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Consideration Of The Second

Coming of The Lord

by John Rucker

Introduction

About four or five years ago, this writer was made aware that many believers have taken the position that the "Second Coming," incorrectly referred to by many as the "Rapture," took place in A.D. 70, at the time of the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. These believers claim, among other things, that all

prophecy was fulfilled coincident with that event -- specifically, those prophecies relating to the nation of Israel, the Second Coming, and resurrection of the saints. This writer believes the Bible teaches the "Second Coming" to be future, and has nothing whatever to do with the "Hope of the Church of this age."

It is not the writer's intention to speak in derogatory terms of other believers for their different beliefs on this subject, or to speak of them in uncomplimentary terms. However, it seems necessary to make reference by name to those of this persuasion, if only as an identifier. Those who claim the Lord returned in A.D. 70 have termed themselves as "Preterists," and believers looking for a future or "Second Coming" as "Futurists." Nothing derogatory is intended by the use of either term, and therefore will be used in describing both groups.

This writer will attempt to demonstrate the Futurists' position that the "Second Coming" or "Rapture," did not occur in A. D. 70, and is still future. In considering the "Second Coming" of the Lord, the writer would note that it is referenced to "Israel's Hope," and not the "Hope" of the "Church which is the Body of Christ." Under...

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normal circumstances, this would not seem a controversial subject. However, it has been made so by a difference of opinion regarding the time element indicated by the Scriptures for the occurrence of this Coming. The Preterists advance the claim that all prophecy, not just that relating to Israel, was fulfilled or completed at this juncture in history. Reference will frequently be made to this statement.

A number of questions necessarily present themselves for our consideration, such as: Did God give Israel a false or illusory hope? Was this promise made by God to Israel in good faith with full expectation of its fulfillment; or was the promise doomed from the start? Further, were there conditions attached to Israel's hope, or were they conditioned upon God for their fulfillment?

It is believed that "Scripture Research" on this subject would not be amiss; an effort will be made to explore the claims by the Preterists with reference to our Lord's alleged return in A.D. 70. In

this presentation there will be no condemnation of either the Preterists or the Futurists for the positions they assume, but rather let us search and see. It is necessary that we be able to consider this subject in an attitude of prayer, love and grace toward all the saints.

Further, we cannot explore the importance of the "Second Coming" without also taking into account "The Resurrection," for such is a vital aspect of that Coming. Therefore, it and other related subjects will be given consideration. No attempt will be made to explore claims of a nature unrelated to the Scriptures. Examination will be made of The Scriptures upon which the Preterists base their claims and conclusions. Effort will be made to consider these Scriptures to see whether they indicate, as the Futurists claim, a future fulfillment, or, as the Preterists claim a past fulfillment. We trust this can be accomplished by looking at the language of the references relied upon, and at the same time seeking compliance with II Timothy 2:15. "The Truth" is of paramount importance and should prevail!

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If "The Second Coming" of The Lord occurred at or during the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, we would expect to find the resurrection, and all it entails, to have occurred during this time-frame in line with Israel's promised hope, and the Preterists claim this is what happened. However, we must give consideration not only to the resurrection of those of the Kingdom calling, but to the effect resurrection at this time might have on the hope of the "Church which is His Body," which was in existence at that time.

The Scriptures show the "Church which is His Body" was revealed by God through the Apostle Paul at a point subsequent to the setting aside of the nation of Israel in Acts 28:28, but before A.D. 70. Since the Church of this age, began some years prior to A.D. 70, are the Preterists who claim The Lord returned at that time, saying that the resurrection is past already, not only for Israel, but also for the Church which is His Body? If this is true, and I believe it is, they appear to overthrow the faith of some, as indicated by the Apostle Paul in II Timothy 2:18 when he spoke of Hymenaeus

and Philetus: "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already."

Texts Referred To By The Preterists

Proof texts by the Preterists will be presented and examined, and in doing so, frequent reference will be made to a book by Mr. J. Stuart Russell, entitled *The Parousia*, reprinted from an edition published in 1887. Copies of his book were mailed several years ago by Russell Schaefer, Editor of *Scripture Research*, to a number of readers, among which I was one. Mr. Russell appears to be one of the fathers of the Preterist movement, claiming A.D. 70 as the date of the "Second Coming." Mr. Russell's position, among other things, is that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman General Titus in A.D. 70 fulfilled all prophecy, and was, in fact, the "Great Tribulation" of the Gospels and Revelation; that it fulfilled all Old Testament prophecy relating to the time of "Jacob's Trouble", and, coupled with the Lord's "Second Coming" or *Parousia*, indicated...

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that a general resurrection of all the saints, both those who had fallen asleep and those who were alive, took place at that time; that a "spiritual" kingdom was begun, not upon the earth, but in the heavens; and there was judgment upon the land and people of Israel. Some of Mr. Russell's claims will become clear by his reference on pages 538 and 539 to his "Summary And Conclusions" quoted below:

3. Our Lord affirms the same speedy coming of judgment upon the land and people of Israel; and He further connects this judgment with His own coming in glory, the Parousia. This event stands forth most prominently in the New Testament; to this every eye is directed, to this every inspired messenger points. It is represented as the nucleus and center of a cluster of great events; *the end of the age, or the close of the Jewish economy; the destruction of the city and temple of*

Jerusalem; the judgment of the guilty nation; the resurrection of the dead; the reward of the faithful; the consummation of the kingdom of God. All these transactions are declared to be coincident with the *Parousia*.

(Emphasis added)

It appears Mr. Russell ignored or was unaware that the initial judgment of Israel occurred, not in A.D. 70, as he claims, but at the end of the Acts period, approximately eight years earlier in A.D. 62 or thereabouts (see Acts 28:25-28).

Mr. Russell continued on page 539:

4. It is demonstrable by the express testimony of our Lord, the uniform and concurrent teaching of His apostles, and the universal expectation of the church of the apostolic age, *that the Parousia and its...*

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accompanying events were represented as nigh at hand; and not only so, but as about to happen within the limits of a given period; that is to say, in the time of the apostles and their contemporaries; so that many or most of them might expect to witness the great consummation....

(Emphasis added.)

The Preterists believe God is completely and forever finished with the nation of Israel, which includes the promises to them as well. However, they appear to appropriate for themselves the promise of the "Second Coming" and the "Kingdom," which would have been the result of the Coming promised to Israel, but never to the Church.

With regard to the second part of Mr. Russell's comments above, he claims these events were not only at hand, but must occur within a stated or given period of time, which he limits to the lifetime of the apostles and their contemporaries in point of fact, to a time no later than A.D. 70. In considering Mr. Russell's position, reference is made to another portion of his book.

On page 26 Mr. Russell quotes Matt. 10:23, which he states is proof positive the Second Coming would definitely occur within the lifetime of the apostles.

The Coming Of The Son Of Man (The Parousia) In The Lifetime Of The Apostles

Please note Matt. 10:23:

But when they persecute you in this city,
flee ye into another: for verily I say unto
you, Ye shall not have gone over the
cities of Israel till the son of man be come.

On page 29, Mr. Russell makes a similar allegation, this time with...

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regard to the *Parousia* occurring within the lifetime of some of the disciples. Here he quotes three references to the same event from Matthew, Mark and Luke. He writes: "...THE PAROUSIA TO TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE LIFETIME OF SOME OF THE DISCIPLES."

Only his reference to Mark 9:1 will be quoted:

And He said unto them, Verily I say unto
you, That there be *some of them that
stand here*, which shall not taste of death,
till they have seen the kingdom of God
come with power.

(Emphasis added.)

On page 51, Mr. Russell quotes Luke 13:34, 35: "...Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me until ye say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

If they have never made this confession, how could Mr. Russell expect the Lord's return until they did?

