

# A Critique of R. C. Sproul's *The Last Days According to Jesus*

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## Overview:

R. C. Sproul (RCS) describes four different theological systems that deal with prophetic Scripture (eschatology = doctrine of "last things") (pp. 193 - 202). He himself takes the second view – that is, he is a postmillennialist. Of the two types of postmillennialists, namely full preterist and partial preterist, described below, he identifies himself as one of the latter.

In the following paper, the present writer lists three of the four theological systems, seeking to point out from Scripture the flaws of postmillennialism in point B and to support from Scripture the accuracy of Dispensational Premillennialism in point C. In point D the present writer attempts to identify certain features that are critical to the success of Sproul's theological system and to demonstrate their weakness in light of Scripture.

It is my conclusion that the proponents of Preterism, or Post-Millennialism, though genuine Christians and sincere in their beliefs, hold to interpretations in the area of eschatology that are simply implausible. They can only maintain their views through an inconsistent hermeneutic (method of interpreting Scripture) that refuses to take prophetic passages of Scripture at face value. Then, to support their views, they are forced to take exegetical leaps (interpretational decisions) that simply do not square with the rest of Scripture. Let the reader judge for himself.

It is my intention not only to refute what I perceive to be the errors of postmillennialism, but to attempt to counteract these errors with a Biblical teaching of the truth. This critique is to be taken as a critique of Sproul's book, not an exhaustive critique of postmillennialism. I have attempted accurately to reflect the views of Sproul and those whom he quotes, and then to interact. I hope I have been fair. The difficulty here lies in the fact that partial preterists, it seems to me, want to have it both ways – Christ has already come, and yet He is coming in the future. How much of Matthew 24-25 and Revelation 4-19 the partial preterists wish to reserve for the future is unclear to me, at least from reading Sproul's book. It is this area of ambiguity that may leave me open to the charge of inaccurately representing the views of the partial preterists, but that is certainly not my intent. In this regard, I commend Sproul and Kenneth Gentry, whom Sproul quotes, for accurately portraying dispensational premillennialism (RCS, pp. 196-197).

## Selective Glossary

- eschatology: The study of last things; the study of end-time prophecy.
- hermeneutics: Method of interpreting Scripture. Premillennialists employ a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture (while still allowing for figures of speech); amillennialists and postmillennialists do not, preferring to interpret prophetic passages figuratively.
- millennium: The 1000 year reign of Christ, as found in Rev. 20:1-7. Dispensational premillennialists take this at face value; amillennialists and postmillennialists do not.
- amillennialism: The theological system denying the existence of a literal millennium.
- premillennialism: The theological system asserting a return of Christ prior to His millennium. (Historic premillennialists (HP) are less literal than dispensational premillennialists (DP). HP's do not adequately distinguish Israel and the church, and believe the church goes through the tribulation. DP's distinguish Israel and the church, are pre-trib, and do not fudge on the literalness of the Millennium.)
- postmillennialism: The theological system asserting a return of Christ after a non-literal millennium..
- preterism: Postmillennialism holding that, fully or partially, Christ has already returned as He said He would in Matthew 24. See below for a distinction between full and partial preterists.
- theonomic postmillennialism: Affirms that "the postmillennial advance of the kingdom involves the total transformation of culture through the application of biblical law (RCS, quoting Gentry, p. 201)."
- pietistic postmillennialism: "Denies that the postmillennial advance of the kingdom involves the total transformation of culture through the application of biblical law (RCS, quoting Gentry, p. 201)."
- parousia*: Greek word meaning "coming" or "presence;" in certain contexts (e.g., Matt. 24) it refers to the (2<sup>nd</sup>) coming or presence of Christ.

- A. "*Amillennialism* teaches that there will be *no* literal millennial kingdom. The prefix *a-* indicates a simple negation" (RCS, p. 194). This system is based on a figurative, non-literal interpretation of prophetic Scripture. [Some amillennialists tout an "inaugurated millennium" – the millennium began at Christ's ascension. See Greg Beale, Commentary on Revelation.]
- B. "*Postmillennialism* teaches that Christ will return *after* (*post-*) the millennial kingdom concludes" (RCS, p. 194). In so doing, it treats many prophetic passages in a figurative, non-literal way. Postmillennialists see in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. "not only the destruction of the temple and its attending circumstances, but also the *parousia* (coming) of Christ in his judgment-coming (RCS, p. 127)." There are two types of postmillennialism pertaining to the present discussion:

- 1. Full Preterism** (preterism means past): Full Preterist postmillennialism holds that **all** of the prophetic passages of Scripture have already been fulfilled in the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. This would include, for example, all of Matthew 24-25 and, unbelievably, all of the book of Revelation. “Radical (Sproul’s word) preterists see in this event [the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D.] the fulfillment of **all** New Testament expectations for the return of Christ and for the last things of eschatology (p. 127).” Sproul disagrees with the full preterists, and identifies himself rather as a partial preterist. [See the following chart adapted from RCS, p. 157.]

<b>Full Preterists</b>		
	<b>A. D. 70</b>	<b>At the end of History</b>
Coming ( <i>parousia</i> ) of Christ	Yes	No
Resurrection and rapture	Yes	No
Day of the Lord	Yes	No
Judgment	Yes	No

- 2. Partial preterism:** These postmillennialists (which include Sproul and Kenneth Gentry, quoted extensively below) believe that virtually all of Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation was fulfilled at the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. However, they also admit, to their credit, that there can be both a far as well as a near fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. However, in the view of the present writer, this proves to be their downfall, for they are inconsistent. If they admit to a future fulfillment of certain events, why on earth do they labor so diligently to squeeze most of Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation into the time period before 70 A. D. when it simply does not fit? [See the following chart adapted from RCS, p. 157.]

<b>Partial Preterists</b>		
	<b>A. D. 70</b>	<b>At the end of History</b>
Coming ( <i>parousia</i> ) of Christ	Yes	Yes
Resurrection and rapture	No	Yes
Day of the Lord	Yes	Yes
Judgment	Yes	Yes



3. **The features of “Contemporary Postmillennialism”** (citing Kenneth Gentry, RCS, pp. 200-201)
- a. “The **first** feature is that the messianic kingdom was founded on earth during the earthly ministry of Christ in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The New Testament church becomes the transformed Israel, the “Israel of God” of which Paul speaks in Galatians 6:16.” (RCS, p. 200)
- 1) Clearly Gentry is wrong here. The Messianic Kingdom was indeed offered to the people of Israel, but it was officially rejected by the leaders of the Jewish people, representing the nation, when they rejected the King. It stands then, that the messianic kingdom has not yet been founded. On the Day of Pentecost, God instituted the Church. But the Church never has and never will become the transformed Israel. Rather, when God’s program for the Church here on earth is complete, Christ will return for His Bride. At that point God will resume His covenanted working with the Nation of Israel.
  - 2) What happened when Jesus offered the Kingdom to the nation of Israel? Clearly, the leaders of the nation rejected His authority, and in so doing, they committed the unpardonable sin: Mat 12:24, 31-32 (NNAS) {24} But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." {31} [To which Jesus replied,] "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. {32} "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.
  - 3) As an act of judgment God temporarily withdrew His offer of the Kingdom to Israel at this time. Matthew 13, which follows on the heels of Matthew 12 (Israel’s rejection of the King and the Kingdom), spells out the broad outlines of the “Mystery” form of the Kingdom to Jesus’ disciples: Matt. 13:10-11 (NNAS) {10} “And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" {11} Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.”

