

Answering Don K. Preston

By Kyle Pope

In 2019, Truth Publications, Inc. published a book I wrote entitled *Thinking about AD 70: Challenging Realized Eschatology* (Athens, AL: Truth Publications, Inc., 2019). Drawn from studies I had done with some struggling with these issues, the book challenged the false doctrine known as realized eschatology, full-preterism, or the AD 70 doctrine. In the spring of 2021, from May 28 through November 19, Don K. Preston, the most prominent current spokesman of this doctrine, produced twenty-one videos spanning over ten hours of play time devoted to a review and attempted refutation of the book. The entire series of videos may be viewed on YouTube: MrDonPreston, playlist “Responding to Kyle Pope”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8z_GvsU3Co&list=PLhTk2RamIlg8ttUee6fChPJod0vrukDAfB. The reader should note that twenty-one videos are posted but there are only twenty actual reviews. Video number ten was filmed and posted twice with no substantial difference in content. Preston identifies both as “video number ten.”

I will respond to Preston’s videos in a single video posted on the church website and Facebook page of the Olsen Park church of Christ for whom I preach, in this written explanation of the material in the video, and in an article summarizing my response published in the April 2022 issue of *Truth Magazine*. The video and written version can be accessed here: <https://www.olsenpark.com/SpecialStudies/answering-don-k-preston.html> or on the Facebook page of the Olsen Park church of Christ. This will constitute the only response I make, and I have no interest in pursuing this any further.

What the AD 70 Doctrine Teaches

For those unfamiliar with this strange doctrine it can be summarized as follows: 1. All OT apocalyptic cosmological language (i.e. the sun turning to darkness, the moon to blood) was only figurative of significant judgments of God and did not foreshadow any future literal fulfillments. That demands that all NT texts with similar language must also be interpreted figuratively. 2. All biblical time statements (e.g. shortly, quickly, soon, immediately) must be interpreted hyper-literally with fulfillments coming within the generation to whom they were first addressed. 3. Jesus spiritually came in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 and will never return again. There will be no future universal judgment day—all souls are judged individually when they die. 4. A spiritual resurrection of souls coming out of hades occurred in AD 70 and there will never be a future universal bodily resurrection. 5. The physical universe will never be destroyed, and evangelism will continue eternally. 6. For these doctrines to be true the book of Revelation must have been written before AD 70 and the Olivet Discourse (i.e., Matt. 24-25 and its parallels in Mark and Luke) can only address the destruction of Jerusalem and not a future final judgment.

The Passing of the Old Law

In his first video, Preston introduced an argument that he returned to in most of the subsequent videos about the passing of the law. He falsely asserted that I teach that “God was done with Israel at the cross” and the old law was “no longer applicable” after the cross. I never said that! He repeated this false claim throughout the entire series of videos. What I teach is that, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4, NKJV). In establishing His law, Christ, took “away the first that He may establish the second” (Heb. 10:9b). After the cross, all men are now “under law toward Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21). This side of the cross the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) has been redefined to include only those of faith in Christ (Rom. 9:6; 2:28-29; Gal. 3:7, 28-29)—a point Preston never addressed in any of his videos.

Because of flawed arguments they make connecting resurrection with the passing of the law (1 Cor. 15:56), Full-preterists must argue that Mosaic Law was still binding upon Jews until AD 70. Preston argues that if Mosaic Law was “taken out of the way” (Col. 2:14), then nothing prophesied within the Law could still await fulfillment or have any application. He cites Paul’s application of Deuteronomy 32:21 and 43 to his own ministry to the Gentiles as his proof of this (Rom. 10:19; 11:11; 15:10).

That is a seriously flawed argument that cannot be scripturally sustained. We can demonstrate this from Genesis 49:10. In this text, the Holy Spirit preserves the prophetic messianic blessing Jacob gave to Judah: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.” Most everyone would agree that this points to Jesus and the law, reign, and dominion He would bring. Yet, it was written in the Torah (the first five books of the OT) generally considered to constitute the heart of Mosaic Law. It records Divine revelation that actually came before the law was given to Moses. So, was this a part of the law that governed the Patriarchs? If so, does that mean that Patriarchal Law is still in force today because “the obedience of the people” that it prophesied is being fulfilled in obedience to Shiloh, the Messiah? No. What if we consider it merely part of Mosaic Law? Preston’s own view argues that Mosaic Law ended at AD 70, but if “the obedience of the people” was prophesied under Mosaic Law and yet continues today, does that mean that Mosaic Law is still binding? Of course not!

When one law is superseded by another it means that the law which has replaced it has become that which defines sinful and righteous behavior. It does not mean that the prior law loses any value or applicability. Paul wrote, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

The Strength of Sin

As mentioned above, a misapplication of 1 Corinthians 15:56, is used by Full-preterists to argue that Mosaic Law continued for the Jews until AD 70. 1 Corinthians 15 focuses on the resurrection. After demonstrating the reality of Christ’s resurrection (15:1-11), Paul devotes the rest of the chapter (15:12-58) to explaining how Christ’s resurrection proves the reality of a future universal bodily resurrection in answer to those among the Corinthians who were saying, “there is no resurrection of the dead” (15:12b)—a claim strikingly similar to the claims of Full-preterists today. Near the end of this explanation Paul describes the wonder of conditions following this future resurrection, declaring:

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:54-57, NKJV).

Full-preterists, generally, must argue that this entire chapter does not concern physical death but spiritual death throughout. Holger Neubauer, in his debate with Bruce Reeves argued this, even asserting that “body” throughout the entire chapter refers to the church rather than to one’s physical body (*Will Jesus Really Come Again? : Reeves-Neubauer Debate on the AD 70 Doctrine*, Athens, AL: Truth Publications, Inc., 2021). In the videos Preston didn’t explicitly address whether he would agree with these assertions, but he did make it clear he understands the resurrection to be a spiritual emptying of hades that he believes occurred in AD 70. He does not believe there will be a future resurrection or a future universal judgment.

If this Full-preterist view of resurrection is correct, we must note what it would mean about the present condition of Christians in light of the passage above. It would mean that death has already been “swallowed up,” Christians have already “put on incorruption” and “immortality.” Is that true for Christians today? Physically human beings still die, so can this apply to spiritual death? If so, it would mean spiritual death has already been “swallowed up.” Is that true today? Absolutely not! All around us there

are souls in sin. That sin has separates them from God. They are spiritually dead. Even Christians, having “escaped the pollutions of the world” through obedience to the gospel can become “again entangled in them and overcome” (2 Pet. 2:10). The Christian can become separated from God and spiritually dead. Spiritual death has not been “swallowed up.”

Preston must make some choices; if spiritual death has been “swallowed up” he must: (1) Accept universalism and say that all living souls are saved (a choice that some Full-preterists have already made); (2) Accept “once-saved always saved” (a tenet of the false doctrine of Calvinism), or (3) Minimize the force of “swallowed up” or “destroyed” (15:26) so it doesn’t really mean what it says. Preston accused me of doing this with time statements, but he doesn’t seem to realize how often his doctrine makes him diminish the force of what the text actually says. None of these compromises are necessary in order to properly understand this text (as we shall see).

Preston has not yet accepted universalism because he argues that evangelism will continue forever. But he doesn’t seem to realize how that contradicts the view that “death” (i.e. spiritual death) has already been “swallowed up.” Jesus came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Those who are *lost* are separated from God, and spiritually dead. The gospel is the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16), but if spiritual death has already been “swallowed up” there are no more souls who are spiritually dead, so there is no more need for evangelism. This is a conflict within his theology that he cannot resolve without abandoning his erroneous beliefs or adopting even more false concepts.

