

Biblical Eschatology

(Studying the scriptures anew)

by David Showalter

In the years that I've been alive, I have come to understand that there are very few things in this life that people will ever change unless they are forced to. I've also learned that next to politics, religion is the one area where people will yield very little ground. When confronted with a Biblical viewpoint that is contrary to their own, even good Christian people can become very hostile. The reason this happens is because deep down inside we all believe that our viewpoint is the right one. The idea that our paradigm of truth could be wrong, or even called into question, is extremely unsettling to most people.

For those of us raised in the church, especially those who attend the same church or denomination that they grew up in, if we are completely honest with ourselves, we must admit that our theological views are what they are simply because that's what we've always been taught. They were formed in us from the moment we first went to the church nursery. Of course we didn't understand this, but since birth we have been fed a particular theological paradigm. From our earliest days we were surrounded by those who believed like us, and since we all believed alike, and since we all validated one another in these views, there was absolutely no reason for us to ever question if what we believed was true or not. It simply was.

Then one day something happens. You read a particular verse, or you hear a pastor speaking on a particular scripture, and it doesn't quite fit your paradigm of truth. It becomes a burr under your saddle, and you find yourself thinking, *"That's not what I've always believed, but what if that's right?"* For the first time in your life your theological foundations have been shaken in a particular area. For some people this leads to intense study of scripture. For others the thought of being wrong about something in the Bible is so upsetting that they cannot stomach it. They reject it outright and completely without study. For the person who simply rejects the new idea based on prejudice alone, the words of Winston Churchill ring true. He is reported to have said, *"Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened"*. A foolish person dismisses theological ideas that cause them to think. The wise will pick up the word and study.

That was where I found myself a few years ago. I was eating lunch with a friend and we began discussing eschatology. That is, the study of end times. My friend was explaining his end time position to me when he mentioned the word "Preterism". The word Preterism derives from a Latin word that means *"past in fulfillment"*. He was not a Preterist himself, and at first the word meant nothing to me. He explained that Preterists believe that many, if not all, of the Bible prophecies pertaining to the end times have already been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. He went on to explain that there are two types of Preterists; partial and full. Partial Preterists believe that many end time prophecies have been fulfilled, but not all. Full Preterists believe all have been fulfilled.

Since, at that time, I had no clue of what happened in Jerusalem in 70AD, or how it even related to scripture, I was always taught that the apocalyptic passages of scripture were all still in the future. Like the vast majority of professing Christians today, I believed that the rapture was imminent, that an evil world leader (the Antichrist) was on the horizon, computer chips were the mark of the beast, and that our generation was the ones who would see the fulfillment of the book of Revelation. Minus some sensationalism, my thinking was right along the lines of the "Left Behind" culture. I was stunned by the idea that anyone could think that some, much less all, of those prophecies were already fulfilled so long ago. I mean, look around! This isn't what I was taught to look for. It was totally crazy because it didn't fit my paradigm of truth. I didn't yet realize that the paradigm of truth that I was filtering through had been

shaped, not by years of intense study, but by years of scriptural ignorance, ignorance of history, and an absolute blind reliance upon what others told me to be true about the apocalyptic passages.

Other than introducing me to Preterism, I can't say that the lunch we shared made an immediate impact on me. The next step in my introduction to Preterism came not too much later when another friend of mine told me about a website he had visited and wanted me to check out. The only problem was that he gave me the wrong Internet address. The address he gave me was www.bereanbiblechurch.org. I began looking around this website and it didn't take too long for me to discern that this church agreed with me on the doctrines of salvation. That was great! Then, and this I credit to the providence of God alone, I realized that the pastor of this church was a Preterist.

The concept of Preterism had now been in my mind long enough that it was no longer a novelty. It even sort of intrigued me, as if only to make me scratch my head in disbelief. Preterism was still foolishness for the most part, but after reading an article or two from this new website I was confronted with some scriptures that were being interpreted in a way that was contrary to my lifelong paradigm. Not only were these scriptures supporting the Preterist view, but they were being backed up by historical evidence that I had never before heard about. What was I to make of all this? It took maybe two or three more articles for me to see that this was not some paper-thin eschatology. These articles were dealing with very clear scriptures that I had never before given any thought to, or if I had I simply forced them to fit my current end time paradigm like a square peg in a round hole.

After letting it rattle around in my head a while, I determined that it would be injurious to my spiritual life if I didn't at least study Preterism for myself. I soon found that several modern theologians, including the well respected R.C. Sproul, who hold to at least partial Preterism. That encouraged me that this was not a totally ridiculous concept. Using other websites, I found hundreds of quotes from non-Preterist pastors and theologians who saw in the scriptures a Preterist bent to eschatology, even if they themselves were not Preterists. At this point I determined to be like the Berean believers in Acts 17:11 who, *"received the word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."*

All I wanted was to know the truth, and let it set me free, whatever it may be. If I was already in the light, great! If I was not, then I wanted nothing more than to be in the light. It was perfectly fine with me if I had been wrong all this time. I had been wrong on other things in my life, both Biblical and non-Biblical. I just thank God that for some reason he gave me the fire to search and know theological issues. I want to believe the scriptures with a childlike faith, but I don't want to be a spiritual child. I want to know my God, and understand what his word says. I want a challenge and that makes me dig deep. More than anything I want my children to know that their father knew what he believed, but more importantly, that he had truly studied the scriptures for himself so that he knew why he believed as he did, and could defend it by rightly dividing the word.

It has been approximately four years since my initial introduction to Preterism. Since that time, through the scriptures and countless writings both for and against Preterism, through study, meditating on the word, prayer, and most importantly, the providence and enlightenment of God, I can now say that I find myself to be a full Preterist. Being a Preterist means taking a lot of scorn and ridicule from others, even friends. The ridicule comes mainly in the raised eyebrows and questions that seem to indicate that I'm crazy if I disagree with church creeds or historical beliefs. I've even been told by some that I'm on "dangerous ground" for taking this stand. What has been my response? My response is that I stand on the scriptures and the clear teachings of Christ, even if I don't understand it all, and that I will be happy to change my eschatological viewpoint if the same scriptures can be used to prove me wrong.

If you're anything like me, I'm constantly getting emails from friends with all sorts of quotes from historical people. Unless there's a way to verify it, you never know whether the person it is attributed to really said it, but as I think about Preterism, and what it costs to take a stand for it, it brought to mind the following quote that I received. Whether it's accurate or not, I don't know. All I do know is that it's dead-on in regards to Preterists like myself

"In the beginning of a change, the patriot is a scarce manbrave, hated and scorned. When his cause succeeds however, the timid join him, for then it costs nothing to be a patriot." (Mark Twain)

Having detailed the events that got me to this point, I now want to turn my focus to how I will attempt to arrive at the conclusions to support my position. In the 1500's one of the main cries of the Protestant Reformation was "Sola Scriptura". It is a Latin phrase that, when translated into English, means "Scripture Alone". While many people today are forsaking scripture alone and deriving their eschatological paradigms from church history, creeds, popular televangelists, or the Left Behind series, I will arrive at all of my conclusions using scripture alone. This does not mean that I will not quote other people or sources, but what it does mean is that my ultimate authority for believing something is right or wrong will lie with the scriptures alone.

In presenting any end-time position, I do not believe it is possible for anyone to be able to show with exact certitude every little detail of how something has, or will happen. If the prophecies are fulfilled, the best that a Preterist can do is use scripture and recorded history to look back on those events to explain what happened and how it relates to the Bible. If the prophecies have not been fulfilled, the best a futurist can do is simply make educated guesses about what will happen and what scripture is pointing towards. What I will attempt to do is establish the overarching argument for Preterism, and then go back in and support it with additional scripture and history. Since the primary purpose of this paper is focusing on the TIMING of the second coming, not the details of every little passage of scripture surrounding it, I will not attempt to prove every detail of HOW it happened. My main goal is to show the clear and emphatic teaching of WHEN it was to happen, and how it differs from today's mainstream Christian view.

I believe that many of the end time scriptures contained in the bible have been, for centuries, misunderstood, avoided, or twisted so as to have a new meaning. The main reason for this is the lack of good hermeneutical principles. Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting a document. In this case, the Bible. Without solid hermeneutical rules to interpret the Bible you end up with poor theology. The two major rules of hermeneutics are the analogy of faith, and audience relevance.

Rule #1: The analogy of faith means that scripture interprets scripture. This means that when we want to arrive at an eschatological conclusion we are to use the clear and easily understood passages of scripture to help us understand the less clear. We don't build our eschatology using the veiled or difficult to understand prophecies and then shove the obvious scriptures into that paradigm. The analogy of faith is a safeguard that should help us from reading in to the scriptures something that is not there. If one scripture seems to contradict another, then we must turn to what is easily understood, and then continue digging until we have reconciled the apparent contradiction or difficult understanding. God is not the author of confusion, and I believe his word is adequately clear to show us the answers.

Rule #2: The second rule of hermeneutics is audience relevance. This means that whatever a passage meant, or whatever words spoken in scripture meant, it meant or had direct application to the original intended audience. If we disengage the original audience from the scriptures then we can make any passage mean whatever we want, or make them apply to whomever we want. Whenever we read the scriptures we must ask ourselves, *"Who is this person talking or writing directly to?"* We must remember that the Bible is nothing more than a collection of personal letters and history books written by real

people, to real people, in real time, and with real time contexts. For instance, in the book of Philippians the Apostle Paul wrote the following

(Philippians 2:19) 19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

Does this verse teach us that we are supposed to be still waiting on Timothy today so that he can take word back to Paul on how we're doing? No. Why? Because we correctly understand audience relevance, and that this was a personal letter from Paul to a real church in Philippi in 62AD about an event (sending Timothy) that was imminent to them, not to us. We correctly understand the time and place context. The Philippians are the intended audience of this book. All time statements in the Bible must be viewed through this same lens of audience relevance. The books of the Bible are not mystical letters written nebulously to Christians throughout eternity whereby all time statements are free to be extracted and applied to whatever generation we wish. No, each book was directed to a specific audience, and again, scripture is more than adequate to show us who that audience was.

The hermeneutical principles of the analogy of faith, and audience relevance are critical in making a case for the Preterist position. They are equally foundational, and must be used by whomever wishes to attack Preterism.

In keeping with the subject of audience relevance, this may perhaps shock many people, but there is not one book in the Bible that was written TO anyone living today. Every single book in the Bible was written FOR us, for application and understanding, but none of them were written TO us. Every book in the bible is a personal letter, a history book, or writing by a prophet to particular people at a particular time and for a particular reason. Yes, we do glean truth and understanding from these books today, but that is far different than saying that these books were written TO us. To put it another way, we are reading other people's mail. Whenever someone today says *"Here's what this scripture means to me"*, we should be the first to say, *"It doesn't matter what it means to you. It only matters what it meant to the original audience"*. That is where we find out what the Bible truly means.

Having laid out how I got here, and how I will plan to arrive at my conclusions, let us now turn to the largest and clearest section of scripture in which Christ himself discussed his second coming; the Olivet Discourse. The Olivet Discourse is located in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. All three have slight differences in their wording based on whom they were writing to, but all three are parallel and deal with the same events.