A mystery, in New Testament terms, is truth previously unrevealed. The "Mystery" Form of the Kingdom of the Heavens is that portion of the King's reign marked by (a) general rejection

by Israel and the world, (b) steady growth from a small beginning, and (c) infiltration by unregenerate people masquerading as true subjects. It is bounded by the First and Second advents of the King. The term "Mystery" comes from Matt. 13:11. Again, the term "Mystery" does not mean mysterious. It simply means that the present form of the Kingdom, bounded by the First and Second Advents of Christ, and consisting almost entirely of the Church age, was unrevealed in the Old Testament, but is now revealed. The nature of the Mystery Form of the Kingdom, the time between the First and Second Advent of Christ, is outlined by our Lord in the parables of Matthew 13:

- a) **The Parable of the Four Soils** (Matt. 13:1-9; 18-23): Between the First and Second Advents of the Messiah, most will reject the message of the (Mystery form of the) Kingdom. Only a few will receive it.
- b) **The Parable of the Tares among the Wheat** (Matt. 13:24-30; 36-43): Between the First and Second Advents of the Messiah, the Mystery form of the Kingdom will be world wide, characterized by unregenerate participants masquerading as genuine believers. Their true character will not be revealed until the judgment, at which time the Kingdom will be rid of evil.
- c) **The Parable of the Mustard Seed** (Matt. 13:31-32): Between the First and Second Advents of the Messiah, the Mystery form of the Kingdom will experience dominating growth from a small beginning.
- d) **The Parable of the Leaven in the Dough** (Matt. 13:33): Between the First and Second Advents of the Messiah, the Mystery form of the Kingdom will have a pervasive influence which dwarfs its size.
- e) **The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Value** (Matt. 13:44; 13:45-46): Interpretation: Between the First and Second Advents of the Messiah, some will see the value of the Kingdom and will sacrifice all to participate in it.
- f) **The Parable of the Dragnet** (Matt. 13:47-50): Between the First and Second Advents of the Messiah, the Kingdom

will encompass both good and evil people. At the end of the age angels will sort out the evil from the righteous, casting the former into the fire.

- 4) In Matthew 21:43, Jesus clearly predicted that the kingdom would be taken away from Israel and given to others. Mat 21:43 (NNAS) "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.
- 5) How long would the kingdom be taken away from Israel? In Luke 21:24 (NNAS), Jesus said, "and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
  - a) To this very day Jerusalem remains trampled underfoot by the Gentiles. Though Israel finally conquered East Jerusalem in the Six Day War in 1967, the city has remained trampled underfoot by the Gentiles. The Israelis cannot even rebuild their temple on the Temple Mount for fear of sparking a violent, bloody war.
  - b) Jesus clearly foresaw a time when Jerusalem would no longer be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles. In other words, He foresaw a return of the Kingdom.
  - c) The disciples of Christ, even after His resurrection, had every expectation that He was going to restore the Kingdom to Israel: Acts 1:6 (NNAS) So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"
  - d) Jesus never denied the truth that lay behind their question. He simply disputed their right to know the timing of the restoration of the Kingdom: Acts 1:7 (NNAS) He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;
  - e) Jesus proceeded to give them their marching orders during the Mystery Form of the Kingdom – commanding them to be His global witnesses: Acts 1:8 (NNAS) but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the

earth."

- 6) The Apostle Paul explains carefully in Romans 11 that God's setting aside the nation of Israel is only temporary! He has temporarily set aside Israel, but only to make her jealous so she ultimately turns to Christ (Romans 11; Zech. 12:10; Jer. 31:31-37).
  - a) God has clearly not rejected Israel completely. There is and always has been a saved, regenerated remnant: Rom 11:1-5 (NNAS) I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. {2} God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about Elijah*, how he pleads with God against Israel? {3} "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." {4} But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." {5} In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice.
  - b) One of God's purposes in allowing Gentiles to be saved was to make national Israel jealous so she too, would one day turn back to God: Rom 11:11 (NNAS) I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.
  - c) Scripture predicts that one day Israel will be restored to fellowship with God, and that restoration will have a profoundly beneficial impact on us Gentiles! Rom 11:15 (NNAS) For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?
  - d) There is a partial hardening of the nation of Israel which will continue until "The Times of the Gentiles" are completed: Rom 11:25 (NNAS) For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- e) The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. He will never choose Israel at one time and ultimately reject her. God's choices are irreversible! Rom 11:28-29 (NNAS) From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of *God's* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; {29} for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
  
- f) One day Israel as a nation will repent and receive her Messiah! Zec 12:10 (NNAS) "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.
  
- g) Yahweh's relationship with Israel is eternal! Jer 31:31-37 (NNAS) "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, {32} not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. {33} "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. {34} "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." {35} Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: {36} "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever." {37} Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

- 7) The misinterpretations of Sproul and other postmillennialists (and amillennialists, for that matter) lie primarily in their failure to maintain a consistent hermeneutic (method of interpreting Scripture), which results in a failure to distinguish that God has a separate program for Israel and for the Church. In Galatians 6:16 “And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God,” Paul meant saved Jews, not saved Gentiles. Today we would call them “Messianic Jews” – those who believe that Jesus is truly their Messiah.) Preterists’ failure to understand that God can never and will never cast aside Israel permanently arises from their faulty and inconsistent hermeneutic, or method of interpretation. In case after case they fail to take Scripture at its face value. Israel means Israel, not “the Church.”
- b. “The **second** feature is that the kingdom is essentially redemptive and spiritual rather than political and physical.” (RCS, p. 200) This is only half true. The Kingdom of Christ, when it arrives, will be all of the above. See below:
  - 1) **Redemptive:** When the saints arrive with Christ they will have been redeemed and holy: Rev 19:6-8 (NNAS) Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. {7} "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." {8} **It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**
  - 2) **Spiritual:** The kingdom is indisputably spiritual.
    - a) Rom 14:16-17 (NNAS) Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; {17} for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness and peace and joy** in the Holy Spirit.
    - b) Isa 2:1-4 (NNAS) The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. {2} Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will

stream to it. {3} **And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

- 3) **Political:** The words of Gabriel to Mary are nonsense if there is no political fulfillment. Luke 1:30-33 (NNAS) The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. {31} "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. {32} "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him **the throne of His father David; {33} and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,** and His kingdom will have no end."
- 4) **Physical:** There is a physical element to the kingdom. Mount Zion is a physical place. The temple in Jerusalem is a physical structure. Christ will judge nations composed of physical humans. Physical weapons of warfare become physical implements of agriculture. Isa 2:1-4 (NNAS) The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. {2} Now it will come about that In the last days The **mountain** of the **house** of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the **nations** will stream to it. {3} And many **peoples** will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {4} And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their **swords** into **plowshares** and their **spears** into **pruning** hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.

