

A Review of *Refuting Realized Eschatology*

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At various times in the past 45 years, some brethren have been taken captive by a false doctrine which goes by several names—Realized Eschatology, Full Preterism, Max Kingism, Transdenominational Transmillennialism, and several others. The 40th Annual Bellview Lectures in Pensacola, Florida, devoted their entire 2015 book to an evaluation of this subject, and it is well worth having. The heresy aside, it is a rich study in what the Bible teaches about the resurrection, the Second Coming of Christ, and related subjects.

The opening chapter was written by Jess Whitlock, who observed Realized Eschatology (hereafter, RE) flourish in Ardmore, Oklahoma. A neighboring congregation began to teach the false doctrine there two decades ago. Pursuing that course, they now call themselves the Ardmore Family of God (7) and will fellowship many who are not Christians by the Bible's definition. Brother Whitlock set the stage for this discussion by repeating the debate proposition that Max King in 1973 affirmed against Brother Gus Nichols:

The Holy Scriptures teach that the second coming of Christ, including the establishment of the eternal kingdom, the day of judgment, the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead, occurred with the fall of Judaism in 70 A.D. (2).

The more the reader mulls over this proposition, the more bizarre it seems. Can someone actually believe the day of judgment promised in so many passages, the end of the world prophesied of in passages such as 2 Thessalonians 1 and 2 Peter 3, and the resurrection of the dead foretold in 1 Corinthians 15 all occurred in AD 70? Yes, that is precisely what Max King and many of his followers will argue. Admittedly, this claim seems absurd on the face of it, but examining the “proof” for such a theory makes one feel as though he has entered the Twilight Zone. All of the pertinent passages related to this proposition are examined in the lectureship book.

One of the results of RE theology is that they have spiritual fellowship with those who are part of various denominations. If there were no other reason to criticize this doctrine, this one practice alone would be sufficient. Those present for the Open Forum on Tuesday saw a video of Don Preston, who transformed the Ardmore church, saying that he expected to be in heaven with the Pentecostal seated beside him. Jess Whitlock calls attention to this departure from the

faith by citing what Timothy King (Max King's son) wrote on pages 86-87 of his book, *Give Me This Mountain*:

By the Spring of 1999, I knew that we needed to model something other than sectarianism. That summer for our annual conference, I invited Leigh Halliwell, an Episcopal scholar, to join our program (2).

Apparently, the belief in Realized Eschatology is more of a common bond than being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Brother Whitlock continues with some of the outrageous statements made by Tim King on page 66 of *Give Me This Mountain*:

Adam's curse is now removed. God is no longer at war with humanity. We now are at rest (3).

A few observations are in order: (1) The Scriptures do not tie Adam's curse to the destruction of Judaism. When God cursed Adam and Eve because of their sins, Judaism did not exist, and neither did Jerusalem. Linking the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 to removing the penalties God placed on the first couple is simply nonsense. So men now work without sweating? (Perhaps false teachers do.) Has death ceased? Do women have no pain in child-bearing? Assertions such as these are like saying, "The square root of an orange is 7% because lobsters don't play basketball."

(2) God is always at war against sin; do REs really want to affirm that there is no sin today (1 John 1:8, 10)? If sin has been done away, how do we explain the presence of evil? When God destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, did that conclude His war with mankind? The prophets spoke against the sins of all the nations. Does God no longer care about the atrocities of ISIS, Boko Haram, and others? Was He not at war against Hitler, either? These are just a few questions and observations to show the foolishness of King's claim.

According to RE theology, the "last days" never referred to the Christian dispensation, and the Old Law was not finally removed until AD 70 (3). Equally peculiar is the claim that all prophecies were complete by AD 70 (4), which includes the entire book of Revelation! Foy E. Wallace, Jr., believed (and some faithful brethren today agree) that the events of Revelation were fulfilled by AD 70, but their view should not be confused with King's; none of them believe in the applications King makes from this position, and a chapter later in the book deals with that fact (279-301).

Brother Whitlock closes out the introductory chapter by detailing a modern history of the popularity of this doctrine within the body of Christ beginning with C. D. Beagle (Max King's father-in-law) and continuing into this century. Then he lists many writers who have held some form of this false doctrine previously, going back to the 16th century.

The next two chapters are foundational, dealing with “The Nature of Prophecy” and the “Interpretation of Figurative Language.” The reader needs to be reminded of these principles which are flagrantly abused by King and his followers. “King has ‘spiritualized’ the resurrection of mankind, the Day of Judgment, Heaven, and Hell” (27), which necessitates this material.

