I. The Four Views of the Tribulation Period

Christianity’s analysis of the Bible’s prophesied “Tribulation period” has become more fully developed over the past two to three hundred years as (1) growing numbers of Christians have begun to take a more literal view of Eschatology and (2) Christian theologians from different Eschatological leanings have increasingly weighed in on the subject. Today most Christians embrace one of four clearly defined Tribulation views: the Preterist view, the Historicist view; the Futurist view; or the Idealist view. Contemporary theologian Thomas Ice provides this summary of the four views:

One of the most important, but seemingly little recognized, aspects of the proper interpretation of Bible prophecy is the role of timing. When will a prophecy be fulfilled in history? There are four possibilities, and they reflect the only four possibilities in relation to time: past; present; future; and timeless.

The preterist (past) view believes that most, if not all, prophecy has already been fulfilled, usually in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The historicist (present) view sees much of the current age as equal to the Tribulation period. Thus, prophecy has been and will be fulfilled during the current church age. Futurists (future) believe that virtually all prophetic events will take place in the future Tribulation, second coming, or millennium. The idealist (timeless) view does not believe that the Bible indicates the timing of events, or that we can determine their timing in advance. Therefore, idealists think that prophetic passages mainly teach that great ideas or truths about God are to be applied regardless of timing.¹

It must also be noted that Preterism has developed into two distinct groups of adherents—one group adhering to what is called “Full Preterism” and the other group adhering to what is called “Partial Preterism.” The historical and Biblical difficulties of Partial Preterism will be the focus of this paper.

II. The Distinctives of Partial Preterism

Partial Preterism holds that prophecies such as the destruction of Jerusalem, the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, and the advent of the Day of the Lord as a “judgment-coming” of Christ were fulfilled c. A.D. 70 when the Roman general (and future Emperor) Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish Temple, putting a permanent stop to the daily animal sacrifices. It identifies “Babylon the Great (Revelation 17 - 18) with the ancient pagan city of Rome or Jerusalem. Some adherents of Partial Preterism see the Emperor Diocletian as the fulfillment of the “little horn” prophecy of Daniel 7. But this is a minority view. The great majority of
Partial Preterists believe that Jerusalem was a “great harlot” destroyed by God in A.D. 70. Partial Preterism is also known by several other names: Orthodox Preterism, Historic Preterism, and Moderate Preterism.

Most (but not all) Partial Preterists also believe that the term “Last Days” refers not to the last days of planet Earth, or the last days of humankind, but rather to the last days of the Mosaic Covenant, which God employed exclusively with the nation of Israel until the year A.D. 70. According to Partial Preterists the Last Days are to be distinguished from the “last day,” which is considered still future and entails the last coming of Jesus, the Resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous dead physically from the grave in like manner of Jesus’ physical resurrection, the Final Judgment, and the creation of a literal, non-covenental New Heavens and New Earth free from the curse of sin and death, which was occasioned by the fall of Adam and Eve. Thus, Partial Preterists contend that they are in agreement and conformity with the historic ecumenical creeds of the church and articulate the doctrine of the resurrection held by the early church fathers. Partial Preterists hold that the New Testament predicts and depicts many “comings” of Christ. They contend that the phrase “Second Coming” means the second of a like kind of series, for the Scriptures record other “comings” of God even before Jesus’ judgment-coming in A.D. 70. This, they contend, would eliminate the A.D. 70 event as the “second” of any series, let alone the second of a series in which the earthly, physical ministry of Christ is the first. Partial Preterists believe that the new creation comes in redemptive progression as Christ reigns from His heavenly throne, subjugating His enemies, and will eventually culminate in the destruction of the “last enemy,” physical death (I Cor. 15:20-24). In the Partial Preterist paradigm, since enemies of Christ still exist, the resurrection event cannot have already occurred.

Nearly all Partial Preterists hold to amillennialism or postmillennialism. Many postmillennial Partial Preterists are also “Theonomic” in their outlook—i.e., they assert that the Bible has been given as the abiding standard of all human government. Partial Preterists typically accept the authority of the Creeds on the basis that they believe the Creeds are in conformity with what the Scriptures teach. Well-known proponents of Partial Preterism include R.C. Sproul, David Chilton, Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, and Hank Hanegraaff.

