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GOD'S PLAN

FOR

MANKIND -

THE FUTURIST

DISPENSATIONALIST VIEW

BY JOHN C. RIBBENS

FOREWORD

By M.B. Hammond

This booklet was written in response to many communications with several people holding the Preterist belief. These men of Christian persuasion hold the opinion that all Biblical prophecy, including the events and visions in Revelation, belong to the past; particularly to the Roman Empire of the first century AD. According to them "Preterist" means past in fulfillment, and "Futurist" means future in fulfillment. Since our viewpoint is a Dispensationalist position, this booklet adopts the title "Futurist Dispensationalist Position" rather than "Dispensational Premillennial Fundamentalists" as we usually call ourselves.

The Preterists believe that most or all of Bible prophecy has been fulfilled in Christ and the on-going expansion of His Kingdom. They set the time of His return at the fall and destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) as the key fulfillment. They take a passage like Matthew 24:34 and make it to say that the generation living at the time of Christ would see His return before they died. We know that the term "generation" really refers to the words of Christ (Seed & Bread No. 12, This Generation Shall Not Pass). They take words of imminency literally and do not observe 2 Peter 3:8-9, where it is clear that God does not see time as man does, and in His patience would have all men come to repentance. They seem not to define what they mean by "the Kingdom" either, preferring to "spiritualize" their terms by saying things like "Kingdomize" and "Christianize" instead. Their arguments seem plausible only to those believers who are unwilling or unable to go into the truth that God has placed in His Word, The Bible.

This article will clarify our position in believing that God will yet intervene in the affairs of men in a miraculous outpouring of His grace. It shows both Old Testament and New Testament prophecies that confirm this training men will receive in righteousness. The Tribulation will be a testing of mankind. Those who have learned righteousness will go on to live in the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth, which we call the parousia (His personal presence). Let us examine scripture for ourselves, carefully. As Otis Q. Sellers often said:

"Be sure that you have Scripture, for all you say or do, But where God's word is silent, may you be silent too."

PREFACE

A successful American business man once said, "I am deeply interested in the future, because that is where I will spend the rest of my life." To paraphrase that quotation, taking into consideration God's promise of eonian life for the believer, it would go something like this; "I am deeply interested in the future of this redeemed earth for that is where I am going to spend my everlasting (eonian) life. " Whether being resurrected or living into God's government, earth is the place where we will experience the great outflow of the Salvation that Jesus Christ has bought for us. The Bible calls this the Kingdom of God. Every living human being should know that there is a life beyond our present one. They should be deeply interested in knowing what awe-inspiring events God has set forth for us to experience in that death-free *eonian life.

David R. Hettema
(*a life that flows from God).

THE FUTURIST DISPENSATIONALIST VIEW

By John C. Ribbens

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and an adherent to the great principle of rightly dividing the Word of truth, it is my unwavering conviction that the next thing man can expect from God is the divine assumption of sovereignty. God is going to govern mankind and the nations upon this earth. He will yet bring mankind under a new accountability and responsibility. As it says in Isaiah 26:9, 10: Let favor (grace) be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness ... for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants will learn righteousness. Clearly this is not God's present purpose or program. God is not governing mankind today. This is not the time of His manifest Kingdom.

Ever since the days of Noah men have been living in Man's Day. At this time God is permitting all men to walk as they choose. For the past 2000 years of human history God has been actively and passively involved in a demonstration of the grace inherent in His character. Every act of God during this time has been one of pure and absolute grace showing love and favor to all, even the most undeserving of mankind. If God cannot now act in grace, He will not act at all.

