

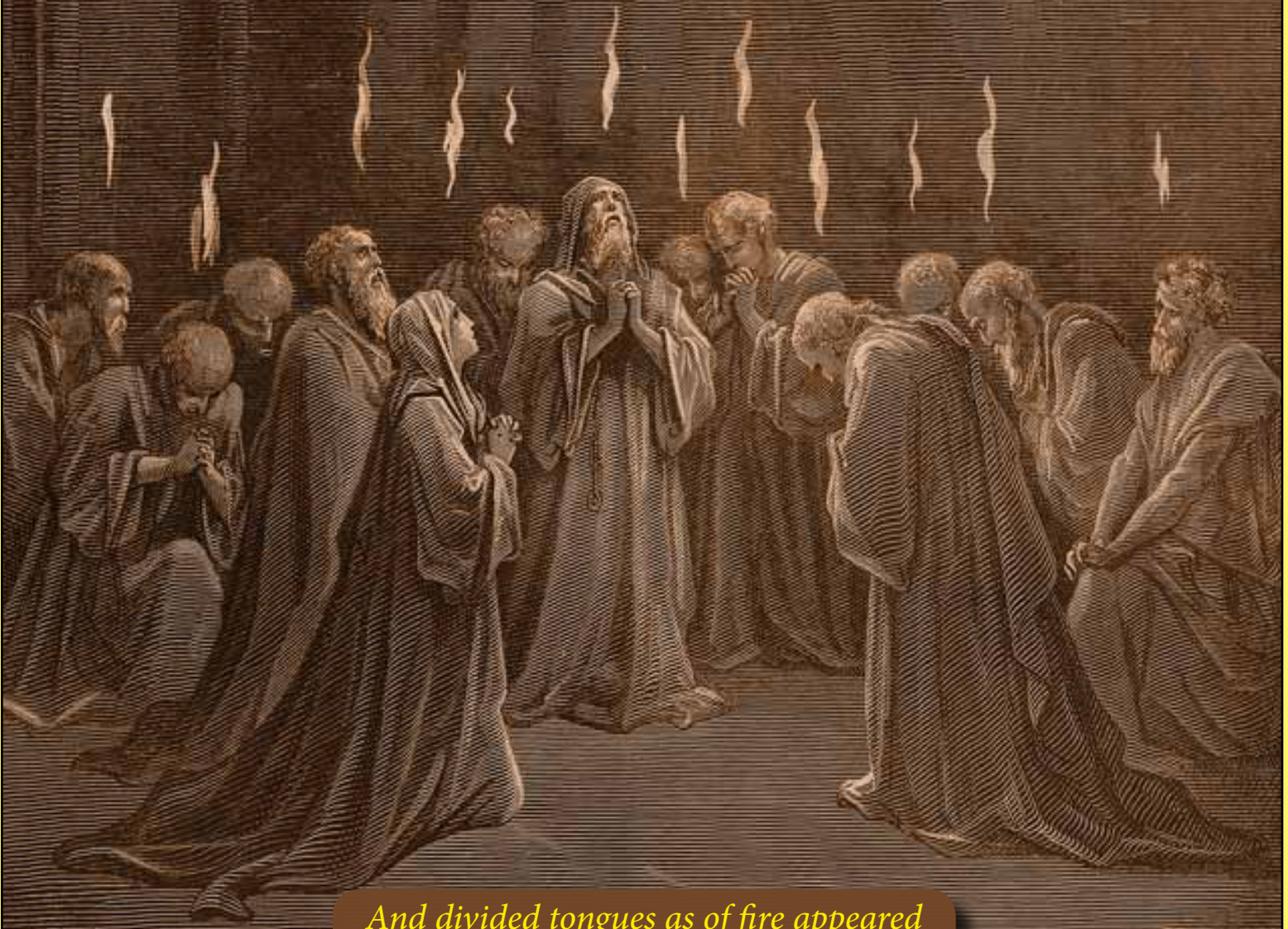
SUMMER 2022

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 2

FULFILLED!

Magazine

EXPLORING AND PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST



*And divided tongues as of fire appeared
to them and rested upon each one of them.
Acts 2:3*

Editor's Note...

YOU HAVE NO DOUBT noticed something different in this issue's layout. Typically, the inside cover sports various resources and ads. In this issue, you opened straight to the editor's note. Another turn of the page will reveal that, rather than the usual "Mailbag" feature, we jump right into this issue's articles. The layout was changed to accommodate some longer than usual articles. I also skipped TJ Smith's "Parting Thoughts" column to free up space. TJ, who is in the thick of building his new house, welcomed the respite. Things should be back to normal in the next issue.

While most full preterists believe (as do many futurists) that the gifts of the Spirit (charismata) have ceased, there are full preterists who believe otherwise. Michael Day, one of the driving forces behind *The Kingdom Bible*, is one of those individuals. I asked Michael if he would like to provide an article defending the continuation of the gifts post AD-70 and he graciously agreed. Gary Parrish and Terry Kashian also helped with the article.

Our longest article award goes to Don Preston, who is interacting with Roderick Edward's book *About Preterism*. Readers who have been involved in the preterist community longer than ten years will recognize Roderick's name. Roderick embraced full preterism and became very active online promoting the view for over fifteen years. However, he later changed his views due to full preterism's "unsustainable arguments and conflicts with history" (from the back cover of his book).

I recently read Roderick's *About Preterism* and noted his claim that anyone engaging a full preterist should begin by challenging the preterist's view of God's sovereignty in light of the fact that the Church has, according to full preterism, misunderstood eschatology for centuries. Does God preserve His Word through the ages, or doesn't He? I asked Don if he would like to address Roderick's "starting point" and he gladly agreed.

I want to thank those of you who took the time to fill out and mail in your survey response! If you have not yet returned your survey (see the 2022 Spring issue), I encourage you to do so. We are trying to get a better feel for how *Fulfilled!* Magazine can serve the preterist community. I am compiling and tallying the results and hope to share them later this year, so there is still time to mail in (or email) your results.

As always, we are grateful to our small core group of supporters who financially make this magazine available to over 2,500 readers. I understand that not everyone agrees with every article, but I hope you have benefitted from *Fulfilled!* Magazine in some way over the years.

Thank you to those who have made FCG your Amazon Smile charity! We received \$146 for our most recent quarter's donation and have received over \$1,400 since we applied for nonprofit status with Amazon. Those interested in participating can find instructions on our website.

Blessings,

Brian



There is still time to fill out the survey from the previous issue!

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Reader Beware!