On page 136 Mr. Russell comments regarding John 21:22: "ST. JOHN TO LIVE TILL THE PAROUSIA." He continues: "Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

By making reference to the actual language of these and similar passages, it will become clear that neither Mr. Russell nor the Preterists have given consideration to the Greek particles *av* or *an*, or *ei* or *if*, occurring in these passages, which, if given proper consideration, clearly qualify and render conditional the references relied upon. The *Authorized Version of The Scriptures*, in most, if not all cases, has left the Greek particles out of the text.

Meaning Of The Greek Particle *av*

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Before looking at individual references where the particle *av* or *an*, and the particle *ei*, or *if*, occur in the Greek text, it might be well to see what other writers have said regarding these particular Greek particles. Sources referred to are: E. W. Bullinger, James Strong, Spiros Zodhiates, George Ricker Berry and Charles F. Hudson.

In his *Complete Word Study of the New Testament*, Spiros Zodhiates gives a long list of references to the particles "*av*" and "*ei*" which will not be cited, but are available in his *Greek Concordance*, pages 985 and 1035 under the numbers 302 and 1477. Mr. Zodhiates states regarding the particle "*av*" or "*an*" in his section on "*Lexical Aids To The New Testament*" on page 885, number 302:

An; part, (a particle) Used with the opt., (optative) subst. (substantive), and indic. (indicative) moods, *sometimes properly rendered by perhaps*, not commonly expressed in English by any

corresponding particle, *but only giving to a prep, (preposition), or sentence an element of uncertainty and mere possibility, and indicating a dependence on circumstances.* In this way it serves to modify or strengthen the force of the opt. and subst. and it may also effect the meaning of the indic, (the pres. [present] and the perf. [perfect] excepted) and other verbal forms. Uses: (1) a *conditional conj., (conjunction) if* (John 20:23; 1 Thess. 2:7). (2) indefiniteness, translated "soever" (Matt. 10:33; Mark 3:28; Rev. 14:4). (3) Potentiality. It is added to verbs of the indic, and sometimes of the opt. moods, giving the meaning of *may, might, would, could, or should* (Matt. 11:21, 23; 23:30; 25:27; John 11:21; 18:30; Acts 2:12.) (4) *Heos an, until* (Matt:2:13; 5:18; 16:28). (5) *Hopos an, that, to the end that* (Matt. 6:5; Rom. 3:4. cf. Acts 3:19) (6) *Hos an, even as* (1 Thess. 2:7).

(Emphasis added.)

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James Strong in his *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, in his *Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, No 302, renders the definition of the particle "an" as:

av, an; a prim, (primary) Particle, denoting a supposition, wish, possibility or uncertainty; (what, where, whither, who-) soever. Usually unexpressed except by the subjunctive or potential mood. Also contr. For 1437.

(Emphasis added.)

Strong's number 1437: *eav ean, eh-an; from 1487 and 302; a conditional particle;*

in case that, provided, etc; often used in connection with other particles *to denote indefiniteness or uncertainty*: before, but, except, (and) (if) so, (what, whither) soever, though, when (-soever), whether (or), to whom, (who) so (ever).

(Emphasis added.)

George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, on page 7, renders the particle an: '*av*', *a particle expressing possibility, uncertainty, or conditionally.*"

(Emphasis added.)

Charles F. Hudson, in his *English and Greek Concordance of the Bible*, on page 20 has the following to say regarding the particle *av*:

1. In the *opodosis* or conclusion of a conditional sentence, with the indicative, (a) Imperfect, q.d. I *would* or *might* do. (b) *Aorist*, q.d. I *would* or *might* have done. (c) Pluperfect, q.d. I would or might have done. III. With the subjunctive, after relative pronouns and adverbs, which it renders indefinite, like Eng. ever.

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Meaning Of The Greek Particle *ei*

With regard to the Greek particle *ei* or if, Doctor Bullinger states in Appendix 118 2. a, b, and c, of the *Companion Bible*:

a. Followed by the *Indicative mood*, the hypothesis is assumed as an actual fact, the condition being unfulfilled, but no doubt being thrown upon the supposition (1 Cor. 15.16.)

b. Followed by the *Optative Mood*, it expresses an entire uncertainty; a mere assumption or conjecture of a supposed case (Acts 17:27; 1 Pet. 3:14).

c. Followed by the *Subjunctive Mood*, like No. 1.b; except that this puts the condition with more certainty, and as being more dependent on the event (1 Cor. 14:5.)

(Emphasis added.)

Doctor Bullinger gives the following by way of examples:

For two illustrations, see Acts 5. 38, 39. If this counsel or this work be of men (1.b, a result which remains to be seen)...but if it is of God (1.a. which I assume to be the case), &c.

John 13.17. "If ye know these things (2d, which I assume to be the fact) happy are ye if ye do them (1.b, a result which remains to be seen)."

Note four "ifs" in Colossians, "if ye died with Christ" (2:20); and "if ye were raised with Christ" (3.1), both of which are No. 2. a (assuming the fact to be true); "if any man have a quarrel" (3:13); "if he come to you" (4.10), both of which are No. 1.b, being uncertainties.

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One other "if" in Colossians is 1:23: "if ye continue in the faith" (eige = if indeed, a form of 2.a) which ye will certainly do.

Strong's number 1487, regarding the Greek particle *ei* or *if* reads:

A prim. Particle of conditionality: if, whether, that etc: forasmuch as, if, that, (al) though. Often used in connection or compositions with other particles, espec. As in 1489, 1490, 1499, 1508, 1509, 1512, 1513, 1536, 1537. See also 1437.

Emphasis added.

With definitions of these two Greek particles before us, it is intended to give consideration to as many of the references relied upon by Doctor Russell and the Preterists as we find, as well as the conditions which they allege must occur at the precise time they insist are required by the passages of Scripture to which they have referred. It is claimed these Scriptures cannot possibly refer to any period of time in the future following A.D. 70. They say to take any other position would be to rewrite Scripture. However, after due consideration we may conclude that it is they who are attempting to rewrite the Scriptures!

Use Of The Greek Particle *av*.

The first passage given consideration regarding the particle *an* is Matthew 10:23:

But when they persecute you in this city,
flee ye into another: for verily I say unto
you, *ye shall not have gone over the cities
of Israel till the Son of man be come.*

(Emphasis added.)

Mr. Russell and the Preterists concluded from this reference that The Lord's Second Coming definitely happened before the

disciples had evangelized all the cities of Israel. However, if the particle *av* or *an* following the word "till" in the Greek text is taken into account, it will be apparent the disciples' efforts to evangelize all the cities of Israel were conditioned, not upon the disciples having gone over the cities of Israel, but upon whether Israel

would, or would not, accept their Messiah before the completion of their evangelization. Reference to Acts 28:28-31 reveals Israel dismally failed to accept Jesus as their Messiah. In fact they have not done so to date.

Next, Matthew 16:28:

Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

This claim is similar to that of Matthew 10:23, except in this instance it is conditioned upon the possibility of "some" not dying before The Lord's return, rather than upon the completion of Israel's national evangelization. The Greek particle *av or an* follows the word "till" in the Greek text.

Doctor E. W. Bullinger has a note on Matt. 16:28 regarding the phrase "till they see the Son of man coming" reading: "till. The particle *an*, with the subjunctive mood, gives this a hypothetical force. Cp. the four 'tills' (10:23; 16:28; 24:34; 26:29)."

The hypothesis is obviously based upon the repentance of Israel for fulfillment, not upon national evangelization, which was uncertain, and renders the condition of their remaining until His return uncertain as well.

It is clear that the Lord did not say that the Apostle John would not die, as claimed. This can be seen by considering John 21:23, where the Lord said: "... If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee...? In this case, the possibility of the Apostle John's not dying until the Lord came, was clearly conditioned upon the Lord's will,

and not upon the Apostle John remaining alive. A review of the Gospels show the Lord had not, nor did He reveal His will regarding the Apostle John remaining alive until He returned. This reference shows that the Greek particle *eon or if*, used by the Lord in this context, is also a conditional particle.

