



The Sword & The Plow

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The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Day of the Lord: Looking Back on the End

INTRODUCTION

The nature and meaning of Christ's coming and kingdom has been understood in different ways at different times. The prevailing modern view, which we deem erroneous, is that Christ's second coming will be visible, bodily, and physical; it will be marked either by a millennial reign of Christ on earth, a material new creation, or by the end of the cosmos itself. The nature of these expectations is such that those who hold them still look for their fulfillment, giving rise to the notion of a 'delayed Parousia.' However, many early Christians rejected the notion of a delayed Parousia, and instead viewed Christ's coming as spiritual and providential, and believed it was accomplished in the events surrounding the persecution under Nero (A.D. 64–68), the Roman civil wars that followed Nero's death (the 'year of four emperors' – A.D. 69), and the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome (A.D. 70). There is a strong correlation in the eschatological views of these early Christians with the authors of the Dead Sea scrolls, who also believed they were living in the 'end of days,' and looked for victory over Rome and wrath

upon the Jewish nation by the coming of Messiah. The Dead Sea scrolls thus serve to corroborate the 'Preterist' view of eschatology.

I. WHAT IS PRETERISM?

The term 'Preterism' is derived from the Latin *praeteritus*, meaning *that which has past*; it describes a school of eschatology that views end-time prophecy as being fulfilled within the lives of the first disciples. Specifically, Preterists view the end-time language and imagery of Daniel, Revelation, and related prophecies as describing events culminating in the persecution under Nero, the series of Roman civil wars that followed Nero's death, and the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. Other interpretative schools include 'Futurism,' 'Historicism,' and 'Idealism,' but are beyond the scope of this study.

Preterism had a very significant showing in the early church. The great Alexandrian thinker and writer, Origen (A.D. 184–254), was a Preterist:

We do not deny, then, that the purificatory fire and the destruction of the world took place in order that evil might be swept away, and all things be renewed; for we assert that we have learned these things from the sacred books of the prophets...But according to Celsus, 'the Christians, making certain additional statements to those of the Jews, assert that the Son of God has been already sent on account of the sins of the Jews; and that the Jews having chastised Jesus, and given him gall to drink, have brought upon themselves the divine wrath.' And anyone who likes may convict this statement of falsehood, if it be not the case that the whole Jewish nation was overthrown within one single generation after Jesus had undergone these sufferings at their hands. For forty and two years, I think, after the date of the crucifixion of Jesus, did the destruction of Jerusalem take place.¹

Origen's use of the phrase 'all things renewed' almost certainly alludes to Rev. 21:5, where John describes a 'new heaven and a new earth' in which Christ's bride is the 'new Jerusalem.' The implication is that Origen interpreted Revelation's imagery as being bound up in the destruction of the old Jerusalem by the coming of Christ, such that the church became the 'new Jerusalem,' taking its place. More importantly, Origen was not alone in this opinion, nor did it originate with him. Celsus cites *other* Christians as taking the view that Christ returned in vengeance upon the Jewish nation. Indeed, Origen's quotation of Celsus gives every indication that the view was then *normative* and *widely* held among Christians, as indeed it would have to have been for it to come to the attention of an unbeliever and outsider like Celsus, and find its way into his works as representative of the general view among Christians. Since it is unlikely Celsus would include mention of this belief among early Christians if it was merely aberrative and isolated, at this time in history a 'preteristic' understanding of eschatology was arguably the *dominant* view within the church.

The famous church historian, Eusebius (A.D. 260–340), was also a Preterist. Regarding Jacob's prophecy of the 'last days' (LXX 'end of days,' Gen 49:1, 10) Eusebius states:

For we must understand by 'the end of the days' the end of national existence of the Jews. What, then, did he say they must look for? The cessation of the rule of Judah, the destruction of their whole race, the failing and ceasing of their governors, and the abolition of the dominant kingly position of the tribe of Judah, and the rule and kingdom of Christ, not over Israel but over all

*nations, according to the word, 'This is the expectation of the nations.'*²

According to Eusebius, then, the 'latter days' describes the period ending with the abolition of the Jewish state and polity, which has been replaced by the universal dominion and government of Christ. Concerning Christ's second advent, Eusebius writes:

*So, then, the prophecy before us says that He comes forth from His place, and will descend upon the high-places of the earth. How are we to understand this? Shall we take it literally of the hills and mountains of Israel, which are the subjects of so many prophecies, Jerusalem itself and Mount Sion, in which our Lord and Saviour spent so much time? If so, their destruction and ruin at the descent of Christ would be prophesied. And it is the fact that after the Saviour's coming and the treatment He received all the hills mentioned were besieged, and utterly desolated. But the rulers of the Jewish people as well, and their kingdom that existed previously, their sacrificial system and the seats of their teachers, here called Mountains metaphorically, are said to be shaken by the Descent of the Lord from heaven. And who could deny that this was fulfilled after the time of our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he sees all these things not only shaken, but abolished?*³

Hence we see that Eusebius, like Origen before him, was of the opinion that Christ's second coming as an *accomplished fact*, evidenced by the destruction of the Jewish state. Even Jewish Christians took this view, as witnessed by the 'Moriad.'

The Moriad is a book-length epic poem written by a third century Christian-Jew about the A.D. 70 destruction of the Jewish state. The name is taken from Mount Moriah (Zion) with 'ad' appended as a suffix similar to the 'Iliad' and the 'Aeneid.' The poem was written by Ben Asaph and translated into English from Syriac Hebrew by Anselm Korlstoff in 1857. Book two, entitled "The Advent," describes Christ's coming to visit destruction upon the Jewish nation:

*"And now, O Branch, (on earth called Christ),
descend,*

And bring the Second Institution to an end.

Sweep from the land the wretched Jewish State,

Their temple burn, and yield them to their fate.

¹ Origen, *Contra Celsus* 4.21–22

² Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 8.5.375

³ Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 6.13.271; *Farrar edition*.

To spirit-baptism they will not aspire,

So let Jerusalem be baptized with fire!⁴

This is a clear reference to John the Baptist's eschatological warning in Matt 3:10–12, and shows this third century Christian-Jew understood Christ's second coming as fulfilled in the A.D. 70 fall of Jerusalem.

II. TIME STATEMENTS BY BIBLICAL AUTHORS

Statements like these from early Christian writers could be multiplied, including comments by Victorinus (died 303–304),⁵ Augustine (A.D. 354–430),⁶ and Jerome (A.D. 347–420),⁷ the latter two of whom, if they did not embrace a form of Preterism themselves,

⁴ Ben Asaph, *The Moriad* (Nashville, 1857), 2:170–75; p. 51

⁵ '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' (Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 11:7). 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.

⁶ '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 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' (Augustine, *City of God*, 20.19).

⁷ 'But these events were typically prefigured under Antiochus Epiphanes, so that this abominable king who persecuted God's people foreshadows the Antichrist, who is to persecute the people of Christ. And so there are many of our viewpoint who think that Domitius Nero was the Antichrist because of his outstanding savagery and depravity' (Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 11:27–30).

nevertheless testify that its basic assumptions were still prevalent in the church well into the fourth and fifth centuries. Indeed, it is widely recognized that the source of Preterism in the early church was none other than Jesus and the disciples—not, of course, in the sense that the events of which they spoke and wrote were already fulfilled, but that they looked for fulfillment in the *apostles' lifetimes*. Jesus stated that he would come in his kingdom, in power, while some of the disciples were still alive (Matt 16:27, 28; Mark 8:38, 9:1); before they had opportunity to preach in all the cities of Israel (Matt 10:23); in judgment and wrath upon the very generation that crucified him (Matt 23:36–39; 24:29–34); the Sanhedrin that tried him would 'see' him seated on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:61; *cf.* Dan 7:13, 22; Acts 1:11; Rev 1:7). The apostle John was specifically named as one who would live to see Christ's return (John 21:20–22; *cf.* Rev 10:11).

