

**BACK TO THE FUTURE: PRESENT, PRACTICAL LESSONS
LEARNED FROM BIBLE PROPHECY**

by Thomas Ice
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What did you do interesting this past summer? Dave Hunt and I added a little extra heat to the atmosphere when we engaged Dominionists in a debate on July 29, 1989 in Dallas, Texas. The exchange was sponsored by *The John Ankerberg Show* and the *National Religious Broadcasters*. The Reconstructionists put up Greg Bahnsen and Ken Gentry to represent their side. However, a few weeks before the debate Gary DeMar replaced Bahnsen because Greg's poor health prevented him from travel. In the first debate (April 14, 1988) hosted by Dominion Press, Dave and I debated Gary North and Gary DeMar, also in Dallas. After the first debate DeMar complained "Hunt and Ice emphasized eschatology, while we stressed ethics . . . the debate topic was not on eschatology" (*American Vision*, June, 1988). Actually the topic **did** include eschatology since eschatology is one of the two major distinctives of Dominion theology with which many Christians disagree. However, DeMar got his wish in this second debate. We mainly discussed ethics—theonomic ethics.

THEONOMIC ETHICS

What is theonomic ethics? Simply, *it is the belief that all Biblical Law, especially the Law given through Moses (this comprises the majority of the Bible's law) carries over into the current church age, unless it is specifically fulfilled or done away with by New Testament Scripture.* Greg Bahnsen has coined a term for this theory which teaches that Christians are under the Mosaic Law called "theonomy." *Theonomy* comes from two Greek words meaning "God" and "Law." "The Christian," declares Bahnsen, "is obligated to keep the whole law of God as a pattern for sanctification and that this law is to be enforced by the civil magistrate where and how the stipulations of God so designate" (*Theonomy*, p. 34). This means, according to theonomic ethics, that Christians are under the Mosaic Law as a way of life, since their use of "law of God" includes the Mosaic Law. But does the Bible really teach this? Was not the Law of Moses given to Israel (Psalm 147:19-20) and was it not temporary (Gal. 3:25), having been fulfilled by Christ? Are not Christian believers under the new, spiritually oriented Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2)? The answer is a clear yes, if you follow the Bible.

Ivory Tower Discussions?

Often Christians view discussions over these kinds of issues as something which only has theoretical value and is a wasted "ivory tower" debate. However, whether or not something is taught in Scripture, which is what the debate is over, should be the basis for a Christian's practice. This is why many of the issues discussed in the debate surrounding Dominion theology are important; because they impact every believer right where we live. An example of this is whether or not Christians are under the Law.

The Unity of the Mosaic Law

During the debate Reconstructionists tried to divide the Law of Moses into three areas: civil, moral, and ceremonial (Dispensationalists are not the only ones who make divisions). They argued that the "ceremonial law" had been fulfilled by Christ, but the two other categories remain for Christians to follow. At least two major problems arise with this argument: *First*, the Bible does not divide the Law into these three sections

(this is an invention of men) it uses Law to refer to an organic unit when speaking of Moses' Law. *Second*, the New Testament (NT) specifically includes references to what Reconstructionists classify as "moral law" when it speaks of the Law being abolished. Paul in Romans 7:1-6 twice says that the Law has been abolished (4, 6) and then in verse 7 refers to one of the ten commandments (classified by Reconstructionists as "moral law") as an example of the Law which Scripture says we have been released from.

The Law of Moses was given to a specific people (Israel), to be followed in a specific location (the land of Israel), to deal with their specific situation. Therefore, the Law cannot simply be obeyed today by the Church, as was expected of Israel when it was given to that nation. This is why modern attempts to obey the Law of Moses must be coupled with a reworking of the Law so that it can be applied in a more general, less specific way. This results in making principles out of the Law, rather than merely following the Law. Instead the Law given to the Church for the current age is not linked to a specific location and governmental situation because its character fits the purpose for this age.

