

What is the Preterist View?

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Have you ever wondered why it is that men can read the same Bible and come up with totally different views of the second coming? How can some study the Bible and be futurists while some see the partial preterist view and yet others are full preterists? "Preterist" means past in fulfillment, and "Futurist" means future in fulfillment. Futurists believe most end-time prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. Preterists believe that all of Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled in Christ and the on-going expansion of His Kingdom. In between these is the partial preterist who believes that many prophesies have been fulfilled in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem. The futurist, as well as the partial preterist, still look for the second coming of Christ, the resurrection and the judgment. To the preterist, these are all past.

How can men who love God and study the Bible have such differing views on eschatology? It is because each of us has within us paradigms of what life is really all about. The word paradigm means a model or a map. We look at life through our paradigms. Inside each of us is a map or model of what life ought to be like. Our paradigms are representations of life. We all have them, and we all have paradigms of eschatology. When I talk about eschatology, I am not talking about the end of time, but the time of the end. There is a very large difference between those two ideas. Eschatology is the doctrine of last things but it is the last things of God's plan to redeem man, not the last things of planet earth.

We all interpret life through our paradigms. We look at life and compare it to our model to decide if life is good, bad, right or wrong. We interpret life through the model that we have developed within us. Most people don't question the models that they have developed, we all assume that we have the right model. Our paradigms are developed over a period of time and we see life through them. Our eschatological paradigms have been developed throughout our church life by what we have heard. The predominant eschatological paradigm of the church today is the late great planet earth exploding in a cataclysmic destruction of fire at a yet future coming of Christ.

There is a thing called a paradigm shift which is when you view things one way and then you shift and view them another way. For example, at one time most all men held the paradigm that the earth was flat. Then, at a point in time, due to new information, men made a paradigm shift and began to believe that the earth was round. Paradigm shifts are in Scripture and they are part of your life and mine. Paul had a paradigm shift on the road to Damascus. He thought that Jesus Christ was a heretic and he was preaching against him. Then Paul met Jesus on that road and everything he believed about him was turned inside out. The person he preached against now became his life. That is a paradigm shift.

In the beginning weeks of 1997 I had a paradigm shift, my view on the second coming of Christ began to change. I have believed in a future second coming since I became a Christian in 1976. Prior to my conversion to full preterism I had held to a preteristic amill eschatology, I was a partial preterist for about eight years. Then, as I began to look closely and analytically at the time statements of Scripture, my view of the nature of the second coming began to change. I no longer believe that the second coming is future.

Now listen carefully, I am not saying I don't believe in the second coming of Christ, I strongly believe in the second coming, but I believe it is past not future. To deny the fact of the second coming is to deny the inspiration of scripture. Do you agree? Well, I believe that the time of the second coming is just as clear as the fact of the second coming. I believe that to deny the time statements that the Bible gives of the second coming is also to deny inspiration. Do you still agree?

In an educational study people were given a new concept (such as the earth is round, or the second coming has already happened) and asked to believe it, which resulted in them setting aside some things they already believe. It required a paradigm shift. The study found this:

Fifty percent believed the new information immediately -- without thinking. Thirty percent rejected the new information, immediately -- without thinking. Fifteen percent wanted to wait awhile while they made

up their minds, but asked for no clarification and no further information. Five percent analyzed all the details, studied the information carefully, and finally came to a conclusion.

The results of the study go like this; It is estimated that 5% of the people think, 15% of the people think they think, and 80% of the people would rather die than think. I am asking you to be a five percenter today.

I want to remind you of a very important hermeneutical principle-- all theology, including eschatology, must come from exegesis! Exegesis means to explain what the Scripture says. The Greek word has the idea of: "to draw out." We, as believers, need to hold a theological position, a paradigm, if you will, we need a model or map to check out the things which we hear. But if your theological paradigm conflicts with the Scripture, you need to modify your theology, not the Scripture. Do you agree with that?