Dr. Bullinger has another note on Matthew 16:28 with regard to the word (coming):

coming, &c. The promise of this coming was definitely repeated later, in Acts 3:19-26, and was conditional on the repentance of the nation. Hence the particle *an*, which (though untranslatable) expresses the condition or hypothesis implied. Their continuing to live until Acts 28:25, 26 was certain; but the fulfillment of the condition was uncertain.

Doctor Bullinger was incorrect when he asserted the apostles would of necessity certainly continue to live until Acts 28:25, 26.

Mark 9:1 is virtually identical to Matthew 16:28, and reveals the particle *av* following the word "till"; although the particle is not seen in the *Authorized Version*, it appears in the Greek, indicating the same possibility of some dying, as well as the possibility of some being alive until The Lord's Second Coming, whenever that might be. It therefore follows that His coming must be conditioned upon a factor other than some being alive at His coming. As suggested by Doctor Bullinger above, the repentance of Israel indicated by the Apostle Peter in Acts 3:19-21 was the controlling or conditioning factor.

Acts 3:19-21 reads as follows:

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before

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was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

The promise of sending back Jesus Christ at that time is shown to be conditioned upon Israel's national repentance.

In considering this reference in *The Interlinear Greek - English New Testament* by George Ricker Berry, it is interesting to note that verse 19 of Acts 3, in speaking of the return or presence of The Lord, uses the particle *av* or *an*, revealing the Lord's return was dependent upon repentance of the nation. Verse 19 reads in pertinent part: "...so that (*av. elthosiv*) may come times of refreshing from (the) presence of the Lord."

It was to the promised earthly kingdom that the Apostles made reference in Acts 1:6, when questioning the Lord before His ascension. They asked, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

Here we pause to refer to an article by Charles H. Welch in *The Berean Expositor*, January 2002, Vol. No. 7, page 122, regarding The Lord's answer to the Apostles' question, "...wilt thou at this time?"

Is it possible for a group of men like the apostles, to be taught by such a teacher as the risen Christ, to be so completely astray that "When therefore they had the opportunity, they made the basic mistake to ask "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel"? Is it also possible that even though they were so dreadfully mistaken, that the same Christ Who had expostulated with those who were 'fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken' (Luke 24:25) should entirely ignore their crass ignorance in Acts 1:7? Here is not a word

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of reproof, except to correct the element of 'time.' Not a single word of reproof that they were mistaken as to the Scriptural

hope that at some time the 'kingdom'
would be 'restored again' to 'Israel.'

And He said unto them, 'It is not for you to
know the times or the seasons, which the
Father hath put in His own power' (Acts
1:7)....

Page 123: As we trace the record of the
Acts, we begin to understand how it was
that The Savior could not give a positive
answer to the Apostles' question "this
time"? Much depended, humanly
speaking, on the response of Israel, and it
would have been unreasonable for our
Lord to say to them, 'You will be
empowered by the Holy Ghost; you will
preach repentance, you will suffer much
in the doing of it, but it will be in vain.
Israel will not 'at this time' be restored, but
will be blind and *lo-ammi* for centuries.

There is no question the kingdom of which the apostles were
concerned in Acts 1:6 was that earthly kingdom promised to the
nation of Israel, beginning from King David up to the time then
present. They did not doubt that the Lord would sit upon the literal
throne of His father David upon the earth. Had they been in error,
we would expect The Lord to have corrected them without delay.

Their only question related to the time, "when."

This is corroborated by the promise made in verse 11 of Acts One
by the "two men in white" regarding The Lord's future return, or
"Second Coming."

...Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing
up into heaven? 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.

The import of what these men told the Apostles was that, when He came again, it would be the "same Jesus," He would come in "like manner" as they had seen Him go, i.e., in a visible, bodily form; and He would return to "the same place," i.e., the mount of Olives, from which He departed. This obviously was not some secret coming, in an alleged spiritual form, to set up a hidden spiritual kingdom in the heavens.

The promised earthly kingdom was conditioned for its fulfillment upon national repentance, as indicated by the Lord in Matthew 4:17, where He stated:

...Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

It appears abundantly clear: no repentance, no Kingdom. This is also borne out by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:2.

Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The writer, a Futurist, believes the Scriptures plainly show no possibility for the "Second Coming" either in A.D. 70, or in any subsequent age, without and until the required national repentance of Israel becomes a reality.

Additionally, Acts 3:19-21 also makes it clear that these times of refreshing related to resurrection would not, yea could not come from the presence of the Lord, nor would The Lord return without this required national repentance on the part of Israel. The setting aside of Israel as proclaimed in Acts 28:28, and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, make it quite obvious that they did not repent. There seems little doubt that, had they repented, the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the nation of Israel would have been averted. There existed no expectation of the coming or presence of the Lord in A.D. 70, nor at any other time, unless and until the matter of their repentance is settled.

Our next reference is Matthew 23:39, where our Lord said regarding Jerusalem, clearly referring to the Nation:

For I say unto you, *ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

(Emphasis added.)

As in prior references, the Greek particle *av*, *an*, follows the word "till," showing their seeing Him in the future is conditioned upon this confession. This confession was to be the acknowledgement that He was in very deed "Messiah." That this coming is conditional is further borne out by the context itself, even had the Greek particle *av* been missing from the text. The coming was predicated upon the basis of what The Lord had said in verse 37 in speaking to the nation:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, *ye shall not see me henceforth (that is, Israel nationally) until ye shall say, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

(Emphasis added.)

This language appears to be without ambiguity. There was no possibility of their seeing Him until they made this confession, and they have not. This one reference alone cuts the ground from under any possibility of the Second Coming occurring in A.D. 70.

In considering this language, is it possible to find any record or indication anywhere, from any source, secular or scriptural, indicating Israel has made this confession? If they have, it is a Mystery yet to be revealed. Insofar as it can be discerned, Israel even at this late date, in the twenty-first century has adamantly refused to do so. The conclusion is inescapable: they have not. Therefore, *the Second Coming*, or *the Parousia*, with the attendant resurrection is yet future.

Here we consider the response of the Lord to the Apostles' question to Him in Luke 11:1, where they asked Him,

Lord, teach us to pray. He said: "...Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

There is no doubt that they were told to pray for the kingdom to come and for His will to be done, "*... as in heaven, so in earth.*"

If no possibility existed for a kingdom on earth, it appears foolish for them to be taught to pray for one.

Next, Matthew 24:34:

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, *till* all these things be fulfilled.

(Emphasis added.)

The Greek text shows the word *till* followed by the particle *av*, an, has the same meaning and implications previously alluded to, indicating uncertainty as to whether that generation would pass before all was fulfilled. Thus, whether that generation would pass or not before The Lord's return could not be known. The question is moot, inasmuch as Israel was set aside prior to A.D. 70; indeed, about A.D. 62, or 8 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, without The Lord's return. Israel's having been set aside, dismissed, or divorced prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in Acts 28:28 rendered the possibility of any fulfillment of Israel's hope of The Lord's return quite impossible of fulfillment at that time.

Mr. Russell and the Preterists wrongly place the emphasis upon the words, "this generation," rather than upon the "condition" of that generation indicated by the particle *av*, or an.

The next reference is Mathew 26:29, where the Lord spoke to His disciples at the last supper:

But I say unto you, I will not drink
henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until
that day when I drink it new with you in
My Father's kingdom.

The particle *av* in this case does not, as in the prior references, follow the word "until" in the Greek text, but the context shows fulfillment regarding His future drinking to be conditioned upon His coming and establishing the promised earthly kingdom. The conclusion is inescapable: if the earthly kingdom has not come, neither has Messiah the King come, and if He has not come, His drinking of the fruit of the vine with his disciples in that earthly kingdom is still future.

