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FULFILLED! *Magazine*

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Rethinking the Resurrection



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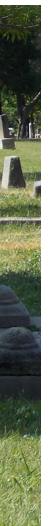
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4. **Editor's Note** After missing two issues, we're back.

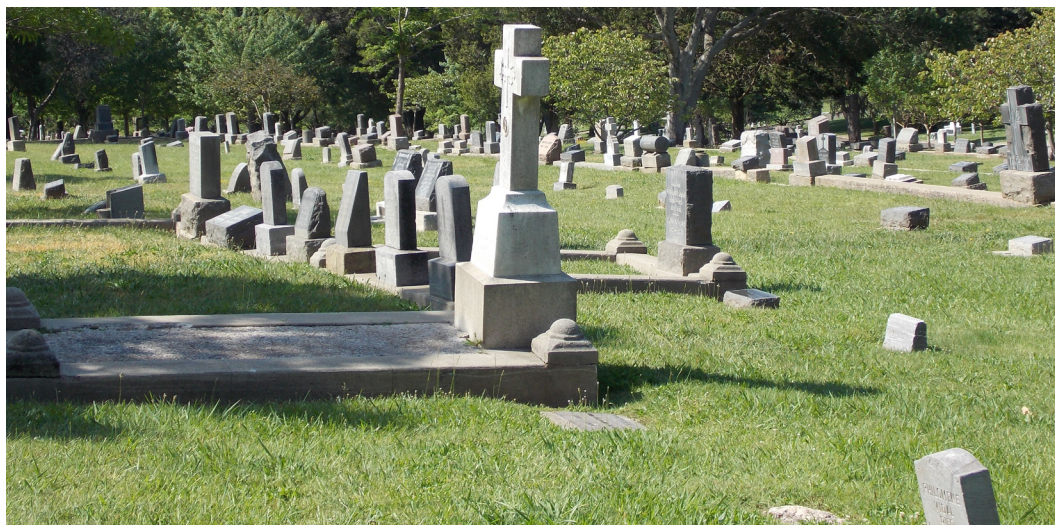
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Editor's Note...

IF IT SEEMS IT has been a while since you received an issue of *Fulfilled! Magazine*, you're right. I got last year's fall issue out too late to get the winter issue out on time, so I opted to skip it and resume with this year's spring issue. However, in early December last year my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. As you might imagine, our focus shifted to her health and this year's spring issue succumbed to various tests, treatments, and a great amount of health research.

Kayla had surgery in early January to remove the tumor, and a subsequent PET scan revealed that there was no other detectable cancer. Although her oncologist recommended chemo and radiation, after much research we have opted to forego those treatments, which themselves are carcinogenic, and instead pursue a change in diet and lifestyle, allowing God's wonderfully designed immune system to perform as intended.

We have come to the conclusion that the majority of developed disease (cardio-vascular, Type 2 diabetes, cancer, etc.) are the result of decades of the body's immune system being overwhelmed by the lifestyle of western civilization. This includes the Standard American Diet (SAD), sedentary lifestyle, and increasing exposure to toxins (I have read that there are 84,000 chemicals on the market).

The modern, western civilized life has many, many benefits—such as producing and distributing a preterist magazine from a home office! However, the side-effects of many (if not most) of these advances in lifestyle have yet to be discovered. How have the many sedentary hours

of sitting in front of my computer, the blue light from my electronic devices, and the electromagnetic waves from my wifi impacted my health? Studies are only beginning to alert us of potential dangers; in the meantime, we are paying for these benefits with our health.

Another huge factor working against the general public is the fact that the myriad of companies that develop and market the items from which we benefit in modern civilization—be they fast food, weed killers, genetically modified food, cell phones, etc.—do not have our personal health as their primary concern. As legal corporations they are required to produce profits.

It is not my intent to turn this editor's update into a personal-health diatribe, but rather give a little background into the research Kayla and I done this year and the reasons for our decision to forego further traditional cancer treatment. We believe that making an effort to minimize toxin exposure, reducing processed food consumption, and increasing the consumption of natural, organic food will allow the body's natural immune and disease-fighting capabilities to rejuvenate themselves and restore our health. Because of the exponential speed at which science progresses, we are increasingly exposed to a host of things the side-effects of which are not known or perhaps downplayed (remember tobacco company executives testifying before congress that tobacco use was not addicting?). I've come to the conclusion that if we are not actively pursuing our own personal health, we are passively dying. As Christians we should resonate with this concept, because

... if we are not actively pursuing our own personal health, we are passively dying.

Mailbag...

Thank you Bro. Martin for having me on the mailing list. Enclosed is a small contribution. I am a layman, a member of a Southern Baptist Church, and a believer of the "Fulfilled Prophecy" point of view. I do enjoy the articles in the magazine.
With best wishes,

L.J., AR

So appreciate your magazine, glad to hear you are taking care of your health. I think I speak for many

when I say we want to keep reading it for many years to come.

Rachel, TX

Your magazine is a life-line to me, as I have no one here in Australia to talk to with preterist views of the Bible!

Joan, Australia

Love your publication and enjoy every copy!

Tracy, FL



if we are not actively walking by the Spirit we are passively performing the lusts of the flesh (Gal 5:16).

Turning to this issue, Jerel Kratt is beginning a three-part series on the resurrection. A former Corporate Body View (CBV) advocate, Jerel has concluded that the CBV has some shortcomings, and discusses these in his series. Jerel sees both individual and corporate aspects to the resurrection, much as Charles Meek did in his online article a couple years ago.

