

HOW were "these things" fulfilled?

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- April 7, 2013

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Thank you for joining us here on Covenant Key for another study in historical fulfillment. It is so nice to see Springtime popping out everywhere, and the worst part of the Winter weather now behind us. However, Springtime brings tax paying time. The tax man cometh, and verily has arrived! There are only two things that we cannot escape: death and taxes. We might note here that Jesus paid tax to the Roman government (Matt 17:24-27) and said, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt 22:21; Lk 20:25). Apostle Paul taught similarly in Romans 13:7 when he said, "render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due, etc...." We here in America have been so very blessed. Compared to the tyranny of Caesar in the first century, our difficulties here in the twenty-first century are "not worthy to be compared."
- B. In this session, I want to spend some time looking at the **NATURE** of fulfillment of the endtime events. Not just "**WHEN**" they occurred, but "**HOW**" they occurred.
- C. **Before we begin I want to let our new listeners know that there is a Lesson Outline available for each of these Podcasts:** Each of them are in PDF format. Most listeners like to have it open in front of them as they listen. If you don't have the PDF, simply email me and request it. If you are planning on being a regular listener, and would like to receive the PDF as soon as it is ready, without having to request it each time, simply email me and ask to be put on the **PDF List**. The PDF contains all my lesson notes and resource references, so that you do not have to write them down while listening. It is free for the asking. My email address is: [<preterist1@preterist.org>](mailto:preterist1@preterist.org)
- D. Let's ask God for His presence and blessing on our study here --
Great Creator and Sustainer of this universe, You are the sovereign King over all kings, and Lord over all lords. We exalt your holy and righteous Name. There are none to compare with you. You are the One and Only True God of all ages. Use our studies here to build your kingdom in our hearts, so that we can help others find their way into your kingdom, and thus bring You much glory. It is in the Name of Your Glorious Son, that we pray. Amen.
- E. **If you have benefited from these podcasts, we would love to hear from you. Why not mail us and tell us how about it. We encourage you to become partners with us in this teaching and publishing ministry, to enable us to share it with many others, and so that all the good fruit that comes from it may be credited to your heavenly account. Those who contribute to International Preterist Association will receive some of our latest resources as our gift to you. Simply go to our website and click on the left sidebar button entitled "Make a Donation to IPA" where you can make a one-time donation or contribute monthly. Our website address is [<www.preterist.org>](http://www.preterist.org) You can also make donations through PayPal. Our PayPal address, to which you may make your payment is: [<preterist1@preterist.org>](mailto:preterist1@preterist.org)**

- F. Last time we looked at a chart that I prepared, which arranges all the events predicted in Matthew 24 in their proper historical sequence. By doing that, we are able to define what the Tribulation was, and when it occurred in relation to the Parousia and the Wrath outpouring upon the unbelieving Jews. By putting all these events in the order in which they actually occurred historically, it really helps us understand not only the Olivet Discourse, but also the book of Revelation. That was an excellent study in **TIMING** and **SEQUENCING**. If any of our listeners did not get that chart, simply email me and request it. It is called: "Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse."
- G. This time we will look at another aspect of historical fulfillment besides the **TIMING** and **SEQUENCING**.

So much of the time in our outreach to our futurist brothers and sisters, we focus only on the **TIME** of fulfillment, and never quite get around to explaining the **NATURE** of fulfillment. I have been guilty of that, and that is why I am focusing so much effort on understanding first century history. I want to know not only **WHEN** these things occurred, but **HOW** they occurred. History tells us not only **WHEN** these events happened, but also **HOW** they happened. When we talk about the **HOW** question, we are dealing with the **NATURE** of fulfillment.

So, before getting into the actual history of the Jewish revolt in AD 66-70, we need to spend a few sessions sharpening our interpretative skills. We need to find out what **KIND** of events the first century saints were expecting to happen in their lifetime. What were they looking for, and expecting to see, hear, and experience in that generation? We have the **TIMING** of those events pretty well nailed down at this point, but the **NATURE** of those events is still very fuzzy for a lot of us.

A few years ago I presented a series of four lessons on the time and nature of fulfillment at a conference hosted by *Impact Ministries* in Chicago. The four lessons dealt with the **TIME** of fulfillment, **NATURE** of fulfillment, Documenting the Fulfillments from first century history, and the **Worldview** that is generated by the preterist view.

