



Truth

On Tough Texts

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The Perils of Preterism

Matthew 24:34

IT HAS BEEN THE PURPOSEFUL HABIT OF THIS publication throughout its existence to avoid eschatology for the most part. The reason is simple: because of the diverse views in eschatology today and because such things are not (or at least *should* not be) a test of fellowship, we should simply agree to disagree agreeably. As I have written previously (TOTT #47), while the Doctrines of Grace, for example, are most certainly cardinal doctrines, one's view of the Millennium is not. While one's view might put him in a different *denomination*, it doesn't place him into a different *faith*.

That being said, there is a view of eschatology today that while growing in popularity is, in my humble theological opinion, very troubling. That view has been dubbed with what its advocates seem to consider a royal title: *Preterism*. For them this "monarch" rules infallibly and his pronouncements trump all discussion, dissent, or even discernment.

As we will see, Matthew 24:34 is the "proof text" that for the preterist ends all argument and is therefore a "tough text" for us to consider: **Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.** Let us examine this issue using five emphases.

What is Preterism?

A noted theologian of our day (who we greatly respect) defines Preterism (Latin *preater*, "past" and *ire*, "to go," that which has gone past or belongs to the past) as: "An eschatological viewpoint that places many or all eschatological events in the past, especially during the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70."¹ As a "convert" to Preterism in the 1990s, his scholarship and popularity probably account, at least in part, for the surge in growth Preterism is presently enjoying. There are actually two types of Preterism.

First, the most popular version is Partial (or Moderate)

Preterism, which holds that while most prophecy (such as all the Tribulation events) were fulfilled in A.D. 70, there are still some prophetic events that are yet future, such as Christ's Second Coming and the bodily resurrection. The odd result of this, however, is that there are *two* second comings: one in A.D. 70 as *a Day of the Lord* for judging Israel and another at the end of human history, which is *the Day of the Lord*, the final and ultimate day of judgment.²

Second, there is Full (or Extreme) Preterism, which insists that *all* prophecy (including the Second Coming and resurrection) was fulfilled in A.D. 70. In this scheme of "eschatology" (a term that doesn't even seem to apply anymore), there is no future climax or culmination to history. Believers have been spiritually resurrected, creation spiritually restored, and the Church exists in the eternal state, a spiritual New Heaven and New Earth.

The History of Preterism

In my many years of study and ministry, I have learned that jumping on a "bandwagon" is unwise. The danger of losing one's footing on a slippery surface and sliding underneath the wheels is very real, and Preterism is indeed just such a wagon. Why do I keep my distance as the band plays on? Well, for two reasons: the first, of course, is *theology*, but following only a step behind is *history*. With any teaching I always ask three questions: Where did it come from? What does it teach compared with Scripture? What will be its end result?

It is that first question that is our focus for the moment. The irrefutable fact of the matter is that Preterism has *never* been the historical view of the church. As one noted expert on Preterism, Thomas Ice, observes, there is no evidence whatsoever of a preterist interpretation from the Early Church through the Reformation.³ In fact, it did not appear (even in

mild form) until Spanish Jesuit Luis Alcazar (1554–1613) offered the novel interpretation of what he called “triumphalism” in his Revelation commentary. He spiritualized various symbols as representing the victory of the Roman Catholic Church over paganism, and especially over the Jews, whose divine rejection was finalized in A.D. 70. Cornelius Lapide (1567–1637), however, the leading Jesuit commentator of the day, rejected such “new” and “unusual interpretations,” calling them “mystical rather than literal” and “allegorical” because it “makes assertions without proof.”⁴

Around the same time, two Protestants—Dutch Arminian Hugo Grotius (1538–1645) and Englishman Henry Hammond (1605–1660)—advocated a mild form of Preterism, which actually more closely resembled a “historicist” view than preterist (that is, that prophecy has been fulfilled throughout Church History). It is interesting that while most of their contemporaries ignored them, the Huguenots thought their error important enough to address and denounced their views. One leader, Pierre Jurieu (1637–1713), unapologetically declared that such teaching “dishonors its authors” and constitutes “a shame and disgrace not only to the Reformation, but also to the name Christian.”⁵

