

The Timing of the Millennium and Millennial Martyrs

By Lloyd Dale
February 2015

For years I have been studying Preston's writings on the subject of the Millennium which he erroneously believes to be the forty year period from the resurrection of Jesus Christ up to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Although Preston regularly asserts his forty year view, as far as I can tell, he has not presented a cogent explanation of why and how he initially arrived at that view.

This article is being written to interact with Don Preston's erroneous 40 year Millennium view in general and more specifically with his article entitled "The Millennial Martyrs" in his *Objection Overruled!* Column in the winter, 2014 Vol. 9, issue 4, of "Fulfilled! Magazine." The title of this article is very misleading as the Scriptures do not give us any examples of anyone being martyred in the millennium. This concept of persons being martyred in the Millennium appears only in the erroneous paradigm of the "forty year Millennialists" who claim that the Millennium occurred during the forty years from ca. 30 – 70 AD. While Preston accuses Jordan of holding to an erroneous "foundational presupposition," Jordan was/is certainly correct to assert that the "Millennium began in AD 70." Contrary to Preston's assertion, that his article "falsifies the idea that the Millennium began in AD70" – it did nothing of the kind.

Preston is very fond of laying out what he thinks to be the "flawed presuppositions underlying" the works of others, such as James B. Jordan, whom he debated in 2004. In this article, we will identify the "flawed presuppositions underlying" Preston's erroneous forty year millennial view.

Because of the aforementioned article, I think that I have now found the initial "flawed presupposition underlying" his basis for his erroneous forty year Millennial position. In the article referenced above Preston wrote, "Amillennialists and postmillennialists generally say the Millennium began in the ministry of Jesus..." As a COC Amillennialist, Don entered preterism with the erroneous

“presupposition” that the Millennium began “in the ministry of Jesus” and ostensibly he simply never ‘looked back and/ or questioned’ that presupposition. Thus, based on that erroneous presupposition, he erroneously assumed *that everything that happened during the time period of ca. 30-70 AD were events that were to take place **during the Millennium** and based all of his arguments on that “underlying flawed presupposition.”*

While it may be true (or not true), that Jordan’s position was that “Revelation 20 is exclusively about the vindication of the martyrs persecuted by the Beast, i.e. Nero...” that is most certainly not our position. In this, we agree with Preston that, “all of the blood, of all of the righteous, all the way back to Creation, would be vindicated in the AD 70 *judgment of Jerusalem*. So, AD 70 was the vindication of *all the martyrs* from Abel onward, *no just from Nero onward!*”

We also assert that “the full measure of the martyrs had been reached at *the initiation of the Millennium by resurrection of the martyred of the ages in AD 70.*”

On page 12 (first page of Preston’s article) at the bottom of this page Preston writes, “...the fact that the martyrs were enthroned to rule – and to wait—for a thousand years belies that...” Preston continues, “What were they waiting for during the Millennium? *They were waiting for the measure of the martyrs to be filled up.*”

Now, in our opinion, this is where Preston completely ‘jumped the track’ and headed down the wrong road. It appears to us that Preston’s claim that the martyrs were “*to wait -- for a thousand years...*” is a complete fabrication on his part. Where does the text in question, Revelation 20:4, state, or for that matter even imply, that they were “to wait” for anything – let alone a thousand years?

Let’s examine that text very carefully:

“Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their

foreheads or their hands. They came to life again and began the reign with Christ for a thousand years.” (Re 20:4)

Now let me ask the reader, do you see the word “wait” anywhere in that text? Of course not, because it simply is not in that text. Second question, do you see anything in that text that even implies a “wait”? Of course you do not because there is simply *nothing* in that text that implies a “wait”—*to say nothing of waiting for a thousand years*. Where does Preston get the entirely erroneous notion that anyone in this verse is “waiting – for a thousand years”? Nothing in the text makes such a statement, nor even implies such an idea.

In this text, John simply describes what and who he saw. The text simply states that John “saw thrones” and he “saw those that were seated on the thrones,” then John adds the information that the ones who were seated on those thrones which he saw were “those to whom the authority to judge was committed.”

At this point, Preston and everyone else who studies this verse should have stopped and asked a question: “Who are the ones to whom Jesus gave the promise that they would “sit on thrones and judge...?” Try as I might, I have found no place in Preston’s writings where he has even asked this question, let alone actually answered this question. So, let’s answer this question for him.

To find the actual Biblical answer to this question, let us turn to Matthew 19:28:

“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto **you** which have followed me (“in my earthly ministry”), when the regeneration occurs and the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, **ye** (the twelve disciples) also shall **sit upon twelve thrones, judging** the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Mt 19:28, emphasis added, see also Luke 22:29-30, Matthew 25:31, and Revelation 3:21)

It should now be obvious and clear to everyone reading this article that John’s statement about “the thrones and those sitting on those thrones” is a ‘rifle shot’ straight back to the promise he heard Jesus make John and to His other disciples on that fateful day there in Judaea. It should also be apparent to all who read this article that NO ONE; not Jesus, not the twelve disciples to whom He made that great promise, not those who had been killed “for the witness of Jesus”, not those “which had not worshipped the beast... NO ONE was waiting; for they all, every

last one of them, "...came to life (i.e. were **regenerated** in the "first" resurrection) and began the reign with Christ..." Contrary to Preston's erroneous position, "judging" and living is not "*waiting*" it is actively functioning in His heavenly kingdom (2Tim 4:18)!

