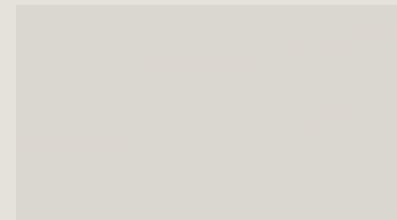


**THINK
THEISM**

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Ratio Christi, meaning “reason for Christ” in Latin, serves to defend the Christian faith in honest dialogue with both our skeptical & believing friends.

Weekly Meetings: Thursday @ 8:30 pm

MSC 2401

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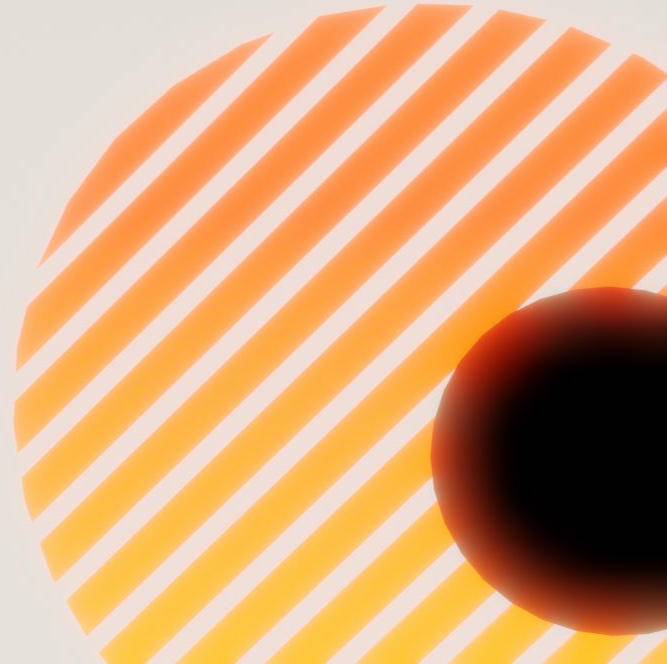
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Texas A&M University



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THOMISTIC
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SSA brings together people from a wide range of religious and ideological backgrounds in order to foster deeper levels of understanding through discussion and dialogue.

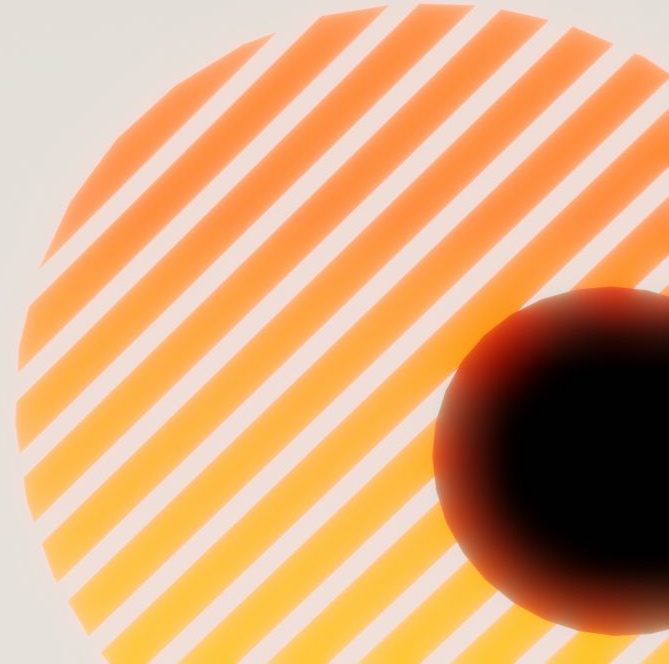
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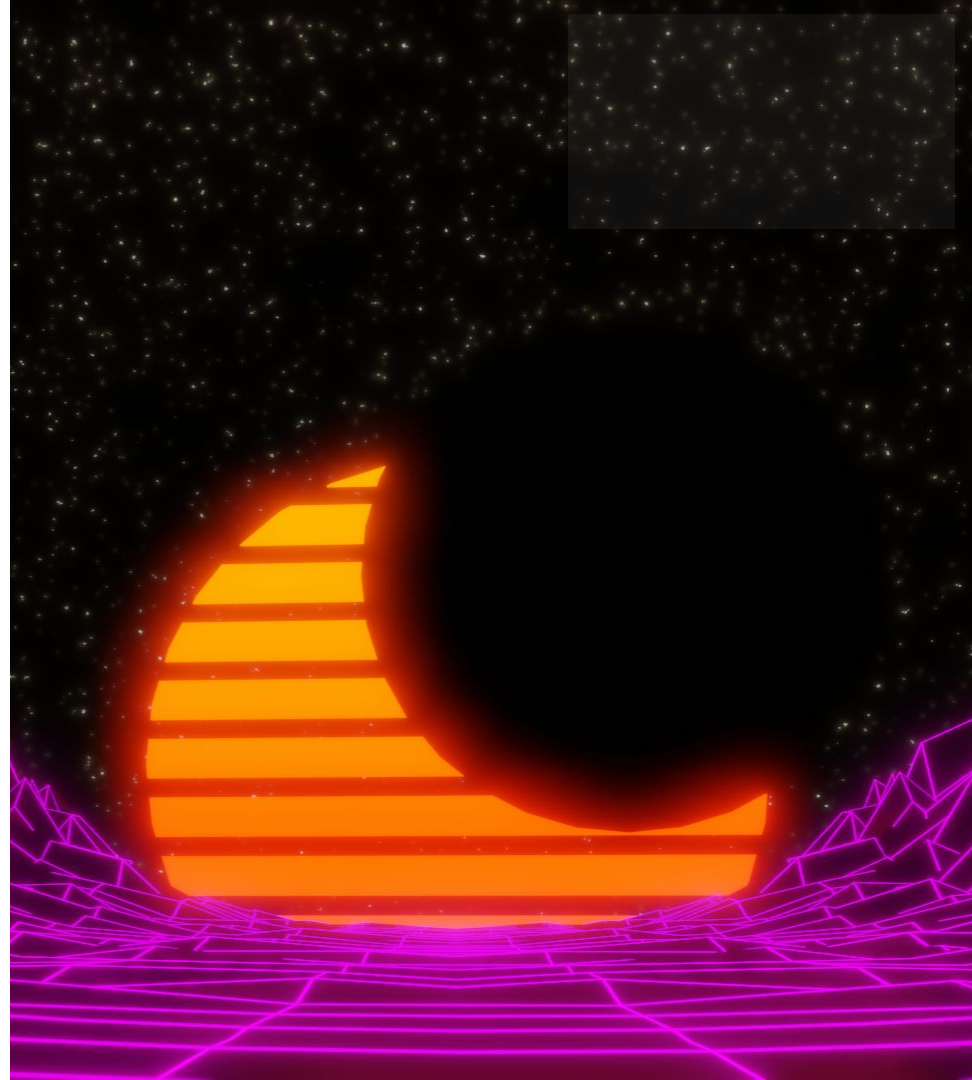