The views expressed in these pages are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FCG or other contributors. FCG does not tell readers what to believe; rather, FCG provides readers with resources intended to aid in discovering biblical foundations informing what they believe. FCG strives to give readers something worthwhile to think about—we avoid telling them what to think. Please understand that we cannot vet every contributor's various doctrinal positions or read every advertised book. We rely on you, the reader, to be a Berean: prayerfully discuss and examine all positions presented according to Scripture to establish any truth or application as you work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

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Published by
FULFILLED
COMMUNICATIONS
GROUP

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IN OUR PREVIOUS ARTICLE we noted that *Eleazar b. Ananias* was the original instigator of the rebellion, and that his lawless deeds revealed him as being the *Man of Lawlessness*. In this issue we will see how the actions of Eleazar and his soldiers provoked Rome's military response to the Zealot rebellion.

On August 5, 66, the Sicarii joined forces with Eleazar's men, which enabled the Zealot rebels to drive Agrippa's soldiers out of the upper city, after which they looted and burned Ananias b. Nedebaeus' house, Agrippa and Berenice's palaces, and the archives building where the debtor records were stored. Now Eleazar's soldiers had control of both the Temple and the lower city. Then the moderates and loyalists, including both Ananias' and Agrippa's soldiers, fled to the upper palace and used it as their fortress (*Wars* 2:425-429 [2.17.6] and *Sepher Yosippon*, Ch. 61).

On the next day (Aug 6, 66), Eleazar's soldiers besieged the Tower of Antonia for two days, killing the Roman soldiers, and burning it (*Wars* 2:430 [2.17.7]) Then, they went to the upper palace and fought with Agrippa's soldiers for eighteen days (See Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, Vol. 2, p. 186. cf. *Wars* 2:431-432 [2.17.7]).

Evidently, *Manahem* (son or grandson of *Judas the Galilean*, founder of the Zealots) returned to Jerusalem from Masada about this time and entered the city as if he was the king. He took control of the Zealot soldiers who were attacking the upper palace, thus enabling them to overpower the moderates inside (*Wars* 2:433-436 [2.17.8]).

The moderates then sent a message to *Manahem*, offering to leave the palace if they would not be killed. That offer was accepted for all the Jews and Agrippa's soldiers, but not for the Roman soldiers. So, the Romans abandoned their camp and fled to the three towers of Herod's palace. However, *Manahem* and his men caught many of them, killed them, plundered them, and set fire to their camp. And since some of the Romans had entered the towers, *Manahem* then besieged the towers (*Wars* 2:437-441 [2.17.8]).

On the next day (Aug 28, 66), the former high priest *Ananias b. Nedebaeus* (father of *Eleazar*), was caught hiding in an aqueduct, and was slain together with his brother *Hezekiah* by *Manahem's* soldiers (*Wars* 2:441 [2.17.9]). This

was not just a random act of violence against an insignificant citizen of Jerusalem. *Ananias b. Nedebaeus* was probably the most powerful ruler of the Jews at that time. He was a moderate and pro-Roman loyalist. More importantly, he was a *restraining influence* against his son *Eleazar*, as well as against the whole Zealot cause. That is why the Zealot rebels eliminated him.

Thus, *Ananias* was one of the first aristocratic casualties of the rebellion (*Wars* 2:441 [2.17.9]), which not only fulfilled Apostle Paul's prediction about *Ananias* in AD 58 ("God is about to strike you" Acts 23:1-3), but also his prophecy in AD 52 which stated, "he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way, and then that lawless one will be revealed" (2 Thess 2:7-8).

Paul referred to *Ananias* as being a *lawbreaker* in AD 58, so it is no surprise that his son *Eleazar* became an *even worse lawbreaker*. After *Ananias* was killed by *Manahem*, and his *restraining influence* on *Eleazar* was removed, *Eleazar's true lawless character* was clearly revealed, and his *lawless conduct escalated rapidly*, just as Apostle Paul had predicted.

Manahem's victory over the moderates and Agrippa's soldiers puffed him up. He thought he had no rivals who could challenge him. But *Eleazar* pointed out to his soldiers and the citizens of Jerusalem that they did not gain their freedom from one tyrant (Rome), merely to hand it over to another (*Manahem*). So, *Eleazar's* soldiers and many of the citizens attacked *Manahem* and his bodyguard in the temple where he was pompously parading himself in royal garments. *Manahem* fled to Ophla, but was quickly found and killed. Thus, *Eleazar* avenged his father's death by killing *Manahem*, and this further consolidated the rebel forces underneath *Eleazar's* control (*Wars* 2:442-448 [2.17.9]). *Eleazar* was ruthless and treacherous in all his dealings—a real tyrant who was a law unto himself, who changed the rules as he went along.

Eleazar's men continued the siege of the Roman soldiers in the three towers until the Roman general *Metilius* (Gk. *eparchos*) offered to surrender the towers and lay down their arms in exchange for their lives. *Eleazar* granted the request, but then *broke his promise* as soon as the soldiers laid down their arms. All of the Romans were slain except *Metilius*,

Eleazar's soldiers besieged the Tower of Antonia for two days, killing the Roman soldiers and burning it.

Rome Reacts to Rebellion

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who promised to convert to Judaism. Josephus said that this breach of oath not only provoked Roman revenge, but the *wrath of God* also (*Wars* 2:449-456 [2.17.9-10]).

And that wrath did not wait long to be poured out. The day on which Eleazar killed the Romans was a Sabbath, and “on the very same day and hour” in Caesarea, the Gentile citizens rose up against the Jewish citizens and slew twenty thousand of them “in one hour’s time,” thus emptying Caesarea of its Jewish inhabitants (*Wars* 2:457 [2.18.1]).

That massacre in Caesarea was a turning point. It incited the entire nation of Jews to take up arms and join the war effort. They immediately formed several bands of soldiers and spread out to attack the villages of the Syrians and other cities, including Philadelphia, Sebonitis, Gerasa, **Pella**, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Gaulonitis, Kedasa, Ptolemais, Gaba, Caesarea, Sebaste, Askelon, Anthedon, and Gaza. It seems that no Greeks or Syrians (or Christians) were left alive in **Pella** after the Zealots took control of it (*Wars* 2:458-468 [2.18.1-3]).

In retaliation for that attack, many of the Syrian and Grecian cities rose up against their Jewish inhabitants: Askelon slew 2,500 Jews, Ptolemais slew 2,000, and Tyre, Hippos, and Gadara each slew large numbers. There was a huge slaughter of Jews (50,000) in Alexandria (*Wars* 2:477-498 [2.18.5-8]).