MATTHEW'S OLIVET DISCOURSE

(Mat 24:1 NASB) And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. (Mat 24:2 NASB) And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down." (Mat 24:3 NASB) And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Mat 24:4 NASB) And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. (Mat 24:5 NASB) "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. (Mat 24:6 NASB) "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. (Mat 24:7 NASB) "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. (Mat 24:8 NASB) "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. (Mat 24:9 NASB) "Then they

will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. (Mat 24:10 NASB) "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. (Mat 24:11 NASB) "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. (Mat 24:12 NASB) "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. (Mat 24:13 NASB) "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. (Mat 24:14 NASB) "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (Mat 24:15 NASB) "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), (Mat 24:16 NASB) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; (Mat 24:17 NASB) let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; (Mat 24:18 NASB) and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. (Mat 24:19 NASB) "But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! (Mat 24:20 NASB) "But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; (Mat 24:21 NASB) for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. (Mat 24:22 NASB) "And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. (Mat 24:23 NASB) "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. (Mat 24:24 NASB) "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. (Mat 24:25 NASB) "Behold, I have told you in advance. (Mat 24:26 NASB) "If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. (Mat 24:27 NASB) "For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. (Mat 24:28 NASB) "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. (Mat 24:29 NASB) "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, (Mat 24:30 NASB) and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. (Mat 24:31 NASB) "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Mat 24:32 NASB) "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; (Mat 24:33 NASB) even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. (Mat 24:34 NASB) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (Mat 24:35 NASB) "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away. (Mat 24:36 NASB) "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (Mat 24:37 NASB) "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. (Mat 24:38 NASB) "For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, (Mat 24:39 NASB) and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. (Mat 24:40 NASB) "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. (Mat 24:41 NASB) "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. (Mat 24:42 NASB) "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. (Mat 24:43 NASB) "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. (Mat 24:44 NASB) "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (Mat 24:45 NASB) "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? (Mat 24:46 NASB) "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. (Mat 24:47 NASB) "Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. (Mat 24:48 NASB) "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' (Mat 24:49 NASB) and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; (Mat 24:50 NASB) the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, (Mat 24:51 NASB) and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.

MARK'S OLIVET DISCOURSE

(Mark 13:1 NASB) And as He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said[^] to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" (Mark 13:2 NASB) And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down." (Mark 13:3 NASB) And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, (Mark 13:4 NASB) "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:5 NASB) And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. (Mark 13:6 NASB) "Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and will mislead many. (Mark 13:7 NASB) "And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. (Mark 13:8 NASB) "For nation will arise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. (Mark 13:9 NASB) "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. (Mark 13:10 NASB) "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. (Mark 13:11 NASB) "And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. (Mark 13:12 NASB) "And brother will deliver brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. (Mark 13:13 NASB) "And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. (Mark 13:14 NASB) "But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Mark 13:15 NASB) "And let him who is on the housetop not go down, or enter in, to get anything out of his house; (Mark 13:16 NASB) and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. (Mark 13:17 NASB) "But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! (Mark 13:18 NASB) "But pray that it may not happen in the winter. (Mark 13:19 NASB) "For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created, until now, and never shall. (Mark 13:20 NASB) "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days. (Mark 13:21 NASB) "And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him; (Mark 13:22 NASB) for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray. (Mark 13:23 NASB) "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. (Mark 13:24 NASB) "But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, (Mark 13:25 NASB) AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. (Mark 13:26 NASB) "And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. (Mark 13:27 NASB) "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. (Mark 13:28 NASB) "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. (Mark 13:29 NASB) "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. (Mark 13:30 NASB) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (Mark 13:31 NASB) "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. (Mark 13:32 NASB) "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (Mark 13:33 NASB) "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is. (Mark 13:34 NASB) "It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. (Mark 13:35 NASB) "Therefore, be on the alert-- for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cock-crowing, or in the morning-- (Mark 13:36 NASB) lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. (Mark 13:37 NASB) "And what I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"

LUKE'S OLIVET DISCOURSE

Luke 21:5 NASB) And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, (Luke 21:6 NASB) "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." (Luke 21:7 NASB) And they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" (Luke 21:8 NASB) And He said, "See to it that you

be not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is at hand'; do not go after them. (Luke 21:9 NASB) "And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." (Luke 21:10 NASB) Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, (Luke 21:11 NASB) and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. (Luke 21:12 NASB) "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. (Luke 21:13 NASB) "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. (Luke 21:14 NASB) "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; (Luke 21:15 NASB) for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. (Luke 21:16 NASB) "But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, (Luke 21:17 NASB) and you will be hated by all on account of My name. (Luke 21:18 NASB) "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. (Luke 21:19 NASB) "By your endurance you will gain your lives. (Luke 21:20 NASB) "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. (Luke 21:21 NASB) "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; (Luke 21:22 NASB) because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. (Luke 21:23 NASB) "Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, (Luke 21:24 NASB) and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:25 NASB) "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, (Luke 21:26 NASB) men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Luke 21:27 NASB) "And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. (Luke 21:28 NASB) "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:29 NASB) And He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; (Luke 21:30 NASB) as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. (Luke 21:31 NASB) "Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. (Luke 21:32 NASB) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. (Luke 21:33 NASB) "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. (Luke 21:34 NASB) "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; (Luke 21:35 NASB) for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. (Luke 21:36 NASB) "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:37 NASB) Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. (Luke 21:38 NASB) And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

Beyond those three versions of the Olivet Discourse, there is an additional passage of scripture in Luke's gospel that parallels them. It is in Luke 17:20-37. It reads...

(Luke 17:20 NASB) Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; (Luke 17:21 NASB) nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:22 NASB) And He said to the disciples, "The days shall come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. (Luke 17:23 NASB) "And they will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after them. (Luke 17:24 NASB) "For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. (Luke 17:25 NASB) "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. (Luke 17:26 NASB) "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: (Luke 17:27 NASB) they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:28 NASB) "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

(Luke 17:29 NASB) but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:30 NASB) "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:31 NASB) "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back. (Luke 17:32 NASB) "Remember Lot's wife. (Luke 17:33 NASB) "Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it. (Luke 17:34 NASB) "I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. (Luke 17:35 NASB) "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. (Luke 17:36 NASB) <"Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."> (Luke 17:37 NASB) And answering they said^ to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered."

As you can see, all of the above texts are parallel and deal with the same subject matter. That being Christ's second coming, and all of the events or signs that would surround it. There is quite a lot of information and prophecy contained in each of the above four sections of scripture, but since this paper deals primarily with the TIMING of the second coming, I want to direct your attention to two main areas(1) The disciples question of "when", and (2) Christ's clear and emphatic answer to that question.

PART #1: THE DISCIPLES' QUESTION

(Matthew 24:1-3) 1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." 3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

(Mark 13:1-4) 1 As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down." 3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"

(Luke 21:5-7) 5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, 6 "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." 7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"

In each gospel version Christ tells the disciples that the temple will be destroyed. Since the temple was the central focal point of the entire Jewish nation this would be a major event, and it logically drove the disciples to ask, "*When will this happen?*" Notice that Matthew is the only version that links this destruction of the temple to Christ's coming and the "end of the age". What age is Matthew talking about? The age spoken of is not the end of the world. It is the end of the Jewish (Mosaic) age. Matthew was a Jew writing to Jews in order to show the Messianic fulfillment of this destruction. Since these Messianic prophecies were of no real concern to Gentiles, Mark and Luke do not take this approach. If the "end of the age" meant the end of the planet then I'm confident Mark and Luke would have worded it similarly. Again, the "end of the age" is the end of the Jewish age. This occurred in 70AD.

PART #2: THE ANSWER TO THEIR QUESTION

Having been asked when this will happen, we see that in each discourse Christ gives them exactly what they asked for and spends several verses laying out the exact signs they (the disciples) needed to be on the lookout for. Having detailed all the signs, Christ then turns his attention to the specific question of timing, and says

(Matthew 24:34) 34 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."

(Mark 13:30) 30 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."

(Luke 21:32) 32 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place."

The question is what generation is meant by "this generation?" The answer to that question is simple. When Christ says "this generation" he meant the generation that was living at that time. His contemporaries, if you will. This is not only clear from the plain meaning of words and the context, but we know it is his generation because of the excessive amount of times he specifically warns them, his disciples (that generation), by using the word "you" in the discourses. It would make no sense at all to tell the current generation that they would see the fulfillment of these signs, if in fact the generation in question was still 2,000+ years away. It is illogical that an event can be imminent to two generations separated by 2000+ years.

Although I am mainly using the NASB version for scripture references in this paper, I wanted to go outside of the NASB translation so that you could see how other versions have addressed Christ's answer of "this generation". It should be noted that none of these versions are Preteristic in their eschatology. I believe these other versions provide an excellent rendering of the answer, and help shed light on what generation Christ had in mind as being the ones who would see the prophesied signs.

(Good News Translation) "Remember that all these things will happen before the people now living have all died"

(New Century Version) "I tell you the truth, all these things will happen while the people of this time are still living."

(Weymouth's Translation) "I tell you in solemn truth that the present generation will certainly not pass away until all this has taken place."

So what generation is "this generation?" The answer is the generation of people living at the time Christ spoke the prophesy of the temple's destruction. They would be the ones who would live to see everything prophesied in the Olivet Discourse, not some future generation. Read the Olivet Discourse again. The question of "when" comes up in the first few verses. Jesus' answer of "this generation" comes near the end. That means that everything between the question and the answer was to be fulfilled before everyone living at that time had passed away. This would include the false prophets, famine, war, the gospel to all the world, tribulation, the abomination of desolation, Christ's second coming, the gathering of the elect,

and judgment.

So that I can further support this view using Sola Scriptura, and wanting to fall back on the analogy of faith (scripture interpreting scripture), I looked up "this generation" in the three gospels. In the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, excluding the references in the Olivet Discourse, the phrase "this generation" occurs 15 times. In every single instance "this generation" either implies or specifically means Christ's contemporaries. The scripture references are Matthew 11:16, 12:41, 12:42, 12:45, 23:36, Mark 8:12, 8:38, Luke 7:31, 11:29, 11:30, 11:31, 11:32, 11:50, 11:51, 17:25. For example

(Luke 17:25) 25 "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

What generation caused his suffering and rejected him? The people living at that time. So, if in Luke 17:25, as well as the other references listed above, "this generation" applies to Christ's contemporaries, why wouldn't "this generation" apply to the same generation when we find it in the Olivet Discourse?

For those still clinging to the idea that "this generation" could not have meant Christ's contemporaries, but rather a future generation, perhaps even our own generation, I ask you why didn't Christ use the words "that generation" to imply some sort of a future fulfillment? Why would Christ warn his contemporaries of the signs to be looking for if they were not to be fulfilled for at least two millennia? For example

(Mat 24:24 NASB) "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. (Mat 24:25 NASB) "Behold, I have told you in advance.

Who is the you in this verse? Remember audience relevance! The disciples are the "you" in this verse. Why would he say, "behold, I have told you (the disciples) in advance" if this did not apply to them? Perhaps even more telling is this one

(Mark 13:14 NASB) "But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

No matter what eschatological position you hold, all systems hold to the fact that there is only one abomination of desolation, and in this verse we have Christ clearly telling his disciples (they are the "you" in this verse) that they would be alive to see this abomination of desolation. If there is only one abomination of desolation then you only have two options. Either it was fulfilled in the generation of the disciples, or Jesus flat out lied to them when he said they would see it.

I know that I could continue to press the issue that "this generation" meant those alive at the time of Christ, and that "you" means the disciples, but I will refrain from doing that. Using the clear understanding of words, and using scripture to interpret scripture, the point has been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that "this generation" meant those first century people that were alive at the time of Christ. It is my position that only extreme prejudice can keep a person from seeing this.

In his book "The World's Last Night" C.S. Lewis pens the following

*"The apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, 'this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.' And he was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else. This is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible." (Essay "The World's Last Night" (1960), found in *The Essential C.S. Lewis*, p. 385)*

There is debate over whether this was Lewis' own personal view, whether it was a passing idea for him, or whether he was penning the thoughts of another individual. All I know is that Lewis himself correctly understood what Christ meant when he said "this generation" and he also understood the ramifications if Christ did not fulfill these prophecies in that stated time frame. If they were not fulfilled then Christ is a false prophet, and this destroys Christianity at its very core.

