A journal to support and encourage those in ministry by providing studies in biblical texts with application for practical ministry

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Preterism (from the Latin *praeter*, which means "past" with regard to time) is the view that the majority (sometimes all) of Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled. The preterist viewpoint affirms that Titus and the Roman armies already fulfilled major prophetic events, such as the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation, when they destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. The purpose for this article is to introduce the reader to the various preterist interpretative methodologies, and how the theological system of preterism relates to amillennialism and postmillennialism. As the purpose is to introduce the reader to preterism, a brief refutation (as opposed to an exhaustive response) of preterism will conclude the article.

**Preterist Interpretation**

Preterists believe they adequately interpret the historical background by relating the fulfillment of major prophetic events to the time of the original audience. For instance, the preterist viewpoint is thought to best interpret Christ’s words in Matthew 24:34 ("Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"), and other references to the coming of Christ as "quickly" or "at hand" (Matt 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15; Luke 21:30-31; Rev 2:5, 16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). Since the events of the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation parallel each other, these passages are understood by preterists to refer only to events that occurred in the first century. The following chart indicates the different types of preterism.

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<th>Mild Preterism</th>
<th>Partial Preterism</th>
<th>Full Preterism</th>
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<td>Prophetic Timing</td>
<td>AD 70-400</td>
<td>Future</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coming of Christ</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Resurrection</td>
<td>No</td>
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Mild preterism interprets the Book of Revelation as fulfilled in both the first century with the fall of Jerusalem and the fifth century with the fall of Rome. The first half of Revelation refers to AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the second half refers to the judgment upon Rome. Therefore, the majority of Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled when God brought His wrath upon Israel and Rome. Partial preterists understand the majority of Bible prophecy as fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, but they still anticipate a future second coming and resurrection/judgment. Full preterism believes that all eschatological prophecies were fulfilled in AD 70 and that there will only be a spiritual resurrection rather than a bodily resurrection. Consequently, full preterism is heretical. The preterist view teaches the destruction of God’s enemy, Israel, is indisputable proof for the divine establishment of Christianity.

**Prophetic Timing and the Millennium**

Failure to maintain a consistent and literal interpretation is the reason for significant disagreement among evangelicals regarding biblical eschatology, which is especially true in regards to the timing of prophetic fulfillment and the meaning of the millennium. Preterists, for instance, believe most prophetic events have already been fulfilled. Preterist understanding regarding the timing of prophetic fulfillment means there is both amillennial preterism and postmillennial preterism. Due to the particulars of preterism, one could not affirm the preterist position and still believe in a literal return of Christ to earth followed by the millennial kingdom (i.e. premillennialism is incompatible with preterism). Full preterists (John Bray, Walt Hilbarrd, Max King, J. Stuart Russell, and Ed Stevens) find it especially difficult to embrace premillennialism since they believe the second coming of Christ occurred in AD 70 and obviously a literal millennial reign did not occur thereafter.

Of course, if advocates of preterism did believe in a literal millennial reign then the current age would be more than a thousand years postmillennially into eternity. It is possible for mild preterists (Isbon T. Beckwith) and partial preterists (R. C. Sproul, reconstructionists), *theoretically* at least, to be premillennial. However, because of an inconsistent hermeneutic, the preterist position is more consistent with the amillennial and postmillennial view. The majority of contemporary preterists seem to be postmillennialists. However, it could be said that these preterists are actually transmillennial since a large majority teach the
church is already in the new heavens and new earth (full preterism is completely transmillennial).²

There are many similarities between amillennialism and postmillennialism. It is for this reason that one can easily hold a preterist position and consider themselves either amillennial or postmillennial. The most popular amillennial preterist today is R. C. Sproul. The dominant arguments for postmillennial preterism are from the reconstructionists, such as Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, Gary North, and Greg Bahnsen.

The Theological System of Preterism

Amillennialism

The prefix *a* means no, which can give the appearance that amillennialists do not believe in a future reign of Christ even when the Old Testament clearly prophesies of a future kingdom in fulfillment of the promises of God. In fairness, amillennialists are not rejecting a literal return of Jesus Christ (only full preterists are that bold and heretical), but they do reject the belief in a literal millennial reign of Christ on earth. Amillennialists recognize this confusion, which is why some favor the term “realized millennialism.”³ Therefore, the current age is the kingdom of God. At the perfection of the current age, amillennialists believe the eternal state will be established without the need for a literal thousand-year reign.

