

# ROMANS Part 108

Chapter 11:25

## The secret of the duration of Israel's blindness.



**For I am not willing for you to be ignorant of this secret, brethren, lest you may be passing for prudent among yourselves, that callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering.**

### RISKY BUSINESS

The risk run by the Romans, or by any member of Christ's body chosen on the heels of Israel's national defection, is that of becoming prudent in one's own estimation. Paul is not discussing the *actually* prudent here, but rather those "passing for prudent among [themselves]." This imprudence takes the form of a bunch of self-deceived "believers" whose heresy can only be sustained in conversation with one another. These imprudent ones sound smart only to those already in the club. Should any of them actually wander out into Truthland, their deception is easily exposed and their arguments overturned.

The imprudence of Paul's context is the assumption that, because God has put Israel on hold and is blessing the nations big-time, therefore God is finished for *all* time with Israel. "We are God's new and only darlings" is the smug, false assurance of the imprudent ones. The name of this deception back in Paul's day was "Ignorant and Imprudent Smuggies From The Nations Reach Horribly Mistaken Conclusion Concerning Israel." Today it is simply called "Preterism."

Preterism is the belief that, back in 70 A.D. at the sacking of Jerusalem by Titus of Rome, God washed His hands once and for all of His once-favorite nation. The Jews rejected their own Messiah, and 70 A.D. was God's punishment upon them. "Take *that*," God said, and He retired to His summer home, leaving Israel on the ash heap of history.

This belief reaches extremes of ignorance and imprudence by insisting that 70 A.D. and the sacking of



Preterists live in a house of mirrors.

Jerusalem was the fulfillment of the book of Revelation. You read correctly. According to the theory, the events of Revelation have already occurred. They all occurred in 70 A.D. I'm not kidding. This is what the Preterists say. This was God's final judgment upon Israel. I am only reporting. Preterists live in a house of mirrors. I was invited over to their house once but I became dizzy and nauseous and asked to be excused.

Let us consider the strange assertions of this cadre of scoffers one fable at a time.

#### STAND ON YOUR HEAD AND CLOSE ONE EYE

To deal with the argument, "Yes, but what about all those promises God made to Israel?" the Preterists say, "Oh, God fulfills those promises 'spiritually,' not literally. None of that stuff will *actually* happen. It figuratively happens in a completely different people, namely the body of Christ." To deal with the argument, "Yes, but what about all the wild things prophesied in the book of Revelation, such as a third of the earth burning up, a plague of stinging locusts tormenting people for five months, all the cities of the nations collapsing in an earthquake, and a New Jerusalem coming down upon a New Earth where there will be no more crying or death—just to name a few of the wild things," this same brigade says, "Oh, none of that is literal, either. It was all fulfilled 'spiritually' in 70 A.D. None of these things *actually* happened. The entire book of Revelation is a metaphor." Should the questions arise, "What are 'locusts' a metaphor for?" or "What is 'five months'

a metaphor for?" or "What is 'earthquake' a metaphor for?" or "What is 'a third of the earth' a metaphor for?" or "What is 'no more death' a metaphor for?" the answers are even more wild than if one simply took the events of Revelation at face value—allowing for the occasional figure of speech.

Every Preterist-type "interpreter" of the book of Revelation has a different "revelation" so that any "study" of this book becomes, rather, a competition for the latest, greatest interpretation. The more outlandish, in some of these circles, the better. (As if the literal interpretation of this book is not outlandish enough.) It is much more exciting to invent, theorize, conjecture, infer and imagine, than to simply believe God's declarations. In these days of apostasy, believing God is boring and out of vogue. People like me are therefore thought to be "common" and "unspiritual." And yet believing in God is one of the most spiritual things one can do—and far from common. Only the spirit of God itself can accomplish the amazing feat of believing God. I wonder what "believing God" is a metaphor for?

I know this much: The beliefs of Preterists are a metaphor for a train wreck.

#### HOW ABOUT A DATE?

The entire premise of the Preterist viewpoint depends on the Book of Revelation being written before 70 A.D. Preterists insist that John wrote Revelation on Patmos in 68 or 69 A.D. They must insist this because, if Revelation was *not* written at that time—or before it—then the Preterists die on their feet. If Revelation was *not* written in 68 or 69 A.D., then Preterists arrive at the hospital without a pulse.

Unfortunately for the theory and its holders, the dating of Revelation is subject to furious debate. Many scholars point to third and fourth century Revelation commentators such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Victorinus and Jerome to prove that the book was written around A.D. 96.

