

Examining Realized Eschatology

Part I: Introduction

2 Peter 2:1-2

I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. **2** The New Testament abounds in warnings concerning false teachers and false teaching.
 - A. Through the pen of inspiration, the apostle Peter says, *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them...”* (2 Pet. 2:1).
 - B. The apostle John adds, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”* (1 Jn. 4:1)
 - C. Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus false teachers would “come in” from without and also from “among yourselves” (Acts 20:29-30).
2. What is the mission of these false teachers?
 - A. They will speak *“perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves”* (Acts 20:30).
 - B. One would think Christians could easily spot such teachers and teaching since they are described as teaching *“perverse things”* (Acts 20:30) and *“damnable heresies”* (2 Pet. 2:1).
 - C. But the Lord Himself warns: *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”* (Matt. 7:15)
 - D. Such people are subtle using *“smooth words and flattering speech”* and if we do not exercise extreme caution we will become their booty (**Col. 2:8**: *“Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”*).
 - E. Therefore, we must *“contend earnestly for the faith”* (Jude 3) by not letting their teaching go unchallenged (“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” —Edmund Burke).
 - F. We must put it to the test to see if it can withstand the light of God’s truth (1 Jn. 4:6).
3. **3** In this series of lessons we will examine the primary tenets of *Realized Eschatology*.

II. DISCUSSION:

I. **4** What is it?

- A. The *realized eschatology* theory is a false doctrine.
 - (1) Most commonly it goes by the moniker of the “70 A.D. doctrine”
 - (2) Some call it the “Preterist View,” or “Preterism” and, adherents refer to themselves as “Preterists” (A man at the Danville, IN debate had a hooded sweatshirt with “Preterist” emblazoned on the front.)
 - (a) Definition (source Google.com):**

“**Preterism** is a Christian eschatological view that interprets some (partial **preterism**) or all (full **preterism**) prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened. The term **preterism** comes from the Latin *praeter*, which Webster's 1913 dictionary lists as a prefix denoting that something is ‘past’ or ‘beyond’.”

- (b) ** Like Baskin-Robbins ice cream; it comes in many flavors.
 - (c) For example, from what I can gather a “full preterist” would claim a “partial preterist” is a heretic, and vice versa.
 - (d) The Westside church of Christ in Indianapolis (Kentucky Avenue; Hwy. 67) advertises themselves as a “Full Preterist” church (John Watson is their ‘preacher.’)
- B. 5 In this series of lessons we will refer to it by the more formal term of *realized eschatology*; and I will refer to it as “RE.”
- (1) According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* *eschatology* is the “doctrine of the last things, is meant the ideas entertained at any period on the future life, the end of the world (resurrection, judgment; in the New Testament, the Parousia), and the eternal destinies of mankind.”
 - (2) The word *realized* simply means “accomplished or completed.”
 - (3) RE is thus the doctrine of *completed last things*.
 - (a) It asserts the end times were *realized* or completely accomplished in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.
 - (b) According to RE all the prophecies of the New Testament concerning the second coming of Christ, the final judgment, the resurrection of the dead, the destruction of the earth and material universe, etc. were fulfilled in 70 A.D..
 - (c) Thus, RE claims no prophecies in the Bible are yet to be fulfilled—absolutely none!
 - (d) RE advocates also claim, but are unable to prove, that all the books of the New Testament were written before 70 A.D. (It is widely believed the book of *Revelation* was written post 70 A.D., circa 96 A.D.).

2. 6 Where did it originate?

- A. Like all false doctrines RE’s origination and roots are shrouded in mystery.
 - (1) The earliest documented writings on the subject were those of James Stuart Russell.
 - (a) *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming, 1878*).
 - (b) Russell was a Scotsman & denominational minister in the Congregational Church.
 - (c) The word *parousia* is a Greek word; it literally means “presence.”
 - (d) It was used in Bible times to denote the arrival or visit of a king or emperor.
 - (e) The Greek word *parousia* corresponds to the Latin word *advent*.
 - (f) The word *parousia* is used 24 times in the New Testament:
 - (i) Six uses refer to the coming of individuals (e.g., Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus; 1 Cor..16:17; Titus, 2 Cor..7:6-7; Paul, 2 Cor.10:10, Phil. 1:26, 2:12; the “lawless one”, 2 Thess. 2:9).
 - (ii) The other seventeen uses refer to Christ’s second coming, except the one case in which it refers to the coming of the “Day of God” (2 Pet.3:12).
 - (g) The word *parousia* is found in the following verses: Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8, 9; Jas. 5:7, 8; 2 Pet. 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1 Jn. 2:28.

- (h) The word *parousia* is mainly used in the New Testament to refer to the second coming of Christ.