As mentioned above, in 1 Corinthians 15:56, Full-preterists draw some faulty conclusions that force them to take the position that Mosaic Law was still binding upon Jews until AD 70. If this was true, Paul, Peter, and all the other apostles lived in sin! Paul told Peter, “you, being a Jew live in the manner of Gentiles, and not as a Jew” (Gal. 2:14). So, if Mosaic Law was still in force, they all sinned in eating unlawful foods! Clearly, that was not the case (cf. Acts 11:9). But let’s focus on a point from 1 Corinthians 15:56 that Preston raised a few times. The argument is this: If death was conquered in AD 70, and the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is “the law,” it must mean “the law” ended in AD 70.

That is not necessarily inferred in the text and relies on several flawed assumptions. First, it assumes that “the end” (15:24) is AD 70—an assumption that cannot be proven from the text. Second, it must minimize the force of putting on “incorruption” and “immortality.” If this is spiritual corruption and mortality, then if Christians have it this side of AD 70, they cannot be lost, and they cannot sin. Third, it assumes “the law” is talking about Mosaic Law. Certainly, there were some Jews in Corinth, but there were enough Gentiles that earlier in the book he said simply, “You know that you were Gentiles” (1 Cor. 12:2). His Gentile audience was never under Mosaic Law, so what would that mean for them? Fourth, by this reasoning one would also have to say sin ended in AD 70. It sure doesn’t seem to me that we live in a world free of sin!

So, what is the force of 15:56? Paul is talking about the principle of sin’s ability to cause spiritual death. Paul taught in Romans, “where there is no law there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). In the 15:57, Paul praises God “who is giving” (present tense), “us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (YLT). Paul is talking about the ultimate victory Christ is bringing to Christians that in eternity will allow them to overcome completely the *sin-to-death* principle for all time. Any sense in which it speaks of the end of “the law” it is speaking of a changed condition in eternity in which the blood of Christ has absolutely overcome this *sin-to-death* principle.

In the videos, Preston does not answer the problems raised by the many assumptions he makes about this verse. But, in videos nine and seventeen he throws out a charge common among Full-preterists that seeks to appeal to the emotion of his audience. He asserts, “Mr. Pope believes the gospel is the strength

of sin!” Wow, that sounds horrible, doesn’t it? We all know “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). How could anyone argue that?

Well, I don’t argue that, but Preston’s charge rests in the assumption that if Mosaic Law had already passed away at the cross the only body of law that could still be in place would be the gospel, the law of Christ. So, they assert, “the gospel saves, it does not condemn!” That sounds good but it ignores many things.

Jesus said that His words will judge the world on the day of judgment (John 12:47-48). Paul taught that God now commands “all men everywhere to repent” because He will judge them by Christ (Acts 17:30-31). He told the Thessalonians that God will condemn those “who do not obey the gospel” (2 Thess. 1:8). Is it a sin not to obey the gospel? Yes. Then even Preston must admit that the gospel defines at least one sin—disobedience to the gospel.

In fact, the words of Jesus, the gospel, will judge all men because the gospel now defines sin and righteousness for all men in this age. Does the *sin-to-death* principle still have force? Yes. In video nine Preston made the accusation that “churches of Christ do not believe the gospel can overcome the problem of sin and death.” That is a skewed accusation! In video seventeen he offered a related question to which he said he has never had a satisfactory answer. He asked, “Is the Christian absolutely, objectively forgiven of sins?” If one answers “yes,” he then counters, “then doesn’t that person have resurrection life?”

Now, I know Preston doesn’t believe full forgiveness came until AD 70, but before AD 70 Paul said, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:13). But Paul also, before AD 70 said, “you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:2). Preston can say “Already, but not yet” until he is blue in the face but it doesn’t change the fact that the same apostle who said (before AD 70) that Christians had been “forgiven . . . all trespasses” also said that faith must be maintained or it is “in vain.”

Unless Preston adopts “once saved always” we could counter his accusation by saying that “the Full-preterist gospel does not overcome the problem of sin and death!” Unless he adopts “once saved always saved” then one could say that his doctrine does not believe one is “absolutely, objectively forgiven of sins.” The reality is that the gospel of Christ (while defining sin and righteousness in this age) also offers the means to ultimately overcome sin. Mosaic Law did not do that. All salvation under Moses looked ahead to the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The one who abides in Christ receives that atoning sacrifice and will into eternity when spiritual death at last is “swallowed up” forever.

Illegitimate Totality Transfer

In his third video, Preston charged me with committing a linguistic fallacy—a charge he repeated several times throughout the series of videos. He was addressing my treatment of how Full-preterists interpret the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. This is an important text to advocates of this doctrine for a few reasons. First, it uses language that is applied by NT writers to people in the first century (e.g. “perverse and crooked generation,” 32:5, etc.). Second, it warns of Israel’s “end” (32:20) or “latter end” (32:29). Proponents of this view argue that this proves the song is a specific prophesy pointing to AD 70 as “the end.” If that is correct, they then argue that AD 70 must be “the end” referred to in other NT passages (such as 1 Cor. 15:24 mentioned above).

In my book I demonstrate that Deuteronomy 31:19 shows the song was to be used as a general “witness” to Israel throughout its history warning them of the consequences of unfaithfulness. I also show that it became a common vocabulary applied by many generations throughout their history not only to those of the first century. Finally, I demonstrate that the Hebrew word *acharith*, used in the preface to

the song in Deuteronomy 31:29 translated “latter days” is the same word rendered “end” (32:20) or “latter end” (32:29) in the song. Surveying its use throughout Scripture, I demonstrate that the conceptual basis of *acharith* broadly refers to what falls *afterward* generally and is not so narrow as to only apply to the end of Israel’s identity as a nation.

In an attempt to dismiss this evidence Preston claimed that I am guilty of a fallacy known as “illegitimate totality transfer.” I was unfamiliar with that term when I first heard his charge, but in researching it I think he is actually misapplying its meaning and charging me with the very thing the AD 70 Doctrine is built upon. Prior to the 1960s, biblical language studies often devoted much attention to the etymology (or the root background) of words in order to properly understand their meaning. In the 1960s that shifted, and more emphasis began to be placed upon context and historical background as a key to understanding word meaning. In 1961, Old Testament Scholar James Barr wrote a book entitled *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961) in which he cautioned about the use of a number of lexical fallacies that can compromise biblical interpretation. Among these was what Barr identified as the *illegitimate totality transfer fallacy* (ITTF). Language scholar Daniel B. Wallace summarizing Barr’s work, explains that ITTF: “assumes that all the uses that occur at a given time apply in any given instance” (“Lexical Fallacies by Linguists” danielbwallace.com [Dec. 2014] <https://danielbwallace.com/tag/diachronic/>). An example of this in English can be illustrated by the word “spoil.” We could use it of *spoiled* food, a *spoiled* child, one *spoiling* for a fight, or of a conquered city that is *spoiled* of its treasure. We should not imagine when applied to a child that it means the child’s possessions had been plundered, nor think that one *spoiling* for a fight brings rotten food into the conflict. While all of these meanings share a common conceptual basis describing the degrading of something, if we applied all meanings to every use of the word it would result in nonsense. The sense intended in each use must be determined by contextual indicators.

Contrary to Preston’s charges, my survey of *acharith*, and my later surveys of *stoicheia* (“elements”), *parousia* (“coming”), and *eutheōs* (“immediately”), do not argue that all meanings apply in every instance. Quite the contrary! I argue that context must determine meaning. I do address what the conceptual basis of these words can teach us about their meaning. In most cases, it shows that the meaning is far broader than the narrow subjective definitions Full-preterists try to impose upon them. In other words, although *acharith* can mean “end,” since its conceptual basis describes what comes *afterwards* and it is used more generally in 31:29, it precludes us from arbitrarily applying it to AD 70 when the context does not specify that.