THINK
THEISM



- Humanity has rejected God, the source of life and goodness.
- Seeking our own ends, we have become victims and agents of evil, death, and misery.
- God, not willing we should perish, entered a covenant of grace to deliver humanity from this miserable state by means of a Redeemer.
- Begun with the Hebrew people, this covenant reached its fulfillment in Jesus who overcame the powers of evil, death, and misery in his death and resurrection.
- Jesus calls for all humanity to turn away (i.e. repent) from evil to the Kingdom of God.

The Olivet Discourse



Mark 13 (ESV)

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” ² And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” ⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. ⁷ And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains...



Mark 13 (ESV)

¹⁴ “But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, ¹⁶ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁷ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸ Pray that it may not happen in winter. ¹⁹ For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. ²⁰ And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. ²² For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.



Mark 13 (ESV)

²⁴ “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.



Mark 13 (ESV)

³² “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father...

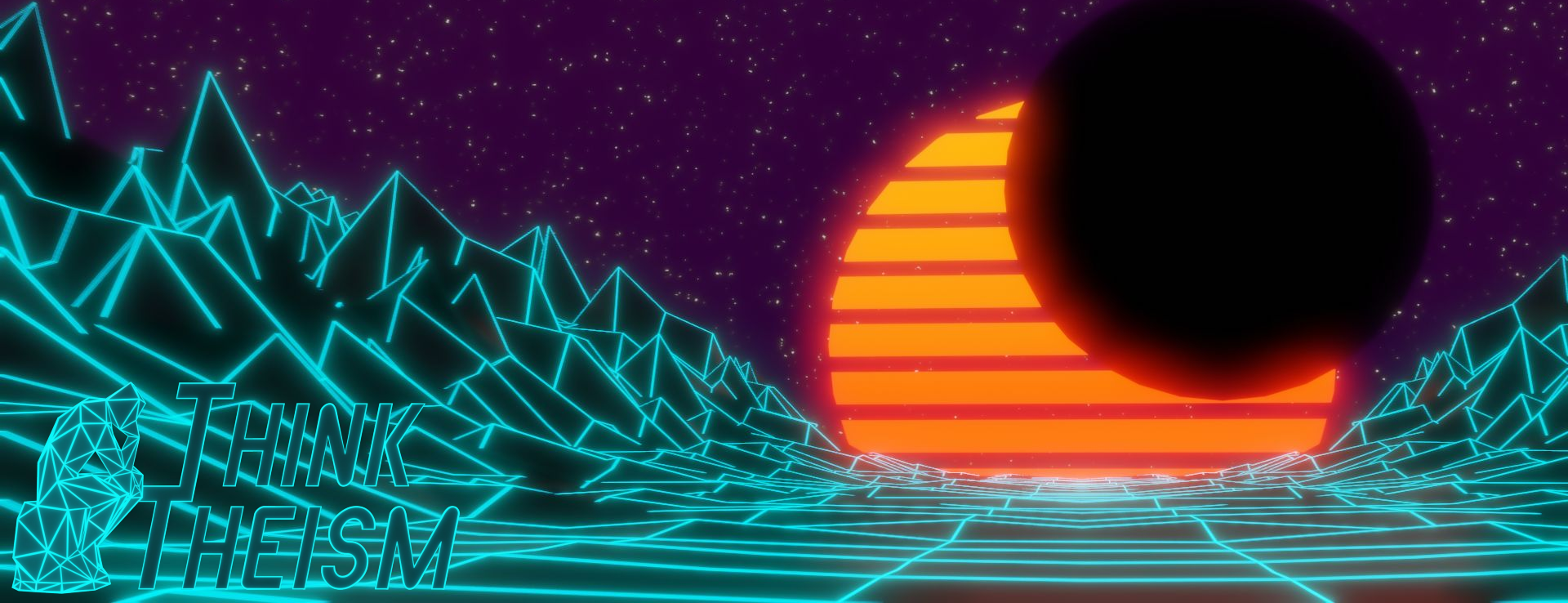
³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