1 Thess. 4:15: “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.”

2 Thess. 2:8: “And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

2 Pet. 3:4: “And saying, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’”

- (2) **7** However, of late, a ‘gospel’ preacher by the name of Max R. King has become RE’s undisputed champion.
- (3) King has written a book ‘explaining’ RE entitled *The Spirit of Prophecy* which was published in 1971 and revised in 2002.
- (4) In this series of lessons, I will refer to both editions; I will refer to the 1971 edition as “SOP-1” and the 2002 edition as “SOP-2.”
- (5) King also wrote a second book, *The Cross and the Parousia of Christ* (1987).
- (6) King and his cohorts have even gone so far as to have their doctrine trademarked as *Transmillennialism*®. (Note: Shouldn’t a huge red flag go up when we refer to your religion as an “ism”?)

B. Here is how King advertises himself on his “Presence” web site:

“Max King is an author, scholar, and Bible teacher. In 1971 Max published *The Spirit of Prophecy*, creating a stir in his denomination and bringing the field of covenant eschatology to the forefront of biblical theology. In 1989, Max expanded this work by founding a series of annual *Presence* conferences and publishing the *Presence Journal*, leading to the formation of *Presence* as a 501c nonprofit. He is also the author of *The Cross and Parousia*, and the upcoming *Gospel of God*. Max and his wife, Navella, live in Dacula, Georgia.”

- (1) When King wrote his first book (*The Spirit of Prophecy*) he was a ‘gospel ‘preacher’ working with a liberal church of Christ in northeast Ohio.
- (2) The RE movement has gone like wild fire through liberal churches of Christ.
- (3) But it has also caused dissension and division among faithful churches of Christ.
- (4) The Westside church of Christ in Indianapolis should be a huge warning to all who love the truth and the Lord’s church.
- (a) When we first moved back to Indiana in 2014 I attended a gospel meeting at this congregation.
- (b) Moe Hafley (very sound!) did the preaching and there were over 100 in attendance; most members of that church.
- (c) The latest picture of the members of that congregation, “a full preterist church,” showed only 11 people.

3. 8 What does it teach?

A. RE is no mere harmless theory or “preacher fuss.”

- (1) It has far-reaching and dire consequences upon the faith of Christians and the unity of

the body of Christ.

- (2) King's book on RE, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, contains a multitude of false teachings.
 - (3) To answer every error in that book would require many volumes to be written.
 - (4) Furthermore, there are other "branches" (permutations) of RE, not unlike other false theories (e.g., Calvinism, premillennialism).
 - (5) It metastasizes like cancer; e.g., "comprehensive grace"; which is essentially "universal salvation" dressed in modern garb and obscured with theological gobbledygook.
- B. Therefore, in this series of lessons we will limit ourselves to a discussion of what I consider to be the major errors of the RE theory as taught by Max R. King.

4. **9 Major errors of RE:**

A. Christ's second coming is past:

- (1) RE teaches the second coming of Christ is not the Lord's yet future coming at the end of time, end of the world, and final judgment; but was Christ's coming in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- (2) Consider King's own words:
**"There is no scriptural basis for extending the second coming of Christ beyond the fall of Judaism" (SOP-I, p. 105)

B. ** Final judgment is past:

- (1) RE teaches the end of the world and final judgment are not yet in the future, but took place when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies in 70 A.D.
- (2) Consider King's own words:
**"The world reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (i.e., 2 Pet. 3:7, cvt) was the Jewish world." (SOP-I, p. 131)

C. ** End of the world is past:

- (1) RE teaches the end of the world is not the destruction or passing away of the earth and the material universe. Rather, it is the passing away of Judaism which was accomplished, hence *realized*, at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- (2) Consider King's own words:
**"The world marked for destruction in prophecy, the end of which involved the second coming of Christ and resulted in the true redemption of Israel, was the Jewish world. Therefore it is the end of the Jewish world and not this material earth we live on today." (SOP-I, p. 83)

D. ** Spiritual adultery:

- (1) RE condones spiritual adultery since it teaches both the Old and New Covenants were in force between the cross and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- (2) Consider King's own words:
**"...the Old Covenant world continued several years after the cross. Its final end came with the fall of Jerusalem, and this event marked the passing of heaven and earth." (SOP-2, p. 298)

E. ** Denies the resurrection of the dead:

- (1) Perhaps the most grievous error of RE is its denial of the resurrection of the dead.
- (2) RE teaches the resurrection of the dead is not a literal resurrection of the physical body of human beings from the grave.
- (3) On the contrary, RE teaches the resurrection was a figurative resurrection of the church from the suppression of persecution at the hands of Judaism.
- (4) Consider King's own words:

******“...the expected eschatological resurrection was the translation of the children of God from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:18).”
(SOP-2, p. 309)

And,

“The church was in the grave or casket of Judaism until the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem.” (King's statement in a debate with Gus Nichols, 1973)

5. **10** Goals of this study:

- A. In this series of lessons we will examine each of these five major errors of the RE theory.
 - (1) I encourage and admonish all of you to pay close attention; at times this will not be easy because of the blatant silliness of this doctrine and its convoluted nature.
 - (2) I will document RE's teachings with quotes from Max King.
 - (3) Stay alert! Pay very carefully attention, ask questions, and study all the scripture references (Acts 17:11).
 - (4) Dealing with false teaching is not pleasant; take it very seriously.
 - (5) Since we are studying RE at the Sunday PM service, you are very important! If this false doctrine tries to infiltrate this congregation you will be the first line of defense!
- B. **11** The errors of RE are very serious.
 - (1) RE preaches “*a different gospel*” (Gal. 1:6) from that which is revealed in the New Testament.
 - (2) Those teaching RE are guilty of twisting the scriptures and deceiving unwary souls (2 Pet. 3:16).
 - (3) And, RE is not of the “*one faith*” or “*one hope*” (Eph. 4:4-5) found in the gospel of Christ; **RE fractures unity (1 Cor. 1:10: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”)**.
 - (4) Cannot compromise with RE adherents! Too much is at stake!
- C. **12** I hold no personal animosity towards anyone who believes and/or teaches RE.
 - (1) My purpose in this series of lessons is twofold: 1) to warn faithful brethren of this “*damnable heresy*.” 2) to encourage those in the bondage of RE theory to “*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith*.” (2 Cor. 13:5)
 - (2) Just recently I visited the Facebook page of the Westside CoC in Indianapolis.
 - (3) Someone had posted a review accusing their preacher (John Watson) of being a false teacher; one of their members gave this response:

“Obviously, you are welcome to your own opinion. However, simply not believing the same way John Watson does, does not give you the right to call him a false teacher. True Christians can agree to disagree.”

(4) The person making the false teacher charge responded:

“...by their fruits you shall know them. By Watson's fruit he has shown himself to be a false teacher and therefore dangerous. He is to be avoided.”

(5) The response by the RE adherent is significant.

(a) False teachers do NOT want to be exposed; they prefer to work like “leaven” (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9).

(b) They prefer to infiltrate faithful brethren and then slowly, but surely, spread their seeds of false teaching (e.g., Incident at Belleville congregation where 70 A.D. adherents were passing out literature in the parking lot.).

(c) They take advantage of Christian's good will and welcoming nature.

(d) They also prey on scriptural ignorance, lack of wariness and most people's tendency to avoid conflict.

(e) We must be wary and forearmed with the knowledge of the truth!

(f) We must not give false teachers an advantage by ignoring them and hoping they will “go away”!

****Rom. 16:17-18:** *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”*

D. **13** Before launching into this study of RE there are three items I would like to address.

(1) First, before I began my study of RE my perception was that it was a somewhat innocuous and relatively harmless theory about eschatology and not of major importance. Now that I've thoroughly studied RE I have come to a very different conclusion.

(a) I'm convinced RE is as rank of a “damnable heresy” as they come.

(b) In the course of this study I believe any good Bible student with a healthy respect for the inspiration and authority of the scriptures will come to the same conclusion.

(2) Second, despite writing dozens of pages on RE, my review is *brief*.

(a) I say this because the more I dug into RE the more I found, as is true with most false teachings, that it is highly convoluted, confusing, and internally inconsistent.

(b) For example, I just learned yesterday (5/29/18) of the “comprehensive grace” error they teach.

(c) I would compare my study of RE with exploring the Grand Canyon.

(i) The main canyon is unmistakable and rather straight forward to explore.

(ii) However, the Grand Canyon contains a multitude of extremely narrow and winding side canyons that would take even the most experienced explorer months, if not years, to fully investigate.

- (iii) The same is true with RE: The main tenets of RE are quite clear and obvious.
- (iv) However, there are many “side canyons” to RE that if fully explored would literally require volume upon volume to be written.
- (v) For the sake of brevity, I’ve chosen to focus on what I perceive as the main issues and even then I do not explore every possible argument to refute them.
- (c) At the conclusion of this study, if you want to study more on your own, I will gladly provide you a bibliography of both the pro and con RE materials I read and studied in the preparation of this tract.
 - (i) I would encourage those with a deeper interest in this subject to consult those books and articles.
 - (ii) However, I warn you, especially with the pro RE material; you are in for an extremely frustrating experience as you will witness the very pinnacle of scripture twisting.
 - (iii) Reading *The Spirit of Prophecy* was, by far, the most difficult “read” I’ve ever done.
- (3) Third, I sincerely appreciate all the dedicated writers who have written refutations of 70 A.D. doctrine.
 - (a) I probably won’t add anything new or improved over what others have already written.
 - (b) However, I hope this series of lessons will help you understand the issues and provide you with some ammunition to refute RE if you run in to it.
 - (c) Many of my arguments were formulated by other writers and I tried my best to put them into my own words or properly document them with direct quotations from the original works.
 - (d) I extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation to these writers as I’ve greatly benefited from the fruits of their studies and do not claim superior scholarship over them.

III. CONCLUSION:

- I. RE’s errors are egregious!
 - A. Christ’s second coming is past.
 - B. Final judgment is past.
 - C. End of the world is past.
 - D. Spiritual adultery.
 - E. Denies the resurrection of the dead.
- 2. Again, addressing false teachers/false teaching is not a pleasant task; but it is a necessary one.

Gal. 1:8-9: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
- 3. Invitation

References:

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