In this session and the next one, I will be sharing the audio tracks of two of those lessons. The first of those two lessons deals with the **NATURE** of fulfillment. Next week we will share the one which **DOCUMENTS** the fulfillments from first century historians. Both of these lessons will help us get a better handle on the **HOW** question. **HOW** did these things actually happen historically? What was their **NATURE** of fulfillment?

The speech which I will play for us here, was originally entitled, "How Would Jesus Return?" At the beginning I share an audio clip from an atheist who posted a five-part series on YouTube entitled, **Jesus Was Wrong**. Using several of the **TIME** statements, especially in Mark 13 and its parallels in Matthew and Luke, he showed how Jesus clearly predicted His return in that first century generation, and that since Jesus did not return then as he promised, he has to be labeled a false prophet.

As you can imagine, that YouTube video created a firestorm of reaction from both futurist and preterist Christians. But he came right back in his second and following podcasts showing that futurists are hopelessly out of touch with reality by saying that the return of Jesus is still future. If Jesus didn't come then in the first century, as He promised He would, then He is a false prophet and Christianity is founded on a hoax.

The atheist was much kinder to the preterists who responded to his first video. He

gave a thumbs up to preterists for recognizing the significance of the TIME statements. However, he sharply criticized our approach to the NATURE of fulfillment. And that is where I want to focus my attention in this session. Pay real close attention to the chart on page 5 of this PDF outline [**What Did Jesus Promise? What Did They Expect?**].

If any of the following material provokes a question or comment, do not hesitate to email me. I would love to hear from you. My email address is: preterist1@preterist.org

HOW Would Jesus Return?

By Ed Stevens

In our first lesson [of this seminar] we showed that the **TIME** of Christ's return is an extremely important issue in eschatology. But the **NATURE** of fulfillment is also important. In fact, as we shall see, I believe this is the issue where the Preterist view runs the most risk of being rejected by our fellow Christians. It is easy for Futurists to grasp the TIMING issue, but they immediately want to know HOW this was fulfilled in the first century, and they want to see the documentation for that fulfillment.

I am going to play another four minute segment from that atheist on YouTube where he deals with the Preterist explanation of both the TIMING and the NATURE of fulfillment. You will find this very interesting.

[ATHEIST AUDIO CLIP: ARE PRETERISTS WRONG?]

Did you notice how the atheist said thumbs up to the Preterists for being right on the TIMING issue? But then he noted that the Preterist view (as it was explained to him by those preterists who contacted him) failed to be a good explanation of the TIME statements because it did not document the historical fulfillments that were supposed to occur in the first century. He accused preterists of spiritualizing the fulfillments in order to get around the difficulty of non-fulfillment.

He used only two texts to make the point (Matt. 24:25-27 and Matt. 24:30):

Matt. 24:25-27 "Behold, I have told you in advance. So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, *or*, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe *them*. For **just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.**

Matt. 24:30 "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.

He showed that in these two texts Jesus promised that His return would be so easy to **SEE** that they could not miss it. They would not have to go out into the wilderness, or

into an upper room to find Him. They would **SEE** him coming on the clouds with power and great glory, just as the lightning flashes across the sky.

He repeatedly stressed the point that the return of Christ was going to be a **VISIBLE** event, and therefore an **experienced** event. Since he is not aware of anything like that occurring in the first century, he assumes that Christ did not return, and that the prophecies failed. He says that Preterists are proven wrong precisely at this point because we cannot show a visible and experiential return of Christ in the first century.

I agree that it is not enough to affirm that the **TIME of fulfillment** was in the first century. Deut. 18:22 demands that there be a recognizable fulfillment of those prophecies before we can claim that it has come true. The first century Christians (at least) should have been aware of the occurrence of the Parousia. They were told that they would **SEE** it. Since the post-70 church did not acknowledge Christ's return as having occurred in AD 70, it puts a huge burden of proof upon the Preterist.

This is a serious problem that Preterists have been very reluctant to deal with. We usually just wave our magic spiritualizing wand over the prophecy and claim it was fulfilled in a covenantal or spiritual or metaphysical sense, and then pat ourselves on the back for being so creative.

But that approach is not satisfactory to that atheist on YouTube, nor is it satisfactory to our Futurist brothers who also know that the fulfillment has to be **VISIBLE** and **EXPERIENTIAL**. It was this very problem which forced me (kicking and screaming) to re-examine my concepts of the **NATURE of fulfillment**.