Covenantal Confusion

Reconstructionists argue that the Mosaic Law is necessary today as standards of righteousness in the realm of civil government and the basis upon which God will judge all peoples in the world. Wayne House and I noted in our book, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* that the jurisdiction for which the human race is held accountable before God is the Adamic Covenant derived from Genesis 1 and the restatement of it after the flood in the form of the Noahic Covenant of Genesis 9, which added the jurisdiction of civil government over the nations. God justly judges and governs His creation on the basis of the Noahic Covenant. If the details are missing, as Reconstructionists try to argue is the case when Christians do not impose the Mosaic Law today, then the same would have been the case for all peoples of the earth before the giving of the Law of Moses (1440 B.C.). Yet God judged mankind in the flood, before the Law was given and civil government functioned before Moses as well. However, the nations derived their laws (whether through a law written on their hearts,—Rom. 2—a development of the principles of "man as God's image" and "the punishment fits the crime," stated in Gen. 9:6, or perhaps an oral tradition based upon unwritten revelation) they did without the Law of Moses. So it would not be valid, as Reconstructionists insist, that a Christian who is only under the Law of Christ and not the Law of Moses is antinomian and does not have a valid basis for specific laws to guide civil government. Besides, one does not have to be *under* the Law of Moses to *apply* the "wisdom" of the Law of Moses in today's world. The only people in the history of the world who had a covenantal obligation to do so has been the nation of Israel. The Church is obligated to fulfill the Law of Christ and to keep His commandments.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

The more a believer thinks about the implications and attempts to take seriously the details of the Law, the more he should realize that it is impossible to do what Christ has already done—keep the Law of Moses. This is a question which has far reaching practical implications for the life of a believer right where he lives, right where the rubber meets the road. It makes a big difference in our practice if we are to keep the Law, or if we are not to keep the Law. Paul teaches in Galatians 3 and 4 that Christ has set us free from the bondage of the Law, not so that we can be lawless as the

Reconstructionists insist, instead, so that we can walk in the newness of the motivation of the Holy Spirit. This is not viewed by Paul as a setback, as do modern Pharisees, rather it is seen to be the passage from childhood to maturity. Yet Reconstructionists call for us to regress into infancy by abandoning the motivating grace of God for slavery under the Law. We stand with the writer of Hebrews who wants believers to leave “the elementary teaching about the Christ [as revealed in the Law of Moses], let us press on to maturity” (6:1-3).

POSTMILLENNIAL ESCHATOLOGY

The neglected item in the John Ankerberg debate was eschatology. Most of the time was taken up by the discussion of theonomy. After this second debate, Ken Gentry mentioned to me that he wished we had dealt more with eschatology. I guess you cannot always please everyone all of the time. I agreed with Ken, since there are serious differences between us in the area of prophecy. In the remainder of this article I want us to see some examples of how one’s view of prophecy can affect in a radical way how they live the Christian life by changing the way we view NT prophecy itself, the role of Satan in the world today, the role of suffering and humiliation, the Kingdom and the Church, and whether or not apostasy is spreading.

NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY VIEWS

Preterist Postmillennialism

Christ's Coming (Jerusalem Judgment)	Second Coming
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A.D. 33	A.D. 70	(Church/Present Age) Millennium/Kingdom
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Indicates Application of NT Prophecy

Futurist Premillennialism

Rapture	Second Coming	End of Mill
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(Church/Present Age)	7 yr.	1000 yr.
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A.D. 33	Tribulation	Mill/Kingdom
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The Biblical Significance of Prophecy

Most Christians think that eschatology, or prophecy, is not an area in which the Saints should expend significant energy in disagreement. It has often been viewed as an area of secondary importance—an intramural debate. This attitude is wise when it

comes to dotting the “i”s and crossing the “t”s between systems of prophecy which have much more in common than they do differences. However, this is not the case in the debate over prophecy between those in the Dominion camp and many on the other side. In fact, I hope to show that there are major differences between the two; so much so that the *practical* differences are as great as night and day—past and future.

