

**God's Gracious Covenant With Israel:  
The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #25 (Pt. 13)**

Revelation 1:1-3  
March 14, 2010  
Rev. Greg L. Price

In the last several sermons, we have been focusing our attention on the internal evidence that the interpretational system of Preterism raises to support the claim that the Book of Revelation was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. We have sought to demonstrate that whether the claim on the part of Preterists is that the city of Jerusalem and its temple were still standing when John penned by inspiration of the Holy Spirit the Book of Revelation (according to Revelation 11:1-2), or whether the claim is that Nero was the emperor ruling at the time that John received this vision from Jesus Christ (according to Revelation 13:18 and Revelation 17:10), these claims do not upon close examination agree with the actual texts of Scripture Preterists have cited. To the contrary, I submit that these very texts of Scripture undermine the very foundation upon which the Preterist has built his erroneous interpretive system of the Book of Revelation.

This Lord's Day, we will consider more pieces of alleged internal evidence from the Book of Revelation to which the Preterist points as supporting his claim that John penned the Book of Revelation before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. In doing so, we will (by God's grace) seek to answer the following question: Do various temporal indicators in the Book of Revelation (like "soon", "at hand", or "quickly") mean that the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (and other events surrounding the rule of Nero) were very near in being realized as Preterists allege? Let us then seek to understand whether this alleged internal evidence helps build a case for Preterism from the Book of Revelation.

**I. Do various temporal indicators in the Book of Revelation (like “soon”, “at hand”, or “quickly”) mean that the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (and other events surrounding the rule of Nero) were very near in being realized as Preterists allege?**

A. Before we examine any particular verses in the Book of Revelation containing temporal indicators (like “soon”, “at hand”, or “quickly”), let me first state that if the previous four sermons have accurately demonstrated that there is no warrant from the Book of Revelation to conclude that neither Jerusalem nor the temple were still standing when John received this vision from Christ (per Revelation 11:1-2) and that Nero was not ruling when John penned the Book of Revelation (per Revelation 13:18 and Revelation 17:10), then I submit the two major reasons (cited by Preterists) for placing the writing of the Book of Revelation before 70 a.d. have evaporated. And if the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 a.d. have already passed (by about 25 years) when John actually received this vision from Christ (c. 95 a.d.), then the various temporal indicators found in the Book of Revelation do not and cannot relate to events surrounding the Emperor Nero (c. 66-68 a.d.) or to events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 a.d.). Dear ones, this is significant, for if the case for Preterism rests (as they themselves indicate) upon the internal evidence of a standing temple and a ruling Nero at the time that John penned the Book of Revelation, and if that internal evidence proves to be without warrant (as demonstrated in the previous four sermons), all these temporal indicators in the Book of Revelation revealed to John (and subsequently to the Church living at that time) take on an entirely different significance (as we shall see). Let

us now consider these temporal indicators in the Book of Revelation to see whether they establish the case for Preterism.

B. The first series of temporal indicators occur at the beginning of the Book of Revelation in Revelation chapter 1 whereas the last series of temporal indicators occur at the end of the Book of Revelation in Revelation chapter 22.

1. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS” (Revelation 1:1). Here the apostle John states that the resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ revealed to him events that must “SHORTLY” or soon come to pass.

a. Because the Preterist views these future events in the Book of Revelation that Christ reveals to John as related to Emperor Nero (66-68 a.d.) and to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans (70 a.d.), the Preterist claims that John penned this Revelation from Jesus Christ in about 66 a.d. just as all these events were beginning to come to pass. But remember, dear ones, that these events regarding Jerusalem, the temple, and Nero were the events that Preterists allege were soon to occur because those are the events the Preterist believes are revealed later on in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 11:1,2; Revelation 13:18; Revelation 17:10). But if the events that are to occur later on in the Book of Revelation **DO NOT** refer to a standing Jerusalem, a standing temple, or to a ruling Nero (as has been demonstrated in the previous four sermons), then the events that are “SHORTLY” or soon to occur must refer to other prophesied events that would “SHORTLY” or soon begin to come to pass. In other words, these temporal indicators do not support the Preterist position if the rest of the Book of Revelation has nothing to do the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 a.d. (Revelation 11:1-2) or with Nero in 66-68 a.d. (Revelation chapters 13 and 17).