It gets even worse, because Preston continues, "...they were awaiting the Resurrection and the New Creation. This is critical." Don is certainly right about something here, "it is critical!" In spite of the fact that Revelation 20:4 specifically states that "those sitting on the thrones," those who had been killed "for the witness of Jesus," those "which had not worshipped the beast" "**came to life and began the reign with Christ.**" Stated in plain English so that NO ONE should be able to miss it – Revelation 20:4, especially when compared with Matthew 19:28, 25:31; Luke 22:29-30; 1Corinthians 15:23c; and Revelation 3:21; ***specifically states that all of the individuals involved in this verse were regenerated to new life in the Resurrection in the Parousia of Jesus Christ.*** In that verse it is plainly stated that all of those people had just been regenerated to new life in the Resurrection and that they all, each and every one of them, were at that very moment in the New Creation, in His heavenly kingdom – Paradise -- living "with Christ"!!!!

In the light of that very clear and salient fact, how can Preston claim that "they were waiting for the Resurrection and the New Creation"??

As we shall see, Preston makes that claim based upon some flawed interpretive irregularities." Preston continues, "Notice now the relationship between Revelation 6:9-11 and Revelation 20 (Although Preston does not identify the specific verse in Rev 20 which is his reference, that verse is 4.):"

"Revelation 6:9-11 – Past martyrdom, (royal) robes given, indicating an initial vindication, a "short) time of waiting (the Millennium) for the filling up of the measure of the martyrs, the promise of full vindication at the Great Day of the Lord"

"Revelation 20 – Past Martyrdom, the seating on the thrones, indicating at least initial vindication, *a time of waiting (the Millennium) for the filling up of the measure of martyrs, the promise of full vindication at the Great Day of the Lord, the resurrection and the New Creation.*(My emphasis)

Now reader, please go back and re-read the above very carefully and you should see how Preston attempts “exegetical slight of hand” in an attempt to establish his erroneous position of a forty year Millennium. Notice how Don inserted the “(Millennium)” in Revelation 6:9-11, when in fact, there is nothing about the Millennium in that passage and it is clearly not intended in that passage. The “short time” that the martyrs were instructed to wait had nothing what-so-ever to do with the Millennium, i.e. the thousands years of Revelation 20:4-7. To actually demonstrate that fact, let us take a good look at Revelation 6:9-11:

“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the land?” Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.” (Re 6:9-11, emphasis mine)

Reader, where does Preston find anything about “the Millennium” in the verses shown above? It simply is not there except in his erroneous paradigm. Also where does Preston find anything about “initial vindication” in these verses? The entire tenor of these verses is that these martyrs have not yet been vindicated and they are crying out “how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the land!” The simple fact is that there is no evidence “indicating at least initial vindication.”

It is true that these verses do indicate “a time of waiting for the filling up of the measure of martyrs” for it was said unto them “rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.” It should also be noted that there is no stated “promise of full vindication at the Great Day of the Lord” in these verses; however, it is implied in the statement “rest a little longer.” Finally, these verses in Revelation 6:9-11 simply do not mention “the resurrection,” and “the New Creation”.

Every alert and astute student of the Bible should recognize that this statement in Rev. 6:9-11 is a clear and certain refrain from a passage in Genesis:

“Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” And the LORD said, “What have you done? ***The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.*** And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.” (Ge 4:9-11 ESV)

It should be noted here that the “ground” of Genesis 4:10-11 is the “altar” of Revelation 6:9 and the “cry of the blood” is the same, i.e. a cry for vengeance to avenge the blood of the slain martyrs. This clear relationship between Revelation 6:9-11 and Genesis 4:9-11 is a clear indicator for the perceptive reader that the words of Jesus, “so that upon you (the apostate Jews of first century) may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, **from the blood of innocent Abel** to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.” (Mt 23:35, emphasis added) are being acknowledged as being fulfilled within these verses in Rev. 6:9-11. Thus, we see that the martyrs “under the altar” as including every martyr from Abel forward until ca. 64 AD, the beginning of the Neronian persecution. Those that are to be martyred later during the Neronian persecution are described here “the number of their fellow servants and their brothers... who were to be killed as they themselves had been” killed.

Now let’s take another look at Revelation 6:11:

Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.” (Re 6:9-11 ESV, emphasis added)

Obviously, the words “rest a little longer” in verse 11 above had nothing whatsoever to do with the Millennium of Revelation 20:4-7. Those under the altar were dead. They “had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne” to Jesus during their life time. Thus, these martyrs must include everyone from Abel forward and specifically included those that had been slain by Jews

(such as Saul) during the years of the Jewish persecutions of the early Christians, ca. 30-64 AD.

