

# Preterism answered: Christ's soon coming

by James M. Ventilato, 28-12-2004, updated: 4-7-2013

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Certain so-called “time” references in the NT will now be touched on—such as *at hand, near, quickly, shortly, soon*—which Preterists point to as supposedly lending support to their theory, but the true bearing of which they completely miss and distort, given their failure to grasp the true nature and position of God’s *heavenly* people in Christ Jesus, the Church—His heavenly Body and Bride—and the resulting *expectant posture* in which she has been divinely placed and of which she ought always give true heart-expression: toward the *imminent (possible at any moment)* coming of her Beloved to take her everlastingly unto Himself to the Father’s house (*Pre-Tribulational/Pre-70<sup>th</sup> Week Rapture*).

“Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to shew his servants *things which must shortly come to pass*; and sending by his angel he signified it to his servant John.” (Rev. 1:1)

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it; *for the time is at hand.*” (Rev. 1:3)

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, *I also will keep thee from the hour of trial that is about to come on all the habitable world, to try those that dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly*: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.” (Rev. 3:10-11)

“And he said to me, These words are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets hath sent his angel to shew his servants *the things which must come to pass shortly*. And, *behold, I am coming quickly*: blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.” (Rev. 22:6-7)

“And he saith to me, Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: *for the time is at hand.*” (Rev. 22:10)

“*Behold, I am coming quickly*; and my reward with me to give each as his work is.” (Rev. 22:12)

“He that testifieth these things saith, *Yea, I am coming quickly*. Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev. 22:20)

Preterists hold that these so-called NT “time” references (such as *at hand, near, quickly, shortly, soon*), particularly in the book of Revelation, teach a *particular* “imminency” which *requires . . . necessitates . . . demands a first century fulfillment* of all prophetic truth or promises (within the sphere of these “time” references)—*specifically, as of, or in, 70AD, in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans*. Preterists also use these so-called “time” references in the book of Revelation to argue that it *requires . . . necessitates . . . demands a pre-70AD date* for its composition, “within a period of one to five years” prior to the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Keep in mind that “partial” Preterists hold to a *non-literal, non-personal, non-physical, providential Second Coming of Christ* in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD; whereas “full” Preterists claim to hold to a literal (!), personal, physical Second Coming of Christ in, or immediately after, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. **But, in either brand of Preterism, the kingdom inaugurated at His 70AD Second Coming is mysticalized/spiritualized.** [Of course, the “partial” Preterist notion is also contradicted entirely, e.g., by Matt. 24:29-31. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD cannot *be* the providential Second Coming; nor can it be the *result* of the providential Second Coming. For the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory is declared by Scripture to take place *after—immediately after—*“the tribulation of those days,” which, in the spiritual alchemy of Preterism, *is the very*

*destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.* To thus teach that the destruction of Jerusalem takes place after the destruction of Jerusalem is utter nonsense!]

It has already been demonstrated at some length that the Preterist *approach or methodology* is a *selective, isolated, pseudo-literal* one (2 Pet. 1:20), which *reads into* their select texts *that which cannot be found there or anywhere else* in God's Word, and which *mysticalizes* the kingdom, and *overthrows* the *genuinely plain, normal, literal* sense of *all other prophetic scriptures*—including, e.g., the myriad of OT prophecies, and the very Olivet Discourse itself and the book of Revelation as a whole—bearing on the future of Israel, the promised kingdom, the coming of Christ, etc, etc. As such, the Preterist take on these so-called NT “time” references is completely illegitimate and cannot possibly be true.

Further, it has already been conclusively shown that the period of time covered by Matt. 24 (Mark 13 and Luke 21:8-11, 25-36) of the Olivet Discourse is *necessarily, the post-70AD*, and *thus yet future*, Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (the reader is directed to the discussions under Matt. 24:34 and Matt. 16:28 for careful consideration in this regard; particularly on the *keybearing* of Matt. 24:15 and Luke 21:12). Therefore, Chapters 4-20 of the book of Revelation (i.e., the Tribulation Period, the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds, the Millennial Kingdom) ***must be fulfilled sometime subsequent to 70AD . . . in connection with (during and after) the accomplishment of the yet future 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel.*** As such, the Preterist take on these so-called NT “time” references is, again, completely illegitimate and cannot possibly be true—*regardless* of whatever date Preterists wish to *arbitrarily and groundlessly* assign to the book of Revelation.