But all this was still *mild* Preterism. It was not until the 1800s that full Preterism emerged as just one more product of German rationalism. *Please note that.* The same movement that rejected supernatural revelation and hatched the eggs of *both* Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism, also gave birth to another offspring: *Preterism*. Why? Because it fit their model. Preterism was a perfect way to avoid predictive prophecy and give a naturalistic interpretation to the Book of Revelation by comparing it with the apocalyptic literature of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. As it then spread from Europe to Britain to the United States, it began influencing men such as J. Stuart Russell (1816–1895) and Moses Stuart (1780–1852), whose works delineated the modern forms of Preterism. By the 1970s, it gained enough momentum to form the foundation of the Christian Reconstruction movement.

So, we submit that there is no ambiguity here: *Preterism is not historical*. It is an enigma to me that while many today defend the historic faith—and we most certainly join with them—many of these abandon that very banner when it comes to eschatology. It is as though they were driving along in their beautiful car, the Literal Interpretation, and then just deliberately drove it over a cliff.

So, if Preterism is not the historical view, what is? It can be stated with absolute certainty and with no doubt whatsoever that the prominent position of the Early Church from the 1st- to the 3rd-century was that of Premillennialism, that the Lord Jesus will return to the earth to establish His literal, physical, political reign over the whole Earth for 1,000 years. As the renowned 19th-century Church historian Philip Schaff (himself an amillennialist, by the way) recounts:

The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a

widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius.⁶

How significant! Inexplicably, however, many do not consider this to be at all noteworthy. For example, Louis Berkoff (again, who we certainly respect) makes a couple of troubling statements, the first being: “The Millenarianism of the early Church was gradually overcome.” Excuse me? Taking the Bible literally is an obstacle to be overcome? Berkoff goes on to note, “During the Middle Ages, Millenarianism was generally regarded as heretical.”⁷ Is it not troubling that the Roman Catholic saturated Middle Ages trumps the Early Church? We should also note that Roman Catholicism, to this very day, is amillennial, which it adopted directly from Augustine’s confusion. Its Vicar of Christ (the Pope) rules on earth now. Here is just one more way that Catholicism continues to influence true Christianity, although few seem to care.

This leads us to a pivotal question: What happened? While in the first three centuries after the Apostolic Age most students of Scripture held to the future establishment of Christ’s literal Kingdom, what happened to change it?

Among other reasons, a major cause for the drift away from a premillennial view in the 3rd- and 4th-centuries was the theology of Alexandrian teacher Origen (c.185–c.254). He became enamored with pagan Greek philosophy and was strongly influenced by its dualism, which taught that matter is evil and only the nonphysical is good. This resulted in his viewing a literal, physical kingdom with physical blessings as evil and prompted him to develop the idea of a spiritual kingdom where Christ simply rules presently in the hearts of believers, which is the definition of Amillennialism. What is the root of Amillennialism? Pagan dualism. Does this not put Amillennialism in a whole new light? Why would any evangelical believe such a view?

We should also note that for similar reasons, Augustine (354–430) also rejected Premillennialism. Not only did Greek philosophy influence his thinking, but his own immoral living before his conversion did as well and drove him toward asceticism and the rejection of literal, physical, and therefore “carnal,” Kingdom blessings. Like many today, Augustine’s “personal experience” affected his theology.

Another major reason for the shift was Origen’s new method of interpreting the Bible, called the Allegorical or Spiritualizing Method, which looks at words as symbols of something else besides the normal meaning of the words. In essence then, the interpreter, no matter how sincere his motives or godly his aims, can make the text say whatever he wants it to say. Origen did just that and ended up in several heresies, such as rejection of a physical resurrection and universal salvation for all men and even fallen angels. *The potential apostasy of this kind of interpretation cannot be overemphasized.* We do not make this statement lightly. As F. W. Farrar writes:

Allegory by no means sprang from spontaneous piety, but was the child of rationalism which owed its birth to the heathen theories of Plato. It deserved its name, for it made Scripture say something else than it really meant. . . . Origen borrows from heathen Platonists and from Jewish Philoso-

phers a method which converts the whole of Scripture, alike the New and the Old Testament, into a series of clumsy, varying, and incredible enigmas. Allegory helped him get rid of chiliasm and superstitious literalism and the ‘antitheses’ of the Gnostics, but it opened the door for deadlier evils.⁸

Forgive the repetition, but many today are missing the naked truth: *Origen and Augustine deliberately altered orthodox biblical hermeneutics*. Instead of viewing Scripture literally and plainly, they allegorized it. Why? Because they didn’t like the results of literalness. Their own experience became the ruling factor in interpreting Scripture, and the Church has never recovered. How on earth can we have biblical sufficiency when we spiritualize what it says?

