

# Listener Questions and Comments

By Ed Stevens -- *Then and Now Podcast* -- May 26, 2013

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. Welcome back to another edition of *Then and Now* where we study the past to help shape a better future.
- B. I want to get right into this session, since we have a lot of ground to cover. I received a lot of listener feedback this week, so much, in fact, that it will take this whole session to cover it all.

[QUESTION-COMMENT] -- I look forward to hearing just who the Nicolaitans were since they're mentioned by John specifically, which means they were on Jesus' mind. And Jesus hates the practices of this group. Just what were their practices?

[ED'S REPLY] In his article about Thyatira in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, E. J. Banks suggested that the Nicolaitans were Christians who had compromised their high moral and ethical standards by being a part of the trade guilds and their feasts that were connected with pagan idolatry and immoral practices:

ISBE article by E. J. Banks: **Thyatira** was specially noted for the trade guilds which were probably more completely organized there than in any other ancient city. Every artisan belonged to a guild, and every guild, which was an incorporated organization, possessed property in its own name, made contracts for great constructions, and wielded a wide influence. Powerful among them was the guild of coppersmiths; another was the guild of the dyers, who, it is believed, made use of the madder-root instead of shell-fish for making the purple dyestuffs. A member of this guild seems to have been Lydia of Thyatira, who, according to Acts 16:14, sold her dyes in Philippi. The color obtained by the use of this dye is now called Turkish red. The guilds were closely connected with the Asiatic religion of the place. Pagan feasts, with which immoral practices were associated, were held, and therefore the nature of the guilds was such that they were opposed to Christianity. ...It was taught by many of the early church that no Christian might belong to one of the guilds, and thus the greatest opposition to Christianity was presented.

The Nicolaitans were supposedly immoral libertines who saw Freedom In Christ as a license to all kinds of sin. There are some preterists today who think that same way: i.e., that everything in the NT was finished in AD 70 and ceased to have any application afterwards, therefore we are free to live however we want. Those folks are making the same mistake that the licentious libertines of the first century made.

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- Regarding my fellow listener who wondered if you might be getting a little too carried away in these historical studies, I appeal to you to discount what he said and pay no heed. Keep your pedal to the metal. Don't let his comment trick you into backing off. If Paul was able to preach the gospel to the whole world between 50 A.D. and 70 A.D., how much more is it necessary that we get the whole counsel out in the next 20 years?!

**[ED'S REPLY]** Thanks for that very encouraging feedback! Lord willing, I definitely intend to keep my pedal to the metal!

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- Your messages are great because of the amount of research that goes into them. Preterism seems to make the pieces of the puzzle actually fit together. Although there are a couple areas that I still need to figure out, for the most part with preterism you don't need to make excuses any more. Like I told you once, I actually heard preachers say that "all the disciples thought that the end was near but they were mistaken". So in other words they just trashed the infallibility of the bible and put the apostles in the position of writing false prophecy and error.

**[ED'S REPLY]** You made a great point about the infallibility of Scripture being adversely affected by the futurist idea that Jesus and the apostles were wrong when they taught that Jesus would return in their lifetime. Indeed, that is reason why the preterist movement is growing exponentially right now. Futurists are finally beginning to wake up and smell the coffee. That is why we put up an exhibit booth every year at the Evangelical Theological Society. We want to keep that very message right in front of them, so that they do not miss it.

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- I was wondering what you would say about the futurist objection to the preterist view, which says that "all" people in the first century must have seen the Parousia, if it occurred then. I am thinking that the heathen actually did not see it and therefore could not report it necessarily. Jesus said that it would come as a thief in the night. A couple years ago a thief went through our neighborhood and got inside all the unlocked cars and stole cell phones etc. We never knew he was there until we were missing stuff. So perhaps the heathen never really saw it.

**[ED'S REPLY]** You are on the right track about ALL the unbelievers seeing the Parousia. This is indeed the BIG objection that all futurists have against the Preterist view. They have read all the expectation statements, and they know that the Parousia was supposed to be a visible and experiential event. Since they are unaware of all the fulfillments documented in Josephus, Tacitus, Yosippon, and Eusebius, they assume that the Parousia did not occur. However, according to Josephus, even the unbelievers actually saw and heard some incredible things at that time, but they did not understand what it was all about. The Christians knew what was happening and experienced all the benefits of it, but the unbelievers did not understand it. It was very much like the ascent of Elijah on an angelic chariot. Elisha was allowed to see it because he was spiritually tuned in like Elijah was. But the other fifty prophets who were watching that event did

not see the angelic chariot. All they saw was a tornado whisk Elijah up into the sky. They thought he was killed by the tornado, and went looking for his body around the countryside for three days. Elisha told them that Elijah had been taken to heaven, but they did not believe him. This is a good example of what happened in AD 70. The unbelieving Jews and Roman world saw and heard some things, but they were not allowed to see into the UNSEEN realm like the Christians were. Therefore, they did not understand what all those things meant. But the Christians got all the heavenly rewards and relief from the persecution that they were expecting to receive at the Parousia. It was a very experiential event for them. The dead saints were raised out of Hades in the UNSEEN realm, while the living saints had their bodies changed from mortal to immortal (into the unseen realm) and then caught up together with the resurrected dead to be with Christ forever afterwards. Incidentally, I have a PDF lesson outline which documents all those things from first century historians. If you would like to have a copy of it, simply email me and request it (Matthew 24 Fulfillments).