It is possible that the Bible deals with prophecy more than any other subject in the Bible. “The number of prophecies in the Bible is so large,” declares Walter Kaiser, “and their distribution so evenly spread through both Testaments and all types of literary forms that the interpreter is alerted to the fact that he or she is dealing with a major component of the Bible.” (*Back Toward the Future: Hints for Interpreting Biblical Prophecy*, Baker, 1989:20) Kaiser reports that J. Barton Payne calculated that 27% of the Bible deals with prophecy. Only Ruth and Song of Solomon in the OT and the tiny Epistles of Philemon and 3 John in the NT have no prophetic portions at all. “The highest percentages of predictive material are found in the small books of Zephaniah (89 percent), Obadiah (81 percent), and Nahum (74 percent). In the New Testament, the honors go to Revelation (63 percent), Hebrews (45 percent), and 2 Peter (41 percent).” (Kaiser:21) W. H. Griffith-Thomas has noted that one out of twelve verses in the NT deal with the Second Coming. In the Epistles, he says the Second Coming is found in one out of ten verses. Such preoccupation by God in His Word on this subject is hardly something that should be relegated to the back burner or an intramural discussion; rather one’s views on this matter will greatly impact his view of present Christian living as I hope to show.

Postmillennialism: a Life Changing Experience

In the early 1980s I recall reading an article by Dominionist David Chilton on the changes in his perspective of Christianity he had undergone since he had become a postmillennialist. He said that it was a life changing experience. The major point of the article was that he underwent a major shift in thought when he realized, according to his new belief, that he would not live to see the second coming of Christ. In other words, he no longer had the Blessed Hope of Christ’s any moment return. Christ could not return until after God’s people had defeated His enemies and brought heaven to earth, which would take longer than his life time. “Therefore”, reasoned Chilton, “I will live my full life out without the expectation of the Return of Christ.”

While not all Dominion, Reconstructionists, like Ken Gentry, David Chilton, Gary North, and Gary DeMar, are preterist, postmillennialists, however this view dominates their literature and followers and is gaining an increasing following in other circles as well. Therefore it is the preterist view that I will be dealing with in the remainder of this article. Also, the preterist, postmillennial view is the most extreme position among Dominionists, in addition to being the majority stance within Reconstructionist circles, especially when compared to my own dispensational, premillennial, pretribulation rapture viewpoint.

Definitions

“The overwhelming majority of the eschatological events prophesied in the Book of Revelation have already been fulfilled,” declares Reconstructionist Gary North. “This interpretation of New Testament prophecy has long been known as *preterism*, meaning ‘from the past tense,’ i.e., the preterist tense: over and done with” (“Publisher’s Preface” in Ken Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 1989: xi). Since prophecy and subjects relating to prophecy dominate virtually every page of the NT this means that most of the NT does

not refer directly to the Church today, but rather to Believers who lived during the forty year period between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Virtually nothing in the Bible refers to future events. Therefore, most of the NT applies only in an indirect way to Christians today, as is true with most of the Old Testament (OT) also. Thus, Reconstructionists see the Bible as a whole made up of laws or principles that generate ideas, theory, and guidelines for government, education, law, economics, music, the arts, religion, personal behavior, and all of society. Some have called it a blueprint.

"The *futurist* generally believes that all of the visions from Revelation 4:1 to the end of the book are yet to be fulfilled in the period immediately preceding and following the second advent of Christ," says Merrill Tenney (*Interpreting Revelation* :139). This is my view and it means that Believers are living in the Church Age, the last interval of time leading up to the final period of history known in the OT and NT as the Kingdom and in Revelation 20 as the Millennium (1000 year reign of Christ upon earth). NT prophecy is yet future to the current age and therefore, we do have specific responsibilities relating to our conduct as Christians during the present time, often in relationship to the future. I believe that virtually no passages relating to future events predicted in the NT were fulfilled in A.D. 70 but are yet to be accomplished.