- c. “The **third** feature is that the kingdom will exercise a transformational socio-cultural influence in history.” Gentry quotes Greg L. Bahnsen: “The essential distinctive of postmillennialism is its scripturally derived, sure expectation of gospel prosperity for the church during the present age.” (RCS, p. 200)

While Christianity has had an enormously positive effect on culture, it is nothing compared to the world-wide impact that redeemed Israel will have on the world through her King, the Messiah, when He returns to the earth with His bride, the Church. See the next point.

- d. “The **fourth** feature is that the kingdom of Christ will gradually expand in time and on earth. This will be accomplished not without Christ’s royal power as King but without his physical presence on earth.” (RCS, p. 200)

- 1) It is true that Christ predicted, in Matthew 13 (see discussion above), a gradual spreading of Christianity.
- 2) It is equally true that the ultimate domination of Christ’s kingdom on earth will not take place until the King is physically present. See Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-10; 24:23 - 25:9; Ezekiel 40 - 48; Zechariah 14; Revelation 19 - 20:6, etc., etc. None of these passages have been fulfilled yet, but they will be!

- e. “The **fifth** feature is that the Great Commission will succeed. Gentry cites Bahnsen: ‘The thing that distinguishes the biblical postmillennialist, then, from amillennialists and premillennialists is his belief that the Scripture teaches the success of the great commission in this age of the church.’ This expectation includes the virtual Christianization of the nations.” (RCS, p. 200)

- 1) Certainly the Great Commission has succeeded and will succeed. But the Great Commission carried no stated or implied expectation of “the virtual Christianization of the nations.”
- 2) The Christianization of the nations will not occur until after the King has returned, and has physically banished all of the rebels (Ezekiel 20:33-38; Matthew 25:19-46; Revelation 19:11-21). Then Satan will be bound, and only righteous people will be left alive to inhabit the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1-4). The parables of Matt. 13 (see above) clearly portray that the Mystery Form of the Kingdom, between the First and Second Advents of Christ, will be characterized by a mixture of good and evil that will not be fully

resolved until the end of that era, when Christ returns (Matt. 24 - 25:19) and judges the entire earth (Matt. 25:19-46, esp. 31-46)

- 3) Incidentally, an angel in “midheaven” will be a very effective conveyer of the gospel during the Tribulation period (after the Church has been taken to heaven):
  - a) Rev 14:6-7 (NNAS) And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; {7} and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of (waters.)"
  - b) The angel's success in achieving salvation, however, will be limited. Apparently, most of the world will worship the world ruler designated by God as “The Beast.” Rev 13:8 (NNAS) All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.)

- f. The **sixth** feature is “that the postmillennial advance of the kingdom involves the total transformation of culture through the application of biblical law (according to “theonomic postmillennialism”).” (RCS, pp. 200-201.)

I totally agree with the result, but disagree with the timing proposed by Gentry and Sproul. The Old and New Testaments clearly teach that the total transformation of the world's culture happens **during** Christ's literal 1000 year reign upon the earth, not **before** the return of Christ following some ill-defined period of time.

- g. “The **seventh** feature is that an extended period of spiritual prosperity may endure for millennia, after which history will be drawn to a close by the personal, visible, bodily return of Christ. His return will be accompanied by a literal resurrection and a general judgment, ushering in the final and eternal form of the kingdom.” (RCS, p. 201)

- 1) The Scripture teaches otherwise: Christ's return to this earth is what ushers in the spiritual prosperity, not vice versa (Rev. 19 - 20). Furthermore, Christ's kingdom, with its spiritual prosperity,

shall clearly last 1000 years only, not “millennia.” Six times in Revelation 20:1-7 the figure “1000” years is clearly used. **Why deny the literalness of what Christ has revealed?** Gentry and Sproul admit a literal resurrection, but why should they if they deny a literal one thousand year reign of Christ? If there is no literal reign of Christ, neither is there a literal resurrection. If there is a literal resurrection, then why not a literal millennium? (Incidentally, we dispensational premillennialists believe that a literal interpretation of Scripture depicts a series of resurrections and judgments, not merely one of each.)

- 2) After the thousand year reign of Christ is at its close, Satan is released from his imprisonment; he deceives the nations; they revolt against Christ; fire comes down from heaven and destroys them; the heavens and earth are apparently destroyed; the wicked dead of all ages are judged (Rev. 20:7-15).
- 3) God then creates a new heavens and earth in which only righteousness dwells, and there is eternal bliss, focused in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21 - 22).

C. “*Premillennialism* teaches that there will be a future, literal, earthly millennial kingdom, and that it will begin when Christ returns. The *pre-* indicates that Christ will return *before* the millennial kingdom is established.” (RCS, p. 194)

Observe that premillennialism is the only theological system that employs a literal hermeneutic (method of interpreting Scripture) in prophetic passages as well as in narrative and doctrinal portions. This is the strength of premillennialism – consistency of interpretation. (A literal hermeneutic does take into account the employment of figures of speech in all forms of literature, including poetry.)

Features of Dispensational Premillennialism, by Gentry, quoted by Sproul: (p. 197)

Gentry has accurately portrayed dispensational premillennialism, to which I hold. His features are in bold, prefixed by Arabic numerals. My comments are interspersed.)

1. **Christ offered to the Jews the Davidic kingdom in the first century. They rejected it, and it was postponed until the future.**
  - a. Jesus is clearly outlined as a descendant of David who has the legal right and blood line necessary to reign over Israel as descendant of David.
    - 1) Mat 1:1 (NNAS) The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:
    - 2) Luke 1:30-33 (NNAS) The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. {31} "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. {32} "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; {33} and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."
  - b. Jesus announced the kingdom of the heavens:
    - 1) It was near: Mat 4:17 (NNAS) From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand."
    - 2) It demanded holy living:
      - a) Mat 5:3 (NNAS) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the **kingdom of heaven**."