Peter warned his audience on the first Pentecost after Christ's ascension that the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit signified that they were in the 'last days,' and that Joel's prophecy of the 'great and notable day of the Lord' was upon them (Acts 2:14–21). When uttered, Joel's prophecy had an immediate, historical application to a drought, famine, and locust plague (Joel 1). However, it's *plenior sensus* (fuller sense) looked to messianic times, which Peter indicated was then being fulfilled, and makes explicit reference to the overthrow of Jerusalem (Joel 2:1); its possible range of fulfillment is limited to ancient times by reference to chariots, swords, the temple, the priesthood, meat and drink offerings, Jerusalem's city walls, and Peter's warning to 'save yourselves from this perverse generation'—words that mirror the Lord's statement that the city would be overthrown before that generation passed away (Joel 1:9, 14; 2:1–17; Matt 24:34; Acts 2:40). Peter's application of Joel's prophecy to the contemporary-historical situation then playing out also helps set the context for the book of Revelation: John uses Joel's imagery to describe the 'abomination of desolation'—the legions of Rome portrayed as a preternatural army of locusts and scorpion-centaurs sent to denude Galilee, Jerusalem, and Judea of men (Rev 9; *cf.* Dan 9:24–27; 12:11; Matt 24:15).⁸

⁸ Matthew uses the term 'abomination of desolation' (Matt. 24:15); Luke interprets this phrase for his Gentile readers, saying, 'when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh' (Luke 21:20). Origen indicates this was fulfilled in the Jews' war with Rome (*Contra Celsus*, 2.13).

A short time after Peter's sermon on Pentecost, Stephen was arraigned for saying Jesus would come and destroy the city and temple and change the customs Moses delivered to the people (Acts 6:14). During his defense, Stephen quoted the prophet Isaiah who predicted the destruction of the city and temple hundreds of years before (Acts 7:49; Isa 66:1–6, 15):

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. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense 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.

Stephen quoted Isaiah's prophecy in support of the proposition that the temple was holy only insofar as it was approved by God. But inasmuch as Isaiah had condemned the city and temple to destruction, Stephen could hardly be guilty of blasphemy for merely repeating what God himself had said. Isaiah's prophecy is particularly important inasmuch as it *twice* mentions the Lord's coming in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem, and concludes with the promised new heavens and earth mentioned by Peter and John—the latter at the close of the book of Revelation where the metaphor is employed to describe the world under the providential government of Christ, ruling the nations with a rod of iron from the right hand of the throne of God, 'angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him' (1 Pet 3:22; cf. Isa 65:17, 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21, 22).⁹

Language describing the imminence of Christ's return intensified as the generation of first disciples grew to a close: Paul said the time is 'short' (1 Cor 7:29); the night was 'far spent;' the day was 'at hand' (Rom 13:12); God would 'shortly' bruise the adversary beneath the church's feet (Rom 16:20). Peter said the 'end of all things is at hand' (1 Pet 4:7), and the 'time had come' for judgment to begin (1 Pet 4:17). James said the 'coming of the Lord draweth nigh;' the 'judge standeth before the door' (James 5:8, 9). The epistle to the Hebrews said it was a 'very little while' (Gk. *micron, hoson, hoson*) and 'he that shall come will come and will not tarry' (Heb 10:37). John said 'it is

the last hour' (1 John 2:18); the book of Revelation opens and closes with warnings that it describes things that 'must shortly come to pass' for the 'time is at hand' (Rev 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10); Jesus repeatedly states 'behold, I come quickly' (Rev 22:11, 20); and warns the seven churches of Asia Minor to be vigilant, lest at his coming he find them unprepared (Rev 2:5; 16, 25; 3:3, 11; cf. Matt 24:42–51).¹⁰

III. THE *USUS LOQUENDI* OF THE PROPHETS

It is difficult to side step these time statements of New Testament writers, or to dismiss them by saying 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day' (2 Pet 3:8; cf. Ps 90:4). A cardinal rule of interpretation is that difficult passages must be interpreted in light of others that are plain. Therefore, as between explicit statements of *time* and the highly charged language of the prophets describing the *manner* of Christ's coming and kingdom, the former must guide our understanding and not the latter. If this is correct, then the 'end' and all that it entailed came precisely when and as Jesus and the apostles said it would, albeit in a *manner* different than popularly supposed.

There are many 'days of the Lord' recorded in the pages of the Old Testament—many instances of national and world judgment in which the Lord 'came' in wrath and vengeance upon the world of sinful men. These comings were always spiritual and providential, not bodily and visible. Thus, the Lord would ride a 'swift cloud' and 'come' in judgment upon Egypt (Isa 19:1; cf. Rev 1:7); the Lord of hosts would 'come' against Babylon in the armies of the Medes and Persians (Isa 13:5–13, 17; cf. Matt 24:29); the day of the Lord's vengeance would be upon Edom and all nations by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar in language appropriated by John in Revelation (Isa 34:1–10; Rev 6:13, 14); Ezekiel saw the Lord coming in his throne-chariot by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem and Judea (Ezek 1:4–28). Jeremiah described this same time of judgment, saying, the Lord 'shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind' leaving the earth 'without form, and void' at the 'presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger' (Jer 4:13–29). In a list of nations stretching over nine chapters that would be visited with judgment in the Assyrio-Babylonian invasions (Isa 15–23), Isaiah sums the devastation up, saying,

⁹ Isaiah's promised new heavens and earth serve as bookends to the destruction of Jerusalem. The first reference occurs in Isa 65:17; the second in Isa 66:22. The fall of Jerusalem comes in between at Isa 66:6, so that it becomes nearly impossible to attach the promised new heavens and earth to any other time or event.

¹⁰ That Revelation was written before A.D. 70, and not during the reign of Domitian in A.D. 96 as popularly assumed, see Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell* (American Vision, 1998); John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, (SCM Press, 1976; republished Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, 2000).

Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof...the earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. Isa 24:1, 19; cf. Jer 25:8-38

The Minor Prophets wrote about the Assyrio-Babylonian invasions using similar language. Micah describes the Lord's coming against Samaria and Jerusalem, saying:

For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. Micah 1:1-5; cf. Zeph 1:1-18

All these were 'cloud-comings' of the Lord; all were 'days of the Lord;' all involved highly-charged language describing a collapsing cosmos, but in reality were each merely times of national and world judgment by God's providential activity in the world of men. Since identical language is used in the New Testament, it must be interpreted the same way—or good reason provided why it should not. Preterists would urge that it is the failure to interpret identical language in identical ways that creates the appearance of a delayed *Parousia*: Men have been looking for something that never materializes because it was never intended to be understood that way. Jesus came when and as he said he would, albeit not the 'personal, physical, and visible' coming so often assumed by readers of the New Testament, but in the manner we repeatedly see in the Old Testament. In the words of Bishop Lightfoot (A.D. 1602-1675), a prominent member of the Westminster Assembly:

Whereas the Jews would not own Christ before for the Son of man, or for the Messiah, then, by the vengeance that he should execute upon them, they and all the world should see an evident sign, that he was so. This, therefore, is called 'his coming,' and 'his coming in his kingdom;' because this did first declare his power, glory, and victory, on that nation that had despised him...not only in the horrid civil wars among the Jews, but also in the great concussions in the Roman empire, in the wars betwixt Otho and Vitellius, and betwixt Vitellius and Vespasian (of which the Roman historians, especially Tacitus, are very large); the like to which, there had not been before, even to the sacking of Rome itself, and the burning of the Capitol.¹¹

¹¹ John Lightfoot, 'The Harmony, Chronicle, and Order of the New Testament; with a Parergon, Concerning the Fall of Jerusalem' in *The Whole Works of the Rev.*

We'll look more at this as we progress. For the present, we want to survey the Dead Sea scrolls, for we believe they will show that their original owners and authors embraced similar views of eschatology, believing they, too, were living in the 'last times' as marked by the Roman conquest of Judea and the impending destruction of Jerusalem.