Reconstructionists are postmillennialists. Postmillennialists believe that we are currently living in the Kingdom and through the Christianization of the world the earth will increasingly take on a millennial nature. After this Edenic state has been maintained for a while Christ will return to a victorious Church and end history with a final, general judgment.

Premillennialism, which I believe, teaches that Christ will return in judgment at the end of this age, but prior to His 1000 year rule in Jerusalem. Upon His return, He will bring about His godly rule by removing much of the curse and producing Edenic conditions upon the earth.

A major difference between the two positions is that postmillennialists believe that we are now in the Kingdom and the Church is commissioned as Christ's present agent to effect not only worldwide conversion of the nations, but also to bring about an ideal society and environment. On the other hand, Premillennialists believe that this is not the Millennial Kingdom, thus our task is primarily evangelism, discipleship, and godly living while watching and waiting for Christ to return Who will then bring about the wonderful conditions of the future Kingdom.

PRACTICAL DIFFERENCES

Efforts have been made by both Premillennialists and Postmillennialists to say that we just disagree doctrinally, but that practically we can get together and work toward the same goal. It is certainly true that all Believers in Christ have much in common, however, we are talking in this instance about whether or not actions that flow out of our views of prophecy can be merged. I do not think that they can, if indeed we are acting in accordance with our beliefs. Why? Because the beliefs of Reconstructionist teach that involvement by the Church in evangelism, without a corresponding and equal effort in society is displeasing to God and brings down upon the Church and society in general God's judgment. On the other hand, the premillennial view does not require the Church to achieve a certain level of activism in society in order for Christ to be pleased with the performance of His Body. The consistent outworking of premillennialism would require the Church to be almost exclusively involved in

evangelism and nurture of the saints, while praying to God to restrain evil in society so that opportunities for evangelism will be available (1 Tim. 2:1-5).

Blessed Hope or Blessed Hoped?

Recently as I was teaching through the book of Titus, I came across the passage which says that Believers are to be *“looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”* (2:13). Immediately I wondered what Reconstructionists taught about this passage. I did not recall a conversation with a Reconstructionist, nor did I remember reading an exposition of their view on this passage. I then looked through most of their writings and found that they had not, to my knowledge, even dealt with the passage. But it raised the issue: Does this passage refer to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem or the Second Coming? As I thought through the implications of both possibilities for the preterist, I came to realize that they would more than likely have to categorize this passage with the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem in order to maintain the consistency and integrity of their approach. But what does that do for the application of the passage to Christians today? Nothing! This would mean that it was a hope only for those Christians living between the time the Epistle was written and the destruction of Jerusalem—A.D. 65-70. If a preterist tried to say that Titus 2:13 is a reference to the distant Second Coming, then on the basis of whatever argument they used to defend a future fulfillment, that same argument could be used in just the same way against most if not all the other passages which they say were fulfilled in A.D. 70. Therefore, the preterist approach seems to demand an A.D. 70 fulfillment in Titus 2:13. Now let’s look at the implications of such a fulfillment.

The Epistle of Paul to Titus teaches Believers that Jesus Christ expects His Church to both believe and practice the right things. After setting out the guidelines for selecting elders and exposing the evil deeds of false teachers in chapter one, Paul instructs Titus to *“speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine”* (2:1). This is followed by practical and specific injunctions for various groups of Believers. Paul concludes the section in verse 10 by noting that the purpose for this godly behavior is *“that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.”* Just as a woman uses makeup to highlight the attractive features of her face, so the Christian is to follow Paul’s admonitions which will serve to highlight the beauty of Christianity.