It should be stressed, however, that if the God-breathed book of Revelation was indeed written *after* the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD—i.e., during the 90s, as all the earliest external evidence indicates—*then the whole Preterist theory is blown clear into oblivion*, including its notions about what is supposedly *required . . . necessitated . . . demanded* by the imminency of these “time” references (*at hand, near, quickly, shortly, soon*) in the book of Revelation. For the book of Revelation, penned after 70AD, declares, as such, that the Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds, the Millennial Kingdom, the creation of a New Heaven and a New Earth, etc., are things which are yet to “*come to pass shortly*” . . . the time is yet “*at hand.*”

Quite frankly, any *doctrinal* scheme or theory which *depends for its very life* on assigning a particular date (or date range) to the composition of a NT book *should be dismissed out of hand on that basis alone*. [Note: dating related to establishing first century human *authorship* is quite a different (legitimate) matter than that of dating related to establishing some *doctrinal* scheme or theory.] In total contrast, recognizing, heeding, taking to heart the *Futurism* of the book of Revelation, *does not depend at all* on whether it was composed at some particular *pre or post-70AD* date; rather, *Futurism* is based on a *genuinely plain, normal, literal interpretation* of “the words of the prophecy of this book” (with all due allowance for *genuine* figures of speech and symbols)—*in accord with the vast connected whole of God's prophetic truth* (2 Pet. 1:20). Preterism, however, depends for its very life, not only on the particular date (*pre-70AD*) which it conveniently, arbitrarily, and groundlessly assigns to the book of Revelation, but also on *its departure* from a *genuinely plain, normal, literal interpretation* of “the words of the prophecy of this book,” a scheme which is inherently forced to *mysticalize/alchemy* the God-breathed book itself—*in isolation from the vast connected whole of God's prophetic truth.*

The following points are presented as further conclusive proof of the utter speciousness and hollowness of the Preterist's isolated, *pseudo-literal eisegesis* of these so-called NT “time” references (as teaching a *particular* “imminency” which *requires . . . necessitates . . . demands a first century fulfillment* of all prophetic truth or promises within the sphere of these “time” references—*specifically, as of, or in, 70AD, in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans*).

“Partial” Preterists actually do not believe that *all* of “the words of the prophecy of this book” of Revelation have been fulfilled as of, or in, 70AD, in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Rather, they believe, e.g., that there is yet a *future* second coming of Christ

(actually a *third* coming, according to their scheme), based on a few NT passages, **including Rev. 20:7-9**.

But the so-called “time” references of Rev. 1:1, 1:3, 22:6, and 22:10 *do not exclude* such passages as Rev. 20:7-9, but rather encompass *all prophetic truth of the book of Revelation*.

“Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to shew his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and sending by his angel he signified it to his servant John.” (Rev. 1:1)

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it; for the time is at hand.” (Rev. 1:3)

“And he said to me, These words are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets hath sent his angel to shew his servants the things which must come to pass shortly.” (Rev. 22:6)

“And he saith to me, Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.” (Rev. 22:10)

But even “partial” Preterists acknowledge that such prophetic words as Rev. 20:7-9 (which they take as a reference to the yet *future* second [actually, according to their scheme, a *third*] coming of Christ), have yet to be fulfilled—**not for the past 2,000 years! Thus, these so-called “time” references (shortly and at hand) allow for the fulfillment of prophecy 2,000 or more years later—teaching an imminency which does not require . . . necessitate . . . demand a first century fulfillment after all!**

“Revelation 22:6 is passage #6 on DeMar’s list of ‘time indicators’ in Revelation . . . In contrast, Gentry cites Revelation 20:7-9 as a reference to the yet future second [actually *third*] coming. This creates a contradiction within Gentry’s brand of preterism. Since Revelation 22:6 refers to the whole book of Revelation, it would be impossible to take *tachos* [soon, shortly] as a reference to A.D. 70 (as Gentry does) and at the same time hold that Revelation 20:7-9 teaches the second [actually *third*] coming. Gentry must either adopt a view similar to futurism [particularly as to the true significance of these so-called ‘time’ references] or shift to the extreme preterist [and even more vacuous] view that understands the entire book of Revelation as past history and thus eliminates any future second coming and resurrection.”