Our paradigms can blind us from seeing certain truths. If, in your eschatological paradigm, you see the second coming of Christ as the end of the physical world, a cataclysmic, earth burning, total destruction of life as we now know it, you will certainly have to manipulate the time statements of Scripture. Because life goes on, you can't believe that Jesus returned as he said he would in the first century. It just won't fit your paradigm. Let's begin by looking at a verse that shatters the paradigm that views the second coming as the end of the world.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 (NKJV) "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, "

Now, if the Thessalonians believed that the nature of the second coming was an earth burning, total destruction of the planet, how could they be deceived about its arrival? If the Second coming was a physical earth ending event, as many view it today, Paul could have written them and said, "Look out the window, the earth is still here so the Lord has obviously not come." They thought it had already happened, so they must have viewed the NATURE of the second coming differently than most folks view it today.

How could this errant belief of an already come parousia have arisen within the church if the apostolic teaching of the second coming were a physical one? Paul doesn't challenge their concept of the nature of the second coming, but rather their timing of it.

How did we end up with a physical end of the earth view of the second coming in light of the clear Scripture that teaches the Lord would return "soon," in the first century?

In the middle of the second century church fathers (like Shepherd of Hermas, Justin Martyr, 2 Clement, and others) postulated the "postponed second advent (parousia)" idea.

When the parousia did not occur in the physical-literal way they had expected, they assumed it had not been fulfilled at all. So they began adjusting their concepts of the TIME of fulfillment, instead of considering the possibility that their concepts of the NATURE of fulfillment were the only things needing adjustment. They suggested that the time statements were somewhat elastic and that the fulfillment had merely been "temporarily" delayed but that it would happen very "soon." Their suggestion of a short delay gradually developed into a longer and longer "postponement" idea, until two thousand years later modern Christianity can conceive of nothing else but and indefinite postponement. The church has never recovered from that early and fundamental error of first "elasticizing" the time of fulfillment, rather than reexamining and correcting their understanding of the nature of the second coming, resurrection and judgment.

The Lord clearly told his disciples and us WHEN he would return.

Matthew 16:27-28 (NKJV) For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. ²⁸ "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

Verse 27 clearly speaks of the second coming. He comes with the angels to reward every man. So far, no problem, but look at the next verse. "I say to YOU, there are some standing HERE who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Who are the "YOU" of this verse? Verse 24 tells us that Jesus is speaking to his disciples. So Jesus is saying to his disciples who were standing there that some of them would still be alive when He returned in the second coming.

Now some say he is talking about the transfiguration of Matthew 17:2, but that is only six days later and none of them had died in that six day period. Did he come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and reward each according to his works at the transfiguration? Of course not! How about Pentecost? No, that was only two months later and they were all still alive except Judas.

What are the possible explanations to this verse? I see only three, if you have others I would like to hear them.

1. There are still some of the disciples alive today. I met a man, a Marine Corp Major, who visited our church that actually holds this view.
2. Jesus was confused or lying. I hope I could not convince any of you of that one.
3. Hang on! Jesus actually did what he said and came in the life time of his disciples.

I would like to convince you all of this last one. This seems like the simple and clear answer that holds to the inspiration of Scripture. Jesus did what he said he would do. I am very comfortable with that, how about you? Let me ask you a question, does Scripture contradict Scripture? No! The primary rule of hermeneutics (the science of biblical interpretation) is called the "analogy of faith." The analogy of faith is the rule that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. This means that no part of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture. Another principle of hermeneutics is that the implicit (that which is suggested though not plainly expressed) is to be interpreted by the explicit (that which is clearly stated). I don't know how you see it, but to me Matthew 16:27-28 is explicit!

If you are going to believe what Jesus is saying here, If you are going to hold to the TIME of his second coming, you are going to have to have a paradigm shift in your view of the NATURE of the second coming.

Keep in mind audience relevance which seeks to discover what the original audience understood a passage to mean. He said he was coming before all of them had died. Some of them would live to see his coming. His coming was seen as imminent. You cannot read the New Testament with out seeing the imminent expectation that they had for the return of Christ. The same event cannot be imminent at two different periods separated by nearly two thousand years.

The Bible was not written in 1999. We must always remember that the first-century Christians were the first believers to read the words of the New Testament, and we must seek to put ourselves in their shoes. What did these words mean to them? The Bible was written for us, but it was not written to us. It is not until we understand what it meant to them that we can apply its principles to us.

