

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #18 (Pt. 6)

Revelation 20:1-3; Hebrews 2:14
December 6, 2009
Rev. Greg L. Price

We continue this Lord's Day our examination of Preterism in light of God's Word. This is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of Preterism. But rather my intention is to give an overview as to how Preterists interpret the restoration of Israel in relationship to the conversion of the nations during the millennial period and to give then a brief biblical critique of Preterism in light of two key passages of Scripture: Romans 11 and Revelation 20:1-10.

It was noted in the previous sermon that Preterism may be subdivided into two branches: Partial Preterism and Full Preterism.

1. **Partial Preterism** states that ALMOST ALL of the Book of Revelation is already fulfilled from our present frame of reference (but not entirely or absolutely all as Full Preterists allege). Most Partial Preterists would seem to place the fulfillment of almost all of the Book of Revelation at or about 70 a.d. at the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple while still awaiting the fulfillment of the Second Coming of Christ, the final resurrection, the final judgment, and the eternal state.

2. **Full Preterism** promotes the view that ALL prophesied events in the Book of Revelation (and for that matter, all prophesied events in Scripture including the Second Coming of Christ, the final resurrection, the final judgment, and the new heaven and new earth) were all fulfilled in the events surrounding 70 a.d. so that there is no Biblical prophecy that must yet be fulfilled after events surrounding the destruction of

Jerusalem in 70 a.d. We will briefly consider Full Preterism in a future sermon, but our present focus is upon Partial Preterism.

In the previous sermon, we considered how Partial Preterists interpret Romans 11 and briefly outlined reasons why their interpretation of Romans 11 does not do justice to the inspired words of the Apostle Paul. You may want to review the previous sermon if you are just joining this series. Whereas Paul gives us great hope concerning the future conversion of Israel as a nation to Christ, the Partial Preterist believes that God has no future redemptive plans for Israel as a nation. Therefore, even if the Partial Preterist believes that God has promised to yet bring the nations of the world to Christ (in accordance with passages like Psalm 72:8-11; Isaiah 2:2), since the Partial Preterist has already ruled out the future conversion of Israel as a nation to Christ because God's judgment upon Israel as a nation was final and complete in 70 a.d., the Partial Preterist should (it would seem) in all consistency pray, "Lord, bring all nations to Christ, except Israel (because she is under God's judgment forever)." The Great Commission (in Matthew 28:19) issued by Christ to His faithful Ministers should (it would seem) likewise be understood by the Partial Preterist as a call to teach or disciple "all nations", except Israel (because she is under God's judgment forever). When we read in Revelation 11:15 that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" at the time of the millennium, the Partial Preterist who believes that this refers to a future time when all of the nations of this world will kiss the Son and serve Christ, he must make one exception: Israel as a nation (because according to the Partial Preterist there is no redemptive future for Israel as a nation due to her being under the judgment of God forever). Perhaps no Partial Preterist actually prays or reasons that way (at least I hope they don't), but if Partial Preterists were to pray or reason in that manner, I submit they would be consistent with their position that since 70 a.d., God is finished

redemptively with Israel as nation because God's wrath abides upon her forever. In light of Paul's treatment of the fullness of the nations coming to Christ and the restoration and conversion of Israel as a nation in coming to Christ in Romans 11, I submit that we should ever keep in our prayers that God would convert all the nations to Christ (in keeping with many promises and prophecies), including the nation of Israel.

For the remainder of the sermon this Lord's Day, we are going to look once again at a very familiar passage of Scripture: Revelation 20:1-3. But we are going to look at Revelation 20:1-3 this time through the spectacles or lenses of the Partial Preterist, and I will seek to demonstrate that the interpretive system of the Partial Preterist falls far short of doing justice to this inspired vision of the Apostle John.

I. Partial Preterism and Revelation 20:1-3.

A. In this first section of Revelation chapter 20, John views the binding and restraint of Satan for a figurative millennium of years. However, what is especially significant to note is the end to which Satan is restrained by the Lord Jesus: "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (Revelation 20:3).

B. Two questions are directed to the Partial Preterist in regard to these verses: (1) What is the time-frame in which this restraint of Satan from deceiving the nations occurs? (2) During that time-frame that the Partial Preterist identifies as the time in which Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations, are there nations (as nations, as geo-political states, as moral persons) deceived by Satan from following Christ?

