

**God's Gracious Covenant With Israel:
The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #34 (Pt. 22)**

Matthew 16:28
August 1, 2010
Rev. Greg L. Price

The Full Preterist will insist that all prophetic events were fulfilled by 70 a.d., and will insist that if all prophetic events were not fulfilled by 70 a.d., the only alternative left to us is to impugn the character of Christ and the apostles as false teachers and the Bible as full of errors (because prophesied events were not fulfilled in 70 a.d. when the Full Preterist alleges that Christ and the apostles said they would be fulfilled). But, dear ones, that is not our only alternative if we do not accept the interpretive system of Full Preterism, as we have seen and shall see. In order to support such false claims that these prophetic events were fulfilled by 70 a.d. (which false claims we have noted in a previous sermon were unheard of by the Church fathers who lived before and shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d.), Full Preterists have had to reinterpret the nature of the second coming of Christ and of the resurrection of the dead as events that were fulfilled non-bodily and spiritually (contrary to the clear teaching of the Holy Spirit in His Word). It's an interpretive dilemma that Full Preterists have placed themselves in when they must either call God a liar (because prophesied events did not happen by 70 a.d.) or maintain that all prophesied events were actually fulfilled by 70 a.d.), but fulfilled in a way which completely changes the nature of Christ's second coming from a visible, bodily coming to an invisible and nonbodily coming, and changes the resurrection of the dead from a glorious bodily resurrection of the same body that was laid in the grave to a re-creation of a new spiritual body that has nothing at all to do with that body that was laid in the grave.

Having presented in previous sermons an interpretive key (i.e.

typological fulfillment) that will help us unlock the door to accurately understanding how prophetic events could speak of a nearer fulfillment and yet have an ultimate fulfillment in view, let us apply this principle as we conclude this series of sermons today by considering two final prophetic texts: (1) Matthew 26:64; (2) Matthew 16:27-28.

I. **Matthew 26:64.**

A. As we approach this text of Scripture, we find the Lord Jesus standing before the Jewish Sanhedrin suffering through a trial that was in every way a mockery of justice. There was not one shred of evidence produced by any witness that proved the Lord Jesus Christ to be guilty of any crime.

1. In leading up to the words of Christ as found in our text in Matthew 26:64, we note the unjust progression of this kangaroo court, which had already made up its collective mind that Christ was guilty—they simply now needed to find a charge they could use against Him.

2. This tribunal of injustice first tried to corroborate the testimony of hired false witnesses (in Matthew 26:59-62), but the false witnesses couldn't even agree on the stories they contrived to testify. The Lord Jesus kept His silence as one witness after another made fools of themselves and made fools of the ecclesiastical court that had bribed them to bear false witness against Christ.

3. At this point, Caiaphas takes matters into his own hands, seeing that no accusation had been brought against Christ by credible witnesses. He, no doubt, realizes that as much as he wants to destroy Christ, he cannot do so without some credible charge. Thus, Caiaphas calls Christ to incriminate Himself, but the Lord is silent (Matthew 26:62-63a). Caiaphas grows desperate and finally charges Christ to answer this question put to Him by way of an oath, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew

26:63b). Now had Christ refused to answer this question, Caiaphas would have had no way to condemn Him. But Christ having covenanted with His Father from all eternity to save elect sinners from among mankind answered unequivocally, “Thou hast said” (in other words, “Thou hast said what is true. I am the Son of the living God”). Of course that is all that Caiaphas needed. Christ had testified that He was the Son of God. Forget about the false witnesses, He has condemned Himself by allegedly uttering blasphemy in claiming to be God.

a. Please note that Christ again demonstrates that no one took His life from Him, but that He voluntarily laid it down for His guilty, unworthy bride. For all He needed to do was to remain silent, and He would have necessarily been released for lack of credible testimony against Him.

b. Dear ones, He spoke at that precise moment because He had you His elect people in mind, because He had you undeserving sinners whom He had loved from all eternity in view. He spoke the truth concerning His Deity at that precise second that He might be condemned and suffer the indignity and shame as a cursed criminal and might suffer the awful wrath of a holy God in order that you, His beloved and elect people, would never be condemned and suffer the infinite wrath of a holy God in hell. What an amazing thought to realize that Christ spoke those words not only because they were the truth, but He did so for you and me personally who have trusted Him alone for our eternal salvation.

