

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #26 (Pt. 14)

Revelation 11:1-3
March 28, 2010
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In the previous sermon, we considered how Preterists interpret various TEMPORAL INDICATORS like, “shortly”, “at hand”, and “quickly”, and found that these temporal indicators carry absolutely no weight in establishing a pre-70 a.d. authorship of the Book of Revelation, **IF** Revelation 11:1-2 does not refer to a temple that is presently standing at the time John penned the Book of Revelation, and **IF** Revelation 13:18 and Revelation 17:10 do not refer to an Emperor Nero that was then reigning at the time that John received this prophetic vision from the Lord Jesus Christ. The very foundation of Preterism (especially in its most popular form) rests upon these two claims: (1) That Jerusalem and its temple had not yet been destroyed when John was given this Revelation; (2) That Nero had not yet committed suicide when John penned this Revelation. Take away these two alleged pieces of internal testimony for the Preterist (as was demonstrated in sermons 21-24 of the present series), and it becomes apparent that the interpretive system of Preterism is built upon sand and is swept away by the Scripture itself.

This Lord's Day we will briefly consider stated TIME PERIODS to which Preterists turn in their interpretation of the Book of Revelation, such as, “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (i.e. 1,260 days in Revelation 11:3; Revelation 12:6), “forty and two months” (Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5), and “a time, and times, and half a time” (i.e. 3 ½ years in Revelation 12:14). The Preterist interprets these just mentioned time periods literally in the Book of Revelation, seeking to apply them to the period of time in which Nero persecuted Christians, and the period of time in which Jerusalem was besieged by the Roman armies. Are these

and other time periods that are mentioned in the Book of Revelation intended by the Holy Spirit to be interpreted literally or non-literally? For if these time periods are intended by the Lord to be interpreted non-literally (as I believe is the case), I submit this internal evidence will likewise demonstrate that the interpretive system of the Preterist is built upon sand. Today's sermon will be divided into two parts: (1) The Problems the Preterist Has with Interpreting the Time Periods Literally in the Book of Revelation; (2) The Solution to Interpreting the Time Periods in the Book of Revelation.

I. The Problems the Preterist Has with Interpreting the Time Periods Literally in the Book of Revelation.

A. The First Problem With Interpreting These Time Periods Literally in the Book of Revelation. It should be noted at the outset that the interpretive system of Preterism (as it is popularly expressed at the present time) believes that the events prophesied to occur in the Book of Revelation (at least most of the events in the Book of Revelation) were all to be fulfilled very soon from the time that John received the Revelation. Thus, long periods of time are not allowed in the fulfillment of the prophesied events in the Book of Revelation for Preterism. Long periods of time (e.g. hundreds of years) would push the Preterist far beyond the events that he believes are prophesied to soon be fulfilled in the Book of Revelation: namely, the persecution of the Church by Nero and Nero's death (in Revelation chapters 13 and 17), and the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (in Revelation 11 and 17). However, if the prophesied events in the Book of Revelation **DO NOT** refer to the persecution of the Church by Nero and his death in Revelation 13 and 17, and **DO NOT** refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in Revelation 11 and 17 (as has already been demonstrated to be the case in previous sermons in this series), then the most important reason for

the Preterist to interpret these time periods in the Book of Revelation literally evaporates into thin air. Thus, the first problem for the Preterist in interpreting these time periods literally (as 1,260 days, 42 months, or 3 ½ years) is based upon a false assumption promoted by Preterists: namely, that the events concerning Nero and Jerusalem were soon to occur, when in fact these events had already occurred when John penned the Book of Revelation.

B. The Second Problem With Interpreting These Time Periods Literally in the Book of Revelation. The time periods of 1,260 days (in Revelation 11:3; Revelation 12:6); 42 months (in Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5); and a time, times, and half a time i.e. 3 ½ years (in Revelation 12:14) are all very unique and unlike the way literal time periods are expressed in the rest of Scripture. The Jewish calendar year consisted of 12 months of 30 days in each month so that there were 360 days in the Jewish calendar year. Thus, 1,260 days divided by 30 days in a month=42 months. And 1,260 days divided by 360 days in a year=3 ½ years. Thus, 1,260 days=42 months=a time, times, and half a time (or 3 ½ years).