The Date of the Book of Revelation

In the final analysis, the entire structure of Preterism stands on a single foundation stone: an early date for the Book of Revelation. There is no escaping this. If there is even a shred of doubt on such a date, the entire system collapses. For the system to succeed in fitting the prophecies of Revelation into the Roman conquest in A.D. 70, the date of its writing must be before that date (i.e., 64–67).

So is there any evidence for such an early date, a date where Nero is considered the Antichrist?⁹ Well, if we may be so blunt, forcing an early date for Revelation is like trying to insert the proverbial square peg into a round hole using a sledgehammer.

By far, the chief argument for an early date is a reinterpretation of the following statement by 2nd-century Church Father Irenaeus, preserved from the Latin, and also preserved in Greek by Eusebius:

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 [the book of Revelation]. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign.¹⁰

It is simply because that statement so clearly indicates a later date under the rule of Domitian, the Preterist is forced to explain it and in doing so performs quite a tap dance. In both the Latin and the Greek texts, it is pointed out, the subject of the verb “was seen” is lacking and must be assumed. So, does it mean that the *Apocalypse* “was seen” or that *John* (the writer) “was seen”? The Preterist insists, of course, that *John* is the subject, arguing that it is more logical that the *writer* is the subject than is the *writing*. It is extremely significant, however, that one of the leading Reformed commentaries, *Baker New Testament Commentary* by William Hendriksen and Simon Kistemaker devotes no less than twelve pages to the issues of date, place, and setting of this book and is not on the side of the preterist. Kistemaker writes here:

The context of these passages in Irenaeus and Eusebius, however, shows that both authors had in mind the book and not the apostle. Irenaeus devotes an entire chapter (chap. 30) to the number and name of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:18), and

in the course of his discussion he writes, “For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, toward the end of Domitian’s reign.” This sentence is an explanation of the preceding one that ends with the expression “apocalyptic vision.” Consequently, the subject is the same in both sentences. And Eusebius, noting the great cruelty of Domitian’s persecution and the banishment of the apostle John to Patmos, mentions the Apocalypse and then quotes the above-mentioned words of Irenaeus. The context of these words in the writings of both Irenaeus and Eusebius intimates that not John but Revelation is the subject.¹¹

While we point the reader to Kistemaker’s excellent discussion, we would briefly note a few other points that indicate a later date for Revelation. In addition to other *external* evidence—which Albert Barnes (another amillennialist) submits “is so clear as to settle the point . . . that the book was written near the end of the reign of Domitian, that is, about 95 or 96 A.D.”—the *internal* evidence in the book itself is virtually overwhelming.

First, while there was certainly persecution under Nero, it was confined mostly to Jerusalem. The persecution under Domitian, however, was far more widespread and fits the description in Revelation.

Second, the seven churches of Asia in chapters 2 and 3 are strong indicators of the later date. “Even a cursory reading,” Kistemaker writes, “leaves the impression that their recipients were not first- but second-generation Christians.”¹² All these churches were healthy and strong in the mid-sixties, as Paul’s letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Timothy indicate. Thirty years later, however, at the time of the writing of Revelation, most of these churches were in serious spiritual decline. The church at Ephesus had abandoned its first love and most of the others had allowed sin and false doctrine to destroy them. A mid-sixties date would simply not be sufficient time for such dramatic decline to take place.

Third, another indicator here is that a devastating earthquake struck Laodicea around A.D. 60 and the city was in the process of reconstruction throughout Nero’s reign. It could, therefore, hardly be “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (3:17) at this time, while the later date during Domitian’s reign obviously would allow sufficient time for enough rebuilding to make those statements accurate.

Fourth, still another aspect of the seven churches is that while Paul never names the heretical sect of the Nicolaitans that had infiltrated Ephesus and Pergamum (2: 6, 15), it had become so infamous by late in the first century that John could call it by name and his readers could recognize it without further description.