I submit to you that either Scripture is wrong about the TIME of the second coming and thus not inerrant or our paradigms are wrong about the NATURE of the second coming. Which one of those are you more comfortable with, an incorrect paradigm or an uninspired Scripture?

R.C. Sproul said, *"I agree with all preterists that what is at stake here is the authority of Jesus, and we must be consumed with maintaining His authority."* I agree!

Remember our hermeneutical principle that the implicit is to be interpreted by the explicit. The time statements are explicit and we must interpret what we don't understand in light of what we do understand. The Lord said clearly that he was going to return before they had all died-- why is it that we don't believe Him? We could believe him if we made a paradigm shift in our understanding of the nature of his return. Remember, time determines nature.

Had you ever noticed that the disciples in the first century missed the second coming of Elijah? There is a prophecy in:

Malachi 4:5 (NKJV) *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*

In one of his discussions with the disciples, they questioned him on this prophecy.

Matthew 17:10-12 (NKJV) *And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. ¹² "But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.*

They knew the prophecy about Elijah, apparently they thought it would be fulfilled physically. It was actually fulfilled but it was not physically fulfilled. Jesus said that Elijah has already come-- TIME, so the NATURE of his coming must have been spiritual. John came in the spirit of Elijah. Speaking to Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth about John, the angel said:

Luke 1:17 (NKJV) *He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

Jesus is telling them, "If you want to understand the second coming of Elijah, you've got to look at the spiritual."

Matthew 11:13-14 (NKJV) *For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ "And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.*

This same thing is true with the second coming of Christ. We must determine its NATURE based upon the TIME of the first century fulfillment.

Most believers today reading John's words speaking of the conditions in the New heaven and earth, *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death"*, understand "death" to be physical. Therefore, they look for a future fulfillment of this verse. But the immediate result of man's sin was not physical death but spiritual death -- separation from God. The Lord said to Adam, *"for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* He didn't die physically that day, but he did die spiritually. Time-- in the day, defines nature-- spiritual death! It is spiritual death that is destroyed in the New Covenant not physical death.

R.C. Sproul, in his book, *The Last Days According To Jesus*, said, "I am convinced that the substance of the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in A.D. 70 and that the bulk of Revelation was likewise fulfilled in that time-frame."

Sproul is very clear about applying the Olivet Discourse to the first-century hearers, especially in light of the various "you" statements. In talking about Matt. 24:4-9, he states:

"We must keep in mind that Jesus was answering questions posed by his disciples, questions about when his previous utterances would be fulfilled. His words were directed to them. 'Take heed,' he said, 'that no one deceives you.'

And regarding the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15-24) he said, *"The preterist view includes the tribulation and the abomination of desolation with signs that take place prior to the destruction of Jerusalem."*

Among those who are partial preterists, there is a great deal of agreement with Preterists that the interpretation and application of Matthew 24:1-35 is to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Among these same partial preterists, however, a debate arises over a proposed shift in topics and eras with verses 36 being seen as a time transition verse. The debate concerns whether Christ dealt with two issues (the destruction of Jerusalem, vs.1-35- and the end of the world, verse 36ff.) or just one, that being the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish age.

Matthew 24:36 (NKJV) *But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.*

J. Marcellus Kik writes in his commentary on Jesus' Olivet Discourse, An Eschatology of Victory, *"Many have recognized that with verse 36 a change in subject matter occurs.* Charles H. Spurgeon indicates this in his commentary on verse 36 of Matthew 24; *'There is a manifest change in our Lord's words here, which clearly indicates that they refer to His last great coming to judgment.'*" Kenneth L. Gentry takes a similar view.

Is it a big deal if Matthew 24 can be divided or not? Absolutely! If the chapter is only dealing with a first century fulfillment, which I believe it is, then the futurist has no text to indicate a future coming of Christ because all other texts that speak of his coming use the same language as Matt. 24. And he must admit that the Parousia of Christ was a first century spiritual event which keeps in tact all the imminent time statements made concerning His coming (e.g. Matt.16:27-28; Lk.21:20-36; Jn.21:22-23; Rom.13:11-12; 1 Cor.1:4-8; Heb.8:13; 10:25,37; Jas.5:7-9; 1 Pet.4:5,7,17; 1 Jn.2:18; Jude 17-19; Rev.1:1-3,7; 22:6,7,10,20; to name a few).