IV. WHAT ARE THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS?

The 'Dead Sea scrolls' describes a collection of texts found between 1947 to 1956 in eleven caves near Qumran in the northwest area of the Dead Sea. This group of texts represents approximately 800 original documents dating from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 70. 'Dead Sea scrolls' is also sometimes used to describe a wider body of texts, which are of a separate provenance than the Qumran caves, including texts found at Masada and in fifteen caves used by refugees of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (A.D. 132-135).¹² In this article, we use the phrase 'Dead Sea scrolls' in the more limited sense, confined to scrolls from the eleven caves near Qumran. The consensus among most scholars and archaeologists is that the scrolls were produced or belonged to the ascetic sect known as the Essenes, mentioned by Josephus, Philo, and Pliny the Elder.

1. *Probable Origin of the Essenes: Judas Maccabeus and the Hassidim.* The Essenes are first mentioned by Josephus during the intertestamental period, in the time of the kingdom of the Greeks. Alexander the Great conquered Palestine in 332 B.C. Following Alexander's death in 323 B.C., his kingdom was divided among his generals, and Judea came under the dominion of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, seated in Egypt. However, in 200 B.C., the Seleucid Dynasty, seated in Syria, was able to wrest control of the Holy Land from the Ptolemies. As part of a program to solidify control of his kingdom, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (171-164 B.C.) undertook a formal Hellenizing program: local peoples were required to abandon their ancestral gods and to worship Olympian Zeus. To eradicate all vestiges of Judaism, Antiochus caused the temple in Jerusalem to be polluted with swine's blood and a statue of Olympian Zeus erected. Keeping the law of Moses was made a capital offense; women who circumcised their sons were crucified with their children hung about their necks. At length, armed resistance broke out; a revolt was instigated by a priest named Matthias, whose son, Judas Maccabeus, defeated Antiochus, gained autonomy for Judea, and

John Lightfoot D.D., (London, 1684; republished 1822 by J. F. Dove) 3.141, 142.

¹² Wadi Murabba'at (Nahal Darga), five caves; Nahal Hever, ten caves.

purified and rededicated the temple.¹³ Judas was helped in his revolt by a group known as the Assideans or Hassidim: *'Then came there unto him a company of Assideans, who were mighty men of Israel, even all such as were voluntarily devoted to the law'* (1 Macc 2:42). Most scholars believe that the Hassidim were the immediate forerunners of the Essenes.

2. *Essene Resistance to Usurpation of the Zadokite Priesthood.* Writings from Qumran indicate the sect was eventually forced to sojourn in Damascus and withdraw into the desert due to a conflict with the politico-religious leadership of mainstream Judaism.¹⁴ Scholars interpret this, at least in part, to opposition by Essenes and traditionalist Jews to the usurpation of the High Priesthood by non-Zadokite priests.

The High Priesthood had been held exclusively by descendants of Zadok from the time of Solomon who thrust Abiathar from the priesthood (1 Kgs 2:26, 27; cf. 1:1–40) in fulfillment of a prophecy by God against the house of Eli (1 Sam 2:31–35). The High Priesthood passed from the sons of Zadok during the Hellenizing campaign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. However, after Judas Maccabaeus defeated Antiochus, the priesthood was not returned to the sons of Zadok. Rather, following the death of Judas Maccabaeus, the High Priesthood was assumed by his brother, Jonathan Maccabaeus. Jonathan received the High Priesthood from Alexander Balas, a usurper of the Seleucid throne, who offered it to Jonathan to secure his support and alliance.¹⁵ It is during the time of Jonathan Maccabaeus that Josephus first mentions the existence of the Essenes by name.¹⁶ The Essenes saw the priesthood and temple services as corrupted, and therefore did not sacrifice there, but looked for the restoration of the priesthood to the sons of Zadok by the coming of the Messiah:

The Master shall bless the sons of Zadok the Priests, whom God has chosen to confirm his Covenant for ever, and to inquire into all His precepts in the midst of His people, and to instruct them as He commanded; who have established His Covenant on truth and

¹³ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 50–53; Will Durant, 'The Life of Greece' in *The Story of Civilization* (Simon & Schuster, 1939; renewed 1966 by Will Durant) 2.579–584

¹⁴ Some scholars interpret reference to Damascus allegorically in reference to the captivity in Babylon 'beyond Damascus' as per Amos 5:26, 27 ('Essene Origins—Palestine or Babylonia' in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Hershell Shanks editor, Vintage Books, 1993), 82.

¹⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.35–57

¹⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.171–173

*watched over all His laws with righteousness and walked according to the way of His choice. May the Lord bless you from His holy Abode; may He set you as a splendid jewel in the midst of the congregation of the saints! May he renew for you the Covenant of the everlasting priesthood; may He sanctify you for the House of Holiness!*¹⁷

Other theories regarding the identity of the community at Qumran have been floated but have not gained serious attention.¹⁸

V. THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE ESSENES

1. *The Essenes as the last remnant.* God has always had a remnant, which consisted of a small number who were faithful to his covenant and precepts. The Essenes believed that they were God's remnant people—*his last remnant*—living in the 'end of days.' This belief was based upon a number of factors, including Jeremiah's promised new covenant, which was itself eschatological.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers...which my covenant they brake... But this shall be the covenant I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Jer 31:31-34

The phrase 'after those days' described the period following the return of the Babylonian captivity until the appearance of Messiah and the institution of the messianic age. Comparison of the phrase shows that it was largely interchangeable with 'the latter days' (cf. Jer 48:47; 49:6, 39; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). However, according to the book of Daniel, the 'latter days' was first foreshadowed or began with the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Daniel said the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes would be at the 'time of the end' (Dan 8:17), 'in the last end of the indignation' (Dan 8:19), 'in the latter time' of the Jew's kingdom 'when the transgressors are come to the full' (Dan

¹⁷ *Blessings* (IQSb=IQ28b), III.20-30; Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 375

¹⁸ For a fuller discussion of the identity of the Qumran community see James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, (2nd ed., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994, 2010), 97-126; James C. VanderKam, 'The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essenes or Sadducees?' in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 50–62.

8:23).¹⁹ This is also the time when the sect of the Essenes is first mentioned and the nation underwent a great contest against Hellenization and liberalizing tendencies that threatened the nation's faithfulness toward God. It therefore comes as no great surprize that the Essenes believed their rules of community life, strict interpretation of the law, and commitment to a Zadokite priesthood, constituted Jeremiah's 'new covenant' and marked them as God's remnant of the latter days. However, unlike the New Testament gospel where there is a complete break with the rituals of the Mosaic law and an end of the temple, priesthood, feasts, and sacrifices, which were types and shadows pointing to the cross of Christ (Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 10:1), the Essenes conceived of the new covenant as a *continuation* of the law of Moses, purified of error and supplemented with various additions and improvements. In the new age, all the errors of mainstream Judaism would be set right and acceptable service in the temple would resume under the sons of Zadok. The Essenes, therefore, did not look for the end of the cosmos, but for a *new age* marked by a time of religious reformation under Messiah.²⁰

None of those brought into the Covenant shall enter the Temple to light His altar in vain...They shall take care to act according to the exact interpretation of the Law during the age of wickedness. They shall separate from the sons of the Pit, and shall keep away from the unclean riches of wickedness acquired by vow or anathema or from the Temple treasure; they shall not rob the poor of His people, to make of widows their prey and of the fatherless their victim. They shall distinguish between clean and unclean, and shall

¹⁹ 'That second block of history carries down to the work of Jesus Christ and to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. These two periods are the former days and the latter days of Israel, not of the entire world. For that reason, as we shall see, Daniel's prophecies of the latter days concern the future history of Israel down to A.D. 70, and do not directly deal with the gospel era (except as general principles). The same is true of Zechariah 9-14. Arguably, every instance of 'last days' and 'last hour' in the New Testament also refers to the end of Israel's history down to A.D. 70' (James B. Jordon, *The Handwriting on the Wall: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (American Vision, 2007), 20).