Preston appeals several times to the Septuagint (LXX) reading in Deuteronomy 31:29, *eschaton tōn hemerōn* “(the) last of the days,” arguing that the different wording in Deuteronomy 32:20 *ep’ eschatōn* “in the last [days]” (Brenton) and 32:29 *ton epionta chronon* “the time to come” distinguishes it from the sense used in 31:29. That really doesn’t help his argument. The wording in 32:20 and 29 in the LXX is even more general than the Hebrew and does not limit the focus of the song to the specific AD 70 “end” he imagines. Preston should consider how the LXX renders this same phrase in Genesis 49:1, as Jacob begins his prophecy to his sons of “what will happen to you at the last of the days (*eschaton tōn hemerōn*)” (NETS). Like the Song of Moses, Jacob’s prophecies refer to the future of his descendants generally throughout their history, not to AD 70 specifically or exclusively.

In the case of *parousia* (“coming”), ironically it is Full-preterists (and unfortunately even some partial preterists) that broaden the meaning of the word beyond what can be found in any biblical or extra-biblical sources. See my essay “What Is the Focus of the Mount of Olives Discourse?” in *When Will These Things Be?: Questions on Eschatology*, ed. by Mark Mayberry and Kyle Pope, Athens, AL: Truth Publications, Inc., 2020, 343-370, for a full analysis of the ancient use of *parousia*. A survey of the use of *eutheōs* (“immediately”) is found in my essay “Is Matthew 24:34 a Transition Verse?” in the Appendix of

“When Will These Things Be?”: Questions on Eschatology (Study Guide), by Kyle Pope, Athens, AL: Truth Publications, Inc., 2021, 253-263.

Melting of the Elements

When Preston charges me with ITTF it is generally in an attempt to reject evidence I offer that broadens the conceptual basis of words beyond the narrow, subjective application Full-preterists try to impose upon their use in specific texts. If *acharith* doesn't exclusively mean “the end” then it becomes harder for Preston to argue that it means AD 70.

In video fourteen, Preston makes the same charge in response to evidence I offer about the use of the Greek word *stoicheia* (“elements”). In 2 Peter 3:10 and 12, Preston argues that it does not refer to the elements of the material universe but to the elements of the Jewish system. He must make this argument or his view that the universe will never end collapses. In the context, this text begins with a reference to God's creation of heaven and earth “standing out of water and in the water” (3:5), the world of the flood that perished “with water” (3:6), and the present heavens and earth “reserved for fire” (3:7). In each case it is the material universe that is being addressed. Only three verses later, it is the “elements” of this same material universe that Peter says will be burned up!

In spite of this context, Preston not only argues that it is the elements of the Jewish system but asserts that every use of *stoicheia* in the NT must be interpreted that way! I demonstrate in the book that *stoicheia* is used in a variety of ways in the NT as proven by the context. Nothing about that makes me guilty of ITTF, but it raises the question: if my argument about *acharith* is ITTF, what is Preston's argument about *stoicheia*? Frankly, full-preterism itself depends upon a method of interpretation that transfers the meaning of words and phrases from remotely different contexts and demands that they must apply equally in all cases. That is far closer to ITTF than any of my arguments.

Method More Than Mercy

In video twelve, Preston addresses some other points regarding 2 Peter 3. He claims at one point that I argue that the terms “heaven and earth” cannot be used figuratively, but then falsely claims that I switch from treating heaven and earth literally in the first part of the chapter to treating it figuratively later in the chapter. That is not true, and I urge him to read more closely. He may have had some opponents who argued that about the “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:12), but I do not. Just as the chapter begins by speaking literally of what God created (3:5), destroyed during the flood (3:6), and will destroy with fire (3:7, 10, 12), at this point in the chapter, like Revelation 21:1-2, he literally promises a new and different eternal home for the righteous. It is not a rejuvenated version of the current “heaven and earth,” but it is a literal, tangible, and spiritual existence.

Throughout his videos, Preston argues that Scripture never promises an end of the material universe—an argument that depends upon his narrow interpretation of apocalyptic language (as we shall see below). In video six he appeals to the flood as an imagined proof that God will never destroy the material universe. We have just noticed that in 2 Peter 3 the Holy Spirit promises that the world that was destroyed by the flood (3:6) is “reserved for fire” (3:7), but Preston in video six appeals to the Lord's words after the flood:

I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease (Gen. 8:21b-22).

Preston addresses this text in response to evidence I offer early in the book from the Hebrew of Genesis 8:22. Literally, it reads, “as long as all the days of the earth”—necessarily inferring that the days of the earth are finite in number. Preston dismisses this and argues that the Lord's words in 8:21b teach that God will never destroy the material universe.

The text qualifies the Lord's promise with the words "as I have done." As 2 Peter explains, it will not be with "water," but it is "reserved for fire." Preston argues that would make God "more concerned with method than mercy!" That is a subjective appeal to emotionalism, not an exegesis of the text. If 2 Peter is consistently talking about material creation, it is inescapably promising destruction by fire of that same material creation. Appeals to an emotional response to that reality do not change what it says.

In the same video, Preston claimed that I ignore Psalm 148. In verse six, speaking of "heavens of heavens," and "waters above the heavens" (v. 5), it says God "established them forever and ever" (NKJV). The careful reader can verify that far from ignoring this, I devote three pages to it specifically addressing the force of the Hebrew word *'ōlam* "forever" (*Thinking about AD 70*, 32-34). I document evidence that *'ōlam* describes "something whose vanishing point is concealed." Context of its use demonstrates whether it is describing things that are actually unending by nature (such as God) or only seem unending because of man's perspective on them. Preston actually claimed to agree with this evidence but dismissed its force in Psalm 148:6.

"By This the Iniquity of Jacob Will be Covered"

The AD 70 doctrine is much like the ancient apostasy of Gnosticism. Its proponents become convinced that they have discovered a hidden key to knowledge that few have understood. They take great pride in what they supposedly understand that has eluded the vast majority of lesser minds. In accepting this—which to them is "falsely called knowledge" (1 Tim. 6:20), they often allow themselves to adopt radically heretical concepts with little hesitation.

Let's take Isaiah 27 as an example. If their view is correct then advocates of full-preterism seek out any passage that says anything about Jerusalem, the temple, or siege terminology and apply it to AD 70. Isaiah 27:9 is one of their favorites. It reads, "Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered; and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: when he makes all the stones of the altar like chalkstones that are beaten to dust, wooden images and incense altars shall not stand" (NKJV).

Isaiah wrote these things before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple under Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC and before the Babylonian exile that would follow. Evidence within this text points to those events, not to AD 70. The last verse of the chapter promises those "about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt" a time when they "shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (27:13). That points to the return from exile. In Hebrew, the word translated "wooden images" in 27:9 is "Asherim" (NASB), referring to Canaanite deities worshipped by apostate Jews throughout OT history (cf. 2 Chron. 34:3, 4, 7, et al.). So, in the context, the most likely interpretation of this is that it is prophesying the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon and Israel's return after this exile.

In spite of this, Full-preterists argue that it is talking about AD 70! In his fifteenth video, Preston actually argues that the words, "by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered; and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin" mean that atonement for sin was not actually accomplished by Christ's death on the cross but achieved by the destruction of Jerusalem! Now, before the cross sacrifice and punishment were demanded to make atonement. But, after the cross, the Hebrew writer said Jesus, "offered one sacrifice for sins forever" (Heb. 10:12). In the same chapter, he declared to those who would turn away from Christ "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:26b). How could Jerusalem's punishment atone for sins if there was no longer a "sacrifice for sins"? John wrote that Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins" and those of the "whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Preston tries to equate this with Daniel 9:24-27, which was a prophecy about the destruction of the temple in AD 70. By including the fall of Jerusalem with all the events involved in the coming of the Messiah it speaks of this as a time, "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24b). *Finishing* transgression and

ending sin is far different from arguing that atonement after the cross was accomplished by destroying “the city and the sanctuary” (Dan. 9:26b). Daniel doesn’t say that nor does Isaiah. I urge Preston to recognize how his flawed assumptions have led him to adopt truly radical heretical views!