The nature of the resurrection, along with its sundry details, is perhaps the greatest point of division within preterism. I am encouraged to see dialog emerging which acknowledges the strengths to two often polarizing views. My hope is that, regardless which particular view you may hold, you don't dig in your heels but rather welcome the insights of Jerel and others, allowing them to sharpen your theology.

It is refreshing to have another objection overruled by Don Preston, whose hectic schedule has prevented him from contributing to the last couple of issues.

I have noted in the past that my wife and I produce this magazine in our spare time. Unfortunately, another aspect of the modern, western lifestyle seems to be an ever-increasingly hectic schedule. Lord willing, I will retire in about two years, at which time I can devote quality time to the magazine and other aspects of FCG. Until then my intent is to maintain a quarterly publishing schedule, but I can make no guarantees. We are appreciative of your prayers in these matters, and also want to express our gratitude to those who have been praying for Kayla since becoming aware of her health issues. Thanks also for your continued financial support, especially since I haven't produced anything for more than half a year.

Blessings,

Brian

Your magazine is a
life-line to me...

Gehenna

by Kurt Simmons

I APPRECIATED SAM DAWSON'S ARTICLE on Gehenna in the fall edition of *Fulfilled!* magazine. I agree that the Bible does not teach Eternal Conscious Torment (ECT) of the lost. Sam attributes the notion of ECT to the Catholic Church, but it actually originates with the Greeks and Romans.

The Greeks and Romans believed in the immortality of the soul, which lived forever in an endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (reincarnation). They taught that there were four places in Hades inhabited by the dead: "Limbo," "Purgatory," "Elysium," and "Tartarus." Most men would pass through Limbo, Purgatory, and Elysium to be born again to earthly life. However, the wicked were tormented eternally in Tartarus (Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 540-627).

This basic belief structure, including Limbo, Purgatory, and Hell (Tartarus), found its way into the Catholic Church, where it has existed ever since. The Reformers jettisoned most of these errors as having no colorable basis in Scripture, but clung to the notion of Hell and ETC, which continue to exist in much of the Protestant Church.

Although I agree with Sam that God does not torture the lost eternally in Hell, I do not agree with his analysis that Gehenna refers *exclusively* or even necessarily to the literal valley of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem. Instead, I believe a candid study will show that New Testament references to Gehenna are impressed with a *symbolic* dimension pointing to the place where the lost suffer final punishment and extinction or annihilation.

Prior to the general Hadean resurrection, the dead went to one of two places: Hades Paradise (also called "Abraham's bosom," or the "third heaven"; cf. Luke 16:22; 23:43; Acts 2:27; 2 Cor 12:2-4) or Hades Tartarus, called the "Pit" in the Old Testament (Ezek. 27:20; Luke 16:23; 2 Peter 2:4). At the Hadean resurrection in AD 70, the souls in Hades went either to Heaven or the lake of fire (also called the "second death," Rev 20:14). Everyone who does not inherit eternal life suffers extinction in the lake of fire or second death (Rev 20:15).

Since all who fail to obtain eternal life suffer the second death, first-century Jews who rejected Jesus and the gospel would also have suffered this fate. Therefore, when Jesus asks the Pharisees "*how shall you escape the damnation of hell?*" (Gk. "judgment of Gehenna" – Matt

23:33 – a passage Sam does not discuss), it seems rather obvious that He is *not* talking about the physical valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem. The Pharisees could very easily have escaped death or burial in the valley of Hinnom by moving to Rome or some other ancient city, or even by simply dying prior to the Jewish war with Rome (AD 66-70) when the bodies of those who perished from famine in the siege were cast into that abyss.

When Jesus asked "*how shall you escape damnation of Gehenna,*" it is clear He alludes instead to the inevitable destruction in the lake of fire that awaits all who fail to attain salvation in Christ. The fact that Jesus calls this destruction *inescapable* proves that this is so, and that the literal valley of Hinnom is not in view.

To the above must be added Matthew 10:28. There, Jesus warns the righteous that they can suffer the fate of the wicked if they deny Him amidst their persecutions: "*Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Gehenna; cf. Mark 8:34-38).

The dichotomy here is between death of the physical body and death of the soul. Men may kill the body, but only God can kill the soul. The usage here must therefore be distinguished

ALL THINGS MADE NEW

THE NEW HEAVENS & EARTH AND THE DAY OF CHRIST'S APPEARING



KURT M. SIMMONS

Read the latest from the p

er exclusively or even necessarily to the literal
e of Jerusalem”

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from Joshua 10:39, cited by Sam, where “destroying the souls” of the Canaanites signifies taking away *physical life*, but says nothing about the soul or spirit of the dead. If physical death is the “first death,” then death of the soul is the “second death.” Physical death can occur in a physical location, but the soul, being a spiritual thing, cannot suffer extinction in a physical place. Therefore, when Jesus warns that denying Him may result in the destruction of the soul in Gehenna, He cannot have in view the physical valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem. Rather, He has in view the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev 20:14, 15).

Hence, in both of these cases (Matt 10:28 and Matt 23:33), Gehenna is seen to be a *symbol* for the lake of

fire and not a reference to the literal valley beyond Jerusalem’s walls.

The above conclusion is strengthened by Matthew 25:31-46, where the dead of all nations—including first-century Jews—stand before the judgment seat of Christ and the lost are sent into “*everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (v. 41). In Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, we learn that the devil and his minions are cast into the *lake of fire*. Hence, the *everlasting fire* of

Matthew 25:41 is the same as the *lake of fire* of Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, 14, 15. But as we have already established that the *lake of fire* is another name for *Gehenna*, it follows that the *everlasting fire* of Matthew 25:41 also refers to *Gehenna* (if A = B and B = C, then A = C).

