

The Extrapolation of the Conflagration of Satan in Full-Preterism

~by~

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~Introduction~

Recently I posted a blog on the Death is Defeated Ning site (DID). It was a commentary on some of Rev. Joseph Vincent II's remarks following a short exchange we had on a popular social network. In my blog, I use the following example to justify my assertion that Full-Preterists commonly use systematization, viz. extrapolation, or making interpretive judgments in passages without exegetical precedent from the immediate text.

The example,

Just look at FPst forums where people ask frequently asked questions like when was satan cast into the lake of fire? The text that they are referring to does not say it was in AD 70; but FPs will commonly extrapolate the answer from other texts without any formal exegesis or systemization.

It is not a specific example; it is a generalization.¹ Even so, the details of the example are not specifically relevant to my central thesis; Joseph and I were not hashing through an exhaustive debate about specific passages.

Nonetheless,² my invitation for Christian discourse² was kindly accepted by another Full-Preterist, Ken Palmer. In a well-mannered tone, he suggested that the immediate context of Revelation 20:10 warrants establishing the timing of the devil's being cast into the lake of fire. He mentioned that the Resurrection of the Dead and the Great White Throne Judgment are in the immediate context. These elements would contextually limit the timing of the realization of the conflagration of Satan, which in Full-Preterism is limited to c. ad 70.

¹ A specific examples is, "Satan is destroyed having been banished to the lake of fire. Paul wrote to the Romans stating that God would crush Satan under their feet "shortly." The time was at hand for Satan's demise (Rev. 1:1-3) Satan knew that his time was short, Revelation 12:12. According to the book of Revelation he was cast into the lake of fire, (Revelation 20:10; 22:6,10,12) an event imminent in the first century." [Online] [Cited: January 26, 2011.] <http://www.allthingsfulfilled.com/faq.html>.

--See too <http://kloposmasm.wordpress.com/tag/millennium/>

² In that blog, I write "The focus of this article is not to give any rebuttal to his arguments point for point, but rather to advance the opportunity to further explain my original points and give a practical application using Joseph's arguments for an educational example and to open the floor for further Christian dialogue."

Mr. Palmer writes,

You paper noted the issue with Satan, and being cast into the lake of fire, decided by FP, to be at 70 AD....as you are correct there is no date permissive in the scriptures for this event, however, the surrounding context of that specific action defines its timing does it not? That is speaking of the ROTD (resurrection of the dead - Sea, Death and Hades.) Would it be liberal of us to assume that at this consummated event of the GWTJ, fall into the category of 70 AD, as it has been repeatedly outlined to have happened in timing with the accomplishment over Sin and Death for those who waited for Him, and the final outcome and demise of the adversary himself, along with the destruction of the "heavens and earth" at that time, wherein righteousness did not dwell any more?

Yet, my thesis was not that the timing of such texts cannot be established—but rather, that the Full-Preterist interpretation of that timing is founded on the extrapolation of their interpretations of other passages. This is not inherently wrong. My “futurist” interpretation of Revelation 20 is primarily exegetical, but I do in part make systematic application and disciplined extrapolation.³

~Focus~

The immediate context of the Revelation chapter 20 verse 10 does not intrinsically furnish adequate support to suppose the events of the passage “fall into the category” of ad 70. Full-Preterists who argue for this ad 70 fulfillment of this passage cannot demonstrate their position exegetically from this passage.

My argument is not *tu quo*, as if I needed to justify my method of the extrapolation of clear propositions of Scripture for systemization; I am arguing for the necessity of it, even within Full-Preterism. For example, when Mr. Palmer suggests that the conflagration of Satan was temporally linked to the time of the Resurrection of the Dead and the Great White Throne Judgment, he has to first show a direct correlation of the Resurrection of the Dead and the Great White Throne Judgment to the events of ad 70 in other passages, then he can extrapolate two different propositions [i.e. 1.) the ROTD & the GWTJ were fulfilled in ad 70 and 2.) that the conflagration of Satan was at the time of the ROTD & the GWTJ] to conclude that the conflagration of Satan was in ad 70.