Jesus and the Death of Adam

A further example of realized eschatology’s willingness to embrace blatant falsehood is seen in some of Preston’s comments about the death Jesus experienced on our behalf. In his ninth video, Preston made the claim that churches of Christ teach that we die physically because of sin. Preston makes much of the fact that he is (or was) a “fifth generation member of the churches of Christ.” It is unclear if he still considers himself to be associated with churches of Christ or not. Most of his comments speak quite disparagingly about churches of Christ and what they teach. Perhaps he has encountered some in the church who would describe physical death in this way—I do not, nor do brethren with whom I have been associated.

Genesis records that Adam was warned “in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17. NKJV). From the moment that he sinned Adam was separated from God, a process that would repeat itself for all of Adam’s descendant when they first sinned against God (cf. Isa. 59:1-2; Ezek. 18:20; Jas. 1:14-15; Eph. 2:1-3). Physical death did not come to Adam (nor does it come to us) as a *direct* result of sin, but it did come as a *consequence* of sin. While the man and the woman were in the garden with access to “the tree of life” they could “eat and live forever” (Gen. 3:22). When they were cast out of the garden, they and all of their posterity lost access to the “tree of life.” Physical death comes to all as a consequence of this.

While this distinction is evident in Scripture, we should note that the Holy Spirit does not specify in every text “this is spiritual death” or “this is physical death.” Did God not understand that this could be confusing? Of course, He understood! God “knows all things” (1 John 3:20; cf. Acts 15:18). This deliberate ambiguity and correlation between spiritual death (that comes directly because of sin) and physical death (that comes as an indirect consequence of sin) allows for the principle of sacrifice and atonement to have meaning. Why did God declare that “it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11b)? Ultimately, because it would set the stage for what God would accomplish through Christ. Full-preterists try to argue that physical death already existed before Adam’s sin, removing any correlation between physical death and spiritual death. That completely removes any connection between physical sacrifice and spiritual atonement for sin.

In video eighteen, Preston tried to refute my point that Paul’s description of Jesus as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20) shows a correlation between His resurrection and the future resurrection of the righteous. Preston argued that Jesus was not the first to be raised from the dead, quickly dismissing the fact that unlike other resurrections Jesus was raised never to die again. He then made the shocking assertion that Jesus was “the first to be raised from the death of Adam.” Let’s consider that.

Preston may not realize it but with this claim he is embracing a major tenet of the false doctrine of Calvinism. This apostasy argues that Adam’s sin was literally imputed to all his posterity, and so the only way to overcome that was for the righteous deeds of Jesus to be literally imputed to the saved and the sins of the whole world to be literally imputed to Jesus. Unfortunately, many unfamiliar with these issues might say with little thought “Jesus took all our sins upon Himself!” Certainly, Isaiah foretold that Jesus would “bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11) and Paul said God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21), but does that mean He literally became guilty of sin? No! If so, He would not have been a “lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:10).

By “the death of Adam,” Preston is apparently referring to spiritual death, but spiritual death is separation from God. Was Jesus, God the Son, ever literally separated from God the Father? If so, then Christ either stopped being God during this separation or there were two Gods for awhile. Is Preston ready to accept either one of those heretical conclusions? Let’s hope not!

Jesus declared, even when all others would forsake Him, “yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” (John 16:32b). Any sense in which Jesus was “forsaken” while on the cross (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34), was only symbolic as a sacrificial propitiation for sin. Paul wrote, of Jesus, “the death He died, He died for sin, once for all” (Rom. 6:10). Jesus died physically as a sinless sacrifice for the sins of all of mankind which God was willing to accept as an atonement for sin. This correlation between physical death and spiritual death which has existed from the beginning is the only way that the blood of Christ could accomplish this atonement for the souls of mankind (cf. Lev. 17:11b). If Preston is arguing that Jesus died spiritually, he is allowing his flawed eschatological assumptions to lead him to embrace yet another radical false doctrine! I beg him to consider the error of his ways.

“Since There Was a Nation”

Daniel 12:2 reads: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (NKJV). This is the most explicit OT prophecy about resurrection and judgment, but the question is when is this text saying it would happen? In chapter 9, as noted above, the coming of the Messiah and even the destruction of the temple in AD 70 was prophesied (Dan. 9:24-27). But chapter 12 concludes a vision that began in chapter 11 about the rise of “the realm of Greece” (Dan. 11:2). It prophetically describes the rise of Alexander the Great and the division of his kingdom among his generals following his death. Daniel is told in great detail how Israel would become caught in the power struggles between the Seleucids in Syria (to the north) and the Ptolemies in Egypt (to the south). This prophecy is so detailed that it has led some liberal scholars to argue it must have been written during the time of those events and then added to the older sections of Daniel. We reject that conclusion and consider it to be inspired revelation and powerful evidence of Divine foreknowledge. I’m sure Preston would agree.

Part of this prophecy addresses the brutal persecution of the Jews that occurred when the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, surnamed Epiphanes, controlled Palestine (175–164 BC). This persecution is what is addressed immediately before chapter 12. In the context of discussing it, Daniel is told: “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1b). Does that mean the resurrection would occur during that persecution? No. The persecuted are promised “those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end” (Dan. 11:35). This promises a post-death deliverance (cf. 12:1c) that would come at “the time of the end.” Daniel himself is promised that he will arise to his inheritance at “the end of the days” (12:13).

As we might expect, proponents of the AD 70 Doctrine reject this clear and simple evidence from the context and argue that AD 70 is the time of “the end.” How do they justify this? First, they must argue for a transition verse. In video number sixteen, Preston accused me of inserting a 2,500-year transition from Daniel 12:1 to verse 2. That isn’t true—I have no idea when the Lord will return and bring the universal bodily resurrection of all human beings. The point of Daniel is that those who have served God can be assured of a post-death deliverance. It does not identify when “the time of the end” will be. Full-preterists themselves must insert a transition of two centuries from the time of Antiochus to AD 70 in 11:35 (Daniel Morris) or 11:45 (Don K. Preston). I document these claims in the book and analyze the text to demonstrate that grammatically there is no such transition.

Second, Full-preterists must impose a narrow and subjective interpretation of Daniel 12:7b. In response to Daniel’s question, “How long shall the fulfillment of these things be?” (12:6b), he is told,

“when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished” (12:7b). Full-preterists make several assumptions about this statement. First, while they devote great energy to identifying first-century Jerusalem as the most wicked generation ever, they think nothing of equating these same people with the “holy people” of this text. In the context, the holy people being addressed are those Jews during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes who remained faithful to the “holy covenant” (11:30). Preston dismisses this context. Second, Full-preterists assume that “all these things” must include the promised resurrection. Preston never addressed that by that reasoning we would also have to include the promise that the “wise” will “shine like the stars forever and ever” (12:3). Has that already been accomplished? I demonstrate in the book that the phrase “all these things” can often be used in Scripture of the main content of a discussion without including every detail mentioned. Preston once again, dismissed this evidence in video seventeen, charging me yet again with ITTF. In this he further misuses the very definition of ITTF applying it to a phrase rather than to the various meanings of a word.