Additionally, in view of the many references to the method of The Lord's coming to establish His earthly Kingdom, we would certainly expect it to occur in an observable, visible way as indicated in Acts 1:11, and many other places. There it is clearly stated by the two men in white apparel, that,

...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.*

(Emphasis added.)

In this connection, do the conditions prevailing during this age, or any age following A.D. 70, reveal The Lord is or has been ruling here on the earth, much less with a rod of iron? Just think of all that has happened in the past two thousand years, and continues up to this present time. It appears without controversy we are under the *Rule of Man*, not the rule of the Lord.

The next reference is Luke 13:35:

Behold, your house is left unto you
desolate; and verily I say unto you, Ye
shall not see Me, until (*hoes an*) the time
comes when ye shall say,

"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Seeing Him in the future is thus shown to be conditioned upon this confession. How can this condition be ignored or set aside?

Next, Luke 21:29-32, the parable of the fig tree:

And He spake unto them a parable:
"Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;
When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."

The Greek particle *av* follows the word "till" in the Greek text.

We know Israel is continually compared to the vine, the fig and olive trees. In this reference we are told the coming of the Kingdom of heaven was likened to the leafing out of the fig tree in early summer, comparing the fig tree to Israel beginning to put forth leaves, indicating national repentance. While the Kingdom of God was said to be nigh at hand, it was clearly conditioned upon Israel showing repentance. There is no observable indication from the Scriptures prior to A.D. 70, or for that matter during the ensuing ages including secular history, which indicates Israel had or has begun to put forth leaves, repent and accept Jesus Christ as Messiah.

Here we pause to ask, Did the establishment of Israel as a Nation in 1948 give any such indication? Some would answer, yes. However, although there are those who are called the nation of Israel in the land, there is no indication that they were called by God to return there in fulfillment of prophecy. They who call themselves Jews have returned to Israel in unbelief. Inasmuch as this was one of the positive signs of the coming of The Kingdom...

of heaven, has the Second Coming happened or is it still in our future? We cannot envisage an earthly kingdom without the King or Messiah being present.

It would appear impossible to demonstrate by the evidence shown by Mr. Russell or the Preterists that the destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the nation of Israel in A.D. 70, could in any way be considered the fig tree putting forth leaves; in fact, just the opposite is indicated. The King (Messiah) was to come and set up an earthly kingdom. That did not happen. The Greek particle following the word "till" in Luke 21:32 indicates the coming is clearly conditioned upon the repentance of Israel.

Next, 1 Corinthians 4:5 from *The Interlinear Greek- English New Testament*:

"So that not before (the) time anything
judge, until (*eos av*) may have come the
Lord,..."

The time of judgment in this instance is shown to be conditioned upon The Lord's coming, indicated by Greek particle (*an*), thus revealing uncertainty as to the time of His Coming.

Next, 1 Corinthians 11:26, in *The Interlinear Greek- English New Testament*, the Apostle Paul states:

For as often as ye may eat this bread,
and this cup may drink, the death of The
Lord ye announce, until (*achris ou an*) he
may come.

His coming in this instance is referenced to the time of His Second Coming, and is conditioned by the Greek particle "an." No Coming or Parousia, no eating of the bread or drinking of the cup.

Before giving consideration to the Greek particle *ei*, or "if," there is a need to address an objection which has been voiced by those claiming the Greek particle *av* or "an" is not found in all of the

early Greek manuscripts. The argument is that since the Greek particle is not found in all of the ancient manuscripts, it must be eliminated from all those references where found. Using the same logic, the argument could be reversed, claiming that, because it is found in some manuscripts, it must therefore be added to all those where it does not appear. To take either position seems futile, foolish and illogical.

Use Of The Greek Particle *ei*

Having looked at a number of Scripture references where the Greek particle *av* is used, we will briefly consider Scripture references containing the Greek particle *ei* or "if." Hopefully, they will be useful in our pursuit of the truth regarding the "Second Coming." These references, unless otherwise stated, will be from the *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, the Nestle-Marshall text.

John 6:51:

I am the bread - living the (one) out of -
heaven having come down; *if(ei) anyone*
eats of this - bread, he will live to the
age;...

(Emphasis added.)

The *Companion Bible* has a note stating the condition which applies is that of Appendix 118. b., as described earlier, and expresses an uncertainty, i.e., a mere assumption or conjecture of a supposed case. Living to "the age" is conditioned upon eating of that bread.

Next, as found in Matthew 11:23:

And thou, Capernaum, not as far as
heaven wast thou exalted? As far as
hades thou shalt descend; because "*if*"
(*ei*) in Sodom happened the powerful
deeds -- having happened in thee it would
have remained until today.

(Emphasis added.)

The particle "if" in this context shows the condition was only conjecture, and depended upon an uncertainty regarding whether the powerful deeds done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom thus revealing the supposition that if they had repented, Sodom would have remained. The fact is that neither Sodom nor Capernaum repented, neither did Israel. The condition was, therefore, purely hypothetical.

Matthew 23:30:

...If (*ei*) we were in the days of the fathers,
of us, we would not have been of them
partakers in the blood of the prophets.

The Scribes and Pharisees were thus claiming that if they had been alive in the days of the fathers, who slew the prophets, they would not have shed their blood. This revealed a condition of pure speculation, which the Lord showed was far from the truth. The truth was that they were just like their fathers, and would have done as they had, as shown by the Lord in verse 31, thus revealing their hypocrisy.

John 5:46:

For if (*ei*) ye believed Moses, ye would
have be- lieved Me: for concerning Me
that (one) wrote.

The particle "if" in the context shows the hypothesis is assumed as actual fact; however, the condition was unfulfilled. They obviously did not believe Moses, nor did they believe the Lord. See also John 8:19, 39,46.

See also the particle "if" where John 21:23 was previously considered.

Last, a consideration of Matthew 11:14, from the *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, the Nestle-Marshall text,

referenced regarding whether John The Baptist was to be considered as Elias.

And if ye are willing to receive (it or him),
he is Elias the (one) about to come.

Further references may be considered by referring to the Greek Concordance of Mr. Spiros Zodhiates, in *The Complete Word*

Study New Testament, page 1035, and Charles F. Hudson's, *A Critical Greek and English Concordance of The New Testament*, pages 20 and 21.

References could continue to multiplied referring to these Greek particles, but it is believed enough has been put forward to show there is more than a little doubt as to the speculation of Mr. Russell and the Preterist as to the true interpretation of the references they advanced. Based upon these two particles alone, it appears clear that the *Parousia* or *Second Coming* does indeed have a future fulfillment.

Use Of The Term "At Hand"

Consideration will now be given to another expression, to which the Preterists have directed attention for the purpose of claiming the Bible teaches the *Parousia* or the "*Second Coming*" occurred in A.D. 70. This concerns the language of The Lord in Matthew 4:17, and other references which speak of the Kingdom of heaven being at hand. Matthew 4:17: "...Repent for the kingdom of heaven is *at hand*."

(Emphasis added)

This language is similar to Matthew 10:7, when The Lord, in sending out the twelve disciples to Israel, said, "...And as ye go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Mr. Russell and the Preterists use this language to mean in the immediate future, holding further that it cannot mean in the distant...

future, but, in fact, at a date no later than the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

With regard to this expression, a note in the *Scotfield Bible* on Matthew 4:17 reads:

At hand is never a positive affirmation that the person or thing said to be "at hand" will immediately appear, but only that no known or predicted event must intervene. When Christ appeared to the Jewish people, the next thing, in the order of revelation as it then stood, should have been the setting up of the Davidic kingdom. In the knowledge of God, not yet disclosed, lay the rejection of the kingdom (and King), the long period of the mystery-form of the kingdom, the world-wide preaching of the cross, and the out-calling of the Church. But this was as yet locked up in the secret counsels of God (Matt. 13:11,17; Eph. 3. 3-10).

(Emphasis added.)

It might helpful to consider a few references from the Old Testament in order to see how the use of the term "at hand" has been treated by the prophets. Joel 2:1 reads:

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand.