And when Vespasian, Titus, and Placidus moved their armies through Galilee, Decapolis, and Perea, they cleared out all the remaining Zealot strongholds, which would have included **Pella** if there were any Zealots still stationed there (*Wars* 4:419-438 [4.7.4-6]).

This means that Pella suffered at least two devastating attacks during the course of the war. First by the Zealots, and then later by Vespasian’s forces. If there had been any Christians in **Pella** when the Zealots attacked, they would have been killed. And likewise, when Placidus came through that area with his cavalry, any remaining Zealots in Pella would have been killed. Pella was left desolate. This is why so many Jewish and Christian historians reject the idea that the Judean Christians who fled to Pella were still alive there after the war, and that some of them returned to Jerusalem after the war.

Cestius Gallus (the Roman legate in Antioch of Syria) was totally aware of the rebellion and was busily preparing the Roman response. He marched the twelfth legion to Ptolemais, along with Agrippa’s troops and many auxiliaries (about 30,000 soldiers) and began the attack in Galilee (*Wars* 2:499-505 [2.18.9]).

After Gallus’ Galilean campaign, he regathered his troops at Caesarea, and marched through Antipatris and Lydda, killing all resistance and burning their cities. Then he camped at Gabao, which is near Beth-Horon. Most of the Jewish men from those villages were in Jerusalem for the *Feast of Tabernacles* (Oct 4, 66). When they heard that Cestius had just attacked some of their nearby cities, they grabbed their weapons and ran to Gabao to fight the Romans (*Wars* 2:515-522 [2.19.1-2]).

Cestius then advanced to Jerusalem to attack the walls, and could have easily captured it, but for reasons which are not totally clear, he withdrew his troops and headed back toward Caesarea, with the Zealot soldiers right behind them.

Cestius suffered a humiliating defeat at *Beth-Horon* as they attempted to retreat to Caesarea (Oct 27, 66). They lost 5,300 footmen and 380 horsemen, plus much weaponry, equipment, baggage, and supplies. The Jewish rebels went dancing and singing back to Jerusalem with all of that plunder. And they saw this victory as a *sign from heaven* that God was on their side, and that they would ultimately be victorious over the Romans (*Wars* 2:555 [2.19.9]; *Life* 5-6, 22-24). The *false prophets* used this victory to deceive the people into supporting the war effort. They never imagined that this was merely the beginning of the end.

Immediately after Cestius was defeated, “many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink” (*Wars* 2:556 [2.20.1]). They knew the Romans would return soon to settle the score. A few months later Vespasian and Titus brought four Roman legions to *pour out God’s wrath* on the Jews (1 Thess 2:16; Rev 6:16-17; 11:18), and “completely shatter” the rebellion (Dan 12:7; Mal 4:1). †

Cestius Gallus . . . marched the twelfth legion to Ptolemais, along with Agrippa’s troops and many auxiliaries and began the attack in Galilee.

Perspectives

THE PAROUSIA TOOK PLACE in AD 70 when Jesus came through the Roman armies and judged apostate Israel and saved true Israel. The Mosaic Covenant came to an end and the New and Better Covenant was fully in effect by AD 70. Some may assert that the New Covenant was in effect in ca. AD 30, and that also is correct, for it was. An analogy for the time period from AD 30 to AD 70 would be a relay race runner handing off a baton from one old (Covenant) runner to the new (Covenant) runner. However, until the temple was destroyed in AD 70, this transition was a bit hazy for some. The end times generation was a generation of mercy towards repentance. Judgment had been declared in the Parable of the Tenants (Matt 21:33-46), as well as elsewhere, but not executed. There was still time to leave the Old Covenant and embrace the New.

Joel prophesied that the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon the last-days generation (Joel 2). We see the fulfillment in Acts 2 (and beginning even earlier with Mary, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, and Zechariah; Luke 1), when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon and into the believers at Pentecost. We also see subsequent outpourings throughout the book of Acts. Most Preterists believe that the Holy Spirit ceased being poured out after AD 70. We believe otherwise and offer three scriptural reasons as support. In addition, two common Cessationist misconceptions will be rebuffed.

Most preterists believe that the Holy Spirit ceased being poured out after AD 70.

1. The New Covenant is a perpetual Covenant

The New Covenant has no end. Since the Holy Spirit was given in conjunction with the New Covenant, we should expect the gifts of the Spirit to continue operating for the duration of the New Covenant, even though the Old Covenant ended in AD 70. The New and Better Covenant continued after AD 70 and so did the Holy Spirit and the activity thereof (Hebrews 8:6). The Holy Spirit did not become a spectator in Heaven after AD 70. The Holy Spirit is alive and active today as is His continuing full New Covenant ministry.

2. The use of “till” or “until” does not necessitate cessation

We present three scriptural examples of continuations beyond an end point.

*“For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death **till He come.**” (1 Cor 11:26)*

If Jesus did come in judgment during the lifetime of those first-century believers, are we to stop taking communion?

Does His coming in the clouds of judgment put an end to communion?

To interpret Scripture with Scripture, let us examine where else these two Greek words are used together. Four chapters away, in 1 Corinthians 15:25, we see the same English word “till” used for the same two Greek words “achre” and “hos.” These same two Greek words are in the same order. “*For He must reign **till** He hath put all enemies under His feet.*” (1 Cor 15:25) Does this usage of “till” convey termination? Did Jesus stop reigning after all enemies were put under His feet? Answer, no! For example, we might say to someone, “work on this till I get back.” Termination of work is not required, as one may continue working after the individual comes back. Another example is, “They walked over the hill, till we could see them no longer.” Their walking is definitely not terminated, the activity continues.

*“and, lo, I am with you always, even **unto** the end of the age. Amen.” (Matt 28:20)*

A different Greek word is used here, nevertheless, the same idiomatic usage is in play. [2193-*Heos*- continuance, until, of time and place, even until, unto, as far as, how long, till, hither, up, to a while.] Again, termination is highly improbable here. Is Jesus not going to be with His disciples after the end of the age? Surely He is, thus the activity of being with them always is not terminated. This same word is used in Matthew 26:29:

*“I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, **until** I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*

We know that termination of drinking wine did not take place:

*“And I appoint **unto** you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed **unto** me; That ye may eat and **drink** at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22:29–30, KJV 1900)*

Therefore, we can safely conclude the termination of communion did not occur in AD 70. It is still in effect today.