“Since [Rev.] 22:10 is at the end of the book and refers to the total [prophetic] message of Revelation, it is inconsistent to interpret part of the [prophetic] message as having already been fulfilled and the other part [any part] as still future. It is better to see *eggus* [at hand, near] as a term that teaches imminency of a period of time that could begin to happen without the warning of signs.”—Thomas Ice (Preterist “Time Texts,” pp. 105, 106, in *The End Times Controversy*, Tim LaHaye & Thomas Ice (General Editors). Harvest House, 2003)[Bracketed comments mine.]

Now suppose that your dearest friend, your closest family member, or your beloved spouse was preparing to depart on a trip, and when the day of his departure arrived he bid you, “Let not your heart be troubled, for my return is at hand . . . I am coming back soon, quickly.” Now what would you think of him and his comforting words if he actually returned, not merely a few days or a few weeks or even a few months later, but (*as he always planned to*) a year, two years, three years, four years, or five years later!!

Or suppose that your friend or family member implored you, begged you to lend him your brand new car, telling you not worry and promising that he would return it shortly, soon, quickly. You thus agree to let him borrow your brand new automobile. Now what would you think of him and his reassuring words if he actually returned with your car, not merely a few days or a few weeks or even a few months later, but (*as he always planned to*) a year, two years, three years, four years, or five years later!!

What is the point of these illustrations? To demonstrate that the meaning which Preterists seek to impose on these so-called “time” references, in their NT context, is completely bogus, self-defeating, and could not possibly be true—even granting the arbitrary and groundless *pre-70AD* date for the composition of the book of Revelation “within a period of one to five years” prior to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. For the particular meaning which the Preterists would assign to these “time” references, in their biblical context, have the effect of making God a liar (!! ) and every Preterist man true. “Far be the thought: but let God be true, and every [Preterist] man false.”

Yes, the Preterist’s isolated, *pseudo*-literal *eisegesis* of these so-called “time” references proves too much (more than any professing Christian would ever wish to “prove”!); but that which proves too much, proves nothing at all, except its own disproof! The Preterist understanding, therefore, of the significance of these “time” references—as teaching a *particular* “imminency” which *requires . . . necessitates . . . demands a first century fulfillment* (not to mention a *specific 70AD fulfillment!*) of all associated prophetic truth or promises—is *utterly false*.

Preterists would actually have to espouse, *and prove* (not merely speculate and assume) a date of *composition* for the book of Revelation **at mere days prior to its fulfillment** in connection with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD (or certain events leading up to it, which varies according to Preterist whims)—in order for their view of these “time” references to have even a *show or glimmer* of plausibility for itself. But even then, not only would all of the other scriptural facts established above and throughout this paper *contradict and refute* this Preterist scheme—irrespective of where the God-breathed book of Revelation is dated in the first century—but *other, and earlier, NT Epistles would do likewise, as they utilize the very same kind of so-called “time” references.*

“***For yet a very little while He that comes will come, and will not delay.***” (Heb. 10:37)

“***But the end of all things is drawn nigh***: be sober therefore, and be watchful unto prayers.” (1 Pet. 4:7)

“Let your mildness be known to all men. ***The Lord is near***.” (Phil. 4:5)

“This also, knowing the time, that it is already time that we should be aroused out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, and ***the day is near***; let us cast away therefore the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” (Rom. 13:11-12)

“***But the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly***. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” (Rom. 16:20)

“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; ***for the coming of the Lord is at hand***. Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged. ***Behold, the judge standeth before the door.***” (James 5:8-9)

It seems that Preterists not only have to re-date the book of Revelation to mere *days* prior to its fulfillment in connection with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (and necessarily “adjust,” accordingly, their mystical interpretation of many of the words of the prophecy of this book), but they have to similarly re-date several other NT Epistles as well! (Not that this would actually support the Preterist scheme anyway. For Futurism/Dispensational Truth is not in the least dependent upon or affected by such *dating-setting*.)