Since “all nations” were liable to the lake of fire, and since “all nations” includes first-century Jews, it was to the lake of fire Jesus referred when He warned His countrymen of the danger of Gehenna, not physical death in the valley of Hinnom.

This is confirmed by the Greek. The phrase “*everlasting fire*” in Matthew 25:41 is *πυρ το αιωνιον*. The identical phrase occurs in Matthew 18:8, where Jesus states that it is better to enter life halt or maimed than with two hands or two feet to be cast into “*everlasting fire*” (*πυρ το αιωνιον*). However, the parallel passage in Mark alters the wording slightly and adds the word *Gehenna*:

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two hands to go into hell (γεενναν), into the fire that never shall be quenched (πυρ το ασβεστον). Mark. 9:43

If the *unquenchable fire* of Gehenna in Mark 9:43 = the *everlasting fire* in Matthew 18:8 and 25:41; and if the *everlasting fire* of Matthew 25:41 = the *lake of fire* of Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, 14, 15; then the *unquenchable fire* of Gehenna in Mark 9:43 = the *lake of fire* of Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, 14, 15 (if A = B and C, and if C = D, then A = D).

Thus, in each case, we find that the physical valley of Hinnom is nowhere in view and that Gehenna *invariably* refers to the lake of fire, or second death.

Conclusion: Gehenna was a literal valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem, but had symbolic import and meaning which pointed to the place where the souls of the lost suffered final extinction in the lake of fire, the second death. It is artificial to read New Testament warnings about destruction in Gehenna in an overly literal manner, as referring to the Jewish war with Rome and having one’s body cast into the physical valley, just as it is artificial to read Eternal Conscious Torment into the imagery of the second death. The better view is the middle way set out above. †

COMMENTARY ON

ISAIAH 65, 66

JOEL

II PETER



Christians have always taught and believed that heaven is the eternal home of the saints. Yet, the Bible also speaks about a New Heavens and Earth following the Day of Christ’s appearing. What are these New Heavens and Earth and who does the Bible say is to inhabit them?

Now for the first time, the prophecies of the New Heavens and Earth, the Day of the Lord, and the Day of Christ’s appearing are brought together in one, easily accessible, verse-by-verse commentary where the reader can learn the meaning attached to these themes.

- Are we living in the “last days”?
- What did the earliest Christians believe about Christ’s Second Coming?
- Does the Bible teach the world will end in a conflagration of *physical* fire?
- Will there be a new, *physical* creation where the saved will spend eternity?
- Is man’s *physical* body, or his soul and spirit, the object of the resurrection?
- Will the lost be tormented with fire for all eternity?

the pen of Kurt Simmons

Perspectives

A Critique of the Corporate Body View of the Resurrection of the Dead (pt. 1)

by Jerel Kratt

I HAVE BEEN A BELIEVER in fulfilled prophecy for over nine years now. At the beginning of my journey, the two biggest hurdles to overcome as a partial preterist were the resurrection of the dead and the millennium. I began to study these two items deeply, and immediately after accepting the one and only second coming of Christ in AD 70, I studied online with all the major public proponents of what is called the “Corporate Body View” (hereafter, “CBV”) of the resurrection. The CBV teaches that the “resurrection of the dead,” specifically in texts like 1 Corinthians 15, does not refer to individual dead people departing Hades, but to the corporate body of saints, both alive and dead, coming out of Judaism (a ministration of death; 2 Cor 3:6-7) and into the church or the “body” of Christ. I quickly adopted this view because it seemed tremendously logical and straightforward. I immersed myself into the works of Max King, who was considered to have written the definitive work explaining a corporate body view of the resurrection of the dead. I have posted a few articles online on the subject, and spoken at three different Preterist Pilgrim Weekends on the subject of resurrection.

As I continued to study these subjects and engage other preterists with differing views on the resurrection, I began to see problems with many of the arguments used to defend the CBV. Over the next several months I will be writing a series of articles outlining these problems and offering what I believe to be a solution. This first article will discuss the phrase “our body.”

The CBV argues that the phrase “our body” (a plural possessive pronoun *our* with a singular noun *body*) as used by Paul in resurrection-related passages indicates that only a corporate body resurrection can be in view and that numerous individual bodies cannot be in view. This view is based on a basic Greek grammar rule which states that, generally, pronouns and nouns should agree in number. Therefore, if the noun “body” is singular following a plural pronoun such as “our,” then the meaning is to be understood as a single corporate “body” (group, collective) to which everyone who is addressed belongs.

However, there are exceptions to this Greek rule, and context determines how the rule is applied. In koine Greek it was possible to use a plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun in order to put emphasis on the noun. This usage was not meant to communicate the existence of only one noun collectively for all those represented by the plural pronoun. I will demonstrate this by looking at some advanced Greek Grammars and citing some scriptural examples.

Wallace¹ lists several categories of pronoun/noun

number agreement: “collective singular subjects, compound subjects, indefinite plurals, and categorical plurals.” Both Robertson², and Blass and Debrunner³ discuss this phenomenon, calling them “idiomatic plurals and singulars,” and *constructio ad sensum* (“construction according to the sense”), respectively. Turner states that using a plural pronoun with a singular noun in order to put emphasis on the noun, yet not denying the plurality of the noun, was a common Hebraism: “Contrary to normal Greek and Latin practice, the NT sometimes follows the Aramaic and Hebrew preference for a *distributive singular*. Something belonging to each person in a group is placed in the singular: as in, *to soma human* (1 Cor 6:19) and *en te kardia auton* (Luke 1:66).”⁴

Therefore, according to the rules of grammar, it wouldn’t be wrong to first consider the singular noun option, but the plural noun should also be considered; it could go either way based on context. The words “our (plural) body (singular)” in and of themselves do not prove that a single corporate body is in view.