III. The Tribulation View of This Paper

The writer of this paper is a Futurist, and he believes that the prophesied Tribulation period (the focus of this paper) lies in the future. The purpose of this paper is to show both the historical and Biblical impossibility of the Partial Preterist position. Hence, much of the paper will examine the contradictions inherent in Partial Preterism and will also contrast the Futurist and Partial Preterist views.

Let it be stated at the outset that all Futurists and virtually all Partial Preterists interpret the numerous prophecies relating to Christ’s first coming literally; both camps take all of these Scriptures at face value. In other words, Futurists and Partial Preterists
both would teach that, as prophesied in the Old Testament, Christ was born of a
woman; was born of a virgin; was from the line of Abraham; was from the tribe of
Judah; was from the house of David; was called Emmanuel; was born in Bethlehem;
was in Egypt for a season; had a forerunner (John the Baptist); was called a Nazarene;
was filled with God’s Spirit; healed many; cast out demons; spoke in parables; made a
triumphal entry into Jerusalem; had His miracles rejected by most; was betrayed for
thirty pieces of silver; was rejected by His own people; was scourged and spat upon;
was crucified between two thieves; had His hands and feet pierced; had His garments
gambled for; was surrounded and belittled by His enemies; was given vinegar to drink
while on the Cross; suffered no broken bones; commended His spirit to the Father; was
buried with the rich; was raised from the dead; and was lifted up into heaven.

However, with regard to such topics as the Rapture of the Church, the
Tribulation period, the Second Coming of Christ, and the Millennial Kingdom,
Futurists and Partial Preterists use entirely different sets of interpretive principles—and
come up with entirely different interpretations as a result. For example, the Futurist
continues to interpret literally all prophecy relating to the Tribulation, while the Partial
Preterist either spiritualizes significant portions of these prophecies or ignores them
altogether. Thus, the Futurist uses a consistently applied Grammatical-Historical-
Literal hermeneutic for Bible prophecy. The Partial Preterist, on the other hand, uses
an inconsistently applied Grammatical-Historical-Literal hermeneutic—adhering to a
literal hermeneutic some of the time and a spiritualizing hermeneutic at other times.
The decision regarding when to spiritualize a passage of prophetic Scripture and when
to take it at face value thus rests with the Preterist, which in turn leads to a greater
degree of subjectivity in interpretation.

The underlying interpretive principles used by each camp can be summarized as
follows:

a. The Futurist’s interpretive principle for Bible prophecy: *If all of the prophe-
cies relating to Christ’s first coming were fulfilled literally (and they were), then all of
the prophecies relating to Christ’s second coming will be fulfilled literally as well.*
This guiding principle for the interpretation of Bible prophecy has led to a high degree
of interpretive agreement among Futurists with regard to the major events of yet-to-be-
fulfilled Bible prophecy (e.g., the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation period, the
Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Kingdom, and the Eternal Kingdom)

b. The Partial Preterist’s interpretive principle for Bible prophecy: *Even
though all of the prophecies relating to Christ’s first coming were fulfilled literally, it
is not necessary for all of the prophecies relating to Christ’s second coming to be
fulfilled literally. Instead, the Christian is free to “spiritualize” some or all of these
prophecies, particularly if it allows these interpretations to fit into the belief system of
the Reformation or the belief system of his denomination.* This guiding principle has
led to a wide range of interpretations and a smaller degree of interpretive agreement
among Partial Preterists.
IV. The Problems with Partial Preterism:

A. The Historical Problem

The first and most obvious problem with Partial Preterism is that it contradicts known human history in a number of ways. As a result, Partial Preterism must be confronted with the following historical realities: During the seven-year period surrounding or bisecting by 70 A.D.,