1. What is the time-frame in which this restraint of Satan from deceiving the nations occurs (according to the Partial Preterist)? Some Partial Preterists begin the binding of Satan during the earthly

ministry of Christ, some at the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and others at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. Regardless of where the Partial Preterist begins, they agree that Satan was bound in the first century and has now been bound for some two thousand years from deceiving the nations of the world. Therefore, according to the Partial Preterist, the nations of this world are not presently deceived by Satan and have not been so deceived since the first century because Satan has been restrained from deceiving the nations of the world since the first century.

a. Now because of the unbelief we see in the nations of this world in their hostility to Christ and to Biblical Christianity, in their idolatry, superstition, and toleration (and therefore promotion) of every false religion imaginable, Partial Preterists must qualify in some way what they understand the word “deceive” to mean when the Holy Spirit says that Satan is restrained so as not to “deceive the nations no more” (Revelation 20:3). And yes they do qualify the word “deceive” by saying that Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations so that he is unable “to prevent the message of the Gospel from achieving success” in Gentile nations (David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, pp. 502,503), or they say that Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations so that he cannot “gather them together for the war” against the saints as he will do when he is released in Revelation 20:8-9 (David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, pp. 504).

b. But is that the meaning of the word “deceive” (πλανάω) in its use throughout the Book of Revelation? I think not. Since Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations any more (in Revelation 20:3), if we look in the Book of Revelation to find out what it means to deceive, we can then know what Satan shall be restrained from doing for a figurative millennium of years.

(1) First, consider Revelation 2:20 where the same Greek word (πλανάω) is translated by the English word “seduce”. There a

false Prophetess is teaching those who profess Christ to commit fornication (whether actual or spiritual fornication). Thus, to deceive here is to mislead others into error and false doctrine i.e. false and corrupt religion.

(2) Second, consider Revelation 13:14 where we read of the second beast (or the false prophet, namely ecclesiastical Rome) who causes the earth to worship the first beast, namely civil Rome (Revelation 13:12) and by means of “great wonders” and “miracles” deceives the whole earth. Thus, to deceive here is to mislead the earth by way of false worship (i.e. false religion) offered to the wicked ambassadors of the devil (as we likewise see in Revelation 19:20).

(3) Third, consider Revelation 18:23 where that great harlot religion (namely, ecclesiastical Rome) that opposes Biblical Christianity deceives all nations by her superstitious, false religion. Thus, to deceive here is to mislead all nations into false religion.

(4) From a brief study of the word “deceive” (*πλανάω*) in the Book of Revelation, we understand that Satan deceives by way of false religion. Thus, if that is how the Holy Spirit uses the word “deceive” (*πλανάω*) in the Book of Revelation, then when Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations any more (according to Revelation 20:3), he must be restrained from being able to mislead the nations of the world into false religion for a figurative thousand years. And so the Partial Preterist who would define Satan’s restraint to mean that Satan cannot deceive the nations so as to prevent the successful spread of the Gospel into Gentile nations or cannot deceive the nations so as to gather them to war collectively against the saints errs on two accounts.

(a) First, the Partial Preterist confuses the EFFECT of Satan’s restraint from deceiving the nations (which according to the Partial Preterist is the successful spread of the Gospel into the nations of the world) with the IDENTITY of the deception itself which Satan can no longer use to mislead the nations of the world (namely,

false religion). In other words, the deception itself which Satan cannot use any longer against the nations of the world once he is bound for a figurative millennium of years is the deception of false religion, and the EFFECT of Satan's restraint in deceiving the nations of the world by way of false religion is that the Gospel goes forth with great power to convert the nations of the world and to prevent nations from persecuting and seeking to destroy the Visible Church.

(b) The second error of the Partial Preterist in this regard is that he does not accurately interpret "the nations" that are no longer deceived (Revelation 20:3). It is not simply that Satan is restrained from deceiving a number of people within Gentile nations according to Revelation 20:3, but to the contrary, the text states that Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations (as nations or as geo-political states or as moral persons) any more. It's one thing to say that Satan cannot prevent the successful spread of the Gospel into the nations of the world so that a number of individuals within the nations come to Christ (as the Partial Preterist interprets Satan's restraint to be), it is quite another thing to say that Satan is restrained so that he cannot mislead the nations of the world as nations (the nations as geo-political states or the nations as a moral persons) any longer into false religion. And it is clear that this is how the Holy Spirit intends for us to understand the word "nations" in Revelation 20:3 ("that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled"), for according to Revelation 18:23, "all the nations of the world" (as nations, as geo-political states, as moral persons) were deceived by Satan and by his corrupt religious ambassadors before Satan was bound. Thus, when Satan is said to be bound from deceiving the nations in Revelation 20:3, we ought to understand that to mean that the very nations of the world that he previously deceived, he shall be restrained from deceiving for a figurative millennium of years. And then as we turn to Revelation 20:7-8, we see that after the figurative millennium of years has expired that

Satan once again goes out “TO DECEIVE THE NATIONS WHICH ARE IN THE FOUR QUARTERS OF THE EARTH.” Thus, the very same nations that Satan deceived by way of false religion prior to the thousand years (in Revelation 18:23) are the very same nations that he was restrained from deceiving by way of false religion during the thousand years (in Revelation 20:3), and are the very same nations that he goes out to deceive by way of false religion once again after the thousand years have expired (Revelation 20:7-9). Thus, when Satan can no longer deceive the nations of the world by misleading them into false religion, the nations of the world (including Israel) will turn to Christ (Romans 11:25-26; Psalm 72:8-11; Isaiah 2:2 etc.)