The image features a dark, starry background. A large, glowing yellow arc is positioned in the upper half of the frame. At the bottom, there is a jagged, purple line representing a horizon or a mountain range. The word "Thoughts?" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

Thoughts?

Was Jesus a Failed Prophet?

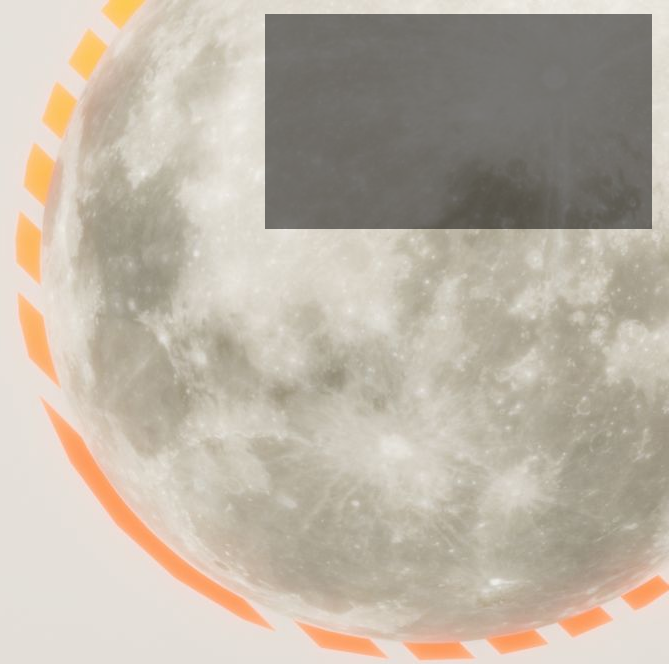
The Problem of the Delayed Second Coming



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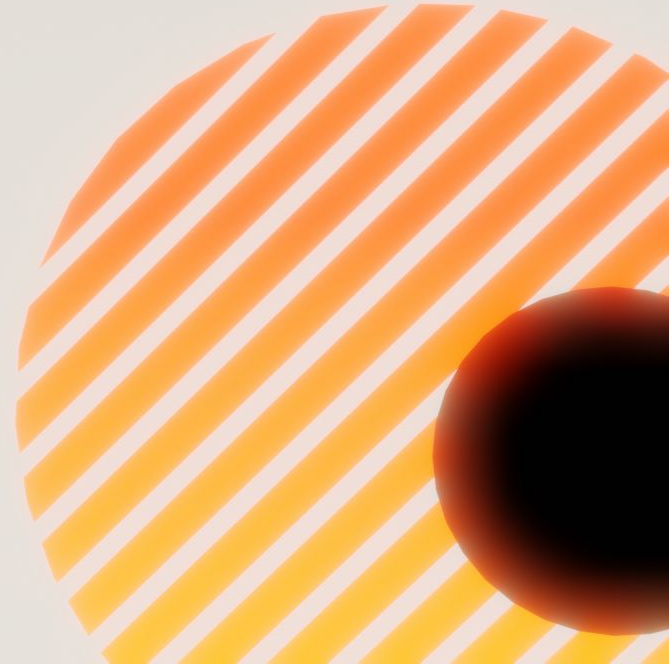
Takeaways

- Many people object that since Jesus predicted that He would come in the lifetime of his disciples and with the destruction of the Temple, the Gospel is invalid / unreliable.
- When trying to argue for a particular interpretation, it is often not enough to simply show that it's possible: you must also show that it's a good / likely reading of the text.
- This question has been around for a long time, and there are multiple textually supported views, including futurism and preterism, that attempt to resolve the apparent conflict.



The Gist

- Jesus comments that the temple will be destroyed, and his apostles ask about that event and the signs surrounding it, relating it to “the end of the age.”
- Jesus discusses a massive tribulation, in which there will be false christs and natural disasters, and the people will flee.
- Immediately after, apocalyptic astrological phenomena will occur, and the Son of Man will come on the clouds.
- The events Jesus is discussing will happen within the same “generation,” so those listening ought to be on their guard.



The Objection

- Jesus claimed that he would return before “this generation” passed away, and he tied his return to the destruction of the temple.
- Jesus’ Second Coming (or “*parousia*”) did not happen within the lifetime of anyone there, including when the temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.
- Jesus was wrong in his prediction.

The Objection

- Two routes for objections from here:
 1. If Jesus was wrong, then he was not perfect, and thus not God, so the Gospel is invalid.
 2. In addition, a fundamental premise of Christianity (as shown both in the historic creeds and in general belief) is invalid, and this casts severe doubt on the rest of the faith.