1. When the Holy Spirit refers to a literal period of 3 ½ years, it is simply stated elsewhere in Scripture as “three years and six months” (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). In fact, whenever the Word of God expresses broken periods of time (i.e. so many years and so many months) that are to be taken literally, it is stated as we find it in 2 Samuel 2:11 and Acts 18:11. Therefore, when we read of a time period that is expressed as “a time, times, and half a time”, it clearly deviates from the ordinary way in which a 3 ½ year period of time is expressed in the Bible. It is like a flashing neon light that is intended to draw our attention to the fact that this uniquely stated time period is not to be interpreted literally. In fact, there are only three times that we find “a time, times, and half a time” (or its equivalent) used in all of Scripture: Daniel 7:25; Daniel 12:7;

Revelation 12:14. And this unique expression of “a time, times, and half a time” is found only in prophetic portions of Scripture filled with various symbols. For example, in Daniel chapter 7 (where in verse 25 occurs “a time and times and the dividing of time”) there are symbolic beasts, symbolic horns, symbolic heads, and a symbolic little horn; and in Revelation 12 (where in verse 14 occurs “a time, and times, and half a time”) there is a symbolic woman that has a symbolic crown with 12 symbolic stars and is given two symbolic wings of a great eagle, and flees into a symbolic wilderness, and is pursued by a symbolic serpent. Thus, in the midst of such prophetic symbolism, I submit we also find non-literal time periods that are stated in a unique manner different from how the Lord expresses literal time periods in other places in Scripture.

2. As for the time period expressed as “forty and two months” in Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5—this time period (equivalent to 3 ½ years) is only stated in these two places in all of Scripture in terms of 42 months, never anywhere else. Thus, it too is absolutely unique and unparalleled in Scripture. The longest period of time expressed in terms of months in the Bible (outside of Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5) is 12 months (and is only found in Esther 2:12; Daniel 4:29). Once again, this unique time period of 42 months is found only in symbolic portions of God’s prophetic Word. I submit, when we see 42 months in this symbolic portion of God’s prophetic Word (Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5), we are being led by the Spirit of God away from a literal to a non-literal interpretation of that time period.

3. As for the time period expressed as “one thousand two hundred and threescore days” (i.e. 1,260 days) in Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 12:6, this time period expressed as days is also very unique in Scripture, and I submit we are being taught once again by the Spirit of God to interpret these days in a non-literal sense (just as we find a time period in Daniel 12:11 of 1,290 days and a time period in Daniel 12:12 of 1,335 days). So when we come to time periods in symbolic portions of

God's prophetic Word, we ought to consider a non-literal use of those time periods as intended by the Holy Spirit (especially when those time periods are unique in comparison to how time periods in historical portions of God's Word are stated). Thus, the second problem for the Preterist in interpreting these time periods literally (as 1,260 days, 42 months, or 3 ½ years) is that they are unique in their expression and occur in symbolic portions of God's prophetic Word, and thus should not be interpreted literally, but rather non-literally.

C. The Third Problem With Interpreting These Time Periods Literally in the Book of Revelation. Though these time periods (of 1,260 days, 42 months, and 3 ½ years) express the same length of time, the Preterist does not apply them simultaneously to the same precise period of time.

1. For example, the Preterist claims that the time period of the Roman siege around Jerusalem lasted 42 months (according to his erroneous interpretation of Revelation 11:2) and that the time period of persecution of Christians by Nero also lasted 42 months (according to his erroneous interpretation of Revelation 13:5), but that these time periods of 42 months do not simultaneously converge to cover the same 42 months. For the 42 months of Nero's persecution was from November 64-June 68 a.d., while the 42 months of Rome's siege against Jerusalem was from the Spring of 66-September 70 a.d. In other words, the 42 months do not cover the precise same period of time contemporaneously—the persecution of Christians by Nero began in November 64 a.d., whereas the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans began in the Spring of 66 a.d. (a difference of approximately 1 ½ years).

2. However, I submit the Holy Spirit has given the same time period of 42 months in reference to the downtrodding of "the holy city" (in Revelation 11:2) and to the Beast's war with the saints (in Revelation 13:5) because we are to understand that during that same time period of

42 months these two sources of persecution are simultaneously (i.e. at the same time) being exercised against Christ's Church. Just as "the holy city" (in Revelation 11:2) i.e. the Church of Christ, is downtrodden for 42 months by the ecclesiastical Beast and the "man of sin" (i.e. the Papacy according to 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4) who sits in the temple (or Church of God) showing himself that he is God, so likewise the civil Beast (in Revelation 13:5-7) wages war simultaneously against the saints of Christ during the same 42 month time period. The dragon (Satan) fires a double-barreled shotgun against the Church of Christ from the ecclesiastical Beast and from the civil Beast.