²⁰ Christians also anticipated a new age, which would be marked by the destruction of the city and temple at Christ's coming, as witnessed by the disciples' question to Jesus on the Mount of Olives 'tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age' (Matt. 24:1-3).

*proclaim the difference between holy and profane. They shall keep the Sabbath day according to its exact interpretation, and the feasts and day of Fasting according to the finding of the members of the New Covenant in the land of Damascus.*²¹

The 'age of wickedness' refers to the time remaining until the great eschatological crisis when God would defeat the 'sons of the Pit,' viz., mainstream Jews who rejected the new covenant according to Essenism. During this time, men would be converted from 'Israel' (apostate mainstream Jews, allegorically equated with the northern kingdom) to the 'house of Judah' (the Essenes, the faithful southern kingdom), and their sins would be forgiven them. But when the age was completed, there would be no more joining the 'house of Judah.' The eschatological crisis would ensue, overtaking the wicked:

*Until the age is completed, according to the number of those years, all who enter after them shall do according to that interpretation of the Law in which the first men were instructed. According to the Covenant which God made with their forefathers, forgiving their sins, so shall he forgive their sins also. But when the age is completed, according to the number of those years, there shall be no more joining the house of Judah.*²²

There is much in this language that echoes Jesus' warning:

When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten in and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. Luke 13:25-28

The object of Jesus' warning was the Jewish nation, which ate and drank in Christ's presence and in whose streets he taught. The point we want to come away with here is that there was a *transitional period* of grace in which to accept the New Testament that would conclude with the nation's rejection, and that this

²¹ *Damascus Document* (CD 4Q265-73, 5Q12, 6Q15) VI.10-20, Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 132

²² *Damascus Document* (CD 4Q265-73, 5Q12, 6Q15) IV.5-15, Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 130

corresponded with the eschatological ‘end’ the Essenes and early Christians looked for. Although obviously the Essenes did not see the New Testament as centered in Jesus, they did clearly understand that biblical eschatology was bound up in the nation’s refusal to accept the New Testament and that they were living in the ‘end of days’ when their fellow Jews would be forced to make their choice and be saved or perish accordingly. In Peter’s words to his fellow countrymen:

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Acts 3:22, 23; cf. Deut. 18:15, 19

2. *Forty-year Eschatological War; National Kingdom and Earthly Throne.* The Essenes looked for a final, eschatological crisis in which the ‘sons of light’ under the command of the ‘Prince of the Congregation’ (Messiah) would defeat the ‘company of darkness,’ consisting of the ‘ungodly of the covenant’ (apostate mainstream Jews) allied with Edom, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines, and the ‘Kittim’:

*On the day when the Kittim fall, there shall be battle and terrible carnage before the God of Israel, for that shall be the day appointed from ancient times for the battle of destruction of the sons of darkness.*²³

This was not to be a spiritual battle between ideologies, as, for example, between the gospel and Judaism or paganism, but an actual war similar to Joshua’s conquest of Canaan, which probably lasted forty years and may have served as the basis for Essene belief in a forty year eschatological war. The Essenes equated the Kittim with Gog and Magog, the pagan hoard Ezekiel foretold would descend upon ‘restored Israel’ and “David their prince” (Ezek. 37:24, 26) at the end of days (Ezek 38, 39). The Essenes viewed the battle of Gog and Magog in terms of an armed conflict typical of a national kingdom and an earthly monarch, followed by the world dominion of Judah and Jerusalem over the nations:

*‘O Zion, rejoice greatly!
O Jerusalem, show thyself amidst jubilation!
Rejoice, all you cities of Judah;
Keep your gates ever open that the nations
may be brought in!
Their kings shall serve you and*

²³ *War Scroll (1QM1, 1Q33, 4Q491-7, 4Q471) I.10, Geza Vermes, The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 164*

*All your oppressors shall bow down before
you;
They shall lick the dust of your feet.
Shout for joy, O daughters of my people!
Deck yourselves with glorious jewels
And rule over the kingdoms of the nations!
Sovereignty shall be to the Lord
And everlasting dominion to Israel.*²⁴

3. *The Kittim Identified as the Romans.* The Kittim are identified in scripture as the end-time enemy of God’s people. This identification is implicit in their rise to dominion as the fourth world empire following the decline of the dominion of the Greeks. The Kittim are first named by Balaam, who said a Star and Sceptre would come out of Jacob who would visit wrath upon his enemies, and destroy ‘Heber’ by the hands of the Chittim (Kittim):

There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Seth...And ships shall come from the coasts of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish forever. Num 24:15–25

‘Asshur’ refers to the land of the Assyrians bordering the Euphrates, which was the eastern-most border of the Roman Empire in the time of Christ. ‘Eber’ is the root word of Hebrew; Eber was the ancestor of Abraham, the Hebrew (Gen 11:17, 26; 14:13). Thus, Balaam’s oracle is the first explicit, end-time prophecy of the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Kittim. The Kittim occur in yet another telling passage:

For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. Dan 11:30

It is widely agreed that the Kittim here refers to the Romans who repulsed Antiochus IV Epiphanes in his war against Ptolemy Physcon. The ascendancy of the Kittim upon the decline of the kingdom of the Greeks implicit in this passage doubtless caused the Essenes to equate the Kittim with Rome. The prophecies of Daniel depict four world empires until the dawn of the Messianic kingdom (Dan 2, 7). Since the Romans were the fourth world empire to arise, it was all but inevitable that the Essenes identify the Romans as the eschatological enemy of the end time. Several passages from the scrolls serve to confirm this identification. For example, the Commentary on Nahum, which takes the

²⁴ *War Scroll XII.10-15; Geza Vermes, The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 176*

prophet's words against Nineveh as a type of God's eschatological judgment against Jerusalem, states at verse 2:11:

*Interpreted, this concerns Demetrius king of Greece who sought, on the counsel of those who seek smooth things, to enter Jerusalem. But God did not permit the city to be delivered into the hands of the kings of Greece, from the time of Antiochus until the coming of the rulers of the Kittim. But then she shall be trampled under their feet.*²⁵

After Antiochus IV Epiphanes, none of the kings of Greece entered Jerusalem until the city was captured by Pompey the Great in 63 B.C. It continued under the power of the Romans until it was destroyed in AD 70 by Titus. The prediction that the city would be 'trampled under the feet' of the Kittim finds surprising correlation in the New Testament: Jesus' Olivet Discourse and Revelation use identical language to the same purpose (Luke 21:24; Rev 11:2).

Among the Dead Sea scrolls, the Commentary on Habakkuk is especially insightful. The commentary repeatedly states that it concerns the 'final generation' and 'end of days,' and treats the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans as a prophetic type of God's end-time judgment against Jerusalem by the Kittim. That the Essenes were correct in interpreting Habakkuk this way is confirmed by Hab. 2:3, which states that the vision is for the time of 'the end.' It is also confirmed by the epistle to the Hebrews, which quotes Habakkuk to encourage Jewish believers to remain faithful in the face of persecution, because it was a 'very little while' (*Gk. micron, hoson, hoson*) and Christ come to save them from the persecution of their fellow countrymen (Heb 10:37, 38; cf. 9:28). Essene comments upon Hab 2:7–8 state:

Interpreted this concerns the last Priests of Jerusalem, who shall amass money and wealth by plundering the peoples. But in the last days, their riches and booty shall be delivered into the hands of the army of the Kittim.

At verses 1:14–16, the identity of the Kittim is made unmistakable when it states that they '*sacrifice to their standards and worship their weapons of war.*'²⁶ This

²⁵ *Commentary on Nahum (4Q169) II:11*, Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 474

²⁶ *Commentary on Habakkuk (1QpHab) I:14-16*, Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 481; 'The Kittim in this document are clearly the Romans, who 'sacrifice to their standards' (1QpHab 6:3-4)' (John J. Collins 'The Expectation of the End in

can only refer to the Romans whom Josephus describes as sacrificing to their standards when they captured Jerusalem:

*And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings lying round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy.*²⁷

Identification of the Kittim with the Romans, together with their belief that the Romans would trample Jerusalem in the 'end of days' and 'final generation' preceding the dawn of the Messianic age, fixes the time of Essene eschatological expectations, and confirms that they were Preterist in nature and essence.