These martyrs were told to “to rest (“sleep” i.e. remain dead, see John 11:11-13) a little longer, until **the number** of their fellow servants and their brothers **should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been**” killed. This resting in sleep is the only case of ‘waiting’ in these sections of Scripture. But it is not the “waiting” that Preston incorrectly sets forth.

These martyrs described in Rev 6:9-11 are seen again in Rev 20:4 were they are included with others “who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God” *who by that time had been killed because they “had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.”* Thus, the number “to be killed” was now “**complete**” as explained in 6:9-11.

In his zeal to promote and establish his erroneous forty year millennium error, Preston has failed to do proper exegesis of Revelation 6:9-11 and Revelation 20:4. Because of this error in exegesis, Preston erroneously conflates 6:9-11 and 20:4 into one package instead of seeing them as sequential events, where 20:4 provides us with the “**completion**” of the promise given to the martyrs in 6:9-11. When the full number of martyrs had been completed; vengeance was taken, their blood was avenged “on those who dwell on the land” and the Resurrection of 20:4d occurred. The full measure of suffering had been fulfilled and the blood of the martyrs was vindicated by the destruction of those who dwell on the land and the dead belonging to Christ were regenerated and resurrected out of the dead as is stated in Rev 20:4d (see also 1Cor 15:23c and 1Thess 4:13-17).

Now let us take a specific look at Revelation 20:4:

“Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had

not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life again and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” (Re 20:4 ESV)

Looking again at Preston’s analysis of this verse:

“**Revelation 20** – Past Martyrdom, the seating on the thrones, indicating at least initial vindication, *a time of waiting (the Millennium) for the filling up of the measure of martyrs, the promise of full vindication at the Great Day of the Lord, the resurrection and the New Creation.*(My emphasis)

Why does Preston see “Past Martyrdom, the seating on the thrones,” as “indicating at least initial vindication?” If there had been any “vindication,” it would have been fully accomplished. There is nothing stated in this verse about any “vindication,” past, present or future.

Where does Preston see anything about “waiting” in this verse?” Simply put, there is not the slightest suggestion of “a time of waiting” in this verse.

Preston continues his erroneous ways as he writes:

“...if Revelation 20:1-4 describes the AD 70 judgment, it demands that the full measure of martyrs had been reached in those verses. *But, that would mean that **the millennial time of waiting** had nothing to do with Revelation 6:9-11 and the filling up of the measure of suffering and martyrdom.*”(Emphasis added)

Again, I ask the reader – were does the Bible teach a “*millennial time of waiting*” as stated by Preston here? The simple answer is – it does not teach such a notion, nor does it even imply that the Millennium is a “*time of waiting.*” Because of his zeal for an erroneous forty year millennium, he has confused the time “...to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete...” of Revelation 6:9-11 with the “thousands years” (millennium) of Revelation 20:4-7 where no such confusion is permitted by the text.

The fact is that the “time of waiting” of Revelation 6: 9-11 describes the early martyrs from Abel through the early martyrs of the first century and Revelation

20:4, describes the later martyrs of the first century. Revelation 6:9-11 is the beginning stages of the filling up of the measure of the martyrs and Rev 20:4 describes the “completion” of the fullness of the suffering of the martyrs **and their regeneration in the resurrection**. According to Revelation 20:4d the “thousands years” does not occur until after Resurrection of 20:4d; therefore it most certainly *is not* in view in Revelation 6:9-11. The time of ‘resting in sleep’ provided in Revelation 6:9-11 has nothing to do with the thousands years of Rev 20 as that ‘resting in sleep’ which Preston refers to as a “time of waiting” is ended by the acknowledgement of the completion of the suffering of the martyrs and **their resurrection of Revelation 20:4d!**

Thus, in response to Don Preston, we have demonstrated that Preston’s “millennial period” was not a time parallel “to the waiting time” of Revelation 6:9-11. Rather, Preston’s “waiting time” of Revelation 6:9-11 was a time completely finished by the resurrection of Revelation 20:4d

We have also demonstrated that the resurrection of Revelation 20:4d was sequential to Preston’s “the waiting time” of Revelation 6:9-11 not parallel to it as Preston erroneously asserts.

And we have also demonstrated that Preston’s “millennial period” was not a ‘forty year period between ca. 30 – 70AD but that it would be a much longer period which actually began with the resurrection of the martyrs of the ages including the first century saints and their entrance into His heavenly kingdom (paradise) in AD 70.

Of the results of that resurrection into His heavenly kingdom Jesus stated:
(Emphasis mine)

“And I say unto you, **many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.**” (Mt 8:11)

So Jesus said to them, "Certainly I say to you **that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have**

followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matthew 19:28)

“But I say unto you, from this day forward **until** that day when I drink it new **with you** in my Father’s kingdom, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine,.” (Mt 26:29)

Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that **I drink it new in the kingdom** of God. (Mr 14:25)

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations 29 and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30 that **ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom**, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:28-30)

"To the overcoming one, I will be granting sitting with Me on My throne, as I also overcoming and sitting down with My Father on His throne.” (Re 3:21)