The primary singular body CBV texts are: Romans 8:23 (NASB) “*And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body*”; and Philippians 3:21 (NASB) “*who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself*.”

“Flesh” (Greek *sarx*) is a word used by Paul which is often argued by CBV advocates to be a mode of existence based on the Law. However, “the flesh” had a primary meaning other than “covenantal mode of existence” both in the ancient Greek and in Paul’s writings. According to the highly respected scholar F.F. Bruce⁵, “flesh” primarily referred to human nature, and was seen as the locus of temptation and sin; not necessarily literally in biological tissue, but more holistically in the individual as a whole person. That is, when one would say “his mind was set on the flesh” they meant he was living according to his own human nature, not brought under control by the mind of God through His Spirit (e.g. Gal 5:16-21).

Of course, a corporate solidarity existed for those who were under the Law, for they all shared the same fate and were all under the same covenant. But the meaning of “in the flesh” should not be stretched beyond its normal use in order to exclude that normal usage—that is, it would be incorrect to define the meaning of “in the flesh” as only a covenantal “mode of existence” to the exclusion of the individual’s human nature as sinful. The human nature is general and primary; the covenantal mode of existence is

Rethinking the Resurrection

Jerel Kratt
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specific within that general category. One text that makes this point clear is Galatians 2:18-20.

“For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (ESV)

It is clear here that being under the law is not the same as being in the flesh, since Paul said that he died to the law yet was still in the flesh. Furthermore, Gentiles who had not formerly known God, nor were in a covenantal mode of existence under the Law, were also said to be “in the flesh” (see Gal 4:8-9 with 5:13ff). So, it might be better stated that being “in the flesh” is primarily talking about being “human.” What is most problematic however to the single corporate-body view of Romans 8:23 is the plurality of individuals discussed throughout that chapter, especially vv. 11-14. Verse 11 is powerful: . . . *will also give life to your mortal bodies.*” (NASB)

Contrary to the standard CBV, contextually, “deeds of the body” (v. 13) cannot be the deeds of multiple corporate bodies (such as of Moses, Adam, or Christ) being put to death, but rather must be the individual deeds of each person. There were individuals who were or were not putting to death their own sinful deeds, with the result (v. 13) that some would live (spiritually) and some would die (spiritually). This is seen clearly by Paul’s use of “so then” (Greek *ara*) in 8:12, which is a particle denoting inference, the drawing of a decisive conclusion regarding the mortal bodies Paul has in view.

Since each individual Roman believer had been set free from the law of sin and death, they each individually, then, must not live according to the sinful human nature aroused by the law. Why? Because as we see from vv. 16-17, (a) the Spirit was within each of them, and (b) they were about to suffer with Christ through the great persecution, which would (c) result in each one who overcame being glorified with Christ.

Concordantly, the CBV misses or de-emphasizes the theme of martyrdom in this chapter. The second half of Romans 8 (vv. 18-39) is built around a promise to people (in Rome) about to be martyred under the persecution of Nero, and is meant to teach them that when they are martyred they will be glorified like Christ was after His martyrdom. This Neronian persecution, which would follow the Jewish persecution they were currently suffering, was the “suffering” and “pains of childbirth” spoken of in Romans 8:18, 22 (cf. Matt 24:7-9).

So when we get to the phrase “redemption of our body” (8:23), a singular noun with a plural pronoun, it does not prove that ONLY one body (i.e. a corporate body)

would be raised. Individual “bodies” is what Paul meant in this chapter when he used the word “soma,” based on its use in verse 11 (“your mortal bodies”). Paul would be using the idiomatic plural here, a Hebraic construction, or *constructio ad sensum* (construction according to the sense) described above.

The plural nouns “sons,” “heirs,” “hearts,” and “saints” found in Romans 8 applied to each individual Christian; furthermore, we also see in vv. 26-27 that the promise was that the Spirit would help each individual person in their weakness, searching each individual’s heart.

This was not a promise concerning the weakness of a corporate body (notice “our weakness” is a plural pronoun with a singular noun); that would be incredibly impotent and impersonal with the upcoming tribulation. Rather, it was to the “hearts” (plural) of the “saints” (plural). This is confirmed in vv. 35-36.

The second primary text for a singular corporate body resurrection is Philippians 3:21, which mentions the transformation of “our lowly body.” King identified Philippians 3:21 as a clear text that showed that “body” meant a corporate group, not the individual person.⁶

I see three problems with a corporate body view here. First, what is the lowly body? The phrase “lowly body” (ESV), “vile body” (KJV), “body of our humble state” (NASB) in Greek is *soma tes tapeinoseos*, which literally is “body of our humiliation.” King claims that the “lowly body” is the corporate body of Israel to which the Apostle and other Jews were still in the process of dying.⁷ This is argued primarily because Paul discussed the Judaizing “dogs” earlier in Philippians 3, and expressed his historic solidarity with Israel and his movement out of the Law of Moses. King argues:

“Since the law set forth a mode of somatic existence wherein sin and death were able to reign, it follows that victory through Christ is by means of a new mode of existence wherein life and righteousness reign. We conclude, therefore, that (1) somatic change is determined by a change in one’s mode of existence, (2) this is accomplished through a change from the Old to the New covenant, (3) covenantal change was the specific design of Christ’s pre-end-of-the-age reign, and (4) from that viewpoint, Paul ties somatic change in v. 21 to the **working** of Christ.”⁸ [Emphasis King’s]

While I disagree with King’s interpretation of this text as applied to the term “body,” I am not denying the overlapping of covenants during this transition period, or Paul’s past as a Jew under the Law. The problem for King is there are no actual written statements by New Testament authors or any direct, concrete evidence that covenantal change equates with somatic change. This is a theory, strung together on facts assumed to connect to each other.