4. *Resurrection of the flesh.* There were diverse opinions among the Jews about the afterlife, just as there are among Christians. The Sadducees were materialists who confined man's existence to his time beneath the sun and denied any future existence after physical death. The Pharisees affirmed angels, spirit, and resurrection (Matt 22:23; Acts 23:8). However, the Pharisaic view of resurrection appears to have contemplated immortality in *physical bodies* on a regenerated earth. This follows from the Sadducees' exchange with Jesus about the resurrection, in which they put to him the question about whose wife the widow of seven brothers would be in the resurrection (Matt 22:23–33). This hypothetical is often assumed to represent the Sadducee's conception of things, but as they did not believe in the resurrection, this was probably the view of their opponents, the Pharisees, and the hypothetical was calculated to show the absurdity of the Pharisees' view that in the resurrection, men receive their physical bodies again, will marry, beget children, etc. If it was not the Pharisees' view, then it would have served no purpose to put this question to Jesus. What could be accomplished by showing the absurdity of a view no one actually held? On the other hand, Josephus presents the Essenes as occupying a middle ground, believing that the body is temporal, and a prison, but that the soul is immortal, and will enjoy eternal life in an ethereal realm somewhere beyond the sea when freed by death:

the Dead Sea Scrolls' in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint editors (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 83).

²⁷ Josephus, *J.W.* 6.316; Whiston edition

*For their doctrine is this: That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal, and continue forever; and they come out of the most subtle air, and are united to their bodies as in prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this is like the opinion of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean.*²⁸

Vermes believes Josephus' representation is essentially correct and that Essene belief in immortality is better attested than belief in bodily resurrection.²⁹ However, VanderKam points out that, according to Hippolytus, the Essenes believed in the resurrection of the flesh impressed with the same immortality already enjoyed by the soul:

*Now the doctrine of the resurrection has also derived support among these; for they acknowledge both that the flesh will rise again, and that it will be immortal in the same manner as the soul is already perishable.*³⁰

Thus, VanderKam believes Josephus misinterpreted Essene beliefs and that they more than likely believed in a resurrection of the body. We tend to agree with VanderKam. The Thanksgiving Hymns, for example, state:

*For the sake of Thy glory
Thou hast purified man of sin
That he may be made holy for Thee...
That bodies gnawed by worms may be raised from the
dust
To the counsel [of Thy truth].*³¹

Raising from dust bodies gnawed by worms clearly affirms belief in bodily resurrection. Indeed, the overall thrust of Essene eschatological expectations seems 'this-worldly,' caught up in such things as a restored temple service and Zadokite priesthood, and a national kingdom and earthly Messianic monarch in which Israel holds dominion over the nations and the Romans are destroyed. Thus, in contrast to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who confessed that they were 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth' and desired a 'heavenly country' (Heb 11:13-16), the Essenes (and perhaps Pharisees) had eschatological hopes that appear to have been largely if not totally 'earth bound.' Significantly, such

²⁸ Josephus, *J. W.* 2.154–155; Whiston ed.

²⁹ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 87–89

³⁰ Hippolytus, *Against all Heresies* 9:22

³¹ Hymn 21 (1QH, 1Q36, 4Q427-32); Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 288

nationalistic hopes and expectations played a large role in the Jews' rejection of Christ, and ultimately led to the destruction of the nation itself. Looking for a national liberator, rather than a Savior from sin, they completely misconstrued the person and office of the Messiah, and fell prey to the delusion that Rome would be defeated with heaven's help.

It appears from history that the Essenes joined the revolt of A.D. 66-70, probably thinking that events would so unfold as to realize their eschatological expectations.³² The disastrous beginning of the war in which Cestius' army was almost completely destroyed probably served as a signal to the Essenes and many other Jews that the moment of deliverance had arrived. Josephus mentions 'John the Essene,' who was made a general in the war³³ but who perished in the battle of Ascalon.³⁴ Josephus also relates that many of the Essenes were cruelly tortured by the Romans during the war, so that we must conclude many from the sect joined the revolt, notwithstanding their normal separation from mainstream Judaism.³⁵ Unfortunately for the Essenes, their nationalistic expectations regarding the end of days and the triumph of the sons of light betrayed the sect: The site at Qumran shows signs of military destruction. The sect disappeared from history after the war, but not before bequeathing to posterity the legacy of their scrolls, hidden carefully in the caves adjacent to Qumran.

5. *Validity of the time factors notwithstanding mistaken interpretation.* Although the Essenes were mistaken about many things relative to the time of the end, there can be small dispute that they understood the time aright. The various time-lines provided by the prophecies of the book of Daniel made unmistakable that they were living in the last days and time of the end: The Roman-sequence of world empires (Dan 2, 7), Daniel's 490 prophetic years until the destruction of the city and temple (Dan 9:24–27), his final vision about 'the end' and what would befall the Jewish

³² 'But it is quite possible that the members of the community decided that the day of vengeance had come when the revolt against Rome broke out. If so, they would have presumably expected the heavenly host to come to their aid as envisioned in the War Rule. Needless to say, no such help materialized' (John J. Collins 'The Expectation of the End in the Dead Sea Scrolls' in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint editors (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 89).

³³ Josephus, *J. W.* 2.566-568

³⁴ Josephus, *J. W.* 3.9–21

³⁵ Josephus, *J. W.* 2.152-153

nation (Dan 10:14; 11:27, 35, 40; 12:4); the identity of the Kittim with Rome, together with the apostate nature of mainstream Judaism and the priesthood all signaled that God's purpose was reaching its appointed consummation—a fact admitted even by Josephus, who acknowledged that Daniel had foretold the nation's destruction by Rome:

*In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them. All these things did this man leave in writing, as God had shewed him, insomuch that such as read his prophecies, and see how they have been fulfilled, would wonder at the honour wherewith God honoured Daniel.*³⁶

The Essenes clearly foresaw that the end would entail wrath upon Jerusalem and the Jews by the hands of Rome, but the deliverance they thought belonged to them, belonged instead to the church, the bride of Christ. The saints' deliverance from their enemies did not entail military victory in the revolt of A.D. 66–70 as the Essenes wrongly supposed. Rather, it came about in the Jews' war with Rome and the year-of-four-emperors, which ended the first imperial persecution of the church. The Essenes disappeared from history; the Jewish nation was destroyed; but the church went on to conquer Rome and the world.

VI. CONCLUSION

According to James C. VanderKam who served on the international committee charged with editing and translating the Dead Sea scrolls for publication:

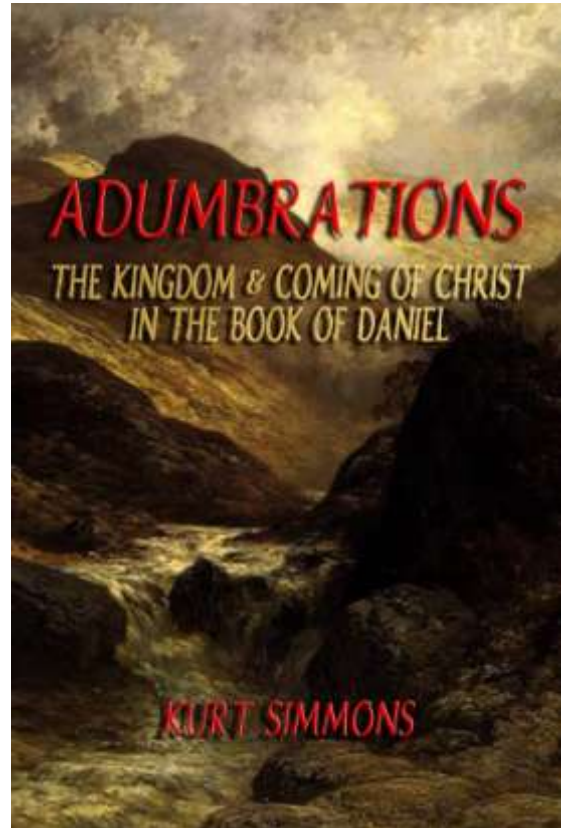
*Both the Qumranites and the first Christians can be called eschatological communities in the sense that both were convinced that the end was near and ordered their beliefs and communal practices accordingly.*³⁷

The Essenes were guided in their belief that they were living at the time of the end and the threshold of the new age by the Old Testament; the early church was guided in the same opinion by the Old Testament, and, more importantly, by numerous direct statements of Christ and the apostles. Based on comments by Origen, Celsus, and others, it was widely understood by the early church that the destruction of Jerusalem marked the end of the age and the coming of Christ. In time, this understanding became lost or obscured, giving rise to the appearance of a delayed *Parousia*; something a Preterist approach to eschatology corrects and sets right.

³⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 10.276-279; Whiston ed.

³⁷ James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, (2nd ed., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994, 2010), 215

“If Daniel is Fulfilled, All is Fulfilled.”



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The Day-Age Theory is Leading Preterists Astray

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom. 10:17

Two Basic Models of OEC

The modern day Preterist movement was born out of intense Biblical study; it's *only* inducement is the Bible. Although secular history corroborates and provides information of events after the close of the New Testament canon, they say nothing to the validity of Preterism itself. No one ever became a Preterist from reading the histories of Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, or Dio Cassius. Debates affirming the Preterist model never rely on, and rarely introduce, extra-Biblical material in evidence of its truth. *We stand upon the word of God.*

In contrast, Old Earth Creationism (OEC) was born as an apologetic attempt to reconcile the Bible with the claims of naturalistic science. This is not an accusation, but a universally admitted *fact*. The sole inducement to OEC is *exterior* to the Bible; no one ever became an OEC based on reading Genesis or the Bible. Debates affirming OEC rely *heavily*, if not exclusively, upon extra-Biblical material; demonstrations of its "proofs" are *long* on naturalistic science and its dating methods, and *short* on Bible. Indeed, not *one word* can be produced from the Bible dating the earth to millions, let alone billions of years. The validity of OEC exists only by imposing upon the silence of the scripture. *To be an OEC, one must be willing to believe what the Bible does not say, and contradict much of what it does.*

How strange that some should attempt to wed these very different disciplines together. The one rooted in the Bible and supported exclusively by the word of God; the other, rooted in atheistic science. One system is founded upon numerous, express statements placing the eschaton in the life of the apostles; the other has not a single verse that can be produced affirming its basic assumptions, and exists only in the space between the lines. Ask a Preterist to place upon paper all the verses affirming Christ returned in the events culminating in A.D. 70 and he will fill pages. Ask an OEC to place on paper all the verses demonstrating the earth is billions of years old and the paper will remain forever blank. And yet, there are those that would tell us that OEC is the logical consequence and bedfellow of Preterism; that Preterism actually proves OEC and *vice versa*!

There are two basic models of OEC: the "gap theory" and the "day-age" theory. We have dealt with the gap theory at length in an earlier article. (Sword & Plow, Oct. 2007) Briefly stated, this theory was developed in the early 19th century by Scottish theologian, Thomas Chalmers, in response to naturalistic theories regarding earth's age based upon the so-called geologic column. In attempting to reconcile the Bible to naturalistic science, Chalmers proposed that there is "gap" between Gen. 1:1 and 2. Chalmers suggested that the earth was inhabited by man and animals hundreds of millions of years ago, but perished in a world-wide deluge, and that Adam is but the first man of the present, 2nd creation, which was accomplished in the space of six literal, twenty-four hour days. All the rage in its day, this theory has all but been abandoned by OEC's who now opt for the "day-age" theory.

In the mid-19th century, American geologist Arnold Guyot sought to harmonize science and scripture by interpreting the "days" of Genesis 1 as epochs in cosmic history. Similar views were held by a protégé of Lyell, John William Dawson. Together these men are attributed with development of the "day age" theory. According to the day-age theory, the six days of creation are interpreted as vast ages, consisting of millions and billions of years. Justification for this is purportedly found in the Hebrew word *yom*. Proponents argue the term *can* mean an indistinct period of time. Hence, OEC's argue that billions of years may be comprehended within the term. Here is how *yom* is defined:

Yom 1) day, time, year; a) day (as opposed to night); b) day (24 hour period); 1) as defined by evening and morning in Genesis 1; 2) as a division of time; a) a working day, a day's journey; c) days, lifetime (pl.); d) time, period (general); e) year; f) temporal references; 1) today; 2) yesterday; 3) tomorrow

Day-Age Theory: A Belief in What the Bible Does Not Say

Here, basic rules of hermeneutics and principles of translation enter in. Moses distinctly qualifies *yom* by the phrase "and evening and morning" followed by ordinal numbers - "And the evening and the

morning were the first day.” (Gen. 1:5) A five year old could not mistake Moses’ meaning. Only someone unwilling to receive the truth would attempt to avoid the obvious meaning of these terms. Outside of Genesis, every time *yom* is used with a number (410 times), it refers to a *literal day*. Elsewhere, "evening" and "morning" show up with *yom* 23 times, and by themselves 38 times--each time referring to a literal 24-hour day. The term "night" is used with *yom* 53 times, similarly indicating a 24-hour day. Other Hebrew words (*olam* and *qedem*) could have been used to indicate periods of time here, but neither was used even once.

Faced with the complete inability to skirt the meaning of the term, OEC’s dismiss it as a mere symbol. They admit that a literal twenty-four hour day is signified, but interpret it as a *symbol* for something else instead; *viz.*, geologic ages consisting of billions of years. However, here again basic rules of interpretation and hermeneutics frustrate their purpose. Before one thing may be made the symbol of something else, the author must so *intend*. So, what was Moses’ intension? Did he intend us to understand *yom* as a symbol, or did he intend it to be taken according to its normal meaning and purport? Here, there can be no mistake. The Jewish Sabbath stood as a testimony to the *literalness* of the creation account. The Jews were commanded to rest the seventh day just as God had rested: “*For in six days the Lord God made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is.*” (Ex. 20:11) One could just about debate the whole question of the day-age theory on the strength on this one verse. There is virtually no avoiding its meaning; however cleverly some may argue for a figurative or poetic meaning in the Genesis, Moses here makes plain that the creation account was intended to be understood literally. The weekly Sabbath could have *no meaning* if the days of creation spanned billions of years, or the “seventh day” was an age that was on-going still. Certainly, four thousand years of sacred history show the creation account has nearly always been taken literally by God’s people, Jews and Gentiles. To cite just a couple examples:

Philo Judaeus – “And he said that the world was made in six days, not because the creator stood in need of a length of time (for it is natural that God should do everything at once, not merely by uttering a command, but by even thinking of it); but because the things created required arrangement...And he allotted each of the six days to one of the portions of the whole.”³⁸

³⁸ Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, III. Philo is sometimes cited by OEC’s as proof that the days of creation may be understood other than literally, but this is wrong. Philo was from the

Flavius Josephus – “Accordingly Moses says that in just six days the world and all that is therein was made; and that the seventh day was a rest, and a release from the labour of such operations; - whence it is that we celebrate a rest from our labours on that day, and call it the Sabbath; which word denotes *rest* in the Hebrew tongue.”³⁹

Epistle of Barnabas – “The Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of the creation: ‘And God made in six days the works of His hands, and made an end on the seventh day, and rested on it, and sanctified it.’”⁴⁰

Clement of Alexandria – “For the creation of the world was concluded in six days. For the motion of the sun from solstice to solstice is completed in six months--in the course of which, at one time the leaves fall, and at another plants bud and seeds come to maturity.”⁴¹

To this short list may be added many dozens of others,⁴² all testifying to the traditional (historical) teaching from the time of Moses until now, that the chronology of Genesis is to be read *literally*. This does not prove the traditional interpretation is correct, but it does demonstrate circumstantially that the motive for *reinterpreting* Genesis stems from the claims of modern science, and not the scriptures themselves; for if the idea that billions of years had elapsed from the beginning was truly in the text, men would not have waited almost eighteen hundred years to discover it; the idea would have been present with men from the start, just as Preterism has been.