A final illustration would be my daughter’s athletic activities. She was one of the few girls on the Anthem Panthers flag football team (ages 11-14). I was her coach for four seasons, winning the Championship three times. I was with my daughter each season. After she exceeded the age limit, we formed a new interest; axe throwing. I was still with her. After axe throwing, we got into bicycle riding.

Charismatic Preterism

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I was still with her. Even though the activity changed over time, the loving relationship remained over time. We have a continuing New Covenant relationship with the Holy Spirit and His outpouring after AD 70, for generations thereafter, today and tomorrow.

3. The generational pattern of Scripture

Our final evidence for the continuing outpouring of the Holy Spirit will be the generational pattern or model found throughout Scripture. A prime example is the book of Judges. God was faithful to Israel. Generation after generation turned away from Him and His commandments, yet when they repented, He sent a judge to deliver them. Likewise, the Holy Spirit was poured out during the first New Covenant generation from about AD 30 to 70. It is consistent with Scripture for God to continue to be with the next generation, and the next, and so on (Deut 7:9, Ps 105:8, and Eph 4:13).

Did tongues cease after the 40-year transition period ca. AD 70 as Cessationists assert, citing 1 Corinthians 13:8? This forty-year period in history is spiritually significant and is a key generational model or pattern, for during it the old covenant was phased out and replaced by the new covenant, the “new thing” predicted by Isaiah (Is 43:19). This new thing was the move of God that ushered in the New Covenant age and established the Kingdom of God. Jesus and the New Covenant, and all the components contained within the New Covenant, were Isaiah’s “new thing.” The gifts of the Spirit are some of the tools God uses to build His assembly, and without Him nothing can be built (Matt 16:18). The first-century assembly was the foundational generation model for subsequent generations. Granted, God laid the foundation in the first century, but every subsequent generation contains individuals (living stones, 1 Peter 2:5) which must be added to that glorious assembly. If we limit the “new things” foretold by Isaiah and claim that they are no longer available, then we have only the blueprint with limited tools with which to build. In 1 Corinthians 14:26 the saints are told to bring the tools (gifts) when they gather, and to let all things be for edification (building up). In chapter 12 of Corinthians, we see nine manifestations of the Spirit. First, manifestations for *revelation*: word of knowledge, word of wisdom, and discerning of spirits. Second, we see manifestations of *speaking*: prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

If we limit the “new things” foretold by Isaiah and claim that they are no longer available, then we have only the blueprint with limited tools with which to build.

Third, we see manifestations of *power*: healings, miracles, and the gift of faith. The believers can, when in submission to the Spirit, be used in these areas of revelation, speaking, and power to build up one another. We all agree that the flesh profits nothing and only the Spirit gives life. Moving in the gifts is evidence of something heavenly manifesting on earth, and as we open ourselves to these spiritual gifts, we will become better equipped in the perpetual purpose of God in building His assembly in every generation.

All the prophets, from Samuel onward, foretold the time of first-century Israel (Acts 3:24). The first century was the fullness of time, the appointed time (Gal 4:4) to bring to a climax all the prophecies and all that was predicted by the prophets. Once we grasp this principle demonstrated in the first century, God can reveal more of His ways to us. This generational model shows us that God starts with the empowering of the Spirit in seed form and grows His followers to fullness and full maturity to the end of the Old Covenant age. It is essential that we don’t assume God retired in AD 70. During Christ’s earthly ministry He planted His Kingdom (Matt 13:1-9 & 18-23) and it continues to grow into maturity in each subsequent generation. This same kingdom is the stone that smashed the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision (Dan 2:37-45) and then became a mountain that grew and filled the entire earth. The main difference now is that there are no last days or end of time. Today we live in a perpetual age

that never ends.

Ezra and Nehemiah give us a pattern of God’s purpose in every generation. This pattern was further realized in the first century. There are three stages to this pattern in Ezra and Nehemiah: 1) The altar, 2) The house (temple), and 3) The holy city. The altar is the place of consecration and dedication and symbolizes our taking up the cross and following the Lord. Then there is the building of the spiritual house, which is eventually revealed as the heavenly Jerusalem, the expression of God in Christ on the earth in every locality. Every generation starts with childhood and moves through adolescence to full maturity. Throughout Christian history God is working toward a mature assembly and a mature harvest. The flesh and natural part of man hinders spiritual growth, and we see this throughout history. Unless each generation of the Lord learns to live and walk according

...continued on page 8

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to the spirit, that generation remains immature and brings less fruit to maturity. Those who dwell in the spirit tend to produce more fruit.

It is essential that the reader understand that fruit in the Scripture is defined in different ways. Of course, there is the fruit of the Spirit, as well as fruit representing souls that are saved, as expressed in John 15. The great commission in John is “go and bear fruit, (15:16), compared to Matthew, Mark, and Luke as “go and preach the gospel and make disciples of all nations.” There are other aspects of fruit but, because of space, I will refrain from going further. We must think of maturity not only on an individual basis, but growing together corporately into a mature man, the fullness of the stature of Christ (Eph 4:13). The gifts of the Spirit, the gifts of grace and the ascension gifts of Christ build the corporate assembly in a fully mature expression of God on this earth. This is why Paul exhorted the Corinthians to pursue spirituality (1 Cor 14:1). The gifts of the Spirit are essential to bring every generation to maturity and move from the “in part” stage to the “fullness” stage. Believing that the gifts have ceased causes the assembly to remain in an “in part” stage, stunted in the growth of life that is essential to inherit the Kingdom and take dominion. The ministry gifts, manifestations of the Spirit, and motivational gifts are all for equipping and building the temple so it can emerge into the heavenly Jerusalem. Cessationists have a blueprint but are in denial of all the tools needed to fully build what is stated in the Word. Tongues is the only gift in Scripture that says it builds up the individual, and once built up the believer can then better build up others. This does not mean a person cannot be built up unless they speak in tongues. They are members of the body of Christ and can be built up by others that are gifted and in turn build others up because they are equipped by those with the gifts to build. For example, someone who does not speak in tongues can be equipped by someone that has a teaching gift, and then become equipped with revelation. Equipped with that revelation, the one who does not speak in tongues ministers that revelation they received from the gifted teacher to build up other believers. Cessationists assert that there are no active gifts today, yet it is difficult to intentionally reject that some teachers today do in fact have the gift of teaching. The believers will always need solid teachers in every generation. While Cessationists assert that tongues ceased after AD 70, perhaps a better translation of the word ceased is in fact paused. Strong's Number: G3973 Greek Base Word: παύω

A second Cessationist misconception involves 1 Corinthians 13:9-13. At first glance it may appear to provide some support for that viewpoint:

Out of the part we are knowing, and out of the part we are prophesying. And while maturity is coming, then that which is out of the part will be put away. When I was a child I spoke randomly, I had the mindset of a child, I put things together as a child: but when I had become a man, I put away the immaturity. For the present we are seeing through a mirror, a riddle; but at that time face to face: presently I am beginning to know just as I am fully known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (TKB).