No date of any Scripture book is known for certain, including Revelation. Any theory which depends on a knowledge of the date of authorship of any given book (such as the Acts 28:28 theory, which supposes that any letter written by Paul before his imprisonment in Rome is not written for the modern-day body of Christ), is necessarily discredited. Why? It has not pleased God to tell us, in His Word, the dates of the authorship of these books. Thus, these dates are unimportant. Thus, we cannot base any doctrines—let alone earth-shattering ones such as “God is finished with Israel” or “Revelation already happened”—upon the date of the authorship of any particular book of the Bible.

Let God be found true, and the ignorant and imprudent, liars.

#### HEADING OFF PRETERISM AT THE PASS

Paul’s motive for writing chapters 9 through 11 of Romans—and especially chapter 11—is to keep believers and potential believers from the house of mirrors I have just described. One of the requirements of the Preterist Club must be, “Thou shalt not ever, in thy lifetime, read the eleventh chapter of Romans.” Is it possible for Paul to state any clearer that God has *not* thrust away His people? The words “God does not thrust away His people” (Romans 11:2) do it for me.

Paul begins this section with, “For I am not willing for you to be ignorant of this secret, brethren.” We will get to the secret momentarily. But first, what would be the consequence of an ignorance of the coming revelation? This: “passing for prudent among yourselves.” The knowledge of what Paul is about to disclose is therefore the remedy for a delusion of prudence.

The fact that what Paul reveals in verse 25 of Romans 11 is called a secret proves that the coming information was not revealed anywhere else in Scripture. Paul received the secret directly from Jesus Christ. The secret answers the pressing question of the day, “What has happened and what will happen with Israel?” That Israel had been knocked off her high horse had become evident to all. It was also painfully obvious to any sane person that the promised kingdom had not arrived. (Nothing is obvious to Preterists, however.) John the Baptist had declared,

“Near is the kingdom of the heavens” (Matthew 3:2). Jesus Himself repeated this mantra in Matthew 10:7, “Now going, herald, saying that ‘Near is the kingdom of the heavens.’” Jesus also said, “By no means *may* this generation be passing by, till all these things *should* be occurring” (Matthew 24:34).

What happened?

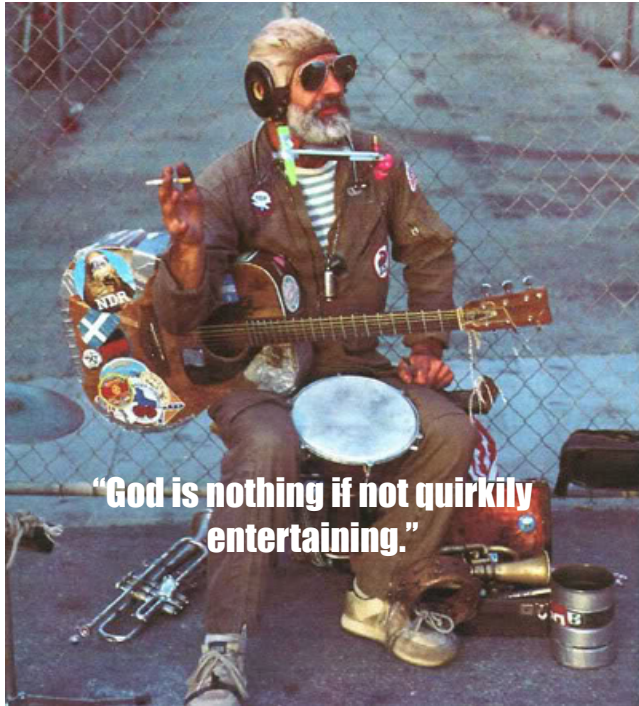
Everyone in Israel knew that the kingdom of the heavens referred to by Messiah was an actual, political, Earth-bound monarchy where Israel would rule the other nations with David as her king and Christ as her Chief Priest. No one could possibly mistake its coming, for it was to arrive with great signs and wonders (Matthew 24:27-31). With the Messiah embarked upon His three-year ministry, this kingdom sat on the cusp of realization. The times prophesied by Daniel (the seventy, seven-year periods described by the prophet in Daniel chapter 9) neared their fulfillment, with only seven years remaining until the inauguration of said Monarchy. What could stop it now? Only God Himself. And this is just what He did.

But why?

“WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST TO BRING YOU AN IMPORTANT NEWS UPDATE”

No one—*no one*—foresaw what God had in mind for the vast world *and* for the vast universe outside of Israel. In the mind and on the as-yet hidden calendar of God was a temporary setting aside of Israel that would make way for the dispensing of a gospel of transcendent grace to those He had basically ignored since the calling of Abraham. God had burdened Himself with the glorious details of the depths of what had occurred at the crucifixion of His Son. Since the cross, however, He had bided His time in announcing it. Jesus Christ had died on that cross, for not only the sins of the nation Israel, but for the sins of the entire world. And not only for the sins of the entire world, but for the sins of the universe—of beings both terrestrial and celestial. But who knew this? No one; not even Jesus Christ’s closest friends on Earth. Jesus Himself refused to utter a word of it while on Earth. And





so God waited. The secret would come; it was be only a matter of time, place, and the staging of the personnel.

To set the table for the revelation of this hidden truth, God had to temporarily clear Israel from the table of Earth. This He accomplished when Israel rejected her own Messiah. Not only was such a rejection necessary in order for Christ to die upon the foreordained cross (Israel, the priesthood nation, sacrificed the lamb that would forgive her nation's sins; how ironic), but the way had to be cleared for a new gospel to be published *apart from the mediation of Israel*. Thus, Israel's greatest national crime served a dual purpose: 1) it offered the ultimate Sacrifice for the sins of the world, and 2) it was *such* a grievous offense that God was justified, before the universe, for yanking Israel offstage. No one would have blamed Him had He removed her permanently. In fact, many would have lauded Him.

God had other ideas.

To whom, then, was this new information to be revealed? To the friends of God? No. That would have been too obvious. God is nothing if not quirkily entertaining. God is oh so obvious *after* the fact, but never before. And so He would reveal the secret concerning the duration of Israel's blindness to the most rabid enemy of God, Christ, and—by unwitting extension—Israel herself. God would change this rabid enemy, in an instant, from a lunatic killer to a mouthpiece of transcendent grace. The man for that job was Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee whose résumé for the position of “Apostle of

Christ” was the worst on the planet. This perfectly suited God's purpose. This former enemy of Christ would publish abroad the deepest aspects of Calvary.

What an unexpected twist.

Everything went as planned—naturally. Israel was out, and the nations in. But now, listen to the murmuring. Listen to the hard questions thrown to the podium at the long-awaited press conference: “God! God! Is this a permanent situation?” “God! God! Has Israel just lost its favored nation status forever?” “God! If Israel has *not* lost her favored nation status forever, then how long will her blindness last?” *Ah!* Here, then, became the catalyst for a revelation of the special secret hidden from the cons in God but now revealed through the ex-Pharisee. Paul would answer the “is Israel finished?” question in the first twenty-four verses of Romans 11. He would answer the timing question in verse 25.

#### THE SECRET

Paul had already stated firmly at the beginning of this chapter that in no way does God permanently thrust away His people. This answers the first question. God casts Israel away temporarily, but does not thrust her away permanently. The next question is: How long will Israel's blindness last? For this, Paul receives a special revelation: “*Callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering*” (Romans 11:25).

What a succinct yet detailed answer. This simple phrase is one of the most sublime utterances of Scripture.

The words “in part” allow for a remnant of faithful in Israel; not everyone in Israel has been calloused, only the

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majority. The words “until the complement of the nations may be entering” unveil the existence of a finite number of people from among the nations believing in Paul's gospel. I get the sense of finiteness from the word “complement.” This word is translated from the Greek *pleroma*, meaning “that which fills.” One also may say, “that which completes.” We have already determined earlier that this chapter speaks of nations and not individuals. Thus also here. Individuals, however, emerge from all the nations to be counted among Christ's body. Think of it this way: All

the nations will eventually disgorge their resident body members, at which time the filling (complement) of the nations will be entering.

“...until the complement of the nations may be *entering*.” Entering what? Entering into their calling. And what is the calling? It is membership in the body of Christ. Paul writes in the ensuing chapter, in Romans 12:4-5—

For even as, in one body, we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, thus we, who are many, are one body in Christ, yet individually members of one another.”

In 1 Corinthians 12:27, another early letter, Paul writes—

Now you are the body of Christ, and members of a part.