- b) Mat 5:20 (NNAS) "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the **kingdom of heaven**."
- c. Most of the Jewish people would reject their King and His kingdom and would be replaced by Gentiles.
  - 1) Mat 8:11-12 (NNAS) "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the **kingdom of heaven**; {12} but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
  - 2) Mat 21:33-43 (NNAS) "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. {34} "When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. {35} "The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. {36} "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. {37} "But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' {38} "But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' {39} "They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. {40} "Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" {41} They said^ to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the *proper* seasons." {42} Jesus said^ to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? {43} "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it."
- d. But some Israelis will ultimately be regenerated when the King returns to set up His Kingdom. These are represented by the five wise virgins, who, in Matt. 25:1-13, will be admitted into the Kingdom. Mat 25:1-13 (NNAS)

- 1) "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. {2} "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. {3} "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, {4} but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. {5} "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. {6} "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.' {7} "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. {8} "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' {9} "But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.' {10} "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. {11} "Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' {12} "But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' {13} "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

- 2) In this passage the wedding feast represents the joy of the Millennial Kingdom.

## 2. The current church age is a “parenthesis” unknown to the Old Testament prophets.

- a. In Matt. 13 Jesus revealed the “mystery” form of the kingdom of heaven. (A mystery is truth previously unrevealed.) Mat 13:11 (NNAS) Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the **mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it has not been granted.
- b. “Mystery” “The fact that God was going to form Jews and Gentiles alike into one body was never revealed in the Old Testament and forms the mystery of which Paul speaks in Eph. 3:1-7; Romans 16:25-27; Col. 1:26-29. This whole mystery program was not revealed until after the rejection of Christ by Israel. It was after the rejection of Matthew 12:23-24 that the Lord first makes a prophecy of the coming church in Matthew 16:18. It is after the rejection of the Cross that the church had its inception in Acts 2.” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pp. 200-201)
- c. Eph 3:1-9 (NNAS) For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- {2} if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; {3} that by revelation there was made known to me the **mystery**, as I wrote before in brief. {4} By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the

**mystery** of Christ, {5} which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; {6} *to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, {7} of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. {8} To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, {9} and to bring to light what is the administration of the **mystery** which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;

- d. Yes, the church age was a mystery unknown in the Old Testament. I do not agree, however, with Sproul's assessment that dispensational premillennialists all believe that the church age is a *parenthesis*. Some, to be sure, have used that terminology. But the use of the term *parenthesis* could almost imply that the Church was never a major program in the mind of God and that it was an interruption in God's kingdom program. That is far from true. If all of human history spans some 7,000 years, 2/7 of that time can hardly be considered parenthetical. The Church is a major portion of God's plan for human history, but by no means the only plan, either.

### 3. God has separate programs for the church and Israel.

- a. The **Church** will continue throughout eternity as the bride of Christ.
- 1) 2 Cor 11:2 (NNAS) For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as* a pure virgin.
  - 2) Eph 5:25-27 (NNAS) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, {26} so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, {27} that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.
  - 3) Eph 5:31-32 (NNAS) FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. {32} This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.
  - 4) Christ will one day come to earth to claim His bride and take her

back with Him to His Father's home – the event we call the Rapture.) John 14:1-3 (NNAS) "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. {2} "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. {3} "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

- 5) When Christ has purified His bride, He will bring her back down to earth as He comes to claim His Kingdom! Rev 19:7-9 (NNAS) "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." {8} It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. {9} Then he said<sup>^</sup> to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said<sup>^</sup> to me, "These are true words of God."

b. In contrast to the Church, redeemed **Israel**, at Christ's return to reign upon the earth, will forever be His Chosen nation of which He is the King and they His loving subjects.

- 1) Zec 12:10-14; 13:1 (NNAS) "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. {11} "In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. {12} "The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; {13} the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; {14} all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves. Zec 13:1 (NNAS) "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.

- 2) Jer 31:31-37 (NNAS) "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, {32} not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. {33} "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. {34} "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." {35} Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: {36} "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever." {37} Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.
- 3) Clearly, Isaiah predicts a future time when the earth's nations will come to Jerusalem to learn from King Jesus. This is a literal physical / spiritual kingdom – the nations come to Mt. Zion, they learn from Jesus there, and He teaches them to turn implements of warfare into instruments of agriculture. There is no plausible “spiritual” interpretation of this passage that does not incorporate the physical / material elements.) Isa 2:1-4 (NNAS) The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. {2} Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. {3} And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {4} And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.

- 4) Isaiah envisions a time when the earth's nations will all rally around The Descendant of Jesse. This refers to Christ as head of His Millennial Kingdom. Isa 11:9-10 (NNAS) They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. {10} Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.
  - 5) Micah clearly indicates the Jewish nature of the Millennial Kingdom! Micah 4:7-8 (NNAS) "I will make the lame a remnant And the outcasts a strong nation, And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on and forever. {8} "As for you, tower of the flock, Hill of the daughter of Zion, To you it will come-- Even the former dominion will come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.
  - 6) Paul, in 1 Cor. 10:32, distinguishes between the church, Israel, and Gentiles. These distinctions are maintained throughout eternity! 1 Cor 10:32 (KJV) Give none offence, neither to the **Jews**, nor to the **Gentiles**, nor to the **church** of God:
  - 7) Paul clearly, in Gal. 6:15-16 distinguishes between the Church and saved Israel, those who today call themselves "Messianic" Jews.) Gal 6:15-16 (NNAS) For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. {16} And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the **Israel of God**.
- c. In the parable of the bridegroom and the (virgin) guests (Matt 25:1-13), the distinction between Israel and the Church at the time of Christ's return to earth may be seen.
- 1) The bridegroom is obviously Christ.
  - 2) The ten virgins represent the nation of Israel who go out to meet the bridegroom at His return. (Mat 25:1 (NNAS) "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.) These virgins are clearly not the bride, but are going out to meet the bridegroom and become a part of the wedding celebration.

- 3) In the parable, half of the virgins are redeemed, possessing oil, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, and represent those Jews who, at the time of Christ's return, are Messianic Jews, believing in Jesus as their Messiah. These are invited to the wedding feast (the Millennial Kingdom) as guests.
- 4) The other five virgins are unredeemed Israel, not having oil (the symbol of the Holy Spirit). These are excluded from the kingdom, and meet their demise.
- 5) Redeemed Israel is clearly here not the bride, but is represented by those who are invited to the wedding. It seems transparent that the bride in this case is none other than the Church. The bride is not mentioned in Matt. 25:1-13 because Matthew is writing to Jews from a Jewish perspective. In contexts in which the marriage figure is used in the relationship between Christ and His own, however, the reference is to the Church, not Israel.
  - a) Rom 7:4 (NNAS) Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.
  - b) 2 Cor 11:2 (NNAS) For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as* a pure virgin.
  - c) Eph 5:25-27 (NNAS) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the **church** and gave Himself up for her, {26} so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, {27} that He might present to Himself the **church** in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.
  - d) Eph 5:28-32 (NNAS) So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; {29} for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the **church**, {30} because we are members of His body. {31} FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. {32} This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the **church**.