By proving what generation is in question in the Olivet Discourse, the burden of proof does not fall on the Preterist to show how all these things were fulfilled in that generation. Christ clearly said they would be. History verifies that the temple was destroyed in the prophesied time frame (70 AD), and therefore we stand on the objective word of God as our proof that all things prophesied did occur. We do not twist the scriptures in order to make them fit our preconceived eschatology, or in order to argue with God over those things we do not grasp or comprehend. We simply look at the fulfilled prophecies and walk by faith on those things we do not fully understand.

There are a great many things we cannot historically detail in the word of God, yet we trust they happened just as they are written. Do you trust that Jonah was in the belly of a great fish? Do you trust that God spoke through Balaam's donkey? Do you understand how God made the sun stand still? Most of us are happy to lay aside subjectivism in regards to those events and simply trust the objective word of God that they happened. Why not do the same in regards to what Christ said about when he would return? If you will not be satisfied unless the Preterist can prove every little detail of how things happened, then I would direct you to the following quote

*"To deny the truth of His (Jesus') predictions because we are unable historically to verify a certain portion of them is simply to make manifest the shallowness of our faith in Him". (George Hampdon Cook, *The Christ has Come*, 1891)*

In regards to eschatology, the real burden of proof is on the person who looks at the prophecies in the Olivet Discourse, sees their fulfillment, knows the generation in question, and then denies that they are the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy. Just like the Preterist, this person must prove their conclusions from scripture alone. I believe this to be an impossible undertaking.

Dispensationalist (futurist) teacher, John MacArthur, in his MacArthur Study Bible, commenting on the verses in Matthew where Jesus predicted the temple's destruction wrote, *"This was literally fulfilled in 70AD."* Yet, being a futurist, MacArthur sees this 70AD destruction not as the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies, but rather a foreshadowing or sign of a yet future destruction of the temple and second coming of Christ. What?! Think about that for a moment. Christ said the temple would be destroyed before the people living at that time had all died. He tied this destruction to his second coming, and it was literally fulfilled, and yet, it doesn't count? Why? Why do we need to play tricks with the word of God in order to make a third coming of Christ? Scripture speaks of no third coming. Why not simply take him at his word?

Perhaps this is a bit cynical, but Preterism doesn't sell books, at least not in today's market. Much of today's church is so material and sensual it wants excitement, and things like the Left Behind book series, or prophecy conferences talking about America's supposed role with Israel sells books. Preterism doesn't spend its time looking ahead for signs and wonders. People want signs and wonders because they are supposed to bring bad world news and bad news is exciting. We want an exciting Christianity. We want our Christian John Wayne, that is Jesus Christ, to ride into town, form his Christian posse, and take care of the bad guys. The problem is that's exactly what the Jews were looking for when Christ showed up the first time. They wanted a conquering Messiah who would set up a physical kingdom on earth and destroy their enemies. He said, "*My kingdom is not of this earth*" and so they crucified him. People are still looking for that physical kingdom today, and when Preterists say prophecy has been fulfilled, and that despite the world around us we are living in the established kingdom today because the kingdom is within us, we are called heretics, and all because we dare to stand on the objective and clear words of God and believe Christ when he said his generation would see the fulfillment of all the things mentioned in the Olivet Discourse.

We often look at the scriptures that foretold Christ's first coming, and in our supposed twenty-first century wisdom we wonder how those first century people missed his first coming. I mean, didn't they have the scriptures that Christ fulfilled to verify who he was? If, with all the scriptures they had available to them, and with all their intimate knowledge of them, the Jews misunderstood his first coming, isn't it remotely possible that with all the scriptures we have available to us that we might have misunderstood his second coming? Are we so much smarter than them?

Having proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ was teaching that his own generation would be the generation that would see the fulfillment of all end time signs and prophesies, and we know from history that the temple was destroyed in that generation, then all we need to do is show the fulfillment of the other signs and everyone should jump on the Preterist band-wagon, right? Well, it should be that easy, but it's not. In spite of this, let's move on and look at the Olivet Discourse in greater detail to see if we can at least show the possible fulfillment of the additional signs and wonders that Christ foretold.

FALSE PROPHETS

(Mat 24:4) 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

We see false prophets in scripture in the book of Acts

(Acts 5:36) 5 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.

(Acts 8:9-10) 9 But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God."

We see false prophets in historical writings dealing with this time period

Eusebius (325AD) (Regarding the Egyptian of Acts 21:38) - "A greater blow than this was inflicted on the Jews by the Egyptian false prophet. Arriving in the country this man, a fraud who posed as a seer, collected about 30,000 dupes, led them round by the wild country to the Mount of Olives, and from there was ready to force an entry into Jerusalem, overwhelm the Roman garrison, and seize supreme power, with his fellow-raiders as bodyguards. But Felix anticipated his attempt by meeting him with the Roman heavy infantry, the whole population rallying to the defense, so that when the clash occurred the Egyptian fled with a handful of men and most of his followers were killed or captured." (pp. 96-97) [1]

Martin Goodman - "It is admittedly now difficult to tell how much this was the case in the first-century Judea, for neither Josephus nor the New Testament was likely to give an honest description of contemporary messianic fervor if it tended commonly to impel Jews towards irrational hostility to Rome. Nonetheless it is striking that even when the siege of Jerusalem was at its height in A.D.70, the belief that God was about to deliver to the Jews the signs of their salvation led a crowd of six thousand, including women and children, to await their deliverance by just standing passively in the Temple court at the urging of a 'false prophet' (B.J. 6.283-5). They were all burnt to death." (The Ruling Class of Judea, pp. 90-91) [2]

Flavius Josephus [Jewish Historian] (A.D. 75) - "A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God; and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now, a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such deliverance." (The History of the Destruction of Jerusalem, Book VI, Chapter V, Section 2). [3]

Adam Clarke (1837) - "Verse 26. **If they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert** -- Is it not worthy of remark that our Lord not only foretold the appearance of these impostors, but also the manner and circumstances of their conduct? Some he mentions as appearing in the desert. Josephus says, ANT. b. xx. c. 7, and WAR, book ii. c. 13: That many impostors and cheats persuaded the people to follow them to the desert, promising to show them signs and wonders done by the providence of God, is well attested. An Egyptian false prophet, mentioned by Josephus, ANT. b. xx. c. 7, and in the Acts, Acts 21:38, led out into the DESERT four thousand men, who were murderers, but these were all taken or destroyed by Felix. Another promised salvation to the people, if they would follow him to the DESERT, and he was destroyed by Festus, ANT. b. xx. c. 7. Also, one Jonathan, a weaver, persuaded a number to follow him to the DESERT, but he was taken and burnt alive by Vespasian. See WAR, b. vii. c. 11. [4]

WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS

(Mat 24:6) 6 "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

On this subject, pastor David Curtis (www.bereanbiblechurch.org) writes

David Curtis (1997) - There were wars in the tributaries of Rome and all over Palestine, Galilee, and Samaria in AD 66, preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. In the Annals of Tacitus, a Roman who wrote a history which covers the period prior to 70 A. D., we find such expressions as these: "Disturbances in Germany," "commotions in Africa," "commotions in Thrace," "insurrections in Gaul," "intrigues among the

Parthians," "the war in Britain," "war in Armenia." Among the Jews, the times became turbulent. In Seleucia, 50,000 Jews were killed. There was an uprising against them in Alexandria. In a battle between the Jews and Syrians in Caesarea, 20,000 were killed. During these times, Caligula ordered his statue placed in the temple at Jerusalem. The Jews refused to do this and lived in constant fear that the Emperor's armies would be sent into Palestine. This fear became so real that some of them did not even bother to till their fields.

FAMINE & EARTHQUAKES

(Mat 24:7) 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

Famine was recorded in scripture in the book of Acts

(Acts 11:28) 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Regarding the famine that existed specifically in the city of Jerusalem

Josephus - 4. And now there were three treacherous factions in the city, the one parted from the other. Eleazar and his party, that kept the sacred first-fruits, came against John in their cups. Those that were with John plundered the populace, and went out with zeal against Simon. This Simon had his supply of provisions from the city, in opposition to the seditious. When, therefore, John was assaulted on both sides, he made his men turn about, throwing his darts upon those citizens that came up against him, from the cloisters he had in his possession, while he opposed those that attacked him from the temple by engines of war; and if at any time he was freed from those that were above him, which happened frequently, from their being drunk and tired, he sallied out with a great number upon Simon and his party; and this he did always in such parts of the city as he could come at, till he set on fire those houses that were full of corn, and of all provisions.* (1) The same thing was done by Simon, when, upon the others' retreat, he attacked the city also; as if they had, on purpose done it to serve the Romans, by destroying what the city had laid up against the Siege, and by thus cutting off the nerves of their own power. Accordingly, it so came to pass, that all the places that were about the temple were burnt down, and were become an intermediate desert space, ready for fighting on both sides; and that almost all the corn was burnt, which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years. So they were taken by the means of famine, which it was impossible they should have been, unless they had thus prepared the way for it by this procedure. (Book V, Chapter I, Section 4)

Again, regarding the famine, Josephus writes

2. But as for the richer sort, it proved all one to them whether they staid in the city, or attempted to get out of it; for they were equally destroyed in both cases; for every such person was put to death under this pretense, that they were going to desert, but in reality that the robbers might get what they had. The madness of the seditious did also increase together with their famine, and both those miseries were every day inflamed more and more; for there was no corn which any where appeared publicly, but the robbers came running into, and searched men's private houses; and then, if they found any, they tormented them, because they had denied they had any; and if they found none, they tormented them worse, because they supposed they had more carefully concealed it. The indication they made use of whether they had any or not was taken from the bodies of these miserable wretches; which, if they were in good case, they

supposed they were in no want at all of food; but if they were wasted away, they walked off without searching any further; nor did they think it proper to kill such as these, because they saw they would very soon die of themselves for want of food. Many there were indeed who sold what they had for one measure; it was of wheat, if they were of the richer sort; but of barley, if they were poorer (1). When these had so done, they shut themselves up in the inmost rooms of their houses, and ate the corn they had gotten; some did it without grinding it, by reason of the extremity of the want they were in, and others baked bread of it, according as necessity and fear dictated to them: a table was no where laid for a distinct meal, but they snatched the bread out of the fire, half-baked, and ate it very hastily. (Book V, Chapter X, Section 2)

Regarding earthquakes during this time period

David Curtis (1997) - Tacitus mentions earthquakes at Rome. He wrote, "Frequent earthquakes occurred, by which many houses were thrown down," and "twelve populous cities of Asia fell in ruins from an earthquake." Seneca, writing in the year 58 A. D., said, "How often have cities of Asia and Achaea fallen with one fatal shock! How many cities have been swallowed up in Syria! How many in Macedonia! How often has Cyprus been wasted by this calamity ! How often has Paphos become a ruin! News has often been brought us of the demolition of whole cities at once." In 60 A.D., Hierapous, Colosse, and Laodicea were overthrown from earthquakes. There were earthquakes in Crete, Apamea, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, and Judea. Earthquakes in diverse places.

PERSECUTION

(Mat 24:8) 8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.

The book of Acts is full of persecution of the followers of Christ. Here are a few

(Acts 4:3) 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

(Acts 16:23-24) 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

(Acts 9:23-24) Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. 24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him.

Tradition and history teach that most of the disciples were killed by the Jews during this time frame, and others were exiled by Rome (John).