Jesus had twelve apostles, but sometimes only three accompanied Him (Luke 8:49-50; 9:28-36). They were emphasized. That does not mean the other nine apostles would no longer be active in the future. Scripture clearly contradicts that fallacious assertion, and history clarifies that many of the other apostles were used throughout the world declaring the gospel. Likewise, emphasizing the big three (faith, hope, love) does not preclude other gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit from future activity. Love is a fruit, not a gift (Gal 5:22-23). Are all fruits of the Holy Spirit except love void after AD 70? Moreover, the Bible does not list hope as either a fruit or a gift of the Holy Spirit. During World War II Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt were called the big three. They had the strength to remain against Hitler. The Australians, Canadians, Free French, Free Poles, New Zealanders, Partisans, and others also fought against Nazi Germany, even though they were not included in the big three. To paraphrase 1 Corinthians 13:9-13 then: Old Covenant immaturity was being put away during AD 30-70 as believers came into New Covenant maturity, similarly to the relationship Moses had with Yahweh as in Numbers 12:8 and Deuteronomy 34:10.

In closing, the three major Scriptural arguments in favor of the Holy Spirit continuing to outpour after AD 70 include:

1. The perpetual nature of the New and Better Covenant continuing past AD 70, which includes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
2. Three biblical examples of continuance after an apparent end point
3. The generational model or pattern demonstrated throughout the entirety of Scripture.

Two Cessationist misconceptions were addressed and rebuffed. Additional minor thoughts include that the Holy Spirit came upon some of the Old Testament Prophets even

Charismatic Preterism

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before AD 30. That does not contradict Acts chapter 2 and Joel chapter 2, which claim that the Spirit's outpouring was for the last days. To be consistent, if we don't negate the active ministry of the Holy Spirit prior to the last days, neither should we eliminate it post-AD 70. Moreover, since the fruit of the Holy Spirit is in effect today, shouldn't the gifts of the Holy Spirit also be in effect? Luke 11:11-13 reads: "*Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!*" ✝

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FORMER PRETERIST RODERICK EDWARDS has written two books attempting to refute the truth of Covenant Eschatology. This article will address what Edwards claims is the foundational issue that is being all but overlooked by all anti-preterists except him. (Interestingly, it “seems” at times that every former preterist thinks that they have found the “silver bullet” that others have missed with which to refute preterism. This makes, in a bit of irony, his own “private interpretation” to be the key to refuting preterism!) A few preliminary thoughts from Edwards’ book.

Edwards’ Bold Claim

Edwards claims, “Preterism by nature is a private interpreter’s paradise.” Of course, he is appealing to Peter’s statement:

... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20).

Edwards’ take on this passage is actually a distortion of what it says. He claims that no individual has the right to interpret the Bible for himself. This is where Edwards’ own presuppositions come into full view. Edwards believes in the authority of “Church history,” the creeds of the church and even the patristic writers. His claim is specious.

What is more than revealing is that Edwards cautions his readers to not hastily engage in biblical discussions with preterists because, as a rule, preterists have “often spent large amounts of time honing their arguments” (p 50). He warns, however, that because preterists have engaged in in-depth study for long hours, this does not prove that preterism is true. That is true. I know people who have spent hours reading the Bible but whose entire theology is misguided—like that of Edwards.

On pages 54f, Edwards gives lip service to Scripture, “the perspicuity of Scripture will win the day every time.” So, the Scriptures are (ostensibly) the ultimate authority and will win the day, but students should be cautious about engaging preterists on what the Bible says about eschatology! Instead, Edwards says that the only proper way to address preterism is “primarily one that asks preterism to explain how God could have failed to properly teach His people His eschatological plan.” Edwards says the proper way to defeat preterism is to not engage in discussions about what the Bible says about eschatology (*catch the power of that!*)—but to discuss God’s sovereignty! (Makes one wonder where Edwards would appeal to for an understanding of God’s sovereignty, does it not? Does he suggest a philosophical discussion of this issue, or a “biblical” discussion? And would not that discussion of the sovereignty of God not be a discussion of the private interpretations of the respective sides)?

Is Edwards’ appeal to 2 Peter valid? Notice what the text *does not say*. It does not say that individuals have no right to study the Scripture for themselves and determine the truth. Paul’s own teaching would refute that, when he spoke: “*how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)*” (Ephesians 3:3f NKJV). This text perfectly reflects 2 Peter 1:20—Revelation (prophecies and doctrine) did not originate in the minds of men. Revelations were given by the Holy Spirit to men who wrote them down, confirming that Word with miracles. Those written records were distributed to the churches and, when read, were to be understood—read that “interpreted”—by the readers / listeners. But in Edwards’ paradigm, the individual members had / have no right or authority to read, or to hear and understand. They must be told by someone else what it means. This smacks strongly of Catholicism, in which members have historically been told that they have no need—or responsibility—to study the Bible. The church will tell them what it says and means. I have had Catholics tell me this very thing! Of course, Edwards would have you to believe *him* when he seeks to inform his readers about the errors of preterism.

The point is that 2 Peter 1 does not disparage or condemn private (individual) study of the scripture. Notice Acts 17:11: “*The Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they studied the scriptures daily, to see if the things that he [Paul, DKP] said were true.*” All they had were the Scriptures—the Tanakh—and the individual Thessalonians studied the Old Testament to determine whether this man who claimed to be inspired was telling the truth! This utterly falsifies Edwards’ claims, and his disparagement of “private interpretation.” The Bereans did not have any Church council, creed, or Church history to tell them if Paul was right! They did not have any “rabbinic counsels” to guide them. They could not be guided by ANYTHING except Scripture, and when they used the Scripture, and Scripture alone (no history, no creed, no council) they came to the truth. Yet, Edwards cautions his readers against following the example of the Bereans!

It should be obvious that Edwards actually disparages reliance on *Sola Scriptura*. He castigates “private interpretation” based on a distorted application of 2 Peter 1:20. Scripture nowhere—EVER—devalues private study, individual interpretation as Roderick Edwards does. Thus, the very foundation of his objection crumbles to the ground.