For there is a spread here of *upwards of 20 years* prior to 70AD (the composition of the Epistle of James is dated by most at around 45-50AD). The two illustrations above may now be revised accordingly, to indicate: “he returned, not merely a few days or a few weeks or even a few months later, but (*as he always planned to*) a year, five years, ten years, fifteen years, twenty years, or twenty-five years later!!”

Thus a spread of twenty-five years, fifteen years, five years, or only one year simply does not square even with the Preterist’s own ***out-of-context*** meaning which he seeks to foist upon these so-called “time” references (*at hand, near, quickly, shortly, soon*). It boomerangs right back at him, delivering a fatal, smack-dab blow to his flighty head. (By “out-of-context” we mean, in part, out of

context to the true character of the position of the heavenly people of God in Christ Jesus, His Body and Bride, and to the expectant posture in which we have been set by His grace as partakers of the heavenly calling—which will be developed briefly below.)

To all of this might be added another set of texts which, when viewed through Preterist lenses, actually provides a spread of upwards of 40 years prior to 70AD; i.e., those texts connected with the gospel of the kingdom which our Lord preached during His earthly ministry (as did His disciples, and as did His forerunner, John the Baptist), heralding, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is **at hand**” (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 10:9,11). When this is viewed through Preterist lenses (for they reject the truth of a “kingdom offer” to Israel conveyed in this gospel of the kingdom), we have the preaching of the kingdom as “**at hand**” (or “near”) **over 40 years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, in which Preterists claim that the Son of Man came on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and established that very kingdom (in a mystalized manner, of course).**

Further, this set of passages is completely immune to the obfuscations or manipulations of any proposed re-dating of Matthew, Mark, and Luke that Preterists might conceivably suggest. For it is not a matter at all of where the God-breathed Synoptic Gospels are dated in the first century; rather, it is a matter of dating *the historical events themselves which these Gospels record*. So it seems that Preterists now have to re-date, not only several NT books, but the very *historical events themselves in the earthly life of our Lord*, so as to have them take place mere days prior to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD! Impossible!!

The bottom line is that the *kind* of “imminency” which Preterists assign to these so-called “time” references is *self-defeating* for the Preterist theory, and completely unscriptural.

Such terminology really speaks to the *position and expectant posture in which we, the heavenly people of God*, Christ’s Body and Bride, have been divinely placed and of which we ought always give true heart-expression: toward the *imminent—possible at any moment—coming* of our Beloved to take us everlastingly unto Himself to the Father’s house—via the Pre-70<sup>th</sup> week Rapture.

“But I would not dwell further upon these points of contrast, only praying that we may remember, day by day, that **our place, the church's only right and befitting place, is to wait for Christ from heaven. It is not judgments that we expect to be in;** it is not the hour of temptation we have to await and dread (Rev. 3: 10), for we shall be kept out of it in the grace of Christ. **Our business is to wait, as a heavenly bride, for our heavenly Bridegroom.** Those who link the church with earthly circumstances will be misled in their ways now, and at times pass on miserably disappointed. Not so the hearts which **the Spirit directs, animates, and sustains in the longing cry, Come, Lord Jesus. May it be so with us, beloved, increasingly as the moment, unknown to us, draws nearer! Amen.**”—William Kelly (*Elements of Prophecy*)

