of Christianity. But the antichrist of St. John is manifestly of Christian origin. This is certain from the testimony of the apostle himself: 'They went out from us, but they were not of us,' etc. (ver. 19). This proves that the antichristian opponents of the Gospel must at some time have made a profession of Christianity, and afterwards have become apostates from the faith.

It cannot indeed be said to be impossible that the false christs and false prophets of the last days of Jerusalem could have been apostates from Christianity; but there is no evidence to show this either in the prophecy of our Lord or in the history of the time.

On the other hand, in the apostolic notices of the predicted apostasy this feature of its origin is distinctly

marked. We have already seen how St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John all agree in their description of 'the falling away' of the last days. (See *Conspectus* of passages relating to the Apostasy, p. 251). Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that the *apostates* of the two former apostles are identical with the *antichrist* of the last. They are alike in character, in origin, and in the time of their appearing. They are the bitter enemies of the Gospel; they are apostates from the faith; they belong to the last days. These are marks of identity too numerous and striking to be accidental; and we are therefore justified in concluding that the antichrist of St. John is identical with the apostasy predicted by St. Paul and St. Peter.

ANTICHRIST NOT A PERSON, BUT A PRINCIPLE.

1 John ii. 18.---'Even now are there many antichrists.'

In the opinion of some commentators the name 'the antichrist' is supposed to designate a particular individual, the incarnation and embodiment of enmity to the Lord Jesus Christ; and as no such person has hitherto appeared in history, they have concluded that his manifestation is still future, but that the personal antichrist may be expected immediately before the 'end of the world.' This seems to have been the opinion of Dr. Alford, who says:---

'According to this view we still look for the man of sin, in the fulness of the prophetic sense, to appear, and that immediately before the coming of the Lord.'

There is here, however, a strange confounding of things which are entirely different,---'the man of sin' and 'the apostasy;' the former undoubtedly a *person*, as we have already seen; the latter a *principle*, or *heresy*, manifesting itself in a multitude of persons. It is impossible, with this declaration of St. John before us,---'Even now are there *many* antichrists,'---to regard the antichrist as a single individual. It is true that in every individual who held the antichristian error, antichrist might be said to be personified; but this is a very different thing from saying that the error is incarnate and embodied in one particular persona as its head and representative. The expression 'many antichrists' proves that the name is not the exclusive designation of any individual.

But the most common and popular interpretation is that which makes the name antichrist refer to the Papacy. From the time of the Reformation this has been the favourite hypothesis of Protestant commentators; nor is it difficult to understand why it should have been so. There is a strong family likeness among all systems of

superstition and corrupt religion; and no doubt much of the Papal system may be designated antichristian; but it is a very different thing to say that the antichrist of St. John is intended to describe the pope or the Papal system. Alford decidedly rejects this hypothesis:---

‘It cannot be disguised,’ he remarks, in treating of this very point, ‘that in several important particulars the prophetic requirements are very far from being fulfilled. I will only mention two,---one subjective, the other objective. In the characteristic of 2 Thess. ii. 4 (“who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,” etc.) the pope does not, and never did, fulfil the prophecy. Allowing all the striking coincidences with the latter part of the verse which have been so abundantly adduced, it never can be shown that he fulfils the former part---nay, so far is he from it, that the abject adoration of and submission to λεγομενοι θεοι ανδ σεβασματα (all that is called God and that is worshipped) has ever been one of his most notable peculiarities. The second objection, of an external and historical character, is even more decisive. If the Papacy be antichrist, then has the manifestation been made, and endured now for nearly 1500 years, and yet that day of the Lord is not come which, by the terms of our prophecy, such manifestation is immediately to precede.

But the language of the apostle himself is decisive against such an application of the name antichrist. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how such an interpretation could have taken root in the face of his own express declarations. The antichrist of St. John is not a *person*, nor a *succession* of persons, but a *doctrine*, or *heresy*, clearly noted and described. More than this, it is declared to be *already existing and manifested* in the apostle’s own days: ‘Even NOW are there many antichrists;’ ‘this is that *spirit of antichrist*, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and *even now already is it in the world*’ (1 John vi. 18; iv. 3). This ought to be decisive for all who bow to the authority of the Word of God. The hypothesis of an antichrist embodied in an individual still to come has not basis in Scripture; it is a fiction of the imagination, and not a doctrine of the Word of God.