- d. Based upon the preceding passages, at the time of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, it seems best to conclude that it is the Church who descends from heaven with Christ, the Bridegroom, as His now thoroughly prepared and presentable Bride.
  - 1) Rev 19:7-8 (NNAS) "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." {8} It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
  - 2) It is the redeemed Nation of Israel, along with redeemed Gentiles who, at Christ's return to the earth, are invited as guests to help the Bridegroom and the Bride celebrate their wedding: Rev 19:9 (NNAS) Then he said<sup>^</sup> to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said<sup>^</sup> to me, "These are true words of God."
  
- e. Even in the Eternal State, the New Jerusalem, distinctions are made between Israel and the Church.
  - 1) Right now, in heaven there exist, and apparently throughout eternity there will exist twenty-four elders: Rev 4:4 (NNAS) Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* **twenty-four elders** sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. (See also Rev. 4:10; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4). My conclusion is that twelve represent the church, while twelve represent Israel.
  - 2) Rev 21:12 (NNAS) It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names *were* written on them, which are *the names* of the **twelve tribes of the sons of Israel**.
  - 3) Rev 21:14 (NNAS) And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them *were* the twelve names of the **twelve apostles of the Lamb**.
  
4. **The church will ultimately lose influence in the world and become corrupted or apostate toward the end of the church age.** (Author: Note that in discussing this next statement by Gentry's we jump backward in time from the passages just discussed into the Church Age in which we now live.)
  - a. 1 Tim 4:1-3 (NNAS) But the Spirit explicitly says that in **later times** some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and

doctrines of demons, {2} by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, {3} *men* who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

- b. 2 Tim 3:1-5 (NNAS) But realize this, that **in the last days** difficult times will come. {2} For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, {3} unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, {4} treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, {5} holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.
- c. James 5:1-3 (NNAS) Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. {2} Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. {3} Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is **in the last days** that you have stored up your treasure!
- d. 2 Pet 3:3-7 (NNAS) Know this first of all, that **in the last days** mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, {4} and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." {5} For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, {6} through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. {7} But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.
- e. Jude 1:17-21 (NNAS) But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, {18} that they were saying to you, "**In the last time** there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." {19} These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. {20} But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, {21} keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.
- f. We believe that that apostasy, having begun in the Church Age, will only intensify upon the earth once Christ has come to claim His bride and take her back up to heaven to prepare her for the upcoming wedding ceremony. This subsequent and climactic apostasy, with the Church absent, will only

intensify as the world ruler appears and gains the affections and worship of virtually the entire earth!

2 Th 2:1-12 (NNAS) Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, {2} that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. {3} Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed*, the son of destruction, {4} who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. {5} Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? {6} And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. {7} **For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work**; only he who now restrains *will do so until he is taken out of the way*. [Author: This restrainer, I believe, is the Holy Spirit within the Church.] {8} Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; {9} *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, {10} and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. {11} For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, {12} in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

**5. Christ will return ... to rapture his saints before the great tribulation.**

- a. Jesus promises to come to get His followers and take them back to the Father's house. This event, known as "The Rapture," fits into the prophetic scheme best as a pre-tribulation rapture. John 14:1-3 (NNAS) "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. {2} "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. {3} "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.
- b. The promised return of Christ for His Church has two features not included in passages which deal with His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming in Power back to the earth: (1) An imminent return – **no signs** that must precede Christ's return.

(2) Only in the rapture passages is there revelation of a **translation** of living believers into saints with resurrected, glorified bodies without dying first! 1 Th 4:13-18 (NNAS) But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. {14} For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. {15} For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. {16} For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. {17} Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. {18} Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- c. The translation of living saints to glorified bodies without dying is a mystery – i.e. a previously unrevealed truth: 1 Cor 15:51-55 (NNAS) Behold, I tell you a mystery; **we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,** {52} in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. {53} For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. {54} But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. {55} "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"
- d. A pre-tribulation rapture is, I believe, implied by Jesus Himself: Rev 3:10-11 (NNAS) 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. {11} 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

- 6. After the tribulation Christ will return to earth to administer a Jewish political kingdom based in Jerusalem for one thousand years. Satan will be bound, and the temple will be rebuilt and the sacrificial system reinstated.**
- a. I have discussed the topic of the Kingdom in some detail in a paper entitled, "The Kingdom Will Be the Lord's" as a commentary on Obadiah v. 21.

- b. Briefly, let me support with the appropriate passages:
- 1) The Bible speaks of "The Great Tribulation," one that is unprecedented.
    - a) Mat 24:21 (NNAS) For then there will be a **great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.
    - b) Rev 7:14 (NNAS) I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of **the great tribulation**, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
  - 2) The Bible speaks of Christ's return to earth visibly, in power and glory.
    - a) Mat 24:29-30 (NNAS) "But immediately after the tribulation of those days **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL** from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. *{30}* And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY** with power and great glory.
    - b) Rev 19:11-16 (NNAS) And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. *{12}* His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself. *{13}* *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. *{14}* And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses. *{15}* From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. *{16}* And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

- 3) The Bible states that His kingdom shall be a political kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem
  - a) Isa 2:2-4 (NNAS) Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. {3} And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." **For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.** {4} **And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples;** And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.
  
- 4) The Bible states that Satan shall be bound during Christ's thousand year reign.

Rev 20:1-3 (NNAS) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. {2} And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and **Satan**, and **bound him for a thousand years;** {3} and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.
  
- 5) The Bible states that Christ's reign shall last a thousand years.

Rev 20:4-6 (NNAS) Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and **reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** {5} The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. {6} Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will **reign with Him for a thousand years.**

- 6) The Bible states that a temple shall exist, complete with sacrifices, which, I take it, are memorial in nature. This temple is described in Ezekiel 40-46, a passage too extended to quote. Even a cursory reading will confirm that this temple has never existed – it has never yet been built. It remains a future temple, to be built during Christ's Millennial Kingdom. This view is confirmed by the description of a life-giving river (Ezek. 47:1-12) that has never yet been in existence, and geographical boundaries of the land never yet marked out (Ezek. 47:13 - 48:35).
  - a) Briefly, the temple's measurements are described in intricate detail in 40-42.
  - b) The functions of the temple are described in Ezek. 43:1 - 44:8, including this reference to the Messiah's presence in the temple: Ezek 43:7a (NNAS) He said to me, "Son of man, *this is* the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever.
  - c) The workers in the temple are described in Ezek 44:9-31
  - d) The offerings of the temple are described in Ezek. 45 - 46.

**7. Near the end of the millennium, Satan will be released and Christ will be attacked at Jerusalem.**

The Bible clearly predicts the release of Satan, his successful deceit of the nations, and his gathering them to make war on the King and His subjects, presumably in Jerusalem: Rev 20:7-9a (NNAS) "When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, {8} and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. {9} And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints . . . ."

