

# Full Preterism and the Lord's Supper

by Michael W. Adams

The Lord's Supper is a stumbling block for full Preterism.<sup>1</sup> If one is a consistent full Preterist, he or she should abstain from taking the Lord's Supper in order to be consistent. Paul's instructions to the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper are stated this way:

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Within the scheme of full Preterism, the New Covenant era doesn't begin until 70 AD. The era of the Old Covenant continued until that time and its end was signaled by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Titus the Roman. For full Preterism, the "age to come" promised in the New Testament is synonymous with the era of the New Covenant: both the New Covenant and the age to come began in 70 AD and will continue forever. Full Preterism also insists that the Lord returned in 70 AD even though His return was not a literal physical one, but was a spiritual return.<sup>2</sup> For the full Preterist, the second coming of Jesus Christ took place in 70 AD.

This brings up a couple of questions concerning Paul's instructions about the Lord's Supper that we must ask. First, if the Lord's Supper is a celebration of the New Covenant, why doesn't it get celebrated in the New Covenant era? Stated another way, how can the Lord's Supper be a remembrance of the inauguration of the New Covenant for the early church if that Covenant was still future? On the night of His betrayal, the Lord clearly identified His death on the cross as the New Covenant:

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the

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<sup>1</sup> For a more complete description of full Preterism than is given in this paper, see my paper entitled, *Full Preterism and Matthew 24* at [http://www.ncbf.net/PDF/Matthew\\_24.pdf](http://www.ncbf.net/PDF/Matthew_24.pdf). If the reader is unfamiliar with full Preterism, I recommend reading that paper before this one because this one assumes a knowledge of full Preterism.

<sup>2</sup> I acknowledge differences within the system of full Preterism and I am speaking in a general sense. Full Preterists may vary on the degree in which they adhere to these statements. I recommend the paper in the previous footnote.

covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:27-28)

Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross is the New Covenant and according to Paul, the Lord’s Supper is a remembrance of it. This means that the first 35+ years of the church’s existence was spent remembering something that full Preterism insists hadn’t happened yet because in full Preterism, the New Covenant era doesn’t begin until the second coming in 70 AD. This means that when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and gave them these instructions he was telling them to remember and celebrate the New Covenant which was really still future because they were all still living in the era of the Old Covenant. He was instructing them to remember something that was still in the future.

This flies in the face of Hebrews 8:13 when the writer of Hebrews says that the Old Covenant has *already* been made obsolete by the coming of the New; “By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear” (Hebrews 8:13). The writer of Hebrews was under the impression that he was living in the New Covenant era prior to 70 AD and that the inauguration of the New Covenant, which was a past event from his perspective, had already rendered the first (old) covenant obsolete. Full Preterism is a complete denial of Hebrews 8:13, insisting instead that the Lord’s Supper was celebrated prior to the New Covenant era – an era that it is supposed to remember, not anticipate.

Second, Paul told the Corinthians “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). Since full Preterism insists that the Lord came in 70 AD, how can the full Preterist, in good conscience take the Lord’s Supper? Paul is quite clear: in the Lord’s Supper we “proclaim the Lord’s death (the New Covenant) until he comes.” Are full Preterists in disobedience to Paul’s imperatives by taking the Lord’s Supper after the second coming? Is the full Preterist sinning by doing so since Paul said to take it only until the second coming?

If the second coming occurred in 70 AD as full Preterism insists it did, then the Lord’s Supper was only applicable for the first 35+ years of the church. After that, it should have ceased. If the New Covenant era began in 70 AD as full Preterism insists it did, then why was the early church “remembering” something that hadn’t happened yet and participating in something that wasn’t for the age they were in? This is a serious flaw that full Preterism needs to wrestle with and one that cannot be answered without taking Scripture out of context or without abandoning the basic tenants of full Preterism. At the very least, full Preterists must stop taking the Lord’s Supper.