Ironically, Preston (and Full-preterists generally) must then do the very thing of which he has inaccurately charged me. He focuses on Daniel 12:1b: “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation” and calls us to consider the similarity with the words of Jesus about the tribulation that would come in AD 70: “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21; cf. Mark 13:19). In the book, I call the reader to notice that these statements, while similar, are not exactly the same. Jesus adds, “nor ever shall be.” Preston, mocks that difference, and continues to argue that Daniel and Jesus are describing the same event. We should notice another distinction. Daniel speaks of trouble “since there was a nation” while Jesus broadens it to trouble “since the beginning of the world.” These are not synonymous statements.

In video sixteen, Preston offers a further attempt to dismiss my argument from the context of Daniel and to equate Daniel 12:1 with Matthew 24:21. He argued that the persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes was not the worst “since there was a nation,” and was not even as bad as the fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. Certainly, both were horrible times for the Jews, but I urge Preston to look closer at the evidence preserved for us.

The Fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC

The assaults of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem spanned a decade with an initial siege in 597 BC that left the city intact but resulted in the deportation and ultimate death of Jehoiakim (2 Chron. 36:5-8), the deportation of king Jehoiachin, his family, 10-18,000 men who were “fit for war,” with smiths and craftsmen, and treasure from the temple (2 Kings 24:10-16). Ten years later, in 587 BC, because of the rebellion of Jehoiachin’s uncle, Zedekiah, Jerusalem fell following an eighteen-month siege (2 Kings 25:1-30). During the siege, those who remained in the city were warned they would die “by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence” but those who defected to the Babylonians would live (Jer. 21:9). Some fled or defected, but many who stayed within the city suffered from famine, pestilence, and some even practiced cannibalism (Lam. 4:10).

When the walls were breached the king fled with his soldiers but was captured and his sons were killed before him and he was blinded and deported. The temple and the city walls were torn down. During this assault the Babylonians killed “their young men with the sword” including the “young man or virgin,” the “aged or the weak” (2 Chron. 36:17). “Those who escaped from the sword” were “carried away to Babylon” (2 Chron. 36:20). As horrible as this time certainly was, surprisingly the Holy Spirit has not preserved for us numbers regarding the death toll. Much more is said about those taken captive. Those carried away were preserved by God and would lead to the faithful, zealous generation of those who would serve God after their return from exile. They were the good figs of Jeremiah’s vision (Jer. 24:1-10).

The Jewish Persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes

The persecution prophesied in Daniel 11 and fulfilled in the period between the testaments was of a much different nature. The temple was not destroyed, nor the walls of Jerusalem torn down, but it was an attempt to exterminate the Jewish religion in a way never seen “since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1b). Early on, the influence of the Greeks had led to the building of a gymnasium in Jerusalem causing many Jewish men to forsake “the holy covenant” and live as Gentiles. Some literally made themselves “uncircumcised” in some way to participate naked in these athletic contests (1 Macc. 1:14-15). When Antiochus IV took the throne, he was given the surname, Epiphanes “illustrious” but his extreme behavior led some of his own people to change his surname to Epimanes “madman” (Livy, *History of Rome* 41.19). That was certainly an apt description of him in his treatment of the Jews. Following a failed effort to conquer Egypt, falsely believing there was a revolt among the Jews, he assaulted Jerusalem:

Then there were massacres of young and old, destruction of women and children, slayings of virgins and infants. Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting, and as many were sold into slavery as were killed (2 Macc. 5:13-14, NETS).

This toll of death and deportation is much higher than the biblical record reveals to us during the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. But that was only the beginning! Antiochus himself went into the temple, took away the altar, the lampstand, the table of shewbread, the veil, and the “crown” with the gold and silver vessels, and 1,800 talents (1 Macc. 1:21-24; 2 Macc. 5:15-16, 21). His slaughter was not isolated to Jerusalem:

Therefore there was a great mourning in Israel, in every place where they were; So that the princes and elders mourned, the virgins and young men were made feeble, and the beauty of women was changed. Every bridegroom took up lamentation, and she that sat in the marriage chamber was in heaviness, the land also was moved for the inhabitants thereof, and all the house of Jacob was covered with confusion (1 Macc. 1:25-28, KJV).

Antiochus commanded one of his officers, Apollonius, with a force of 22,000 to kill those “in their best age” and to sell the young and women (2 Macc. 5:24). During later incursions, Jerusalem was further plundered and set on fire with houses and walls pulled down “on every side” (1 Macc. 1:31). The oldest portion of Jerusalem, known as the City of David, was seized and made a citadel for the forces of Antiochus.

In addition to this spoil and slaughter the focus soon shifted to a direct attack on the faith of the Jews. Daily sacrifice at the temple was stopped for three and a half years (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1.1). The temple was dedicated to Jupiter with unclean sacrifices and sexual immorality practiced within its courts (2 Macc. 6:2-5). Observance of the Sabbath and Jewish festivals was prohibited with those who disobeyed being put to death (2 Macc. 6:6, 9). Some who hid in caves to observe the Sabbath were found and burned to death all together (2 Macc. 6:11). Circumcision was forbidden and women who let their children be circumcised were publicly killed with their babies hanging around their necks (2 Macc. 6:10; 1 Macc. 1:60-61). All Hebrew Scriptures that could be found were burned and anyone found with any portion of the Scriptures was put to death (1 Macc. 1:56-58). Pagan shrines were erected all throughout Palestine and Jews were compelled to practice pagan worship. The historical books of 1 and 2 Maccabees record the details of this horrific time. Chapters 5-7 of 2 Maccabees read like a portion of *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* describing those tortured and killed for refusal to eat pig’s flesh and obey these ungodly commands.

The reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes was brief, and the Jews were eventually delivered from those trials by the rise of a Jewish resistance led by Judas Maccabeus. Yet this time was so traumatic in Jewish history it came to be commemorated annually by the Jews (including Jesus) as the “Feast of Dedication” (John 10:22) or Hanukkah. It involved a level of persecution of the Jewish faith unequalled “since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1b). While Preston casually dismisses the severity of this time, it is worth noting that Josephus in his *Wars of the Jews*, the primary source for what we know about the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, begins with an account of the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes—not with the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC.

“How Is This Possible?”

In Preston's last videos he makes an argument to which he has devoted an entire book regarding the nature of the resurrection and Christ's coming (*How Is This Possible?* Ardmore, OK: JaDon Management, Inc., 3rd ed., 2009). First, he charges me with inadequately explaining the meaning of 2 Timothy 2:17-18, which records that Hymenaeus and Philetus overthrew the faith of some by claiming "the resurrection is already past." He then argues, if the resurrection is to be an "earth burning, time ending event" how would it be possible for anyone to believe or convince others that it had already occurred?

He later made the same argument in an attempt to refute my evidence that the Greek word *parousia*, translated "coming" in numerous passages in reference to Christ's return always refers to the actual presence of the one to whom it is applied. He appealed to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, which he first claimed I "conveniently ignored," then falsely claimed that I have built my views upon the wording of this text in the KJV. How can I ignore something and yet at the same time build my belief system upon a certain translation of it? Neither claim is true. The text refers to the "coming (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ" and Paul urges them not to be shaken by those who would argue that "the day of Christ had come" (NKJV). Preston asks how it would be possible for anyone to think Christ had already come if His coming was to be a "personal, literal, visible, bodily coming of Christ?"

This odd argumentation appeals to what the NT clearly identifies as false doctrine to supposedly demonstrate the nature of sound doctrine. This is like arguing, "if baptism really was immersion, how could anyone ever come to believe that it was sprinkling or pouring?" People often accept false notions about biblical concepts without scriptural authority. The nature of false doctrine does not prove anything about sound doctrine. I urge Preston to consider rather how these false doctrines parallel exactly his own teaching!

