

# **God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #32 (Pt. 20)**

Matthew 24:36  
July 4, 2010  
Rev. Greg L. Price

We continue this Lord's Day our study of Full Preterism, which alleges that all of biblical prophecy was fulfilled by the year 70 a.d. (at the time that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Romans). In particular, it is claimed (though falsely so) that Christ's second coming occurred in 70 a.d. And perhaps that portion of Scripture that Full Preterists turn to as especially foundational to their view that Christ's second coming was fulfilled in 70 a.d. is Matthew 24-25 and its parallel accounts in Mark 13 and Luke 21 (which is known as the Olivet Discourse). Their interpretation of Matthew 24-25 is the same as their interpretation of the Book of Revelation—all of the prophesied events were fulfilled by 70 a.d. Nothing in Matthew 24-25 is yet to be fulfilled.

Now let me be clear at this point that I do believe (as do all Historicists) that there are prophesied events found in Matthew 24 that were indeed fulfilled at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. I submit that one cannot avoid in the immediate context of Matthew 24 a number of references to the destruction of both Jerusalem and the temple (Matthew 23:37-38; Matthew 24:1-2). From this sobering warning of the Lord as He and His disciples were leaving the temple came two questions from His disciples in Matthew 24:3: (1) "When shall these things be?" (i.e. the things related to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple); (2) "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (i.e. the second coming of Christ and the end of the age). I believe that the answers given by Christ (in Matthew 24-25) to these two questions comprise two different time periods prophesied by our Lord: (1) The time

period leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple in 70 a.d., which answers the first question of the disciples, “When shall these things be?” (Matthew 24:3); and (2) The time period at which Christ will bodily and visibly return at His second coming at the end of the world to raise the dead and to judge all the world in righteousness, which answers the second question of the disciples, “What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3). The Full Preterist sees only one time period encompassing all of the prophesied events of Matthew 24-25: The time period leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple in 70 a.d. Thus, for the Full Preterist, there is (from our present perspective) no future second coming of Christ, no future general resurrection of the dead, and no future general judgment of the whole world. Why? Because all the prophesied events found in Matthew 24-25 were fulfilled by the year 70 a.d.

Dear ones, I intend this Lord’s Day to briefly demonstrate the biblical warrant for two distinct time periods in Matthew 24-25 as fulfilling the prophesied events given here by the Lord, rather than simply one time period (as alleged by the Full Preterist) as fulfilling all of the prophesied events given here by the Lord. In seeking to provide (by God’s grace) such biblical warrant in one sermon, I will not be able to go through these two chapters in any detail, but will be summarizing for you how the Lord Himself distinguishes events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem from events occurring at His bodily and visible second coming at the end of the world. Let us then this Lord’s Day consider the two following main points from our text: (1) The Second Coming Of Christ At The End Of The World Distinguished From The Destruction Of Jerusalem In 70 a.d. (Matthew 24:36-41); (2) The Application Of These Truths Made To Our Lives.

# **I. The Second Coming Of Christ At The End Of The World Distinguished From The Destruction Of Jerusalem In 70 a.d. (Matthew 24:36-41).**

A. Various Reformed interpreters will look at Matthew 24 and draw a solid line at where they believe a division occurs between events related to the destruction of Jerusalem (70 a.d.) and between events related to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world.

1. Most, if not all, Reformed interpreters will draw a solid line between these two prophesied events in one of two places in Matthew 24: (1) Some draw a solid line beginning with Matthew 24:29-31 (so that all that Christ says prior to verse 29 prophesies about events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem, but beginning with verse 29 and continuing through to the end of Matthew 25, Christ moves to an entirely different time period and prophesies about events related to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world); (2) Others draw a solid line beginning with Matthew 24:36-41 (so that all that Christ says prior to verse 36 prophesies about events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem, but beginning with verse 36 and continuing through to the end of Matthew 25, Christ moves to an entirely different time period and prophesies about events related to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world).

2. In other words, it would seem that Matthew 24:29-31 are the verses concerning which Reformed interpreters differ as to which event these verses relate (whether to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d., or whether to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world). Now I don't intend to settle that specific question in this sermon, but in the next sermon we will look more closely at that question. However, let me say at this time that most, if not all, Reformed

interpreters are in agreement that once we have reached the words of Christ's prophecy in Matthew 24:36 (wherein the Lord says, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."), the Lord is no longer addressing prophesied events related to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d., but is now addressing prophesied events related to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world (which same theme continues all the way to the end of Matthew 25).