The kingdom of God is both a present reality in the current age and a future hope in the eternal state. Amillennialists believe the kingdom began at the birth of Christ and it will be perfected at the time of His second coming. The kingdom is *now* since Christ is presently ruling from heaven; it is the time from the first coming to the second coming. Christ will not reign for a literal thousand-years since the current age is “the millennium now.” Hoekema explained the two views concerning the millennium.

The amillennial position on the thousand years of Revelation 20 implies that Christians who are now living are enjoying the benefits of this millennium since Satan has been bound for the duration of this period [i.e. the millennium is the church on earth]. . . Amillennials also teach that during this same thousand-year period the souls of believers who have

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died are now living and reigning with Christ in heaven while they await the resurrection of the body [i.e. the millennium is the church in heaven].

It should be apparent why amillennialists speak of an already form of the kingdom and yet a future eschatology. The current age is thought to be the fulfillment of Revelation 20 since believers are in the millennium. The departed saints, now in heaven, are living and reigning with Christ in heaven. There will be a general resurrection of believers and unbelievers at the second coming of Christ. In terms of the future, amillennialists regard the second coming of Christ as a single event, which is in contrast to premillennialists who understand the second coming of Christ to occur in two phases. Concerning the tribulation period, amillennialists reject the idea of a specific seven-year period. Believers who are alive at the return of Christ will be transformed and glorified as they meet Christ in the air and return with Christ to earth. After the second coming, those who have rejected Christ will be sent into everlasting punishment at the final judgment. On the other hand, believers will enter the everlasting glory of the eternal state. At this time, both heaven and earth will be created new.

Just as there are different forms of preterism, so are there different forms of amillennialism. Some amillennialists determine their view of Scripture based on a preterist perspective, as such, these amillennialists refer to the AD 70 destruction of the Jewish Temple. Other amillennialists understand the fulfillment of biblical eschatology continuing to AD 300 (approximately) and the reign of Constantine. Some amillennialists classify themselves as historicists, which means biblical eschatology describes events of the last two thousand years of the church age. Other amillennialists regard biblical eschatology as the cosmic battle between good and evil.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism is the view that the kingdom of God is the current age of the church. Presently, in the church age, the kingdom is being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel. Through the preaching of the Gospel and saving work of the Holy Spirit, the church will introduce a golden age wherein the church is no longer expanding the kingdom, but is actually reigning in the

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5 The word tribulation is not a technical term. It can refer to general suffering (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3; 12:12), to the seven years of Daniel’s seventieth week (Jer 30:7-9; Dan 9:24-27; 12:1), or to the second half of the seventieth week, the great tribulation (Matt 24:21).
kingdom. At this time, the majority of people in the world (not necessarily all) will become “Christian.”

Postmillennialists believe the present church age is expanding morally and spiritually until it introduces the golden age. The millennium is not a literal thousand years; it is simply a long period of time. After the millennium, “a long period of righteousness and peace,” Christ will return. Postmillennialism, therefore, holds to three essentials: (1) the world will become Christianized through the preaching of the gospel; (2) the preaching of the gospel will introduce a long period of peace and righteousness; and, (3) the return of Christ will be after the golden age commonly called the millennium. There is disagreement among postmillennialists as to whether the term “millennium” refers to the entire church age or is limited to the golden age. For instance, Kik applied the term to the expanding of the “gospel dispensation” and “the victorious reign of the saints upon earth regardless of martyrdom and suffering.” Conversely, Boettner limited the millennium to “a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, during the Church age, and is to be brought about through forces now active in the world.” A major feature of postmillennialism is its staunch optimism that the world is getting better.

That a great spiritual advance has been made should be clear to all. Consider, for instance, the awful moral and spiritual conditions that existed on earth before the coming of Christ—the world at large groping helplessly in pagan darkness with slavery, polygamy, oppressed conditions of women and children, the almost complete lack of political freedom, the ignorance, poverty, and primitive medical care that was the lot of nearly all except those who belonged to the ruling classes. . . . Today the world at large is on a far higher plane.