While we could go on, we will stop there, for, as Albert Barnes submits again, “There is, perhaps, no book of the New Testament whose date is better determined on historical grounds than this.” Preterism, in fact, contradicts Revelation’s own repeated claim to be *prophecy* (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). It is impossible to see all the events in Revelation as already fulfilled. Our intent is not to offend, but Preterism is simply folly. We humbly submit, therefore, trying to prove an early date for Revelation is about as successful as grasping at the wind. It seems to be totally agenda driven, invented simply

because it is needed to prop up a weak hypothesis.

The Meaning of Matthew 24:34

We turn now to our text, the “proof text” of Preterism. It insisted that the words **this generation** must *literally* refer to the first-century generation to whom Jesus spoke. But that is simply not so, for the Greek *genea* is not limited to contemporaries. As the aforementioned William Hendriksen submits, the same word is used several times in the Septuagint and New Testament “with a meaning that goes beyond a ‘group of contemporaries.’”¹³

Even more to the point, this passage simply cannot possibly refer to the first-century generation if you look at the context honestly. Here is one of the oddities of Preterism, in fact. While it claims to view our text *literally*, what about the rest of the passage? As partial preterist Kenneth Gentry writes: “Matthew 24:1–34 (and parallels) in the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In Revelation, most of the prophecies before Revelation 20 find fulfillment in the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70).”¹⁴ But when have we seen this fulfillment? The fact is that these descriptions are far too widespread and devastating to be answered by the Romans in A.D. 70. That event clearly did not involve “famines” and “earthquakes” (v. 7), believers being “hated by all nations” (v. 9), false Christs and false prophets (vv. 5, 11), the preaching of the gospel to the whole world (v. 14), the abomination of desolation (v. 15), the sun being darkened, the moon being extinguished, or the stars being dislodged from their places (v. 29). Add to that the descriptions in Revelation 4–19 and the impossibility becomes clear. No amount of symbolism or spiritualizing can explain the unimaginable events that are depicted. It comes back to the often stated truism about Revelation: *The problem is not that it is hard to understand, but rather it is hard to believe.* Many interpretations have sprung from the simple fact that expositors cannot accept that it actually means what it says, so they make it all figurative. While they accept the miraculous elsewhere in Scripture, Revelation is just too much for them to bear. If we may lovingly ask, is that not just simple unbelief, and again the product of Rationalism?

If I may also interject, and pity my simplicity, was Satan bound in A.D. 70 (or is he today)? Revelation 20:2 declares that an angel “bound [Satan] a thousand years” and shut him up in the “the bottomless pit” so “that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” So when exactly did this take place? When has Satan ever been bound and his deception suspended? While one writer notes the amillennial view that “Satan was bound during Jesus’ earthly ministry, restraining him while the gospel is being preached in the world,”¹⁵ how can that possibly be true? Who tempted Jesus in the wilderness? Who repeatedly deceived the religious leaders? And just how exactly could Satan enter into Judas (John 13:27) if he was bound?

And finally, if all this description does refer to the first-century generation, why did Jesus not appear? One cannot argue, “Well, He returned figuratively to rule in the hearts of believers” because it is maintained that the passage is *lit-*

eral—**this generation**. The only other alternative is that while Jesus correctly foretold the destruction of Jerusalem that was to come in 40 years, He must have been mistaken about His returning at that time.

It should also be pointed out that the historical record does not match the preterist’s interpretation of this passage. Most notably, for example, verse 27 states that the direction of Christ’s Coming to Jerusalem will be “out of the east . . . unto the west.” The Roman army, however, which preterists insist fulfills this prophecy, advanced on Jerusalem from west to east, the exact opposite. Additionally, the Roman army did not advance “as the lightning cometh,” that is, quickly. On the contrary, the war went on for several years before Titus even besieged the city!

To what, then, does **this generation** refer? It can only refer to the generation that will be alive just prior to Christ’s return, those who will see the final, severe “labor pains” begin (v. 8; “beginning of sorrows” is *ōdin*, which refers to the travail of childbirth; 1 Thes. 5:3). This fits the lesson of the fig tree (v. 32), in fact, which emphasizes the short time span in which these events will occur. When the branch sprouts leaves, summer is almost here. Likewise, when you see the final birth pangs begin, you know that Christ’s appearing “is near, even at the doors” (v. 33).