Edwards’ Chief Objection

We move now to consider Edwards’ chief objection, based on his interpretation about the sovereignty of God. Here is what Edwards claims is the fundamental issue:

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“The challenge to preterism is then primarily one that asks preterism to explain how God could have failed to properly teach His people His eschatological plan.

. . . if God is sovereign and in control of His message and plan; it is clear His intention was that His new Covenant people; especially as manifested as the Church would comprehend His message and plan.

What preterism must do is get you to reject this notion. Preterism must get you to either believe one of three things:

1. Christians were not better off at understanding and teaching God's eschatological plan than the Jews.
2. God was unable to relate His plan in a way that Christians could understand and teach to future generations.
3. People actually corrupted what God related and thus foiled God's intention.

This is where every interaction with preterism must begin. It cannot and should not begin with an examination of a person's interpretation of any specific verse but rather it should begin with what the person thinks of God's sovereign ability to carry out His intentions.” (*About Preterism*, pp 54, 56-57).

So, for Edwards, although “the perspicuity of Scripture will win the day every time” he clearly holds the view that this is NOT true, since we are to discuss issues of God's sovereignty independently of what the Bible may say about eschatology. In reality, Edwards is demanding that a person accept his view of the sovereignty of God independently of what the Bible says about eschatology. Or at the least, we must view eschatology through the prism of his personal interpretation of God's sovereignty. This is a massive case of *petitio principii* (i.e., begging the question, assuming that his view of God's sovereignty is the correct view. And once again we would ask, where would Edwards go to prove his views of God's sovereignty? It would be to the Scriptures, which he says can't be interpreted privately—yet he does just that). A concise summary of Edward's view can be stated like this:

Point #1 - If God is sovereign, man could never distort it or prevent it.

One thing that must be kept in mind is that there are conditional and unconditional promises in Scripture (see Jer 18). The fact is that the Parousia, judgment and coming of the kingdom were never conditional. God's sovereignty

would ensure their fulfillment, in spite of man (cf. Psalm 2). So, Edwards needs to explain to his readers how it is that God's sovereignty failed to fulfill those hundreds of time indicators, all of which pointed to a first-century fulfillment.

Point #2 - Was God unable to relate His plan in such a way as to be understood?

What about the hundreds of temporal indicators that pointed—undeniably so—to the first-century fulfillment of the end of the age, Christ's Parousia, the judgment and resurrection? *Can God tell time?* And can He, *did He*, communicate truthfully about the imminence of those events in Scripture? Edwards denies that God communicated truthfully about the imminence of those events in Scripture. For Edwards, *soon* did not mean *soon*. *Shortly* did not mean imminent. *At hand* did not mean temporally near, and “*in a very, very little while*” meant, well, who knows what Edwards says about this! The reality is that man has, most assuredly, distorted and perverted God's time statements! Is that God's sovereign fault?

Point #3 - If preterism is true: “People actually corrupted what God related and thus foiled God's intention.”

There is an admixture of Edwards' presuppositional theology and bad logic, not to mention ignorance of Scripture at work here.

Remember, in Edwards' view of God's sovereignty, if God is sovereign man should not have been able to pervert the truth about eschatology to such an extent that the truth was lost. Consider the following:

Two Critical Facts to Consider

Fact #1 - Jesus Himself said that there would be a massive apostasy in the first century, so much so that “the love of the majority” would grow cold (Matt 24:10-12 NASV). That apostasy was to be so widespread that Jesus pondered, “*When the Son of Man comes, will he even find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:6-8; it would not matter if Edwards would apply this text to the future. The text still demands a massive apostasy prior to the Lord's coming, and that fact negates Edwards' objection). Not only so, but Paul said that before the Parousia and resurrection could occur “the *apostasia*” had to take place (2 Thessalonians 2:1-5).

One has but to read the New Testament epistles to know that a massive apostasy from the truth of the Gospel did happen in the early church:

*I marvel that you are turning away
so soon from Him who called you in ...continued on page 12*

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the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed (Gal 1:6-9).

Ask yourself the question: Was this apostasy God's will? Was He not sovereign enough to prevent it from happening? Did the Judaizers so pervert the Gospel of Christ as to thwart God's will for the Galatians—and the other churches? What about the doctrinal aberrations and distortions that took place at Corinth? Was that a violation of God's sovereignty? Was man more powerful than God?

These questions pose a serious threat to Edwards' preconceived doctrine of God's sovereignty. He is entirely ruling out that "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels*" (2 Cor 4:7) and that God granted to the earthen vessels the freedom—and responsibility—to read, to know, to understand, and to obey the truth.

Edwards poses a question about eschatology: The challenge to preterism is then primarily one that asks preterism to explain how God could have failed to properly teach His people His eschatological plan. More straw man argumentation based on Edwards' faulty view of God's sovereignty.

Did God communicate truthfully about the time of the Parousia (we can also ask if He communicated about the *nature* of that event, (Luke 17:20-21)—but we are keeping this as basic as possible). If He did, then any misunderstanding lies, *not with God's ability or will to communicate truthfully*, but either in mankind's ability to understand, or (and this is critical) their refusal to bring their understanding of the nature of the event into conformity with the timing of the event.

Consider: Did the apostles teach the truth *about God's grace*? Did God inspire them to such an extent that they knew and taught the truth about Grace? He clearly did! But what happened? Well, some heard Paul teach about "*the width and length and depth and height*" of God's love and grace, and came to the conclusion: "*let us sin that grace may abound*" (Rom 6:1f). Was that perversion of grace God's fault? Was He not in control of the Truth concerning grace? How is it that, "People actually corrupted what God related" about grace, as Paul declared they did? How could that perversion of grace become so dominant and widespread in the early church if God is in control and exercises His sovereignty *in the way Edwards suggests*?

Would Edwards argue that God—in His sovereignty—was unable (or unwilling) to communicate truthfully about the time of the end? After all, the Bible is very clear that, "*of that day and hour knows no man, no not the angels or the Son, but*

the Father only" (Mark 13:30-32). And keep in mind that in Revelation it was the Father (who knew the day and the hour of the consummation) that told John to write of the impending destruction of Babylon (the city where the Lord was crucified) "*the hour of her judgment has come.*" That "hour" was the hour of the coming of the Son of Man at the harvest of the earth, i.e., *the resurrection!* Thus, the Father was revealing the time! But of course, Edwards rejects that, and claims that we still don't know the time, even though the Father revealed it 2,000 years ago!

Fact #2 - The NT records that there was an apostasy / perversion of eschatological truth at a very early time.