Although it is exegetically impossible for Mr. Palmer to demonstrate the first premise—that the Resurrection of the Dead and the Great White Throne Judgment were fulfilled in c. ad 70—I’ll admit it to demonstrate how the second premise cannot be exegetically deduced. Thus, even though I think it is necessary to extrapolate, the conclusions are nevertheless dependent on the verity of the premises.

³ Joseph Vincent quotes me on DID, “The reason **we know some things** like the Resurrection at the last day and the Second Coming of Christ **are still to be fulfilled** in due time is **from their necessity in systematic theology. We extrapolate these core doctrines** from thousands of other clear passages of Scripture, **most not centrally dealing with eschatology**, that have well tested exegesis.” (Emphasis his).

~Purpose~

If it can be shown that the Satan was not cast into the Lake of Fire in ad 70, then it will be established that some common Full-Preterist doctrinal distinctive are false. It does not refute Full-Preterism because Full-Preterist theology has not established a definite dogmatic system (besides that all Bible prophecy has been fulfilled already). But it will demonstrate the impossibility of one common Full-Preterist distinctive.

One important notice: I do not think that the Full-Preterist doctrine of the conflagration of Satan in c. ad 70 is universally held by all Hyper-Preterists, but it is a common idea in many Full-Preterist circles where there is a proclivity to force all Bible prophecy to be fulfilled before or during ad 70. This should keep Full-Preterists mindful of the intricacies of Scriptural exegesis so they may avoid superimposing their own paradigm into the text along the inevitable road of systemization.

~Method~

To address Mr. Palmer's question, I will exegete the immediate passage he referenced, giving commentary relevant to our discourse and my thesis.

~Exegesis and Commentary~

And when the thousand years are expired,

Verse 20:7, the subordinating conjunction “and” (*kai*) coupled with the conjunctive particle “when” (*hotan*) begin the first dependent clause; its mood marked in the subjunctive by the verb “expired” (*telesthE*) to give the force of causation. The noun phrase the thousand years (*ta chilia etE*—nominative plural neuter) refers to the specific period already indicated to have a definitive ending point (cf. 20:2-3, 5).

Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

The word for “when” indicates that at the time of the expiration of the millennium, Satan will be unbound. At that time, Satan (*ho satanas*) will be the one that is loosed (*luthEsetai*). The passive construction indicates that Satan does not escape, he is unbound. The prepositional phrase beginning with *ek* shows the origin from where he was loosed (cf. 20:1-3), viz. his prison.

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Parenthetical note on the deceiving of the nations

The first verse of chapter 20 begins with the phrase “And I saw” (*kai eidon* occurring about 24 times in the Revelation according to the Authorized Version). It functions conjunctively; the aorist in the first-person introduces another snapshot of the vision. It may introduce a recapitulation, but usually it has the force of an unveiling of the Revelation into a deeper focus. In chapter 20, it never carries the force of discontinuity because the same themes are readdressed with little textual variations. The preserved continuity preserves some sense of

sequence and order, even when parenthetical ideas are introduced. John’s vision begins with the binding of Satan (20:1-3).

It says in v. 3b, “that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” The conjunction “that” (*hina*) denotes the purpose and result of the binding. The negative particle “no” (*mE*) works adverbially to modify the subjunctive verb in the third person singular, referring to Satan’s checked ability to deceive. The word for “more” (*eti*) also works adverbially to affirm that he has had influence before he was bound. The direct object is the “nations” (*ta ethmE*)—implying the gentiles of nations, in the plural. The purpose of the binding was primarily to cut the influence of Satan from deceiving the world; in this context (cf. 19f), he was deceiving them so that they would not know the truth of the Word of God.