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- I look forward to all the good things you are sharing with us every week. I'm excited for the future to see how God will use the preterist view to turn the world upside down.

**[ED'S REPLY]** Amen to that! Thanks for listening.

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- I have been giving thought to the idea about 'the judgments of God throughout the earth' spoken of in the Old Testament and how God rides on a swift cloud. Those clouds that He surrounds Himself with are sometimes doomy and gloomy. For instance, the tornado yesterday in the city of Moore, Oklahoma. Could we say that we were seeing God first hand? Doing some of His works? Forcing men to call upon Him or to cry out to Him? Along these same lines, David Chilton wrote many years ago that God didn't wind up the universe and let it go. I believe that God is still very intensely involved with His universe all the way up to our day. That tornado yesterday might be considered by many an incredible force of nature, but the more accurate way to view it would be the ordinary activities of God?!

**[ED'S REPLY]** I think you are exactly right. Everything that happens is by God's design, in order to mold us and shape us into His more useful servants.

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- I'm really glad that you and others spend so much time in the Word deciphering it for us. I wandered through a lot of dumb doctrines over the years and finally found my way into preterism. A couple things helped guide me. One is that I assumed that the reformation of 500 years ago only went so far, and another is realizing that truth has an A through Z arrangement and any one Church or denomination usually only offers 1 or 2 letters, even though they think they teach the whole alphabet.

I'm so glad I got in contact with all of you preterists, especially you, because you believe in a rapture. I like that. A rapture answers so many questions, and gives solid explanations to the verses that so plainly say something was going to happen physically to them then. It just seems that not believing in a rapture goes against the 'audience relevance' and 'plain meaning' rules that preterists cling to.

**[ED'S REPLY]** Thanks for those great comments. I couldn't agree more!

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- I was wondering why there wasn't any reports or writings about Christians that seem to be here one day and gone the next. I guess with the degree of persecution and carnage, that the true Christians could vanish and no one would really be concerned. People thought they just died off.

**[ED'S REPLY]** One of the reasons the disappearance of the elect was not noticed was that there were very few Christians left alive after the Neronic persecution (AD 64-65), so that by the time of the Parousia (AD 66) there were not many left to be raptured. Furthermore, because of the Neronic persecution, the disappearance of Christians would have been considered an arrest in the night and taken away to be killed. No one would dare inquire about them for fear of being accused of being a Christian also. This is the same kind of thing that happened to the Jews during Nazi Germany's purges. Whole ghettos of Jews disappeared (arrested in the night) and were never seen again. No one knew for sure what happened to them. Everyone thought they were arrested in the night and taken away to be killed. Nobody thought they were raptured. Same way in the first century.

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- Could you explain Romans 8:18-19? It is not quite clear to me.

**[ED'S REPLY]** Rom 8:18-19 — Some background info first. This letter of Paul was written from Corinth near the end of his third missionary journey (AD 58), just before he went to Jerusalem where he was arrested and sent as a prisoner to Rome. The two letters to the church at Corinth were written just before this. So, we need to keep that in mind as we read these words here in Romans 8.

Paul says in Rom 8:17 that suffering with Christ (in the persecution) was proof that they were children of God, and was earning them an eternal weight of glory that would be given to them at Christ's soon return. The unbelieving Jews were persecuting the saints because they thought THEY were the true children of God, but Paul encourages them with the promise that at the Parousia Christ would reveal who His true children were (the Christians), and those saints would see the glory of Christ revealed to them at that time.

In 2 Thess 1:4-12, there is a similar thought expressed. The Thessalonian Christians were suffering persecution, and Paul promises them that they would receive "relief" when the Lord Jesus was revealed from heaven. Paul says those suffering "worthy" saints would "glorify Him

on that day and marvel at Him among all who have believed” (2 Thess 1:10). That is a very clear expectation that Paul gave to those saints. They were expecting to see Christ “revealed from heaven” and experience some “relief” from the persecution, and share in that glory with Christ.