Paul builds upon the previous section by noting that Christ’s first coming (appearance) was for the gracious purpose of providing salvation to all men (all kinds of men, not every person) (2:11). Paul says that Christ’s appearance the first time impacts the lives of Believers in the *“present age.”* Titus 2:12 says, *“instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.”* The grammar of the next verse (2:13) relates the activities of 2:12 to activity of *“looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”* If 2:13 is a reference to A.D. 70, then the *“present age”* in 2:12 would have ended when 2:13 was fulfilled. Therefore, the total admonition of 2:12 was temporary and applicable only to Christians up until A.D. 70. This would mean that the instruction *“to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age”* would not directly apply to the current age, but to the past age which ended in A.D. 70 when *“the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”* appeared in the destruction of Jerusalem. This would sadly have to be the practical implications of the preterist view as applied to this passage.

Practical application of the Christian life is impacted in two major areas depending on whether Titus 2:13 is a past prophecy or a future event. First, if this is a past event,

the *motivation* of the Blessed Hope as it relates to living a godly life in “*the present age*” (2:12) would not apply to Believers living today. Second, the *ethical* admonitions of 2:12 would not apply to Believers living today, since the basis for compliance would have been fulfilled in A.D. 70.

The Opening of Pandora’s Box

The story of Pandora’s Box is an apt illustration of how one act can have a wide, multiplying effect upon many other issues. The belief, that there “are no major eschatological discontinuities ahead of us except the conversion of the Jews (Rom. 11) and the final judgment (Rev. 20)” (North:xii) has a wide and great impact upon NT prophecy, especially the Epistles. **I believe the application of the preterist interpretation virtually wipes out the *direct* application of the teaching of the Epistles to our current age.** Just as the Law of Moses was given by God to Israel to be the focus of their dispensation, so the NT Epistles are the focus, giving vision and direction to the Church during “this present age.”

If the preterist interpretation is left to stand, and it is applied systematically, then the practical result is that almost all of the instructions in the Epistles were designed to guide Believers through the forty year period from A.D. 30-70. A new dispensation began in A.D. 70, and is the one we are currently under at the present time. According to this view, we are now in the Millennium, or at least the Church is responsible to live according to the standards of the Millennium. On the other hand, the instructions of the Epistles are written to a people who are not yet in power, but are still oppressed. Therefore, a certain ethical posture is admonished, different in many ways (similar in some) from that which is based upon a people who are actually ruling over the world. True, Dominionists often quote many passages from the Epistles in ways that apply to today, but it is my contention that they are inconsistent with the logic of their interpretation. Note the following examples!

Satan: Bound or Loose?

The preterist view relating to the current work of Satan and the demons should reflect their theology on the subject. According to the preterist view, Satan is currently bound (Rev. 20:2-3) and crushed (Rom. 16:20). The enemy was not just defeated *de jure* (legally) at the cross, but has been crushed *de facto* (in fact). Therefore, there is no spiritual road block prohibiting Christians from reigning and ruling now—kingdom now. On the other hand, if the binding and crushing of Satan and his company is still future, as I believe the Bible teaches, then the commands in the Epistles make sense in this present age. Commands such as “*resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (Jas. 4:7b). “*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world*” (1 Pet. 5:8-9). “*Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity*” (Eph. 4:26-27). “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly place*” (Eph. 6:12). These are instructions which are the very tactics to be applied by the Believer in this present age because we are not yet in the Millennium; Satan has not yet been bound and crushed. True, Christ has the victory at the cross, and *de facto* victory is certain, but not yet applied in this area. Yet if Satan is bound and crushed, as the Preterist interpretation insists, then they are unfaithful to their understanding of Scripture to apply the above passages to the

Christian life today, as they often do. A crushed and bound enemy does not prowl, or wage war, etc. This becomes crystal clear when one realizes that Satan resumes his war with God only after he has been “*released from his prison*” (Rev. 20:7b). Therefore, he is not bound in the present, but active, and this is why the outline a strategy consistent with that fact.