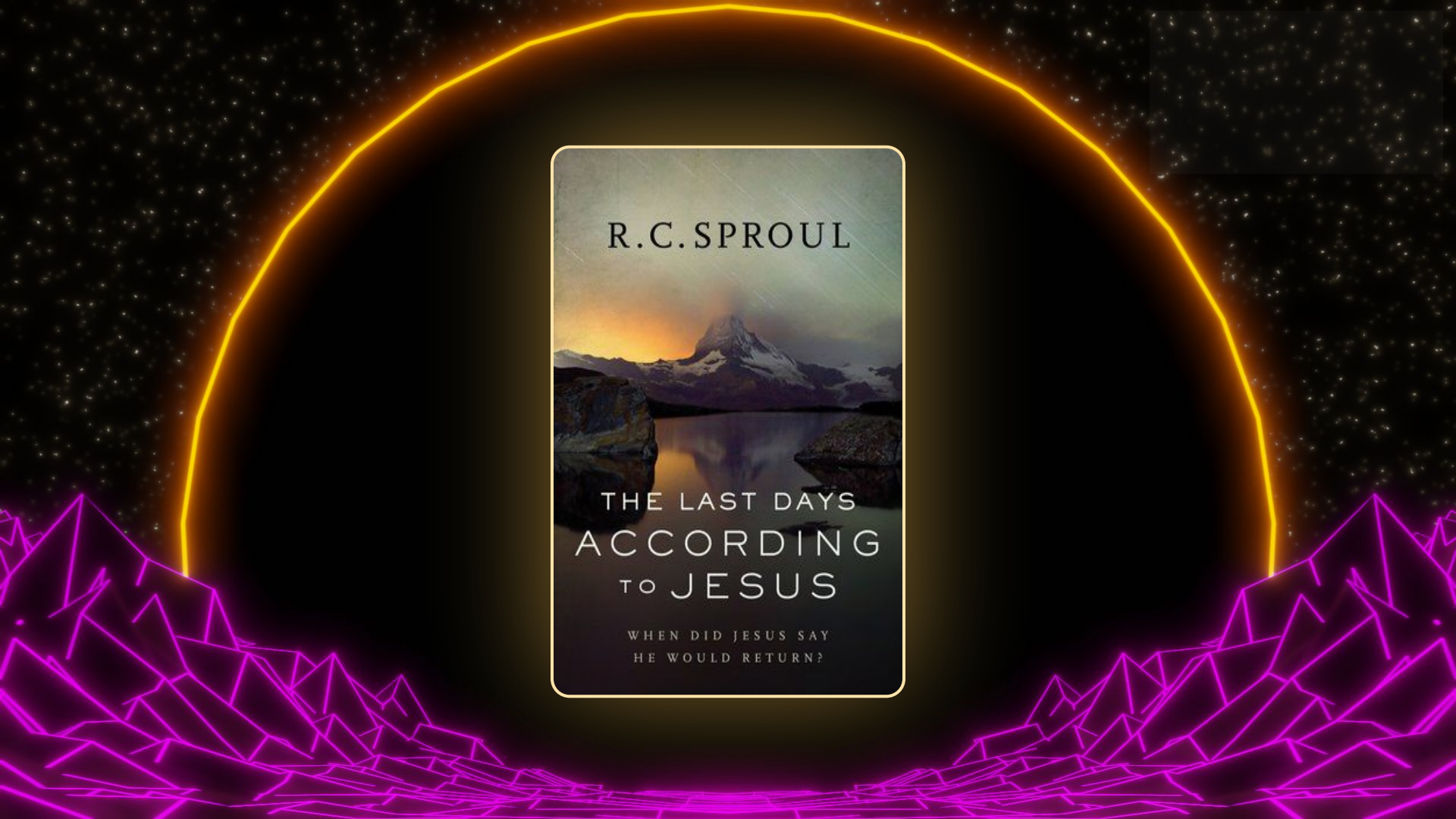
Either way, this shows that we should not believe the Gospel.

A Quick Note

Prophetic passages are inherently very tricky to deal with, due to their vague and poetic nature. Citing a failed prophecy as a disproof of the inspiration of the Bible or of God's perfection is something that must be done very carefully, as the meaning of what is being said in a prophetic passage is not always obvious.

However, this is not a cop-out for Christians to completely discard arguments from failed prophecies: we just have to be aware of what we're discussing.





R.C. SPROUL

THE LAST DAYS
ACCORDING
TO JESUS

WHEN DID JESUS SAY
HE WOULD RETURN?

How Should We Read the Olivet Discourse?

- The *prima facie* reading does seem to imply that Christ should have come in AD 70.
 - The Son of Man's coming on the clouds parallels the predictions of Christ's second coming in, e.g., Acts 1:11.
 - The statement that "this generation shall not pass away" sounds like the *parousia* should have happened during the lifetime of at least some of the apostles.

So what are the Christian alternatives?

How to Discuss Difficult Passages

- When discussing these difficult passages with a skeptic, we are starting with different premises. This can lead to a bit of a communication breakdown.
- The Christian must provide evidence not just that their interpretation is coherent, but that it is reasonably likely to be the correct reading of the text.

Sure, that interpretation might be logically valid, but why should I believe your interpretation over the obvious reading?

