

# Revelation 1:7 - Past or Future?

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The testimony of the coming return of Jesus Christ in judgment upon the earth is central to the message of the entire New Testament. The capstone of this testimony is found in the Book of Revelation which repeatedly predicts His coming and includes descriptions of the conditions upon the earth shortly prior to His return. His return will be unmistakable and severe--involving a great slaughter from many different nations (Rev. 19:19). This New Testament description of the return of Jesus Christ dovetails with Old Testament revelation of the time of the end when all nations will surround Jerusalem to destroy her, but the Lord will personally intervene leading to Jerusalem's vindication and salvation setting the stage for ushering in the millennial kingdom upon the earth (e.g., Zec. 12:1-9; 14).

This all seems clear enough: at some time in the future, corresponding to the Second Coming of Christ, *Jerusalem will be defended and vindicated by God*. This last point is of particular importance--she will not be destroyed and her inhabitants scattered as was the case when Rome overthrew Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when the Jews were "led away captive into all nations [and] Jerusalem . . . trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

As clear as this may seem, there are those within Christianity who make the mistake of merging the *destruction* of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the *vindication* of Jerusalem at Christ's Second Coming into a single historical event--claiming that most of the passages describing the Second Coming have already been fulfilled in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. These are the *preterists* who are serious about trying to convince the church that the things we still wait for have already transpired and lie behind in the past.

Among the many passages which preterists attempt to move from the future to the past, is a key passage which introduces the expectation of the Second Coming in the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation:

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. (Rev. 1:7)

The preterists assure us that this verse is describing the "cloud coming" of Jesus Christ in *judgment upon Jerusalem* (at which every eye did *not* see Him). They assert that this was fulfilled when Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 and that the context of the verse is restricted either to Jerusalem and its environs, or to the Roman empire and Mediterranean region. They achieve this exegetical slight-of-hand by restricting "tribes" to mean "Israel" and "earth" to be "land."<sup>1</sup> Thus, they maintain that only the "[Israelite] tribes of the land" are specified in this passage.

## What Jesus Said about Revelation 1:7

All interpreters recognize the close affinity between Revelation 1:7 and the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:

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 and power and great glory. (Mtt. 24:30).

There are at least three elements which tie these passages together: (1) all the tribes mourn--the exact same Greek phrase is used in both passages;<sup>2</sup> (2) Christ returns with clouds; (3) His appearance is *seen*. Preterists

1 Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating The Book Of Revelation* (Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 1998), 127-131.

2 "All the tribes of the earth" (*pasai hai phylai tēs gēs*).

apply a similar context-restricting interpretation to Jesus' words in Matthew 24 as to John's words in Revelation 1:7 in order to arrive at the same conclusion: the passage speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and *Christ Himself* was not literally seen, but *His hand of judgment* was seen in the events that befell Jerusalem and the Jews.

The preterist explanation of these passages encounters several major difficulties.

*First*, both Matthew's passage and John's passage in Revelation place emphasis not just on the fact of Christ's return, but on Him *being seen*. Jesus prefaces His remarks about His return by emphasizing that upon His return He will not be found in some place that is private or distant, but that His return will be dramatic and as undeniable as lightning:

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. (Mtt. 24:26-27)

This poses a serious problem for the preterist interpretation of His "cloud coming in judgment" because nobody saw Jesus in A.D. 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem. This is amply demonstrated by the inability of preterists to establish a specific day on which He supposedly "came." Christ simply did not return in A.D. 70 as predicted by the angels at His ascension:

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This [same] Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will *so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.*" (Acts 1:9-11, emphasis added)

*Second*, preterists fail to distinguish the context of Jesus' coming as recorded by Matthew. Jesus is answering several questions posed by the disciples:

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what [will be] the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Mtt. 24:3)

The first question of the disciples, "When will these things be?," refers to the previous statement by Jesus indicating that the Temple will be destroyed (Mtt. 24:1-2). They then ask a follow-on question in two parts: "What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" Preterists make the mistake of merging these separate events (the destruction of the Temple and His coming at the end of the age) into a single event when they are in fact separated in time. How do we know this? We know this from looking at the context of Matthew's passage.