The Sufferings Of This Present Time

The Kingdom/Millennium is to be a time of peace and rest for God’s people. [For Scriptural documentation, hundreds of verses relating to the preceding sentence and conditions of the Millennium, see J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, (Zondervan, 1958):476- 546.] The era preceding the Kingdom will be one of suffering and struggle. Again, if the preterist interpretation is correct, then the instruction of the NT Epistles on the issue of suffering only directly applied to Believers until A.D. 70, because we would now be in the time of Millennial peace, not “*the sufferings of this present time*” spoken of by Paul (Rom. 8:18).

Endurance of unjust suffering is a major theme in the Epistles. In fact, the NT paints it as one of the major ingredients which God brings into our life to produce Christ-like character in His children (Heb. 12:1-17). Peter notes, “*For this [unjust suffering] finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. . . . But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God*” (1 Pet. 2:19-20). Revelation promises a future reward of co-rulership with Christ to believers who have remained faithful and loyal to Christ during this present age of humiliation (Rev. 3:21; see also 2:25-28). Revelation 3:21 not only promises future rule with Christ after this current age of humiliation, but notice it also makes a distinction between Christ’s future kingdom and the Father’s current rule. “*He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*”

According to the Preterist interpretation, the period of unjust suffering and humiliation ended in, you guessed it, A.D. 70. The current Kingdom age is now a time for Believers to rule with Christ, stressing His justice and visible success; not a time of humiliation while looking forward to a future reign. Reconstructionist believe in a present rule, not suffering and humiliation, of Believers. David Chilton declared, “*Christians rule with Christ in His Kingdom now, in this age*” (*The Days of Vengeance* :587). North chimes in, “*Now His kingdom is of this world. Now His followers do fight for His honor*” (*75 Bible Questions* :170). Why should Christ’s followers now fight for His honor, according to the revision of North, instead of continuing to follow Christ command? “*My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm*” (John 18:36). Another way of stating the issue is when will the last (the humble=Christians) be first (the exalted, rulers)? Christ stated in Matthew 19:30, “*But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.*” If we are in the Kingdom/Millennium at this time, as an A.D. 70 fulfillment of prophecy would demand, then it is time for Christians to no longer be last, but to be first, as North and company are saying. However, if the preterist view is incorrect, as we are convinced it is, then the scores of passages instructing us regarding our posture of suffering and humiliation apply to the current times, while our rule is yet future.

Present and Future Apostasy?

"If preterism is true," says Gary North, "then most of the prophesied negative sanctions in history are over" (*Before Jerusalem Fell* :xii). I would say, if premillennialism is true, then great apostasy lies ahead. Does the current Church age become increasingly apostate concluding with "the Great Apostasy" during the Tribulation, or were the scores of passages speaking about apostasy fulfilled in A.D. 70, as the preterist interpretation demands? "The 'Great Apostasy' happened in the first century. We therefore have no Biblical warrant to expect increasing apostasy as history progresses; instead, we should expect the increasing Christianization of the world," declares David Chilton (*Paradise Restored* :225).

This is another area where large sections of the NT, especially the Epistles and Revelation, would have to be adjusted away from the meaning Christians have historically seen in those passages. An example of this is seen in how the different approaches would handle Paul's warning in 2 Timothy 3. Paul begins by saying that "*in the last days difficult times will come*" (3:1). The "last days" likely refers to the whole of the current Church age, or perhaps it is a general reference to the final portion of the current Church age. Either way, it is a reference to the period of time before the final phase of history (the Tribulation and Millennium). Paul goes on to describe how these times will be characterized by men who "*will be lovers of self,*" . . . (3:2) "*rather than lovers of God*" (3:4). The general course of "the last days" are described as a time when "*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived*" (3:12-13). Therefore, if "the last days" have already come and gone, we should expect that the persecution of the godly should be absent and "evil men and impostors" should not "proceed from bad to worse." This directly applied to events before A.D. 70, but not after that time since the preterist interpretation would remove this passage from present and future significance. But if their view is incorrect, which it most certainly is, then this passage is saying that the current Church age is a time when these traits, which start out bad, only get worse.