The full preterist view is that the second coming of Christ happened in AD 70 and was a judgment and removal of the Old Covenant system (heaven and earth), and it established fully the kingdom, the New Covenant (New heavens and earth). Jesus came in the first century, just as He said He would, and there is NO mention anywhere in Scripture of a "third" coming.

Let's look at some different arguments that demonstrate that this chapter cannot be divided.

1. This day and That day

One of the KEY arguments by those who divide this chapter is that four times in three different verses (Matthew 24:19,22,29) Jesus refers to "those days." However, we are told, in verse 36 we have a direct contrast when Jesus says, *"But of 'that day' and hour knoweth no man."* Stafford North says, *"Verse 36 starts with the word `but', suggesting a contrast with what has gone before. Before verse 34, moreover, Jesus uses the plural `days' to refer to his major subject, while after verse 34 he speaks in the singular of `that day.'"* Kik also emphasized this distinction: *"The expression `that day and hour' gives immediate evidence of a change of subject matter."* Gentry writes, *"We should notice the pre-transition emphasis on plural 'days' in contrast to the focus on the singular 'day' afterwards."*

Gentry also writes, *"There seems to be an intended contrast between that which is near (in verse 34) and that which is far (in verse 36): this generation vs. that day. It would seem more appropriate for Christ to have spoken of 'this day' rather than 'that day' if He had meant to refer to the time of 'this generation.'"*

I think "that" all of "this" is much ado about nothing. "This generation" refers to the present generation Jesus was addressing. "This" is therefore the appropriate word for something present while "that" is the most appropriate word for something future (to them). Arndt and Gingrich agree: *"This refers to something comparatively near at hand, just as ekeinos [that] refers to something comparatively farther away."*

These writers do not believe "that day" can be a reference to the fall of Jerusalem. They argue that the singular, "that day" can only refer to a future (to us) coming of Christ. It is easy to show how wrong they are by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Luke 17:31 (NKJV) *In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.*

Here Jesus uses the singular expression, "That day" which is clearly referring to the same situation that is spoken of in Matthew 24:17, which those who divide Matthew 24 say is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Matthew 24:17 (NKJV) *Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.*

You cannot say "that day" of Luke 17:31 refers to a past event to us, and "that day" of Matthew 24:36 refers to a future event to us. They are clearly speaking of the same event! So when Jesus uses the expression, "But of that day," in verse 36, He is still talking about the same subject.

Doesn't it make sense that "those days" would culminate in "that day?" "Those days" led to the passing away of the heavens and earth which is "that day" referred to in verse 36.

One of the reasons a distinction between "those days" and "that day" is seen by many commentators is because of a pre-conceived idea that the disciples had asked questions about two subjects, the destruction of Jerusalem and end of time. With this presupposition, the interpreter then sees Jesus changing the subject in verse 36.

Where is the contextual evidence that the disciples had any other coming in mind than the coming just mentioned by Jesus--his coming to destroy Jerusalem in that generation? It is pure eisegesis to import another coming into this context!

2. Sign, sign, everywhere a sign.

Another argument that those who divide the chapter use, is the absence of signs in verse 36. They say that Jesus gave signs in the first part of the chapter, but in verse 36 He says, "But of that day and hour no one knows." They say, "One day has signs, the other doesn't, therefore it can't be the same day!" North says *"He had told the disciples...precisely when the destruction of Jerusalem would be: during their lifetime and they could read the sign of the approaching army so closely that they could escape it. But of His coming, no one knows when it will be--neither man, his angels, nor Jesus himself."*

If you examine carefully all three synoptic accounts, you will see that Jesus never told them that they would know "the Day" in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. You won't find it anywhere. The signs He gave them was to tell them when it would be "NEAR," He never gave them a day or hour.