“ ‘The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.’ **Such is the normal position, such the primary testimony which the church renders.** After that, it can turn towards others and say, ‘And let him that is athirst come,’ for living waters already flow there; ‘and whosoever will,’ etc. **But for Christians this is the Spirit's last behest to the church pointing out her true position. Her sentiments are based upon her relationships to Christ, and the Spirit demands that those who hear should be in unison with this desire of His heart. Is it wrong to engage those who have heard the voice of the good Shepherd, to take the position of the bride and to join in the cry, ‘Come’?** But the doctrines of the presence of the Holy Spirit here below in the Church, and of the return of Christ, are identified with its unity upon earth, **with the position of bride, or rather of her who here below is espoused to be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ, and with the desire of His coming, which detaches us from all that is not of Him, and attaches us entirely, exclusively, to Himself.**”—J.N. Darby (*The Collected Writings of J.N. Darby*, Vol. 1, pp. 304-305)

True biblical Imminency does not mean that He *must* come for His heavenly Bride at any moment, but that He *may* come for her at any moment. It is imminent at all times to the *not-of-this-world* Church, and certain at one time to God (hidden in His eternal counsels). And as the Rapture is thus imminent/at hand, then *everything* that will come to pass thereafter may likewise be said, as a whole, to be imminent/at hand. For the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus to rapture His heavenly people—to remove them from this world unto their home with Him in Heaven—*triggers the onset all of subsequent events.*

"In Daniel's time, expressly to Daniel himself, the book was to be sealed [Dan. 12:4], and even the old oracles were sealed then: not so John's. 'And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand' [Rev. 22:10]. In Daniel's time it was not at hand. But now Christ is come [First Advent], and is dead, risen, and glorified. **To the church the end is always near. In her own course, and in the matters of her portion, the church does not know time at all. All that instinctively belongs to the body of Christ is unearthly and unworldly. The church is heavenly; and in heaven are no times or seasons. There may be lights of the heaven to mark times and seasons for the earth; and to the lamp of prophecy we do well to pay heed. But the church consists of souls called out from the earth, and is not of the world: consequently to the Christian the time is always at hand.** When Christ at God's right hand was announced even from the very beginning, He was ready to judge the quick and the dead. **He remains in this condition of readiness from the time when He sat at God's right hand till the present. The church goes on according to the will of the Lord, who might according to His own purpose lengthen or abridge the space. It is entirely in God's hand, and in none other's.** Whereas for the [earthly] Jew, there are necessary dates and momentous changes that must take place; and hence, as Daniel represents the Jew, we have the difference kept up. To the Christian this book [of Revelation] is not sealed. All is opened, and this because we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; 'for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.' "—William Kelly (*Introductory Lectures on the Revelation*)

"But he [John] adds more [in Rev. 22:10], and a very important thought it is, practically, for God's children. You may remember in the last chapter of Daniel it is written (verse 4), 'But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' **Now mark in what a wonderful place God has put His church,** as we gather from comparing Revelation 22.

"He was sending His word to the most favoured man that could be found among all the favoured prophets of the Old Testament—'a man greatly beloved.' But although there had been given him so plain and distinct a prophecy of Christ's coming and death, other words were added, as to which it was said, 'But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of the end.' Here the same Spirit addresses John, and says to him, 'Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand' (verse 10). **How comes this to pass? The whole calling of the church is at the time of the end. From the day that the church began its actual existence here below, it was the time of the end; and all through her history, still it is the time of the end.** Of course I do not mean that it is distinctively the time of the end for the Jews, who must wait for the development of all on the platform of literal facts; but therein lies **the peculiarity of the church's calling. She is above times and seasons, though she knows them** [cf. 1 Thess. 5:1]; **she has nothing to do with dates, or signs, or outward events, any more than with the world,** of whose history they are the natural and necessary accompaniment. **The church is lifted up above such a scene; she is heavenly. Such is the place where we are put by the grace of God, entirely outside all the computations which refer to the government of this world.**

"As for the Jew, of whom Daniel was the type, he must wait till the time of the end is historically come, till the knowledge is given by God to those who have understanding then. **Until that time all is sealed up for Israel. This is not the case with the church represented by John. To him it is said, 'Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book.'**