When the disciples ask Jesus, "What will be the sign of Your coming?," we must realize these are the same disciples which the gospels witness were generally clueless concerning the impending crucifixion and future return of Jesus. They are not asking the question out of their knowledge--as if they occupy the same vantage point we do--having the completed NT canon as their reference point. No, they are generally ignorant concerning the sequence of events which lie ahead which will soon be initiated by the crucifixion of their Master. How is it then that they ask such a question? They ask this question *because of what Jesus previously said* to Jerusalem:

"O 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!'*" (Mtt. 23:37-39, emphasis added)

This statement by Jesus is extremely important in establishing the context of His "cloud coming" (Mtt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7). Jesus says that Jerusalem will not see Him again until she repents and recognizes Him as Lord--by blessing the One Who comes in the name of the Lord--the Messiah!

This writer found little discussion on this verse in preterist literature. The verse is quoted in connection with verse 38, but it is not discussed. Verse 38 describes Israel's house being left desolate, which preterists say occurred when Christ left the temple. But nothing is said about Israel's repentance and the Lord's return! This is significant especially in light of the fact that verse 39 seems to be a "time-element" verse. It should be considered along with other temporal elements in this section of Matthew, especially because it deals with the time when Israel will see their Messiah again.<sup>3</sup>

This does not speak of a "cloud coming in judgment" upon Jerusalem, but a *subsequent physical return* at a time when the Jews recognize their rejected Messiah and call Him blessed. This speaks of a time of vindication and restoration--a time when He *will* gather Jerusalem's children "as a hen gathers her chicks." This scenario is compatible with the events of Zechariah 12-14 and the overthrow of world powers at His physical return as described by the global context within the book of Revelation.

We have seen that Revelation 1:7 is closely allied to Matthew 24:30--an almost identical statement is found in the words of Jesus and the words of John concerning Christ's coming. The key phrase which the preterists localize as, "All the [Israelite] tribes of the land" is duplicated in both passages, but in the Matthew passage the context ties it to Jesus' final return when Jerusalem repents and recognizes Him as Messiah. The context of Matthew 23 and 24 indicate that the "cloud coming" is in response to the proclamation of the Jews: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" This is completely contrary to the preterist explanation of an A.D. 70 fulfillment and strong evidence that Revelation 1:7 is also describing this same event of the vindication of Jerusalem--not her destruction. At what time during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem did the Jews ever say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord?" Never!<sup>4</sup>

## Every Eye Will See . . . Even Those Who Pierced

As is manifestly obvious, "every eye" did not see Jesus Christ return at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Preterists try to work around this problem for their view by interpreting "see" as "understand" :

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. . .<sup>5</sup>

3 Stanley Toussaint, "A Critique of the Preterist View of the Olivet Discourse," *Bibliotheca Sacra* Vol. 161 No. 644 (2004): 472.

4 "Preterists content that the word 'you' in this verse [Mtt. 23:39] refers to the generation of Jews who heard Christ speak these words. However, the question remains, When in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem did Israel look to the Lord Jesus and say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'? Preterists avoid dealing with this question. (Toussaint, 482).

5 Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness* (Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 1994), 157, 161, 306.

We might ask where the text of Scripture (or any other external historical source, for that matter) indicates that all Jews (“every eye”) “recognized His visitation” in A.D. 70? There is simply no such indication.

Preterists attempt to bolster their interpretation by pointing to other passages in which “seeing” is equated with “understanding”--something that all Biblical interpreters recognize as being true in some contexts. But does Jesus leave open this metaphorical interpretation in the passage at hand? Earlier, we saw the close connection between the words of John in Revelation 1:7 and those of Jesus in Matthew 24:30. The context of Matthew 24:23-30 makes a very strong case that the *seeing* is literal--referring to His personal physical Second Coming. Jesus indicates that His visible, personal Second Coming is the antidote to all who suggest He has arrived clandestinely and is to be found in some remote or hidden location:

"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. (Mt 24:23-27)

To Jesus' cautionary warning about accepting anything but His personal, obviously visible manifestation, we might easily add: “If they say Christ came spiritually in the destruction of Jerusalem, do not believe it!” The text makes it clear that when Jesus comes, there will be no lingering question of His arrival as with the preterist interpretation:

His coming will be like lightning flashing from the east . . . to the west; it will be a splendid, visible event.<sup>6</sup>

That this language finds its highest interpretation in the Second Personal Coming of Christ, is most certain.<sup>7</sup>

The Son of Man's coming in power will be sudden and obvious like *lightning*. No one will need to point it out.<sup>8</sup>

Not only will “every eye” see His literal arrival, but a subgroup, “even they who pierced Him,” will be among those who see and mourn. Most commentators see this subgroup as a reference to Israel which bears a unique responsibility for having crucified her own Messiah.