3. As noted earlier, the Full Preterist disagrees with Reformed interpreters that Christ has taken up a different prophesied period of events in Matthew 24:36 through Matthew 25. The Full Preterist sees no temporal distinction at all between the prophesied events before Matthew 24:36 and the prophesied events that begin at least with Matthew 24:36 and continue to the end of Matthew 25. The Full Preterist claims that both chapters (Matthew 24-25) relate to prophesied events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. (including the second coming of Christ and the judgment upon the nations that is found in Matthew 25:31-46).

B. The question that needs to be answered then at this point is this: Do the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that begin at least with Matthew 24:36 indicate that He is no longer addressing prophesied events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d., but is rather addressing prophesied events surrounding the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world? Let's examine the words of the Lord.

1. The Lord begins by saying in Matthew 24:36, "BUT OF THAT DAY." The words "but of that day" point to a transitional contrast from the prophesied events of Jerusalem's destruction (in 70 a.d.) which related to the first question of the disciples (in Matthew 24:3, "When

shall these things be?") to the prophesied event of Christ's bodily, visible second coming at the end of the world which related to the second question of the disciples (in Matthew 24:3, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"). Note the various clues that we begin to see with Matthew 24:36 that indicate that Christ has (by now at least) moved from answering the first question ("When shall these things be?") dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 a.d. to answering the second question ("What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?") dealing with the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world.

a. The first reason for understanding such a transition in Matthew 24:36 is that prior to Matthew 24:36 (in Matthew 24) we find no specific mention of the words "THAT DAY" (which is a reference to the second coming of Christ at the end of the world), but only a reference to "THOSE DAYS" in the plural (Matthew 24:19,22,29). Whereas after Matthew 24:36 (in Matthew 24-25), we find no further mention of "THOSE DAYS", but only a reference to "THAT DAY". It so happens that the words "THAT DAY" in Scripture very often have reference to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ and the day of judgment at the end of the world (Matthew 7:22; Luke 10:12; Luke 21:34; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8). Thus, we should see in the very words used by Christ ("But of that day") that He has moved to a different prophesied event than that which He had previously prophesied to occur at the desolation of the temple when He used the term "those days."

b. A second reason to see a temporal transition from the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 a.d.) to Christ's bodily, visible second coming at the end of the world in Matthew 24:36 is this: There are specific signs given by the Lord (beginning with Matthew 24:15, "Therefore when you see . . .") that would precede the desolation upon Jerusalem and the temple: namely, the siege laid by the Roman armies

around Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15; Luke 21:20), a period of great tribulation (Matthew 24:21), and false messiah's and false prophets (Matthew 24:24); however, there are no signs given by the Lord (in Matthew 24:36ff) that would precede His bodily, visible second coming at the end of the world. In fact, no man knows the day or the hour when He will come, for He will come as unexpectedly as a thief in the night according to Matthew 24:42-44; or as unexpectedly as the master in Matthew 24:50; or as unexpectedly as the bridegroom in Matthew 25:6,13.

c. A third reason to see a temporal transition from the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 a.d.) to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world in Matthew 24:36 is that when Christ speaks concerning events which will precede the judgment upon Jerusalem (in Matthew 24:15-18), He commands His disciples to flee immediately from Judea to the mountains, to come not in from the fields, or to come not down from the housetops into the house in order to gather their belongings. However, when Christ speaks of His bodily, visible second coming at the end of the world (in Matthew 24:40-41) there is no command to flee, for there is no time to flee, nor place to which one can flee in order to escape the presence of Christ at His bodily, visible second coming at the end of the world.

d. A fourth reason to see a temporal transition from the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 a.d.) to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world in Matthew 24:36 is that prior to Matthew 24:36 God's judgment is specifically directed toward Israel (Matthew 23:37-38; Matthew 24:2,16; Luke 21:20-24), whereas the theme of a worldwide judgment upon all nations is found in the verses that follow Matthew 24:36 (note Matthew 24:37-39 when the whole world was judged by God in the flood; Matthew 25:31-32).

e. A fifth reason to see a temporal transition from the

destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 a.d.) to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world in Matthew 24:36 is this: The Lord's prophecy concerning the desolation of the temple speaks of events that will immediately precede it as being far from ordinary (fleeing for one's life, the siege of Jerusalem, and great tribulation that will befall Jerusalem), whereas the Lord's prophecy concerning His bodily, visible second coming at the end of the world speaks of events that will immediately precede it as being relatively ordinary ("eating and drinking" and "marrying and giving in marriage", i.e. the vast majority of people at that time will be consumed with their own ordinary activities of life, as we see in Matthew 24:37-39).