Here the "day of the Lord" is said to be "at hand," indicating nearness at that time. This refers back to Chapter 1:15, which reads:

Alas for the day! for the day of The LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the ALMIGHTY shall it come.

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These two passages show that what is said to be "at hand" is the "Day of the Lord." Joel, Chapter 2:2 & 11, show the character of that day. Verse 2 reads:

A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

Verse 11 states: And the LORD shall utter His voice before His army: for His camp is very great: for He is strong that executeth His word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Malachi 4:5 says regarding this day:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of The LORD.

The prophet Isaiah also writes of "The day of the LORD" in chapter 13, verses 6 and 9:

Verse 6: Howl ye; for the day of The LORD *is at hand*; it shall come as a destruction from the ALMIGHTY.

(Emphasis added.)

Verse 9: Behold, the day of The LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce

anger, to lay the land desolate; and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

In the New Testament we find reference to this same day of "The...

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Lord," which was said to be at hand by the Old Testament prophets. Consider the following three references.

1. I Thessalonians 5:2: "For yourselves know perfectly that the *day of The Lord* so cometh as a thief in the night."

(Emphasis added.)

2. II Peter 3:10: "But the day of The LORD will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

3. Jude 6: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto *the judgment of the great day.*"

(Emphasis added.)

The references to the "Day of The LORD," said to be "at hand" in the Old Testament, were hundreds of years in the future, and were unfulfilled at the time these references were written. There is no indication that that day has occurred to date. To state "the day of The Lord" was "at hand" in and of itself lacks proof it has any connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Here we digress again to make reference to Mr. Russell's book, *The Parousia*, in order to explore his treatment of the subjects

referred to above. The first is concerned with what he termed the nearness of the coming Salvation referred to on page 232, where he refers to Romans 13:11-12 as follows:

The Nearness of The Coming Salvation

Rom. 13:11- 12: And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is...

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our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand,...

He interprets this passage as follows:

It is not possible for words more clearly to express the apostle's conviction that the great deliverance was at hand. It would be preposterous to regard this language, with Moses Stuart, as referring to the near approach of death and eternity. In that case the apostle would have said, 'The day is far spent, the night is at hand.' But this is not the manner of the New Testament; it is never death and the grave, but the *Parousia* 'the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ,' to which the apostles look forward.

(Emphasis added.)

A portion of Mr. Russell's quote above is from Titus 2:13, and obviously cannot be referenced to the *Parousia*, which concerns the apostles' and Israel's "hope" of the Old Testament and the Acts period. Titus 2:13 applies only to the hope of the Church which is His Body, and has no relation at all to Israel's hope.

Mr. Russell continues on pages 232-33:

Professor Jowett justly observes that 'in the New Testament we find no exhortations grounded on the shortness of life. It seems as if the end of life had no practical importance for the first believers, *because it would surely be anticipated by the day of the Lord.*' This is undoubtedly true; but what then? Either the apostle was in error, and our confidence must be withheld from him as an authoritative expounder of divine truth; or else he was under the guidance of the spirit of God, and what he taught was unerring truth. To this dilemma those expositors...

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are shut up who cannot bring themselves even to imagine the possibility of the *Parousia* having come to pass according to the teaching of St. Paul. It is curious to see the shifts to which they resort in order to find some way of escape from the inevitable conclusion.

(Emphasis added.)

Insofar as Mr. Russell was concerned, only two options were available: either the Apostle Paul was wrong, or he was writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He was satisfied that his second choice was the correct one, and concluded that what the Apostle Paul had written must come to pass within the lifetime of that generation. Obviously, neither he nor the Preterists, unlike the Futurists, are able to envisage a third possibility, i.e., that Israel was set aside in unbelief in Acts 28:28, thus postponing the coming of the Kingdom and Israel's King, until the time of the Gentiles was fulfilled and they should then confess: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Consideration of Doctor Russell's Treatment of Scripture

While it may have no direct bearing on consideration of the Second Coming, it appears that Mr. Russell gave little consideration to accuracy of the prophecies of the New Testament, and it appears even less to those of the Old Testament. This may be seen by observing his treatment of the Old Testament, first as revealed on page 351:

Again in Isaiah xxiv, we have a prediction of judgments about to come upon the land of Israel; and among other representations of the woes which are impending we find the following: 'The windows from on high are open; the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down; the earth is clean dissolved; the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; it shall fall, and not rise again, etc.

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Doctor Russell's explanation of this passage from page 351 was: *"All this is symbolical of the civil and social convulsion about to take place in the land of Israel."*

(Emphasis added)

He gives little or no credence to the truthfulness of Isaiah's prophecy, and indicates it is mere idle words, or empty threats, which was only "symbolical of the civil and social convulsion about to take place." However, the Bible does not portray our God as making idle or empty threats, but as One who brings to pass all that He has promised, *in His own time*.

One might conclude from Doctor Russell's language above that he had the same general conception of the flood of Noah's day, inasmuch as the language from Isaiah 24 is similar to that of Genesis 7: 11-12, reading:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of

the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

(Emphasis added.)

Should we be so foolish as to conclude from Genesis 6:13 and 7:21, as Doctor Russell did regarding Isaiah 24, that the report of the flood was greatly exaggerated and was only "symbolical of the civil and social convolutions which took place," or do we believe the flood actually occurred?

In Genesis 6:13, God said to Noah:

...The end of all flesh is come before Me: for the earth is filled with violence through them and

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behold I will destroy them with the earth.

(Emphasis added.)

Was the earth destroyed? God said it was.

Genesis 7:21-23 reveals that God fulfilled his promise regarding the destruction of the earth and all flesh upon it:

And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, *and every man*: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were *destroyed from the earth: and*

Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

(Emphasis added.)

In Genesis 9:9-17, God made the covenant of the bow in the cloud with Noah, saying that He would not *again destroy man, or the earth* by a flood. Contrast this with Doctor Russell's assessment of the destruction of Israel's enemies on page 352:

In Isaiah xxxiv, the prophet denounces judgments on the enemies of Israel, particularly on Edom, or Idumea. The *imagery* which he employs is of the most sublime and awful description: 'The mountains shall be melted with the blood of the slain. All the host of heaven shall be dissolved; the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf fallen off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.' 'The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof

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shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever and ever.'

From Mr. Russell's descriptions, one might initially conclude that he implicitly believed these judgments were literally visited upon Israel's enemies. However, far from believing the destruction actually occurred, he concluded on the same page:

It is not necessary to ask, have these predictions been fulfilled? We know they have been; and the accomplishment of them stands in history as a perpetual monument of the truth of Revelation. Babylon, Edom, Tyre, the oppressors or

enemies of the people of God, have been made to drink the cup of The Lord's indignation. The Lord has let none of the words of His servants the prophets fall to the ground.

(Emphasis added.)

However, his subsequent conclusion on pages 352-3 does not comport with his prior statement, where he said:

But no one will pretend to say that the symbols and figures which depicted their overthrow were literally verified. These emblems are the drapery of the picture, and are used simply to heighten the effect and to give vividness and grandeur to the scene.

(Emphasis added.)

One can but wonder what it would have taken for the judgments of the Scriptures to be literally verifiable to Mr. Russell. Does our God use such "symbols", "figures" and "emblems" merely for the purpose of giving vividness and grandeur to the scene, to heighten or frighten, for fear or effect?

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On page 352, Mr. Russell refers to some of the events portrayed by the prophets Micah, Nahum, Joel, and Habakkuk in much the same way.

Similarly the prophets Micah, Nahum, Joel, and Habakkuk describe the presence and interposition of the Most High in the affairs of nations as *accompanied by stupendous natural phenomena*: Behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth, and the mountains shall be molten

under him, and the valleys shall be cleft
as wax before the fire, and as the waters
that are poured down a steep
place'(Micah 1.3, 4).