Scripture indicates that both Jews *and* Gentiles are responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 4:27-28). It was *Jewish mouths* (Mark 15:13; Luke 23:21; John 19:6, 14-16) together with *Gentile hands* (John 19:23) which crucified Jesus. Ultimately, it was the sin of all mankind which sent Jesus to the cross (Rom. 4:25). Yet this passage refers to the Jews who have a particular responsibility (Acts 3:12-15) because Jesus is their promised national Messiah (Rom. 9:4-5). The Jewish generation which witnessed the crucifixion of Messiah made the fearful mistake of pronouncing a curse upon themselves *and their children*: "And all the people answered and said, 'His blood [be] on us and on our children.'" (Mtt. 27:25). So it is Jews who will specially mourn when they realize their grave error and the historical destruction it has wrought. As Robert Lightner observes: "You don't put kings on crosses, you put them on thrones!"

6 Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), Mtt. 24:27.

7 Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, A. R. Fausset et al., *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Mark 13:26.

8 *NET Bible Notes : Study Notes for the New English Translation*, (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 1998), Mtt. 24:27 n35.

It is important here to recognize that Scripture records that the Jews of Jesus' day took upon themselves a blood curse--that is, a curse which is *generational and national in nature*. This fact is important because it explains how “even they who pierced Him” in Revelation 1:7 can refer to *offspring of the Jewish nation* and need not refer to those Jews who were actually living at the time Jesus was crucified--as maintained by preterists.<sup>9</sup>

Some who question the global scope of Revelation 1:7 maintain that the phrase “every eye” may describe the entire Jewish nation whereas “they that pierced” represents those Jews who actually took part in the crucifixion of Jesus. This view seems problematic.

*First*, how does one establish the precise boundary between all the Jews living at the time of Christ vs. those who contributed to His crucifixion? And what does contributing to His crucifixion entail? Direct persuasion, such as manifested by the Jewish religious leaders? Does incitement by the crowd count? What about Jews who were not present at Jerusalem at the crucifixion, but opposed Jesus' ministry? And how does such a distinction between some Jews and not others square with the generational curse pronounced by and upon the Jews in general (Mtt. 27:25)?

*Second*, if “every eye” is restricted to refer to Israel only, why does Zechariah use a completely different phrase to refer to Jews who will mourn the One whom they pierced?

*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. (Zec. 12:10, emphasis added)*

Here, Zechariah identifies “they who pierced” (Revelation 1:7) as being *all Israel*--not a subset specifically held responsible for the crucifixion of Messiah from among a larger group of Jews.

*The recipients of the spiritual blessing [identical with those who mourn] will be (1) “the house of David,” through whom the promise of the Messianic-Davidic Kingdom was made (2 Sam. 7:8-16), and through whom it will be realized (Luke 1:31-33); and (2) “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” -- the whole saved remnant of Israel, by metonymy, the capital representing the whole nation (cf. 1 Kings 20:34, where “Samaria,” the capital, represents the nation).<sup>10</sup>*

*The fact that only the inhabitants of Jerusalem are named, and not those of Judah also, is explained correctly by the commentators from the custom of regarding the capital as the representative of the whole nation. And it follows . . . from this, that in v. 8 also the expression “inhabitants of Jerusalem” is simply an individualizing epithet for the whole of the covenant nation. But just as in v. 8 the house of David is mentioned emphatically along with these was the princely family and representative of the ruling class, so is it also in v. 10, for the purpose of expressing the thought that the same salvation is to be enjoyed by the whole nation, in all its ranks, from the first to the last.<sup>11</sup>*

If we use Zechariah's identification of “they who pierced,” then the *entire nation* is in view. This argues against understanding “they that pierced” of Revelation 1:7 as indicating a subset among the Jews. We also note that both Jesus and John *depart* from the phraseology of Zechariah 12:10 in identifying the larger community as “tribes of the earth” rather than “the house of David . . . and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” This difference is significant: why wouldn't both Matthew and John--guided by the Holy Spirit--have used the same phrase as

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<sup>9</sup> Upon closer examination, the “time texts” which preterists hold *require* a 1<sup>st</sup>-century fulfillment often require no such thing.