3. Now this interpretation by the Preterists seems to be a case of Scripture being stretched to fit one's interpretation, rather than one's interpretation being stretched to fit the Word of God. Thus, the third problem for the Preterist in interpreting these time periods literally (as 1,260 days, 42, months, or 3 ½ years) is that the Preterist does not apply prophesied events simultaneously to the same time period of 42 months.

D. The Fourth Problem With Interpreting These Time Periods Literally in the Book of Revelation. These time periods (1,260 days; 42 months; and a time, times, and half a time) are fulfilled and realized **AFTER** the unified Roman Empire is fragmented and divided by ten kingdoms (and **NOT BEFORE** that time as the Preterist claims).

1. For the Beast that makes war against the saints (in Revelation 13:7) and has authority given to him for 42 months (in Revelation 13:5) is a Beast that has 10 horns (kings/kingdoms) that are already crowned (Revelation 13:1) and have already divided the unified Roman Empire into various kingdoms at the time, which occurred hundreds of years after Nero (see sermon #22 in the present series). Whereas these 10 horns (kings/kingdoms) had not yet divided the unified Roman Empire and received power to rule when John penned the Book

of Revelation (according to Revelation 17:12), the 10 horns (kings/kingdoms) did divide and break up the unified Roman Empire and did receive power to rule in those kingdoms hundreds of years after Nero died.

2. Although there is no historical evidence to which the Preterist can turn for the historical fulfillment of the Roman Empire being divided and broken by 10 kingdoms prior to the death of Nero (68 a.d.), I submit there is much historical evidence to confirm that this prophesied division of the Roman Empire by 10 barbarian kings (or kingdoms) began about 376 a.d. with the advance of the kingdom of the Visigoths, and 10 kingdoms had contributed to significant division within the Roman Empire by 538 a.d. by which time three of the original ten kingdoms had fallen (in fulfillment of Daniel 7:24).

3. Thus, the fourth problem for the Preterist in interpreting these time periods literally (as 1,260 days, 42, months, or 3 ½ years) is that a literal interpretation of these time periods cannot be made to fit into a pre-70 a.d. timeframe because they relate to a period in history when the 10 kings/kingdoms were to receive their rule (according to Revelation 13:1), but had not yet received their rule at the time John penned the Book of Revelation (accord to Revelation 17:12). The time period in which the 10 kings/kingdom would receive their rule was not fulfilled until hundreds of years after the death of Nero (in 68 a.d.) and after the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 a.d.).

E. The Fifth Problem With Interpreting These Time Periods Literally in the Book of Revelation. These time periods (1,260 days; 42 months; and 3 ½ years) are interpreted literally the Preterist, but then he inconsistently interprets other time periods in the Book of Revelation non-literally.

1. We ask the Preterist for clarification as to why he interprets some time periods in the Book of Revelation literally and

others non-literally? Why (according to Preterists) is the 1,260 days (of Revelation 11:3 and Revelation 12:6) a literal time period, but the 10 days (of Revelation 2:10) and the 3 ½ days (of Revelation 11:9) a non-literal time period? Why (according to Preterists) is the 3 ½ years (of Revelation 12:14) a literal time period, while the 3 ½ days (of Revelation 11:9) a non-literal time period?

2. I have not heard sound hermeneutical reasons for the arbitrary way in which the Preterist interprets the various time periods in the Book of Revelation. Now while I don't agree with the Futurist system of interpretation, Futurists at least consistently interpret all the time periods literally. Likewise Historicism (which I believe to be the scriptural interpretive system) consistently interprets all the time periods in the Book of Revelation non-literally. However, the Preterist, it seems, is inconsistent in his interpretation of time periods in the Book of Revelation, interpreting some time periods in the Book of Revelation literally and other time periods in the Book of Revelation non-literally.

3. Thus, the fifth and final problem for the Preterist in interpreting these time periods (1,260 days, 42 months, or 3 ½ years) literally is his inconsistency in applying a literal interpretation to some time periods in the Book of Revelation and a non-literal interpretation to other time periods in the Book of Revelation without assigning a sound hermeneutical reason for doing so.