That is the same thing Paul is referring to here in Romans 8. That glory of Christ was about to be revealed, at which time those saints who had suffered shame for His Name would be revealed in front of their persecutors as being the true children of God. They would share in His glory at the Parousia. Those saints who died in the persecution would be raised in their new immortal bodies, while those saints who remained alive on earth would have their mortal bodies “changed” into immortal bodies. Then, both the resurrected dead and the “changed” living saints would be gathered (raptured) into the presence of Christ to live with Him forever afterwards. The bodily “change” of the living is implied here in the context (Rom. 8:23) when Paul tells them about the “redemption of their bodies.” The living would have their mortal bodies “changed” or redeemed from subjection to death.

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- Another text that bothers me is Phil. 3:20-21. It seems to relate to the resurrection somehow.

**[ED'S REPLY]** Philippians 3:20-21. Paul here is talking about the same bodily “change” for the living and remaining ones that he mentioned in his two letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:51-54 and 2 Cor 5:1-4). Here in Phil. 3:20-21, he was telling those saints in Philippi in the first century that those of them who remained alive on earth until the Parousia would have their mortal bodies “transformed” (or “changed”) into immortal glorious bodies like Christ has. Apostle John refers to that same idea in 1 John 3:2, where he says that he does not know exactly what kind of bodies they would get at the Parousia, but he did know that they would be changed to be like Christ's glorious body.

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- I've read a great deal of your material but I'm still not quite certain how the following text fits your view. It sure seems like the righteous were the ones left behind and the unrighteous were taken away by the flood. Matthew 24:37-39 -- For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

**[ED'S REPLY]** In my rapture book, EXPECTATIONS DEMAND A FIRST CENTURY RAPTURE, I explain this text (Matt 24:37-39) in connection with Luke 17:31-37 where Jesus implies that it was the wicked who would be taken away and killed and consumed, just like the vultures did to their prey. There are some futurists who see this as a rapture text, but none of the preterist rapture proponents take that position as far as I know. Lk 17:37 clinches the meaning of this text for me. The disciples asked where those folks would be taken, and Jesus says they would be taken away by the vultures (or eagles). This was a veiled reference to the Romans

whose symbol was the Eagle. Eagles are a type of vulture which carries off its prey and drops them on the rocks to kill them and then eat them. If Jesus was talking about taking the righteous away in a rapture, this statement would not fit a rapture very well. But it does fit the idea of the Romans coming and carrying away the Jews into captivity and consuming them there outside the Land.

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[QUESTION-COMMENT] -- Thanks so much for continuing your solid teaching here on BuzzSprout. It is a blessing. I just downloaded your latest podcast and listened to it. It worked flawlessly. It seems to be a perfect fit for your podcasts, since you are not hosting any live questions at this time. Great sound quality and I like the absence of all the questionable advertisements and the clutter that the BlogTalk network has. That really takes too much attention away from your message.

[ED'S REPLY] That was a huge factor in my switch. I did not like all those questionable advertisements either. Thanks for your good comments on that.

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[QUESTION-COMMENT] -- A dear preterist brother that I am in contact with, appears to be faltering in his Christian faith. He said that he has no more energy to write because he no longer is convinced that the NT & OT texts are reliable. He has been listening to too many liberals, skeptics, and critics. There are many weak Christians out there like this dear brother who think that they're the first one to ever encounter textual criticism. Do you have any specific resources that I can suggest for this hurting, confused brother? Have you done any teaching on this subject?

[ED'S REPLY] The Bible has its own way of refuting the textual critics. It is the best resource out there. Nothing else even comes close, and I have read a bunch of them, and have them in my library. I have studied textual criticism under the liberals and skeptics. So, I know what their evidence is, and have found satisfying answers to it, right in the biblical text itself.

In my **Apostolic Canonization** series of studies, I gave a little bit of explanation on how the New Testament books were written, copied, distributed, collected, and preserved for future generations. Considering that we have over eight thousand known fragments of New Testament texts, a few of which go all the way back to the second century, drastically more than we have for any other religious or philosophical books. It should not be surprising that later copyists made some mistakes. In fact, we should be surprised that there aren't more mistakes than there are. But those mistakes were not in the original autographs. They were introduced into the text by later copyists. I have all of those studies on Apostolic Canonization collected together in a PDF document. If any of our listeners would like to have it, simply email me and request it. It is free for the asking. My email address is **preterist1@preterist.org**

The Bible is like a pet lion on a leash, being attacked by a tiny little Chihuahua puppy. Do we step in front of the lion and defend him from the wimpy pooch, or do we unleash the lion and let him defend himself?

Back 35 years ago when I was attending Adelphi University to finish my Bachelors degree in Liberal Arts (religious studies), I had a couple of religion professors who were determined to destroy my faith in the credibility of the Bible. They popped the TIME statements on me, thinking that would blow away my faith. When I answered them with the preterist view, it blew them away. They had never heard that position before, and were at a loss on how to answer it. I have never forgotten how powerful the Word really is, when it is rightly understood. That is the problem with this dear brother that you are working with. He evidently does not understand the Bible rightly, and is therefore unable to cope with the arguments of the skeptics and critics.