“But here is the error made by many excellent persons. Sir Isaac Newton, a man of the highest reputation in human science, applied this shutting up and sealing of the book in Daniel to the church. The consequence was that he gave it up as a thing that could not be understood till the time of the end. Had he compared the passage in Daniel with the closing words of St. John's Revelation, he would have learnt that the very words that were hidden from the Jewish prophet are expressly opened to the Christian. If Daniel was to seal, John is expressly told not to seal. And why? Because Christ had come, and is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, ready to judge quick and dead; **He was rejected, and from that moment it is morally the time of the end. And so the New Testament writers speak. The apostle John says, 'Little children, it is the last time;' Peter writes, 'The end of all things is at hand;' James, 'The Judge standeth before the door.'** So wrote St. Paul: **'Now all these things happened unto them as ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come' {or ends of the ages are met}.** And so Heb. 9:26. Thus you have substantially the same great truth from the Epistles of Paul, of Peter, and of James, down to the Revelation.”

“This it is, I conceive, that is supposed, when John is told not to shut up the words of the prophecy of this book. It is to be used and understood now in virtue of the knowledge of Christ and with the Holy Ghost given by Christ as an unction whereby we know all things. **To us the time is always at hand.** The words of this book are not sealed to us; so that it is unbelief, if instead of taking the book as it were to Christ who is the light to reveal this as all else, we submit it to the world and its wisdom which can but darken. This, I doubt not, is the root and reason of the mistakes and difficulties so prevalent with regard to the interpretation of the book. In order to understand this and every other part of scripture, I must see what God is doing for the glory of His Son. As a Christian I am encouraged to read the prophecy: its sayings are not sealed to those who have the mind of Christ. If I were a Jew, I should have to wait till the time of the end arrive in the full prophetic sense, i.e., the end of the age. Then the wise among the Jews shall understand; they are the godly intelligent remnant. With such a remnant in principle (called, it is true, into better hopes) the church began.”—William Kelly (*Lectures on the Book of Revelation*)

“Furthermore, the time is said, and said repeatedly (Rev. 1, 22), to be **at hand**; and this as a reason why its sayings were not sealed to John as they were to Daniel {12:4}. The work of redemption being done, Christ gone on high, and the Spirit sent down to be in the Christian and the church, **the time of the end is always near to us, as the Lord is ready to judge the quick and the dead.** Still the ground taken from first to last is, **not that we are in the scenes of the prophecy, but that "the time is at hand," not present.** It is very possible that the prophetic warning it contains may be the divine preservative against the sins which at length draw down the closing strokes of God's wrath on the apostasy of Christendom. Into this worst, this rebellious, corruption the professing mass sink during, if not before, the hour of temptation {trial} which is to try them that dwell on the earth {Rev. 3:10}. Out of this hour the Lord has pledged Himself to preserve such as keep the word of His patience. The faithful, His church, will not be in that hour or scene. The Lord keep this promise, full of comfort, before our souls!”—William Kelly (*Elements of Prophecy*)

“**The whole outlook of this current age is built upon the imminency of our Lord's return, which will at last trigger the final week of years** for which Daniel so longed. Therefore, the events of the book of Revelation are said ‘to be at hand’—that is, they are to be the next season of events that will occur. God will not intervene with another new program like the church. We can be sure that the next phase of history is the Tribulation and then the millennial kingdom. John F. Walvoord is correct when he says, ‘The expression ‘at hand’ indicates nearness from the standpoint of prophetic revelation, not necessarily that the event will immediately occur . . . . The time period in which the tremendous consummation of the ages is to take place, according to John's instruction, is near. **The indeterminate**

**period assigned to the church is the last dispensation before end-time events and, in John's day as in ours, the end is always impending because of the imminent return of Christ at the rapture with the ordered sequence of events to follow.'**

"Revelation is not the only book to speak about future events as imminent and 'at hand.' Paul admonishes godly living in light of the fact that the 'night is almost gone, and the day is near' (Romans 13:12). Peter says, 'The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer' (1 Peter 4:7). This passage also makes the best sense when 'at hand' is understood to mean 'overhanging' or 'the next imminent event.' As in Romans 13:12, this also means that the practical admonitions to live a godly life are still in effect, since the end of all things has not yet come.