Many today use verse 36 to prove that we have no knowledge of the time of a future to us, second coming of Christ. But, as we have already seen, "that day" refers to the passing away of the heavens and earth which was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Old Covenant. Jesus had already told them, (verse 34) that it would happen in their generation (forty years or so). But they did not know the "day or hour" that it would happen.

When a woman gets pregnant, we know that in about forty weeks she is going to have a baby. We don't know the day or hour but we can know that it will happen in about forty weeks. That is exactly what Jesus is saying here. And it is quite interesting that the time prior to the consummation of the kingdom is often referred to as birth pangs.

Matthew 24:8 (NKJV) *All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

The Greek word translated "sorrows" is *odynē*. It means: "a pang or throes, especially of childbirth--pain, sorrow, travail." This same word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 translated, labor pains.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 (NKJV) *But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.*

So, the illustration of gestation and child birth is a biblical one. We know when the birth of the child is near, but we do not know the day or hour.

N. Nisbett(1787) said, *"But though the time was hastening on for the completion of our Lord's prophecy of the ruin of the Jews; yet the exact time of this judgment, laid hid in the bosom of the Father. Verse 36. 'Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.' St. Mark has it: 'Neither the Son, but the Father;'* but the sense is the same. Some men of great learning and eminence have thought that our Lord is here speaking, not of the destruction of Jerusalem, but of that more solemn and awful one of the day of judgment. But I can by no means think that the Evangelists are such loose, inaccurate writers, as to make so sudden and abrupt a transition, as they are here supposed to do; much less to break through the fundamental rules of good writing, by apparently referring to something which they had said before; when in reality they were beginning a new subject, and the absurdity of the supposition will appear more strongly, if it is recollected that the question of the disciples was, *'When shall these things be? 'Why,' says our Saviour, 'of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only'"* (pp. 38-39)

So they knew the season but not the day or hour.

3. Does the word "but" signal a transition?

It has been said that by the use of the word "But," Jesus changed the subject to something else. Does the fact that verse 36 starts with "but" signal a contrast in subject matter? No! The word "but" is used as a conjunction and not a preposition. As a conjunction, "but" is not a word of contrast but joins what has just been said with what is about to be said. The New Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament says, *"The conjunctival usage of 'de,' is by far the most frequent use of the particle 'de' in the New Testament"*.

If the use of "de" at the beginning of a verse introduces a break in subject, there are 8 subject changes in chapters 24! See Matthew 24:6,8,13,20,32,36,43,48. By examining the verses before 24:36 and after, you will see that the most common usage of "but" in Matthew 24-25 has nothing to do with changing subjects!

Thomas Newton(1754) said, *"It is to me a wonder how any man can refer part of the foregoing discourse to the destruction of Jerusalem, and part to the end of the world, or any other distant event, when it is said so positively here in the conclusion, 'All these things shall be fulfilled in this generation.' It seemeth as if our Saviour had been aware of some such misapplication of his words, by adding yet greater force and emphasis to his affirmation, v 35 - 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away'"* (p. 426)

4. Matthew's words for "coming."

I think that we can clearly prove that verse 36 is not a transition verse switching to another subject by noticing Matthew's use of the Greek words for coming. The Greek word "parousia" is used four times in Matthew 24, twice before verse 36 and twice after it.

Matthew 24:3 (NKJV) *Now as He sat 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 (parousia), and of the end of the age?"*

Matthew 24:27 (NKJV) *"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man be. Matthew 24:37 (NKJV) "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man be. Matthew 24:39 (NKJV) "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man be.*

Not only is "parousia" used on both sides of verse 36, but so is the Greek word "erchomai" which is also translated coming.

Matthew 24:30 (NKJV) *Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming (erchomai) on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

Matthew 24:42 (NKJV) "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming (erchomai).

Erchomai" is also used in verses 44, 46, and 50. Now, some commentators apply all three "coming" passages before verse 36 to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and say the same exact words used after verse 36 refer to a future to us coming of Christ. Are there two comings of Christ discussed in this passage? Does Jesus use the exact same words to speak of two totally different events in the same passage of Scripture? And what is interesting, the Greek word 'parousia' is not used by Jesus anywhere else in the four gospel accounts. Nowhere does Jesus or any of the apostles or New Testament writers distinguish between two different "parousias" separated by thousands of years.

