

Revelation 1:7 – Past or Future

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1. Revelation 1:7 – Past or Future?
 - A. **PRAYER**
 - B. Question I’ll be Addressing:
 1. Is the coming of Jesus Christ as described in Revelation 1:7 a future event? OR...
 2. Did Jesus come, as described by this verse, in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed the Temple?
 - C. The Answer is Obvious, Right?
 1. Perhaps some are thinking: “the answer is obvious!”
 2. The danger: underestimating the appeal and convincing power of “spinning Scripture.”
 3. Saved under a ministry which held these views.
 - a) I had little knowledge of prophecy (which, by the way = little knowledge of Scripture).
 - b) Holding ground here requires a **SOLID** ability to synthesize a comprehensive grasp of prophecy from numerous passages.
 - c) Many Christians today are perpetually in this condition.
2. Preterism
 - A. **DEFINITION:** The term **preterism** comes from the Latin *praeter*, meaning "past".
 - B. Two principle variations:
 1. Partial Preterism
 - a) The *last days* refers to the events which transpired in the first century A.D. which were brought to a climax at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 - b) Most of the events described in the book of Revelation have *already transpired*.
 - c) The “problem,” from the perspective of Preterism, is that most Christians today lack an understanding of the history of these times and therefore are unaware of the fulfillment.
 2. Full or Consistent Preterism
 - a) All of the events in the book of Revelation, including the Second Coming, have been fulfilled.
 - b) We are presently living in a “spiritual” new heavens and new earth.

- c) Heterodox – denies the physical Second Coming of Christ
- d) NOT THE SUBJECT TODAY

3. What does this have to do with “PROPHECY AND THE JEWS”?
- A. EVERYTHING
 - B. Doctrines “ride in posse” – that is, they travel in groups.
 - C. Preterism: holds that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the end of the “Jewish age”
 - D. This leads, inexorably to Replacement Theology (the Church is the “New Israel”)
 - E. Replacement Theology fuels the satanic engine of anti-Semitism.
 - 1. Preterists are generally quick to point out that they are not anti-Semitic
 - 2. HOWEVER, Preterism undermines the belief that God has a continued purpose for the nation Israel – a purpose which cannot be fulfilled by the Church.
 - 3. Remove the prophetic significance of Israel from the Scriptures and evangelical support for Israel will flounder, as sure “as night follows day.”
 - 4. Make no mistake: Preterism is a convenient tool of the devil.
4. Christendom Clueless in the Tribulation
- A. Strategy #1: Get rid of God’s Word
 - 1. God actively preserves His Word for salvific purposes.
 - 2. Information revolution: digital and global distribution, encryption, cell phones, CDs, tiny memory devices
 - B. Strategy #2: Undermine the understanding of God’s Word
 - 1. Discredit Scripture *outside* the Church
 - 2. Reinterpret Scripture *inside* the Church
 - a) Academic liberalism, rational skepticism in seminaries
 - b) Reinterpret the plain meaning of the text – especially prophetic portions
5. Moving the Future to the Past
- A. A “positive theology” – no terrifying tribulation in man’s future
 - B. The dominion of the Church
 - 1. The Church Age will meet with success
 - 2. Christianity will convert social and political systems as Gods “rod of iron”
 - 3. Popular in the home schooling movement
 - C. The Book of Revelation: a veiled political document written in apocalyptic genre

1. Only the naïve interpret the book at face value
 2. Generally of devotional value, concerning “the forces of good and the forces of evil”
- D.** Preterism: what appears to be future has passed
1. There is no future Tribulation
 2. the antichrist was Nero
 3. futurists are so many “chicken littles” who’s prophetic sky is always falling

6. Why Does This Matter?

- A.** If Scripture is so plain on this matter, why do we need to be concerned?
- B.** A spiritual battle
1. Logic has little to do with it
 2. Scriptural knowledge is waning rapidly
 3. Systematic knowledge of prophecy is especially rare
 4. “pan-millennialist” attitude – understanding doesn’t matter, after all it will “pan out” one way or the other.
- C.** Blessed are those . . . who *keep* those things which are written... (Rev. 1:3)
1. keep is (*tērountes*), “while presently-continually holding fast”
 - a) What does it mean to “keep”? What is there a need to keep? To keep what, why, from whom?
 2. My experience in a preterist congregation
 - a) prophecy was hardly ever taught
 - b) Why study things that only relate to the distant past?