b. The words “must shortly come to pass” imply that God has ordained the events of history for His most wise and holy purposes, for these are prophesied events (even the persecution of Christians) that “MUST” (not “might”, but “MUST”) shortly come to pass. Dear ones, Christ is not controlled by the events of history, but to the contrary He controls all these events and orders them for the glory of His justice and the glory of His mercy. There is a most wise and holy plan to reveal the glory of His justice to His enemies and the glory of His mercy to His beloved children. Although we sinfully grow impatient at times awaiting the plan of the Lord to unfold like a scroll that is slowly being opened, opened it will be in God’s perfect time (as we see here in the Book of Revelation)

c. The Greek phrase used here in Revelation 1:1 (ἐν τάχει), translated “shortly” is synonymous to “soon” in meaning. In other words, John (and the Church of Jesus Christ) will not have to wait a very long time before these prophesied events begin to occur. They will begin “shortly” or “soon”.

(1) I submit it is not to events under the reign of Emperor Nero (c. 66-68 a.d.) or to events related to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple that the “shortly” or “soon” have in view, but rather to events beginning with the first seal (in Revelation 6:2), which I submit refer to the imperial conquest and extension of the boundaries of the Roman Empire under the imperial rule of Emperors Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus, and Aurelius (beginning in c. 96 a.d. a year or so after John penned the Book of Revelation). For in the first seal (in Revelation 6:2), we see a rider upon a white horse—the rider that sat upon the white horse, which symbolizes victory, is wearing a crown (literally, a στέφανος or a wreath that was worn by the Roman Emperors). The rider also has a bow in his hand and goes forth conquering and to conquer—extending the Roman Empire deeper into Europe, which was especially

the case beginning with Emperor Nerva. With Trajan, the Roman Empire reached its peak in terms of territorial expansion.

(2) Thus, I submit, John pens the Book of Revelation while banished to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of Emperor Domitian (c. 95 a.d.), who was the second Roman Emperor to bring persecution against Christians (Nero being the first). However, Domitian has the historical distinction of using a particular form of persecution against Christians—banishment to remote areas (as was used against the Apostle John). We'll consider such external evidence in a later sermon for John being banished during Domitian's reign rather than during Nero's reign (which once again will demonstrate that John did not receive this vision from Christ while Nero was ruling, but while Domitian was ruling).

(3) Thus, Historicism (which is the interpretive system I believe to be faithful to the Scriptures), has no interpretive problem with Revelation 1:1 as it relates to prophesied events that were "shortly" or soon to occur (beginning with the First Seal in Revelation 6:2 just as Christ revealed to John). Preterism, on the other hand, has a significant problem in as much as the events they allege should "shortly" begin to fall out (events surrounding Nero the Beast and the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple) are not events prophesied to occur later on in the Book of Revelation (especially Revelation 11:1-2; Revelation 13:18; and Revelation 17:10) because they are events that had already occurred by the time John received this Revelation from Jesus Christ.

2. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND" (Revelation 1:3).

a. Once again, the Preterist will understand the time is "at hand" or is near as it relates to events that surround Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem. However, as was already stated, those events are not in view later in the Book of Revelation (review sermons 21-24 in the present series). Thus, the time is not near for Nero or the destruction

of Jerusalem to occur, because those events occurred some 25 years before John was given this revelation by Jesus Christ.

b. However, the Historicist has no problem with understanding the prophesied events that are “at hand” or near as referring to events of the First Seal as initiating the time of fulfillment (of Roman conquest in expanding greatly the Roman Empire under Emperors Nerva, Trajan etc. as mentioned earlier).

C. The second series of temporal indicators occur at the end of the Book of Revelation in Revelation 22:6,7,10.

1. As we turn to Revelation 22:6, we read, “And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants THE THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY BE DONE.” This is exactly word for word and in the same order (in the Greek text) what was stated earlier in Revelation 1:1. Since I have already commented on the phrase earlier, I will not repeat what was said earlier; except to say that when it is stated at the beginning of the Book of Revelation and is repeated at the end of the Book of Revelation, the Lord certainly does not want the readers to forget that the fulfillment of these things would soon begin to occur (which was the case under the First Seal of expanded Roman conquest).