There may be disagreement among evangelicals regarding the nature of the millennium, but all non-postmillennialists challenge the notion that the world is getting better. Covenant premillennialist George Ladd wrote, “The argument that the world is getting better is a two-edged sword. One can equally well argue from

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8 Boettner, Millennium, 14.

empirical evidence that the world is getting worse.”\textsuperscript{10} Likewise, dispensational premillennialist Herman Hoyt responded:

There is a sense in which the world is getting better, as Boettner affirms. But there is a sense in which the age is growing worse. . . . All progress, including moral and spiritual progress, should be reason for hope in a coming millennium here on earth ushered in by the Lord Jesus Christ. But the spiritual decline is reason for warning of an approaching end of the age with judgment from Christ. This decline is coming in spite of the spiritual influence of the church and suggests that real hope must be vested in the personal appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not to ignore international good will, the translation and dissemination of Scriptures, the worldwide missionary movements, the increasing Christian population and the many other factors contributing to a better society. But in assessing these values, one dare not shut his eyes to the trends that point to the disintegration and demoralization of society in preparation for the end of the age.\textsuperscript{11}

Amillennialist Anthony Hoekema also challenged the postmillennial belief that the world is getting better.

Boettner’s second argument is that the world is growing better (pp. 125-33). Many readers will be inclined to take issue with the author on this point. To begin with, his sketch of world conditions is seriously out of date. Little or nothing is said, for example, about the war in Vietnam, the tension in the Middle East, the ecological crisis, the world food shortage or the energy crisis. . . . Besides, the author seems to pick out only the favorable aspects of world conditions while ignoring unfavorable aspects. He mentions, for example, how much progress has been made in the areas of transportation and communication. But certainly modern inventions are used for purposes which are evil as well as good!\textsuperscript{12}

Postmillennialism did rise during an age of scientific and educational advances, but it virtually diminished in light of the two world wars in the twentieth century. A major fault of postmillennialism is its failure to interact with the historical facts. If taken consistently, postmillennialism could embrace any organization that is


\textsuperscript{11} Herman A. Hoyt, “A Dispensational Premillennial Response,” in \textit{Meaning of the Millennium}, 146-47.

making society better as advancing the kingdom even though the same organization could be contributing to evil in the society. For instance, there were some who supported the Nazi party since they believed that Kaiser Wilhelm’s policies were making society better. Sometimes, postmillennialism will obfuscate the distinctions between good and evil. Postmillennial teaching regards the expansion of the kingdom as eventually affecting every sphere of life (culturally, economically, politically, and socially). When the church emerges triumphant, through the preaching of the gospel, postmillennialists teach that wickedness “will be reduced to negligible proportions, that Christian principles will be the rule, not the exception, and that Christ will return to a truly Christianized world.”

There is a strong relationship between preterism and postmillennialism. Advocates of such positions have deceived the church into thinking that God has rejected Israel. As a result, they believe it is necessary for the church to build the kingdom of God throughout the world. John Walvoord’s comments with regard to postmillennialism are equally applicable regarding preterism: “In order to find fulfillment of millennial promises in the present age, it is necessary for them to follow an allegorical or figurative system of interpretation in great areas of Biblical prophecy.” The unrelenting attempt to find the fulfillment of biblical eschatology in the rejection of Israel, as demonstrated in the destruction of Jerusalem, is the motivating factor for preterism. The church is now the means through which millennial blessings will be experienced. It is for this reason that a relationship can be made between the foundation of preterism and the postmillennial system.

Unfortunately, postmillennialism today is experiencing a resurgence in the Christian reconstruction movement. Christian reconstruction, or dominion theology, argues that Christians are to exercise dominion in all spheres of life. Dominion will occur as the church preaches the gospel and institutes the law of God in the church and the world. Prominent postmillennialists who are also preterists include: David Chilton, Gary DeMar, Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., Gary North, and Douglas Wilson.