Resurrection

by Jerel Kratt

... continued from p. 9

This will become clearer as we continue.

One of the strengths of preterism is that it honors the biblical principle of audience relevance when interpreting passages. Hence, we must ascertain the audience intended by the pronouns in our text. The pronoun “our” in Philippians 3:20 contextually can only be Paul’s entire audience in Philippi as v. 15 demonstrates by Paul’s use of “us” and “you.”

From the best info scholars have gathered, the church in Philippi was composed of Jews and Greeks. The text does not indicate two lowly corporate bodies (one for Jews and the other for Gentiles), so the context of “our” being all of Paul’s audience (both Jews and Greeks) in Philippi means it can’t be the idea of a corporate body to old covenant Israel, since the Greeks were never in the old covenant body of Moses (cf. Eph 2:11-12).

Some CBV advocates say the “body of humiliation” is not the old covenant body of Moses as King specified, but rather is the Body of Christ, the Church, which did contain both Jews and Gentiles. If the “lowly body” was the Church/the Body of Christ, then it seems to contradict other more specific passages about the Church being “pure” (2 Cor 11:2), “spotless, holy, without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27), “a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:4-9). None of those references indicate that the body of Christ was “lowly” or of “humble state”; rather, they state the opposite.

Leaving the discussion on the “lowly body” for a brief moment, I’d like to look at the context of the entire Philippian epistle, which I believe shows that the best meaning of “lowly body” is the individual person. Every other instance of this word “lowly” (Greek *tapeinosei*)—found three other times in the New Testament—refers to specific individuals found in a state of humiliation (see Luke 1:48; Acts 8:33; James 1:10). Here, in Philippians 3:21, the form of this word is a noun. The verb form of this word, *etapeinosen*, is used of Jesus just one chapter earlier in Philippians 2:6-8:

“... who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (ESV)

Notice that the verb points to Jesus’ humble state as a “human.” This fits with every other New Testament use of this word. The most logical way to determine this word’s meaning is to see how Paul used it elsewhere in the same letter. As we have already seen, he used it in reference to Jesus’ “human form,” which leads to the simple conclusion that Paul was referring to the individual human, not the Church, when he used the phrase “lowly body.”

Jerel is an agricultural scientist specializing in soil health and plant nutrition using organic, sustainable techniques. He and his wife homeschool their four children and run a small family farm in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California called Covenant Pastures. Jerel was a full time minister for a Church of Christ in Washington state before coming to believe in fulfilled prophecy. He has since spoken at several Preterist Pilgrim Weekends in Ardmore, OK, and spoken at the 2010 Covenant Creation Conference.

Second, notice in the preceding verse (3:20) the location of both the citizenship and the Savior: “heaven.” The most straightforward contextual explanation is that the individual bodies of the saints in Philippi would be transformed into the same type of heavenly body as Jesus possessed in heaven. In refutation of this, CBV advocates usually point out the corporate solidarity Paul had as a Jew with the Law and the body of Moses from previous verses in chapter 3. While Paul certainly identified as belonging to that community, he also thoroughly repudiated it (3:7-8). Paul then made a personal plea for his own individual resurrection: “*that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead*” (3:11). One’s covenantal status surely dictated the end result in the resurrection, but this does not negate the individual tone clearly present in this text.

At this point, CBV advocates usually counter-argue (as I have done in the past) that the fact that Paul would say he hoped “*by any means possible*” to “*attain the resurrection*,” followed by “*not that I’ve already obtained it*,” would be an odd thing to say if he is talking about a corpse resurrection, or even an invisible individual bodily resurrection out of Hades, since it would be obvious that he hadn’t obtained it yet because he was still living! And, if it was the general resurrection of the dead, doesn’t everyone (both the just and the unjust) participate in it to be judged? This being true, why would Paul “hope” to be part of something over which he had no choice?

While I am certainly not arguing for a resurrection of individual corpses, I do believe that Paul used rhetoric designed to demonstrate that even in his imprisonment, he felt he hadn’t yet “completed the race” of his apostolic ministry, as it were. This seems to reflect some sort of maturity benchmark. Notice 2 Timothy, which was written during Paul’s last imprisonment before his death:

“*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2 Timothy 2:3-10 ESV)*

Though the Greek word here for “may obtain” is not exactly the same as it is for “may attain” in Philippians 3:11-12, it is very similar in meaning and communicates

the same idea. This passage clearly describes striving for maturity and holiness as striving for salvation and the attainment of glory, just as Paul did in Philippians 3. “Striving” is very uncomfortable for evangelicals based on our “grace vs. works” mentality. But we know from what we read above that Paul clearly saw the need to continue to strive for holiness and perfection “in order to attain” both resurrection and salvation.

First John 3 also emphasizes purity in connection with seeing Christ, which I believe is connected with the idea of seeing God “face to face”:

“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” (1 John 3:2-3 ESV)

Notice the emphasis on purifying oneself. This connects with the striving theme above. I might also note here that this passage seems to strongly indicate a transformation of each/all of the children into being like Christ at His Parousia, rather than a legal transformation of a corporate body. This seems intuitively clear by how John said he and they didn’t know what they would be like when Jesus returned. If this was talking about covenant transition, this would be a ridiculous thing to say *since they were preaching exactly what a new covenant without an old covenant would look like.*

One of the most important examples of striving till the end might be Revelation 3. In the letters to the seven churches, some are told that if they endure to the end (i.e., if they die as martyrs in the persecution), they will be saved. But some, because of their spiritual maturity, will get to skip the whole tribulation:

“Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.” (Rev 3:10-11 ESV)

The implications of this are interesting and are more than we can discuss here. The point remains that it is not outside the scope of Paul’s teaching for him to write “*not that I have attained it*” in order to emphasize continued need to work and strive for holiness.