In my courses there at Adelphi, those two religion professors were constantly criticizing the Bible to make it look ridiculous, old-fashioned, inconsistent, and full of errors. But the more I simply read the Bible and let it sink deeply into my psyche, the more I could see through the wimpy faithless arguments of the form critics and text critics (“higher” criticism? NOT!). They do not worship and adore and believe in the same God that I do.

It really boils down to FAITH. Those who really BELIEVE Jesus was supernaturally and miraculously raised from the dead, have no problem believing the rest of the Bible. Conversely, and unsurprisingly, those who have difficulty believing in the supernatural miraculous bodily resurrection of Jesus will also have difficulty believing in the rest of the miracles of the Bible, including the miraculous inspiration and miraculous preservation of the Bible itself. Those who read the Bible with faith in God and Jesus will be rewarded with an understanding of the truth. Those who doubt are like the waves, or the chaff, driven along by the winds, and cast about by every wind of skepticism that blows through.

If God can raise Jesus bodily from the grave, then He can easily keep His Word pure for all generations to come. So, it all boils down to how much faith people have in a supernatural and sovereign God. Is He smart enough and powerful enough to inspire His Word, get it written down accurately for us, and then preserve it for all generations to come? If He isn't, then He is not God, and there really is no god at all, and the Bible is just a bunch of fairy tales. But if there really is a God who has the nature that the Bible describes (Omniscience, Omnipotence, Immutable, Immortal, Eternal, Purely Holy, Infinitely Just in all His ways), then we can have total confidence in His Word.

Again, it boils down to FAITH and BELIEF that there is a God, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek for Him. Have that dear brother read back through the whole Bible again, praying that God will show him the truth. God gives His truth to those who seek for it and ask Him for it. “Without [that kind of] faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God MUST BELIEVE THAT HE IS, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). Does that dear brother “believe that God exists”?

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** -- I am now beginning to realize that as I study this Rapture idea, I am entering a controversial area of preterism. For instance, I just received this objection to the rapture in my email. It is Kurt Simmons' latest newsletter with his article entitled: HISTORY: A Final Objection to the Literal Rapture. He does not care about how you explain the biblical texts, since he believes HISTORY clearly shows that there was no rapture.

**[ED'S REPLY]** "Controversial" is a nice way of describing it. :-) Evidently our dear brother Simmons does not realize the implications of what he is saying in that newsletter. He is using uninspired and fallible history to overturn the clear teaching of scripture. In his newsletter, he says basically that the so-called "Christians" who were still alive in Pella after AD 70 are proof positive that there was no rapture. In net effect, that is letting history invalidate the Word of God, just like the scribes and Pharisees did in the first century. Whenever anyone takes that high of a view of history and tradition, they have just admitted they have no allegiance to the Bible as our inspired, infallible, and absolutely authoritative guide. In net effect, he is admitting that he does not care what the Bible teaches about a first century rapture, because a rapture would contradict his understanding of history and church tradition. That is the same kind of argument that the futurists make against the Preterist view, except that they substitute the word Parousia for the word rapture. They say, "We know the preterist view cannot be correct, because history shows that there was no Parousia in the first century." Simmons is saying, "We know the rapture view cannot be correct, because history shows that there was no Rapture in the first century." Well, the futurists and brother Simmons can have all the tradition and history they want! I will stick with the Bible! The Biblical statements about the rapture are enough. History can only support and explain the Bible. It can never overturn it. In our podcast last time, we showed that the folks in Pella were not true Christians, and that explains why they were still around after AD 70. They were left behind because they were not true Christians. That very effectively neutralizes his BIG historical argument! Now, maybe he can get back to looking at what the Biblical text actually has to say, rather than letting his flawed understanding of history and tradition invalidate the Word of God.

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**[QUESTION-COMMENT]** I read your PDF lesson outline about Apostle John not living beyond AD 70. I see what you are saying, and agree with it. Scripture proves that John did not live beyond AD 70, and that the statements of some of those second century church fathers are not very dependable.

**[ED'S REPLY]** Amen to that! Matthew 20 and Mark 10 talk about the martyrdom of both James and John. In the context, it mentions that James and John wanted to be seated on the right and left sides of Jesus when He came into His Kingdom at the Parousia. James and John were expecting to be among those who lived and remained until the Parousia, so that they could escape physical death by being changed into their immortal bodies. However, Jesus tells them that they would die before the Parousia. I have a PDF which covers all this in great detail. Simply email me and request it (Did John Live Beyond AD 70?).

Well, that will wrap it up for this time. If any of our listeners have questions or comments, do not hesitate to email me. My email address is: [preterist1@preterist.org](mailto:preterist1@preterist.org)