THE GOSPEL TO ALL THE WORLD

(Mat 24:24) 14 "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Through the Apostle Paul, we see that this was also fulfilled in the prophesied time frame

(Colossians 1:5-6) because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

(Colossians 1:23) if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

(Romans 1:8) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

(Romans 16:25-26) Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith;

As mentioned earlier, we must begin thinking like a first century person when reading the scriptures. The term "whole world" did not have the same meaning to them that it does to us today. Even now, in some remote jungle, there are still people who, when the words "whole world" are used, probably have a much different concept of what that term might mean. Remember that the scriptures were written at a time when people believed the world was flat. Understanding the audience and grasping the concept of words in their understanding is critical. Whatever the concept "whole world" meant to the disciples or the people living at that time is what it actually means in regards to scripture. Our job is to find out what it meant in their time and culture, not apply it to ours. If we will learn to think like this, and allow scripture to speak for itself, we will see that this prophecy that the gospel must go to all the world was adequately fulfilled in that generation.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

(Mat 24:15) 15 "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

The parallel passage in Luke's Olivet Discourse tell us what this "abomination of desolation" is

(Luke 21:20) 20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

We have already addressed the fact that Christ clearly told the disciples and their generation that they would see this abomination of desolation, but was this scripture fulfilled in this generation? Yes. The Roman armies marched to Jerusalem and, together with their allies, surrounded the city for its destruction. This was fulfilled in 66-70AD. Note also the words "let the reader understand" in Matthew 24:15. The gospel of Matthew was written some time between 55-63AD. When Matthew says, "let the reader understand", he's not talking to you and me today. He's talking to the Jews who would soon be reading his letter, and would be alive to see this fulfillment so as to understand that what they are seeing was prophesy fulfilled.

On the topic of the Roman armies being the object of desolation, Josephus writes

Josephus - 3. But now, as soon as that legion that had been at Emmaus was joined to Caesar at night, he removed thence, when it was day, and came to a place called Seopus; from whence the city began already to be seen, and a plain view might be taken of the great temple. Accordingly, this place, on the north quarter of the city, and joining thereto, was a plain, and very properly named Scopus, [the prospect,] and was no more than seven furlongs distant from it. And here it was that Titus ordered a camp to be fortified for two legions that were to be together; but ordered another camp to be fortified, at three furlongs farther distance behind them, for the fifth legion; for he thought that, by marching in the night, they might be tired, and might deserve to be covered from the enemy, and with less fear might fortify themselves; and as these were now beginning to build, the tenth legion, who came through Jericho, was already come to the place, where a certain party of armed men had formerly lain, to guard that pass into the city, and had been taken before by Vespasian. These legions had orders to encamp at the distance of six furlongs from Jerusalem, at the mount called the Mount of Olives (1) which lies over against the city on the east side, and is parted from it by a deep valley, interposed between them, which is named Cedron. (Book V, Chapter II, Section 3)

Compare what is recorded by Josephus (above) to this passage in Luke

(Luke 19:41-44) Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 "For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44 "and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

This was fulfilled completely in 66-70AD when Jerusalem was destroyed from within and without.

For those who wonder just how bad the tribulation was in Jerusalem, and how it compares with scripture, let's look at some additional passages from the Olivet Discourse and then compare them with recorded incidents in the writings of Josephus.

(Luke 21:23) 23 "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;

Josephus - 4. Now there was a certain woman that dwelt beyond Jordan, her name was Mary; her father was Eleazar, of the village Bethesud, which signifies *the House of Hyssop*. She was eminent for her family and her wealth, and had fled away to Jerusalem with the rest of the multitude, and was with them besieged therein at this time. The other effects of this woman had been already seized upon; such I mean

as she had brought with her out of Perea, and removed to the city. What she had treasured up besides, as also what food she had contrived to save, had also been carried off by the rapacious guards, who came every day running into her house for that purpose. This put the poor woman into a very great passion, and by the frequent reproaches and imprecations she cast at these rapacious villains, she had provoked them to anger against her; but none of them, either out of the indignation she had raised against herself, or out of the commiseration of her case, would take away her life (1); and if she found any food, she perceived her labors were for others, and not for herself; and it was now become impossible for her any way to find any more food, while the famine pierced through her very bowels and marrow, when also her passion was fired to a degree beyond the famine itself: nor did she consult with anything but with her passion and the necessity she was in. She then attempted a most unnatural thing; and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, "O thou miserable infant! for whom shall I preserve thee in this war, this famine, and this sedition? As to the war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives, we must be slaves! The famine also will destroy us, even before that slavery comes upon us; yet are these seditious rogues more terrible than both the other. Come on; be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews." As soon as she had said this, she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate one half of him (2), and kept the other half by her concealed. Upon this the seditious come in presently, and smelling the horrid scent of this food, they threatened her that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not shew them what food she had gotten ready. She replied, that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them; and withal uncovered what was left of her son. Hereupon they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind, and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them "This is mine own son; and what hath been done was mine own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself! Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous, and do abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one half, let the rest be reserved for me also." After which, those men went out trembling, being never so much affrighted at anything as they were at this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother. Upon which, the whole city was full of horrid action immediately; and while everyone laid this miserable case before their own eyes, they trembled, as if this unheard-of-action had been done by themselves. So those that were thus distressed by the famine were very desirous to die (1); and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not live long enough either to hear or see such miseries.

(Luke 21:24) 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

History records the following

Josephus - 3. Now the number (1) of those that were carried captive during the whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand (2); as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege, eleven hundred thousand * (3), the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation, [with the citizens of Jerusalem,] but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army (4), which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straightness among them, that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a famine as destroyed them more suddenly. And that this city could contain so many people in it is manifest by that number of them which was taken under Cestius, who being desirous of informing Nero of the power of the city, who otherwise was disposed to contemn that nation, entreated the high priests, if the thing were possible, to take the number of their whole multitude. So these high priests, upon the coming of their feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour to the eleventh, but so that a company not less than belong to every sacrifice, (for it is not lawful for them to feast singly by themselves,) and many of us are twenty in a company, found the number of sacrifices was two hundred and fifty-six thousand five hundred; which, upon the allowance of no more than ten that feast together, amounts to two millions seven hundred thousand and two hundred persons that were pure and holy; for as to those that have the leprosy, or the gonorrhoea, or women that have their monthly courses, or such as are otherwise polluted, it is not lawful for them to be partakers of

this sacrifice; nor indeed for any foreigners neither, who come hither to worship.

Jerusalem was a massive fortress. When Rome marched on it, the people naturally ran into the city for protection so that the numbers of people in the city were, as Josephus reports, a minimum of 2.7 million people, not counting those who were unlawful to be numbered or to partake of the sacrifices. Rather than run into the city for protection, what did Jesus tell his followers to do when they saw the city surrounded? He said

(Luke 21:21-22) 21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

Jesus warned his followers ahead of time to flee the city instead of running into it for protection. He had already prophesied her total destruction and those inside of her would be destroyed or taken captive at best. Note what Jesus says in verse 22. He says that the destruction of Jerusalem and the great tribulation the land incurred was the fulfillment of all things written. Since at that time all that was written was the Old Testament books, which were books written to the Jewish nation only, Jesus is saying that the destruction of Jerusalem is the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies concerning the apostate condition of the Jews, thus ending the Jewish age. God had already destroyed forever the northern 10 tribes (Israel), and now this was the final divorce decree to the southern 2 tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Jews). The Old Covenant with its physical signs and shadows was done away with forever. The New Covenant was established. The church (the true Israel) was born, and the kingdom of Christ established forever. No longer would signs and shadows be necessary. Christ had fulfilled them all and he is sitting on this throne forever.

SUN DARKENED, MOON WILL NOT GIVE LIGHT

(Mat 24:29) 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Was this fulfilled? Yes. Contrary to what most people believe, this is not speaking of actual physical signs and wonders in the terrestrial realm. This is apocalyptic language that was commonly used in the Old Testament to symbolize the fall of nations or empires. Matthew 24:29 is speaking of the final fall and dissolution of the Jewish nation, never to rise again. Using scripture to interpret scripture, here are some Old Testament examples to prove this point...

(Isaiah 13:9-13) Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. 11 "I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12 I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger.

The above verses are talking about the destruction of Babylon, and yet they sound like the destruction of the created order. Here is another

(Isaiah 34:3-5) Also their slain shall be thrown out; their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4 All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, And as fruit falling from a fig tree. 5 "For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; Indeed it shall come down on Edom, And on the people of My curse, for judgment.

This describes the fall of Edom, and yet again it sounds like the dissolution of planet earth. Here is another

(Nahum 1:1-5) The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. 2 God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; 3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. 4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the flower of Lebanon wilts. 5 The mountains quake before Him, The hills melt, and the earth heaves at His presence, Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.

The above verse describes the fall of Ninevah, and yet again it seems as though it speaks of a worldwide destruction. One last example

(Ezekiel 32:7-8) 7 When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, And the moon shall not give her light. 8 All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land,' Says the Lord GOD.

This is a prophecy about Egypt. This again is similar wording to Matthew 24:29-30.

Matthew 24:29 is speaking about the end of the Old Covenant and the Jewish nation, not the end of the physical created order.

COMING ON THE CLOUDS

(Mat 24:30) 30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

Concerning "coming on the clouds"; this is also apocalyptic language that represents God's nearness both to his people, and in judgment to his enemies. Here are some examples of God coming near to his people in a cloud

(Exodus 16:10) 10 Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

(Exodus 19:9) 9 And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

(Leviticus 16:2) 2 and the LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.

Here are some examples of God's judgment in a cloud

(Isaiah 19:1) 1 The burden against Egypt. Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.

(Nahum 1:3) 3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

Just as the sun and the moon signs are apocalyptic language representing the fall of the Jewish nation, so too the cloud coming in this portion of the Olivet Discourse represents God's coming near to his people and final judgment upon his enemies. It is commonly held that Christ will be visible to every single person. Even if this means that somehow Christ himself was visible to an audience, it does not take away from the timing. The nature of something never determines timing. Timing always determines the nature.

THE GATHERING OF THE ELECT

(Mat 24:31) 31 "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Daniel references this gathering at the time of tribulation this way

(Daniel 12:1-2) 1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. (see Matt. 24:21) And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

It is my opinion that the gathering of the elect in verse 31 is two-fold. First, it was the gathering of all the Old Testament saints that had been bound in Sheol (the abode of the dead) until this day of redemption when they could finally be brought into the presence of God. Christ's second coming is the fulfillment of the Old Testament type of the high priest coming back out of the holy of holies signifying that the sacrifice was acceptable and full redemption complete. With Christ's coming again, the Old Testament saints had

their long awaited redemption and were gathered from Sheol into their new spiritual and glorified bodies and taken to heaven. This gathering is also the gathering of the living elect believers who were watching anxiously for Christ's return. Christ references the living elect in the Olivet Discourse, therefore I feel the gathering is both of the living and the dead elect. Christ told his disciples that they would not all die before he came again, and he told them that he was going away but would come again for them. Therefore I believe that this gathering was of the living and the dead.

The idea of a first century rapture of the living saints is somewhat of a new position for me as I study Preterism. I have finally settled on the idea as my own view for two reasons. The lesser reason is that in the Old Testament Elijah was "translated" from the physical realm to the spiritual realm, thus the possibility of this happening to a number of people is not out of the question. There are also other instances where the spiritual realm was invisible to many, and visible only to those whom God chose to show it to. If God can translate Elijah from one realm to another, he can most assuredly do it for all his saints. The more compelling reason is that if the coming at 70AD was to somehow "change" the living believers, or provide them with some sort of relief, but not take them to heaven, then why do we not have letters from post 70AD believers telling us of this? The lack of literature written immediately after the 70AD destruction of the temple, I believe, lends credibility to the idea that the living saints had truly been raptured, therefore they were not around to pen any letters immediately after 70AD.