Apocalyptic Language

In video ten, Preston addresses an issue I raised in the book about the interpretation of apocalyptic language. I used a term coined by commentator William Hendrickson to describe what he believes to be the dual application of prophetic apocalyptic language: *prophetic foreshortening*. Hendrickson compares it to the way that mountain tops, seen from a distance can appear to be closer than they are (*Thinking about AD 70*, 35). With this, Hendrickson is arguing (and I agree) that apocalyptic language can have a dual application: immediate and long term. Preston mocked this concept, charged that it is not valid in personal experience, and dismissed the very idea. That does not prove from Scripture that apocalyptic language cannot foreshadow future events.

For realized eschatology to be true all cosmological apocalyptic language must apply only to the event with which it was first associated. It can have no dual meaning or literal application to any future events. In an article (now removed from his website) which Preston wrote in 2006, entitled "What Is Preterism," he explained:

The language of the prophets by its very definition is veiled and obscure; it is marked by poetic imagery, license, and exaggeration, and is impressed with hyperbole, metaphors, and symbols. . . . The manner of fulfillment was essentially spiritual, not physical, and that language which on its face appears to describe the dissolution of the chemical elements in a cataclysmic end of time and space must be given a figurative construction and interpretation. This is required, not only because of the confines for fulfillment imposed by statements of time, but by the *usus loquendi* [manner of speech] of the prophets ("What Is Preterism?" *Bible-Prophecy.com* [Sept. 18, 2006] <https://bible-prophecy.com/articles/2006/09/18/what-is-preterism>).

Let's note some things he says here. Preston says apocalyptic language is "exaggeration." Does God *exaggerate*? He argues it "must" be given a figurative interpretation. Why? First, because of "the confines for fulfillment imposed by statements of time." How do we know that the time statements aren't figurative? If God uses "exaggeration" in apocalyptic language how do we know He doesn't do the same

with time statements? Second, he says it must be figurative because this is just the “*usus loquendi*” a Latin phrase meaning manner of speech “of the prophets.”

Let’s break this down and relate it to some things Preston said in the videos. In video number seven Preston asked what hermeneutical principle allows a NT writer to quote OT figurative language and apply it literally? All would agree that some apocalyptic language with cosmological elements can have an immediate figurative application indicating the importance of the event being described. Acts 2 fulfilled Joel 2 on the Day of Pentecost but the sun was not literally darkened nor was the moon turned to blood, but Preston assumes that it *only* has immediate application and cannot foreshadow any future fulfillment.

Dual applications and fulfillments run throughout Scripture. Matthew quotes Hosea’s words “Out of Egypt I called My Son” (Hos. 12:1) and applies it to Jesus’s time in Egypt as a child (Matt. 2:15). The context of Hosea was talking about Israel as a nation, but it foreshadowed what happened in the life of Christ. Isaiah’s prophecy “the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son” (Isa. 7:14) had an immediate application to when Assyria would take Israel (Isa. 7:17) and a future application to Christ’s birth (Matt. 1:23). In arguing that apocalyptic language can have a future literal fulfillment, Preston accuses me of *petitio principii* (“begging the question”), but frankly he has the burden of proof here! He must prove that God *exaggerates*. He must prove that God has flexibility in His use of apocalyptic language but is limited by time statements. He must prove this “exaggeration” was just the *manner of speech* of the prophets! So far, he has failed to prove any of these claims. He simply asserts what he claims to prove.

In Numbers 23:19 the Holy Spirit reveals: “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” This has serious ramifications for the issues we are considering. If God *exaggerates*, Preston is asserting that He actually has said things that “He will NOT do” and “He will NOT make good!” If apocalyptic cosmological language has dual application God is honest. Immediate figurative fulfillment foreshadows future literal fulfillment. If it is all an “exaggeration” then God lied! If so, how can we know that anything He said is not “exaggeration.” Full-preterism compromises the very honesty of God!

I would ask, what hermeneutic principle allows us to tie God’s hands when it comes to time statements? Preston has written an entire book entitled, *Can God Tell Time?* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Management, Inc., 2008). His argument is that God uses language that is understandable to His audience. As such, he argues that this limits God’s use of time statements to the narrow subjective time periods Full-preterists imagine. Ironically, they don’t use this same argument of understandability when it comes to apocalyptic language. It is the Holy Spirit that said, “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day” (2 Pet. 3:8; cf. Ps. 90:4). Full-preterists dismiss the force of this.

It is amazing to me how willing Full-preterists are to limit God’s manner of expressing His word and His will in ways we would never impose upon a human author. We see this not only in their narrow and subjective interpretation of time statements but prophetic language itself. In video eleven, Preston argues that the biblical principle is that the literal always comes first and then the spiritual. Really? Why would he say this? Because otherwise his theory about apocalyptic language always being figurative and never foreshadowing the literal collapses.

So, is his so-called “biblical principle” valid? Not in Genesis 37:5-10. Joseph dreams that sheaves and the sun, moon, and stars bow down to him. That was figurative but it was literally fulfilled later when Joseph ruled under Pharaoh in Egypt during the famine. It’s not valid in Genesis 41:1-8. Pharaoh dreamed about cows and stalks devouring other cows and other stalks. That was figurative, but it was literally fulfilled when Egypt faced seven years of famine. Because man calls something a principle does not limit God’s ability to express things however He chooses and we should not allow it to limit how we interpret His word.

“The Voices of the Prophets”

Let’s go back to this assertion that “exaggeration” is just the *manner of speech* of the prophets. I have heard Full-preterists make the assertion that this theorized exaggerated hyperbolic language, with no concept of it ever being literally fulfilled was just “how it would have been understood” by ancient Jews and faithful Christians. Some, drawing from Paul’s words in Acts 13:27, assert that this Full-preterist interpretation of apocalyptic language is what it means to truly listen to “the voices of the prophets.” That treats God’s word as if it is some hidden code that can only be discerned by those gifted enough to unravel it!

In video nineteen, Preston took an interesting turn in his attempt to try and prove this assertion about the *manner of speech* of the prophets. After devoting most of his videos to the argument that this prophetic exaggeration was just Jewish idiom, he then admitted that Jews in the first century believed in literal eschatological fulfilments but those who did so were wrong.

To support this, Preston argued that throughout the gospel of John we see those who made physical interpretations when a spiritual meaning was intended such as eating Christ’s flesh as the “bread of life” (John 6:53-59) or destroying the temple, when Jesus was speaking of His body (John 2:19-22). He then asserted that I and those who oppose full-preterism have a “carnal view” of eschatology, claiming “this is the very hermeneutic that put Jesus on the cross!”

That’s a bold statement! I presume he means the Jews were looking for a Messiah that would reign over a physical kingdom and since that was not what Jesus intended to do, they crucified Him. Preston is apparently trying to equate that with what I am teaching. That is not what I teach, but this betrays what I believe is an underlying problem with which Full-preterists struggle: an almost Gnostic concept of the physical (as evil) versus the spiritual (as good) with no correlation between the two.

In video eighteen, Preston claimed that I teach you can’t go to heaven without a physical body. That is not true! A glorified spiritual body is not a physical body, but neither has a disembodied spirit put on a glorified spiritual body. Certainly, Paul taught “flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50), but in the same chapter Paul spoke of the body that is “sown” as “a natural body” but “it” (not the spirit, but the body) “is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44). In Preston’s view the “it” is the spirit—but that is not what the text teaches.