7. Promoted by Popular Teachers

- A.** Hank Hanegraaff – The Last Disciple
1. Fictional work countering the “Left Behind Series”
 2. Highly-influential “bible answer man” broadcast.
- B.** R. C. Sproul
1. Influential radio teacher
 2. *The Last Days According to Jesus* – popularizing the views of Preterism
- C.** Both books are highly rated on Amazon.com
1. Review of “The Last Disciple”
 - a) The book has been a great help to me and to my teenage daughter *because it planted our feet squarely on the ground in our*

*consideration of the popularized view of the end times. Our response to the book was to say "of course it is right." It took a lot of the science fiction out of our Bible study and helped us see real, concrete answers in a book that everyone tells us is difficult to understand. **Revelations** is easy to understand when seen against the backdrop of Roman persecution.*

2. The huge appeal of sweeping the Tribulation out of the future.

8. Revelation 1:7 – Past or Future?

A. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

B. View	Futurist	Preterist
When?	Yet future	70 A.D.
Who mourns?	Mankind	Jews
Seen?	Visible	Perceived
Scope:	Global	Israel or Mediterranean

9. The Preterist View

- A. A non-literal “cloud coming” of Jesus in judgment upon Jerusalem
- B. Fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- C. Revelation concerns: the “end of the Jewish age”
- D. Those who mourn are exclusively Jews – “all the tribes of the *land* will mourn”

10. Answering the Preterist View

- A. Scripture interprets Scripture
- B. What Zechariah said about Rev. 1:7
- C. What Jesus said about Rev. 1:7 (in Mtt. 24)
- D. The context of Jesus’ return

11. Revelation 1:7 According to Jesus

- A. Matthew 24:30
Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then **all the tribes of the earth will mourn**, and **they will see** the Son of Man coming **on the clouds** of heaven with power and great glory.
- B. Revelation 1:7
Behold, He is coming **with clouds**, and **every eye will see Him**, even they who pierced Him. And **all the tribes of the earth will mourn** because of Him. Even so, Amen.

12. Preterism: Seeing is Perceiving

- A. With the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the truth sank in for the tribes of Israel (Revelation 1:7). . . . John is telling us that those who pierced Jesus

experienced His covenant wrath. . . . The crucifiers would see Him coming in judgment – that is, they would *understand* that His coming would mean wrath on the land. . . . Only when Jesus came to destroy Jerusalem in A.D. 70 did the apostate Jews of that generation recognize His visitation. . . .¹

13. Jesus: Seeing is . . . seeing!

- A. "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here [is] the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe [it]. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; [or] 'Look, [He is] in the inner rooms!' do not believe [it]. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."
(Matthew 24:23-27)

14. A Visible Undeniable Event

- A. His coming will be like lightning flashing from the east . . . to the west; it will be a splendid, visible event.
--Barbieri, Bible Knowledge Commentary
- B. That this language finds its highest interpretation in the Second Personal Coming of Christ, is most certain.
--Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown
- C. The Son of Man's coming in power will be sudden and obvious like *lightning*. No one will need to point it out.
--NET Bible Notes

15. The Context of Matthew 23-24

- A. Matthew 23 precedes Matthew 24! ☺
- B. What did the disciples ask (Mtt. 24:1-3)?
1. Tell us, when will these things be?
 2. And what [will be] the sign of your coming,
 3. and of the end of the age?
- C. What return?
1. What caused the generally clueless disciples to wonder about a return?
 2. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under [her] wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed [is] He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"
(Matthew 23:37-39)
- D. Jesus will not be seen by Jerusalem until He is called blessed by the Jews.
- E. At that point, He will gather her children together as a hen gathers her chicks

¹ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 157, 161, 306.

- F. This is speaking of the restoration of Jerusalem, when “the Deliverer will come out of Zion and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11:26).
- G. At what point during the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome did the Jews say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord?”

16. Preterism: Only Jews Mourn

- A. “every [Jewish] eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the [Israelite] tribes of the land will mourn...”
- B. “every eye” is entire *Jewish* nation
- C. “even they who pierced Him” refers to *a subset of Jews* from among Israel—those directly responsible for the crucifixion who were still alive in A.D. 70 at the time of this “cloud coming”
 - 1. Remember a key tenet of Preterism: “you” must always refer to people who live to see fulfillment

17. Who Pierced Christ?

- A. It was *Jewish mouths* (Mark 15:13; Luke 23:21; John 19:6,14-16) together with *Gentile hands* (John 19:23) which crucified Christ.
- B. Ultimately, the sin of all mankind sent Jesus to the cross (Rom. 4:25).
- C. Yet Israel bears a heightened responsibility in that she crucified *her own Messiah* (John 1:11; Acts 3:12-15; Rom. 9:4-5).