The preposition “until” (*achri*) marks a termination of this period. The period of his loosing is temporally limited in sharp contrast from the sense of totality in the subject of the sentence (i.e. the thousand years). Even if we take a figurative or symbolic usage of the word thousand years, or translate it as thousands [the word is plural, but adjectives normally take the number of the noun they modify] of years, there is still a consistent theme of the period’s termination. Full-Preterists take as many opinions of this passage as any other, but generally restrict the thousand years to a much shorter period of time than a millennium—before ad 70. If they do, depending on their opinion of the little season’s (*micron chronon*) terminus quo, the little season is commonly not sharply contrasted with the millennium as it is in the text. Further, if Full-Preterists argue things like Ephesians 2:5-6 and Colossians 2:12-13 show that the saints raised in Christ is an expression of the resurrection in the millennium, their position would be in doubt considering that Satan was not bound at the time, but walking about like a roaring lion at that general time (e.g. 1 Peter 5:8, Acts 5:3, 1 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 12:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:7-9, 1 Timothy 1:20, 5:15).

Verse 4 also begins with the phrase “And I saw”—John sees thrones and they seated upon the thrones and judgment given unto the seated (cf. Daniel 7:22)—a deeper unfolding of the subject of the previous vision. But not only do these sitting on the thrones receive judgment—but the souls of some other set do too. The subject of the clause “judgment” (*krima*) was given unto the indirect object “them” (*autois*) which must refer to those who were seated on the thrones. The usage of the coordinating conjunction “and” (*kai*) is cumulative to connect the previous clause. This conjunction distributes the “I saw” by introducing another subordinating clause with a different set of individuals, viz. he also sees the souls of those distinguished from those who he couples them with.

Verse 5 begins with the adversative “but” (*de*), denoting a parenthetical clause. The rest of the dead do not live again until the end of the millennium. This cannot refer to Christians who are dead in Christ because they live with him; whether in the body in this world or out of the body they live unto God. The next independent clause “this is the first resurrection” refers not to the dead who live not again during the millennium, but to the Christians who live and reign with Christ during the millennium (cf. 20:6).

Considering verse 5, the dead who do not live during the time of the blessed and holy's first resurrection (i.e. those who by implication are subject to the second death), are said to live at the time of when Satan is loosed from his prison. The Scriptures speak of a day when the just and the unjust will be raised. Like the Full-Preterist, I don't believe the text speaks of the *first resurrection* as *the resurrection of the body*, but perhaps the saved souls of the martyrs, and the born-again rulers with Christ who are not dead. But if the Full-Preterist supposes that the millennium ended a little season before ad 70, then we read that Satan does not persecute the Church (cf. 20:9), rather he deceives the dead who were raised after the millennium. He cannot deceive the Church, because they, asleep in Jesus or alive unto God, and they cannot be hurt by the second death. There cannot be such an apostasy of the blessed and holy, especially in those who were committed judgment from God. The only ones who can be deceived again are the nations, and perhaps all of the revived dead outside of Christ. Yet, "the nations" most likely does not refer to the roused dead at the end of the millennium. Remotely, on the breadth of the earth, there must have been other unconverted gentiles: Gog and Magog.

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And shall go out to deceive the nations...

Verse 8 introduces the future verb tense. The simple connective conjunction "and" (*kai*), nevertheless maintains continuity. The shift in verb tense indicates what the devil will go to do when he is loosed. The subject is distributed by the conjunction and implied by the verb "shall go out" (*exeleusetai*). The infinitive "to deceive" (*planEsai*) is the verbal describing what the devil will go out to do, and what is the causative purpose of his doings. The article "the" (*ta*) is circumpositional, before and after the direct object—translating as "the nations which", to demonstratively connect the accusative reference to Gog and Magog with the prepositional phrase modifying "the nations." The nations are described by their locative remoteness, i.e. in the four corners of the earth, and by their association with Gog and Magog.

...to gather them together to battle

The infinitive "to gather" (*sunagagein*), has a military sense in this context. It too describes what the devil will go out to do, and his purpose; by implication he first deceives them, so that he can mobilize them for battle. The pronoun "them" (*autous*) refers to the people of "the nations". It takes a gender, unlike the neuter "nations" (*ethnE*). He deceives the heathen nations, to mobilize the unconverted people of Gog and Magog for battle.