II. The Solution to Interpreting the Time Periods in the Book of Revelation.

A. I submit that the scriptural solution to accurately interpreting prophetic time periods (like 1,260 days, 42 months, and 3 ½ years) in symbolic portions of God's prophetic Word (as is the Book of Revelation) is the Day-Year Principle. The Day-Year Principle basically means that such time periods are to be understood in a non-literal sense by applying

the principle that one prophetic day in Scripture is equivalent to one literal calendar year in actual time. Such a principle is based upon sound scriptural warrant as we shall see.

1. **Numbers 14:34.** Here we find the Lord judging Israel based upon a Day-Year Principle. The Israelites find themselves upon the borders of Canaan. Spies had been sent out into the Land where they explored Canaan for **40 days** (Numbers 13:1,2,25). When they returned, the faithless report of the 10 spies (the majority report) declared it was impossible to take the Land, while the report of Joshua and Caleb (the minority report) declared that all things are possible with God, and that the God who cannot lie had promised the Land to Israel. The people believed the majority report rather than the minority report. The Lord then states that Israel will bear its sin in the wilderness for **40 years**—for the 40 days the spies went throughout the Land, they would spend 40 years in the wilderness, i.e. one year for one day.

a. Carefully note the emphasis on the Day-Year Principle in Numbers 14:34 from a literal rendering of the Hebrew text: "According to the number of the days which you spied out the land, forty days, **A DAY FOR THE YEAR, A DAY FOR THE YEAR**, you shall bear your iniquities forty years." Why is "**A DAY FOR THE YEAR**" repeated by God in the Hebrew text? It is repeated for emphasis, so that this Principle might be indelibly marked upon the minds of the Israelites and upon our minds as we read and seek to interpret Scripture.

b. God Himself gives a very specific reason for the 40 years that Israel would bear its sin in the wilderness: **A DAY FOR THE YEAR**. And God repeats it for emphasis so that later on in the Scripture we might use this interpretive key to unlock time periods found in prophetic portions of God's Word. Thus, it is God Himself that first uses the Day-Year Principle.

2. **Ezekiel 4:4-6.** In this prophetic Book of the Bible, Ezekiel is commanded by God to act out in symbols stated time periods of sin that

were perpetrated against the Lord by the Northern Kingdom of Israel and by the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

a. Ezekiel is first commanded to lie on his left side for 390 days as exhibiting the sins of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ezekiel 4:5). Then the Lord commands Ezekiel to lie on his right side for 40 days as exhibiting the sins of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Ezekiel 4:6).

b. But what is significant is what God says the time periods of 390 days and 40 days mean in actual calendar time for the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in bearing their sin. God says in Ezekiel 4:6, “I have appointed thee each day for a year” (literally in the Hebrew text, **“A DAY FOR THE YEAR, A DAY FOR THE YEAR”**). Now where have we heard that language before? It is precisely the same language that was used in the Hebrew text back in Numbers 14:34. Thus, the 390 prophetic days equals 390 actual calendar years, and the 40 prophetic days equals 40 actual calendars years according to God’s own interpretation here in Ezekiel 4:4-6.

c. I would submit that both of these time periods provide the reasons why the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah incurred the judgment of God that fell upon them. The sin of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the 390 year period of time would seem to have begun with the sin of Jeroboam in leading the revolt against Judah and in leading Israel into idolatry (as we see in 2 Kings 17:22 it is stated that it was due to Jeroboam’s idolatry that God brought His judgment upon Israel). And the sin of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the 40 year period of time would seem to have begun with the sin of King Manasseh in leading Judah into the grossest forms of idolatry (as we see in 2 Kings 21:10-13 it is stated that it was due to Manasseh’s idolatry that God brought His judgment upon Judah). Thus, it is God once again that uses and presents to us the interpretive key of the Day-Year Principle.

3. **Daniel 9:24.** One of the most significant prophecies in the Old Testament is based upon the Day-Year Principle.

a. For here in Daniel 9:24, we see that 70 prophetic weeks are determined for God's people Israel (which would be 490 prophetic days if we multiply 70 weeks times 7 days per week). It should also be noted that the Hebrew word translated "weeks" (שָׁבָעִים) is always used in the Old Testament to refer to a week of days i.e. a week consisting of seven days (שָׁבָעִים is used 20 times in the Hebrew Old Testament [according to *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament*, p. 1224, George V. Wigram], 4 times in the singular and 16 times in the plural, but each time it refers to a week consisting of 7 days). Using once again the Day-Year Principle, God would have us to understand that 490 prophetic days equals 490 actual calendar years. And since the events prophesied here in Daniel 9:24ff take us to the time of Jesus, the Messiah, we are assured that God does not intend 490 literal days, but rather 490 prophetic days which (according to the Day-Year Principle) are 490 actual calendar years.