Third, it’s not just in Philippians 3:21 where Paul employs a plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun (“our body”). The two preceding verses (3:19-20) have four

occurrences: “*whose end is destruction*,” “*whose god is their appetite*,” “*whose glory is their shame*,” and “*our citizenship is in heaven*.” Each of the Christ-deniers had their own individual destruction, their own individual appetite, and their own individual shame. Likewise, each citizen of heaven had their own individual citizenship. One might argue that there was a corporate solidarity in each of the two groups, and that is certainly true, but we can know for certain that the singular nouns were distributive because of how Paul employed a plural noun with a plural pronoun in the same sentence construction: “*who set their minds on earthly things*.” Paul had no problem switching between singular and plural nouns with plural pronouns.

A rather clear example of how Paul employed the plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun to give emphasis to the noun, yet acknowledge the obvious plurality of the noun, is 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (ESV)

In the Greek, “your” is plural, but the nouns “spirit,” “soul,” and “body” are singular. Paul didn’t mean the corporate spirit, soul, and body of the Thessalonian church; rather, he prayed that the individual spirits, souls, and bodies of the Thessalonian saints might be kept until the Parousia. CBV advocates use this text in this way to prove imminence by audience relevance, and they are right to do so. Yet, Paul uses “your (plural) body (singular)” here in Thessalonians, which is the same grammatical construct as “our body” in Romans 8:23 and Philippians 3:21.

Other examples of the plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun, referring to a plurality of the noun distributed to each individual, are Luke 6:22; Romans 8:16, 26; 2 Corinthians 1:12, 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:17; James 3:3; and Revelation 13:16. The James 3:3 passage is so important, it needs to be quoted: “*Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well*” (NASB). Here we clearly see the singular “body” meaning multiple horses’ bodies.

After looking at all the evidence regarding plural possessive pronouns with singular nouns, it is clear that the CBV claim that the phrase “our body” **must** be a corporate body is not only contrary to the rules of Greek grammar, but is also contrary to the context of the passages in view.

In our next article, we will look at 1 Corinthians 15 and the present passive indicative verb in the phrase “*are being raised*.” ✚

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Why No One Noticed the Rapture

by Ed Stevens

WHY DID NO ONE notice the rapture? Fair question! And it is the same basic question that futurists ask to all of us full preterists: *"If the Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment really happened in the way those pre-70 saints were expecting, then why didn't anyone notice it, and why didn't the remaining Christians afterwards claim it was fulfilled?"*

This is not just a *documentation problem* for rapture preterists. It is a historical problem for *all preterists*. So when we as preterists point a finger and ask why no one noticed the rapture, keep in mind that we have three fingers pointing back at us: why did no one notice the Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment? Consider what Don Preston stated about this:

Stevens is correct to say that we have no [patristic] authors who point to AD 70 as the time of Christ's final coming, the judgment, and resurrection of the dead. *This silence is indeed perplexing . . . for which we have no easy answer. . . .* how in the name of reason did they fail to see that the Parousia had indeed occurred? . . . Are we to suppose that the post 70 saints were so ignorant that they could not see that connection? [Don K. Preston, *We Shall Meet Him in the Air*, pp. 286, 287, 291, 299]

Preston sees the problem, but has "no easy answer" for it. ALL preterists face this challenge, but only some of us have an easy explanation for it—a rapture! The Parousia was not documented because the saints were no longer on earth to do so. However, the manner in which the rapture occurred, with no unbelievers noticing it, is *not* as easy to explain, so that is the purpose of this article.

Since many Christians are unaware of the actual historical circumstances that existed at the time of the Parousia, we need to examine those historical and geo-political conditions which made it difficult for unbelievers to even suspect that a rapture might have occurred.

WHAT KIND OF RAPTURE WAS IT?

As a result of Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* fiction, some fellow preterists have asserted, *"If there was a rapture of hundreds of thousands of bodies floating up into the air leaving their clothes behind, then surely someone would have seen it and talked about it. That would be hard to miss."* Indeed, that would have been hard to miss! However, that is not the kind of rapture the Bible describes.

NOT "HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS"

The Great Tribulation and the Great Apostasy were the two major end-time events which had dramatic impact upon the number of true faithful Christians living on earth at the time of the Parousia. Ten years ago, fellow preterists who were critical of the rapture were claiming that there would have been "hundreds of thousands" of Christians left alive on earth at the time of the Parousia. But I noticed a reversal on that after I published my *First Century Events* and *Final Decade* books, and presented my historical podcasts detailing the Neronic persecution and the great apostasy. Now those

same critics agree that the vast majority of saints were either killed in the great tribulation or fell away in the great apostasy, so that there were not "hundreds of thousands" of true Christians left alive on earth at the time of the Parousia.

NOT ALL WERE KILLED OR FELL AWAY

However, the point that too many of us forget is that even though *most* of the pre-70 saints either died in the persecution or fell away back into paganism or Judaism, *not all of them did!* There was still a *significant number* of "elect" saints living at the time of the Parousia.