Apostasy increases, not decreases, during the current Church age, with an even greater time of unfaith-fullness ahead known as "the apostasy" (2 Thess. 2:3) which occurs during the future Great Tribulation. Observe the list of passages in the NT which speak of apostasy and remember that if the preterist view is correct, these no longer relate to the present or future, but were fulfilled in the past. The following is a list of passages which speak about apostasy from the Epistles only: Rom. 1:18-31; 10:16:17-18; 2 Cor. 11:1-15; 13:5; Gal. 1:6-9; 5:1-12; Phil. 3:2, 18-19; Col. 2:4-23; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 4:1-3; 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:11-26; 3:1-4:1-5; Titus 1:10-16; Heb. 2:1-4; 3:7-1:13; 5:12-6:12; 10:26-31; 12:14-17; 1 Pt. 3:19-20; 2 Pt. 2:1-22; 3:3-10; 1 Jn. 2:18-23; 3:4-12; 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 9; Jude 3-23. Similar lists could be made on other subjects such as we have already covered. As you can see it would only take a few of these lists before the special instructions written by Jesus Christ to His Church have all been relegated as ancient history, not applicable to the present.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While the preterist system of interpretation has been around for a few hundred years it has never received a wide and popular following within the ranks of evangelical Christianity. In times past it has had a significant degree of followers among "scholars." However, the majority (not all) of preterist advocates have been from the liberal or moderate liberal philosophy of Biblical interpretation. You can see where a "scholar" who is anti-miracle would be greatly attracted to an interpretation of

“prophecy” which does not require great emphasis upon the predictive feature. True, Reconstructionists do believe in the miracles of the Bible and they believe in the predictive element of prophecy, however, it seems strange to me that they would be attracted to an approach which has been championed in the past by liberals in order to explain away the miraculous nature of God’s Word.

Perhaps a major reason why many Reconstructionists are drawn to the preterist approach is because it is at so many points the exact opposite of the Dispensational, futurist approach which they love to hate. It is also interesting to note that while “Old Princeton” and to a much lesser degree Westminster Seminary were Postmillennial, to my knowledge, not one of their Biblical, or theological scholars held the preterist approach. Many of these men lived at a time when the preterist approach was at the height of its popularity. They apparently thought it missed the mark.

Coming at Death?

Ken Gentry in a recent book stating and defending the preterist interpretation said that the Scripture “teaches that Christ comes . . . to believers at death” (*The Beast of Revelation* :25-26), and cited as his proof-text John 14:1-3. John 14:3 says, “*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*” Leon Morris has noted in his commentary, “The reference to the second advent should not be missed” (*The Gospel According to John* :639). However, the preterist interpretation forces the Believer to miss just such an emphasis and is another example of the radical shifts in Biblical interpretation, theology, and application one must undergo to make such an approach “work.”

Contemporary Reconstructionists make a shamble of Scripture in two major ways: First, their view of theonomy puts the Christian under the Law of Moses, which the NT says we have been freed from. Second, the preterist approach to prophecy virtually destroys the impact that the NT, especially the Epistles and Revelation, is to have on the Believer during the current Church age. Reconstructionist theology ends up mishandling God’s Word as it relates to the past, present, and future.

Next time someone tells you that prophecy is not important. You might suggest to them that it depends on what you believe about prophecy. As we have seen from this article, prophecy can be very important, even greatly affecting how we live in the present. We have seen that one’s view of prophecy can affect in a radical way how they live the Christian life by changing the way we view NT prophecy itself, the role of Satan in the world today, the role of suffering and humiliation, the Kingdom and the Church, whether or not apostasy is spreading, and certainly many other areas not mentioned. While those holding to a preterist position do not necessarily, in many cases rarely, apply their position as I have stated, nevertheless, they should either become consistent in the application of their views or abandon their interpretation.