f. A sixth and final reason to see a temporal transition from the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 a.d.) to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world in Matthew 24:36 is in considering the parables given by the Lord—one before Matthew 24:36 and three after Matthew 24:36. The parable of the budding fig tree was a warning to look for certain signs before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. (as we see in Matthew 24:32-33), whereas the parable of the thief that comes unexpectedly and suddenly without warning in the night (in Matthew 24:42-44), and the parable of the master who left and returns unexpectedly and suddenly without warning (Matthew 24:45-51), and the parable of the bridegroom that comes unexpectedly and suddenly without warning (Matthew 25:1-13) calls us to look not for certain signs immediately before the bodily, visible second coming of the Lord, for He will come when He is least expected. For no man knows the day or the hour of that future visible, bodily coming of the Lord at the end of the world.

2. Thus, I submit that the prophesied event of which Christ was now speaking by at least Matthew 24:36 and continues to speak until the end of Matthew 25 (i.e. the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at

the end of the world) was not fulfilled in 70 a.d. (at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem) for all of the reasons just cited. The Lord does indeed prophesy in Matthew 24 that Jerusalem will be destroyed (which was fulfilled in 70 a.d.), but He also prophesies (by at least the time that we have reached Matthew 24:36) that He will come again visibly and bodily at the end of the world to bring salvation to His people and to judge the world in righteousness. I believe (with historic Reformed interpreters) that Full Preterism is refuted by a faithful interpretation of Matthew 24 and Matthew 25 that recognizes the temporal distinction between the prophesied events related to the destruction of Jerusalem, and between the prophesied events related to the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world.

## **II. The Application Of These Truths Made To Our Lives.**

A. Dear ones, the Lord says, “But of that day and that hour KNOWETH NO MAN” (Matthew 24:36). He declares again in Mark 13:33: “Take ye heed, watch and pray: FOR YE KNOW NOT WHEN THE TIME IS.”

1. What utter presumption, pride, and foolishness on the part of various false teachers on radio and TV to think they can identify the time of Christ’s second coming when Christ Himself has unequivocally declared that “NO MAN” can know “THE DAY”, or “THE HOUR”, or even “THE TIME” of His Coming (according to Mark 13:33). All professing Christian teachers and ministers who believe they can narrow Christ’s bodily second coming at the end of the world to the DAY, the HOUR, or even to the TIME, are in error and are misleading and deceiving so many today. And it is not irrelevant to note that they are making a whole lot of money off of many gullible people in such books wherein they pretend to be able to date the second coming of Christ. Those who pretend to know when Christ will come may have huge followings of people, but they are



deceiving the masses.

2. The apostle Paul tells us that Christ is coming to reward all those who “love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). But dear ones, how can we love Christ’s appearing and His coming if we hardly ever consider it, if we forget it, if we are so preoccupied with this life that we hardly ever cast the eye of hope upon that great and glorious day? One of the greatest hindrances to our loving Christ’s appearing is not so much that we have become grossly rebellious, immoral, or ungodly, but rather that we have simply forgotten and do not daily consciously remember that our Savior is bodily and visibly coming again in great power and glory to judge the world in righteousness. Beloved, we do not have to go out and sow weeds in our gardens for our gardens to be infested with them. All that is necessary for us to do in order to have a garden filled with weeds is to forget, and to do nothing about caring for our gardens. And so likewise, dear Christian, all you need to do is to forget and not to remember Christ’s second coming, and you will indeed become indifferent and apathetic to that blessed hope of every Christian, when all wrongs will be made right, when all tears and sorrows will be forever vanquished, and when all sin and death will be swallowed up in victory. What a tragedy for one who professes faith in Christ to become so wrapped up in his sins, his temptations, his conflicts with the flesh that he/she forgets that blessed hope that God has given to encourage us to persevere and to not lose hope that full and complete victory awaits the child of God (1 John 3:2). Although we look with faith back to Christ’s victory in legally destroying sin, temptation, and the struggles of the flesh, we look forward with hope to Christ’s victory experientially destroying sin, temptation, and the struggles of the flesh. You cannot look back without looking forward. Faith and hope must go hand in hand everyday if we would live in victory.

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