The passage doesn't have to be contradictory: Jesus didn't mean what it looks like he meant. You're just reading it wrong.



One Option: Futurism



Futurism

- The Olivet Discourse is talking about multiple separate events.
 - Some parts discuss the destruction of the Temple, while others talk about the end of the world and Christ's Second Coming.
- Futurist interpreters argue that there are many distinct sections of the discourse...

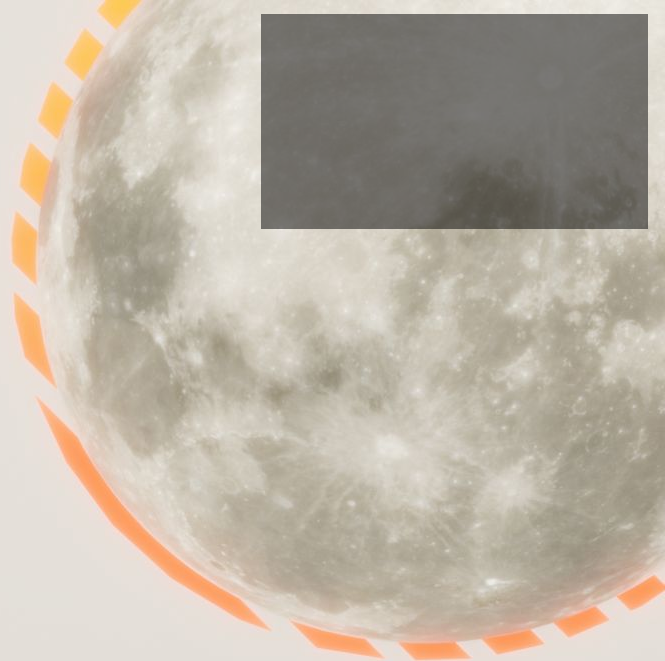


Futurism

“In harmony with apocalyptic style, Jesus exhibited the judgments of His coming in a series of cycles, each of which depicts the whole futurity, but in such a manner, that with every new cycle the scene seems to approximate to and more closely resemble the final catastrophe.”¹

1. Matthew 24:4-14 talk about the general course of the world.
2. v. 15-28 discuss the destruction of Jerusalem.
3. v. 29-44 talk about the end of the world.
4. v. 45 ff. contain parables and metaphors about Christ’s judgement of different groups of people.

1. Lange, Johann Peter. *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*.
Qtd. in Russell, J. Stuart. *The Parousia: A Careful Look at Our Lord’s Second Coming*.



Futurism

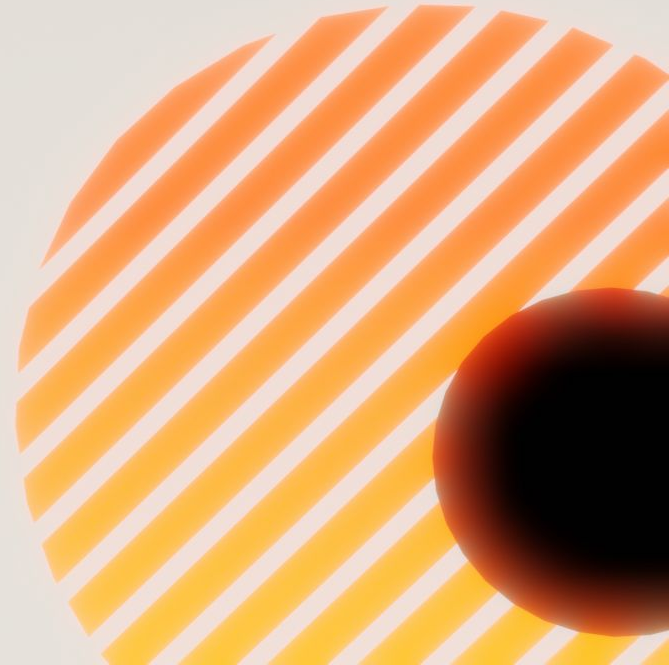
- One issue with Dr. Lange's approach is that in the section ostensibly about the end of the world, Jesus says "This generation will not pass away until all these things take place." (Matthew 24:34)
 - However, "generation" (in Greek, *genea*), does not have to refer to a literal generation: it could be understood as referring to a group of people of the same mindset (cf. Jeremiah 8:3).
 - The word might also refer to the literal current generation, but not in the sense that they will be around for the Second Coming...

Futurism

“The meaning therefore is: ‘This prophecy does not relate to evils that are distant, and which posterity will see after the lapse of many centuries, but which are now hanging over you, and ready to fall in one mass, so that there is no part of it which the present generation will not experience.’