Creation According to Day-Age: Evolution Wrapped Up in Biblical Garb

In treating the days of creation as geologic ages, the day-age theory is guilty of embracing a type of

Alexandrian school of interpretation which treated the scriptures allegorically. In the allegorical part of his work, he gives the creation a mystical sense. For example, the mind he says is referred to under the image of heaven, and the senses under the image of the earth, and so forth. When he says, therefore, that it is “a sign of great simplicity to think that the world was created in six days, or indeed in time at all,” he is not denying the literal days, any more than time or the literal heavens and earth. Rather, he is to be understood as attempting to make a clever point that time exists only in relation to the world, hence the world could not be made in time, but it is the world that in a sense made time: “Time is a thing posterior to the world...the world was not created in time, but that time had its existence in consequence of the world.” *Legum Allegoriae*, II. In no event can Philo be cited on the side of OEC.

³⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, I, i, 1; Whiston ed.

⁴⁰ Epistle of Barnabas, XV

⁴¹ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, Bk. VI, *The Fourth Commandment*.

⁴² For a more complete compilation on-line, see <http://www.creationism.org/articles/EarlyChurchLit6Days.htm>

theistic evolution. Moreover, it implicitly denies Adam's universal, biological priority. Here is a sketch of typical day-age approach to creation; judge for yourself if we are not correct:

Day One: 10-20 billion years ago the "big bang" occurred, creating the universe. The universe today continues to expand due to that explosion. The earth was formed by a process called "accretion." Matter that revolved around the young sun soon began to accumulate into a distinct body. About 4.5 billion years ago, our world finally became a distinct planet; it was also uninhabitable. Around four billion years ago, the earth cooled to the point where steam could liquefy. This precipitated a great deluge. For millions of years, torrential rains poured down upon the surface of the earth, eroding the volcanic mountains and cutting valleys. Stable mountain ranges as we recognize them today did not exist at that time, because the process of plate tectonics had not yet begun. The surface of the earth was relatively smooth, and was soon covered by a global ocean. The precursors to life - and maybe the first simple life - appeared at about that time, possibly extending as far back as 3.85 billion years ago. As the torrential rains continued to fall upon the earth, the atmosphere slowly dissipated, and light reached the watery surface of our world for the first time.

(Note: the Bible says it did not rain upon earth until the time of Noah's flood. (Gen. 2:5) Thus, there may be added to its other contradictions the idea that it rained for billions of years before the sun appeared.)

Day Two: Approximately two billion years. The hydrologic cycle (or water cycle), creating the atmosphere was accomplished. The sun is the catalyst of the hydrologic cycle, and light was finally visible on the surface of the earth when the second day began. Since the deluge of the first day, water existed in both its liquid and gaseous states. Science tells us that a stable water cycle began at that time.

(Note: This evening and morning is somewhere between 8-18 billion years shorter than the one before, yet both are supposedly described as a single "evening and morning." Notice, also, that it is "science" that purportedly tells us these things, not the Bible.)

Day Three: 2.5 billion years ago the continental plates emerge from the oceans; plants in the seas (seaweed, algae, and plankton) established. 476 million years ago, rudimentary plant life on land appears. However, plants probably did not achieve prodigious success on land until the Devonian

Period. This was a period that extended from 412 to 354 million years ago.

(Note: The phrase "rudimentary life" is a complete accommodation of evolution. The Bible nowhere allows room for this sort of evolutionary process, but affirms that God specially created grass, herbs, and trees with seeds bearing their own kind. I personally would be interested to learn how natural processes developed the first seed. Wonder how plants and trees reproduced for billions of years before the first seed came along?!)

Day Four: Celestial bodies arranged for purposes of guiding times and seasons on earth. No length assigned.

Day Five: 600 million years ago multi-cellular creatures were flourishing in the seas, but no life of any kind had appeared on the land. By 530 million years ago, the seas literally teemed with all manner of life. The extinct trilobites were the most prevalent species of life that existed at that time, but primitive clams and snails had also appeared. By 520 million years ago, the first vertebrates made their appearance. Jawless fish soon followed by the Ordovician Period - about 500 million years ago. Jawed fish arrived by 460 million years ago. Around 400 million years ago, larger marine creatures such as sharks followed them. Amphibians would venture onto dry land during the Devonian Period (between 412 and 354 million years ago) The Mesozoic Era - or the "Age of Dinosaurs" (250 million to 65 million years ago) - saw the rise of enormous marine creatures such as the Ichthyosaurs, Plesiosaurs, Mesosaurs, and giant crocodiles. In the air, flying insects were the first to appear, about 300 million years ago. The reptilian Pterosaurs filled the skies during the "Age of Dinosaurs," while birds finally appeared some 150 million years ago

(Note: Day three ended 412-354 million years ago; but day five began 600 million years ago, and therefore overlaps days three and four: a strange "evening and morning" to say the least!) **Day Six:** 1.4 million years ago; Mammals appear and ultimately mankind.⁴³

Implicit Denial of Adam's Universal, Biological Priority

This brief survey reveals that the day-age theory is based upon the supposition that God accomplished the creation of the heavens, the earth, the seas, and

⁴³ Taken from an article "A Day Age Creation Theory" by Jim Schicatano.
<http://home.att.net/~jamspsu84/ttocdayage.html>

all that are in them by *natural processes over long periods of time*. Life first appears in the form of simple algae and plankton and develops through natural, evolutionary processes into more complex forms. Clearly, with this basic premise in mind, there is *no room for the special, instantaneous creation of the first man Adam*. The whole day-age theory is a complete accommodation of Darwinian naturalistic evolution, and therefore implicitly *denies* the instantaneous creation of the first man, as well as all other life forms!

Faced with this, some advocates of the day-age theory make an exception in the case of Adam, allowing that he was specially and instantaneously created. But notice the incongruity this compromise introduces in the overall paradigm. Surely, the concession that God created Adam instantaneously disproves the idea that his creation of everything else required billions of years. Why did it take billions of years to create the planet and hundreds of millions of years to develop other life forms? What power did God possess in creating Adam that allowed this to be accomplished instantaneously that he did not possess in creation of everything else? Moreover, at what point in “day six” was Adam made? Was Adam made instantly on the last day of this figurative day-age, which they tell us lasted 1.4 million years? And if he was made in *one day* based upon the Genesis record, why then was not everything else? How can the disparity be accounted for? If to avoid the implications of long ages in the creation of man OCE’s allow that Adam was made instantly, by what principle of interpretation do they deny the instantaneous creation of all else?

These are but a few of the manifold objections that show the complete absurdity and impossibility of the day-age theory. One must virtually abandon his critical faculties to maintain this theory. Alas for sorrow; men are not always logical.

Leading Preterists Astray

The time has come to realize that either we must accept the Biblical account of creation or reject it altogether. It is foolish to attempt to bend the Biblical account to accommodate the discredited theories of unbelieving men. The two begin at completely different starting points and therefore cannot be harmonized or made to agree. One assumes all things occurred in a completely closed system without the benefit of supernatural forces; the other begins with God (“In the beginning God”). Attempts to wed these systems together can only result in hopeless contradiction. Those who accept the atheistic model end up rejecting the word of God. One proponent of the day-age theory

is on record denying the universal parentage of Adam and Eve:

“Why preterists would insist on a biological reading of ‘Eve the mother of all living’ in Genesis 3 baffles me. Eve is prophetic of the Church, just as Adam is prophetic of Christ. Genesis 3 is about covenant not biology.”