B. But not only did the Lord give a good confession and affirm His Deity as the Son of God before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, He goes on to give further confirmation of this truth by way of a prophecy, which is stated in Matthew 26:64 as follows: “Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

1. Full Preterists insist that this is a prophecy of Christ’s

second coming, for it is a “coming in the clouds of heaven” (cf. Matthew 24:30). The Full Preterist further notes that this is not a prophecy that was prophesied to occur hundreds or thousands of years later, but in the words of the Lord is said to be fulfilled “hereafter” (i.e. literally, the Greek prepositional phrase, *ap arti*, means “from now on” i.e. “from the present time on”) which cannot mean two thousand years from when Christ uttered this prophecy. Thus, the Full Preterist declares this prophecy of Christ was realized 40 years later when Christ invisibly came with the clouds of heaven in bringing destruction upon Jerusalem and the temple by means of the Roman armies in 70 a.d.

2. How should we respond to the interpretation proposed by Full Preterists?

a. First, it should be noted that the Full Preterist in reality condemns himself when he states that the prepositional phrase in Greek (*ap arti*), translated as “hereafter” in the AV (or literally “from now on” in Matthew 26:64) cannot mean hundreds or thousands of years from the time that Christ uttered this prophecy. For the propositional phrase “from now on” is no more appropriate to be used of a prophecy that would not be fulfilled in any sense until 40 years later in 70 a.d. (as the Full Preterist alleges) than it would be appropriate to be used of a prophecy that would not be fulfilled in any sense until 2,000 years or more later (as some Premillennialists would allege). In either case (whether 40 years or 2,000 years), the words of the Lord in Matthew 26:64 cannot be stretched to fit in with such interpretations. For the Lord had events in mind that were much nearer than 40 years when He says here in Matthew 26:64, “Hereafter” (i.e. *ap arti*, from now on, or from the present on). This prepositional phrase (*ap arti*) is used a total of six times in the New Testament (Matthew 23:39; Matthew 26:29,64; John 13:19; John 14:7; Revelation 14:13), and in none of the usages of this prepositional phrase do we see that *ap arti* (“from now on”) may mean that 40 years may pass before a prophecy is fulfilled in any sense. Thus, I

would submit that we must see the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy as having some initial fulfillment within the same time frame in which Christ uttered this prophecy.

b. Second, let us understand what Christ meant when He prophesied to Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders that "ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." These words carry us back to a prophecy we find in Daniel 7:13-14. There we see the Son of Man (i.e. Christ, the God-man) coming (after His death, resurrection, and ascension) with the clouds of heaven to the throne of God (not to the earth) and being exalted to receive all power and authority over the kingdoms of this world and being seated at God's right hand (according to Psalm 110:1 and Acts 2:29-36). Thus, dear ones, I would submit that Christ's prophecy actually points to various events that evidence that Christ is the Messianic King and events that begin within the time frame in which Christ uttered these words. I submit that the first step in the fulfillment of this prophecy of Christ's Messianic exaltation made to the Jewish Sanhedrin in confirming that Christ was the Son of God began to be seen in the supernatural events that very soon followed and declared Christ to be the Son of God, namely, the rending of the thick veil in the temple from the top down to the bottom and the great earthquake that shook the land at His death (Matthew 27:51). But even more to the point, we see beginning with His glorious resurrection that Christ has entered into His estate of Messianic exaltation with great power and glory (as we see in Acts 2:30; Romans 1:3-4). For when the Roman soldiers reported with great fear the glorious events associated with Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week, the Jewish Sanhedrin "saw" with some degree of light and knowledge (though that light was spurned due to their unbelief) that Christ was the Son of God and was reigning as Messianic King; for they could hardly discount the report of the soldiers and rather came up with a lie they knew was not true, namely, that the disciples had removed the stone and stolen the

body of Christ while the soldiers slept. Then after the resurrection we see in His ascension and His coming with the clouds of heaven and His being seated at God's right hand in heaven another step in His Messianic exaltation (Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 2:33-36), which then led to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a visible manifestation of Christ's coronation in heaven (Acts 2:33), and then we see in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. a further step in which the Jews beheld a glorious manifestation of Christ's Messianic rule when the Lord came in judgment upon an apostate and persecuting Jerusalem (Matthew 24:29-30,34). We also see in the establishment of the millennium an even more visible and universal demonstration of Christ's Messianic power and glory over the nations of the world (Psalm 72:8-11; Isaiah 2:2-4; Romans 11:25-27; Revelation 20:1-6). The point made here is simply that this prophecy was not fulfilled in 70 a.d. (as alleged by Full Preterists), but began to be fulfilled within the time frame in which Christ uttered this prophecy. In fact, this prophecy was not even finally and ultimately fulfilled at the time of Christ, or the apostles, or 70 a.d., or at the time of the millennium, but finally and ultimately points to that most glorious demonstration of Messianic glory and power at Christ's visible, bodily second coming at the end of the world (just as we saw in the previous sermon from Matthew 24 that the prophesied event of Christ's coming in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 a.d. pointed ultimately to the visible, bodily second coming of Christ at the end of the world).