...the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

Not necessarily "*as many* as the sands of the sea *in number*", but rather, the adverb "as" (*hOs*) [implying the copula] correlates the number with *the sand*. The sand is of a great multitude, and the number is a great multitude. One could argue that this "number...as the sand of the sea" is an allusion to texts speaking of Israel (e.g. Genesis 22:17, 1 Kings 4:20, Isaiah 10:22, Hosea 1:10), but the same phrase is spoken of gentile nations in relevant war themes (e.g. Judges 7:12, 1 Samuel 13:5). However, even if the Full-Preterist argues that the nations of the four corners of the *land* are a reference to the apostate Judeans, or to the Tribes of Israel, in an effort to explain God's wrath against "them" in verse 9, it gives no further support for their case. Verse 9:

And they went up on the breadth of the earth,

Again, the conjunction maintains continuity with the preceding verses and by extension, a logical sequence. The pronoun “they” is implied by the verb construction, being plural in number, and from following the conjunction. The preposition “on” (*epi*), governing the accusative, introduces the direction where the unconverted army goes. The “breadth” (*platos*), or “width” is the direct object the prepositional phrase “of the land” is affixed to. That is, they went up to the border of the land (*gEs*). This word for “land” is never directly describing the land of Judea specifically. It almost always means *the earth*, or a plot of land or region. The scope of this passage can easily mean the entire earth. They went to the edge of the earth—outside the gates. It is as if the Kingdom of the saints had expanded by this point—nearly all the world had been subdued (cf. Genesis 1:28).

...and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city

The conjunction is again copulative, distributing the pronoun, omitted again for diction. The deceived encompass (*ekuklOsan*) the camp. The border of the camp is surrounded by all sides, from the four corners of the earth. To some Full-Preterists, this is a parallel to Luke 21:20. However there is at least one rash difference. In Luke 21:20, the desolation of Jerusalem is nigh, in Revelation 20:9 the desolation of the armies is nigh. In the old Jerusalem, the apostate ruled the city that has been loved. In the New Jerusalem the saints rule and reign with Christ. The substantive adjective *tOn hagiOn*, the saints, cannot refer to the condemned religious order in Jerusalem of the cursed generation. The demonstrative article in Greek is definite, specifying *these* are the saints, not just some holy ones—the holy ones. It cannot refer to the apostate being surrounded by Roman armies.

...and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

“And” is subordinating here, keeping to a sense of continuity and dramatic pace. “Fire” (*pur*) dramatically seizes the stage shifting the verse into gear with powerful imagery and allusion—taking the nominative case and active voice. The sense of immediacy is introduced, viz. the nations are conflagrated before they enter into the city’s gates. It is propositionally described by the phrases “from God” (*apo tou theou*) and “out of heaven” (*ek tou ouranou*). This illustrates the source and place the fire comes from. The fire is possibly figurative—unlikely symbolic of the Roman troops. The Romans were not immediately devoured (*katephagen*) in God’s Providence. They captured the city and trampled the Temple.

It is undoubtedly “the [unconverted people of the] nations” who are destroyed—not the saints. Although the pronoun “them” (*autous*) is in the same gender and number as the saints, the antecedent must be the nations. The first indicator is that the saints are in the genitive case describing something’s possessor—the camp. “The nations” are continually in focus as the implied subject of the beginning of verse 9. The saints are only referred to describe the identity of the city, for the aid of interpretation. Verse 10, solidifies this. The “them” are referred to as those who were deceived by the devil.

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,

The dependent clause is marked, again, with the subordinating conjunction. The noun phrase “the devil that deceived” (*ho diabolos ho planOn*) includes the present participle describing the devil as the one devil who was deceiving the unconverted of the nations from the

immediate context (v. 8). The “devil” is the simple subject who deceives “them” (*autous*). The nearest antecedent of the direct object “them” is the direct object of the previous clause’s “them” (v. 9), viz. God’s fire devours the deceived (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12).

The main verb “was cast” is in the passive voice. It is Satan that is bound, loosed, and cast-out by the hand of One in control of him. The adverbially functioning preposition “into” (*eis*) indicates where the devil is cast-out, i.e. the lake of fire and brimstone (*tEn limnEn tou puros kai theiou*).