But there is a destined limit to the reign of evil in this world. Futurists do not believe that the present condition of things will go on forever. The hour is coming when the Almighty God will do the thing that all God-fearing men believe He can do, should do, and will do. The day is surely coming when God, in Christ, will take unto Himself His great power (Matt. 28:18), judge the peoples of the earth righteously (Acts 17:31), and govern the nations upon the earth (Psa. 67:4). Hundreds of prophecies speak of a future time when God will lavish untold spiritual blessings upon mankind. There is no prophecy that must be fulfilled before God assumes sovereignty. All God needs to do is speak in heaven and His inauguration will take place upon the earth. Then it can be said, "the Lord reigneth" and we can praise Him because, "He has taken to Himself His great power and does reign" (Psa. 96:10, Rev. 11:17).

This great truth is denied by many, including the Preterists who "believe that most or all of Biblical prophecy has already been fulfilled in Christ, and the on-going expansion of His Kingdom" (quoted from their material). Futurists and Dispensationalists, in particular, believe most prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. This includes the prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Malachi and Daniel that speak so eloquently of the future time when Israel will be restored, regathered and returned to the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses.

The great prophet Ezekiel declared, **Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel, And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord** (Ezek. 37:12-14). As a Dispensationalist, I believe in the denationalization of the people of Israel; their regathering into their own land, and the restoration of the Davidic scene. This great truth, rejected by the Preterists, is positively proclaimed in Ezekiel 34. God declares, **Behold, I even I will both search My sheep, and seek them out** (Ezek. 34:11) ... **so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in a cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and will feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers,** (Ezek. 34:12, 13)... **and I will set up one shepherd over them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David, a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it** (Ezek. 34:23, 24).

Futurists believe Israel will lie in safety and be delivered from the hand of terrorists. [They] shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen (nations), neither shall the beast of the land devour them, but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid (Ezek. 34:26-28, also see Isa. 11:6-9 and Jer. 33:14-16).

Dispensationalists believe that under divine government, wars and conflicts will cease and be eradicated from the earth (see Isa. 2:4), resulting in the end of hostilities, and inaugurating peace in the earth. The psalmist David declared, Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still (cease and desist) and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen (nations), I will be exalted in the earth (Psa. 46:8-10, also see Isa. 2:2-4).

These things are the direct and immediate result of the divine assumption of sovereignty. It is in that future day that God will "destroy the wicked" and "put out their name forever and ever," i.e. with respect to eonian times and beyond. God will "break the arm of the wicked and evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none" (Psa. 10:15).

Bible-believing and God-honoring Dispensational Futurists understand that mankind will be enlightened about God, placing every man under a new accountability and responsibility. The psalmist David declared, For all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds (families) of the nations shall worship before Thee, for the Kingdom (government) is the Lord's and He is governor among the nations (Psa. 22:27-28). To "remember" is to bring into each person the knowledge and understanding of God. It will be the result of God enlightening mankind, making the facts known so no man can claim ignorance of God's truth in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-11). God will yet imprint truth upon every man's mind and men will be turned in the direction of righteousness (the right way). "All the ends of the earth" signifies that men everywhere living on this planet earth will be enlightened by God. This is still future. It is not true today.

This Dispensationalist believes that under divine government every man will enjoy a perfect gift of health. Never again will sickness, disease, or death permeate men's lives as today, where it is the result of sin and death working in man. The Apostle Paul says, By one man (Adam) sin entered into the world and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). God's government is synonymous with perfect health, life, joy, and peace.

Men will yet experience "**Thy saving health among all nations**" (Psa. 67:2, see also Isa. 33:24). Psalm 67 is a picture of conditions that will prevail in the earth when God governs. It will be the result of God flowing out in a great river of life, health and truth. This is a future state made possible by the manifest Kingdom of God. Christ's Kingdom is not here now.

We are not now living in "the garden of Eden" as Preterists claim. We, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, have the promise of eternal life. "Eternal life" is eonian life, that is life flowing out of God. We have the guarantee of this life because we have believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 20:30, 31). Eonian life does not refer to the time duration of such life, but to the source, the gift of life flowing out of Jesus Christ. Eonian life is not here today; it belongs to the future in the time of Christ's intervention and resurrection.

