

Unstable 'Elements':

An Over-Reaction To Dispensationalism Can Lead To Preterism

The term 'preterism' comes from a Latin word 'praeter'

which means something that is PAST.

Preterism is basically an 'entirely realized' or 'completely fulfilled'
eschatology (which is the study of end-time prophecies).

This view interprets the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ,

the general resurrection,

and the Great White Throne Judgment

as events which have already happened in the PAST

in the year 70 A.D. at the destruction of Jerusalem.

As the dispensationalists distort 2 Tim 2:15 as their 'spring-board'
for DIVIDING the Bible into different '2's like

- 2 peoples of God (Israel, as being different from the Body of Christ)
- 2 eternal destinies for the 2 peoples of God (earth or heaven)
- 2 salvation programs (faith plus works, as opposed to grace alone) etc.

.... so the preterists use Matthew chapter 24 as their basis

for claiming that everything was fulfilled over 1900 years ago in 70 A.D.

Dispensationalists are known for excessive use of charts and time-lines.

Preterists make it easier: there is nothing to think about in the future at all!

Many teachings of perterism come from a book that was published in 1878 by James Stuart Russell. A new edition of it was published in 1996 for the present day heresy.

I received a letter this past week, in which a man asked me the following 2 questions, then he answered with his own (wrong) conclusion: (his words are green) "The word 'elements' in scripture, what does it mean? Can you find one place in the Bible where the word 'elements' is used to describe ANYTHING but the law and Jewish ceremonies? I cannot."

In another article he sent me, he stated, "There is a common teaching in Christendom that one day the heaven and earth and everything in them will burn up with heat and be destroyed. This is one common teaching that most people agree on today. I am going to put a different spin on the teaching from 2 Peter 3 on what I see from scripture right now."

He continued, "I will stand for what I see and if it can be proven wrong, then I will change my beliefs."

The 'unstable elements' title is what he does with the word 'elements'.

Here are the 2 verses in question containing the word 'elements':

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the [elements](#) shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

2 Peter 3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the [elements](#) shall melt with fervent heat?

The Greek word <stoicheion> is in the scriptures a total of 7 times.

In the KJV, it is translated

- 'elements' 4 times,
 - 'rudiments' 2 times,
- and
- 'principles' 1 time.

The man referenced the other verses where the word 'elements' was used:

He incorrectly concluded, "We can see that the apostle Paul was talking about the Law and the system here." He went on to say, ".... that system that Christ freed them from the same system that Christ did away with."

But notice that the 'elements' were 'of the world' not 'of God':

Gal 4:3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

Gal 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Likewise, the 'rudiments' were not 'of God' but were 'of the world'.

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

In this context, the 'elements' were the commandments and doctrines of MEN, of the world ... not the commandments (or law) and doctrines of GOD:

Col 2:20-22 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,
 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;
 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

Paul was happy inside in the law of God (Prov 29:18, John 13:17):

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

We ought not have a negative attitude toward God's law, but rejoice in it:

Psa 1:1-2 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; (Psa 40:8, Psa 119)
and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Paul's 'old man' was 'crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin' (Rom 6:6, 8:7). His inner man obeyed God's law that was in his heart (Isa 51:7, Rom 2:14-15):

Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

The law of God is holy. It is not 'of the world' as the 'elements' were:

Rom 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy,
and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Here is the definition of the Greek word <stoicheion> given by a lexicon:

- 1) any first thing, from which the others belonging to some series or composite whole take their rise, an element, first principal
 - a) the letters of the alphabet as the elements of speech, not however the written characters, but the spoken sounds
 - b) the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe
 - c) the heavenly bodies, either as parts of the heavens or (as others think) because in them the elements of man, life and destiny were supposed to reside
 - d) the elements, rudiments, primary and fundamental principles of any art, science, or discipline

The last of the 7 uses of the word translated 'elements' and 'rudiments'
and here 'principles' was also referenced by the man who wrote me.

He wrote, *"The first principle of the oracles of God? That is the law."*

But he missed the point. The issue was urging the saints to "go on unto perfection" (Heb 6:1), by maturing in God's word "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom 8:4) not to abandon it. After learning the 'basics' of scripture, we are to graduate off milk and onto meat:

Heb 5:12-14 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the **first principles of the oracles of God**; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

13 For every one that useth **milk** is **unskilful** in the word of righteousness: for **he is a babe**.

14 But **strong meat** belongeth to them that are of **full age**, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to **discern** both good and evil.

Paul taught to 'grow up' (Eph 4:15). Peter taught to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18) like changing from babes into adults:

1 Peter 2:2 As **newborn babes**, desire the sincere **milk** of the word, **that ye may grow thereby**:

The **first** 'principles' **of the world** ... have been since the **first** of the world:

Gen 3:6 (Eve, in the garden of Eden) And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, (the lust of the flesh) and that it was pleasant to the eyes, (the lust of the eyes) and a tree to be desired to make one wise, (the pride of life) she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, (and they are still in the world) the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is **not of the Father**, but is **of the world**.

The man wrote, "Now we see, from scripture, what Peter was talking about in 2 Peter 3. He is NOT talking about a 'physical' destroying of the elements of the earth, but a 'spiritual' taking away of that which is done - the law and its system."