**8. Christ will call down judgment from heaven and destroy his enemies. The (second) resurrection and the judgment of the wicked will occur, initiating the eternal order.**

- a. The Bible predicts the demise of the rebels and Satan: Rev 20:9-10 (NNAS) And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded

the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. {10} And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

- b. The Bible predicts the final judgment of the wicked dead of all ages: Rev 20:11-15 (NNAS) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. {12} And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. {13} And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. {14} Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. {15} And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
- c. The Bible predicts the “eternal order” in Revelation 21 - 22 (a brief excerpt of which is here quoted): Rev 21:1-4 (NNAS) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. {2} And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. {3} And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, {4} and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

## D. Criticisms of the Postmillennial view of Prophecy:

1. **A mistaken identification of the time frame of Jesus' parousia.** “The central thesis of (James Stuart) Russell and indeed of all preterists is that the New Testament's time-frame references with respect to the *parousia* (Author's note: Greek word meaning “coming” or “presence” – in certain contexts, the second coming or presence of Jesus Christ) point to a fulfillment within the lifetime of at least some of Jesus' disciples (RCS, p. 25).” Here, Sproul (pp. 24-25) identifies three Scriptures cited by James Stewart Russell (JSR) as necessitating Christ's already having come. He then concludes, “No violence can extort from them (these Scriptures) any other sense than the obvious and unambiguous one, viz. That our Lord's second coming would take place within the limits of the existing generation (as quoted approvingly by RCS, p. 25).”

- a. Mat 10:23 (NNAS) "But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.
- b. Mat 16:28 (NNAS) "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."
- c. Mat 24:34 (NNAS) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

It is the present writer's view that postmillennialists commit errors of interpretation of Scripture in attempting to maintain their view. Some examples are given in the following points of discussion.

## 2. Postmillennial errors in interpreting Scripture

### a. A failure to interpret Scripture in its broader context.

- 1) At face value, Matt. 10:23 appears to support the postmillennial view: "But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes." According to postmillennialists, Jesus listeners have all died, therefore He must have come already. **However, a closer examination of the context**, namely verse 22 "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved," clearly indicates that, ultimately, Jesus had in mind Jewish people who will have survived clear until the end of the Tribulation period, not His immediate listeners.
- 2) In Matt. 16:28, in which Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," it might be possible to conclude that Jesus meant that some of His disciples would survive until His Second Coming in power to set up His Kingdom, and that, therefore it must have already happened. **However, a closer examination of the context**, beginning at the very next verse (Matt. 17:1) indicates that Jesus clearly had in mind His transfiguration, not His Second Coming: Mat 17:1-2 (NNAS) "Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. {2} And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light."

- b. **Imprecise word studies.** Postmillennialists have a mistaken view that the term “generation” in Matthew 24:34 inevitably refers to a time-frame of 40 years. Matt. 24:34 (NNAS) "Truly I say to you, this **generation** will not pass away until all these things take place.
- 1) That is not necessarily correct. Generation here may mean a group of people generated by Abraham – the Jewish people.
  - 2) According to Arndt and Gingrich Lexicon (p. 153), the first meaning of *genea* is “those descended from a common ancestor, a clan ..., then *race, kind ...*” Following this, A & G quote the following Scriptures:
    - a) Luke 16:8 "And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind [generation] than the sons of light.
    - b) “The meaning nation is advocated by some in Mat. 24:34 (the passage under consideration); Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32; but see also meaning 2.” (A & G, p. 153) [Note: Acc. to A & G, meaning 2: “Basically, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time *generation, contemporaries ...*”]
    - c) Mark 13:30 (NNAS) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
    - d) Luke 21:32 (NNAS) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.
  - 3) If one insists, in Matt. 24:34, the meaning of time, rather than origin, it is still apparent from the context that Jesus did not mean that the generation to which He was speaking would not pass away until all the prophesied events had taken place, but he was speaking rather of a yet future generation. As Louis Barbieri (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*) states, “The generation (*genea*) of people living in that future day will see the completion of all the events. Jesus was not referring to the generation listening to Him then, for He had already said the kingdom had been taken from that group (Matt. 21:43). That first century generation would experience God’s judgement, But the generation that will be living at the time these signs begin to take place will live though that period and will

see the Lord Jesus coming as the King of glory.” (Matt. 21:43: “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.”

3. **An inconsistent hermeneutic (method of interpreting Scripture).** This consists of a failure to take literally, at face value, the prophetic portions of Scripture.
  - a. Anyone wishing to hold to the postmillennial or preterist view of eschatology (the study of last things) must depart significantly from the literal or face-value method of interpreting used elsewhere in Scripture.
    - 1) Sproul (p. 44) approvingly quotes Russell: “Symbol and metaphor belong to the grammar of prophecy.” To be sure, there are symbols and metaphors in eschatological passages of Scripture. One need only peruse the book of Revelation to determine that. But time and again preterists (and amillennialists) assign symbolism and metaphor where the reader is meant to take the prophecy at face value. (One only has to read commentaries on Ezekiel 40-48, Matthew 24-25, and Revelation 20-22 to illustrate that point.)
    - 2) Sproul (p. 65) himself admits that one’s method of interpreting Scripture is the fundamental determiner of whether one is amillennial, postmillennial, or premillennial in Matthew 24-25: “How one approaches the contents of the Olivet Discourse depends largely on the hermeneutic (the principles of interpretation) employed.”
  - b. Sproul (p. 65) clearly states his method of interpretation in eschatological portions of Scripture: “Much of biblical prophecy is cast in an apocalyptic genre that employs graphic imaginative language ....”
  - c. Sproul (p. 66) goes on to admit that he does not use the normal, literal method of interpretation in Matthew 24-25: “The cataclysmic events surrounding the *parousia* as predicted in the Olivet Discourse obviously did not occur ‘literally’ in A.D. 70.”
  - d. Sproul (p. 66) continues on: “This problem of literal fulfillment leaves us with three basic solutions to interpreting the Olivet Discourse:
    - 1) “We can interpret the entire discourse literally. In this case we must conclude that some elements of Jesus’ prophecy failed to come to pass, as advocates of ‘consistent eschatology’ maintain.

- 2) We can interpret the events surrounding the predicted *parousia* literally and interpret the time-frame references figuratively....
  - 3) We can interpret the time-frame references literally and the events surrounding the *parousia* figuratively. In this view, all of Jesus' prophecies in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during the period between the discourse itself and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. **The third option is followed by preterists** (emphasis mine)." (To the present writer, this hermeneutic makes nonsense of language. One can, under this view, make language say virtually whatever one intends it to say.)
4. In support of his preterist view of prophecy, Sproul (and other preterists) arrive at some remarkable and untenable, if not bizarre conclusions:

**a. Jesus Christ really did return in 70 A. D. (the fall of Jerusalem).**

According to Sproul (p. 127), "Josephus's record of Jerusalem's fall indicates the radical fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in the Olivet Discourse. As we have seen, preterists see in this event not only the destruction of the temple and its attending circumstances, but also the *parousia* of Christ in his judgment-coming."