"James joins the chorus of John, Paul, and Peter in his admonition that 'you too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near' (James 5:8). Were believers only supposed to be patient towards those who wronged them until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70? Of course not! This passage is speaking about a still-future return of our Lord. Because it is imminent, ongoing patience is required by believers in our day."—**Thomas Ice (Preterist "Time Texts," pp. 107-108, in *The End Times Controversy*, Tim LaHaye & Thomas Ice (General Editors). Harvest House, 2003) [Emphasis mine.]**

We close this section with a very fitting extract on Romans 16:20—"***But the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

"In this verse believers have been given the wonderful promise that our war with Satan will shortly come to a complete and final end, with Satan totally vanquished and with God's saints sharing in the glorious victory."

"When will this great defeat of Satan take place? It will happen 'shortly, quickly, suddenly, soon.' Believers are encouraged by the fact that the battle, though difficult, will not be long. We can expect it to be soon. Satan's time is short and his defeat is certain.

"Prophetically we know that at the mid-point of the tribulation Satan will be cast out of the third heaven and execute his fury upon the earth, knowing that his time is short (Rev. 12:12). He knows his doom is impending. Three and a half years later he will be cast into the abyss . . . His final and ultimate doom is described in Revelation 20:10 (and compare Matthew 25:41).

"When Paul wrote to the Romans, Satan had not yet been [experientially] defeated, nor is this the case today (1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1 John 4:4). Believers of the first century, as well as believers today, are joyfully expecting the imminent return of Christ (Tit. 2:13; Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; etc.). We know that once this event takes place (which may be at any time), Satan's defeat will soon follow. It is from the perspective of imminency that we may speak of Satan's defeat as 'soon.' Believers of any period of church history should be encouraged by the fact of Christ's soon coming and Satan's soon defeat!

"This Greek phrase 'soon' or 'shortly' is also found in Revelation 1:1 and 22:6—"the things which must ***shortly*** come to pass.' . . . Romans 16:20 serves as an argument against such thinking [i.e., against the thinking of Preterists]. Obviously Satan is an active and dangerous foe today and he has not yet received his [experientially] crushing and defeating blow, even though it has been nearly 2000 years since Paul promised that this would soon take place! And yet, from the perspective of believers both then and now, this event may be anticipated to take place 'shortly.'

"I wrote to, Gary DeMar, a very prominent author, anti-dispensationalist and defender of the view that says that most prophecies have been fulfilled in the past, in or around 70 A.D. I simply asked him when he believed Satan would be crushed in light of Romans 16:20. I also asked him if he thought this has already taken place in 70 A.D. Here is his response:



The primary reference is the Roman Christians to whom Paul is writing ("your feet" not "their feet," that is, not the feet of people who were not alive when Paul wrote his letter). The crushing is to take place "soon." "Soon" means "soon." Since nearly 2000 years have passed, whatever Paul was describing, it is history. Satan could refer to the apostate Jews who Revelation describes as a "synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9), the same ones that Jesus describes as being related to the Devil in John 8:44 ("ye are of your father the devil"). The Jews were the ones "who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out," Paul writes. "They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved, with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. *But wrath has come upon them to the utmost*" (1 Thess. 2:14-16). This "wrath" might be Paul's crushing metaphor. (5/21/01)

"Notice that DeMar, in seeking to understand 'soon' [via his isolated, *pseudo*-literal, Preterist *eisegesis*] . . . is forced to understand the verse in a very non-literal way. He says that 'soon' means 'soon' but then goes on to explain that Satan does not really mean Satan but it is merely a metaphor for the unbelieving Jews who will be crushed in 70 A.D. This is typical of the preterist position. By insisting that most prophecies find their fulfillment in the first century they are forced to understand most prophecies in a very non-literal way. (See our booklet, *The Great Tribulation—Future or Fulfilled?*)—George W. Zeller [Bracketed comments mine.]