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13 Ibid.
As a postmillennial view, reconstructionism teaches that when God created man He gave to him a mandate to subdue the earth on His behalf. The result of this mandate would be that Christians would establish the kingdom of God on earth (Gen 1:28), and this mandate was never to be revoked. Both Jews and Gentiles failed to fulfill this mandate; therefore, it was in Jesus’ first coming that He established and restored the Old Testament Law to complete fruition (Matt 5:17-19). The Old Testament Law is now to be the Christian’s rule of life in addition to society. Through the provisions of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, reconstructionists teach that Satan was defeated and also bound. Furthermore, Satan and his minions’ stronghold on the world have been eradicated. Although satanic activity still occurs in the world, this activity is greatly restrained.

Reconstructionism affirms that at the end of history every sphere of society, including all the nations, will eventually be subjugated to Christ’s rule by the end of history. It is believed that at this point the kingdom of God will be completely established on earth, and only then will Christ return to this earth in order that He will receive His kingdom. In view of the mandate given in Genesis, reconstructionism teaches the idea that the fulfillment of the mandate will be in the present age and without the physical reign of Christ. In other words, it is not in the millennium that Christ will lead His people in the progress of fulfilling the mandate; rather the church will do this in the present age.

**Millennial Differences and Similarities**

Postmillennialists differ from amillennialists and premillennialists in the sense that they adopt an optimistic view that a golden age of victory will be realized without a cataclysmic return of Christ. It would be similar in one sense to premillennialism since both views anticipate a future millennium when the Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled. However, it is strongly antagonistic toward dispensational premillennialism because of the strong emphasis upon the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies by Israel in the Davidic (millennial) kingdom rather than the fulfillment by the church in a golden age instituted through gospel preaching. Postmillennialism would be similar to amillennialism since there is a single coming of Christ, a general judgment and resurrection, which will be followed by the eternal state. Consequently, it is possible to be an amillennial preterist or postmillennial preterist. Since preterists believe the tribulation period has already occurred and the second coming was the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem, it is not possible to be a premillennial preterist. Amillennial preterists teach that the church is already in the millennium, and many postmillennial preterists are now teaching the same, which would also make premillennial preterism impossible. Millard J. Erickson identified some of the differences between the postmillennial and premillennial views as follows:
Further, this earthly millennium will not come into reality through a gradual process or progressive growth or development. Rather, it will be dramatically or cataclysmically inaugurated by the second coming. While the millennium expected by postmillennialists may begin so gradually that its beginning will be virtually imperceptible, there will be no doubt about the beginning of the millennium as premillennialists envision it. The return of Christ will be similar to His departure—dramatic and external, readily observable by anyone, and consequently unmistakable.\footnote{Millard J. Erickson, \textit{Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977) 91-92.}

Interestingly, postmillennialists have identified some common ground with progressive dispensationalists.\footnote{To better understand progressive dispensationalism, see Ron J. Bigalke Jr., “Dispensationalism Today,” \textit{Midnight Call} (August 2006): 8-19.} Chris Strevel, pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, applauded the progressives on five points: (1) “soteriological clarification,” (2) “covenantal unity,” (3) “ethical renewal,” (4) “present realization,” and (5) “future fulfillment.”\footnote{Chris Strevel, “Dispensational Theology: A Flawed Hermeneutic Produces Flawed Eschatology,” SCCCCS Conference on Left Behind or Moving Forward (Summer 2001).} Nevertheless, Strevel noted three main differences that still exist between covenant theology and progressive dispensationalism. First, differences exist as to the nature of the present kingdom. Postmillennialists can be pleased with progressive dispensationalists with regard to an emphasis upon the earthly aspects of the kingdom impacting present life, but also find disharmony with the fact that the majority of the fulfillment will occur in the millennium. The reason for this is that postmillennialism anticipates a glorious age of the church as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, and this age will be brought to fulfillment through the preaching of the gospel. All nations will become Christian and will live in peace. The prophecies will be fulfilled in history and time. Once Christianity is victorious by the institution of the glorious age, then there will be the second coming of Christ. Therefore, the emphasis is that the kingdom is now wherein the church is rejoicing and the kingdom is growing through the preaching of the gospel and will climax in a “golden age of righteousness, peace, and prosperity that will mean the salvation of the world under the reign of Messiah the Prince.”\footnote{Chris Strevel, “The Certainty of the World’s Conversion” [article online] (The PreteristSite, 5 July 1998, accessed 30 November 2011) available from http://www.preteristsite.com/docs/strevelcertainty.pdf.}
Second, there is also disagreement with the “substance of Christian obedience.” Postmillennialists are often displeased that greater emphasis is not given to the law of God in terms of daily Christian living. Thirdly, there is the disagreement of the “place of national Israel.” Progressive dispensationalism teaches that the church is receiving benefit of a “partial and glorious experience” of some aspects of the Davidic kingdom, which according to postmillennialism is commendable since this teaching emphasizes covenantal unity as some Old Testament prophecies find fulfillment in the church. According to progressive dispensationalists, “The present dispensation is not the full and complete revelation of the eschatological kingdom. It is a progressive stage in the revelation of that kingdom.” Postmillennialists regard progressive dispensationalism as still in need of improvement for the following reasons: (1) it does not regard Israel’s excommunication, as does preterism; (2) it does not interact with the phrases “it has been fulfilled” (e.g. passages like Acts 2:16); and, (3) it does not realize the full lifeline implications of the present kingdom in every sphere of life.