- Did ten powerful nations subrogate their respective national sovereignties and form a ten-nation world empire (Dan. 7:24)? No.
- Did a Western political leader rise to power to lead these ten powerful nations (Dan. 7:24-25; Rev. 17:12-13)? No.
- Did men and women throughout the earth make an idol or image of a world political leader to worship (Rev. 13:11-19)? No.
- Did men and women throughout the earth receive the mark of the beast on their right hand or forehead (Rev. 13:11-19)? No.
- Were men and women throughout the earth forbidden to buy or sell goods unless they had the mark of the beast on their right hand or forehead (Rev. 13:11-19)? No.
- Was one-fourth of the earth’s population killed (Rev. 6:7-8)? No.
- Did every mountain and island move out of its place (Rev. 6:12-17)? No.
- Did men and women throughout the earth hide in caves and mountains out of sheer fright (Rev. 6:12-17)? No.
- Was another one-third of the earth’s population killed (Rev. 9:15-18)? No.
- Was a third of the earth burned up (Rev. 8:7)? No.
- Was a third of the earth’s green grass burned up (Rev. 8:7)? No.
- Were a third of the earth’s trees burned up (Rev. 8:7)? No.
- Did a third of the earth’s seas become blood (Rev. 8:8-9)? No.
- Did a third of the earth’s sea creatures die (Rev. 8:8-9)? No.
- Were a third of the world’s ships destroyed (Rev. 8:8-9)? No.
- Did a third of the earth’s rivers and lakes become bitter, causing many men to die from these waters (Rev. 8:10-11)? No.
- Was a third of the earth prevented from seeing the sun, moon, and stars (Rev. 8:12)? No.
- Did two Jewish witnesses, having the power to shut up the sky and to smite the earth with every plague, prophesy in Jerusalem for three and a half years (Rev. 11:3-6)? No.
- Did the Antichrist double-cross and destroy Apostate Christendom (the “Harlot”) (Rev. 17:15-18)? No.
- Did the Antichrist subdue three of his ten heads of state (Rev. 7:24)? No.
- Was the Antichrist’s Empire judged and destroyed in one hour, causing wailing and lament among the earth’s shipmasters and merchants (Rev. 18:9-20)? No.
• Did the earth’s oceans turn to blood and every living thing in the seas die (Rev. 16:3)? **No.**
• Did the earth’s fresh water supply turn to blood (Rev. 16:4-7)? **No.**
• Did mankind find itself scorched with fierce heat, causing men and women throughout the earth to blaspheme God (Rev. 16:8-9)? **No.**
• Did men and women throughout the Antichrist’s Empire gnaw their tongues and blaspheme God because of intense pain (Rev. 16:10-11)? **No.**
• Did the Euphrates River dry up, enabling the kings and armies of the East to gather in northern Israel (Rev. 16:12-16)? **No.**
• Did a *world-wide* earthquake take place during which *all* the cities of the nations fell (Rev. 16:18-19)? **No.**
• Did the Antichrist’s Empire break into three parts and fall into the ocean, never to be found again (Rev. 16:19; 18:21)? **No.**
• Did Jesus Christ return bodily to the earth to the Mount of Olives (Rev. 19:11-16; Acts 1:11)? **No.**

What does the Partial Preterist do with these numerous contradictions to known human history? He either spiritualizes them, ignores them, or accuses the Futurist of “wooden literalism” (even though the Partial Preterist uses the same “wooden literalism” with regard to all of the prophecies relating to Christ’s first coming). Consequently, because of Partial Preterism’s refusal to take Christ’s prophetic teaching on the Tribulation at face value, two questions must be asked. First, why would any twenty-first century Christian, in view of the contradictions listed above, want to accept the Partial Preterist’s position of an A.D. 70 Tribulation timeframe? Second, is not the Partial Preterist’s denial of Christ’s prophetic voice a dangerous precedent and a serious quenching of the Holy Spirit?

The Futurist position, in contrast, contains none of these contradictions. Every Futurist, because he believes that all Second Advent prophecy will be fulfilled literally (just as all the prophecies relating to Christ’s First Advent were fulfilled literally), contends that all of the questions listed above—at some point in the future—will be answered with a “yes.” Well-known, recent or current-day proponents of Futurism include C.I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chafer, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, Dwight Pentecost, J. Vernon McGee, Billy Graham, Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, Ken Boa, Len Sykes, Tom Ice, Mal Couch, Jobe Martin, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Dave Hunt, Mart DeHaan, Adrian Rogers, John MacArthur, Earl Radmacher, Zola Levitt, John Hagee, Chuck Smith, Jack Van Impe, and Kay Arthur. All Futurists are premillennial; and most (including all of the above) are pre-tribulational.