<sup>10</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary On The Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 2040.

<sup>11</sup> Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 10:609.

Zechariah if Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7 were intended to be restricted to the same community as Zechariah's passage? This is a strong indication that something broader than Zechariah's passage is in view--the scope is widened to take in the global community, among which are "they that pierced"-- the Jews.

### **"Tribes of the Land"?**

In their attempts to restrict the scope of Revelation 1:7 to Israel in order to find an A.D. 70 fulfillment, preterists point out that the phrase "all the tribes of the earth" (*pasai hai phylai tēs gēs*) can be translated "all the tribes of the land." This is true. 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). Having established that *gē* can mean "land" as well as "earth," the preterist position then attempts to prove that "tribes" (*phylai*) is a *technical term*<sup>12</sup> which should always be understood to mean "the tribes of Israel." This sounds appealing because if *phylai* always means the twelve tribes of Israel, then its usage is uniform within the New Testament--Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7 being the only two passages where "tribes" (*phylai*) is coupled with "earth" and given a broader interpretation than the twelve tribes of Israel.

Evidence against the claim that *phylai* is a technical term denoting the tribes of Israel is found in the rendering of the phrase "tribes of the earth" (*phylai tēs gēs*) in the Septuagint.<sup>13</sup>

In all of these contexts, the phrase clearly refers to the global community (not just the tribes of Israel). It is through Abraham's seed that "all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:3; 28:14) will be blessed. God says to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2) 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). In each of these OT passages, the Septuagint renders the phrase using the same Greek term (*phylai*) found here.<sup>14</sup>

Preterists have responded to this evidence from the Septuagint by noting that where the Septuagint renders "tribes" as *phylai*, the underlying Hebrew is *mishpachah* – a different Hebrew word from the more frequently encountered word for "tribe" which describes Israel: *shebet*. They claim that by rendering both *shebet* and *mishpachah* as "tribes," the Septuagint loses the precision of the underlying Hebrew text. We agree, but what does it have to do with the evidence before us? The observation that the Septuagint renders both *shebet* and *mishpachah* by *phylai* ("tribes") provides *further evidence* against the preterist contention that *phylai* is a technical term which always denotes Israelite tribes. This response of the preterists is simply a smoke screen, which when considered carefully, actually supports the opposite conclusion.

The fact is that the Septuagint, translated by Hebrew rabbinical scholars familiar with the use of Greek in times much nearer to the NT than our own, renders two different Hebrew words--denoting both Jewish tribes and non-Jewish tribes or families--as *phylai*. This leads us to conclude that *phylai* is *not a technical term denoting only Jewish tribes*. It can have different meanings which are dependent upon the context. This is also obvious from the numerous qualifiers which appear in conjunction with *phylai*: "tribes of the earth," "the twelve tribes," "every tribe," etc. Why would these additional qualifiers be necessary if *phylai* always referred to Israelite tribes as preterists claim?

Even if we go along with the preterists and assume *gē* should be rendered "land" in both Matthew 24:30 and

12 A technical term is one which has a uniform meaning everywhere it is used. Its meaning does not vary with context.

13 The Septuagint, or LXX, is a Greek translation of the Old Testament which is useful when studying the use of Greek terms throughout the entire Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament.

14 Tony Garland, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, rev. 1.4, (Camano Island, WA: n.p., April 22, 2004), Rev. 1:7 <[www.SpiritAndTruth.org/id/revc.htm?Revelation\\_1:7](http://www.SpiritAndTruth.org/id/revc.htm?Revelation_1:7)>.

Revelation 1:7, where else can we find a similar usage? The phrase “tribes of the *land*” is simply not found in a Jewish context. But if *phylai* always means Jewish tribes and *gē* is often to be understood as “land” rather than “earth,” why doesn't this phrase show up in Jewish contexts elsewhere in Scripture? When a search is made throughout the Septuagint for passages containing some combination of the words found in the phrase “tribes of the land” (*phylai tēs gēs*), the only passages which contain these terms always use *phylai* in a way which includes *non-Jews* (Gen. 10:32; 12:3; 28:14; Ps. 72:17<sup>15</sup> Eze. 20:32; Amos 3:2; Zec. 14:17-18).