Preterists believe they now enjoy "eternal life" as though it were a present reality. Scripture declares, "**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom. 6:23). Today, living in the Dispensation of the Grace of God, we are alive, but dying. In God's Kingdom we will be alive and living. The fact is that, "**In Adam all die (are dying), even so in Christ shall all be made alive (with life flowing into us from God)**" (1 Cor. 15:22). To insist we enjoy that life today, is to fall prey to the Satanic lie, "**Ye shall not surely die**" (Gen. 3:4). The fact is that, "**the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death**" (1 Cor. 15:26). As believers in the fact and power of resurrection we look to the time when, "**This corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory**" (1 Cor. 15:53,54). These are true facts.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ hold that Jesus is the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever (in relationship to the coming eon), and the bread that I will give is (represents) My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (John 6:51). Under God's coming Kingdom, life will permeate this planet. The idea of a "Late Great Planet Earth," promulgated by Hal Lindsey, is patently false and a travesty on the promises of God.

Every believer in Jesus Christ is assured of life because of, "**God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**" (1 Cor. 15:57). This great triumph for Christ will sound a crushing defeat for Satan, That as sin hath reigned unto death even so grace will yet reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21).

We do not now live in a paradise restored by Christ or in the "Garden of Eden" as Preterists falsely proclaim. Christ has not yet brought in His Kingdom to bless the world or dealt in vengeance and conquered His enemies. What we do have is the guarantee of living upon the earth in the day of His government. This belongs to the future, not to the present.

Futurists and most Dispensationalists believe that Bible prophecy points to a redeemed earth, a new condition of things in which Christ will govern the nations and bring an end to Man's Day with all of its failures and misery. Bible prophecy makes absolute sense only when viewed from the Futurist perspective. The ravages of sickness, disease, crime, corruption, greed, hatred, starvation, immorality and unstable governments will be eradicated by God and His Kingdom.

This is not as Preterists claim, "a postponed sensual gratifying paradise way off in the future," but the assurance of divine government promising "life for the world," the very fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, that, "In thy seed shall all the nations be blessed." Futurists do not look for a rapture, escape or retreating from society, but for divine intervention into the life and affairs of every being on this planet Earth.

All hints, suggestions, or proclamations (of men) that God has left us here to bring about a great and wonderful world, to "Christianize" our planet and to "kingdomize" the human race are doomed to failure. The disposition of this earth and its inhabitants is not even within the responsibility or capacity of any man, whether individual or human government. We believe the Preterists should observe the admonition of Paul to Timothy, "**Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus**" (2 Tim. 1:13). The adjective "spiritual" as used in Scripture is not something invisible; it designates things produced by the Spirit of God, which come directly from God without any human intervention or instrumentality in the process.

The Apostle Paul declared, **For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we all know that all the creation groans together and travaileth in pain until now** (Rom. 8:18-22). This is the reality of earth's present condition.

Under divine government, **"The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing"** (Isa. 35:1, 2).

Also: **Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear** (stand in awe of) **Him** (Psa. 67:6, 7).

These blessings will extend to every living being on earth. The Bible says, **With righteousness shall He judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.** (Isa. 11:4) It also says, **They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom (government) and talk of Thy power, to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing** (Psa. 145:11-16).

This is the message of hope which the Futurists believe in as God's promise to the world. The realization of these blessings will radically transform the world. The results are eulogized in Psalms 96-98 in which men are called upon to Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvelous things. His right hand and His Holy arm hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the nations (Psa. 98:1, 2).

When will these things take place? Some say at the "second coming of Jesus Christ." We believe these blessings will begin to flow out once God assumes sovereignty and injects Himself into the affairs of mankind. As to the exact day or month or year we are not told. But we know the Kingdom is coming as sure as God exists.