**B. The Scriptural Problem**

The second and equally serious problem with Partial Preterism is that it contradicts Scripture (not just history) in at least two major areas: (1) Christ’s warning of extinction in Matthew 24:21-22; (2) John’s Revelation 17 picture of the “great harlot.”
1. The Partial Preterist position utterly contradicts Christ’s warning of extinction in Matthew 24:21-22. In Christ’s sobering description of the second half of the Tribulation period, He warns His hearers (and us) as follows: “for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.” In unambiguous language Christ teaches that at some point in human history a time of catastrophic distress will come upon the earth and that unless this distress is cut short no life would survive. So the question must be asked of the Partial Preterist: in 70 A.D. was the Partial Preterist’s “tribulation” period so severe on earth that no life would survive? The answer, of course, is obvious: humankind was in no danger of perishing during the 70 A.D. timeframe. Any objective commentator understands, for example, that the entire Western Hemisphere knew no danger whatsoever from Titus’s destruction of Israel and Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Indeed, no one in the Western Hemisphere even knew the name of Titus. No one in the Western Hemisphere even knew that Israel existed, let alone was being overrun. Thus, the Partial Preterist position plainly contradicts Christ’s warning of extinction in Matthew 24:22. Indeed, to suggest that the entire world was in danger of perishing in 70 A.D. is wholly untenable.

The Futurist position, on the other hand, recognizes that the earth today—given the military hardware of the United States, Russia, Great Britain, and China—clearly is in danger of perishing. Three United States Trident submarines, for example, could kill one-fourth of the earth’s population (the death toll of the Seal judgments) in thirty minutes. The Futurist also understands, in view of the arsenals and weaponry extant throughout the world, that the death tolls portrayed in Revelation 6 and 9 are readily attainable. Finally, the Futurist sees the wickedness of the unregenerate heart and sees this madness being unleashed in a still future Tribulation period during which time Christ’s warning will come to pass: “unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved.” Given the ominous threat of world-wide nuclear annihilation (and human extinction), shouldn’t every Christian today embrace the Futurist position?

2. The Partial Preterist position contradicts—in two different ways—the Apostle John’s teaching on the “great harlot” in Revelation 17:

First, the Partial Preterist position does not correlate with John’s description of the geographic scope of the “great harlot” of Revelation 17. In Revelation 17:1-2 John initiates his description of one of the principal institutions of the Tribulation period—the Great Harlot: “And one of the seven angels having the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come. I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have practiced fornication and with whom those who dwell upon the earth were made drunk from the wine of her immorality.’” Of critical significance to the topic of Partial Preterism is the fact that John describes the great harlot as one who sits on “many waters.” Most Partial Preterists interpret “the Great Harlot” to be Jerusalem. So the question must be asked: Did Jerusalem sit on “many waters” (Rev. 17:15) in 70 A.D.? Obviously, because it sits on just one geographic location, it did not—and thus rendering impossible the Partial
Preterist’s contention that Jerusalem is the Great Harlot. Let’s ask an ancillary question: Did the Jews themselves sit on “many waters” in 70 A.D.? Again, the answer is no. Very few Jews lived outside of the Roman Empire, and none lived in the Western Hemisphere—again rendering the Partial Preterist interpretation of the Great Harlot impossible.

If the Great Harlot is not Jerusalem or the Jews, then who is she? The Futurist would suggest that the Great Harlot is the Apostate Church. In the New Testament, post-Pentecost believers are called "the Bride" of Christ; spiritually, believers are united with Christ—He in the believer and the believer in Him (Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:3-14). In Revelation 17, however, John introduces the reader to a large body of people—"the Great Harlot"—who call themselves "Christian" and who claim to belong to Christ, but who in fact have not put their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. These “Christians” refuse to come to Christ on His terms—and are not saved; they have strayed from Christ’s true Gospel for a false one. Furthermore, because the context of Revelation 17 is the Tribulation period, the Futurist would suggest that the Great Harlot is that part of Christendom—specifically, Apostate Christendom—which remains on earth after Believing Christendom has vanished from the earth at the Rapture.