Jesus promised that His elect would not all be killed or fall away before the Parousia, i.e., the tribulation would be *"cut short for the sake of the elect"* (Matt 24:21-22). Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that *"we shall not all sleep"* (1 Cor 15:51), and that some of the Thessalonians would *"live and remain until the Parousia"* (1 Thess 4:15, 17). So there were *not hundreds of thousands* of saints left alive at the Parousia, *but there were some!*

And those saints who remained were certainly not killed at the Parousia. Instead, Jesus and the apostles promised them that they would be relieved, rescued, vindicated, and rewarded at the Parousia. This means that if they were not taken out of the visible realm at the Parousia, then they would have still been alive on earth afterward to at least mention the fact that they had experienced that relief, rescue, vindication, and reward that had been promised. Yet for some strange reason, we hear nothing from any of them after AD 70. In fact, the first Christians we hear from afterwards (Papias, Polycarp, Ignatius) were teaching that the Parousia was still future.

Nor did they all fall away or get confused by the false teachers (Judaizers, Hellenizers, Gnostics, and other heretics). A remnant of "elect" saints remained alive and *faithful* unto the very end. Paul even said that they would experience the arrival of the Perfect, after which they would *"know fully"* and understand all these things clearly as if *"face to face"* (1 Cor 13:12). Note what one scholarly critic of preterism said about this:

In 1 Corinthians 13:12, Paul avers that the ignorance that he then experienced would be remedied *when the perfect would come*. His dim vision would then cease; he would then *"understand fully"*, even as I have been fully understood." Where then is the perfection of knowledge that Paul so earnestly expected? How paradoxical it is that *the very generation* which attained consummate *fullness of knowledge* when the perfect came, saw that knowledge *evaporate virtually overnight* [after AD 70]! . . . The irony is astounding. [This darkness of understanding] struck the church, according to [full preterism], concurrently with the church's attainment of its *ultimate state of perfection*. It does not seem to me that one can have it both ways. If one wants to argue for a *radical nosedive* of the church as soon as the Apostles left the scene somewhere around A.D. 70,

was a literal rapture, why did no one see it?

Studies in Redemptive History

then I do not see how one can argue that it was precisely then that the church also attained the consummation of its hope, its *full measure of knowledge* and sanctification, [which was] its final state of conformity to the image of Christ. [Charles E. Hill. "Eschatology in the Wake of Jerusalem's Fall" chapter in Keith A. Mathison's multi-authored book, *When Shall These Things Be? A Reformed Response to Hyper-Preterism*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey USA: P&R Publishing Co., 2004. ISBN 0875525520. pp. 108-109]

Where was that "fullness of knowledge" and "face to face" clarity of understanding after AD 70? *Do you catch the irony of that?* They could not have been left in the dark, ignorant and confused about what had just happened. The Perfect had arrived. They should have had the "fullness of knowledge" and complete understanding that was promised. So there is no excuse for their silence and confusion about the fulfillments if they were still alive on earth after the Parousia.

Therefore, the Neronic persecution (Great Tribulation) and its associated Great Apostasy is *not an adequate explanation* for the silence and confusion of Christians after AD 70. *There were some survivors* of that persecution and apostasy who had experienced the Parousia and received the fullness of knowledge and the perfection of their understanding, and who would have been able to bear witness to all of this, *if they were still around afterward*. The rapture easily explains why they never reappeared after AD 70 to proclaim the fulfillment. They indeed received that perfection, but they were not on earth when they received it. They were in the unseen realm.

NO BODIES FLOATED UP IN THE AIR

In 1 Cor 15:51-52, Paul says that at the same moment (*"blink of an eye"*) when the conscious disembodied souls of the dead were *raised* out of Hades in the unseen realm, the living saints were *changed* from mortal to immortal. This bodily change of the living saints *took them out of the visible realm*, similar to how Enoch disappeared when God took him into the unseen realm. He did not float up into the sky. Those living saints were no longer in the visible realm after they were changed. The *bodily change* removed them from the SEEN realm first, then they were *caught up* together with the resurrected dead saints to remain with Christ forever afterwards in the UNSEEN realm (1 Thess 4:17-18). They were not "caught up" with the resurrected saints until AFTER they were "changed" and put into the unseen realm. So the "catching up" occurred in the unseen realm. Thus, no bodies were seen floating up into the air in the visible realm.

NO CLOTHES WERE LEFT BEHIND

Furthermore, when Enoch was snatched away into the unseen realm, his clothes went with him. When Elijah was caught up by the angelic chariot, only his mantle was thrown down for Elisha. The rest of his clothes went with him. When Samuel appeared to the necromancer at Endor, he had his

robe on. When Jesus was transfigured with Moses and Elijah, all three of them apparently had their clothes on. When Jesus ascended he kept his clothes on, and that provides a biblical precedent for the living saints to keep their clothes on when their bodies were changed. Evidently their clothes were changed right along with their bodies. Neither their bodies, nor their clothes, were left behind—both were "changed" and "taken" into the unseen realm.

WHY NO ONE NOTICED THE RAPTURE

However, it is still very reasonable to think that someone might have *noticed one of the Christians disappear* when their bodies were changed, or at least *noticed their absence* afterwards. How do we account for that?

We moderns simply do not understand what life was like for those pre-70 saints during the Neronic persecution. Consequently, we impose our socio-politico-cultural situation back into their times, thinking that they lived under conditions similar to ours today. We claim to interpret Scripture from an *audience relevance* hermeneutic, but in this case we have not considered the actual historical situation of the first-century saints. The place to start in our recovery of a first-century perspective is with the *Neronic persecution*. That was the key factor in their lives just prior to the Parousia. Knowing how that persecution affected them will help us understand why no one noticed the rapture when it occurred.

On July 19, AD 64, Nero ordered some of his ruffians to set fire to several of the neighborhoods in the section of Rome where he wanted to build his golden palace. The fire burned for six days, and then broke out again and burned another three days. Of the fourteen sections of the city, only four remained intact after the fire (Tacitus, *Annals* 15:44). Many lives and much property were lost. Most of the precious antiquities and national treasures were destroyed. Numerous prominent figures pointed the finger at Nero, and his throne was at stake.