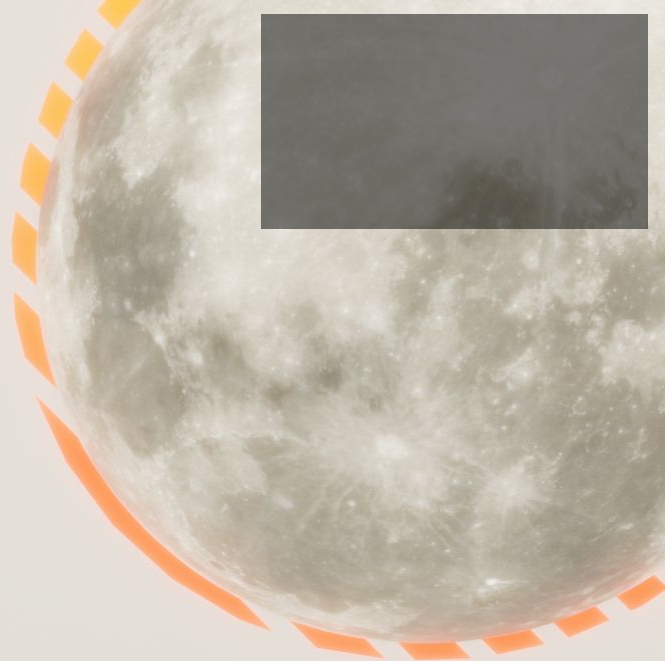
So then, while our Lord heaps upon a single generation every kind of calamities, he does not by any means exempt future ages from the same kind of sufferings, but only enjoins the disciples to be prepared for enduring them all with firmness.”²

2. Calvin, John. *Commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke*.



Futurism

- This understanding of generation can seem somewhat contrived, but with a prophetic passage like this, understanding it apart from its *prima facie* meaning is useful.
- With that understanding in mind, the futurist interpretation is a completely valid and very common approach.
 - It is one of the most common approaches, especially in the Reformed tradition.



Futurism: Pros and Cons

- Pros:
 - The interpretation, for the most part, is fairly literal and harmonizes pretty well with the rest of Scripture.
 - Certain parts of the Discourse seem to imply multiple, separate events, (e.g. “the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations”).
- Cons:
 - Even with these indicators, the passage seems very homogeneous in nature, so dividing it can still seem too contrived for many.

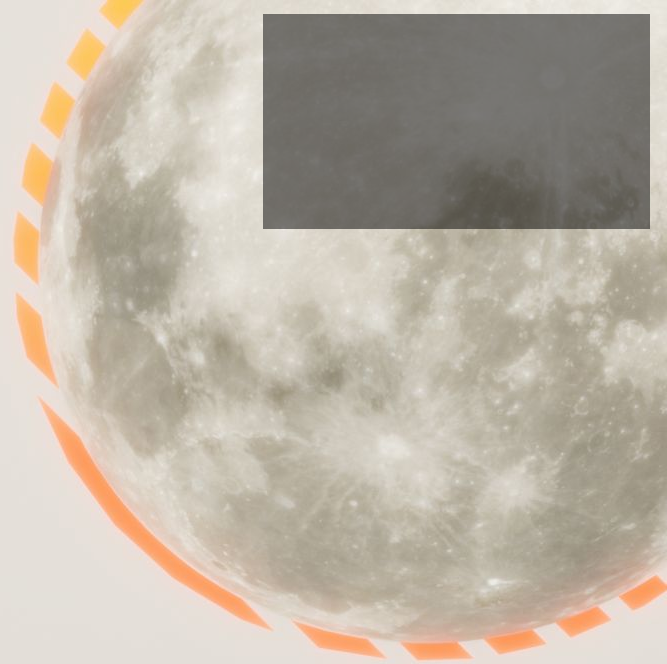


An Alternative: Preterism



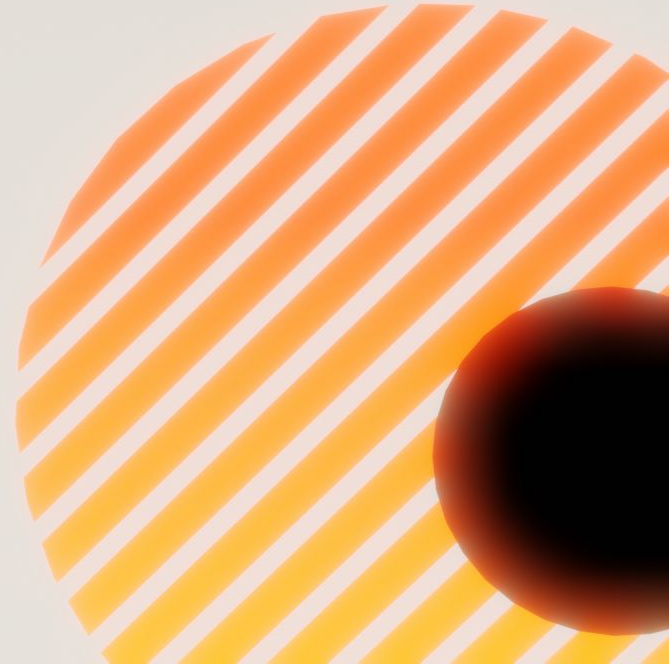
Preterism

- Preterism: an interpretation of the Olivet Discourse claiming that the events described in it have already taken place during the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
- Based on the observation that the Olivet Discourse is very homogeneous in nature (the same observation that skeptics make when interpreting the passage).