MARKS OF THE ANTICHRIST.

1 John ii. 19.---‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.’

1 John ii. 22.---‘Who is a [the] liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is [the] antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.’

1 John iv. 1.---‘Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.’

1 John iv. 3.---‘Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come: and even now already is it in the world.’

2 John, ver. 7.---‘Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is [the] deceiver and [the] antichrist.’

Here we may be said to have a full-length portrait of the antichrist, or, as we should rather say, the antichristian heresy or apostasy. From this description it distinctly appears,---

1. That the antichrist was not an individual, or a person, but a principle, or heresy, manifesting itself in many individuals.
2. That the antichrist or antichrists were apostates from the faith of Christ (ver. 19).
3. That their characteristic error consisted in the denial of the Messiahship, the divinity, and incarnation of the Son of God.
4. That the antichristian apostates described by St. John may possibly be the same as those denominated by our Lord ‘false christs and false prophets’ (Matt. xxiv. 5, 11, 24), but certainly answer to those alluded to by St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude.
5. All the allusions to the antichristian apostasy connect its appearance with the ‘Parousia,’ and with ‘the last days’ or close of the aeon or Jewish dispensation. That is to say, it is regarded as near, and almost already present.

Doubtless, if we possessed fuller historical information concerning that period we should be better able to verify the predictions and allusions which we find in the New Testament; but we have quite enough of evidence to justify the conclusion that all came to pass according to the Scriptures. Whether the false prophets spoken of by Josephus as infesting the last agonies of the Jewish commonwealth are identical with the false prophets of our Lord’s prediction and the antichrist of St. John, it is not easy to determine. But the testimony of the apostle himself is decisive on the question of the antichrist. Here he is at the same time both prophet and historian, for he records the fact that ‘even now are

there many antichrists;’ ‘many false prophets are gone out into the world.’

ANTICIPATION OF THE PAROUSIA.

1 John ii. 28.---‘And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.’

1 John iii. 2.---‘We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.’

1 John iv. 7.---‘That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.’

In these exhortations and counsels St. John is in perfect accord with the other apostles, whose constant admonitions to the Christian churches of their time urged the habitual expectation of the Parousia, and therefore fidelity and constancy in the midst of danger and suffering. The language of St. John proves,---

1. That the apostolic Christians were exhorted to live in the constant expectation of the coming of the Lord.
2. That this event was regarded by them as the time of the revelation of Christ in His glory, and the beatification of his faithful disciples.
3. That the Parousia was also the period of ‘the day of judgment.’

The

Man of Sin

Kurt Simmons

Futurists have long believed that II Thessalonians “man of sin” is an arch-evil world leader who will appear before the world’s end. Preterists maintain that this individual appeared once for all on the world scene centuries ago. In this article we want to solve the riddle of the “man of sin” and the events described by St. Paul.

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 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: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thess. 2:1-12).

Four issues rise from this passage: 1) What is the “falling away;” 2) who is the “man of sin;” 3) who and/or what restrained him; and 4) who would be destroyed? Examination of these will show that St. Paul’s man of sin was Nero Caesar and the events he described culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. We will take these in reverse order in which they appear.

The Objects of Christ’s Wrath

The first thing we should note is that the coming of Christ and day of the Lord would result in the destruction of those who “received not a love of the truth.” Thus, the coming of Christ in wrath was in wrath upon a *specific people*. This is an unmistakable reference to the Jews.

In his first epistle, Paul mentions that the Thessalonians had “received the word in much affliction” (I Thess. 1:6). He says that they had “become followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for

ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (I Thess. 2:14-16). Here is specific reference to the wrath that was to come upon the Jews for crucifying the Lord and persecuting the church. This is the same wrath described in Paul’s second epistle. Although Paul indicates the Thessalonians had suffered from their own countrymen, it is clear the Jews were ultimately responsible.