My first step was to re-read the whole New Testament asking these three questions:

1. Did Jesus actually **promise** them that they would see, hear, and experience anything at His coming?
2. Do the NT writers make any statements which tell us what their **expectations** were? Did they expect to see, hear, or experience anything at His coming?
3. Or does Jesus indicate that it would be a **non-experiential** event, which they would not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor experience in any cognitive way?

Here is what I discovered when I read back through the whole New Testament:

What Did Jesus Promise? *What Did They Expect?*

| Biblical Text | Expectation | How Fulfilled? |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Matt. 16:28; 24:34; <u>1 Cor. 15:51</u>; <u>1 Thess. 4:15</u>; <u>Matt 24:22-24</u>; <u>Lk 18:7-8</u>; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:18; Jude 21; Rev. 2:25;</p> | <p>Some saints would still be alive at the time of His return. But it would not be a huge number. Many would perish in the tribulation.</p> | <p>Some of the original disciples indeed remained alive until AD 66. Not all of the saints died in the tribulation.</p> |
| <p><u>1 Cor. 16:22</u>; <u>Rev. 6:10</u>; <u>2 Tim. 4:8</u>; <u>1 Pet. 1:13</u>; Phil. 3:20f; Heb. 9:28; Jude 21; 1 Thess 1:10; Rom 8:18-25; 2 Cor. 5:2; Matt. 9:15; Lk. 12:35-40; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:12-13</p> | <p>They were eagerly waiting and longing for His return. They “loved his appearing” and “fixed their hope completely” on it.</p> | <p>Was that intense longing fulfilled? Could they have kept silent about it after being so pumped up about it beforehand?</p> |
| <p><u>2 Thess. 1:6-10</u>; <u>Rom. 8:17-25</u>; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:13-14; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:4-9, 13; 5:4; 5:6; Rev. 11:18; 2 Jn. 1:8; Heb. 10:35; Lk. 21:34-36; Rev. 3:10; Lk. 21:28</p> | <p>They were promised rescue, relief, reward, glory, adoption, salvation, redemption, and grace at the return of Christ.</p> | <p>Did they get these things? Did they know they got it? Did they see it and experience it in any way? Why didn't they say something about it later?</p> |
| <p><u>2 Thess 1:6-10</u>; <u>Matt 16:28</u>; <u>1 Jn 2:28--3:2</u>; <u>1 Thes 2:19</u>; <u>1 Pet. 4:13</u>; <u>5:1-4</u>; <u>Lk 21:36</u>; <u>Rom 8:18-25</u>; <u>2 Cor 4:14</u>; <u>1 Thess 4:17</u>; <u>Col 3:4</u>; 1 Pet 1:7-13; 2:12; 2 Pet 3:12ff; Jude 24; Matt 25:1,6,21,23; Phil 2:16 1 Jn. 4:17; Col 1:22; 1 Cor 13:12; Matt. 25:6-10;</p> | <p>They would actually know about His return, and SEE Him revealed, MEET with Him at His coming, GLORIFY Him, STAND before Him, and have GREAT JOY in His PRESENCE at His return.</p> | <p>Did they experience these things? Why didn't they say something about it later? How could they experience all this and then go on with their lives as if nothing ever happened? This would have been a life-changing experience. Life would never be the same.</p> |
| <p><u>1 Thess 4:15-17</u>; <u>Jn 14:1-3</u>; <u>Matt 24:31</u>; <u>2 Thess 2:1</u> Phil 3:14;</p> | <p>Reunited and caught up together with their departed loved ones, received to Him; gathered, upward call</p> | <p>What was this gathering by the angels, the catching up, the being received to be with Jesus where He was?</p> |
| <p><u>2 Cor 5:1-4</u>; Phil 3:21; <u>1 Cor 15:51-54</u> 1 Jn 3:2</p> | <p>Their bodies would be changed, transformed, to be like Christ</p> | <p>What was this bodily transformation, change?</p> |
| <p><u>1 John 2:28</u>; Heb 10:38-39</p> | <p>Would see Him appear, and would not shrink away from him at his Parousia</p> | <p>Did they see him appear? Did they shrink away from Him at His Parousia?</p> |

We need to seriously ask ourselves what these Biblical texts would have meant to the first century saints. How would they have understood these things?

My awareness of these promises and expectations of an experiential return of Christ created another problem for me. Since I now knew that the Parousia must have been seen, heard, witnessed, and experienced by the first century saints, I was baffled by the **lack of documentation** for it. This is the same problem that the Atheist and our Futurist brothers have. They know it was supposed to be seen and experienced. Why don't we hear something afterwards from those saints who saw it and experienced it?

Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. What if they were raptured out of there just like these expectation statements suggest? That would explain why we do not have any statements from them afterwards about what it was like to **SEE** Him at His coming, and **GLORIFY** Him on that day, and **MARVEL** at Him in the presence of all who had believed. They were gone! Jesus took His bride with Him when He came! And it would explain why the church fathers were so confused later, and why they fell into so many doctrinal deviations in the second century.

Now you can only imagine how stunned I was at this idea. I did not like the idea of a rapture at all, but there was no other reasonable explanation for their silence after the Parousia.

But there is a problem with this rapture idea. There are some logistics involved here which need to be carefully dealt with. What kind of rapture are we talking about? Surely not the kind of thing we see described in the *Left Behind* series of books and movies. That kind of rapture would be noticed and documented.

When we start asking questions of this sort about the way in which a supernatural event occurred, we immediately have to start thinking about the **cosmological worldview** of the first century saints. How did they view their world, including the *heavenly realm* and the *earthly realm*?

Cosmology is the study of the universe, including both its **UNSEEN** spiritual realm and its **SEEN** physical realm. Cosmology attempts to explain how both realms inter-relate to each other and interact with each other. Notice the contrast between the **invisible** things in the heavens and the **visible** things on the earth mentioned in **Col. 1:16** –

Col. 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both **in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible**, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.

As I began to look at the statements of Jesus and our NT writers (especially Paul, Jude, James, Peter, and John in the book of Revelation) I noticed that they did not have the same concepts about **heaven and earth** that we here in 21st century America do. Surprise!

They followed the same cosmological concepts that God's people throughout Biblical times since creation had always believed. I have a chart which will help us grasp this.

[COSMOLOGY CHART ON THE SCREEN—included as a separate file]

The reason why so many Christians do not recognize the fulfillments of eschatology at AD 70 is because they do not know what **KIND of event** they are supposed to be looking for. They do not know **HOW it was supposed to be fulfilled cosmologically**. They are looking in all the wrong places for the wrong kind of event. An understanding of Biblical Cosmology is absolutely essential for understanding what kind of events Jesus predicted, and what kind of events the first century saints expected and experienced.

This was my problem. Once I saw the expectation statements, I began struggling with **HOW** those expectations could have been fulfilled according to my understanding of the nature of fulfillment? I began to realize that it was my faulty concept of **cosmology** that was the problem. I needed to go back to the Bible and see what its concept of the SEEN and UNSEEN realms really is. Once I understood Biblical cosmology, then I saw **HOW** all these events (the Parousia, the Resurrection, the Rapture, the Judgment) were supposed to occur. So the nature of fulfillment is directly related to our concepts of cosmology.

In my studies of the relationship between the SEEN and the UNSEEN realms, I noticed that prophets were called **SEERS** in the Old Testament because they were enabled by God to SEE into the normally UNSEEN realm. God makes his angels **become visible** on certain redemptive or revelatory occasions, but the rest of the time they remain invisible even to His people, except to SEERS like Moses and Elijah. It is this relationship between the SEEN and UNSEEN realms that is so important to understand. It enables us to easily explain how all these events promised by Jesus and expected by the first century saints were actually fulfilled in an experiential way without the pagan world around them seeing it, experiencing it, or documenting it. This is exactly what atheists, critics, and futurists have challenged us to explain.

A good grasp of Biblical Cosmology and the Expectations of the first century church paves the way for us to understand and explain **HOW** Christ returned, and resurrected the dead saints (in the UNSEEN realm), and changed the living saints (into the UNSEEN realm), and snatched them up together as one group to be with Him in the **UNSEEN** realm above.

Thank you for listening.

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If any of this material has raised any questions for you,
or if you need more information, do not hesitate to email me at:
<preterist1@preterist.org>

There are a lot of great supplementary articles posted on our website,
plus books and audio/video media for purchase. Go there and browse all you want.
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If you would like a couple of great books which detail all of these events, I would recommend **ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS** by F. F. Bruce, which is available for order at our website (www.preterist.org), and **JEWISH BACKGROUNDS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT** by J. Julius Scott, which is available from Amazon.com. Be sure to get a copy of my book, **First Century Events**, which deals with the Roman, Jewish, and Christian events of the first century. We will be using it as a resource here in our studies of the first century. You can purchase it from our website: www.preterist.org

Some further recommended reading:

Josephus *Antiquities* and *Wars* (sections which deal with the Herodian rulers)