(Emphasis added.)

Again his conclusion on pages 352-3 does not square with his
statement. He said:

These examples may suffice to show,
what indeed is self-evident, that *in
prophetic language the most sublime and
terrible natural phenomena are employed
to represent national and social
convulsions and revolutions. Imagery,
which if literally verified would involve the
total dissolution of the fabric of the globe
and the destruction of the material
universe, really may mean no more than
the downfall of a dynasty, the capture of a
city or the overthrow of a nation.*

(Emphasis added.)

How he can blithely refer to such overwhelming judgments as "the
most sublime and terrible natural phenomena" and then say they
were "...employed to represent national and social convulsions
and revolutions" is devoid of logic.

If Doctor Russell had taken his claims to their logical end, so as to

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interpret the New Testament in the same fashion, then we would
expect him to describe the time of Jacob's trouble and the
destruction of Mathew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and Revelation as
only prophetic language regarding the most sublime and terrible
natural phenomena employed to represent national and social
convulsions and revolution. But *that they never happened*, nor
were they meant to happen.

While it may be true that the Scriptures referred to by Mr. Russell may not refer to the "total dissolution of the fabric of the globe and the destruction of the material universe," they obviously refer to an overthrow and destruction such as revealed in Genesis 6:13, 7:21-23, and possibly Genesis 1:2.

Let us look at a some other Scriptures referring to things which would seem impossible, and should be classified as miracles. In Joshua 10:11-14, the nation of Israel was in conflict with the five kings of the Amorites. In verse 8, The LORD had told Joshua that He had delivered them into their hand, "...and there shall not a man of them stand before thee."

In verse 12 Joshua made request of The LORD:

"...Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon."

Verse 13: "...So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day."

Mr. Russell apparently was not confident that the one Who made both the heaven and the earth was capable of causing the earth to stand still without any disruption or dissolution of the earth itself. The scientific world has confirmed that about a 24-hour disruption actually occurred at this time, indicating the truthfulness of the Bible.

In Isaiah 38, we see a record of a similar event occurred regarding the sun. God told Hezekiah through Isaiah that he was going to die.

Hezekiah prayed to God and was granted an additional fifteen

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years. Hezekiah was told by God he would be given a sign confirming the additional fifteen years, as well as the delivery of the city from the king of Assyria. The sign is given in verse 8.

Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward.

So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it had gone down.

God Who made the heavens and the earth is shown to be very clearly in control of His universe, including the earth, the doubting of Mr. Russell to the contrary.

The Bible reveals many such catastrophic judgments showing destruction of things for the purpose for which they were obviously intended, as well as those prophesied to occur in the future. Reference is made to the following by way of example (2 Peter 2:1-6):

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying The Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbered not. *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them*

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with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.

(Emphasis added.)

The passage from II Peter confirms there were catastrophic judgments of God in the Old Testament, showing that God spared not the old world in the flood of Noah's day, nor the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell to be reserved in chains of darkness, and completely destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah. Physical evidence confirms God's overthrow of the cities of Sodom and Gormorrha, as well as the flood of Noah's day, truly making them ensamples unto those that after should live ungodly. If these things are not true, they could hardly be considered as ensamples unto those that after should live ungodly.

It would not be amiss to consider also the language of 2 Peter 3:9-12 regarding the concept of future punishment, where he said:

The LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness: but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the LORD will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

A consideration of the words "melt" and "dissolved" in this text is an interesting study in itself, which will not be considered now.

When considering the claim made in II Peter 3:12 concerning the "Day of God" which is to result in the heavens being on fire and being dissolved, and the elements melting with fervent heat, can we arrive at a logical conclusion? If we content ourselves with the

Scriptures alone, we may decide that The Lord meant what He said, and go on to read verse 13 before making the mistake of Mr. Russell. Verse 13 reads:

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for *new heavens and a new earth*, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

If we are content to limit ourselves to the Scriptures, we shall lose nothing, but gain the more.

Right Division, One Of Many Keys To Understanding The Scriptures

The Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:15 gives us one of the most important tools for understanding the Bible, which, if ignored, we do so at our peril. He states by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that, in order to be approved of God, the Scriptures must be rightly divided. It is the writer's position that the Bible, "rightly divided," does not support the validity of the Preterists claim that the Second Coming of the Lord took place in A.D. 70.

A research of Doctor Russell's book, *The Parousia*, reveals no indication he was familiar with or applied the explicit instructions of God through the Apostle Paul, to rightly divide the Word. It is believed that the rightly-divided Word is a definite key to understanding as much as possible of God's plan and purpose for the ages. Again, as previously stated, Mr. Russell and the Preterists continually allege all prophecy, of whatever nature has been fulfilled. They place great emphasis upon the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 in order to support the claim that it was the "Great Tribulation," and that the general resurrection of I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4 occurred at that time.

There seems to be no question that Mr. Russell failed to take into account the clear and obvious setting aside of Israel in Acts 28:28, some eight years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

It is alleged this occurred regardless of the lack of repentance on Israel's part, and acceptance of their Messiah.

Consideration of Acts 28:28 should have led them to the conclusion that Israel was set aside, or divorced, in about A.D. 62, or eight years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. It was therefore impossible for the Parousia to take place in A.D. 70. The pronouncement of blindness upon the nation of Israel by the apostle Paul in this context is a quote from Isaiah 6:9-10, showing a door closed, at least temporarily, on Israel's hope. Whether this blindness was to be temporary, as in the Apostle Paul's case, or permanent is unknown.

Children Are For Signs and Seasons

Isaiah 8:18 reveals children are referred to in the Scriptures for signs and seasons. It is the writer's position that the setting aside, or divorce, of the nation of Israel, shown by the language of Acts 28, is in line with God's instructions to Hosea in Chapter 1:8-9 in naming his children to indicate Israel's position before God. First he uses the name *Lo-ammi* in Hosea:

Now when she had weaned *Lo-ruhamah*,
she conceived, and bare a son. Then said
God, "Call his name *Lo-ammi*: for ye are
not My people, and I will not be your
God."

(Emphasis added.)

Israel's future re-gathering was promised by God in verses 10 through 11 of the same chapter.

Yet the number of the children of Israel
shall be as the sand of the sea, which
cannot be measured nor numbered; *and it
shall come to pass, that in the*

place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living GOD. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

(Emphasis added.)

The second chapter of Hosea reveals the Lord pleading with Israel as her divorced or estranged husband during the period of her rejection to put away her whoredoms from her, and to return to God. In Hosea 2:16-23, after having detailed her punishments, we are told Israel will return at a future time.

And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call Me Ishi; (my husband); and shalt call Me no more *Baali*. For I will take away the names of *Baalim* out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. And I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know The LORD. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith The LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall

hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto Me
in the earth; and I will have mercy upon
her that had not obtained mercy; and I *will*
say to them which were not My People,
"Thou art My People;" and...

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they shall say, "Thou art my God."

(Emphasis added.)

The context shows it is God Himself who will do this, without dependence upon the obedience of Israel for fulfillment. God alone claims responsibility for the conditions and fulfillment of these promises.

The Preterist's position regarding this language in Hosea seems to be that it relates only to the time of Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity, and has nothing whatever to do with the future. The language itself shows this cannot be the case, and leaves a great many questions for our consideration. Reference is directed to the context above to examine some of these questions.

First, when and where did God take away the names of Baalim out of Israel's mouth as promised? Where is the record that God at the time of the return from Babylon made a covenant with the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven? What is the basis for claiming that God at that time betrothed Israel unto Himself for ever, as stated in verse 19? Where and when were they betrothed to Him in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies forever? If they were, the term "forever" would seem to be meaningless.

This prophecy of that future day indicates it is the promise of the coming kingdom, with David's Greater Son as King. There is no indication in Israel's recorded history that that day ever arrived. What is indicated is that only a partial fulfillment of this prophecy occurred, indicating an immediate and a future fulfillment.