In Acts, we learn that the Jews of Thessalonica set the whole city in an uproar, assaulted the house of Jason, and brought him and others forcibly before the city rulers (Acts 17:1-9). The brethren then sent Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, but the Jews of Thessalonica were so strident in their opposition to the gospel that they followed Paul there and stirred up the people of Berea also (Acts 17:10-13). Paul was thus forced to depart to Athens, and it is from there that he wrote his epistles to the Thessalonians by the hand of Timothy. It is in this context that Paul thus writes “it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess. 1:6-8). The gospels also make abundantly clear that the day of the Lord would come upon the Jews (Matt. 3:11, 12; 8:12; 10:23; 16:27, 28; 21:33-46; 22:7; 23:34-39; 24; Mk. 13; 14:62; Lk. 19:41-44; 20:16; 21; *etc.*). Luke sums it up well when he says, “For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people” (Lk. 21:23). This does not mean Christ’s coming was confined to Judea and the Jews, for the whole Roman world came under wrath (recall the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream). However, it does identify the time of Christ’s coming, linking it to “that generation.”

He Who Lets

The time for fulfillment of these things was definitely fixed by the Lord, saying, “This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:32; *cf.* Matt. 24:34). However, as St. Paul indicates, the “falling away” and “man of sin” had first to come upon the scene. This could not occur until “what withholdeth” and “he who now letteth” was taken “out of the way” (II Thess. 2:6, 7). This has long been recognized as referring to Claudius Caesar and the restraining power of the *religio licita*. Tertullian (A.D. 145-220) was

among the earliest to comment that the restraining power of the Roman state is alluded to by Paul in these verses, saying “What obstacle is there but the Roman state.”⁴ This is echoed by several patristic writers. Victorinus, in his commentary on the Apocalypse, states:

“And after many plagues completed in the world, in the end he says that a **beast ascended from the abyss**...that is, of **the Romans**. Moreover that he was in the kingdom of **the Romans**, and that he was among the **Caesars**. The Apostle Paul also bears witness, for he says to the Thessalonians: Let him who now restraineth restrain, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall appear the **Wicked One**, even he whose coming is after the working of Satan, with signs and lying wonders.’ And that they might know that he should come **who then was the prince**, he adds: ‘He already endeavours after the secret of mischief’ – that is, the mischief which he is about to do he strives to do secretly; but he is not raised up by his own power, nor by that of his father, but by command of God.”⁵

Victorinus here connects the “beast” from the abyss with the Roman empire and the “Wicked One” with the one who was prince when Paul wrote (Nero), and would follow his father (Claudius) to the throne. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) is even more explicit:

“Some think that these words refer to the **Roman empire**, and that the apostle Paul did not wish to write more explicitly, lest he should incur a charge of calumny against the Roman empire, in wishing ill to it when men hoped that it was to be everlasting. So in the words: ‘**For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work**’ he referred to **Nero**, whose deeds already seemed to be as those of Antichrist.”⁶

The late Canon of Westminster, F.W. Farrar, wrote:

⁴ Tertullian, Concerning the Resurrection of the Flesh, XXIV; *cf.* Apology, XXXII.

⁵ Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, ad 11:7; Ante-Nicene Fathers, p. 354; emphasis added.

⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, XX, xix; *cf.*, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, xxv-xxviii; Lactanius, *Divine Inst.* VII, xxv; emphasis added

“St. Paul, when he wrote from Corinth to the Thessalonians, had indeed seen in the fabric of Roman polity, and in Claudius, its reigning representative, the “check” and the “checker” which must be removed before the coming of the Lord.”⁷

J. Stuart Russell, in his classic work on the Parousia of Christ, states

“At that time Nero was not yet ‘manifested;’ his true character was not discovered; he had not yet succeeded to the Empire. Claudius, his step-father, lived, and stood in the way of the son of Agrippina. But that hindrance was soon removed. In less than a year, probably, after this epistle was received by the Thessalonians, Claudius was ‘taken out of the way,’ a victim to the deadly practice of the infamous Agrippina; her son also, according to Suetonius, being accessory to the deed.”⁸

Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. is among modern writers reaching the same conclusion:

Apparently something is presently (ca. A.D. 52) ‘restraining’ the Man of Lawlessness: ‘you know what is *restraining* [*katechon*; present participle], that he may be revealed in his own time’ (2:6). This strongly suggests the preterist understanding of the whole passage. The *Thessalonians themselves know* what is *presently restraining* the Man of Lawlessness; in fact the Man of Lawlessness is alive and waiting to be ‘revealed.’ This implies that for the time-being Christians can expect some protection from the Roman government. The Roman laws regarding *religio licita* are currently in Christianity’s favor, whole considered a sect of Judaism and before the malevolent Nero ascends the throne.⁹

⁷ F.W. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity* (1891, Columbian Publishing Co, NY), p. 13; cf. *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, Excursus XIX, (1879, Cassell and Co. ed), p. 726.