This may be all that Paul means by “entering.” But because I am the World’s Most Outspoken Bible Scholar, I will venture boldly to the next level. I admit that I may be taking a liberty with Paul’s intention, but at least I’ve admitted to that possibility. Therefore: Not only are members of the body of Christ emerging from all the nations to become a single, spiritual body united under their head, Christ, but they shall also be entering into the *realm* of their service, namely “among the celestials” (1 Corinthians 15:49; Ephesians 2:6). A text from the Circumcision gospel suggesting this principle comes to mind. Matthew 25:21—

“Well done! good and faithful slave. Over a few were you faithful; over many will I place you. *Enter into the joy of your lord!*”

This “[entering] into joy” touches upon an even more specific yet similar parable from Luke 19:17—

Seeing that you became faithful in the least, *be having authority over ten cities.*

The abstract blessing of entering into joy graduates into an accession of an actual role in an actual place. I know that this is Circumcision teaching, but the Uncircumcision enjoys a similar appointment under Christ. Only the place changes: ours is a celestial kingdom rather than a terrestrial one. We not only enter into a body (the body of Christ) that awaits the last member’s entrance, but that body itself shall enter into its rightful *place*, that place being above the stars. Paul writes in Philippians 3:20—

For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

## SYNCHRONISM

It is not incidental that the callousness upon Israel lasts “until” the complement of the nations may be entering. This verse strongly suggests that the snatching away of the body of Christ not only synchronizes with the removal of Israel’s national callousness, but triggers it. Read: The majority of Israel is calloused “*until* the complement of the nations may be entering.”

No wonder Paul writes in Romans 8:19, “For the premonition of the creation is awaiting the unveiling of the sons of God.” I usually apply this to the animal kingdom, but why not apply it to Israel as well? Do you suppose that perhaps the knowledgeable among the



“The snatching away of the body of Christ triggers the removal of Israel’s callousness.”

mother nation *also* await our manifestation? Don’t you think that they might *also* anticipate our completion? According to Paul’s wording, our completion activates the removal of Israel’s blindness. I am not saying that, at the snatching away of the body of Christ, Israel enters the kingdom. That is later. I am saying that, at the snatching away, callousness is removed from the majority of Israel and the New Covenant commences with the calling of the 144,000 and the vast throng (Revelation 7:4-9). Israel must still pass through the final seven year tribulation, but now, with the body of Christ removed and God again granting Israel favored nation status, her chief witnesses assume their places for the final lap.

## CALLOUSNESS

The Greek word translated “callousness,” in the Concordant Version, is *porosis*. This is the adjective



form of the verb *poroo* (“callous”), meaning “to cover with a thick, insensitive skin.” How well this describes the current state of Israel. No matter what truth gets hurled against the modern unbelieving nation, it never sticks. Israel is insensitive to both rebuke and revelation. To protect her own favorable opinion of herself, she has developed a thick layer of epidermis. This, she seems proud of. Think of the skin at the bottom of your feet, and now compare it to the skin at your fingertips. We, as members of Christ’s body, are blessed with finger-tip sensitivity to the things of God. Israel? She can walk over a bed of hot coals and not flinch. The day shall soon arrive, however, when God will remove the callous and expose Israel to truth. The truth will hurt at first, but the nation will recover. Oxygen bathes the wound. Pain will give way to healing.

We may sometimes question (curse?) God for the level of sensitivity He’s saddled us with. In the end, however, this *gift* of sensitivity is what heightens our responsiveness to His call. He can nudge us now, rather than torment us with locusts later for five months. We get it. Sensitivity hurts, but the bite of a thousand locusts hurts worse. Endure your light afflictions, then, to the end. Your reward among the celestials will be great. —MZ

## Dear Martin:

I would like to introduce myself to you. I am a 69 year old man who has been in and out of the studying of God’s Word since I was 20 years old. Years ago, I was a strong believer in the teachings I received from “The Way International.” I went through their top leadership training and ran a group of home fellowships. But for reasons which are ancient history and just too numerous to go into, I reached a point where I could no longer tolerate their ministry. I walked away from the things of God. It has taken me many years to even want to come back and to un-learn so much that I thought was “The Truth.” With the help of the spirit of God and my own conscience, I must have known in my heart that what we were doing was not right.

I have read all of your books, and am also a big follower of the works of A E Knoch, E. W. Bullinger, Clyde Pilkington Jr. and a few more. I am currently reading your series on Romans. I just finished reading A E Knoch’s *The Unveiling of Jesus Christ*, and I look forward each day to your broadcasts on the Revelation Series.

Your knowledge of, and presentations of God’s Word each day are a positive influence for me. I have no one with whom I can freely discuss God’s Word. After 3 minutes or so I watch peoples’ eyes glaze over, or I simply get no response. It’s too bad, but it does draw me closer to God.

Your work helps me to feel that I am not the only one who sees this world and present evil eon as “twisted.” Keep up the good work; it is appreciated. I hope that you will publish more of your writings soon. I will buy and study them all!



“I’m glad I’m not the only one who sees this world as twisted.”