In conclusion, we find: (1) the term “tribes” (*phylai*) is not a technical term, but has a meaning broader than the Israelite tribes--sometimes denoting Gentile “families”;<sup>16</sup> (2) the phrase “tribes of the earth” (*phylai tēs gēs*) which preterists would have us understand as denoting Israel, is never found elsewhere in Scripture *except* where it includes *non-Jews*; (3) preterist claims to the contrary, evidence from the Septuagint supports an understanding of *phylai* as a non-technical term whose meaning is established by the context within which it appears.

Therefore, for preterists to assert that all usages of *phylai* in the NT denote the Israelite tribes is circular reasoning. They can only reach this conclusion by asserting this to be the case in two key passages which are themselves in question. When evidence from the Old Testament is allowed (via the Septuagint), a strong case can be made that “tribes of the earth” (*phylai tēs gēs*) has an all-inclusive, global meaning. This is completely compatible with the global theme of the book of Revelation.

### Other Global Indicators in Revelation

An exhaustive survey of all the global indicators in the book of Revelation is beyond the scope of our treatment here. Nevertheless, it is instructive to consider some of the more obvious clues which argue against an attempt to localize the geographic and historical scope of the book of Revelation to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. These indicators evidence a global context for the entire book and further support understanding Revelation 1:7 as being world-wide in scope and future in fulfillment.

- **Dependence Upon Psalm 2** – In a recent work on the book of Revelation, we identify over seventy references and allusions to Psalm 2 from the book of Revelation.<sup>17</sup> 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).
- **Ruler Over the Kings of the Earth** – 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 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.
- **Hour of Trial** – 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.
- **Tribes, Tongues, Peoples, Nations** – This global combination appears throughout the book, and describes

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<sup>15</sup> Psalm 72:16 in English translations.

<sup>16</sup> The translators of the KJV recognized this fact by translating *phylai* as “kindreds” in global contexts (Rev. 1:7; 5:9; 7:9; 13:7; 14:6).

<sup>17</sup> Garland, s.v. “Scripture Index,” “Ps. 2” <[www.SpiritAndTruth.org/id/revc.htm?Psalms](http://www.SpiritAndTruth.org/id/revc.htm?Psalms)>.

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!<sup>18</sup> John is told to prophecy concerning “peoples, nations, tongues, and kings” (Rev. 10:11). This four-fold designation emphasizes universality.<sup>19</sup> Babylon, the harlot, fornicates with the “kings of the earth” and sits upon “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15).

- **Global Worship** – 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.” Is this praise restricted to the region of the Roman Empire or Mediterranean basin? The context argues otherwise.
- **Four Winds** – While the servants of God are sealed for protection, four angels stand at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds which will soon unleash global destruction (Rev. 7:1).
- **Standing on Earth and Sea** – 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).
- **The Devil's Domain** – 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). 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).
- **Cataclysms and Catastrophes** – 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.
- **Global Reclamation and Restoration** – 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). 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. 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).
- **The Capstone of Revelation** – This is the essential crux of the disagreement between futurists and preterists: Is Revelation, the final inspired writing of the canon, the climax of the age which terminated in the destruction of Jerusalem, or the capstone of God's Revelation concerning the end of the present age? 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). Why would God begin Scripture with a global context

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18 The author believes Scripture to teach *unlimited* atonement.

19 Garland, 2.7.5.3.3 <[www.SpiritAndTruth.org/id/revc.htm?2.7.5.3.3](http://www.SpiritAndTruth.org/id/revc.htm?2.7.5.3.3)>.

("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?

Those who are willing to acknowledge the global context of Revelation have much evidence to support such a view. Those who are determined to shoe-horn Revelation back into the events of A.D. 70 are unlikely to be swayed by our evidence. Thankfully, we need not be overly concerned about the persistence of preterism because the plain meaning of the Biblical text stands opposed to its foundational teachings.<sup>20</sup> 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.

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20 In their efforts to limit Revelation to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, preterists take the beast to be Nero. But a simple reading of the text indicates that the beast is destroyed at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 19:20). The contradiction couldn't be clearer: How could Nero be the beast of Revelation when he perished in A.D. 68 yet Christ has yet to come?