b. This use of the Day-Year Principle in Daniel 9:24 is especially important in interpreting prophetic time periods because a couple chapters earlier in Daniel 7:25 and later in Daniel 12:7 is where we first find the prophetic time period of "a time, times, and half a time", i.e. 3 ½ prophetic years (that is later used in Revelation 12:14). I submit that using the Divinely inspired Day-Year Principle found in Daniel 9:24 (in reference to the 490 prophetic days being equal to 490 years), we may likewise use the same Divinely inspired Day-Year Principle to interpret the time period of 3 ½ prophetic years in Daniel 7:25 and in Daniel 12:7 to be equivalent to 1,260 prophetic days or (according to the Day-Year Principle) 1,260 actual calendar years.

c. Early Church Fathers used the Day-Year Principle to interpret the 70 weeks of Daniel (or 490 prophetic days) to mean 490 actual calendar years. Tertullian (c. 160-220 a.d.) interpreted the first 69

weeks of Daniel (in Daniel 9:25—7 weeks + 62 weeks = 69 weeks) as giving the time period up to the first coming of Christ. "How, then are we to show that Christ came within the sixty-two weeks? . . . Let us see, then, how the years are fulfilled up to the advent of Christ" (*Adversus Judaeos* [*Against the Jews*], Chapter 8.1ff.). And from that time on, there are found various Church Fathers using the Day-Year Principle to interpret time periods in the Books of Daniel and Revelation. The Day-Year Principle became the classic, historical interpretation of time periods in the prophetic Books of Daniel and Revelation by most of the Protestant Reformers in the First and Second Reformations. The Counter-Reformation efforts of the Church of Rome (which fell back upon Futurism or Preterism in understanding the prophetic time periods as literal) sought to destroy the Day-Year Principle of the Protestant Reformers because by means of the Day-Year Principle the prophecies found in Daniel and Revelation were demonstrated to be fulfilled in the Romish Church and in the Papacy (as being the antichrist and the man of sin) that would usurp and oppose Christ and the true religion of Jesus Christ.

d. When did this time period of 1,260 prophetic days or 1,260 actual calendar years in the Book of Revelation begin? I have already given some indication in a previous sermon as to when I would likely begin this time period of 1,260 years. It seems to me that when the ecclesiastical Beast of the Church of Rome and the Papacy (Pope Leo III) joined hands with the civil Beast of the revived Roman Empire under its healed 8th head (Emperor Charlemagne) in 800 a.d., the prophesied events found in Revelation 13 and Revelation 17 concerning this political-ecclesiastical alliance took clear shape which subsequently issued forth in a concerted effort to trample underfoot the Church of Christ in Revelation 11:2 for 42 prophetic months (or 1,260 actual calendar years using the Divinely inspired Day-Year Principle) and to make war against the faithful witnesses of Christ in Revelation 13:5-7 for 42 prophetic

months (or 1,260 actual calendar years using the Divinely inspired Day-Year Principle). Thus, I submit that the time periods of 3 ½ prophetic years, 42 prophetic months, and 1,260 prophetic days are not to be interpreted literally, but rather are to be interpreted non-literally according to the Day-Year Principle, which is the inspired key that God Himself has given to us to unlock these prophetic time periods.

B. In conclusion dear ones, prophetic time periods in Scripture remind us of a very important truth: God has ordained all our days. We do not live by chance from day to day, but every event in history (and every event in our lives), and even the very number of days that each of us shall live has been ordained by the Lord (Job 14:4,5). We are taught by such truths to beseech the Lord to teach us to number our days that we might live wisely rather than foolishly (Psalm 90:12). For we at times forget that the days we live here upon the earth are numbered and short. However, the strength we feel today in these mortal bodies will pass away, and so will all our earthly possessions (Psalm 39:4,5). Therefore, dear ones, life for the Christian is summed up in the words of the Apostle Paul (Philippians 1:21). What is it for you to live? What gives meaning and purpose to your life? If your life is not Christ, but is rather something earthly, you will leave your life behind when you die. But if Christ is your life and your reason for living, you at death be going to enjoy your life forever and ever.

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