History shows that Israel has remained in a *Lo-ammi* condition beginning from their setting aside in Acts 28:28 to the present, and we are reminded it occurred some eight years before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In all that time they have not proclaimed: "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of The Lord."

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It therefore would appear illogical to conclude that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was, in fact, "The Great Tribulation," "The Parousia," or "The Second Coming of the Lord," with the accompanying resurrection of 1 Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4, in the absence of these and other related events referred to previously. It appears unlikely this event qualifies in any manner as the fulfillment of all prophecy, or the "Second Coming." As a Futurist, I believe the "Second Coming" has not occurred, and was impossible of fulfillment in A. D.70, or any other period, including the present.

The following has small relevance to the subject under consideration, but it is hoped it will also shed some light on our topic.

Some time ago I attended a conference where each of the speakers chose a different aspect of "Grace" for their subject. One speaker examined the various covenants regarding God's grace. If the position of the speaker was correctly grasped, he held that many of the Old Testament covenants were conditional - conditional however, not in the usually accepted sense that the keeping of the covenants depended upon man or Israel's ability to keep them. It was his position these covenants were conditioned completely upon God alone for their fulfillment, and were therefore all of "Grace."

One of the first given consideration was the Abramic Covenant. It was pointed out that this covenant was dependant upon God alone for its fulfillment, and Abram was not given any conditions to keep. In Genesis 15:7-18, we find the covenant described. In verse 7, God promised to give to Abram the land to inherit. In verse 8 Abram asks for assurance regarding how he would know he would inherit. In verses 9-11, The Lord instructs Abram as to how he is to make preparation for confirmation of the covenant,

and he prepares the animals as commanded. In verse 12, The Lord put Abram into a deep sleep so that he could have no part in any of the conditions for its fulfillment. God assumed responsibility for all the...

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conditions required for fulfillment of the promise.

Reference is made to the language of Charles H. Welch in the May 2003 issue of *The Berean Expositor*, page 42, wherein he commented on the unconditional aspect of the Abrahamic covenant:

The next thing to observe, however, is the peculiar nature of this covenant. In most covenants there are two contracting parties, and terms are binding, the breaking of which by either side rendering the covenant void. Here in Genesis 15, Abraham is no active partner, he is asked to do nothing, he promises nothing, and to ensure that this is seen and understood, "a deep sleep fell upon Abram" (Gen. 15:12). The word for "deep sleep" occurs seven times in the Hebrew Old Testament (in Gen. 2:21; 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12; Job 4:13; 33:15; and Isa. 29:10). The verb from which it is derived is the Hebrew *radam*, to sleep heavily, to fall down astounded.

It will be seen, as in the case of Adam (Gen. 2:21), this deep sleep that fell on Abraham necessarily prevented him from having any active part in this covenant. It was unconditional, a feature which the apostle stresses in Galatians 3.

Another of the covenants given consideration at this meeting and shown to be conditioned upon God alone for fulfillment, is the promise of a New Covenant to be made with the nation of Israel, as prophesied by Jeremiah in Chapter 31:31-34. The language of

this covenant with Israel reveals a number of things which are of extreme importance. First, the fulfillment of this covenant had to do with Israel's future, and was written some 600 years before Christ. The aspect of future fulfillment is indicated by the words, "Behold the days come." This covenant is quoted by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews, Chapter eight, and is virtually identical to Jeremiah 31.

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Jeremiah prophesized that The Lord would make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. This covenant *had absolutely nothing to do with the Church which is His Body*. By observing the specific language of the New Covenant, it will be seen there are *no* conditions to be met by the house of Israel and the house of Judah. God, Himself, through the prophet Jeremiah, in

His supreme sovereign grace plainly claims that it is *He* Himself Who is going to make the covenant; *He* alone will be responsible for its conditions; and *He* assumes complete responsibility for its fulfillment. His assumption of complete responsibility is shown by the language of Jeremiah 31:33-34:

.../ will put my law in their inward parts, /
will write it in their hearts, / will be their
God, and they shall be MY People, they
shall teach no more every man his
neighbor, for they shall all know *Me*, (all
this without having to be taught it by
others), / will be merciful to their
unrighteousness, and their sins and their
iniquities will / remember no more.

(Emphasis added.)

With these positive assertions of what God will do when He puts the "New Covenant" into effect (for it is He Who says He will do it), there can be no possibility of its failure. If the "New Covenant" was in effect during the Pentecostal age, as some have claimed, Israel could never have failed and been set aside in unbelief, as

revealed in Acts 28:28, for its fulfillment was dependent upon God alone.

The Abramic Covenant and the New Covenant are both clear indications that all prophecy has not been fulfilled as claimed, as both are completely dependent upon God alone.

There are those who claim the New Covenant is conditional based upon the alleged qualification of Jeremiah 31:35-37, reading:

Thus saith The Lord, Which giveth the sun for a...

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light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, Which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar: The LORD of Hosts is His name: *'If* those ordinances depart from before Me,' saith The LORD, 'then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever.'

Thus saith the LORD; *'If* heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done,' saith The LORD.

(Emphasis added.)

It is claimed that the occurrence of the two "ifs" in this reference show that entire New Covenant shown by Jeremiah 31:31-37 to be conditional. However, reading the language of the complete text shows the impossibility of this happening, for the nation of Israel will continue as long as the named ordinances continue to prevail. These ordinances are in effect and continue to this date.

Israel Set Aside Prior To A.D. 70

It has been previously claimed, and there appears ample Scriptural evidence to support the claim, that the nation of Israel was set aside, not cast off forever as God's chosen people, in about A.D.62, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The language of Acts 28:25 indicates Israel was not only "set aside," but it is indicated they were "divorced" by God, as shown by Hosea 2:16-23. See also the language of Acts 28:25 which reads: "And when they agreed not among themselves, they *departed*."

Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance* defines "departed" in this instance by the Greek word *apoluo* number 630 in his *Greek Dictionary*. There he says it comes:

...from 575 and 3089; to free fully, i.e. (lit.)
relieve, release, dismiss (reflex, depart),
or (fig.) let die, pardon, or (spec.) *divorce*:
(let) depart, dismiss,

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divorce, forgive, let go, loose, put (send)
away, release, set at liberty.

This also reminds us of the language of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy in speaking of his departure (Greek analysis) or English analysis. This is much stronger than the expression in Acts 15:39, wherein the Apostle Paul and Barnabas "departed" asunder one from the other. The word "departed" here is described under number 373 in Strong's Concordance as, "to rend apart, reflex, to separate: depart (asunder). It indicates a violent departure."

Strong shows this language to be identical to the same term used in Matthew 1:19, where, after discovering Mary was with child, Joseph was minded to "put her away privily" (*apoluo*), i.e., to divorce her.

Do we have Scriptural authority to spiritualize the truth belonging to a prior calling or age, in order to claim the King (Messiah) returned in A.D. 70, as promised, some eight years subsequent to the setting aside (or divorce) of the nation of Israel? Is there a basis to allege a general resurrection of the dead occurred at this time, which could only be related to Israel's hope, and the

kingdom promised them, a kingdom which had clearly been set aside prior to this date?

Had Messiah returned in A.D. 70 for the purpose of setting up the Kingdom, as Mr. Russell and the Preterists believe, whether it was to be an earthly or spiritual return, we would expect to find, subsequent to the Millennium, New Jerusalem had descended from heaven, which, in line with this theory, should have occurred somewhere around 970 A.D., in line with Revelation 21:2. It would then have continued to be visible from that time to the present. This would have qualified as one of the most spectacular, wonderful and stupendous events of the ages.