Let us again point out that John describes the great harlot as one who sits on “many waters.” To the Futurist this description reveals that Apostate Christendom will be widespread in geographic scope during the Tribulation period and will be embraced by many people, particularly by those who live in the Antichrist's Empire. Revelation 17:15 confirms this interpretation: “The many waters which you saw where the harlot sits are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” Today, nearly 2,000 years after Christ's Resurrection, Christianity (be it Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox) has spread throughout much of the earth (“the peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues”) and is the predominant religion in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Russia, Scandinavia, Great Britain, North America, Central America, South America, Australia, and New Zealand—with additional footholds in sub-Saharan Africa, South Korea, and China. In 70 A.D., however, Christendom had not even expanded throughout the Roman Empire, a smallish geographic area compared to the geographic size of Christianity at the present time. To be sure, Christianity in 70 A.D. did not sit on “many waters”—and was not almost worldwide in geographic scope. Today, on the other hand, the Apostate Church does sit on “many waters,” including the nations and regions listed above. In short, it is clear that the Great Harlot is the Apostate Church, not Jerusalem or the Jews (as suggested by Partial Preterists).

Second, the Partial Preterist position does not correlate with John’s description of the world political clout demonstrated by the great harlot. John, in Revelation 17:3-5, shows the reader (1) the relationship between the harlot and a world empire: “And the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast—a beast full of blasphemous names and having seven heads and ten horns. Other parts of Scripture identify the beast having “seven heads” as seven world empires concurrent with the history of Israel. John thus sees the harlot (“a woman”)
“riding atop” a world empire ("sitting on the scarlet beast")—here a picture of the harlot exercising substantial political clout over the empire in which she lives. So the question must be asked: Did Jerusalem (or the Jews)—the Partial Preterist’s interpretation of the identity of the “great harlot”—have substantial political clout over the Roman Empire in 70 A.D.? The answer should be obvious. Jerusalem and the Jews had little or no influence whatsoever over the Roman Empire, for indeed the former were destroyed by Rome in 70 A.D.—once again rendering impossible the Partial Preterist’s interpretation of the Great Harlot as being Jerusalem (and the Jews).

If the Great Harlot is not Jerusalem or the Jews, then who is she? Once again, the Futurist would suggest that the Great Harlot is the Apostate Church. Specifically, John, in Revelation 17:3-5, shows the reader (1) the relationship between Apostate Christendom and the Antichrist’s Empire and (2) the true nature of Apostate Christendom: “And the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast—a beast full of blasphemous names and having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and was adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, and had in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her immorality. John thus sees Apostate Christendom ("a woman") “riding atop” the Antichrist and his Empire ("sitting on the scarlet beast")—here a picture of a large, influential "Christian" religious institution pridefully believing that it can usher in a new era of moral, ethical, and political advance within the structure of the Antichrist's Empire. The message of the Apostate Church will be a social and political gospel rather than the spiritual Gospel of Jesus Christ, and her ultimate objective will conflict with the clear teaching of the Lord.

By the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church—a formidable hierarchical institution at this point—was at the center of much of the political dialogue in Western Europe. Indeed, the Catholic Church’s interaction with the secular leaders of Europe during the Middle Ages clearly foreshadows John’s Revelation 17 picture of the Great Harlot (Apostate Christendom) riding atop the Beast (the Antichrist’s Empire) during the Tribulation period. A classic foreshadow of the “Harlot riding the Beast” occurred during the 900-1000 A.D. period in Germany, a relationship which historians Brinton, Christopher, and Wolff describe as follows:

The Saxon dynasty established by Henry I relied on the Church to perform much of the work governing Germany. Henry welcomed the alliance between Church and monarchy, partly because bishops, unlike counts, could not pass on their offices to their sons, and partly because bishops were better educated than laymen. And the Church welcomed the alliance because a strong central government was its best guarantee of stability. In the tenth century the papacy itself recognized the rights of German kings to appoint their own bishops. . . . In addition to efficient administration, the Church supplied the German king with much of his revenue, and tenants of church lands furnished three-quarters of his army. The Church also shared largely in the German expansion to the east—the celebrated Drang nach Osten—in the defeat of the Magyars (955), in the push into Slavic lands along the Elbe and Saale rivers, and in the advance into Silesia. New German bishoprics were set up, with Mag-
deburg as center, and subject sees were established east of the Elbe. The Church, in consequence, was now able to impose Christianity upon the vanquished Slavs.3

**B. The Scriptural Problem (Part 2)**

Another serious problem with Partial Preterism is that it must finesse Christ’s declaration of immediacy in Matthew 24:29-30.