As it is derived from Scripture through a consistent hermeneutic, traditional (biblical) dispensationalism by its very nature demands a clear distinction between Israel and the church, yet progressive dispensationalism has obfuscated those distinctions to such an extent that postmillennialism can actually commend some of the changes, which is staggering considering the manner in which postmillennialism views the future of Israel. For instance postmillennialists may cite John 12:28-32, Ephesians 1:19-23, and Revelation 1:9 to teach that the kingdom is not imminent, but it has arrived at Christ’s first coming. According to postmillennialism, the kingdom now is comprised of every promise and blessing (cf. Luke 1:46-54; 2 Cor 1:20). Every promise and blessing is believed to have fulfillment in Jesus Christ because of His obedience. As the church is changed by the power of the gospel, follows Christ’s example, and lives under His lordship this will result in changed institutions in every sphere of life. The kingdom now encompasses all of the enemies of Christ being conquered so that the church is somewhere between the “session” and “final victory.”

Furthermore, it is believed that Israel has been excommunicated; therefore, preterists of both amillennial and postmillennial persuasion believe that their view is superior. In other words, the kingdom that the Jews were expecting was not the kingdom that Jesus was offering at the triumphal entry. Israel will be restored


20 Strevel, “Dispensational Theology.”
to the olive tree of faith (cf. Rom 11), but she will not be the mediator of all salvation blessings to the world. The inheritance that the Jews will possess will be as heirs of God’s promises in the same manner as the church today.

**The Biblical Teaching against Preterism**

The purpose for this article is not to address all the particular interpretive errors with regard to preterism. Therefore, one primary issue will be addressed only. Preterists believe that the abomination of desolation prophesied in Daniel 9:27 should be equated with the events that occurred in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Daniel prophesied that after Messiah is crucified, the Romans, that is, the people of the prince who is to come, would destroy Jerusalem and the second Temple. The prince who is to come is the eschatological Antichrist. However, the destruction of Jerusalem would occur due to the national rejection of the Messiah (Matt 24:1-2; Luke 19:41-44). The prophecy does not end with the AD 70 destruction; rather, its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. In other words, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his armies in the first century was not the final destruction of the holy city. The reference to the end extends the prophecy to the seventieth week. A time interval, the dispensation of the church, will occur between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.

The interval in the current dispensation of the church of the fulfillment of the messianic program for Israel is derived from the Greek verb apotelō meaning "to complete" or "to be perfected." Randall Price explained, “The apotelesmatic interpretation recognizes in Old Testament texts that present the messianic program as a single event, a near and far historical fulfillment is intended, separated by an indeterminate period of time.” It is this period of time that is known as an “intercalation” or a “gap;” however, the term “prophetic postponement” is more preferable. Since the Old Testament prophets did not have the current dispensation as a great parenthesis revealed to them, God would reveal the mystery of the church in the New Testament. Postponement is an intercalation (gap) in fulfillment, concluding that the delay is only temporary, and hence prophetic since there is a purposeful and preordained work in the divine program. God implied a parenthesis in His messianic program in the Old Testament with references of Israel’s hardening (Isa 6:9-13; Zech 7:11-12) and