Full-preterists muddy the issue by accusing their opponents of making it about *biology* or the *physical*. That treats it as if conditions at the resurrection will remain no different than they are at the present. Just as they fail to recognize the way in which Jesus’s physical death accomplished a spiritual atonement (as we shall see below), they also fail to recognize that in eternity the distinctions between the physical and the spiritual will be erased. Eternal life will not be on a rejuvenated version of earth as it now exists, but it will be a tangible spiritual existence in which the spirits of the righteous are clothed with incorruptible, immortal bodies. They will not be disembodied spirits floating on the clouds.

“There Is about to Be”

Throughout the videos, with little or no explanation, Preston frequently quotes eschatological passages usually rendered “will be” and puts them “is about to be.” For example, in video seventeen he quotes Acts 24:15, where Paul says, “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (NKJV) and puts it “there is about to be a resurrection.” Why does he do that? Because of a narrow interpretation Full-preterists impose upon the Greek word *mellō*.

This Greek word is defined to mean “I. *to be destined or likely to*, indicating an estimated certainty or strong probability in the present, past, or future; II. *to be about to*, in purely temporal sense; III. *to be*

always going to do without ever doing: hence, *delay, put off*; IV. Participle *mellōn* is used quasi-adjectivally, *ho mellōn chronon*, the *future time*; V. *might be delayed*" (LSJ). In the NT, it is used 110 times. The KJV translates it *shall* (25), *should* (20), *would* (9), *to come* (9), *will* (7), *things to come* (4), not translated (3), miscellaneously (33). YLT is one of the few translations that frequently renders it "about to be," and Preston doesn't usually use this translation. But in eschatological texts he puts it that way. I wonder if he would do that in Acts 26:22-23? It reads:

Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would [*mellō*] come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would [*mellō*] proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles (NKJV).

Full-preterists make much of this text. They call to attention the fact that Paul says he taught "no other things" than what was said in the "the prophets and Moses." Their argument is that one can look to the OT to teach everything in the gospel. That reminds me of a study I once had with a Messianic Jew who said one can learn everything they need to know to be saved in the first chapters of Genesis. Really? I doubt Preston would go that far, but he comes close in some arguments. These arguments ignore that Jesus said the Holy Spirit would reveal things to the apostles He had not yet said to them (John 16:12-13). Where do Moses and the prophets teach about baptism? Where do they teach forgiveness of others as a prerequisite of our own forgiveness? Where do they teach to turn the other cheek? And many other doctrines? Paul is teaching that the gospel was what was promised in Moses and the Prophets, not that its substance was fully revealed in these Scriptures.

Let's notice how *mellō* is used in Acts 26:22-23. It uses it of what "the prophets and Moses" said centuries beforehand about Christ's coming and proclamation of light. YLT follows through with Preston's favorite practice here—I wonder if he would agree with this reading?

Having obtained, therefore, help from God, till this day, I have stood witnessing both to small and to great, saying nothing besides the things that both the prophets and Moses spake of as about to [*mellō*] come, that the Christ is to suffer, whether first by a rising from the dead, he is about to [*mellō*] proclaim light to the people and to the nations (YLT).

I doubt Preston would be consistent in his use of "is about to" in this passage because it would shatter his false premise that all time statements must apply to the generation to whom they were first spoken. If *mellō* always means "is about to be" then Paul is saying Moses and the prophets said centuries ago that "Jesus *is about to come*" and "*is about to proclaim light*." If it can apply to centuries in Acts 26:22-23 why can't it apply to centuries Acts 24:15?

In video nine, Preston objects to a similar idea from Jeremiah and the book of Hebrews. He is responding to arguments I make about Hebrews 8:13. This is a favorite passage for Full-preterists because they argue from its wording that the Old Covenant was "ready to pass away" that it proves the Mosaic Law was still in force. In the book and in an article published in 2018 I demonstrate from the text that the Hebrew writer is describing the significance of Jeremiah proclaiming a "new covenant" ("Ready to Pass Away," *Truth Magazine* 62.10 [Oct. 2018]: 6-7). To prophesy that there would be something "new" from Jeremiah's perspective would indicate that the "old" was "becoming obsolete," "growing old" and "ready to vanish away."

Preston mocked this argument, accused me of ignoring the tense of the verbs in the passage, and said it would be ridiculous to speak of the Law (at the time of Jeremiah) as "ready to vanish away." I urge Preston to rethink this in light of the use of *mellō* in Acts 26:22-23. If the Holy Spirit can lead Paul to describe Jesus as "about to come" when Moses and the prophets wrote, He can lead the Hebrew writer to say that when Jeremiah wrote it was "ready to vanish away."

The Book of Revelation

In the book, I devote an entire chapter to the date of the book of Revelation. When Preston did the videos, he was in the middle of a written debate on this issue, so he only offered a few comments. First, several times throughout the videos he appealed to Deuteronomy 32:43, from the Song of Moses, which reads: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.” Preston argues, that this is a specific prophecy pointing to AD 70 and claims that Revelation 19:2 proves it. In describing the fall of Babylon the Great, it reads: “For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.” We note that his argument rests on the common phrase “avenged . . . the blood of His servants.” Throughout the videos, whenever I have made points appealing to similar wording, he charges me inaccurately with ITTF. Why is it acceptable for him to do it here? I have argued that the Song of Moses was a general warning to Israel throughout its history that established a common vocabulary of rebuke for the Jews (Deut. 31:19-21). While Preston agrees that it functioned this way, he maintains his contention that it is a specific prophecy and fulfillment.

In another passage we can observe the same use of this language. In warning of the punishment to the house of Ahab in the ninth century BC, it declares: “You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel” (2 Kings 9:7). This echoes the wording of the Song of Moses just as closely if not closer than Revelation 19:2. Is it a specific prophecy? Why doesn’t Preston apply it that way in this passage? If he did it wouldn’t support his false doctrine.

He made a few other very quick points. He appeared to disagree with evidence I offered that Domitian, the emperor that I believe was reigning when Revelation was written, insisted on being worshipped as a God. If he is, he is disagreeing with ancient writers. Both Suetonius and Dio Cassius claim that he did (Suetonius, *Domitian* 13.2; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 67.4.7). He criticizes me for offering evidence in the book that Rome, and not Jerusalem was known as a city set on seven hills (cf. Rev. 17:9). He asserted that, “no preterists believe that this was Jerusalem!” Well, he certainly knows more about full-preterism than I do, but he is wrong about this. I have heard Full-preterists make this argument.

Finally, he makes much of Revelation 11:8, which reads: “And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” Full-preterists contend that “Babylon the Great” (17:5; 18:2), whose downfall is promised in Revelation was Jerusalem, arguing that Revelation as a whole, points to AD 70. To support this, Preston appeals to the wording of this text “where also our Lord was crucified.” Preston may assume that I equate “Babylon the Great” with this “great city,” but I do not. The text says this city “spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt”—not Babylon. Two cities are both called great in Revelation: Jerusalem and Babylon. Preston must also assume that the temple in Revelation 11:1-2 is a physical temple rather than the spiritual temple of God’s people (cf. Rev, 3:12). That is an odd view for one whose doctrine would have us spiritualize virtually everything!

A similar example of this arbitrary interpretation of references to Jerusalem as physical or spiritual depending on whether it fits their doctrine is seen in their treatment of the last chapters of Zechariah. Ignoring how the NT uses the language of these chapters, Full-preterists argue that miraculous spiritual gifts (while certainly limited in duration) would end at AD 70. They then ignore that the last chapter of Zechariah describes God’s deliverance of the spiritual Jerusalem and interpret it as a description of AD 70. Preston made this argument in video thirteen. For a thorough analysis of this, see my article “Zechariah and the AD 70 Doctrine,” *Truth Magazine* 64.10 (Oct. 2020): 6-7, 34.