II. Matthew 16:27-28.

A. In the immediate context leading up to Matthew 16:28, the Lord Jesus has given clear indication of the suffering that He would soon accomplish in Jerusalem and His resurrection that would follow on the third day (Matthew 16:21). However, Peter took great exception to the part about Christ's suffering and death and presumed to even correct and

rebuke the Son of God for revealing these truths (Matthew 16:22). Peter was in turn righteously rebuked by Christ (in Matthew 16:23) for having a worldly perspective (rather than a heavenly perspective) in regard to the necessity of Christ's suffering and death in order to establish a righteous kingdom.

1. The Lord's order for Himself and for us was (and still is) first, suffering, and then reigning (Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12). Neither the flesh of Peter, nor the flesh of any of us love that order. By nature, we all want to have the glory now (just as Peter did), but Christ goes on to reveal to His disciples the cost and sacrifice we must all be willing to make as those who are true followers of Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:24-26).

2. Dear ones, nothing is too great to sacrifice for Christ and His kingdom when it comes to our soul, even if it means enduring and suffering persecution, slander, separation from loved ones, the loss of a job, the loss of financial security, the loss of health, or the loss of life itself. The call to every Christian (not just to "spiritual" Christians) is one in which we must deny ourselves, take up the cross Christ has given us each one to bear, and follow Christ. And we must not do this once, but we must renew our covenant with the Lord every day, lest we forget what it means to follow Christ.

B. As the Lord and His prophets so often teach when speaking about the suffering we must endure in this life, look to the coming of Christ and the reward promised to those who persevere in practicing what is faithful and true (Matthew 16:27). Take your eye off of the suffering, the heartache, the trials, and the loss at the present time in standing for Jesus Christ and His truth, and turn the eye of hope to the second coming of Christ at which time, dear ones, you will have no regrets that you denied yourself, took up your cross, and followed Christ. For on that final day, the Lord will (at His visible, bodily second coming at the end of the world) come in the glory of His Father with His holy angels,

and then He shall reward every man according to his works: to those who have persevered in practicing the truth, a free and undeserved reward of unsurpassing glory in heaven; and to those who have despised and have been ashamed of Christ, a just and deserved recompense of everlasting wrath in hell. Dear ones, the remedy to our present discouragement in suffering loss for the Cause of Christ is the future hope of an undeserved and unsurpassable reward that the Lord has promised to give to those who by God's grace stand fast in practicing (not merely professing), but in practicing the gracious commandments of the Lord. Dear ones, this is the question that needs to be answered by everyone within the sound of my voice: What is more important to you: your present loss of the persons or things of this world, or the future gain of that unimaginable reward the Lord has prepared for all those who by God's grace deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ?

C. This brings us to the coming of the Lord that is prophesied in Matthew 16:28. What is this coming of the Lord and when was it fulfilled?

1. The Full Preterist insists that this coming of the Lord was entirely fulfilled in the judgment that fell upon Jerusalem in 70 a.d. For this coming of Christ is clearly prophesied to be fulfilled before "some" who were standing there would taste death. Now such a fulfillment in 70 a.d. (at the destruction of Jerusalem) would be within the lifetime of some of those who heard this prophecy made by Christ in 30 a.d. Furthermore, the Full Preterist also joins Matthew 16:27 with Matthew 16:28 as being both fulfilled at the same time in God's judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 a.d. How should we respond to the Full Preterist?