⁸ J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia* (1887, London, T. Fisher Unwin; republished 1983, 1999 by Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 182, 183.

⁹ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr, *Perilous Times* (1999, CMP), p. 104-106 (*emphasis in original*).

A final consideration worth noting is that the Greek “*ha katechon*” (“*he who lets*”) may be rendered in Latin “*qui claudit*.” The similarity of *claudit* and *Claudius* has led many to conclude that Paul cryptically referred to Claudius Caesar by this allusion in a manner similar to St. John’s reference to Nero by the number six hundred threescore and six.¹⁰

Beginning with Tiberius, the Jews were under intense imperial disfavor, which continued through the reigns of Caligula and Claudius. Claudius restrained the Jews from persecuting the church, extending it the protection of law under the *religio licita*, even banishing the Jews from Rome for rioting because of “Chrestus.”¹¹ As long as Claudius was at the head of Rome, the Jews were prevented to openly persecute the church. However, Claudius was taken out of the way when he was poisoned by his wife, Agrippina, Nero’s mother. This brought Nero to the throne, opening the way for the Jews back into imperial favor; Nero’s wife, Poppaea, was a Jewish proselyte. The antichristian movement (“mystery of iniquity”) that had thus been hidden and repressed under Claudius was loosed and revealed under Nero.¹²

Man of Sin

Tradition among primitive Christians identified St. Paul’s “man of sin” with St. John’s “antichrist” and Revelation’s “beast,” many holding that these were references to Nero. Victorinus and Augustine we already heard from, above. In his fourth homily on II Thessalonians, St. Chrysostom (A.D. 347 to 407) states,

“For the **mystery of lawlessness** doth already work.” He speaks here of **Nero**... But he did not also wish to point him out plainly: and this not from cowardice, but instructing us not to

¹⁰ F.W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, Excursus XIX, (1879, Cassell and Co. ed), p. 727; *Darkness and Dawn* (1891), pp 73, 74; Kenneth L. Gentry Jr, *Perilous Times* (1999, CMP), p. 104-106.

¹¹ Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Claudius*, XXV, 4. Cf. Acts 18:2.

¹²The correspondence between II Thess. 2:1-12 and Rev. 20:1-11 suggests that the binding of the dragon in Rev. 20:1-11 refers to Claudius’ reign and the loosing of the dragon to the persecution under Nero; the reign of the martyrs answers to those that had fallen asleep in I Thess. 4:13-18. See Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages* (2003, Bimillennial Preterist Assoc.), pp. 362-388.

bring upon ourselves unnecessary enmities, when there is nothing to call for it.”¹³

of the world, in order that he may practice the **mystery of iniquity.**”¹⁵

Lactantius (A.D. 260-330) writes:

“And while **Nero** reigned, the Apostle Peter came to Rome, and, through the power of God committed unto him, wrought certain miracles, and, by turning many to the true religion, built up a faithful and steadfast temple unto the Lord. When Nero heard of those things, and observed that not only in Rome, but in every other place, a great multitude revolted daily from the worship of idols, and, condemning their old ways, went over to the new religion, he, an execrable and pernicious tyrant, sprung forward to **raze the heavenly temple** and destroy the true faith. He it was who first persecuted the servants of God; he crucified Peter, and slew Paul; nor did he escape with impunity; for God looked on the affliction of His people; and therefore the tyrant, bereaved of authority, and precipitated from the height of empire, suddenly disappeared, and even the a burial-place of that **noxious wild beast** was nowhere to be seen.”¹⁴

Reference to Nero as a “noxious, wild beast” is generally understood to be an allusion to the beast of Revelation; reference to Nero’s attempt to raze the temple of God (the church), to Thessalonians’ “man of sin” taking his seat in the temple of God. Sulpicius Severus (A.D. 360-420) makes similar comments:

“In the meanwhile **Nero**, now hateful even to himself from a consciousness of his crimes, disappears from among men, leaving it uncertain whether or not he had laid violent hands upon himself: certainly his body was never found. It was accordingly believed that, even if he did put an end to himself with a sword, his wound was cured, and his life preserved, according to that which was written regarding him,-“**And his mortal wound was healed,**” -to be sent forth again near the end

Although Sulpicius Severus erroneously concludes that Nero’s life was somehow wondrously preserved and would appear again at the world’s end, he correctly identified Nero with the “beast” and “man of sin” (cf. Rev. 13:3; II Thess. 2:7). Other evidence that Nero was the “man of sin” will be discussed below.