2. A second question for the Partial Preterist: During that time-frame that the Partial Preterist identifies as the time in which Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations, are there nations (as nations, as geo-political states, as moral persons) deceived by false religion? Yes, there are, and for that reason, the Partial Preterist interpretation of Revelation 20:1-3 falls short of not only Biblical accuracy, but also falls short of historical confirmation. In fact, the deception of Satan in misleading the nations of the world (as nations, as geo-political states, and as moral persons) into false religion has continued from the first century to the present time. Nations of the world (as nations) were deceived by Satan for hundreds of years after 70 a.d. in the false religion of Pagan Rome and in its toleration of myriads of false religions. Nations of the world (as nations) have been deceived by Satan for hundreds of years during this alleged time of Satan’s restraint in following the false religion of Papal Rome. Nations of the world (as nations) have been deceived by Satan for hundreds of years during this alleged time of Satan’s restraint in following the false religions of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Paganism (even Communism and Atheism have their own moral and antichristian beliefs and worldviews which deceive the nations of the world). Thus, the interpretive system of the Partial

Preterist falls far short of being able to do justice to this first section in Revelation 20:1-3, for during the present time in which they allege that Satan is bound from deceiving the nations, it is clear by way of historical confirmation that the nations have been and are deceived and misled in following many different false religions in contrast to embracing Biblical and Reformed Christianity. Although there have been a few exceptions among nations (as nations) which for a period of time authorized Biblical Christianity as the national religion of that nation (e.g. a few nations during the Reformation, notably Scotland), there is coming a time, dear ones, when the nations of the world (including Israel) will no longer be deceived by Satan in following false religions but will be converted to Christ in establishing (by way of national covenants) Biblical and Reformed Christianity (and that is the visible glory of Christ's Church that will be realized in the millennium of Revelation 20).

Dear ones, the Scripture clearly teaches that due to the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, Satan's rule and power has been LEGALLY and COVENANTALLY abolished for the child of God. For Christ suffered and was exalted on behalf of all His people (chosen from all eternity in love) whom He came to save from sin, Satan, and death and to exalt to heaven with Himself. That is why we read with joy that we who lay hold of Christ by faith alone are legally and covenantally dead to sin (Romans 6:1-2, it was legally accomplished when Christ died and was raised from the dead for us)—sin has no legal power over us any longer because Christ died to abolish sin for us. And on the basis of that fact, dear ones, we are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, for sin shall not have dominion over those who have legally died to it under the terms of the glorious Covenant of Grace.

Moreover, we read with gladness that we who rest in Christ and in His righteousness alone for our justification are legally and covenantally

delivered from Satan (Hebrews 2:14, it was legally accomplished when Christ died and was raised from the dead for us)—the devil has no legal power over us any longer because Christ died to destroy Satan and all his evil works. And on the basis of that, dear ones, we are not to fear the devil, but to take up the weapons of warfare given to us by Christ knowing that Satan is legally a defeated foe.

Furthermore, we read with hope that we who embrace Christ and His obedience alone as the only ground for our acceptance before God are legally and covenantally set free from death (2 Timothy 1:10, it was legally accomplished when Christ died and was raised from the dead for us)—death has no legal power over us any longer, because Christ lives we too shall live.

Dear ones, we confidently and boldly declare on the basis of Christ's promises to us in the Covenant of Grace that we are presently to reckon by faith what is true of us legally and covenantally. We are to lay hold of these exceeding and great promises that are ours in Christ in overcoming sin, Satan and death. Dear ones, we acknowledge, profess, and embrace by faith the fact that to be in covenant with Christ is to presently enjoy all these royal blessings as the children of the King. And how we pray that the Holy Spirit may open our eyes and increase our faith to enjoy these blessings more and more as we are sanctified at this present time.

But let us not confuse what we have in Christ presently as individual Christians with what Christ will do in the future with the nations of the world (as nations) when Satan shall be bound so that he cannot deceive or mislead the nations of the world (including Israel) into false religion any longer with the glorious result that the fullness of the Gentile nations will be converted to Christ and Israel as a nation will likewise be converted to Christ and brought into the Visible Church of Christ. Legally

and covenantally (*de jure*), the nations of the world (including Israel) already belong to Christ by virtue of the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace (Psalm 2:8; Genesis 22:18), but they (including the nation of Israel) will in the future (when Satan is bound from deceiving them any longer) become Christ's by virtue of their own profession and national covenants (Psalm 72:8-11; Zechariah 2:11; Romans 11:25-26; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 15:4; Revelation 20:4-6). Beloved, let us then never cease from praying for the nations of the world (including the nation of Israel) to come to Christ which will certainly be accomplished by Christ to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18-20).

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