18. Preterism: A Jewish Subgroup Still Living

- A. How to establish a boundary between all Jews living in Jesus’ day vs. those who contributed to the crucifixion—“they that pierced?”
- B. What does piercing entail?
 - 1. Direct persuasion such as manifested by the Jewish religious leaders?
 - 2. Does incitement by the crowd count?
 - 3. What about Jews who were not present at Jerusalem at the crucifixion, but opposed Jesus’ ministry?
- C. KEY: The national/generational curse – “His blood [be] on us and on our children.” (Mtt. 27:25)
 - 1. This curse is *national*
 - a) It came in response to Pilate’s washing his hands, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.”
 - b) “Us and our children” can only mean the Jews.
 - 2. This curse is *generational*
 - a) “Those who pierced” need not refer to Jews living in the time of Jesus. It encompasses their offspring.

19. Zechariah – Who Pierced Jesus?

- A. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for [his] only [son], and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)
- B. The House of David – the line of Judah through whom Messiah came.
- C. Inhabitants of Jerusalem – the capital representing the whole nation (metonymy²).
- D. Zechariah: they who pierced = *the entire Jewish nation*
- E. Zechariah's context parallels that of Matthew 23
 - 1. Jerusalem will be a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples (Zec. 12:2)
 - 2. all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it (Zec. 12:3)
 - 3. It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem (Zec. 12:9)
 - 4. ...And I will pour...
 - 5. This is the vindication of Jerusalem, not her destruction!

20. Who Mourns? All the [Israelite] Tribes of the Land?

- A. Identical Greek phrase in both Matthew and Revelation: *pasai hai phylai tēs gēs*
- B. The word for “earth” (*gē*) can either have a local meaning as “land” (e.g., Mtt.2:6, 20; 4:15) or a global meaning as “earth” (e.g., Gen. 1:1, LXX; Mtt. 5:5, 18).
- C. Preterism: *phylai* is a technical term which always refers to the 12 tribes of Israel

21. The Septuagint Weighs In

- A. It is through Abraham's seed that "all the families of the earth" will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; 28:14)
 - 1. identical Greek phrase
- B. God says to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2)
 - 1. almost identical Greek phrase (different in case only)
- C. Whichever "of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King" (Zec. 14:17) during the Millennium will not receive rain. These families include "the family of Egypt" (Zec. 14:18)

² A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated, as in the use of *Washington* for *the United States government* or of *the sword* for *military power*.

- D. In each of these OT passages, the Gentile-inclusive concept of “families” is rendered in the Septuagint using the same Greek term (*phylai*) and phrase found in Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7
- E. Preterist response
 - 1. Septuagint renders “tribes” as *phylai* where the underlying Hebrew term is *mishpachah*
 - a) A different Hebrew word from the more frequently-encountered word for “tribe” which describes Israel, that is *shebet*
 - b) The word, however, is never used to refer to tribes of other nations.³
 - 2. By rendering both *mishpachah* and *shebet* by *phylai*, the LXX loses the precision of the underlying Hebrew text.
 - 3. Perhaps true – but what does this really prove?
 - 4. Adds to the evidence that *phylai* is not a technical term for Israelite tribes since LXX translators used it to render the non-Israelite Hebrew term.

22. A Global Scope, Therefore Unfulfilled in Revelation 1:7

- A. “every eye shall see” – every person living at the Second Coming will visibly see His return
- B. “even they who pierced” - Israel bears a unique responsibility – she crucified her own prophesied Messiah and undertook a national, generational curse at the crucifixion.
- C. “all the tribes of the earth shall mourn” - All those living will realize their error in rejecting Christ, especially as goats in the impending sheep and goat judgment (Mtt. 25:31).

23. Other Global Indicators

- A. Dependence upon Psalm 2
 - 1. In a recent work on the book of Revelation, we identify over seventy references and allusions to Psalm 2 from the book of Revelation.⁴
 - 2. The global context of Psalm 2 is undeniable, concerning the “raging of the nations” and the “kings of the earth” (Ps. 2:1 cf. Rev. 1:5). The Son is to be given “the nations for Your inheritance,” even “the ends of the earth” for His possession (Ps. 2:8). God admonishes the “judges of the earth” (Ps. 2:10).
- B. Ruler Over the Kings of the Earth (Rev. 1:5)
 - 1. This title of Jesus (Rev. 1:5) can only be localized to the Mediterranean basin as preterists do at the great risk of distorting the clear teaching of His

³Harris, R. L., Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., & Waltke, B. K. (1999, c1980). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (Page 897). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴ [1](http://www.SpiritAndTruth.org/id/revc.htm?Psalms) Garland, s.v. “Scripture Index,” “Ps. 2” <www.SpiritAndTruth.org/id/revc.htm?Psalms>.

earthly dominion. He is not just ruler over a handful of Kings related to the Roman Empire in A.D. 70, but “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19:16)--the *highest* King and *highest* Lord over a domain encompassing *all* kings and lords.