Ezekiel Appendix

While I am honored that Preston felt that my material was worthy of devoting so much time to it, I really wish he had been more careful in his reading of it. For example, in his first video he noted a few places I had cited him. He claimed that I had not documented my quotes from his material “not one time!” In comments on his Facebook page and YouTube channel I provided him with page by page proof of where I had documented his works. To his credit, he apologized for his oversight in the second video, but the problem didn’t stop.

For example, several times he referred to a lecture I included in the appendix from a preacher’s study in which I had participated on eschatology in Ezekiel. He made several assumptions that were the opposite of what was explicitly stated in the text. He said I applied Ezekiel 32 to final judgment. I did not! It describes souls in Sheol and I point out that it demonstrates that they experience a conscious existence with both positive and negative conditions for different souls. I did not equate this with final judgment. He claimed I apply Ezekiel 37, the vision of the dry bones coming to life, to the final resurrection. I do not! What I write is, “the resurrection of the dry bones vision . . . is not talking about ‘resurrection at the last day’ (John 11:24), but the spiritual resurrection after the Babylonian exile that would set the stage for the coming of Christ’s kingdom” (*Thinking about AD 70*, 195). In fact, in the chapter on resurrection, I include Ezekiel 37 in a section under the heading “Spiritual Resurrections” (ibid., 75). Assuming that I teach things I do not, then building an argument against those false assumptions is not productive.

Fulfillment of the Law

In videos three, seven, and nine, while addressing points I discussed in the book about Christ’s fulfillment of the Law, Preston made more false claims about my views, then argued against things I have never taught! In the book I was discussing Jesus’s words in Matthew 5:17: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (NKJV). I then offer “at least two ways” this can be understood: (1) Jesus fulfilled what was spoken about Him; and (2) Jesus “established” or empowered the Law to accomplish its purpose (*Thinking about AD 70*, 47-48). By saying “at least,” clearly, I was not offering an exhaustive list. In the second point I addressed several principles addressed in Scripture, including atonement, redemption, salvation, and that Christ’s teachings “showed the way to fulfill the moral intent of the Law” (ibid.). Preston ignored any other aspects of fulfillment I had offered and falsely claimed that I teach that “some moral fulfillment” or the “spirit of the OT” was all that Christ had to fulfill. That is not true, as any careful reader of the text can see.

As I then moved to the next verse in the book, Preston’s false claims about it continued. Jesus continues: “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18). For Full-preterists, several assumptions are made about this verse. First, many treat the words “heaven and earth” as a figurative reference to the Mosaic system. So, for them the sense is the Mosaic system lasts until “all is fulfilled.” Second, they assume this verse is predicting a time the law ends, rather than describing its reliable nature. In the book I point out the parallel in Luke 16:17: “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.” Third, they assume that there is no sense in which the phrase “the law” envisions the fulfillment and establishment of perfect law in the Law of Christ.

Preston, based on his own flawed assumptions, makes this false claim: “According to Mr. Pope, the OT remains in place until the end of the material universe.” That is ludicrous! In virtually every video he disagreed with my understanding that the Law or Moses was “taken out of the way” and nailed “to the cross” (cf. Col. 2:14). How can I believe the Law was “taken out of the way” but that it still “remains in place”? Clearly, I cannot, and do not! Perhaps he was trying to claim that would be a logical consequence of my views. If so, that’s what he should have said. Putting words in my mouth that I have never said doesn’t help anyone.

That is not a logical consequence of my beliefs because I believe the verse is emphasizing the enduring reliability of God's word as revealed in the Law. If it does include the sense that the Law of Christ fulfills and establishes the purpose of Mosaic Law it is not talking about a time when the law ends at all, but about the enduring reliability of the word.

Four Flawed Assumptions

Since the time of the Protestant Reformation, the false doctrine of Calvinism has had a pervasive influence on the religious world. We might ask ourselves, how could any doctrine that teaches that God (apart from any choices of man) arbitrarily chooses some to save and some to condemn; that teaches God is the direct cause of all things—even sin!; that teaches that Christ only died for those God had already chosen to save, and that teaches that once one is part of the elect he or she can never sin in such a way as to be lost—how could such a doctrine ever gain any acceptance by students of Scripture? The answer is that if one grants them the false premises that the sovereignty of God demands that He must be the cause of all things; that Adam's sin made all of his posterity sinful by nature and incapable of doing any good—then logic leads one to accept all the false concepts built upon these flawed assumptions.

Realized Eschatology is quite similar to this. If we grant them the false premises that: (1) All apocalyptic language is figurative; (2) All time statement must be narrowly interpreted; (3) The book of Revelation was written before AD 70; and (4) the Mount of Olives Discourse only addressed AD 70, then logic can lead a person to accept all of the skewed doctrines built upon these flawed premises.

In 2020, in anticipation of the debate that would be hosted by the Olsen Park church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas, I presented a series of four lessons addressing the AD 70 Doctrine. This series can be accessed at: <https://olsenpark.com/SpecialStudies/AD70.html>. In these lessons I compared these false premises to four pillars supporting a building. If any of them fails, the entire system collapses. In reality, all four of these flawed premises are false. Sadly, in embracing these flawed premises advocates of this doctrine have allowed themselves to embrace an entire system that reinterprets fundamental biblical doctrines and is gravely heretical. I pray to God that they may open their eyes to this reality and turn from this error.

Conclusion

In his last video, Preston said that having read my book he finds my reasoning “uncritical, illogical, and unbiblical.” Since I believe Preston's doctrine is wrong, if the AD 70 Doctrine is what is considered the standard of what is critical, logical, and biblical, I say, “Thank you!” In the same video, he went on to say (once again) that as a “fifth generation member of churches of Christ”—“Mr. Pope's views stand outside the normal tradition of the amillennialism in the churches of Christ.” Frankly, I'm not sure how he said that with a straight face. Full-preterism is about as far “outside the normal tradition” of churches of Christ as one can imagine!

I'm not sure why he would say that. I believe that the Bible teaches Jesus will literally, visibly, and actually come again some time in the future, at which time there will be a literal bodily of all human souls who have ever lived followed by judgment and a destruction of the present universe. This is what most members of churches of Christ believe and teach. I do not believe Matthew 24:34 is a hard transition verse, but the entire discourse has elements aimed at preparation for AD 70 and final judgment. Not all brethren would put it that way. I believe 2 Peter 3 speaks literally of heaven and earth. Not all brethren would put it that way. I believe the book of Revelation was written near the end of the first century (well after AD 70). Most brethren would agree. In the appendix, I do offer an argument that the “four living creatures” of Ezekiel and Revelation is a figurative and spiritual way of describing the people of God worshipping God. Most brethren are unfamiliar with this argument, but it is not in conflict with any

doctrine brethren have taught over the years. What is in conflict with what churches of Christ have taught is the AD 70 Doctrine that Preston promotes.

Brother Preston, this is not about me. It is not about you. It is about truth. One day, you and I will both stand before God and be judged by what we believe and teach. If your background is rooted in churches of Christ, I presume that you were baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. If so, that makes you my brother in Christ, but your teaching demonstrates that you do not abide “in the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9). It is “disorderly” and not in keeping with apostolic tradition (2 Thess. 3:6). You are not my “enemy,” but I humbly and sincerely admonish you “as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:15).

I know you have come to believe that you have unlocked some secret understanding of Scripture that has alluded others, but I honestly believe it is deeply flawed and contrary to the teaching of the gospel. I beg you (and any who have adopted the false doctrines you embrace) to reconsider your conclusions, repent, and turn to sound doctrine. When any doctrine leads one to adopt concepts about atonement, the honesty of God, the nature of God, the sinlessness of Christ, the efficacy of the cross, and the meaning of clear teaching in Scripture that doctrine is wrong.