There is no problem in suggesting that Jesus Christ was present at the judgment of Israel in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., as there is no problem in suggesting that He was present at the judgment of Jewish people in the Holocaust, as there is no problem in suggesting that He was present in the subsequent judgment against Germany and its allies in World War II. The Son and the Father are one, and where God acts, Jesus does also. But to say that Jesus' presence in judgment is the *parousia* or coming to which Matthew referred in 24:27 and 30 strains the bounds of exegesis and language beyond credibility. To the preterist, Jesus' supposed return in Matthew 24 was invisible, in judgment only and not gloriously enjoyed by His followers, experienced locally only by the nation of Israel, and not by the whole world. **This, despite the fact that the Scriptures clearly teach that Christ's coming will be**

- 1) **Ubiquitous – not localized:** Mat 24:27 (NNAS) "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.
- 2) **Visible, not invisible:** Mat 24:30 (NNAS) And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY** with power and great glory.

- 3) **Universally mourned and feared, not locally suffered:** Mat 24:30 (NNAS) And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then **all the tribes of the earth will mourn**, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.
- 4) **Audible, not inaudible:** Mat 24:31 (NNAS) "And He will send forth His angels with **A GREAT TRUMPET** and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.
- 5) **Accompanied by all the angels:** Mat 25:31 (NNAS) "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

**b. Revelation was written before 70 A. D.**

- 1) Preterists believe that Christ's *parousia*, or coming, which He predicted in Matt. 24:3, 30, 37, 39, etc., was God's judgment upon the city of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. All students of prophecy conclude that Matt. 24 parallels the book of Revelation. So preterists not only have to convince their adherents that the events of Matt. 24 were fulfilled by 70 A. D., but also that the events of the book of Revelation were fulfilled by 70 A. D. For their view to succeed, they must also argue that the book of Revelation, then, must have been written *prior to* 70 A. D. R. C. Sproul (p. 140) admits this: "The burden for preterists then is to demonstrate that Revelation was written before A.D. 70." He goes on to admit the following (p. 141): "Though conceding that in twentieth-century scholarly circles the majority have placed the writing of Revelation well after A. D. 70, Gentry lists numerous scholars who place it earlier."
- 2) It is not the present writer's purpose to debate at length the date of the book of Revelation. First, however, the majority of scholars do not hold to a writing of the book of Revelation before 70 A. D. Second, the majority of scholars are not encumbered with an interpretation that *demand*s that Revelation be written before 70 A. D. Consequently, I would, therefore, consider them to be more objective.
- 3) Sproul puts forth several arguments for a date of the writing of Revelation prior to 70 A. D. In my estimation, his arguments are weak.

- a) For example, he cites as external evidence the comments of Irenaeus, who lived 130 - 202 A. D. His interpretation of Irenaeus's comments, however, is a stretch. Irenaeus is quoted as saying, "We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign." Sproul goes on to say, "Is the antecedent of *that* (in the final sentence) the vision, or is it John, the one who saw the vision?" Sproul, following Gentry, argues for the latter. That seems to the present writer a linguistic contortion. The clear antecedent of *that* is the vision, not the man (RCS, pp. 141-143).
- b) For internal evidence, Sproul cites the Apostle John's reference to the temple in Rev. 11:1 as proving that the temple still stood (pp. 147-148).
- i Here is the text: Rev 11:1 (NNAS) Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.
- ii If one examines the next verse, however, it is clear that John was not speaking of a First Century Temple, but of a Temple that would exist in the yet future period of the Tribulation, with Gentile domination of that temple during the last three and a half years.: Rev 11:2 (NNAS) "Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.
- iii If Sproul and other preterists continue to maintain that the reference here is to the first century temple, then my question to them is this: Who, then, were the two witnesses who manifestly must have prophesied during that time (Rev. 11:3-12)? Why have we no record in history of anyone who had power to call down fire from heaven and destroy

their enemies and to smite the earth with every kind of plague? The text says that the whole world rejoiced at their death. Who were they?

iv The answer is clear – the temple in Rev. 11 is a yet future temple, not the temple that was destroyed in 70 A. D.

4) Following is the view to which I subscribe, as stated by John F. Walvoord (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*):

“Most evangelical scholars affirm that Revelation was written in A.D. 95 or 96. This is based on accounts of the early church fathers that the Apostle John had been exiled on Patmos Island during the reign of Domitian who died in A.D. 96. John was then allowed to return to Ephesus.

Because of a statement by Papias, an early church father, that John the Apostle was martyred before A.D. 70, the Johannine authorship has been questioned. However, the accuracy of this quotation from Papias has been seriously challenged by statements by Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius who affirm that the book was written by John on Patmos in A.D. 95 or 96.”

**c. The celestial disturbances predicted in Matt. 24:29 and the book of Revelation have already, or at least in some measure, been fulfilled.**

- 1) In support of this interpretation, Sproul cites Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived prior to and during the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D.: “Thus there was a star resembling a sword which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year (RCS, p. 122, quoting Josephus).”
- 2) Gary DeMar refers to a comet that appeared in 60 A. D., and to Halley’s Comet, which appeared in 66 A. D., as celestial spectacles of the magnitude of that which Jesus described in Matt. 24:29. He says, “The appearance of comets in the sky was often taken as a warning of some approaching calamity or a sign of change in existing political structures... (RCS, p. 123, quoting DeMar).”
- 3) Author’s note: I myself have seen a comet in the sky. I can assure you that, beautiful and awe-inspiring though it may be, it pales in comparison to the celestial catastrophes described in the following passages!!! Clearly, none of the events described below have happened. Let the reader judge for himself whether the view of Sproul, DeMar, and Gentry is plausible . . . .