I find it almost impossible that the Apostle John could have lived, as is believed, 20+ years after the destruction of Jerusalem and not penned a letter showing any significance in the destruction of the temple and Christ's second coming. I believe this strengthens the idea that they were no longer around. Surely, if one of the disciples or a number of believers were still around after 70AD, somebody would have penned something that God would have allowed to last through the ages for our benefit. The absence of such letters should give us confidence that he actually did come for his elect. Considering that Christianity at this time was predominately people who were not mighty, not noble, not strong (i.e. the weaker and outcast), then it is not so strange to believe that in a region that was in such tremendous upheaval and tribulation due to the Roman onslaught, that living Christians might have been translated from the physical world to the spiritual world and unbelievers just simply missed it. After all, Christianity would still have been a predominantly small religion in numbers. Considering that Christ himself clearly stated that the gathering of the elect was an event co-joined to the destruction of Jerusalem, then if nothing else I stand upon a first century gathering of the saints (living and dead) based upon scripture alone. It is my final authority.

Even if I am incorrect on this, and the rapture (or gathering) was only of the dead saints, and that the living saints remained on earth, but we have no record of it, it does not take away from the major premise and that is the clear timing of the second coming.

If you would like to read more about the 70AD rapture position, I highly recommend the book, *"Expectations Demand a First Century Rapture"*, by Ed Stevens. You can obtain this book at www.preterist.org. You may not settle on the same conclusions I have, but the book will certainly bring to light some ideas you may not have pondered before.

We have now come to the end of focusing on the Olivet Discourse. Scripture alone has been adequate enough to show that Christ meant what he said when he said he would come again in that generation, and history and scripture have been adequate enough to show us that all things predicted did in fact happen in some form or fashion in that generation. It does not matter if we don't see how it could have happened. We must stand on the objective Word of God alone for our conclusions.

From a historical standpoint, and so that you can get a much better grasp on how the severity of the tribulation experienced in Israel qualifies for the fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse, I would strongly suggest that you take some time to read some of the excerpts from the writings of Jewish historian Josephus concerning the Jewish Wars. He was alive at the time of 70AD and penned a great deal concerning it. He was also an unbeliever. This would mean that his writings have no Christian bent to them in order to try and force a fulfillment in events of 70AD. You can find all of these excerpts at www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/index.html or in the complete works of Josephus, the book. Here are just a few examples showing the horrific events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem

EXAMPLE #1 (Josephus) - "In the mean time, the Jews were so distressed by the fights they had been in, as the war advanced higher and higher, and creeping up to the holy house itself, that they, as it were, cut off those limbs of their body which were infected, in order to prevent the distemper's spreading further"

EXAMPLE #2 (Josephus) - "And, indeed, why do I relate these particular calamities? while Manneus, the son of Lazarus, came running to Titus at this very time, and told him that there had been carried out through that one gate, which was entrusted to his care, no fewer than a hundred and fifteen thousand eight hundred and eighty dead bodies(1), in the interval between the fourteenth day of the month Xanthieus, [Nissan,] when the Romans pitched their camp by the city, and the first day of the month Panemus [Tamuz]. This was itself a prodigious multitude (2); and though this man was not himself set as a governor at that gate, yet was he appointed to pay the public stipend for carrying these bodies out, and so was obliged of necessity to number them, while the rest were buried by their relations; though all their burial was but this, to bring them away, and cast them out of the city. After this man there ran away to Titus many of the eminent citizens, and told him the entire number of the poor that were dead, and that no fewer than six hundred thousand were thrown out at the gates, though still the number of the rest could not be discovered; and they told him further, that when they were no longer able to carry out the dead bodies of the poor, they laid their corpses on heaps in very large houses, and shut them up therein; as also that a medimnus of wheat was sold for a talent; and that when, a while afterward, it was not possible to gather herbs, by reason the city was all walled about, some persons were driven to that terrible distress as to search the common sewers and old dunghills of cattle, and to eat the dung which they got there; and what they of old could not endure so much as to see they now used for food. When the Romans barely heard all this, they commiserated their case; while the seditious, who saw it also, did not repent, but suffered the same distress to come upon themselves; for they were blinded by that fate which was already coming upon the city, and upon themselves also."

EXAMPLE #3 (Josephus) - "Hereupon some of the deserters, having no other way, leaped down from the wall immediately, while others of them went out of the city with stones, as if they would fight them; but thereupon they fled away to the Romans. But here a worse fate accompanied these than what they had found within the city; and they met with a quicker dispatch from the too great abundance they had among the Romans, than they could have done from the famine among the Jews; for when they came first to the Romans, they were puffed up by the famine, and swelled like men in a dropsy; after which they all on the sudden overfilled those bodies that were before empty, and so burst asunder, excepting such only as were skillful enough to restrain their appetites, and by degrees took in their food into bodies unaccustomed thereto. Yet did another plague seize upon those that were thus preserved; for there was found among the Syrian deserters a certain person who was caught gathering pieces of gold out of the excrements of the Jews' bellies (1); for the deserters used to swallow such pieces of gold, as we told you before, when they came out, and for these did the seditious search them all; for there was a great quantity of gold in the city, insomuch that as much was now sold [in the Roman camp] for twelve Attic [drachms], as was sold before for twenty-five. But when this contrivance was discovered in one instance, the fame of it filled their several camps, that the deserters came to them full of gold. So the multitude of the Arabians, with the Syrians, cut up those that came as supplicants, and searched their bellies. Nor does it seem to me that any misery befell the Jews that was more terrible than this, since in one night's time about two thousand of these deserters were thus dissected."

It is true that since 70AD there have been terrible wars and horrific tragedies toward humanity, but scripture plainly shows that the destruction spoken of in the Olivet Discourse was God's outpouring of final vengeance upon a particular nation, the Jews, for first turning away from him by breaking the Old Covenant, and then finally crucifying the Son. This was the final turning away from him, and he fulfilled his promises of crushing them and taking them out of the promised land since they had not kept their part of the covenant. The promised land did not come without conditions. God told the Israelites that when they entered the land to make sure to follow after him. If they turned from him he would completely wipe them off the face of the land.

Deuteronomy 28:15 (NASB) "But it shall come about, if you will not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all his commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you."

Deuteronomy 28:20-21 (NASB) "The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me. 21 "The Lord will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land, where you are entering to possess it."

God had chastised Israel for centuries, but now, after having turned a final time from Him by crucifying the very Son of God, God charges all this to their account, and wiped them from off the face of the land forever. Matthew and Daniel, written hundreds of years apart, record it this way

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

(Daniel 12:1) 1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands {guard} over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

Remember, Daniel was a prophet to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. Matthew was a Jew writing to Jews. The point is that the destruction spoken of in both passages is directed at the Jews, not the whole world. And that the "end times" are the end times of the Jewish, not planet earth. What was experienced in Israel in 66-70AD should make us think of the parable of the vineyard, and how the workers killed and stoned the messengers sent to them by the owner. Finally when they killed the owner's son the He exacted full and final vengeance upon those workers by killing every one of them and burning their city. That parable is a picture of what was to happen in 70AD when God poured out his wrath on Old Covenant physical Israel, and ended that age, and began the New Covenant church age, to which there is no end. Today people point towards physical Israel and say they are God's chosen people, but this simply is not the case. God is done with physical Israel. He is now working through the true Israel the church. The Apostle Paul clearly teaches that anyone who trusts in Christ alone as their savior is a son of Abraham and is counted as true Israel (Galatians 3:6-18). Physical birth or lineage means nothing to God. It never has. Only faith matters to God, and that is what has always made a person a true Israelite. Physical Israel today means nothing to God. Physical Israel has long been done away with because of their apostasy toward God and failure to live up to the Covenant he had with them. People are not Jews by religion or birth, they are Jews by faith in Christ.

Now I want to turn our focus to countless other New Testament scriptures to further help solidify the position that Christ did in fact mean that he would come again in that first century generation. There are

many of these type passages in the New Testament, and in an attempt to try and limit the length of this paper I will try to limit my references to those with extreme significance.

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

In Matthew's gospel, besides the Olivet Discourse, there are several passages that speak about the imminence of the coming kingdom, the pending tribulation and destruction of Jerusalem, the second coming, judgment, and resurrection. Verses that are of interest that I will not be addressing in this paper are Matthew 3:2, 10:15, 12:32, 13:37-51, 22:6 (speaks specifically of the destruction of Jerusalem), and 26:63-64. Lets look at some key verses in the book of Matthew that help establish a first century fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse, and validate the truthfulness of Christ regarding when he said he would come.

(Matthew 3:7) 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

The word "come" in this verse is the Greek word "mello", which means "to be about to be". By using the Greek word "mello" John is pointing to a wrath that was chronologically prophesied as near to the Jews, not a wrath that was 2000+ years away and meant for the entire planet. It could be read "who warned you to flee from the wrath about to come".

(Matthew 10:23) "But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

This is a very clear time reference regarding the second coming of Christ. First, who is the relevant audience? The disciples. What does he tell them? He tells them that they will not finish evangelizing all of Israel before he comes again. If we compare the statements, "you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes" with "This generation will not pass away until all these things be fulfilled" we have two time limiting and compatible scriptures supporting one another as to the brevity of time before his second coming.

(Matthew 16:27-28) "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Who are the "you" in this verse? The disciples. How much clearer could Christ be when establishing the time he was going to return? He has already limited the time of his coming by saying these same men won't finish going through Israel evangelizing, and now he says he is clearly coming back in the lifetime of at least some of his disciples. Both of those line up perfectly with "this generation." Time after time Jesus has given us specific and emphatic time limiting statements. When you read this particular scripture you have only two choices(1) He either came back in the lifetime of some of his disciples, which would also qualify for "this generation", or (2) There are some disciples still alive today because he told them that he would return with glory and angels to establish his kingdom and give rewards before all of them had died.

(Matthew 23:34-38) 34 "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. 37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

Here again we see the use of "this generation" (verse 36). It is the same generation as "this generation" in the Olivet Discourse. It is Christ's contemporaries. When you read this passage you can see why it was this generation that was so guilty and so worthy of the great tribulation that God poured out on it in judgment in 66-70AD. They were the generation that was not only going to be guilty for all the righteous bloodshed from Abel to that present time, but they were also the generation that was responsible for the bloodshed of the most righteous ever Jesus Christ. Is this not the generation that most deserved all the horrific events described in the Olivet Discourse? This was the culminating apostate generation that would see the full and final wrath of God in judgment upon them as described in the pages of scripture. Christ himself told the religious leaders of that day that they were "filling up the measure of their father's guilt" for killing the prophets (Matthew 23:32). They had been a covenant breaking people for centuries, and now, having killed the Messiah, this was the last generation of physical Israel before God kept his promise to wipe them out forever. They even called this wrath down upon themselves in the following verse

(Matthew 27:25) 25 and all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

They asked that his blood be upon them and their children, and it was done just as they asked. They, their children, their temple, their city and their culture were completely annihilated in 70AD.

THE BOOK OF MARK

Mark is a shorter gospel book and is much faster paced than Matthew or Luke. It doesn't have near as many passages dealing with the coming kingdom, judgment, etc. I will cover the major verse (8:38-9:1) and leave other one to be read at your convenience. The verse I will not cover is Mark 1:15.