Let me ask the reader to consider this. Edwards is proposing (claiming) that if God is truly sovereign (as he perceives that sovereignty) it would not have been possible for the first-century saints—or supposedly, the church through the ages—to so distort and pervert that truth to such an extent that it would result in loss of the truth. But there is another side to this issue of God's sovereignty.

In Edwards' view of God's sovereignty, i.e., in the Reformed / Calvinistic view, every single thing that is done or that occurs was / is *predestinated*. That means that if (since) there was an apostasy, a loss of proper understanding of eschatology, then that apostasy was foreordained / predestinated by God in His sovereignty! It is thus not a question—certainly not in Edwards' paradigm—of whether, "God is or isn't in control" (*About*, p. 59). His own argument is self-defeating. [Let me interject at this point that Edwards has been in the past a believer in the Reformed view. I could find nothing on his website that was informative as to his current beliefs in this regard but have no reason for thinking that he has changed his views. I am therefore basing my comments on what I knew from past interactions with him.]

Now, let's allow Scripture to answer the question about a large-scale apostasy:

... and consider that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation—



as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:15-16).



Did Peter believe that men were, when he wrote, perverting eschatological truth? Undeniably. In so perverting that truth, would they have been leading others to lose that truth? Who could deny that? Was that distortion of eschatological truth “fatal” to those who were leading others astray?

In an even earlier epistle, written circa 50-52 AD, Paul addressed those who were teaching that “*the Day of the Lord has already come.*” And in a later epistle, circa AD 66-67, he spoke of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were teaching “*that the resurrection is already past*” (2 Tim 2:18). We thus have several NT texts that inform us of a widespread apostasy, loss, and distortion of eschatological truth as early as AD 51! Was this a violation of God’s sovereignty? Was God not able to communicate sufficiently clearly to prevent this apostasy? How could this have happened if God is sovereign? (In Edwards’ view of sovereignty, it could NEVER have happened, but it patently did. Therefore, Edwards’ view of God’s sovereignty is severely called into question).

Side Bar: Of course, Edwards and his supporters would note that Paul condemned Hymenaeus and Philetus for teaching that the resurrection was past, and that preterists are guilty of the same error. But that is an anachronistic argument (at best). It does not address the issue here: Would God’s sovereignty prevent such distortions of the truth—as Edwards’ suggests it must? Patently not. Furthermore, one must ask: If the resurrection is what Edwards and all futurists envision, a time-ending, earth-burning time when all the dead / decomposed bodies come out of the grave, at the destruction of creation, how could anyone convince anybody that such an event was already past? See my book *How Is This Possible?* for an in-depth analysis of this, as well as my book *The Hymenaeian Heresy:*

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Another text informs us about eschatological apostasy in the first century—Romans 11. In that chapter Paul addresses the Gentiles who were claiming that Israel had been completely cut off (cf. 1 Cor 15—no resurrection for “the dead ones” was the claim there, the “dead ones” being Old Covenant Israel). The fact is that biblical eschatology is inextricably linked with the end of Israel’s covenant history. Thus, to claim that God was through with Israel was to affirm that the Day of the Lord had come (2 Thess 2:1-2). It was to affirm that the resurrection was fulfilled (2 Tim 2:18).

So, in Romans, ca. AD 57, we find a massive distortion and misunderstanding of the true story of eschatology and Israel’s role in it. (Lamentably, this same misunderstanding of the role of Israel in eschatology still dominates the millennial and postmillennial world). But, once again, in Edwards’ book and in his claims about God’s sovereignty, “God is either in control or He isn’t,” such an egregious and widespread abandonment of the truth of eschatology should never have taken place. And it should never have continued, as it most clearly did in the patristic writers.

How / Why Did That Apostasy Take Place

The question can be asked, what was the source of the loss of proper understanding of eschatological truth in the first century? I think one of the chief reasons was the Hellenization of the early church that caused the church to lose contact with the Hebraic understanding of apocalyptic language and covenantal thought.

Tom Holland notes how the inter-testamental writings are often appealed to by scholars and Bible students to help interpret the NT writings. He offers this cautionary note:

There is no doubt these documents give fascinating insight into this period of Judaism, but their relevance for the New Testament message must be questioned... They assume there is a strict equivalence in terminology and themes found in these writings and in the New Testament. They use intertestamental texts as the key for understanding the New Testament texts. This presupposes they share the same theological outlook and their meanings are transposable. However, this understanding is flawed. (Holland, Tom: *Romans: The Divine Marriage* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 23).

He also offers this:

While the vocabulary of the NT could be found throughout the Hellenistic world, it did not have the same meaning when it was used in the religious sense within the Jewish community.”

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(252); Holland notes that when a NT writer wrote in Greek it was “Hebrew in its mind-set and essential meaning.” (P. 52). (Tom Holland, *Contours of Pauline Theology*, Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-Shire IV20 1TW, Scotland, UK, 2004, 52.) (www.christianfocus.com) or, www.tomholland.instant.org.uk.

Other scholars agree. Graydon Snyder says of Hebraic eschatology:

“It affirms the absolute validity of God’s promises to mankind through Israel and of the historical locus of its fulfillment; yet denies that present history or the present institutions of man could lead to its fulfillment. . . . Paul proclaimed this eschatological form not only in terms of mythology of the cross, but also with a more full orb ed apocalyptic framework. In the Hellenistic world this apocalyptic form was understandably misunderstood. In some instances it was literalized dualistically (i.e. the myth becomes a cosmology) so that a struggle between flesh and spirit resulted. In some instances it was misunderstood chronologically (i.e. the myth becomes history), so that an actual end of time was expected . . . the chronological misunderstanding resulted in a problem regarding the delay of the parousia to such a point that the community was forced to identify that disjuncture with the baptism or the birth of Jesus rather than to speak of a radical disjuncture yet at hand. . . in other words, the problem of the delay of the parousia is a problem only in so far as the early community misunderstood and literalized the apocalyptic.” (*The Literalization of the Apocalyptic Form in the New Testament Church*, Chicago Society of Biblical Research, Vol. 15, (1969), 5-18).

David Instone-Brewer, although discussing the differences between Hebraic thought on marriage and divorce versus the Grecian understanding, makes some very pertinent observations:

The Early church was soon separated from the Synagogue and the Jewish world was itself cut off from part of its past by the destruction of Jerusalem. Background knowledge that could be taken for granted in the original readers of the New Testament disappeared from the Church. (David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Re-Marriage in the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002, Intro, p. X).