C. Hour of Trial

1. The “hour of trial” from which Jesus promised to keep the overcomer “shall come upon the whole world” to test “those who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10). These same earth dwellers are identified as, “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). It is difficult to imagine what terminology the Holy Spirit could have had John use to denote a more global context.

D. Tribes (*phylēs*), Tongues, Peoples, Nations

1. This global combination appears throughout the book, and describes those redeemed by the Lamb (Rev. 5:9). Are preterists ready to be consistent and limit Christ's redemptive work to the Roman Empire or Mediterranean basin? This would truly be a new angle on the doctrine of limited atonement!
2. John is told to prophecy concerning “peoples, nations, tongues, and kings” (Rev. 10:11). This four-fold designation emphasizes universality.
3. Babylon, the harlot, fornicates with the “kings of the earth” and sits upon “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15). The *global* dispersion of the nations at the tower of Babel in early Genesis argues for a global understanding of her influence—not localized to the Mediterranean.

E. Global Worship

1. In scenes of high worship, such as the song of the Lamb in Revelation 5:9-12, doxologies are proclaimed by “every creature which is in heaven and on the earth (*gē*) and under the earth (*gē*) and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them.”
2. Is this praise restricted to the region of the Roman Empire or Mediterranean basin? The context argues otherwise.

24. Other Global Indicators

A. Standing on Earth and Sea

1. A mighty angel descends from heaven and places his feet on both land and sea. His stance conveys divine dominion over the entire globe (c.f. Gen. 1:9-10).

B. The Devil's Domain

1. In the process of Christ reclaiming dominion over the earth, Satan is cast down to the earth. The solemn observation is made, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows he has a short time” (Rev. 12:12).
2. Notice the global domain of the devil (both earth and sea) and that he has only a short time. This cannot speak of a localized context pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 because: (1) abundant evidence indicates the devil has been active for nearly 2,000 years since then; (2) the domain of the devil is global, not restricted to the area of the Roman Empire or Mediterranean basin. Also, the spirits of demons, performing signs, “go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world” to gather them for the “great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14).

C. Cataclysms and Catastrophes

1. The text of Revelation either describes global catastrophes and cataclysms never before seen or it is chock-full of dramatic hyperbole and exaggeration. The astrophysical signs and great earthquakes are coupled with descriptions of global destruction and death--exactly what would be expected of literal events spanning the globe. When “every island” flees away “and the mountains were not found” surely this must speak of a global scope. Any other interpretation must take it as extreme hyperbole or inaccuracy.

D. Global Reclamation and Restoration

1. The central theme of the book of Revelation is the physical (not just spiritual) reclamation of the earth in obedience to serve the Lord Jesus Christ at the establishment of His kingdom which He will rule upon His physical return (Mtt. 25:31; Rev. 3:21; 20:4).
2. This reclamation and restoration is the reversal of what took place at the Fall in the Garden of Eden. It is the undoing of all that flowed from the disobedience of Adam and Eve. This is a theme which is truly global (even universal) in scope and predates Israel in the plan of God.
3. The reclamation and restoration is similarly global (even universal, Rev. 21:1) and postdates the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70--culminating history as we know it with the literal, physical, visible, fearful return of Jesus Christ in judgment (Rev. 19:11-21).

25. The Capstone of Scripture

- A. the climax of an age which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.?
- B. the climax of all history culminating in the end of the present age?
- C. Even normative preterists admit that key parts of the book have not yet been fulfilled and concern a global context (e.g., the Second Coming of Christ in Revelation 19).

- D.** Why would God begin Scripture with a global context (“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. . .”, Gen. 1:1), but then bring it to a climax in the limited destruction of a modest city--an event of little significance to most of the world--nearly 2,000 years ago?

26. CLOSING STATEMENT

- A.** Thankfully, the plain meaning of the Biblical text stands opposed to its foundational teachings.⁴ As long as Bible students take the text at face value--as it was intended to be understood--then preterism will continue to face an uphill battle. To this fact we owe thanks to the perspicuity of the Scriptures.
- B.** PRAYER