## CONCLUSION

Our Lord gave the following warning in Luke 21 of the Olivet Discourse: "See that ye be not led astray, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am he, **and the time is drawn nigh**: go ye not *therefore* after them." (Luke 21:8)

The Lord Jesus warns of these false christs, who claim "I am He." But why does our Lord make a point of mentioning their other claim, i.e., that *the time is "at hand"*? Why *should that* be a clear indication (to those who will live during the Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel) of the blasphemous counterfeit claims of these false christs on earth? For the very simple reason that, *if the true Christ had actually returned to this earth*, the results would be universally, unmistakably and incontrovertibly evident . . . the time would no longer be, and could no longer be said to be, merely "*at hand*" . . . the time would have actually arrived . . . His literal, world-wide Kingdom—precisely as promised and depicted in the OT prophetic word—would be installed and underway! (with all living unbelievers having been judged and purged off the face of the earth, leaving no more room for the *competing* claims of false christs!).

There is a principle in this warning of our Lord that may be applied today—i.e., prior to the days of the future Tribulation Period/70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (with *no implication* that Preterists themselves are false *christs*, though their teachings are indeed false, in peddling a *preterized date-setting* scheme): *see that ye be not led astray . . . go ye not therefore after Preterist mysticalizers . . . go ye not after modern-day Hymenaeus and Philetus: men who concerning the truth went astray . . . and overthrow the faith of some. For if the Lord indeed returned to this earth in 70AD, the results would be universally, unmistakably and incontrovertibly evident!*

"Preterism rises and falls upon the validity of the preterists' so-called 'time texts.' Once preterists have confidently [and baselessly] asserted that the texts are related to A.D. 70, they use that starting point to expand their preterist [and mysticalizing] framework, until it has swallowed up the entire New Testament [and Old Testament]. However . . . their starting point—the 'time texts'—is not valid. . . . If the infection is stopped at its source, then there is no danger of the gangrene spreading throughout the rest of the body."—**Thomas Ice (Preterist "Time Texts," p. 108, in *The End Times Controversy*, Tim LaHaye & Thomas Ice (General Editors). Harvest House, 2003)** [Bracketed comments mine.]

“Let not your heart be troubled . . . I am coming again and shall receive you to Myself, that where I am ye also may be.” (John 14:1a, 3b)

"Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice . . . . The Lord is near." (Phil. 4:4-5)

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. . . . [And in the last utterance of the breath of inspiration:] He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly. Amen; Come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:17a, 20)

“Ever keep, brethren beloved, according to this charity, the doctrine which is connected with the cross and resurrection of Jesus—the justification of the believer and of the church; and seek to *awaken* the church from her torpor, by **the doctrine of her position as the bride of the Lamb—one and beloved. Take for a banner this testimony of the Spirit—‘The Spirit and the bride say, Come!’** such is the desire, which comes out of the fulness of the heart. Encourage in grace (for this is all in grace) those who hear, but who have not the persuasion of being the bride of Christ, to come and join their cry to yours and to say with you, Come! And certainly if the heart has entered into the love of Christ in secret, the same Spirit which has made you taste the joy of His love, will make you turn toward the world, and say in the consciousness of that joy and of the possession of those living waters, ‘And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’

“The same Spirit which makes us enjoy Christ and desire His coming, urges us to call others to the same enjoyment. **In fact, this verse (Rev. 22:17) is the expression of the position of the church and of the presence of the Holy Spirit; but it has been left to her as a last testimony, on the part of the Lord, in order to define that position.**

“The thought of the coming of Christ and the persuasion of our obligations to Him, as Bridegroom, give to our souls and to our testimony an energy which nought else could give. He who recognises the Holy Spirit down here, soul of the unity of the church which is the body and bride of Christ, witness of His glory on high, and consequently ardently—yes, ardently—desiring His return, will not cease on this account to enjoy that third great truth which is the foundation of the others—Christ delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. On the contrary, he will enjoy it the more, he will understand it the better. But to avail oneself of the last named truth in order to deny the others, is at least to provoke God to take from us the strength even of that which we desire to retain.”—J.N. Darby (*The Collected Writings of J.N. Darby*, Vol. 1, pp. 336-337)