David Chilton said in 1996 after becoming a full preterist, *"...any proposed division of Matthew 24 into two different 'comings' is illegitimate, nugatory, and gossamer. Scripture foretells a Second Coming (Heb. 9:28) - not a third!" (Forward to What Happened in AD70?)*

Alright, so far I have given you four arguments as to why this chapter cannot be divided; we looked at the "this day, that day" argument, the absence of signs argument, the big "but" argument, and the Greek words used for "coming" argument. Now, all of those pale in comparison (and I think they are all good) to the next argument that I want to put forth. To me this one ends the discussion and sends the dividers of Matthew 24 running. My final argument is a divine answer that ends all questions, it is Luke 17.

You will notice that in this parallel account of Luke, all of these same signs and symbols are being applied to the question asked by the Pharisees as to "when the kingdom would come." If Jesus is using signs in Luke's account to answer when the kingdom would fully come that in Matthew's account are applied to the destruction of Jerusalem, it doesn't take a "brain surgeon" to figure out that any attempt to apply the coming of the kingdom, that Luke is talking about, to Pentecost is patently false.

The dividers of Matthew 24 assert that the first part (verses 1-35) can only refer to the destruction of Jerusalem at 70 A.D., while the second part (verses 36-51) is completely different and only can be applied to the end of the world and the "real" second coming of Jesus.

But a simple reading of Luke 17 will reveal that, according to Luke's arrangement of the signs and symbols, he only understood Christ to be referring to one event, which, as we have already stated, pertained to the full coming of the kingdom in AD 70. No distinction is possible when examining Luke's context. He uses the signs from the first part of Matthew 24 and the second part in an intermingled fashion.

Notice how Luke records the same events as Matthew, but in a different order. Matthew's order is:

1. Matthew 24:17-18 (NKJV) *"Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes."*
2. Matthew 24:26-27 (NKJV) *"Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."*
3. Matthew 24:28 (NKJV) *"For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."*
4. Matthew 24:37-39 (NKJV) *"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."*
5. Matthew 24:40-41 (NKJV) *"Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left."*

But Luke's order of these same events is scrambled 2, 4, 1, 5, 3. Luke has an event from section 1 followed by one from section 2, then another from section 1 followed by section 2, and finally one from section 1.

If Matthew 24 really deals with two different comings, that happen thousands of years apart, then Luke

made a mistake. He mixes Matthew's events up and makes them all happen at one time. The way I see it, you have one of two choices, you can either say that Luke is wrong, thus denying inspiration, or you can conclude that Matthew 24 all speaks of one event. Which do you choose? Think carefully now. The simple answer is that Jesus returned in the first century, just as He said He would, and there is no "third" coming mentioned anywhere in Scripture.

J. Stuart Russell said, *"There is not a scintilla (1. a spark. 2. a particle; the least trace.) of evidence that the apostles and primitive Christians had any suspicion of a twofold reference in the predictions of Jesus concerning the end."* (The Parousia p. 545)

Folks, you cannot divide Matthew 24. There is no indication that Jesus is describing two comings separated by an indeterminate period of time. What would have led the disciples to conclude that Jesus was describing a coming different from the one He described moments before when He uses identical language to describe both of them?

It's as plain as the nose on your face to anyone who is honestly looking, that you cannot divide this chapter. So why the big effort to divide it? So they will have some verses that speak of a future (to us) coming of Christ. They can't let go of the traditional view of a future coming of Christ to destroy the planet, so they try to get two comings out of Matthew 24. But it can't be done. Jesus only spoke of one coming, and that happened in AD 70, in reference to the judgment coming of Christ upon Jerusalem.

All partial preterists agree that Matthew 24:30-31 was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. But since the passage cannot be divided and Matthew 25 is a direct and immediate result of the judgment in 24, we can clearly see that the coming of the Son of man in Matthew 25:31-32, is identical with that referred to in Matthew 24:30-31 and 16:27-28, which some of the disciples were to live to witness.