He continued, "I am equally convinced that the terms 'the day of the Lord' in verse 10, and 'the day of God' in verse 12 are also talking about a 'spiritual' day and NOT a 'physical' one!"

He also stated, "I believe the coming of the Lord mentioned in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 is a 'spiritual' one and not a 'physical' one. I believe, and see from scripture that these things happened in 70 A.D. The coming of the Lord was Him coming to judge and conclude Israel, which God did when He destroyed Jerusalem. The fire and the fervent heat Peter was talking about is the judgment of Almighty God upon the nation!"

We have already read the scriptures that specifically stated that the 'elements' and 'rudiments' were 'of the world' 'the commandments and doctrines of MEN'. Thus in those sentences, they could NOT be the law of God. Let's go back to the 2 verses in question containing the word 'elements' which was the primary focus of the guy's letter to me.

A fundamental principle in Bible study, is to look at other verses that talk about the same things. The context of 2 Peter 3 is the coming of the Lord:

2 Peter 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

Whatever the 'elements' are they shall MELT with fervent heat:

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

2 Peter 3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

What are the 'elements' that will MELT when the called, chosen, and faithful (Rev 17:14) get the 'eternal' promised land (Heb 11:16):

Amos 9:13-15 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

What 'elements' will MELT in the day of the Lord's vengeance (Isa 34:8-10)?

Nahum 1:2, 5-7 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. (2 Peter 2:9, 3:7)

5 The mountains quake at him,

and the hills melt, (not the law)

and the earth is burned at his presence,
yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

6 Who can stand before his indignation?

and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?

his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

7 The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and

he knoweth them that trust in him. (John 10:27, 1 Cor 8:3, 2 Tim 2:19)

What 'elements' will MELT when the Lord appears (Micah 1:3-4, Heb 9:28)?

Psa 97:1-6 The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice;
let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

2 Clouds and darkness are round about him:

righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

4 His lightnings enlightened the world:

the earth saw, and trembled.

5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

6 The heavens declare his righteousness,

and all the people see his glory. (Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27)

When Jesus Christ's servant John wrote about the revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:1) he told about the same circumstances surrounding it:

Rev 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds;
and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him:
and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.
Even so, Amen.

Ungodly men will cry out in fear at the catastrophes happening both in the atmosphere and on the earth followed by the appearing of the Lord:

Matt 24:29-30 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:
30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The return of Christ will NOT be a SECRET! This was not a 'spiritual' coming that already happened in 70 A.D. When Jesus returns, there will be NO 'missing' it nor 'mistaking' it! He will 'visibly' be seen in a blaze of glory:

Luke 21:25-28 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;
26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

What 'elements' will MELT at the coming of the Lord? The hills, the land:

Amos 9:5 And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

The fire will MELT whatever solid 'elements' it touches hills, mountains, land, earth and it will boil liquid 'elements' streams, rivers, seas, etc.:

Isa 64:1-2 Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that **the mountains might flow down at thy presence,**

2 As when **the melting fire burneth,**
the fire causeth the waters to boil,
to make thy name known to thine adversaries,
that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

Psalm 46 prophesies the state of the world **when the Lord comes** in fire, and brings the new Jerusalem (Heb 12:22, Rev 21:2-3), the city of God:

Psa 46:1-11 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble. (Then will be safety for God's saints.)

2 **Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,**
and though **the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;**
3 Though **the waters thereof roar and be troubled,**
though **the mountains shake** with the swelling thereof. Selah.
4 There is a river (Rev 22:1), the streams whereof shall make glad
the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.
5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.
6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:
he uttered his voice, **the earth melted.** (What will MELT? the earth)
7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.
8 Come, **behold the works of the LORD,**
what desolations he hath made in the earth.
9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.
10 Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.
11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

When the Lord comes, the sinners will be judged and the saints justified:

Psa 79:10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?

let him be known among the heathen in our sight
by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.

When the 5th seal opened, John saw the souls of the martyrs crying for God to judge the inhabitants of the earth for killing them (Rev 6: 9-10). Vengeance belongs to God (Psa 94: 1, Isa 35:4, Heb 10:30, Rom 12:19). He will take it on those that don't know Him when He comes in flaming fire, in that same day when He will be glorified and admired in them that believe:

2 Thess 1:4-6 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all **your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:**

5 Which is **a manifest token (a visible sign) of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:**

6 **Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;**

When the Lord arises up from His throne He will curse the lost and bless the saved (Gen 12:3; Matt 25:34,41; Rev 11:18):

Psa 7:6-7 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,
lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies:
and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

7 **So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.**

Dispensationalists, and 'mid-Acts-ers' in particular, don't accept these verses as applying to them, and Preterists 'spiritualize' them into the past (70 A.D).

Psa 68:1-3 Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered:
let them also that hate him flee before him.

2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: **as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.**

3 **But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.**

Next week we will study Matt. 24 and the words 'generation' and 'all these things' so you can see more of the Preterism errors. I will answer other questions from the same man that sent me the ones I shared today.

This is David Dowell saying, "God is not mocked! Think about it!"