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judicial exile (Deut 4:27-30; 28:36-37, 49-50, 64-68); however, this postponement in the divine program was not fully revealed until the New Testament (John 12:37-40; Acts 28:25-28; Rom 11:25-26).^22

It can be said that a false covenant, the same covenant prophesied by the prophet Isaiah (28:14-22), will be made with Israel by the Antichrist. The seventieth week is the false covenant that lasts for one week of years;^23 that is, a period of seven years commonly understood as the tribulation, or time of God's wrath. Scripture also teaches that the tribulation is divided by the abomination of desolation into two three and one half year periods (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-4). According to the eschatological chronology of Daniel 9 and 2 Thessalonians 2, the tribulation will follow the rapture of the church, which is yet future and will terminate the present prophetic postponement of the church age between the sixth-ninth and seventieth weeks. Shortly after the rapture, the tribulation will begin with the signing of the false covenant between Israel and the Antichrist. It is this event that will inaugurate the final events of Daniel 9:24-27.

The nature of the tribulation will focus upon Israel. Jeremiah 30:7 refers to the tribulation period as a time of Jacob's distress. During this period, God will prepare Israel for restoration and conversion (Deut 4:29-30; Jer 30:3-11; Zech 12:10). God will also judge an unbelieving world during this time for its sins against Him ( Isa 13:9; 24:19-20; Rev 4—19). All nations and communities will be affected by this judgment. However, for those who trust in the Messiah there will be salvation. The time of wrath will also result in worldwide evangelization and mass conversions (Matt 24:14; Rev 7:1-17). The tribulation will end with the return of Christ to this earth. He will descend upon the Mount of Olives, cross the Kidron Valley, and enter the Eastern Gate (Zech 14:4; cf. Matt 24—25). Clearly, there is not a single event that occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem which can be said to fulfill Daniel's description and Christ's reference of Daniel in Matthew 24:15.

Conclusion

Both preterist amillennialism and preterist postmillennialism replace God's program for Israel with the church despite the fact that Scripture never claims that God has permanently rejected Israel (cf. Deut 28—30). Indeed, the Old

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^23 The Hebrew word for week is sh'Bu' which means a unit of seven.
Testament clearly teaches a restoration of a future national Israel (Joel 3:1; Amos 9:11-15; Zeph 3:20; Zech 12:10). It is biblical to affirm that great blessings are yet to come for the nation of Israel in the future. Although she has been temporarily set aside as a nation in the fulfilling of the covenants, God will ultimately bring the nation to a place of prominence where she will be a blessing to all the nations of the world. God’s covenant people, Israel, were not cast away; rather, “judicial blindness” was brought on the people.24 The stumbling block to the Gentiles (which would include preterist amillennialists and preterist postmillennialists) was not that Israel should fall and be rejected permanently; rather, the temporary “casting away” was to allow salvation to come to the Gentiles in order that Israel would be provoked to jealousy (Rom 11:7-11).

God has principally focused on Gentiles in this present dispensation because of Israel’s hardness of heart. However, a future blessing for the nation of Israel is to be eagerly expected. Paul wrote, “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall be the receiving of them be, but the life from the dead” (11:15).25 It is because Abraham is the root of promise and Israel is the stock of promise that the Gentiles cannot boast about being grafted into the rich root of the olive tree (11:16-18). The encouraging and humbling note to Gentiles is that God is using the failure of Israel as a way of opening doors to the Gentiles (of which the Book of Acts is a testimony).

When God resumes His covenant program with Israel as a nation, her spiritual condition will be a complete contrast with what it is presently. Currently, Israel is hardened to a degree. The natural branches of the olive tree have been broken off as a consequence of her unbelief, but the hardening is not complete because God still has a remnant of faith. When “the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,” God will again turn to Israel and “all Israel shall be saved” (11:25-26). The “all Israel” refers to a turn to God by Israel on a national scale. A mass turning to God by the Jews does seem impossible today. However, Romans 11:28-32 emphasize the certainty that the event will occur because the “gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (11:29). God never retracts on His acts of grace (11:29). God has “concluded them all in unbelief” for the precise purpose that He can show mercy on the Jewish nation (11:32). God’s ways are unsearchable beyond all understanding, and the church does well when we find ourselves not teaching doctrines contrary to His eternal plans (11:33-36).