- a) Mat 24:29 (NNAS) "But immediately after the tribulation of those days **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL** from the sky, and **the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**
  - b) Rev 6:12-14 (NNAS) I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the **sun** became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole **moon** became like blood; {13} and the **stars** of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. {14} **The sky was split apart like a scroll** when it is rolled up, and **every mountain and island were moved out of their places.**
  - c) Rev 8:10-11 (NNAS) The third angel sounded, and a great **star** fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. {11} The name of the **star** is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and **many men died from the waters**, because they were made bitter.
  - d) Rev 8:12 (NNAS) The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the **sun** and a third of the **moon** and a third of the **stars** were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.
  - e) Rev 16:8-9 (NNAS) The fourth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the **sun**, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. {9} Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.
- d. **Nero is likely the beast described in Rev. 13:1-18** (pp 182-186, cf. 186-189). While admitting that it is possible there could be a yet future fulfillment of the prophecy of this malevolent human called in Scripture "the beast," Sproul nonetheless leans toward a fulfillment in the first century before the fall of Jerusalem (p. 189). Sproul, of course, is driven by the unsustainable notion that the *parousia* of Christ manifested itself in the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. On that shaky assumption, of course, the beast predicted in Revelation must have existed prior to 70 A. D. Note the following assertions from Scripture that render Sproul's interpretation untenable:

- 1) **The beast in Revelation 13 had a fatal wound, from which it was healed:** Rev 13:3 (NNAS) *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed *and followed* after the beast.” Nowhere does Sproul indicate how Nero might have fulfilled that prophecy.
  - 2) **The beast in Revelation will be given authority for 42 months:** Rev 13:5 (NNAS) There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. To what in Nero’s life does this correspond? Sproul does not explain.
  - 3) **The beast in Revelation will have world-wide power.** Rev 13:7 (NNAS) It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. While the Roman empire occupied all of North Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Europe, it by no means ruled the entire earth. Sproul does not explain how Nero could fit this description.
  - 4) **The beast in Rev. 13 will be worshiped by the entire world.** Rev 13:8 (NNAS) All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. While emperor worship was practiced widely, it by no means included the entire earth. Sproul does not explain how Nero could fit this description.
  - 5) **Rev. 13 clearly indicates that the beast will gain a world-wide economic stranglehold over the earth’s population, preventing them from buying or selling without the “mark of the beast.”** This did not occur in the lifetime of Nero. Rev 13:16-17 (NNAS) “And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, {17} and *he provides* that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, *either* the name of the beast or the number of his name.” While Sproul discusses the number 666 at some length, nowhere does he discuss how events in Nero’s reign correspond to this world-wide economic imperialism.
5. If Sproul’s and other preterists’ interpretation of Scripture is true – that is, if God’s judgment of Israel in 70 A. D. was the *parousia* (coming) of Christ which He predicted in Matt. 24, then certain other events said to happen at the same time

must also have happened. Even the casual reader will readily see that the following events did not happen, and therefore Sproul's interpretation is invalid. Note the following false conclusions that must be made if Sproul's interpretation is correct:

- a. **The tribulation that befell Israel in 70 A. D. is the worst that has ever befallen the world or will ever befall the world.** Mat 24:21-22 (NNAS) For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. {22} "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.
  
- b. **Half the world's population was destroyed when Rome sacked Jerusalem in 70 A. D.**
  - 1) Rev 6:8 (NNAS) I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a **fourth** of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.
  - 2) Rev 9:18 (NNAS) A **third** of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths.
  
- c. **The elect have already been gathered from one end of the globe to the other:** Mat 24:31 (NNAS) "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.
  
- d. **Jesus has already personally judged all the earth's nations, permitting the righteous to inherit the kingdom and consigning the wicked into eternal hell fire:** Mat 25:31-34, 41 (NNAS) "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. {32} "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; {33} and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. {34} "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. {41} "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

6. Postmillennialists believe that history will improve and that the Church will conquer all in the present age. The view of preterists simply does not square with the Bible, with history or with current events.
  - a. Gentry cites Bahnsen: "The thing that distinguishes the biblical postmillennialist, then, from amillennialists and premillennialists is his belief that the Scripture teaches the success of the great commission in this age of the church." This expectation includes the virtual Christianization of the nations." (RCS, p. 200).
  - b. In our study of the parables of Matthew 13, however, we learned that the "Mystery" Form of the Kingdom of the Heavens – the time between the first and second advents of the King, is marked by (a) general rejection by Israel and the world, despite (b) steady growth from a small beginning, marred by (c) infiltration by unregenerate people masquerading as true subjects. We learned from 2 Thessalonians 2 that (d) a great apostasy is inevitably descending upon the world once the Holy Spirit, indwelling the true church, discontinues His restraining of evil in the world as the church is miraculously taken up to heaven: 1 Th 4:15-17 (NNAS) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. {16} For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. {17} Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.
  - c. Common sense recognizes that, while Christianity has made huge inroads in the world, a sinister anti-Christian, global world view is gaining momentum. Islam is gaining world-wide power. Even in America, the most "Christian" of all nations, Christianity is in decline and is now politically incorrect. In my view it is only a matter of time before Christians will not only be politically incorrect in America, but actively persecuted. A global anti-Christian movement will find its climax in a world dictator who imposes his own brand of religion upon the whole world (Rev. 13), a scenario that has never yet happened.
7. The words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 ring loud and clear. He warns us, with regard to the coming (*parousia*) of our Lord, and our gathering together to Him (the rapture) that we are not to think that the "Day of the Lord" has come, the time of God's terrible judgment on the earth. That time of terrible judgment will not come until a man of terrible lawlessness is revealed, one who will sit as God in the Jewish temple: 2 Th 2:1-5 (NNAS) Now we request you, brethren,

with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, {2} that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. {3} Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, {4} who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. {5} Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? **The man of lawlessness was not Nero, and has never yet been revealed.**

Paul goes on to say: 2 Th 2:6-8 (NNAS) And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. {7} For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. {8} Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; Whatever happened in 70 A. D., Jesus Christ did not return in the sense demanded by the language of Matthew 24, Revelation 19, nor in 2 Thess. 2. He did not return and slay Nero or any other world dictator with the breath of His mouth.

To the reader, I would urge, “that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us [**or a book written by a postmillennialist** – addition mine], to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. {3} Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ... (2 Thess 2:2-4).” Christ has not returned, and the judgment on Israel in 70 A. D. was not preceded by the man of lawlessness, nor was it the terrible day of the Lord of which Paul in this passage speaks. When that day of unprecedented judgment arrives, there will be no mistaking it for some lesser judgment. It will be a record-setting judgment that will dwarf all previous judgments.

Let the reader escape that awful coming judgment by taking refuge in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, sent by His Father to die and be resurrected for our sins, so that if we trust in Him, we will escape God’s judgment and will have eternal life! John 3:16-18 (NNAS) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. {17} "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. {18} "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

8. In conclusion, I do not doubt or question the spirituality, the integrity, the godliness or the sincerity of preterists like Sproul, Gentry, DeMar, or Russell. I do question their hermeneutics and their conclusions. It seems patently clear to me that they have not adequately demonstrated their most basic contention – that Jesus Christ returned to the earth in 70 A. D. in the way that He said He would in Matthew 24. The *parousia* of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24 was not fulfilled in 70 A. D. It remains the yet future hope of believers and the fear of unbelievers. Let us seek to recruit as many people for Christ's coming Kingdom before it is too late for them.

## A Critique of R. C. Sproul's *The Last Days According to Jesus*

by James T. Bartsch

[WordExplain.com](http://WordExplain.com)

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