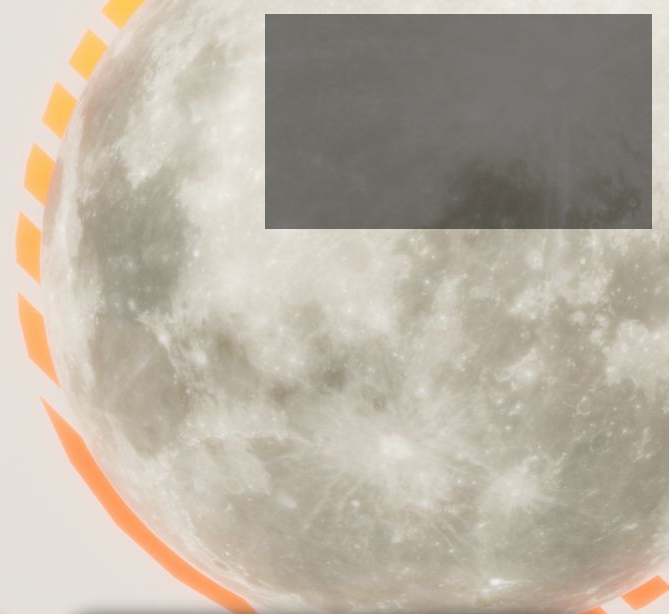
Preterism

- The Great Tribulation refers to the siege of Jerusalem, rather than an eschatological period.
- The “end of the age” refers to the end of the Jewish dispensation/age, rather than the end of the world.
- The coming (*parousia*) of the Son of Man refers to God’s coming in judgement upon Jerusalem.
 - “For behold, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel.” (Micah 1:3-5 ESV)



Preterism

- The dramatic language surrounding the Tribulation is about the horrific conditions surrounding the siege of Jerusalem.
 - In addition, for the Jewish people, the temple represented the center of their world. Its destruction would be tantamount to the end of the world they knew, so dramatic language makes sense there.



Preterism

- What about the astrological phenomena?
 - In the Old Testament, prophecies often employed this type of apocalyptic language.
 - “Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light... Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.”

(Isaiah 13:9-13 ESV)

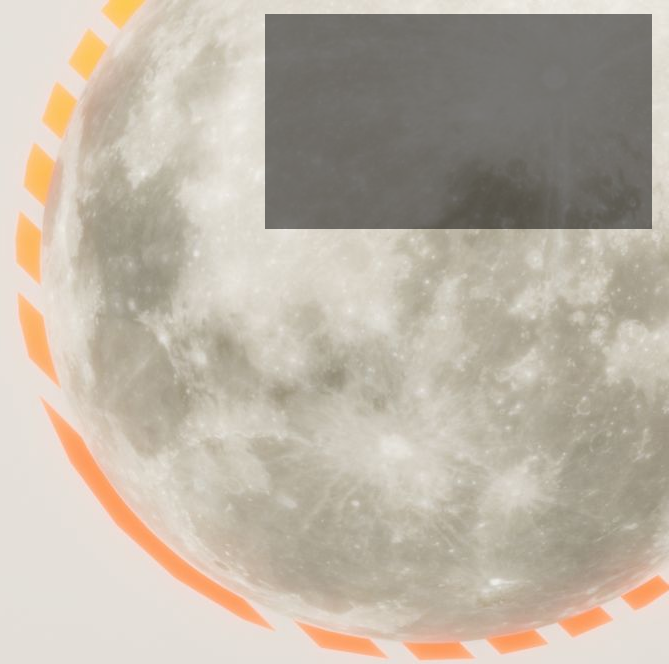
Two Flavors of Preterism

1. Full preterism: all New Testament eschatology (Revelation, the resurrection, the Day of Judgement, etc.) has already happened at the temple's destruction.
2. Partial preterism: some New Testament eschatology is still yet to come.



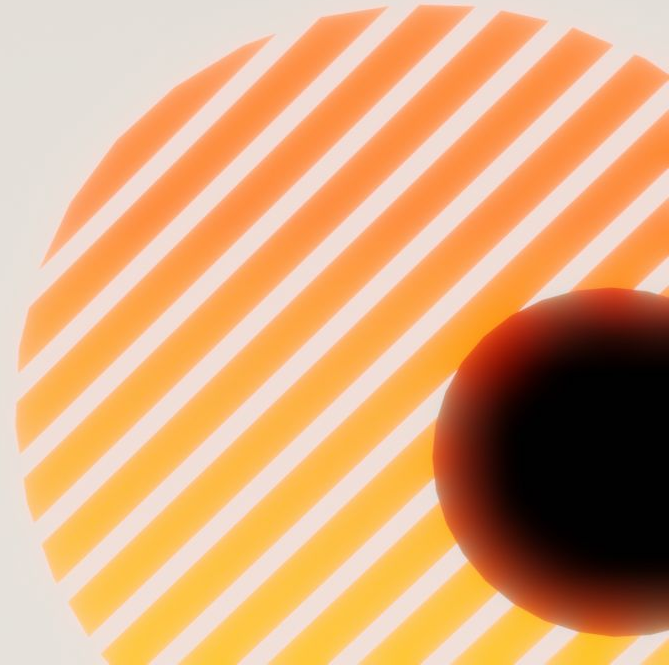
Full Preterism

- Asserts that the *parousia* happened with the destruction of Jerusalem, and that there will be no future advent.
- In this view, there is no future eschatology, so the bodily resurrection of the dead cannot happen, nor can a future day of judgement.
 - Rather, full preterists believe in a purely spiritual resurrection.