Let it be carefully noted that when the Kingdom of God becomes a reality, our entrance into it, or our exclusion from it, is going to be determined by the life we have lived during our days upon the earth. The life you are living today, your attitude toward God who is our Savior, may provide the facts on which Christ's judgment is based. As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I wait patiently for the Kingdom of God. This is the attitude the Apostle Paul declared in Titus 2:12, 13, saying, Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Please note that "appearing" is the Greek word epiphaneia, and it means a "blazing forth" of Jesus Christ to bless the world. It also heralds the Day of Christ, to which Paul

refers in Philippians 1:10 and 2:16, being a direct reference to the Kingdom of God. In this day, Isaiah 66:1 states, "**Thus saith the Lord, heaven is My throne, earth is my footstool:**" It is not the Greek word parousia as in Matthew 24:3, where His disciples ask, **Tell us when these things shall be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming (parousia) and of the end of the world?** (Gk.-awn, Eng.-eon,) That day is what John called, "**I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day** (literally the Day of the Lord)" (Rev. 1:10), and is the end days of the eon termed "the Kingdom of God." This is noted in Amos 5:18 where the prophet says, "**Woe to you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.**" We also know that Joel 1:15 says, "**Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand, and it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.**" Even Malachi 4:5 says, "**Behold I will send Elijah, the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.**" We have a picture of how the Kingdom comes in the Parable of the Farmer (Mark 4:26-29) who put seed in the ground and it comes up in obvious stages. In verse 28 it says, "**For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full grain in the ear.**" The blade stage refers to the Acts Period in which many believers, mostly Jews, had the manifest blessings of the Spirit and could do marvelous things.

This was abruptly suspended by the present Dispensation of the Grace of God at Acts 28:28. When it returns, it will grow to full maturity and only then will God put in His sickle and harvest the righteous ones who go on into the 1000-year-reign of Christ on this Earth. If the Preterist wishes to honor God, he will learn to patiently await God's development of His works and not force fixed ideas on reference to timeliness and readiness for the events. The reference to "the extreme sense of imminency" in several passages given by the Preterists is not reason to ignore the rest of Scripture. The insertion of 2000 years of the Dispensation of Grace was not prophesied, but allows God to display the graciousness of His character, so wait on Him.

The Scriptures detail many other things that must happen before the Day of the Lord, and these include the regathering of Israel to the land, the rebuilding of the Temple, restoration of Temple worship, the new heart within them and the blessings of the Kingdom. When the Great Tribulation takes place, it is a testing following the blessings of the Kingdom in which all nations have had the chance to learn who Jesus Christ is and what He is in the sight of God, living in a world where righteousness is practiced. The events noted in Matthew 24 would have little meaning today as signs of His coming, but after hundreds of years of blessing in the Kingdom these would be very meaningful to the men who seek to know God. The Kingdom of God is the time spoken of in Isaiah 2:2-4 where it says, **It shall come to pass in the last days** (literally the sequel of the days), **that the mountain**

(government) of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it (Isa. 2:2). Such a time will place on all men the responsibility to obey God's law and to follow and love His commandments which cause righteousness to pervade mankind.

In contrast, Isaiah 2:12 speaks of the judgment of men in the Day of the Lord. Thus, the Day of the Lord heralds Christ's coming in vengeance on those who have rebelled in the Tribulation. Likewise it heralds life to those who will be with Him on earth in the 1000-year personal presence of Jesus Christ. That is what 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16 is about, saying, ... **that we which are alive and remain to the coming (parousia) of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep (the martyrs). For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.**

Christ described this time in the Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30). In verse 30 He says, **Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn** (See also 2 Thess. 1:7-10).

The Kingdom comes when God's plan in Grace is complete. These words from Scripture portend His glorious intervention in the affairs of men: So shall they fear (stand in awe of) the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun. **When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.** (Isa. 59:19).

It will not always be like this we know today.

This is the Day of Man.

When the Day of Christ comes, the Spirit of God will invade the earth, and the awe-inspiring changes brought about by the Christ, the King of the earth, will be seen. Redeemed men, resurrected, alive and living, will be enjoying the bountiful blessings of a curse-free earth. Then will be true the inspired promise of Habakkuk 2:14 which says:

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

END