Terry Hightower did not present the “Arguments Against Realized Eschatology” that comprise 41 pages of the book (36-76) at the lectures, but it is important that the reader have this material available. All of these cannot be repeated here, but one has been chosen as a sample (although not put in the logical format as it appears on page 60). This argument relates to the idea that the Law of Moses was not fully done away with until AD 70. If Jesus was High Priest before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, then the law had to have already been changed, since He could not be High Priest under the Law of Moses. Hebrews 7:11-16 demonstrates conclusively that Jesus is our High Priest and that therefore the Old Covenant had come to an end. Several other arguments show the absolute futility and inanity of the RE position.

Daniel Denham provides a word study of several key terms to show how the words are being misapplied by RE adherents. Among those considered are the words translated “age,” “world,” “will,” “death,” and “resurrection” (77-91). This is an important study that should be read very carefully. Brother Denham had signed debate propositions that were available for RE leaders to sign during the lectures. To date, nothing has been accepted. Only two stipulations were attached. The first was that the debate be four nights in one week (which is standard) so the subject could be fully covered. The second was that it be held in one of two congregations in Michigan that support this doctrine. The reason for that is that one part of a former debate was held in Fort Wayne, Indiana, but the second part, scheduled for Michigan, never came about.

The next chapter discusses the differences between partial and full preterism, although King and his followers hold to the “full” position. This is followed by David Brown’s chapter that discusses, “Old Testament Texts Misused by Realized Eschatologists.” Although this one deals with Daniel 2 (and other matters), later chapters cover Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel 12, and Joel 2.

An important aspect of Realized Eschatology is its “Sin-Death” doctrine. Daniel Denham sets forth two doctrines crucial to AD 70 theology. The first is “the Grave of Judaism,” which a later chapter discusses more thoroughly. Max King wrote: “Judaism was the metaphorical grave of the spiritual dead out of which this resurrection took place” (324). Or as Denham put it, “the General Resurrection was the raising up of the church out of ‘the grave of Judaism.’ ” (116). What?! Yes, RE teaches that the church was dead in the grave of Judaism, but when Jesus returned and

destroyed Jerusalem, the church was resurrected. As Denham asked, “If the church was dead in Judaism, then what killed it?” (116).

The second subject raised is that of “sin-death” or “soul-death.” If God destroyed “sin-death” in AD 70, then no one since then has been separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2). How absurd is such a position! One can only imagine how hard one would have to scramble to both affirm but then deny such a foolish assertion.

As one might imagine, several New Testament passages must be examined to show the truth from which REs have departed. Various writers examine the following texts: Luke 17:20-37, Luke 20:27-40, John 5:24-29, Acts 2:29-36, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, and 2 Peter 3:1-13. In regard to this last passage, lectureship director Michael Hatcher was having a conversation about it with an RE defender. Finally, Michael said to him, “Just read the text,” and the AD 70 enthusiast replied (and this is a quote): **“Simply reading the text is poor Biblical hermeneutics.”** It was pointed out that perhaps failing to read the text is probably the way they fell into this heresy.

One passage the reader might not expect to find discussed is the “Allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Galatians 4:21-31).” Most Bible students know that Paul is arguing against the Judaizing teachers throughout most of Galatians. Ultimately, he will say that those who attempt to be justified by the Law of Moses have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). However, just prior to that Paul is showing, via the allegory, that the Law of Moses was a fleshly covenant, just as Ishmael was born of the will of the flesh. Isaac was the child of promise, and he represents the freedom that exists in the new covenant. Yet the chart on page 230, representing RE theology has the covenant of Ishmael (Judaism) existing from Mount Sinai to the time of the New Jerusalem (AD 70). The covenant involving Isaac (Christianity) goes from the cross to AD 70. Again, King has two covenants in effect at the same time—a notion which the Bible refutes.

The following chapter, “The End of the Law of Moses,” also shows the fallacy of that view. Also appropriate to this study is: “The Establishment of the Kingdom.” Another chapter deals with “The Second ‘Coming.’” How is *coming* used in the New Testament? The context must determine which *coming* is intended since there are several (which the REs must deny). The most consideration is given to the final *coming*, which also involves the Day of Judgment. A little consideration is given here as to how thin the RE songbook must be. All songs mentioning a future coming of Christ or the Day of Judgment would need to be expunged since those events already occurred in AD 70.

Also included is a study dealing with, “The Bible’s Teaching of Spirit and Soul Regarding Man,” “The Judgment and Resurrection of the Dead,” and “Bible Doctrines of Hades, Heaven, and Hell.” The book contains 396 pages in all and may be ordered from the Bellview Church of Christ in Pensacola, Florida (850-455-7595). It costs \$25 plus postage and handling. A brief summary such as this one does not do justice to the material contained in the book.

Elder and song leader Paul Brantley announced a song about one’s name being in the Book of Life. If RE is true, he commented, then that Book has been out of print since ad 70. If someone were going to select a heresy, why choose an obvious error? Hymenaeus and Philetus were condemned for teaching that “the resurrection is already past” (2 Tim. 2:18). It is still heresy.

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