(Mark 8:38 9:1) 38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." 1 And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

See notes on Matthew 16:27-28. Because of the break from verse 38 in chapter 8, and verse 1 in chapter 9, some have tried to make this mean that Christ was referring to the Transfiguration, which is the next chronological event in scripture, or even Pentecost. The problem with that is many. First, why would Christ say that some of them would not taste death if the event in question (the transfiguration) were only 6 to 8 days away, or Pentecost, which was not that far away? Saying that some of them would not taste death necessarily implies that some of them (not just one) would taste death. Since none of the Apostles had died by the time of the transfiguration, and with the exception of Judas, none of them had died by Pentecost, these events should be ruled out as it would be extreme overkill on Jesus' part. Also, when you contrast this verse with Matthew 16:27-28 you see that his coming is to be with glory, with angels, and Christ will reward at this coming. Did Christ come with angels at the transfiguration or Pentecost? No.

Did he do any rewarding at the transfiguration or Pentecost? No. Christ is speaking of his second coming only. Not Pentecost or the Transfiguration.

THE BOOK OF LUKE

Verses of interest in Luke that I will not be covering are as follows Luke 3:7, 11:31-32, 14:13-14 (compare to Daniel 12:13).

(Luke 9:26-27) 26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. 27 "But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

See notes on Matthew 16:27-28 and Mark 8:38-9:1

(Luke 11:49-51) 49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'

See notes on Matthew 23:34-38

(Luke 12:37-40) 37 "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. 38 "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. 39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 40 "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

This is an important parable for two reasons. First, because he says near the end "you too, be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that "you" do not expect". Twice he says "you". Who is the "you" in this verse? It is the disciples. He is telling them that they need to be on guard for this coming. Is this not the same as "this generation" and "some of you standing here shall not taste death" and "you will not go through all the cities of Israel?" Yes. Also, notice that in the parable that the slaves are still alive when the master comes back. The master did not go away 2000+ years and come again to different slaves. I don't want to make the parable walk on all fours, but that is something that shouldn't be overlooked.

(Luke 19:41-44) 41 When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

Compare Luke 19:41-44 to Luke 21:20

(Luke 21:20) "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

Think about what Josephus penned about the famine, pestilence, death, and total destruction of Jerusalem. There were well over a million dead and just like the final destruction of the northern 10 tribes, the rest were taken away captive. Luke 19:41-44 was spoken by Christ even before the Olivet Discourse. We know that this was fulfilled in that generation.

(Luke 20:13-19) 13 "The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 "But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.' 15 "So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 "He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!" 17 But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone'? 18 "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." 19 The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

The key part of this verse is the last line. The religious leaders knew that he was speaking this parable about them. This destruction was realized in the lifetime of some of these leaders, or "this generation".

(Luke 23:27-31) 27 And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. 28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' 30 "Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US.' 31 "For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Compare Luke 23:27-31 to Matthew 27:25

(Matthew 27:25) 25 and all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

Compare Luke 23:27-31 to Revelation 6:16

(Revelation 6:16) and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

These are all speaking of the same event. That is the second coming of Jesus Christ and the wrath poured out upon the Jews because of their rejection of Christ and their responsibility for the righteous bloodshed from Abel on. Look specifically at Luke 23:30 and Revelation 6:16

(Luke 23:30) 30 "Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, `FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, `COVER US.'

Revelation 6:16 says

(Revelation 6:16) and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

Either there are two second comings (one in 70AD and another one in Revelation, which would actually be a third coming) or these passages are speaking of the same event. We have shown how Luke 23:30 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. If that is true, then Revelation 6:16 relates to the destruction of Jerusalem as well, for the wording is almost identical. This is the wrath that John the Baptist had been warning the Jewish nation about.

THE BOOK OF JOHN

Verses worthy of reading that I will not cover in detail are as follows: 6:39-40, 6:44, 6:54, 11:24 (compare 6:44, 6:54, and 11:24 to Daniel 12:13), 12:48, 13:36, 14:2-3.

(John 5:25-29) 25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Compare to Daniel 12:2

(Daniel 12:2) 2 " Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

There is but one resurrection so the question is "when" did that resurrection take place? Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse that it would happen at the time of the great tribulation and destruction of Jerusalem when he sends forth his angels to gather his elect. In John 5:25-29 Christ says he has been given authority to execute judgment. Think about what Christ said in Matthew 16:27-28. He said he would come to establish his kingdom and reward (judge) in the lifetime of his disciples, or "this generation". The resurrection of the saints is a past event.

I know that when I say that the resurrection is a past event some people find me crazy. With that in mind I want to turn to scripture alone as my means for substantiating this position. In the Olivet Discourse, which I believe has been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt to be related to the destruction of Jerusalem, Luke writes the following

(Luke 21:22) because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

What was written at that time Jesus spoke those words? The Old Testament was all. None of the New Testament books were written till at least 52-53 AD so when Christ says that the destruction of Jerusalem is the fulfillment of all things written this would include all prophetic literature, including the book of Daniel. If that is true then that would include Daniel 12:2

(Daniel 12:1-2) 1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands {guard} over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace {and} everlasting contempt.

We have already established the fact that the distress spoken of in Daniel is almost identical in wording with the distress spoken of in Matthew 24. Both authors tie this distress to the gathering of the elect (or resurrection), therefore the resurrection is a past event that happened in conjunction with the fall of Jerusalem, just as Christ predicted in "this generation". Note also in Daniel it says, "*and at that time your people*" Who were Daniel's people? The Jews! Again, this helps us to know that the tribulation spoken of was God's judgment of the apostate Jewish nation, not the whole world.

(John 14:28-29) 28 "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.

Who are the "you" in verse 29? Again, it is the disciples. As we have seen elsewhere in scripture, Jesus told his disciples that he would come in their generation, before all of them had died, and before they had evangelized all of Israel. Now he tells them, "I go away, and I will come to you". He then goes on to say "I have told you before it happens so that when it happens you may believe". The point is that he was telling them while they were still alive about an event that would happen while some of them were still alive to see it. In other words, and pointing back to Matthew 16:27-28, they would not all taste death.

(John 21:21-23) 21 So Peter seeing him (John) said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" 23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

This is simply another scripture that points toward the brevity of time regarding Christ's second coming. It would only be possible for John to remain alive if Christ' coming would be fulfilled in his lifetime. He has already told the disciples that not all of them would taste death before he returned. Why not John? John was alive in 70AD at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

THE BOOK OF ACTS

(Acts 2:5-21) 5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of

them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs--we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine." 14 But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. 15 "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 17 `AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, `THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; 18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. 19 `AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 20 `THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 21 `AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'

Notice what Peter says in verse 16. He says that the tongues being spoken were a sign that the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled. The prophecy of Joel dealt with the last days just prior to the great day of the Lord. The day of the Lord was a prophecy concerning the Jewish nation. Thus, the tongues being spoken were a sign to the unbelieving Jews that their prophesied destruction was on it's way. Notice verse 19. It says

(Acts 5:19-20) 19 AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 20 `THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.

This is almost identical to the Olivet Discourse

(Matthew 24:29-30) "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, (Mat 24:30 NASB) and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

Joel was a prophet to the Jews. When you remember that, and when you compare Acts 5:19-20 with Matthew 24:29-30, you begin to see that the "last days" are the last days of the Jewish nation, not planet earth.

(Acts 17:30-31) 30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

In verse 31 the word "will" is the Greek word "mello". Mello in the Greek means, "to be about to be" or "to be on the point of something". The passage could just as easily read, "He has fixed a day in which he is about to judge the world". The Greek word "mello" helps us to understand the imminence of this

judgment.

THE EPISTLES

Beginning with the book of 1st Thessalonians, we now enter into a different section of scriptures. We are now going to deal chronologically with passages that were written anywhere from about 52AD to perhaps at late as 66-67AD. As these letters get closer and closer to 70AD, or the end of that generation, you will see how scripture begins to have an even more imminent feel to it. I will be commenting on some of the epistle scriptures, and others I will simply list in order to show the overwhelming belief that they knew the second coming of Christ was imminent.

THE BOOK OF 1st THESSALONIANS

(written 52 AD+/-)

(1 Thessalonians 1:9-10) 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

(1 Thessalonians 2:19) 19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

(1 Thessalonians 3:13) so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul assures these first century Thessalonians, just as Christ had assured his disciples, that some of them would be alive at the second coming of Christ. Now, lets look at verse 16 specifically

(1 Thessalonians 4:16) 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Let's compare that with the Olivet Discourse

(Mat 24:31 NASB) "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Unless there are multiple trumpet comings, these verses are speaking of the same event—the gathering of the elect at the second coming of Christ. We have already established that Matthew 24:31 is in regards to the destruction of Israel, and that it would happen in the lifetime of the disciples. Paul is simply validating to the Thessalonians what Christ first voiced to the original Apostles years earlier.

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-11) 1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

(1 Thessalonians 5:23) 23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE BOOK OF 2nd THESSALONIANS

(written 53 AD+/-)

(2 Thessalonians 1:6-10) 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

In this passage we see several things (1) Relief for believers, (2) punishment for those causing affliction, (3) Christ's second coming with angels, and (4) Judgment. Paul says that these believers will experience relief when Christ is revealed. If Christ still hasn't returned then what good is this promised relief to the first century Thessalonians? Also, compare this verse to Matthew 16:27-28

(Matthew 16:27-28) 27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. 28 "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

In both verses you see Christ coming with angels to repay people. These are obviously speaking of the same thing, and that is the second coming of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 16:27-28 when did Jesus say this

coming would be? It would be in the lifetime of at least some of the disciples (verse 28). That is why Paul can speak confidently to the Thessalonians that this coming was ever nearer and would provide their blessed relief.

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-12) 1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

When you read this particular passage there are two main things to keep in mind. FIRST, why in the world would Paul take the time to tell first century believers details about all the things that first must happen in the world before the second coming of Christ if that second coming was nowhere near, and the events he was talking about didn't impact them at all? It would have no relevance at all to the Thessalonians. Paul is not addressing these signs of the times to the Thessalonian believers so that we in the year 2004 can be on guard. No, he's reminding the people who would see them so that they would not miss them (verse 5). And why? Because Christ himself had said he would come in their generation. SECONDLY, Paul never corrects their understanding of the nature "day of the Lord". He only corrects their timing. Today, in the minds of most professing Christians, we think that the "Day of the Lord" will be a world-wide earth burning, cataclysmic experience. If that is true, and the Thessalonians had the same understanding of the nature of that day as we do, how could the Thessalonians have thought they missed it? Paul could have written to them and said, "*Hello! Look around outside youthe earth is still here!*" The reason they thought they might have missed it is because they had a different view of the nature of that day. They weren't looking for an earth burning experience. They were looking for something completely different. This is often overlooked by people today.

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

(written 55-56 AD+/-)

(Galatians 1:3-5) 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

THE BOOK OF 1st CORINTHIANS

(written 57 AD+/-)

(1 Corinthians 1:7-8) 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Corinthians 2:6) 6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;

(1 Corinthians 15:51-55) 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

This verse screams first century fulfillment. Paul says, "we will not all sleep". If you were in Corinth, and you were the original intended audience for this letter, what would you have understood that to mean? You would have obviously understood it to mean that the second coming would happen before all of the people living at that time had died perhaps even you! Why? Because that's exactly what Paul is saying. Compare the above verse to 1st Thessalonians 4:15-16

(1st Thessalonians 4:15-16) 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

They are conveying the exact same thought. Paul is telling first century believers in both Corinth and Thessalonica that they will not all die before the second coming. They use almost identical wording about some living and some dying, and the trumpet, etc. How can Paul be so confident that first century believers will not all die before Christ's second coming unless he believed Christ's coming would be in "this generation" and before all the disciples had died?

In regards to the above passage, compare verse 52 to the following other two passages

(1 Corinthians 15:52) 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

(1 Thessalonians 4:16) 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

(Mat 24:31 NASB) "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Again, all three passages are speaking of the same event. The second coming of Christ. In the Corinthian and Thessalonian passages Paul is telling those believers they would see it. Why? Because in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:31) Christ said all of this would happen in "this generation". When you begin to line up all these scriptures the evidence becomes almost overwhelming that the second coming of Christ was expected and fulfilled in that first century.