1. The Partial Preterist’s positions (1) that the Great Tribulation took place in 70 A.D. but (2) that Christ’s “last” Coming is still future utterly contradicts Christ’s statement in Matthew 24:29-30 that He will return bodily to the earth immediately after the Tribulation period: “But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” So how does the Partial Preterist get around this contradiction? He is forced to spiritualize a 70 A.D. “coming of Christ” as a so-called “judgment coming” of General Titus of Rome to destroy Jerusalem and its temple—in order to conform to the explicit language of immediacy given in Matthew 24:29-30. Such a spiritualization, however, does not do away with the problems (1) that there is no historical record which shows a time in human history (let alone 70 A.D.) when the sun was darkened, and the moon did not give off its light, and the stars fell from the sky, and the powers of the heavens were shaken, and the sign of the Son of Man appeared in the sky, or (2) that there is no historical record that shows a time in human history (let alone 70 A.D.) the entire population of the earth saw the Son of Man coming on the clouds with power and great glory.

The Futurist, on the other hand, can go to Daniel 12:11-12 and determine that Christ will return bodily to the earth exactly 1,290 days after the Antichrist’s desecration of the rebuilt Jerusalem temple at the mid-point of the Tribulation: “And from the time of the regular sacrifice is abolished, there will be 1,290 days. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!” Thus, the Futurist contends that thirty days after the end of a future tribulation period, Jesus Christ will return bodily to the earth with His elect (I Thess. 3:13) and His holy angels (II Thess. 1:7). The reader of this Daniel 12 quotation can be sure that it refers to the bodily return of Christ because the quotation correlates perfectly with the Lord’s teaching in Matthew 24:29: “immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened . . . and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with great power and great glory.” Forty-five days after Christ’s bodily return to earth (or exactly 1,335 days after the Antichrist’s desecration of the temple), Christ will begin His Millennial reign over the earth (“How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!”).
In short, the Futurist position correlates seamlessly with Scripture, and it sees Christ returning bodily to the earth immediately after a future seven-year tribulation period, while the Partial Preterist position is forced into a “judgment-coming” interpretation, in this case the coming of a man, General Titus, rather than the Lord Himself—even though this seminal text on the Lord’s Second Coming, taught to us by the Jesus Himself, says nothing of the sort.

V. Conclusion

As shown above, Partial Preterism contradicts large amounts of prophetic Scripture—and no Christian who desires to come to an accurate understanding of Bible prophecy is well served by the Partial Preterist view.

The development and emergence of Partial Preterism over the past three hundred years can be understood today as an erroneous (though well-meaning) belief system which arose and expanded because of (1) the inability of any Christian in the 17th century to foresee the enormous leap forward in military technology by the end of the 20th century (including hydrogen bombs, I.C.B.M’s, Trident submarines, global positioning satellites, and laser-guided weapons)—technology which points to a future Tribulation period of seven years involving the staggering death tolls enunciated in Revelation 6 and 9; (2) the Reformation culture which did little critical analysis of Eschatology and considered the subject to be an afterthought; and (3) the early Reformation’s nearly universal use of a spiritualizing hermeneutic when it did choose to interpret prophetic Scripture.

Given the military technology of the 21st century and the ever-increasing clash of cultures and civilizations (e.g., the West, the Islamic Middle East, and the emerging kings of the East), there is now no reason for today’s Christian to spiritualize any part of prophetic Scripture. All of it can be taken at face value. When Christ Himself teaches that one-fourth of the world’s population will be killed in the Seal judgments, all Christians can without reservation take the passage at face value: the reality of the world’s military arsenals today makes the literal fulfillment of such a prophecy entirely reasonable.

In conclusion, twenty-first century Partial Preterism (1) contradicts known human history; (2) rejects present-day military and societal reality—specifically, the reality of the world’s lethal military arsenals and the intractability of several clashing cultures—all of which points to a future Tribulation period of seven years (rather than an A.D. 70 Tribulation timeframe) and (3) refuses to take Christ’s and John’s prophetic teaching at face value. And it does so, it seems, for the sole reason of maintaining belief in a centuries-old position, which—in light of honest Scriptural analysis, known human history, today’s military arsenals, and today’s alignment of nations—is no longer defensible.

2. “Preterism.” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. pp. 3-4