The Perils of Preterism

So why is Preterism a cause for concern? I believe it is for at least five reasons.

First, and most obvious, it says Christ has already come (spiritually) and, in its extreme form, will never come again bodily. But both flatly contradict Acts 1:11: “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Both His going and coming are obviously literal, and the latter has clearly not occurred, regardless of how much allegorizing one might do. To deny that is also to deny “that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Please pardon my bluntness, but that in itself puts Preterism in the category of false teaching.

Second, Preterism renders meaningless the many commands given to Christians who await Christ’s return. If it all is past and not future, the admonitions in Romans 13:11–13, 1 Thessalonians 5:4–10, Titus 2:12, and 1 John 3:3 are hollow and pointless.

Third, Preterism completely denies the conflict of the ages, teaching the absurd idea that Satan is bound and apostasy is a thing of the past. This flies in the face of verse after verse that speaks of the spiritual conflict we are in today (1 Tim. 4:1; Eph. 2:2; 6:10–20; 1 Jn. 5:19) and again renders many verses meaningless that command us to “resist the devil” (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9) and to avoid apostates (1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 3:10; 2 Tim. 3:5; 2 Jn. 10). The popular notion that things are going to get better is ludicrous. If the doctrine of the depravity of man teaches us anything, it teaches us man’s state of spiritual death (Eph. 2:1–3) and that things will only grow worse (cf. Matt. 24:37; 2 Tim. 3:1–13; etc.).

Fourth, Preterism replaces Israel with the Church, going so far as to say Christ’s judgment-coming (A.D. 70) was to

finally end the Jewish nation. Such a notion demands the ignoring of reality on an unprecedented scale, namely, a total denial of any significance whatsoever of the existence of the modern Jewish State. Far more serious, however, is that if Israel's future salvation and restoration (Rom. 11:25–27) in God's program is annulled, then so is God's promised blessing for the world (11:12) in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:3).

Fifth, Preterism makes a mockery of Revelation 1:3: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." This is the only book of the Bible where blessing is promised to all who either read it or hear it read. But what possible blessing could come from reading "prophecy" that isn't really prophecy at all? As important as history is, our Lord is not telling His people to read about what has already happened but about what is going to happen as He brings human history to its final end.

We humbly submit, therefore, that Preterism is neither biblical, historical, or edifying to the Body of Christ. It is a bandwagon we not only should stay off of but one we should labor to stop and dismantle.

A Closing Burden

I would close with this: What has puzzled and burdened me for years, and continues to do so, on the subject of eschatology is how many Bible teachers abhor the idea that the prophecies of Revelation are yet future. As I have again written elsewhere, in fact, those who hold such a futuristic view are often looked upon with condescension and even mocked as being childish. Apparently, such an "interpretation" is to be avoided like the plagues of Revelation themselves.

What blessings men miss out on by novel interpretations! How tragic that they reject the truth that our Lord will come to earth and rule and reign with perfect justice (Isa. 32:1), that former enemies, such as Egypt and Israel, will be at peace with each other for the first time (19:23–25), that the whole world will be at peace as the nations "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks" (2:4). How sad that they cannot enjoy the thought that, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (11:6–9). How tragic that they can't look forward to the time when humanity will know great longevity of life (65:20–22), and when the earth will again be as Eden (51:3). How sad that they can't rejoice in the fact that the Earth will experience more productivity than its known since the Fall, when "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" and become useful again (35:1–7).

Dr. J. D. Watson
Pastor-Teacher

NOTES

¹ R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Baker, 1998), 228.

² Leading proponents of this view include R. C. Sproul, Greg Bahnsen, Gary Demar, Kenneth Gentry, and David Chilton (who actually changed to Full Preterism after his books were published).

³ *The End Times Controversy* (Harvest House, 2003), 42–46.

⁴ Cited in LeRoy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Review and Herald, 1950), 2:506, 512.

⁵ Cited in Jean-Robert Armogathe, "Interpretations of the Revelation of John: 1500-1800," in John J. Collins, Bernard McGinn, and Stephen J. Stein (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (Continuum, 2000), 2:198.