THE BOOK OF 2nd CORINTHIANS

(written 57 AD+/-)

(2 Corinthians 1:13-14) 13 For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; 14 just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

(2 Corinthians 5:10) 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Compare 2 Corinthians 5:10 to Daniel 12:2, Matthew 16:27-28

(Daniel 12:2) 2 "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

(Matthew 16:27-28) "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and **WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS**. "Truly I say to you (the disciples), there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

They are speaking of the judgment that accompanies the second coming of Christ that was imminent to that first century generation of people.

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

(written 58 AD+/-)

(Romans 2:5-8) 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

Again compare the above verse to the following verses

(2 Corinthians 5:10) 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

(Daniel 12:2) 2 "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

(Matthew 16:27-28) "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. "Truly I say to you (the disciples), there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Again, they are all speaking of the judgment that accompanies the second coming that would happen in that generation.

(Romans 8:23-25) 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

(Romans 13:12) 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

THE BOOK OF JAMES

(written 60-62 AD+/-)

(James 5:7-9) 7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

Two times James tell his 1st century audience to be patient as they wait for the coming of the Lord. How much stronger and clearer could the words of scripture be? Christ said he would return in that first century generation, and now, just a handful of years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the fulfillment of the promises that accompany it, and James uses phrases like "be patient UNTIL THE COMING of the Lord" and "for the coming of the lord is NEAR" and stronger still, "the Judge is standing RIGHT AT THE DOOR". James is telling these Christians nothing more than what Christ himself prophesied, and what Paul had been telling his churches. Unless you strip away audience relevance, you must concede that James believed in a first century second coming and that is why he taught it to his churches.

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

(written 62 AD+/-)

(Philippians 1:6) 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 1:9-10) 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

(Philippians 2:16) 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

(Philippians 3:20-21) 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

(Philippians 4:5) 5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

Notice the extreme wording - AT HAND!!!

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

(written 63 AD+/-)

(Ephesians 1:21) 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

The word "come" at the end of verse 21 is again the Greek word "mello". This passage should read, "not only in this age but also in the one about to come".

(Ephesians 4:30) 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

When was this promised redemption to occur? In Luke's version of the Olivet Discourse we are told

(Luke 21:20-28) 20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. 23 "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. 25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. 28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

The promised full and final redemption would be at the time Jerusalem is surrounded and the temple destroyed.

THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

(written 63 AD+/-)

(Colossians 2:17) 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

"Come" in this verse is the Greek word "mello" or "about to come".

(Colossians 3:4) 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

(written 63 AD)

(Hebrews 1:1-2) 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

The book of Hebrews is an epistle written to Jews (or Hebrews) specifically. That is why when you see "the last days" it again refers to the last days of the Jewish nation, not planet earth.

(Hebrews 9:26-28) 26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

(Hebrews 10:1) 1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

"Come" in verse 10 is the Greek word "mello", or "a shadow of the good things about to come".

(Hebrews 10:25) 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

(Hebrews 10:37) 37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.

I do not think scripture could be any clearer than this. It is now 63AD. You are a Jew and you receive this epistle. You know that Jesus has prophesied that your generation will not all pass away before his second coming, and the destruction of the temple. You read "for yet a very little while". What would you have

understood that to mean? Would you have thought it meant 2000+ years? No. You would have understood it to mean just what it says that Christ's promised coming was imminent to you and your generation. Considering that the temple was destroyed just a few years later, and Jesus tied his coming to this destruction, you can see why the writer said "for yet a very little while", and Christ did come.

(Hebrews 13:14) 14 For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.

"Come" is the Greek word "mello", or "the city which is about to come". Also notice the writer's eternal emphasis on a place not physical. He's not looking for a physical kingdom to be established here. He's looking, like Abraham, for the city of God elsewhere.

THE BOOK OF 1st PETER (64 AD)

(1st Peter 1:5-7) 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

(1st Peter 1:13) 13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(1st Peter 4:7) 7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

Can you see the imminence here? It's 64AD and the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of all Old Covenant things, is right there. It is "near", or "yet a very little while".

(1st Peter 4:13) 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

(1st Peter 4:17) 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

(1st Peter 5:1) 1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

THE BOOK OF TITUS (64 AD)

(Titus 2:11-13) 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13

looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

THE BOOK OF 1st TIMOTHY (64 AD)

(1st Timothy 4:1) 1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

(1st Timothy 6:13-15) 13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which He will bring about at the proper time--He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, The "proper time", as mentioned in verse 15, was the time that corresponded with the destruction of Jerusalem.

THE BOOK OF 2nd PETER (65 AD)

(2nd Peter 3:3-4) 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

This is a significant passage that helps us to nail down the time of his coming to 70AD. The reason these mockers were saying, "where is the promise of his coming?" is because they knew that Christ had predicted his second coming in their generation. Now that generation was fast coming to a close and still no second coming. No wonder they mocked believers. It was the 11th hour of that generation and still no return. Their generation was so close to its end that it caused them to mock Christ's prophecy that he would return in that first century generation. For yet a very little while and he came just as he said he would.

(2nd Peter 3:9-13) 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

At a glance, these verses seem to imply the end of physical earth, but is that what they teach? Remember the passages in the Olivet Discourse about the sun and the moon not giving their light and turning to blood? That was apocalyptic writing and is the same as this passage. The heavens and earth spoken of in these passages are physical Israel (the Jewish nation). They were going to be completely obliterated by the Lord on that day. The "elements" spoken of in this verse are the elements of Judaism, not the physical planet earth. We must learn to read scripture from the 1st century perspective. They were real people living in the first century and they wrote from the Jewish apocalyptic style. They were familiar with all the Old Testament apocalyptic literature so this was not anything new for them. Peter's use of the words, "looking for, and hastening the coming of the day of God" is further proof they expected a first century second coming. They were not deceived. They believed Jesus when he said "this generation".

THE BOOK OF JUDE (65 AD)

(Jude 1:17) 17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 18 that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts."

(Jude 1:21) 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

THE BOOK OF 2nd TIMOTHY (65 AD)

(2nd Timothy 1:12) 12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

(2nd Timothy 1:18) 18 the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day--and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

(2nd Timothy 2:17-18) 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

When people find out that Preterists believe that the second coming of Christ and the resurrection have already happened, if they are familiar with this passage of scripture, they usually call us heretics or a Hymenean. The truth of the matter is that the reason Hymenaeus and Philetus were wrong is that they were claiming that the resurrection had already taken place, and yet the temple was still standing. That would be not only incorrect based on what Christ had prophesied, but it would be mixing Old Covenant Judaism and the works of the law with New Covenant Christianity and grace. For if the temple still had significance in the New Covenant then that would be mixing grace with works. The destruction of the temple was the sign that the Old Covenant and Judaism was completely done away with, and that God was no longer abiding in the temple, but in the hearts of his people. That is why they were wrong. The resurrection occurred when the temple was destroyed and that happened in 70AD just as Christ prophesied in the Olivet Discourse.

THE BOOK OF 1st JOHN (64 or 65 AD)

Before we venture into the writings of John, let me say that there are traditions and speculations that state that the books of 1st, 2nd and 3rd John, and the book of Revelation were not written till some time around 90-96AD (20-26 years after the destruction of Jerusalem). This may be tradition, and it may be believed by many people, but it is not my position. I believe that the topics in his epistles, and particular scriptures in Revelation help verify the books as being written sometime just before the siege of Jerusalem in 66AD. The epistles deal with similar topics that James, Peter, Paul, and Jude wrote about (the end time apostasy, the spirit of antichrist, and false teachers), and the book of Revelation itself even deals with the subject of the temple, which would not have been standing in 90-96AD. Therefore I believe that John's writings all fall in the time frame of around 66 AD. If you would like to study more on this subject there are a number of good books out there that help date the books of the Bible. One such book is, "The Development of the New Testament" by Arthur M. Ogden (ISBN #0-9646497-0-5). Ogden does not write

from a Preterist perspective. He never even mentions his eschatology. This, I feel, lends credibility to his positions. There are other books that deal with the subject, but Ogden does a good job validating the time of John's writings, as well as the other books of the New Testament.

(1st John 2:18) 18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

Up to this point we have read from other New Testament writers the term "last days". Now, John says it is the "last hour". How is it possible that a last hour could last 2000+ years? That is foolish and does a disservice to God's faithfulness and ability to convey time concepts to mankind. It was the "last hour" because these books were written right at the time when the signs Christ spoke of in the Olivet Discourse were unfolding. 64-65AD would have been the last hour of that generation

(1st John 4:17) 17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

John would have have confidence because he would be alive to see it. Remember what Christ told Peter about John? He said

(John 21:22) 22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

THE BOOK OF REVELATION (65 - 66 AD)

Before I get into the book of Revelation, I want to focus your attention on a particular fact. The Olivet Discourse is recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, but there is no Olivet Discourse in the gospel of John. John gives us the Revelation, but Matthew Mark and Luke do not. If you look at the Olivet Discourse what do you see? You see death, pestilence, famine, disaster, the destruction of Jerusalem, judgment, and the gathering of the elect. What do we see in the book of Revelation? We see death, pestilence, famine, disaster, the destruction of Jerusalem, judgment, and the gathering of the elect. Because there are so many similarities in wording, and based on the dating of Revelation, it is my belief that the Book of Revelation is John's Olivet Discourse. I believe it was written in perhaps 66-67AD, and simply is much more comprehensive than the gospel narratives. It points to the events that would shortly come to pass. Remember, John said it was the "last hour" (1st John 2:18).

(Revelation 1:1) 1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

In the New Testament of the New American Standard version of the Bible the word "soon" is used 15 times. In every instance it relates to an event that was to take place very quickly. In the New Testament of the King James "soon" is used 20 times, and again in every instance it means or implies something happening rapidly. The same is true for every version you can look up. There is no way, looking at how words are used repeatedly, that you can have a word mean something 15-20 times, and then have one lone example where the word "soon" could mean something that wouldn't happen for 2000+ years. This book was written, I believe, in 66-67AD and that is why Christ tells John that the events listed in

Revelation were to happen soon. There is no way to tap dance around the meaning of soon. That would be like tap dancing around the meaning of "immediately".

(Revelation 1:3) 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

(Revelation 1:10-11) 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Here we have audience relevance. The book of Revelation was an actual letter from John to the seven churches in Asia Minor. It is not a mystical open-ended letter written to any and all churches that have existed since then. Neither do the seven churches represent different church ages. They were real churches, and it was to them that the events of Revelation would "soon" happen.

(Revelation 1:9) 9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

(Revelation 2:25) 25 `Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

How would it be possible for the Christians in Thyatira to do this unless his coming was near enough for them to do it?

(Revelation 3:10) 10 `Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

(Revelation 6:15-17) 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

We have covered this verse earlier, but notice the wording in verse 16 above. It says that the people said, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;" Compare it to Luke 23:37

(Luke 23:27-30) 27 And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. 28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, `Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' 30 "Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, `FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, `COVER US.'

We have established the fulfillment of Luke 23:27-30 as 70AD. Revelation 6:16 applies to 70AD also.

(Revelation 11:1-2) 1 Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. 2 "Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.

In all of Revelation, there is not a single verse more powerful in explaining the time it was written (around 66AD), and that it speaks of the events of 70AD, than this verse. John is told to "get up and measure the temple of God", and that the temple and city would be trod under foot by the Gentiles for forty-two months. For John to measure the temple points to the fact that this book was written prior to 70AD. If it were written after 70AD the temple would already have been destroyed. John is told to measure the temple, and then the nations would trample the holy city (Jerusalem) under foot for 42 months (3 ½ years). Did you know that the siege of Jerusalem lasted 42 months (3 ½ years)? It lasted from part of 66 AD to part of 70AD. Coincidence? Hardly!