If we compare the three texts, Matthew 16:27-28; 24:30-31 and 25:31-32) we will see:

- (a) That in all of the passages the subject referred to is the same, the coming of the Son of man- the Parousia.
- (b) In all of the texts, He is described as coming in glory.
- (c) In all the texts, He is attended by the holy angels.
- (d) In all texts, He comes as a King. "Coming in his kingdom;" "He shall sit upon his throne; Then shall the King," etc.
- (e) In the texts, He comes to judgment.
- (f) In all the texts, the judgment is represented as, in some sense, universal. "He shall reward every man." Before him shall be gathered "all the nations."
- (g) In Matthew 16:28, it is expressly stated that this coming in glory was to take place in the lifetime of some then present. This fixes the time of the Parousia within the limit of a human life, thus being in perfect accord with the period defined by our Lord in His prophetic discourse. "This generation shall not pass."

All of these texts are speaking of a first century event. This judgment of Matthew 25 took place in AD 70. The destruction of Jerusalem, the coming of Christ, the resurrection, and the judgment are all connected in Scripture.

In his book, *The Last Days According To Jesus*, on pages 139-140, Sproul correctly identifies the imminent Greek word *mello*, as referring to nearness, literally translated as "about to be". But he refuses to acknowledge that the same Greek word is used to indicate the eminence of the resurrection and judgment:

Acts 24:15 (NKJV) *I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.*

Paul uses the word *mello* here, "there is about to be a resurrection."

2 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV) *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:*

Mello is also used here, "who is about to judge." The Parousia, judgment and resurrection were all about to happen in the first century.

R. C. Sproul tries to find a reference to a yet future coming of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, but if you compare the language of these texts, you will see it is the same as that found in Matthew 24.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NKJV) *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

Notice what happens here, the trumpet sounds and the dead are raised. This is a reference to the dead in Christ. The dead are raised into the presence of God, and the living are changed. The living put on immortality. Is this a different trumpet than the one Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:31? No! In the Old Testament the trumpet was sounded to gather God's people. This is a spiritual gathering into the presence of God, this is the resurrection. This is the same idea found in Matthew 24:31, the trumpet is sounded and the elect are gathered, or resurrected. Daniel connects the resurrection and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Daniel 12:1-2 (NKJV) *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.*

Just in case we miss it, he further clarifies it as the time of Jerusalem's destruction in verse:

Daniel 12:7 (NKJV) *Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.*

Daniel is told that the resurrection will be when the power of the holy people (the Jews) has been completely shattered.

Daniel 12:11-13 (NKJV) *And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. ¹² "Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. ¹³ "But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.*

The resurrection mentioned in verses 1-2 and in 11-13 is tied in time-wise with the "abomination of desolation," which, according to Matthew 24, is an AD 70 event.

In his book, *The Last Days According To Jesus*, Sproul says, "One can legitimately take the descriptive language of the Olivet Discourse in a figurative way, because the language is so similar to Old Testament prophetic imagery. But Paul's language in 1 Thessalonians 4 is clearly of a different sort. Here the genre of the text makes it highly unlikely that Paul was describing an event hidden from earthly view."

The language in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 is of the same genre as that of Matt. 24:30-34, although one was written and the other was oral. We know that Sproul correctly places the Olivet Discourse fulfillment with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, so let's make a quick comparison of the two passages.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 (NKJV) *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 by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (resurrection). ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

A comparison between 1 Thessalonians 4-5 and Matthew 24 is fascinating.

1. Christ Himself Returns	Matt. 24:30	I Thess. 4:16
2. From Heaven	Matt. 24:30	I Thess. 4:16
3. With a Shout	Matt. 24:30 (in power)	I Thess. 4:16
4. Accompanied by Angels	Matt. 24:31	I Thess. 4:16
5. With Trumpet of God	Matt. 24:31	I Thess. 4:16
6. Believers Gathered	Matt. 24:31	I Thess. 4:17
7. In Clouds	Matt. 24:30	I Thess. 4:17
8. Time Unknown	Matt. 24:36	I Thess. 5:1-2
9. Will Come as a Thief	Matt. 24:43	I Thess. 5:2,4
10. Believers Unaware of Impending Judgment	Matt. 24:37-39	I Thess. 5:3
11. Judgment Comes as Travail upon Expectant Mother	Matt. 24:8	I Thess. 5:3
12. Believers to Watch	Matt. 24:42	I Thess. 5:4
13. Warning Against Drunkenness	Matt. 24:49	I Thess. 5:7