I think we can all agree that these are the words of someone who (at least as regards the question of origins) has *left the word of God* and started down the long road of Biblical liberalism. This process has played out in many churches and denominations that take a low view of inspiration and the Bible; it begins with dismissing the integrity of the scriptures and the historical accuracy of its claims, and ends up allowing women preachers and homosexual marriages. In most denominations, the incentive to begin this journey has historically been the very question before us: Can the Christian put implicit trust in the Biblical creation account or must we fudge to make accommodations for the claims of science?

The journey from Biblical conservatism to liberalism is not a process that happens overnight, but the end of the road is clear and unmistakable. Once the Bible is set aside as the rule of faith and practice, and other considerations allowed to dictate how we interpret scripture, cultural norms and traditions quickly take root and subvert the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We have seen the process all too many times before. Visit any Methodist or Episcopalian or Congregationalist church and you will recognize it immediately. Just ask the woman preacher if she believes in Genesis’ literal creation account. Ten to one says she is an OEC! *Virtually all the liberal churches deny the historical accuracy of the literal Genesis creation account.*

Beloved brethren, this is not a road Preterists want to go down!

The World God Created

By Ed Stevens

In our last two articles, we surveyed the big picture of redemption by studying the Scriptures which affirm that God planned redemption before He created the universe. This lesson builds on that redemptive theme by looking at the world God created and attempting to discover the identity of the world with which Genesis 1-3 deals, as well as the nature of that world before the fall of Adam into sin.

This is important to study because there are some within the Preterist movement who suggest that the creation account of Genesis is nothing more than an allegorical description of Israel's covenantal "world" created during its exodus out of Egypt. This concept of covenantal "creation" is then used to build a "collective body" model of redemption and resurrection. Fortunately, very few advocates of a "collective body" resurrection view take this approach to Genesis. Thus, our focus here is not on those who hold a "collective body" resurrection view, but rather on those who deny a literal, historical Genesis account of creation, either because of an allegorical or an evolutionary approach. As such, I will be following a more traditional approach, which views Genesis as affirming the creation of the visible, physical realm (the earth) and all it contains, including plants and animals, the first two humans (Adam and Eve), and an actual physical Garden in which they were to dwell.

This does not mean, of course, that the original, physical creation cannot be used as types for eschatological antitypes, for the physical creation has been applied typologically in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor 15). Instead, what I am affirming is that any typological use of Genesis in the New Testament presupposes a real, historical creation of the physical earth, including Adam and Eve as the first two created (not evolved) human beings, a real Garden of Eden, a real Tree of Knowledge and Tree of Life, and a real, historical appearance of Satan in the form of a serpent to deceive Eve.

The main problem with both the allegorical and evolutionary approaches to Genesis is that they attack the credibility of Jesus and the New Testament writers who clearly interpreted Genesis literally and historically. So let's look at some New Testament teaching about the world that God created:

Colossians 1:16-17 - Jesus never gives the slightest credence to evolution or long ages (both of which were taught by Greek philosophers at that time).

Jesus was certainly in a position to know how the universe came to be since Colossians 1:16-17 says He existed before all things and created all things.

Mark 13:19 - Jesus taught that the universe was created by God, not the product of blind chance or natural processes ("the creation which God created").

Matthew 24:21 - Jesus believed the world had a beginning ("since the beginning of the world"), rather than always existing and finally evolving into what we see today.

Matthew 19:4-6 - Jesus quotes from both Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, showing that Jesus believed the "male and female" created on the sixth day (in Gen 1:27) to be none other than Adam and Eve (mentioned in Gen 2). Jesus also states (v. 6) that marriage between the very first "male and female" was instituted at the very beginning of creation, a marriage identified by His quote of Genesis 2:24 to be that of Adam and Eve. Jesus takes the account of Adam and Eve literally and historically and bases the sanctity of marriage ("let not man put asunder") upon that first union which God arranged ("what He has joined").

Mark 10:6 - Here Jesus teaches that Adam and Eve were created at "the beginning of the creation" (at the beginning of the world, not the beginning of the human race), right after everything else had just been created—not millions of years later after everything else had long been in existence! (See also Mark 13:19.)

1 Timothy 2:13-14 - Both Adam and Eve are mentioned as historical persons. Paul says Adam was created first, implying his acceptance of Genesis' account of Eve's creation from Adam's rib as historical fact. Then he mentions the deception of Eve and her fall into transgression. Mentioning the serpent's deception of Eve in 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul must have considered Genesis 1-3 to be historical narrative, not allegorical or mythological.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 45 - Sin and death came through one man (Adam). Paul accepts as historical the Genesis account of the fall of Adam into sin, which brought some kind of death to him and all of his descendants. It also proves that Adam was the first man, since it was through him

that death spread to all mankind afterwards. Adam cannot be allegorical with no basis in history, otherwise the antitype (Christ) would have no historical precedence. The typology (Adam the type and Christ the antitype) presupposes a literal, historical Adam who fell into sin and brought his whole family of descendants under condemnation, so that they needed the Last Adam to bring redemption (cf. Rom 5:12-15).

Conclusion

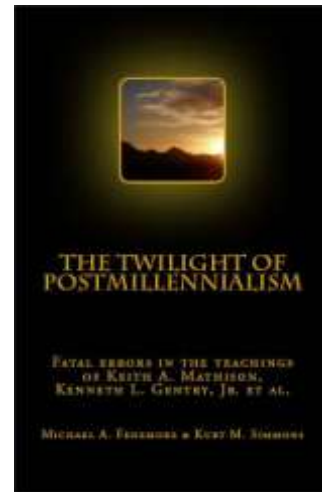
If we removed Genesis (which depicts Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the genealogies, the Tower of Babel, the Table of Nations, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) from our Bibles and considered it as either unreliable mythology or unhistorical allegory, it would destroy the foundation for the rest of the Bible, making it unintelligible and inapplicable. The New Testament bases its moral, ethical, and redemptive teaching directly on the people and events mentioned in Genesis. The whole focus of the New Testament is on Christ's sacrifice to cover the sinfulness of mankind which was introduced by Adam and Eve. If Adam and Eve never existed, then mankind never fell into sin, rendering meaningless Christ's death and the plan of redemption. This would remove the essential historical fabric of the Bible through which the moral, ethical, and redemptive content is interwoven. Marriage and family—the most fundamental institutions of mankind—are based directly on literal, historical people, as well as the events mentioned in the first three chapters of Genesis.

In view of the above New Testament affirmations of the historicity of the Genesis account of Creation, all conservative Christians should back away from any view of Genesis which teaches that it is nothing more than mythology, or an allegory using fictitious names of people who never really existed to represent the creation of the nation of Israel.

Genesis is an account of God creating the visible universe and all that it contains, including: the earth with all its plants and animals; and the first two humans—Adam and Eve; and an actual, physical Garden in which they were to dwell. This is the kind of world that God created. It would discredit both Christ and His apostles to teach otherwise, since it is clear from their teaching that they took Genesis literally.

As we go further in our studies of redemption, we will notice how a literal interpretation of Genesis, along with the appropriate applications of typology, will solve all of the difficult eschatological problems which are encountered at the other end of the Bible (i.e., the book of Revelation). Stay tuned.

The Reason Why Ken Gentry and Keith Mathison Have Not Been Sleeping Nights....



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

Psalm 72

The Reign of the Righteous King

A Psalm for Solomon.

[Editor's note: This Psalm of David for Solomon is prophetic of Christ. Solomon, the son of David, was the world power of his day. Egypt was in decline and Assyria and Babylon had not yet risen to world power; Solomon reigned over all nations from Egypt to the Euphrates. The reign of Solomon foreshadowed the world dominion of Christ over the heathen. Christ received the kingdom and dominion of the world at his ascension when he sat down at the right hand of God in heaven. He rules the nations with a rod of iron. The saints thus enjoy world dominion by the providence of Christ who guides history to advance the gospel and the church. See Dan. 7:26, 27]

1 Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers *that* water the earth.

7 In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.

13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

15 And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; *and* daily shall he be praised.

16 There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

17 His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

18 Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.

19 And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen, and Amen.

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.