Effect of The Second Coming on Satan

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The Bible reveals Satan is the enemy of mankind. Beginning with Genesis, Chapter three, he is shown lying and deceiving Eve regarding the tree of good and evil. In the book of Job he is seen involved in Job's testing. In the New Testament, he came to the Lord in the wilderness, tempting him. If what the Preterists tell us regarding Satan is correct, he is no longer present to exercise authority and influence upon the world of man, their position being that, subsequent to the Great Tribulation, that old enemy was destroyed. It is true that Revelation 20:1-3 shows he was to be put into the bottomless pit at the end of the Tribulation for one thousand years, after which he was to be released for a little while. He was to proceed to go out and deceive the nations, verse 8, and subsequently to be destroyed in the lake of fire, verse 10. If it is true that he has been cast into the lake of fire, then we should be able to observe him there at the present time.

Has Satan really been eliminated from influence upon the world of man as claimed? A consideration of Ephesians 6:10-17 reveals that our adversary, the old devil, is still among us. Here we are told to,

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Further that,

...We wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this
world, against spiritual wickedness in high
places.

It appears axiomatic that, if there is no enemy, there is no need for armor, no need to stand against the wiles of a non-existent devil. Obviously Satan is still among us, and the need for armor is still present.

The Church Which Is His Body

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This subject needs further consideration, especially if in any way it involves the "Second Coming." Had that coming actually occurred in A.D. 70 as alleged, it would have had disastrous effects upon the Church which is His Body. The Church of this age did not come into being until shortly after the setting aside of the nation of Israel around A.D. 62, some eight years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In that case, if Doctor Russell and the Preterists are correct regarding the fulfillment of all prophecy in A.D. 70, including the Second Coming, the resurrection, the setting up of the kingdom, the time of Jacob's trouble, and the events of Revelation, it would necessarily follow that this would negate the possibility of any further existence of the Church which is "The Body of Christ" in this or any other age. Continuance would have been rendered impossible, inasmuch as this Church would have been manifest *with* Christ prior to any alleged appearing in A.D. 70, in line with Colossians 3:3-4. In that case the only "hope" remaining, if indeed there could be said to be a hope today, would be the limited hope of Israel. We would then be faced with the conclusion Israel did not fail, Messiah came, and the Kingdom was established. Can we find Scriptural evidence to support this conclusion?

Second Coming -- Spiritual?

Mr. Russell and the Preterists also claim the Second Coming was not physical, but a spiritual coming. Without belaboring the point and citing all the Scriptures available, the following references will suffice to show a literal, physical coming is not only intended, but demanded. Acts 1:9-11 was previously quoted and reveals the Lord's return was to be physical, not spiritual. The two men in white said to the Apostles that this same Jesus, i.e., the one Who had just ascended, would come again.

He "shall so come in like manner," i.e., clearly, visibly, in bodily form, and not in some hidden spiritual way. This brings to mind what the Apostle John said in Revelation 1:7:

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Behold, *He* cometh with clouds; and
every eye shall see Him, and they also
which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the
earth shall wail because of Him. Even so.
Amen.

(Emphasis added)

This coming is to be seen, not only by Israel, but also the world. It was not to be a secret, invisible manifestation of the spirit. There is no reason to suppose that the Second Coming was to be other than literal, physical and earthly.

I Thessalonians 4:16 & 17 reveals the Second Coming to be literal, and the resurrection of those who were dead, literal as well.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from
heaven with a shout, with the voice of the
archangel, and with the trump of God:
and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
Then we which are alive, and remain,
shall be caught up together with them in
the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:
and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

A literal descent from heaven, a literal appearing, and a literal resurrection of the saints is the clear and obvious message.

Job also looked for a literal physical resurrection. He said in Chapter 19:25,26, quoting from Bullinger's *New Metrical Version*:

*I know that my redeemer (ever) lives, and
at the latter day on earth shall stand; And
after (worms) this body may have
consumed, yet in my flesh I shall Eloah
see.*

(Emphasis added.)

While considering the Parousia or "Second Coming," we should not overlook the lack of testimony from the secular world of A.D. 70. Had the Lord come in A.D. 70, then every eye would have seen

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Him as prophesized. No doubt this stupendous event would have been duly reported in all the newspapers, periodicals and journals of that period; nor would this event have been seen only in the land of Israel, but it would have been viewed from all over the known world. Such a happening would without a doubt still be extant in the written records of the historians of that age, no matter whether Biblical or secular. We would at the present time be able to read the stirring accounts of this marvelous event, and able to verify all that had transpired. These accounts would still be available for our perusal and study, and could not have been ignored by the biblical or secular world.

In line with prophecy, the Lord would have proceeded to set up His earthly kingdom, and begun His reign from the city of Jerusalem upon His father David's throne as promised. Where are the missing records of this great happening? In the absence of any such records, should we arbitrarily decide because we see no physical evidence of an earthly King and kingdom beginning in A.D. 70, that of necessity a spiritual hidden coming and a spiritual kingdom was indicated? It would be more logical to conclude that the lack of any physical evidence at all is clear and positive evidence that the "Second Coming" never happened, and is yet in our future.

They Who Pierced Him

The Preterists rely heavily upon the language of John 19:37 and Revelation 1:7 to support the claim that, in order for the *Parousia* or Second Coming to occur, those Israelites who pierced Him would have remained alive until A.D. 70, when they claim He returned. Rev. 1:7 reads:

Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.

According to their calculations, this would have required those to

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whom they refer to continue living for about 40 years. However, examination of the actual crucifixion shows factually only one person pierced His side, i.e., the Roman soldier. Are they saying that this Roman soldier must remain alive until A.D. 70? It appears obvious the language is figurative, and refers to the nation of Israel as a whole and not to specific individuals who might remain alive until the *Parousia*. And so Israel nationally will, when the Second Coming takes place, look upon Him Whom they, not as individuals, caused to be pierced and wail and mourn. The original quotation is found in Zechariah 12:10. Chapters 12, 13 and 14 reveal that, contrary to popular opinion, when this takes place, rather than the destruction of Israel and their dispersion among the nations, the following will take place.

Zech. 12:6-9:

In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David

and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall The LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

(Emphasis added.)

In A.D. 70 the nation of Israel was virtually destroyed. Concomitantly, not *all the nations* that came against Jerusalem suffered the same fate.

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Zech. 13:1-2:

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith The LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered.

Instead of this, Israel was set aside or divorced.

Zech. 14:3-4:

Then shall The LORD go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and

toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

Did the Lord go forth and fight against those nations? Of course not. Has the mount of Olives been divided in the midst toward the east and toward the west, or where is the very great valley which was to result? The answer again is no.

No More Death

It would appear that if the Preterists are correct, mankind in this day and age should not be subject to death, and no one should die. A consideration of Revelation, Chapter 21, mandates that subsequent to the destruction of Satan following the millennium after his release from the bottomless pit, there would be no more death. The pertinent language of Chapter 21, verse 3, reads:

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And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*'

This conforms with Revelation 20:14 summing up the judgment at the end of the Millennium: "And death and hell (i.e., the grave, or place of death) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

If the events of the book of Revelation took place after the alleged Second Coming of the Lord, in A.D. 70, then we should be living in a time when there is no death or dying. However, when we look around us, we see death and dying, sorrow and crying everywhere.

There are many questions left unanswered, however, whether we except the conclusions of the Preterists regarding the fulfillment of all prophecy and the occurrence of the "Second Coming" in A.D. 70, or whether as Futurists we believe the "Second Coming" is still future, we must continue to be true Bereans and search and see. We must not be satisfied with the conclusions advanced by any individual or group, but must search for our answers from the Scriptures "rightly divided." It is believed enough has been presented to show reasonable doubt that the Second Coming did not occur in A.D.70, and support the belief it is still future. Right division of The Scriptures themselves must be our guide and lead us in our quest for the truth connected to the *Parousia* or "Second Coming" of the Lord. May the Lord bless all of those who continue this quest.

We finish with the words of our Lord from Luke 24:44: "And He said unto them, 'These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which...

were written in the Laws of Moses and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me'"