⁶ *History of the Christian Church* (Eerdmans, 1973), Vol. II, 614. For example, Justin Martyr wrote: "But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare. . . . And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place. Just as our Lord also said, 'They shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal to the angels, the children of the God of the resurrection'" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1; Chs. 80, 91, 460, 461.) After stating, "Premillennialism is the historic faith of the Church," Charles Ryrie provides several quotations in his excellent work, *The Basis for Premillennial Faith* (Loizeaux, 1954), 17–33.

While we respect Louis Berkoff, his statement that "the adherents of this doctrine were a rather limited number" (*The History of Christian Doctrine*; [Baker, 1937], 262) seems to be in error. He puts himself at odds not only with Schaff but also Adolph Harnack (1851–1930), Lutheran theologian, church historian, and undisputed authority on Ante-Nicene Church History, who writes: "First in point of time came the faith in the nearness of Christ's second advent and the establishing of His reign of glory on the earth. Indeed it appears so early that it might be questioned whether it ought not to be regarded as an essential part of the Christian religion" ("Millennium," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, 314).

Berkoff also lists Polycarp as one who did not mention this doctrine, but we would point out that Irenaeus was taught by Polycarp, who in turn was trained by the Apostle John. Is it not likely, then, that Irenaeus learned his premillennial position from Polycarp?

⁷ Berkoff (see note 6), 262, 263.

⁸ *History of Interpretation* (MacMillan, 1886), 193–94, 196.

⁹ While Preterism goes to great lengths to make this point, it's almost laughable. As Thomas Ice recounts: "Nero was a poor excuse for an Antichrist. He was a wimpy emperor who preferred to act on the stage of his day and recite poetry than be Caesar of Rome. . . . He doesn't even come close to being 'a king of fierce countenance (Dan. 8:23) or the king who makes a covenant with Israel for seven years and breaks it in three and one half years (9:26, 27). . . . Nero was not destroyed by the coming of Christ, but committed suicide by cutting his own throat in A.D. 68. . . . He died two years before the destruction of Jerusalem occurred, which is when preterists claim that Christ returned" (*End Times Controversy*, 13).

¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.30.3; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.18.3, 5.8.6.

¹¹ Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Revelation* (Baker Academic, 2011), 27 (read his whole discussion, 26–38).

¹² Kistemaker, 34.

¹³ "Deut. 32:5, 20; Psa. 12:7; 78:8; etc.; Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:15; Heb. 3:10," as offered in William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Matthew* (Baker Academic, 1973), 868. We would also submit: Acts 8:33 (an allusion to Isa. 53:8) and 15:21.

¹⁴ *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), 159.

¹⁵ Sproul, 196.

JUST PUBLISHED

This book's predecessor, *Truth on Tough Texts: Expositions of Challenging Scripture Passages*, is a compilation of most of the articles that appeared in the first six years of the monthly publication, *Truth on Tough Texts*. A few were omitted in that collection partly for space reasons but primarily because I felt a separate volume was in order to deal with the historical matters they address.

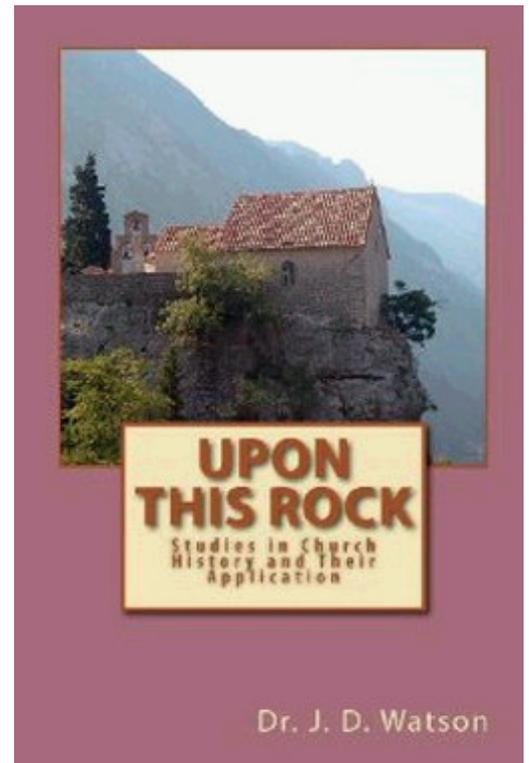
The Reformation, for example, is misunderstood by many, ignored by some, and even attacked by others. It is, therefore, a major emphasis here in chapters 3 through 8. Even Church History itself, as is history in general nowadays, is viewed by many as unimportant, if not wholly irrelevant. "Why look backward?" it is argued. "We should only look forward and be about our Father's business in the here and now."