Finally, among many other sources that could be cited, Richard Hays offers this: “The Christian tradition early on lost its vital connection with the Jewish interpretative matrix in which Paul had lived and moved; consequently, later, Christian interpreters missed some of Paul’s basic concerns” (Richard Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination, : Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2005, 43).

Personally, I think that this Hellenistic divorcement from the Hebraic roots of apocalyptic is one of, if not the chief reason,

for the loss of understanding of eschatology. There are other factors perhaps, but Snyder is surely correct in his assessment. From reading Edwards’ book, it surely seems that he is either unaware of this reality, or simply chooses to ignore it. Now, why, in Edwards’ view of the sovereignty of God, did the Lord allow this divisive, destructive Hellenization of the early church? The reality of this loss is undeniable, the consequences of it are indisputable.

So, the point can be made that God could and did communicate sufficiently and authoritatively about His plan and His will. “*Holy men of God spake as they were moved along by the Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:19) and they wrote down that revealed Truth. God “guaranteed” the true revelation of His Truth and kept His promise. However, the Lord never guaranteed that every man would understand that revelation as it was intended. We know from Scripture itself that they did not. And we all know people who have no idea about audience relevance, about history, about language, about even the idea of “context,” about hermeneutic, about exegesis, who read the Bible a bit and declare themselves to be the final word about what it says! We witness this on social media virtually every day.

Is this God’s fault? Is it the fault of the revealed Word or the Spirit or the Father? Patently not. And it is inappropriate and wrong to call the sovereignty of God into question due to our own mistaken concepts of that sovereignty. Yet, Edwards wants to blame God for the misunderstandings, distortions, and perversions of Scripture when the consistent testimony of Scripture is that God communicated the Truth faithfully, but that it is man’s own fault for perverting the Truth that was faithfully revealed and recorded.

What About Martin Luther?

I and others have made the point that Luther was charged with being guilty of giving his own “private interpretation” in opposition to 1000 years of “church history” and the creeds. Edwards denies this, claiming that Luther actually appealed to the “ancient faith” and that he cited other theologians who taught what he did. This argument has no actual validity and flies in the face of the accusation brought against Luther. The emperor Charles, who was leading the trial proceedings, lodged this charge against Luther:



For it is certain that a single brother is in error if he stands against the opinion of the whole of Christendom, as otherwise Christendom would have erred for a thousand years or more.” (Cited in *Beyond Creation Science*, Timothy Martin and Jeffrey Vaughan).

So, the actual charge against Luther was that he was a “lone wolf” standing in opposition to 1,000 years of the creeds, the councils, the church, and church tradition. In other words, according to the leaders of Luther’s trial, contra Edwards, *they accused Luther of private interpretation*, of violating church history, of opposing the traditions of the church, the very thing that Edwards accuses preterists of doing. And look deeper.

Edwards says Luther appealed to theologians and “the ancient faith” of those who taught like he did. Well, did Luther appeal to any creed? No. Did he appeal to any council? No. In significant contrast and contradiction to Edwards, who suggests that it is not wise to engage in exegetical discussions based on Scripture alone with preterists, Luther took a clear stand:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves, I am bound by the Scriptures that I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot to do otherwise. Here I stand, God help me. (April 19, 1521). <https://www.expositormagazine.org/new-blog/2018/4/11/martin-luther-and-sola-scriptura>.

Not only this, but, when Edwards claims that Luther appealed to those other theologians, he is actually saying that Luther cited other men who gave their own “private interpretation” of Scripture. He certainly had no creed, or council, to support him. Thus, Edwards’ attempt to escape the force of Luther’s appeal to Scripture alone, and his refusal to rely on tradition, creeds and councils is destructive to Edwards’ claims. They are totally misguided and refuted.

A Closing Thought on Edwards and the Sovereignty of God

One should give careful thought to Edwards’ view of the sovereignty of God. Remember, Edwards claims that if God is

truly sovereign there could not have been a loss of the truth concerning eschatology. Compare that with the atheist’s argument on the sovereignty of God. The atheist argues that if God exists, and if God is good and sovereign, then evil could never exist. But evil surely exists. Therefore, either God does not exist, or God is either not good or not sovereign. But if God is not good, or not sovereign, then He is not God. {Note: This very argument was made by an atheist on YouTube: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=706602160468162>}

Does Edwards accept this view? No. But why not, since logically there is a one-to-one comparison between his concept of the sovereignty of God and the atheist’s argument. It seems patently clear to me, however, that Edwards needs to seriously rethink his claims about preterism and the sovereignty of God. His argument opens the door wide for the application of the atheist’s argument.

So, what have we seen in this consideration of Edwards’ Objection?

Edwards devalues and discourages the study of Scripture alone to settle issues of eschatology. Yet, we have shown *from Scripture* that from the very beginning of Christianity individuals went to the Scripture, and Scripture alone, to determine the truth.

Edwards attempts to deflect attention away from Scripture by focusing on the sovereignty of God, claiming that, “God is either in control or He isn’t.” (He never explains the source of his doctrine of the sovereignty of God, but of course, he would claim it is from Scripture. Yet he urges folks not to use Scripture alone. The irony here is incredible). This is obfuscation and exposes the fallacy of Edwards’ own view of the sovereignty of God. If God’s sovereignty was applied in the way that Edwards is suggesting, there would have never been such widespread apostasy as described in the biblical texts.

We have shown that Edwards’ own Reformed view of God’s sovereignty, which teaches that every single thing that happens was predestinated before the world began, means that the apostasy that did happen was in fact *predestinated by God*. Thus, Edwards’ claim that if God is truly sovereign—in total control of every event—there would have been no apostasy, is falsified by his own view of God’s sovereignty.

We have shown that:

1. There was a massive apostasy from the truth in the first century, and,
2. Part of that apostasy was about eschatology.

We have shown that Edwards’ attempt to “re-tell” and “re-frame” the story of Martin Luther is in fact wrong. It denies or falsifies the actual charges brought against Luther, and, more importantly, ignores Luther’s appeal to Scripture alone, the very thing that Edwards eschews.

With these facts indisputably established, Edwards’ entire argument about the sovereignty of God is falsified, and his Objection is Overruled! ✚



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It's about the time Jesus told His disciples that He would return—this (His) generation!

*It's about the time the New Testament authors told their readers Jesus would return—
soon, near, at hand, shortly!*

It's about time for a scriptural explanation other than delay!

It's about time for a "last days" view that doesn't conjure up gaps and parenthetical ages!



Preterism
Preterism
Preterism

. . . maybe it's about time you looked into it!