2. Let’s consider next the temporal indicator as found in Revelation 22:10: “And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND.” There are a couple observations that should be made at this point.

a. First, the angel forbids the Apostle John to seal the prophesied events found in the Book of Revelation. In other words, the angel prohibits John from rolling up the scroll and fixing a seal on the scroll as if what is recorded will not begin to be realized for a very long time. Note that the Prophet Daniel was commanded by the angel to do just the opposite, namely to seal the scroll that had prophecies in it “till

the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4,9). For the prophecies referred to would not begin to come to pass for a long time.

b. Second, just as we read these words, “for the time is at hand” in Revelation 1:3, so we read them once again here in Revelation 22:10 (though slightly altered in the Greek text). However, the same truth is revealed to John (and to the Church of Christ) for their encouragement that the time was near for the fulfillment of the prophecy to begin. And that generation that lived at the time in which John received this inspired revelation from the Lord Jesus was assured that Christ having begun the fulfillment would also complete all that was revealed by way of prophecy in the Book of Revelation.

3. We come now to the last temporal indicator found in the words of our Lord, “I come QUICKLY” (we find this phrase used six times in the Book of Revelation in reference to Christ’s coming Revelation 2:5; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,12,20). The first two references (Revelation 2:5,16) refer to Christ coming QUICKLY (in a non-bodily coming) in judgment upon the ministry of these Churches IF they do not repent of certain sins . The third reference (Revelation 3:11) refers to Christ coming QUICKLY (in a non-bodily coming) in judgment upon the pagan Roman Empire that has severely persecuted Christ’s Church. Christ comes in this non-bodily judgment against the pagan Roman Empire in 323 a.d. when Emperor Constantine establishes Christianity as the official Religion of the Roman Empire (this is the Sixth Seal, Revelation 6:12-17). The last three references (Revelation 22:7,12,20) close the Book of Revelation and refer to the bodily Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world.

a. The Preterist interprets this phrase, “I come QUICKLY” to mean “I am coming SOON” i.e. “there will not be any significant delay before I come, I will come shortly”. Thus, the Preterist understands such a statement concerning Christ’s coming SOON to mean not His bodily Second Coming which is yet in the future, but rather the SOON non-bodily coming of Christ in power to bring judgment upon Jerusalem and

the temple (in 70 a.d.). Now although I agree that Christ did come in judgment upon Jerusalem and the temple (in 70 a.d.), nevertheless, I disagree with the Preterist that it is that coming in judgment that Christ speaks of when He declares, “Behold, I come QUICKLY” (Revelation 22:7,12,20). And although the Greek adverb translated “QUICKLY” (ταχύ) in Revelation 22:7 may in certain instances be interpreted to mean “SOON”, I submit it is also accurately translated “QUICKLY” in other instances as we have it here in the Authorized Version (cf. standard Greek Lexicons like Arndt and Gingrich, p. 814 which also distinguishes “quickly” from “soon”). Thus, it is the context and the particular event in question that determines whether ταχύ should be translated “shortly” (i.e. soon) or “quickly” (i.e. swiftly or suddenly). Now you may not see at this point the distinction between “shortly” and “quickly”, but we will come to that in a moment.

b. Let us consider the reasons why this declaration of hope from the Lord Jesus should be properly translated “I come QUICKLY” rather than “I come SOON.”

(1) First, this prophesied coming of the Lord (in Revelation 22:7) cannot be the non-bodily coming of Christ in judgment upon Jerusalem and the temple (in 70 a.d.) because as we have already noted in a previous sermon (#21 in this present series), there is no internal evidence (in Revelation 11:1-2) that would establish scriptural warrant that Jerusalem and the temple were standing when John penned the Revelation of Jesus Christ. And if there is no such internal evidence that Jerusalem and the temple are still standing, it cannot be claimed by Preterists (at least it cannot be claimed with scriptural warrant) that Christ’s coming here in Revelation 22:7 is a coming SOON to judge Jerusalem and the temple (in 70 a.d.).

(2) Second, there is a significant difference between “I come QUICKLY” and “I come SOON”. “I come QUICKLY” refers to **HOW** Christ will come (I will come speedily, hastily, or suddenly), whereas “I



come SOON” refers to **WHEN** Christ will come (I will come shortly, without any significant delay). “I come QUICKLY” may allow for a delay in Christ’s coming (even a long delay), but when He does come, He will come speedily like lightning that flashes across the sky. However, “I come SOON” does not allow for such a long delay because Christ’s coming will occur shortly.