Such an attitude, however, is not only foolish but downright dangerous. As we will note in chapter 1, Spanish-born American philosopher and writer George Santayana (1863–1952) made the now famous statement, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Well, the Church as a whole has, indeed, forgotten much of the past, and the lessons we should learn from it, and is repeating many of the same errors.

This book, therefore, begins in Part I with "Our Foundation," in which we examine the value of studying Church History and then study the deep significance of the words of our Lord in Matthew 16:16–19, "Upon this rock." Part II, "The Five Solas of the Reformation," is the heart of our study in which we examine the core issues of the Reformation and are challenged with their importance for our day. Part III, "Other History Lessons," addresses other historical figures and events that are critical for our understanding in a day of growing indifference to these matters. There are also more than 60 illustrations, most of which were not in the original articles. (220 pages)

I pray these studies will be to God's glory and the reader's good. You can get your copy either by using the enclosed order form (published by Sola Scriptura Publications) or from Amazon.com (also available for Kindle for \$7.99).

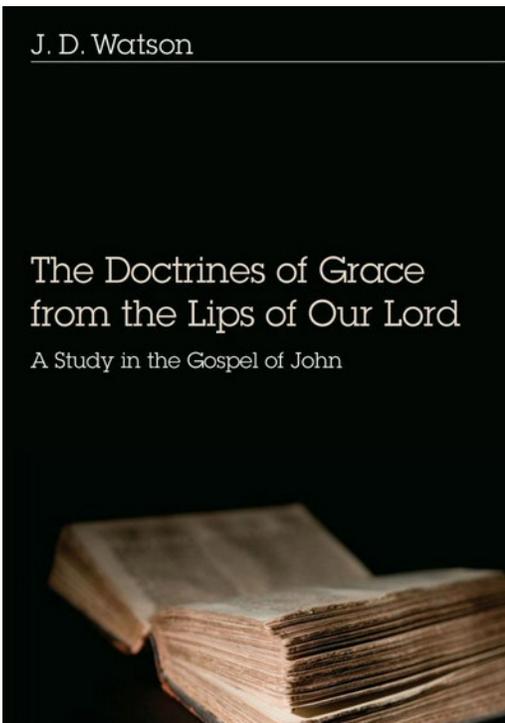
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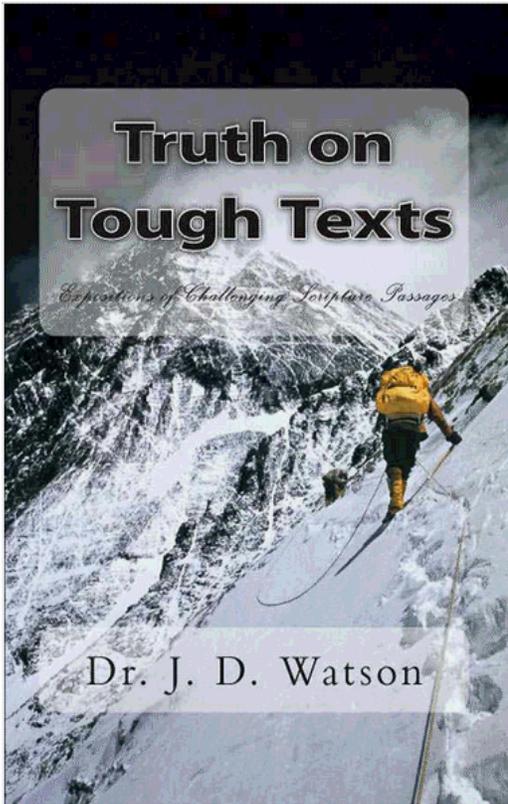
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