(Revelation 11:18) 18 "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

This is the judgment that accompanies the second coming. It is the same wrath and judgment spoken of by Christ in the Olivet Discourse, to his disciples just prior to the transfiguration, and it's the same judgment spoken of by Daniel

(Daniel 12:1-2) 1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands {guard} over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 " Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace {and} everlasting contempt.

We have seen that Christ said in Luke's Olivet Discourse that the destruction of Jerusalem and the vengeance exacted by God at that time would fulfill all things written, which would include Daniel, therefore if Daniel is fulfilled, then Revelation is fulfilled because these are speaking of the same judgments.

(Revelation 19:1-2) 1 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; 2 **BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER.**"

Who is the great harlot that was judged for the blood of the bond-servants? It was Jerusalem. Look at Matthew 23:34-38

(Matthew 23:34-38) 34 "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the

temple and the altar. 36 "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. 37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

(Revelation 19: 7) 7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

This is what those living saints and dead saints were looking for! Jerusalem, the Jewish nation, and the enemies of God have been judged and now "those who are alive and remain" witness first hand the marriage of the lamb to his saints. The dead saints are raised, and the living go to be with God forever. This was the hope of the Old Testament saints, and what was looked for by the New Testament saints.

(Revelation 21:1) 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

The first heaven and earth were physical Israel. The new heaven and earth are the church. He is not talking about a new physical creation. That's the problem the Jews had. They were looking for Messiah that would establish a physical kingdom. No! The kingdom of God does not come with observation. It is a spiritual kingdom that is within his people. They are the new heaven and earth. We don't need a physical place or a physical temple. He (Jesus/God) is our temple

(Revelation 21:22) 22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

(Revelation 21:27) 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

(Revelation 22:15) 15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

The two above verses are very interesting because they help to substantiate the idea that the world continues on after the tribulation experienced in Revelation (and/or the Olivet Discourse). It shows a continuance of time, and a continuance of people who practice abomination and lying (sins). This verse shows that the kingdom has been established and that his people still live among sinners (like we do today). If Revelation meant that all sinners were already dispatched to hell and that they did not exist any more, then why this verse? He came a second time in the first century as a culmination of his sacrifice and to establish his kingdom. Believers, since his second coming, now live in that kingdom in a spiritual since. Yet we live in and around those who commit abominations. His kingdom is forever.

(Revelation 22:7) 7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

The word "quickly" is found 20 times in the New Testament of the New American Standard version of the Bible. Just like with the word "soon", "quickly" has the same meaning in every instance. It implies speed. Christ was telling the seven churches that he was coming quickly, and he meant it. You cannot make

soon or quickly mean 2000+ years.

(Revelation 22:10) 10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

(Revelation 22:12) 12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

Compare to

(Matthew 16:27-28) "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. "Truly I say to you (the disciples), there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Both Revelation 22:12 & Matthew 16:27-28 are speaking of the same coming and judgment. We have established that Matthew 16:27-28 occurred in the lifetime of some of the disciples. Therefore, and of necessity, Revelation 22:12 occurred in the lifetime of some of the disciples. Both would fall under "this generation".

(Revelation 22:20) 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

See notes on 22:7 regarding the use of the word "quickly".

The fact that Christ prophesied the destruction of the temple and all of the tribulation that accompanied it, and the fact that history records that these events actually did happen just as he said, should cause us to celebrate and trust him even more in all areas. Lets choose to side with scripture and not get "Left Behind" in our eschatology.

OTHER SCRIPTURES

In the last book of the Old Testament (Malachi), we are told the following

(Mal 4:5) "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

Who is the "you" in this verse. The Jews! Malachi was a prophet to the Jews. Has this Elijah come? Yes

(Mat 11:12) "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. (Mat 11:13) "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John[the baptist]. (Mat 11:14) "And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come.

(Mat 17:12) but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." (Mat 17:13) Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

John came in the "spirit" of Elijah, and according to Jesus himself he is the fulfillment of this prophecy. This is important for two reasons. First, it proves that prophecy can be fulfilled literally, although done spiritually and different than we might think or understand. Second, John came preaching repentance and judgment to the Jews prior to the great and terrible day of the Lord, AD70. This further establishes that the last days and/or the day of the Lord were in that first century time frame, not ours. Malachi was a prophet to the Jews telling of future destruction for their apostasy from God. Four-hundred years later John the Baptist comes on the scene and fulfills this prophecy in the spirit of Elijah and preaches the nearness of this wrath and judgment. This is a prophecy to the Jews, not for any future generation.

CONCLUSION

I know that there are more New Testament scriptures and Old Testament prophecies that I could use in this paper. The failure to use them is due primarily to my lack of accessing them in my brain, or my desire to not make this paper lumber along beyond a necessary length. I have, however, used a tremendous amount of scripture to support the Preterist view, and it is my contention that if I were to access more scriptures, and continue to compare them to one another, it would only help to establish further credibility for the Preterist position.

Having used scripture to interpret scripture, and having tried to use credible historical data to substantiate the facts surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem, I believe that when Christ said he would come again in the lifetime of his disciples, and reiterated that fact to them by using the phrase "this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled" he meant it. Christ is now on his throne, ruling and reigning. For those of us living today, we are living in the kingdom of Christ in a spiritual sense, but also a real sense. We will ultimately go to be with God face to face when we die. We no longer need look for a resurrection to be with God. The resurrection was a promise to Old Testament saints. Now, when people die, they are judged and immediately ushered into the presence of God, or for unbelievers, into the lake of fire. There is no more waiting in Sheol.

This is my position, and it is supported by the clear and plain meaning of scripture as spoken first by God the Father, Christ the son, and reiterated and believed by all of the New Testament authors as moved by the Spirit. I don't need crazy dispensational time charts to try and twist the words soon, quickly, and near to mean 2000+ years. Out of prejudice, I don't need to split the Olivet Discourse and make it point to two different time periods when no such split exists. God is not the author of confusion.

I know that most people will throw up their hands and disagree with me completely. My position certainly goes against the eschatological paradigm of most Christians today. Before I'm told I'm wrong, and I know this will be redundant, but this alone would I like to know. What event did Christ point to that made the disciples ask the question, "When shall all these things be?" It was the destruction of the temple. He then told them of all the events that would precede and/or accompany the destruction of the temple, and that it would occur in the lifetime of that first century generation. Was the temple destroyed in their lifetime? Yes! Christ linked all of the events in the Olivet Discourse to that destruction. Therefore the question should not be, "*David, look around you how can you possibly believe all of those end time prophecies have been fulfilled?*" I just point to scripture and say, "*Well, that's exactly what Christ said, and I believe it*". When a person is confronted with the fact that the temple was destroyed in the prophesied time frame, and that Christ linked his second coming to the destruction of the temple, the real question should be, "*How can you not believe it happened?*"

As mentioned before, the burden of proof is not on me, for I stand on scripture, historical facts, and the plain meaning of words. The burden of proof is on the person who does not believe all these things have happened. To prove that they have not happened would require re-writing history, and denying the words of Christ. Is it possible to prove, using scripture alone, that he didn't come again? The only way this is possible is to change the meaning of words, and completely leave out audience relevance.

It does not matter if this view is contrary to creeds, or church doctrinal statements. All that matters is scripture. The second we put our feelings, creeds, church tradition, or other men as our guide for what we are to believe about scripture we are saying that we, or they, are more trustworthy than God himself.

The good news of Preterism is that I look towards tomorrow not with pessimism, but with celebration that all things are working out just as God and Christ have planned. Yes, the world is difficult, but in Christ we have what we lost in Adam. That is, a relationship with God. It isn't the physical world or the Garden of Eden we lost. It was fellowship with God that was lost. Stop looking for the physical. This world truly is not a Christian's home, and I'm not looking for a physical kingdom. I want to work for him while I'm here and then ultimately go and be in the presence of God forever. Preterism offers hope because the promises of God are "realized", and that should give us confidence in all of his promises. That should give us reason to praise God.

I once had a pastor tell me he would not believe Preterism because if all things are fulfilled that meant his faith was "static" and there was nothing really worth working for today. Oh, really? The cross is 2000+ behind us, but does that make the work of the cross "static"? Hardly! To the Christian the cross is our hope and confidence that we have been reconciled to God. Let us take confidence in the realized second coming of Christ, just as we take confidence in his first coming and death on the cross. By being in Christ we are in his kingdom now, so let us start living like it, and go out and bring others into it.

It is encouraging to see Preterism grow exponentially on the Internet and elsewhere. It is no longer a novelty. It is either hated or loved, but either way it is growing. God is opening the eyes of people and helping them to see the foolishness of all the "Left Behind" sci-fi books, and turning them to the plain and simple meaning of scripture. My hope is that it will spread like a wildfire as people are forced to deal with the clear time statements of Christ and the Apostles concerning the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem.

I have studied the scriptures in depth for myself. I know what I believe, and more importantly, I can defend what I believe. I stand on the objective word of God for my conclusions.

David Showalter

[mailto:davidshowalter@cox.net?Subject=Biblical Eschatology, by David Showalter from the BBC site](mailto:davidshowalter@cox.net?Subject=Biblical%20Eschatology,%20by%20David%20Showalter%20from%20the%20BBC%20site)

PRETERIST TIME LINE

400 BC Malachi tells the Jews that God will send to them Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord. (Malachi 4:5)

30 AD John the Baptist fulfills this prophecy of Elijah and preaches repentance before the wrath that would accompany the great and terrible day of the Lord. (Matthew 11:12 & 17:12)

33 AD Christ prophesies the temple's destruction and the fulfillment of all things in the Olivet Discourse before the people of that time had all died. (Matthew 24:34)

33 AD Peter explains that the tongues of fire are a fulfillment of the prophet Joel, and that they are now living in the "last days". (Acts 2:16-17)

52 AD Paul teaches his churches that at least some of them will be alive to see the second coming of Christ. (1 Thessalonians 4:15)

57 AD Paul teaches his churches that they are to eagerly be waiting on Christ's second coming (1 Corinthians 1:7)

57 AD Paul again teaches his churches that they will not all die before the Second Coming of Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:51-52)

58 AD Paul teaches the Roman church that the "night is almost gone, and the day is near" (Romans 13:12)

62 AD James teaches his churches to be patient until the Second Coming of Christ, and the Christ is "right at the door" (James 5:7-9)

62 AD Paul teaches his churches that Christ is "at hand" (Philippians 4:5)

63 AD The writer of Hebrews pens, "For yet a very little while, and he who is coming will come and will not delay (Hebrews 10:37)

64 AD Peter writes, "the end of all things is near" (1 Peter 4:7)

65 AD John tells his readers that it is the "last hour" (1 John 2:18)

66 AD John tells the 7 churches the events mentioned in the Revelation must "soon take place" (Revelation 1:1), and that the "time is near" (Revelation 1:3)

66 AD Christ, through John, tells the church at Thyatira to "hold fast until I come" (Revelation 2:25)

66 AD John is instructed to "measure the temple" [the temple was still standing in 66 AD] (Revelation 11:1)

66 AD John is told not to seal up the book of prophecy because the time is "near" (Revelation 22:10)

70 AD The great and terrible day of the Lord. The temple, Jerusalem, and the apostate Jewish nation are completely destroyed forever. Christ comes for his people, and judges his enemies. The last days come to an end, and the new day of the church age dawns. God now tabernacles in the hearts of his people.