(3) In fact, we do find in Scripture that though Christ’s Coming in judgment may be said to come “quickly”, it may also involve a delay (even a long, extended delay).

(a) While the Lord looks for repentance in the ministry of Churches, He delays His coming in judgment and yet when He comes (whenever that may be), He will come QUICKLY (Revelation 2:5,16). How long that delay may be, the Lord does not reveal. However, it is clear that it is not inconsistent for there to be a delay in the Lord’s coming even though when He comes, He will come QUICKLY.

(b) Likewise, we see in Revelation 3:11 the worldwide judgment that Christ brings upon the pagan Roman Empire when He comes QUICKLY (in the Sixth Seal) and destroys pagan Rome (in 323 a.d.). There is a two hundred year gap between the time John penned the Revelation and the official establishment of Christianity as the official Religion of the Roman Empire. And yet that coming of Christ is said to be QUICKLY.

(c) Finally, it is apparent that though the bodily Second Coming of the Lord will be delayed, yet Christ will come QUICKLY (Revelation 22:7,12,20) or suddenly (Mark 13:33-37; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 which immediately follows 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18) like a thief in the night (Matthew 24:43-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10) and will catch the wicked unaware and unprepared for His coming.

(d) This, I submit, is the idea behind the words of the Lord, “I come QUICKLY” (in Revelation 22:7,12,20). It is not “I come SOON without any significant delay”, but rather “I come QUICKLY,

SWIFTLY, and SUDDENLY like a thief in the night after a delay in which people are not expecting me.” Thus, I submit that this temporal indicator (“I come QUICKLY” in Revelation 22:7,12,20) does not refer to Christ’s non-bodily coming in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 a.d. (as is alleged by Preterists), for that judgment is already passed by the time John receives this glorious Revelation (as demonstrated in the previous four sermons). But rather this temporal indicator (“I come QUICKLY) refers to Christ’s bodily Second Coming at the end of the world.

In conclusion, let us reflect for a moment on the bodily coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Dear ones, there have always been scoffers and skeptics who doubt or disbelieve the bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ in great power and glory. This was true even in the days of the apostles: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Peter 3:3-4). However, the Apostle Peter goes on to remind his readers that though the Lord may delay His coming, it is in order to save and rescue all His people from destruction. Just as the rain and the worldwide flood were delayed in the days of Noah in order to rescue Noah and his family, so the Lord delays His coming judgment upon the earth in order to draw unto Himself through faith in Jesus Christ all His elect ones (chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4). The world that perished in the flood was consumed with its own eating and drinking and carrying on as usual with the affairs of life until the windows of heaven and the waters in the deep were opened and sudden and quick judgment fell upon the unsuspecting world as a thief in the night. Likewise, dear ones, God tells us through the Apostle Paul that the Day of the Lord will come upon the world at that future time with sudden judgment as a thief in the night even while the scoffers cry out, “Peace and safety” (1

Thessalonians 5:2-3). Dear ones, our eyes have been opened by the grace of God to see how easy it is to carry on our lives without hardly any real recognition of Christ's coming that has a life-changing effect upon the way that we presently live. And though the Lord delay His coming until certain prophesied events are fulfilled, we are warned against having the attitude that we can do whatever we want to do because of that delay. Dear ones, although the Lord delays His bodily Second Coming, He will still come in a non-bodily sense when death comes to us all. The Christian who lives each day in light of Christ's appearing (whether those Christians who are alive at His Second Coming at the end of the world or His coming to us at death) will not be caught off guard when He comes, but will live each day ready to meet that glorious Savior who loved us and gave His life for us.

Copyright 2010 Greg L. Price. Distributed by Still Waters Revival Books (<http://www.swrb.com>) by permission of the author, Greg L. Price. More free online written Reformation resources by Greg Price (John Calvin, John Knox, Samuel Rutherford, *et al.*) are at <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/newslett.htm> and more free audio (MP3) Reformation resources by Greg Price (and many other Puritans, Covenanters, and Reformers) are at <http://www.sermonaudio.com/go/699> or at <http://www.sermonaudio.com/swrb>.