In Matthew 24 Jesus predicted his coming to gather together the saints in that generation. In 1 Thessalonians 4-5 Paul spoke of the same coming of the Lord to gather the saints. How many comings of the Lord, with his angels, in fire, in power and glory, to gather the saints, are there in the New Testament? Just ONE! The conclusion is inescapable that 1 Thessalonians 4-5 is dealing with exactly the same coming, judgment, and gathering that Matt. 24 is.

Notice that in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Paul does not say, "THOSE WHO ARE ALIVE when Christ comes"; he said, *"WE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD."*

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, *"The Lord Himself will descend from heaven,"* the word "descend" was commonly used with priest's decent out of the temple to announce that atonement had been completed.

Luke 21:20-22 (NKJV) But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Jude flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Jesus said that in the destruction of Jerusalem, *"all things written would be fulfilled."* All prophecy was fulfilled in AD. 70. There is no future coming or any other prophecy yet to be fulfilled.

All prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 in the day of God's wrath, just as Jesus said it would be. Any ideas of a "third coming" are truly speculation and have no shred of biblical backing. There is only one parousia talked about in the New Testament. That is the parousia that took place in the fall of Jerusalem, the parousia that brought about the fulfillment of all of the promises that God made to the fathers of Israel.

Before he became a consistent preterist, David Chilton, concluded that there were no verses in the Bible which taught a future (to us) coming of Christ, in which Christ would bodily return to this planet. Nevertheless, he continued to believe the doctrine because it had been taught for nearly 2000 years by "Holy Mother the Church" (Chilton's words).

John Bray held a similar view in his booklet, Jesus is Coming Soon! He says this, "The New Testament references to the parousia/coming of Christ had reference to that 'momentous' and signal event which occurred in AD 70. The time statements in the New Testament prove this. Any reference to a future (to us) coming of Christ found in the New Testament is found by inference and deduction, and not by express statement."

Do you hear what he said? He said that he holds to a future coming of Christ but there is no Scripture to support it, it is only seen in inference and deduction. In the past year Mr. Bray has given up his view of a future coming of Christ and has become a full preterist.

In his book, "The Days of Vengeance", David Chilton labels full preterism as heterodox:

"Contrary to the theories of those interpreters who would style themselves as 'consistent preterists,' the Fall of Jerusalem did not constitute the Second Coming of Christ... its ultimate thesis - that there is no future Coming of Christ or Final Judgment - is heretical."

"...it has become popular in some otherwise apparently orthodox circles to adopt a heretical form of 'preterism' that denies any future bodily Resurrection or Judgment, asserting that all these are fulfilled in the Resurrection of Christ, the regeneration of the Church, the coming of the New Covenant, and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Whatever else may be said about those who hold such notions, it is clear that they are not in conformity any recognizable form of orthodox Christianity."

David Chilton denounced full preterism as heresy but then he had a paradigm shift. He became a full preterist.

After his paradigm shift he said this, *"The more I pondered the awesome implications of Jesus' words, the more I realized their truly revolutionary significance for eschatology. Without exception, every event foretold by the Biblical prophets was fulfilled within that generation, as Jesus said. Scripture foretells a Second Coming - not a third!"* (David Chilton, Foreword to What Happened in AD 70? By Ed Stevens, 1997)

How is it that David Chilton went towards heresy? How does a man come to embrace what he has once denounced as heresy? He embraced it because he realized it was the irrefutable truth of Scripture! The preterist view may go against the creeds but it is in line with the Scripture. May our prayer be like that of the psalmist:

Psalms 25:5 (NKJV) *Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.*

This message preached by David B. Curtis on February 20, 1999 in Orlando, Florida for the Preterist Convention.

Other lessons by Pastor Curtis can be found at www.bereanbiblechurch.org/