2. It should be noted that the judgment or reward prophesied by Christ in Matthew 16:27 is not a judgment limited to simply Israelites living in Judea or Jerusalem (as we see is the case in Matthew 24:15-22), but is rather a judgment wherein the Lord says that

“he shall reward EVERY MAN according to his works.” This is the same universal language for the general judgment that occurs elsewhere in Scripture at the end of the world for all people and all nations (e.g. Matthew 25:31-32; Romans 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10). God’s judgment did, in fact, fall upon the Jews in Judea and Jerusalem in 70 a.d., but how did God reward “every man” universally throughout the whole world according to his works at that time? Thus, the Lord (in Matthew 16:27) does not limit this judgment to simply Israel in 70 a.d., but rather extends it to “every man”, which speaks of the visible, bodily second coming of Christ at the end of the world as distinguished from Christ’s coming in judgment upon Jerusalem and Judea in 70 a.d.

3. Thus, as we approach the prophecy of the Lord’s coming in Matthew 16:28, we conclude that this coming of the Lord in Matthew 16:28 cannot be identically the same as the coming of the Lord just mentioned in Matthew 16:27 (contrary to the view of Full Preterists). For this coming of the Lord in Matthew 16:28 is to be realized within the lifetime of some who were standing right there before Christ. To what event does Christ refer here as fulfilling His prophesied coming in His kingdom?

a. Some sound scholars have seen the fulfillment of this prophecy in the transfiguration of Christ which is contained in the next few verses (Matthew 17:1-8) where there is indeed manifested a **powerful** display of Christ’s glory that shall be His in His everlasting kingdom (see 2 Peter 1:16-18 where the transfiguration and the visible, bodily second coming of Christ at the end of the world are related to one another by way of the transfiguration foreshadowing the second coming).

b. Other sound interpreters have viewed the fulfillment of this prophecy in the **powerful** miraculous signs and wonders that were evidenced by the apostles on the Day of Pentecost and which pointed to coronation of Christ in coming with the clouds of heaven to be seated at God’s right hand in His heavenly kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 2:29-36).

c. Still other sound teachers (even Historic Postmils) have looked upon the fulfillment of this prophecy in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans whereby Christ came in His kingly power to judge Jerusalem in 70 a.d. (as we concluded was the case in Matthew 24:30, which was typologically fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d., but as a type ultimately pointed to the visible, bodily second coming of Christ at the end of the world).

d. Dear ones, as you can see, there are sound reasons for each of these views. And all of them may, therefore, in some sense fulfill the words of the Lord uttered here in Matthew 16:28. Each of these events gives a **powerful** demonstration of Christ's Messianic coming which was intended to encourage those who heard it to look upon these comings as foreshadowing the ultimate visible, bodily coming of the Lord at the end of the world. Once again, we see an application from the previous sermon as to how various comings of the Lord in history are intended to encourage our hearts that Christ is ever near to us and ever comes to save and rescue us, and to confirm the truth that Christ is finally coming visibly and bodily to reward those who evidence their faith in Jesus Christ by denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Christ, and to punish those who despise Christ and are ashamed of Christ and His Gospel. The Full Preterist once again has erred in seeing the entire and ultimate fulfillment of Matthew 16:27-28 in the coming of Christ in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 a.d. rather than in seeing a typological fulfillment in the coming of Christ in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 a.d. and the ultimate fulfillment of Christ's coming in His kingdom as fully realized at the end of the world, when He shall come visibly and bodily to bodily raise all of the dead and to judge the whole world in righteousness.

Dear friend, the reason that our works are judged by Christ on that final day is not because we are justified before an infinitely holy God on the

basis of our works. No, for no work that one might do can make him/her righteous who is a sinner, for even one sin calls forth the everlasting wrath of God upon the transgression of God's Law in any point (whether in thought, word, or deed). No, our works are judged because our works evidence whether there is faith alone in Jesus Christ and life in Jesus Christ. For good fruit (that is good in the sense that God judges the fruit as good—denying oneself, taking up one's cross, and following Christ) can only spring from a living faith in a crucified and resurrected Savior who is offered to us in the Gospel. And let us be clear that when God rewards His children for such good works performed for His glory, performed out of love for and faith in Christ, and performed according to the standard of God's Word, the reward His children receive is not a meritorious reward, but a free and gracious reward upon those who are and always shall be undeserving of such acts of kindness and love from our blessed Lord. The very works for which we are rewarded are merely the result of what the Lord Himself has worked within us both to will and to do His good pleasure. Dear ones, let us go forth as we face the suffering and afflictions of this life with the eye of faith firmly fixed upon our Savior who secured victory for us by His death and resurrection, and with the eye of hope ever fixed upon the visible, bodily second coming of Christ at the end of the world at which time we will have no regrets for all that we have suffered according to Christ's appointment in this life.

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>.