...where the beast and the false prophet are,

“The beast and the false prophet” are in the nominative case; they function as the subject a new, dependent, adverbial phrase to describe the lake of fire. The phrase begins with the adverb “where” (*hopou*). Its part of speech demands an implied copula; the explicative “are” renders the full scope of the adverb. The adverb implies that “the beast and the false prophet” are in the place of the lake of fire *already*; they do not carry the sense of motion that the devil is said to have. There is neither any conjunction, nor immediate mention of them, that would assign the idea that they would be all cast-out simultaneously. Rather, they have already been banished to fire *before* Satan is cast-out. This mention of the beast and the false prophet is important because it underscores the continuity of this passage with the end of chapter 19 (Revelation 20:10 cf. 19:20).

~Conclusion~

If Full-Preterists suppose that the beast is Nero, or Rome, or Titus, or the persecuting power, then Satan is cast-out either some time after, or immediately after the beast is cast-out. This puts further fulfillment outside of ad 70—temporally and chronologically after ad 70. Rome was not immediately consumed by fire in c. ad 70, or before ad 70 in any explainable way.

Maybe it could be argued that the spiritual power of Rome was spiritually consumed by fire, or perhaps the Jews, or all of God’s enemies for that matter. Then one would have warrant that the events of Revelation 20 were nearly all *spiritually* fulfilled in ad 70—that the “earth” mentioned is a *spiritual earth*. But then we are not talking about ad 70 and Jerusalem anymore; there would be no basis to establish a historical correlation with the events of ad 70. Further, the interpretation would have no exegetical warrant to associate its fulfillment with categorically different kinds of events. It would be an example of superimposing one’s own theological paradigm into the text, simply force it into one’s eschatological presuppositions.

If the encompassing of the saints was after the millennium, which the text amply shows, and the persecution of the saints did not begin until Satan’s loosing, then it cannot be said that the souls of the beheaded saints reigning with Christ had already been persecuted for their testimony, at least not by the beast. The persecution of the beast, or what some associate with the Great Tribulation, must chronologically precede the millennium. By the time of the millennium’s commencement, the beast (and the false prophet) have already been subdued (v. 19:20 cf. 20:10), and the martyrs would have already been killed because they resisted the beast (v. 20:4). The mention of the beast in v. 4 indicates that the martyred saints were physically alive during the time of the beast. After that time, not before, does the millennium begin. It is not until *after that*

when Satan is loosed. If Nero was the beast, then the millennium is wedged into a very short period of time after Nero's death, and the Great Tribulation occurring at the time of the millennium. This would force Full-Preterists to concede any case that the saints were reigning in the millennium until Nero's death or later, and would not make sense of any other persecutions the saints have faced in history. It would be all conjecture with no exegetical support.

In conclusion, the Full-Preterists has no exegetical basis from the immediate context in Revelation 20 that the conflagration of Satan was in c. ad 70. They are forced to make this inference based on the extrapolation of other passages, even when their conclusions are in tension with the immediate context in Revelation 20. Being that they must extrapolate this to systematize their theology, they must recognize the legitimacy of this analogy of faith when other Christians make applications for their non-hyper-preterist systems.

I cannot say that Revelation 20:10 is future, unless I get the support from other Scriptures. However, I can infer from the text that it most likely does not refer to the events of ad 70. If I establish that, then I am freed from the self-imposed rule of making all prophecy fit into a pre-70 ad time frame. Even though the Revelation of John says that these things includes the things that "must be becoming [infinitive middle deponent] in swiftness" (*dei genesthai en tachei*), it does not say that all the things in the book of Revelation will be exhausted soon—the necessity of their happenings is imminent soon, was to be happening soon. This does not mean that nothing in the book of Revelation was already fulfilled at the time John was given the Revelation. Not all events were to be finished "soon", but all the future events were about to begin. There is a lot about the events of ad 70 in the Revelation, but not every passage can be demonstrated to be about ad 70.