Partial Preterism

- Asserts that there are two *parousias*: one that happened in AD 70 (a “coming of judgement” on Jerusalem), and one that will happen at the end of the world.
 - Passages like Acts 1:11 clearly refer to a physical return, in addition to the metaphorical one described in the Discourse.
- There is still a future day of judgement and a future bodily resurrection.



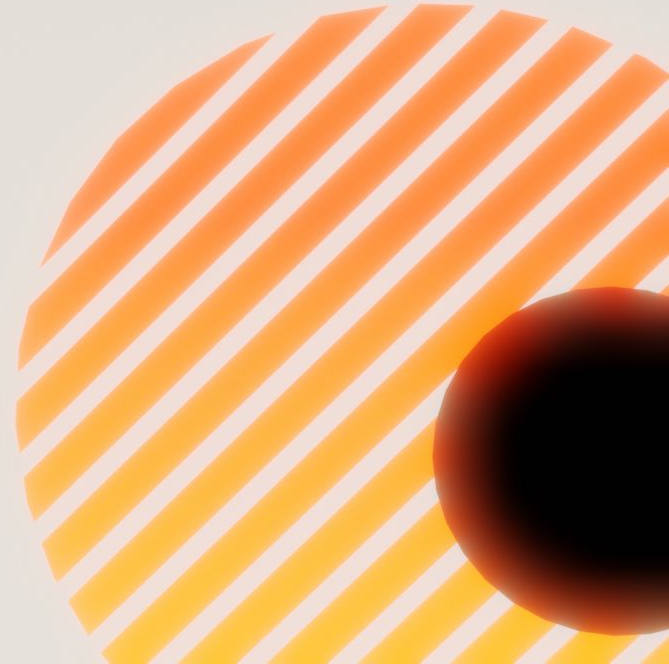
Preterism: Comparing the Flavors

- The advantage of full preterism is that it is much simpler: rather than two separate *parousias* and two separate judgements, there is only one of each.

	Full Preterism		Partial Preterism	
	AD 70	End of the World	AD 70	End of the World
Coming (parousia) of Christ	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Resurrection and rapture	Yes	No	No	Yes
"Day of the Lord"	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Judgement	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Preterism: Comparing the Flavors

- The disadvantage of full preterism is that it's rather unorthodox.
 - The Nicene Creed, written in the 4th century AD, talks about Christ's future return and judgement.
 - The Apostle's Creed talks about a "resurrection of the body," i.e., not merely a spiritual resurrection.
- Scripture itself seems very strongly to indicate a bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20) and a physical return of Christ (Acts 1:11).



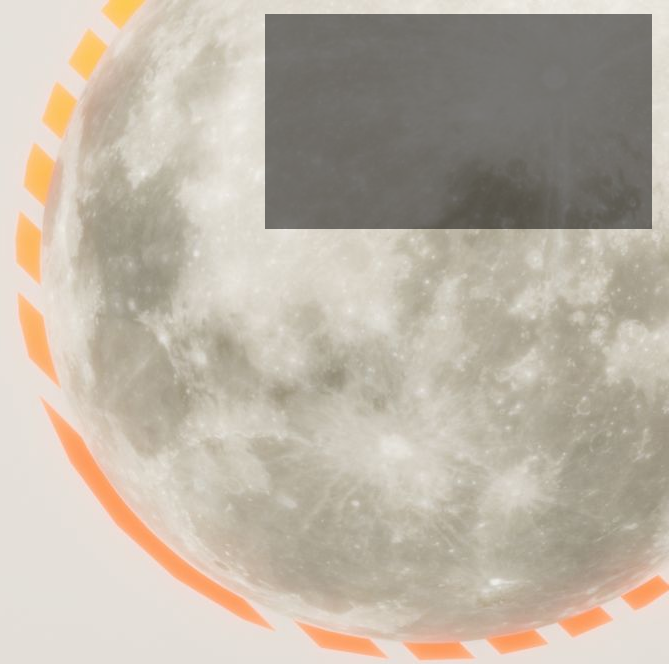
Preterism vs. Futurism

- As a whole, preterism is advantageous because it harmonizes well with the homogeneity of the passage.
- However, each approach does have its disadvantages (and can lead to heresy if you're not careful).
- In the end, we might not know what the correct reading is, but there are multiple views that harmonize well with the rest of Scripture and have varying levels of simplicity.



Takeaways

- Many people object that since Jesus predicted that He would come in the lifetime of his disciples and with the destruction of the Temple, the Gospel is invalid / unreliable.
- When trying to argue for a particular interpretation, it is often not enough to simply show that it's possible: you must also show that it's a good / likely reading of the text.
- This question has been around for a long time, and there are multiple textually supported views, including futurism and preterism, that attempt to resolve the apparent conflict.





THINK
THEISM

Matthew 24 (ESV)

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

Matthew 24 (ESV) – First Cycle

⁴ And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

⁹ “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.



Matthew 24 (ESV) – Second Cycle

¹⁵ “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, ¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁹ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. ²³ Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.



Matthew 24 (ESV) – Third Cycle

²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

³² “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.



Matthew 24 (ESV) – Third Cycle

³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