The Falling Away

During the Reformation, many believed that the “man of sin” was the pope and the “falling away” spoke to Catholicism’s corrupt forms of worship and doctrine. However, few scholars can be found who take this seriously today. The present tense of the verbs indicates that the “mystery of iniquity” was *already* at work, and he who “*now letteth*” would let until taken out of the way (II Thess. 2:6, 7). This can hardly describe the papacy, which did not grow up until centuries later. Instead, the better view is that Paul is describing the full and final rejection of Christ by the Jews through their participation in the persecution under Nero and apostasy from the church and a return to Judaism. This is the crux of Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy prophetic weeks (*viz.*, 490 yrs) which would end in the destruction of the city and temple (Dan. 9:24-27).¹⁶ It was also spelled out at length by the prophet Isaiah. First, Isaiah describes God’s anger and contempt for the Jews’ idolatrous devotion to the temple:

“Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word (Isa. 66: 1, 2).

¹⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History*, II, xxviii-xxix; emphasis added.

¹⁶ “And when did this happen? When were prophecies completely done away with?...Daniel makes it clear that he is not talking about the destruction of the temple under Antiochus but the subsequent destruction under Pompey, Vespasian, and Titus.” St. John Chrysostom, *Fifth Homily Against the Jews*.

¹³ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on II Thess.*, *Nicene-Post Nicene Fathers*, Vol. XXIII; emphasis added.

¹⁴ Lactantius, *Of the Manner in which the Persecutors Died*, Chpt. II; *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII, p. 302; cf. *Divine Institutes*, VII, xvii; emphasis added.

Then, he shows his abhorrence for the continuing temple cultus, which stood in denial of Christ's substitutionary death and atoning sacrifice:

"He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not (Isa. 66:3, 4).

Next, Isaiah speaks to the persecution of Christians by unbelieving Jews and the promise of Christ's coming:

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed (Isa. 66: 5).

And finally, Christ's coming in wrath to destroy the city and nation:

"A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, as voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies...For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire" (Isa. 66: 5, 15).

Here is explicit reference to the coming of the Lord to destroy his enemies in the events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, predictions repeated by Christ in his Olivet discourse (Matt. 24, 25; Mk. 13; Lk. 21).¹⁷ This would come, as suggested by the Hebrew writer, after forty-years, like their fathers' in the wilderness (Heb. 3:7-4:11; cf. Num. 14:34). The church's persecution and apostasy from the faith by a return to the temple cultus is the dominate theme of the epistle to the Hebrews and attests to the fact the apostasy Paul spoke of was then underway. The writer is at pains to demonstrate the provisional nature of the temple service and Christ's imminent return to put his

¹⁷ St. Stephen quoted Isaiah in this place (Acts 7:49) when accused of teaching that Jesus would come and destroy the temple (Acts 6:13, 14), to show that he was merely teaching what the nation's acknowledged prophets had said all along.

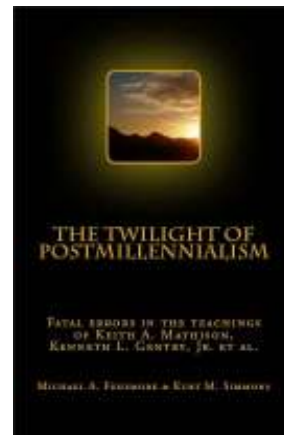
enemies beneath is feet by destruction of the city and nation, warning his readers from apostasy by returning to Judaism:

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries...For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:26, 27, 37-39).

Conclusion

St. Paul's "mystery of iniquity" and "man of sin" spoke to the apostasy of the Jewish nation by its full and final rejection of Christ and persecution of Christians under Nero. The restraining power of Claudius was taken out of the way when he was poisoned by Nero's mother, Agrippina. Nero then came to the throne and was revealed as the "man of sin," setting the stage for the final drama in God's eschatological purpose, which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The Reason Why Ken Gentry and Keith Mathison have not Sleeping Nights....



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