Someone who was obviously an enemy of Christianity (motive), and who had significant influence with Nero (opportunity), suggested that the blame be placed on the Christians. That unleashed a holocaust upon Christianity, the terror of which has never been seen before or since. Countless thousands died in Rome, but the carnage did not stop there. Orazio Marucchi (*Manual of Christian Archaeology*, p. 29) found evidence that the persecution "extended throughout the length and breadth of the Empire." Philip Schaff (*History of the Christian Church*) likewise cited numerous ancient and modern historians who believed it was much broader in scope than just Rome and Italy (for the details, see my book, *Final Decade Before the End*).

This was the *Great Tribulation* about which Jesus had warned the Church almost forty years earlier (Matt 24:21-

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Why No One Noticed

by Ed Stevens

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31). The persecution began in the late summer or early fall of AD 64 and continued until the Jewish Zealot rebellion broke out in the Spring of AD 66. When the war broke out in AD 66, both Jews and Romans turned their attention to the war effort, thus cutting short the Great Tribulation against the Church.

The Neronic persecution broke out suddenly and with such fury that there was little opportunity to flee. Entire Christian communities all over Palestine and throughout the Roman world were devastated. Only a few of the “elect” managed to escape the notice of the Jewish informers and the Roman executioners. It was during this persecution and time of political turmoil that the Parousia began and the Rapture occurred.

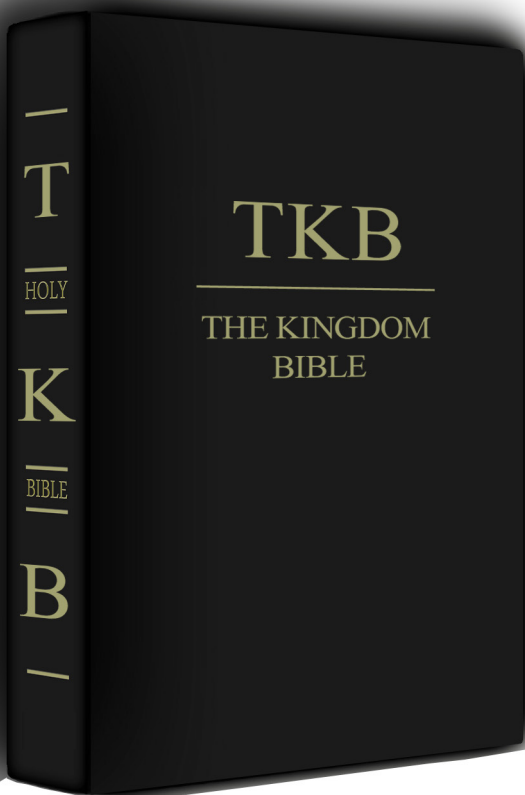
The situation was very much like that of the Jews in Nazi Germany during World War Two. Entire Jewish neighborhoods disappeared overnight. No one knew what happened to them. Did they flee the country, or were they were arrested in the night and taken away to be killed? No one knew for sure until years later when some of them resurfaced in foreign countries to tell their story. But no one thought they were raptured. And no one dared to go down to the local Gestapo to inquire about them, for fear of being arrested on suspicion of either being Jewish or aiding the

Jews. It was not safe to say anything about it, so they just zipped their lips.

During the Neronic persecution, Christians were routinely disappearing, so the non-Christians would not have thought it was strange. Nor would they have gone to the local Jewish or Roman authorities to inquire about it for fear of being arrested under suspicion themselves. They were not associating with the Christians, nor living in the same quarters of the city with them. If they even noticed the absence of the Christians, they would not have thought they were raptured. The idea of a rapture would never have crossed their mind. They did not know there was supposed to be a rapture. *They would only have thought that the Christians either fled in the night, or were rounded up and killed by the Jewish and Roman authorities.* And since those pre-70 saints never resurfaced again after the destruction of Jerusalem, it appeared that they had all died in the persecution.

Thus, since most of the Christians were either killed in the Great Tribulation or fell away in the Great Apostasy, there were not many of them remaining by the time of the Parousia. And the few that did remain were hiding from the Jewish and Roman authorities. They were not out in the open where their disappearance could be seen. That is why their bodily change and rapture was not noticed by the unbelievers.✚

If you would like more details about any of this, there are several resources available: (1) My first-century history book, *Final Decade Before the End*, (2) My rapture book, *Expectations Demand a First Century Rapture*, and (3) My FREE 9-page PDF article entitled, *Why No One Noticed the Rapture*. The two books can be ordered from our website (<http://preterist.org/store>), and the free PDF article can be obtained by email request: (preterist1@preterist.org).



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WHEN: July 20-22, 2017 (Thur Eve – Sat Noon)

WHERE: DoubleTree Hotel in Niagara Falls, NY

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What About Earthquakes?

by Don K. Preston

AN OBJECTION TO THE truth of Covenant Eschatology has been lodged based on Revelation 16:18-20, where John recorded:

“And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.”

The objector states:

“Notice that the above earthquake is so big that the cities of the nations will fall—this DID NOT HAPPEN IN 70 AD. Notice that the Bible teaches that mountains will be leveled and islands ‘fled away’ . . . This seems to have to be the biggest earthquake that will ever hit the planet with humans on it.

Did it already happen?

Of course not.”

. . . it is clear that an earthquake so large that it hit the entire globe has never happened.

The objector continues by listing some earthquakes that did occur in the first century, but discounts them as irrelevant, because, if (*since*, per the objectors view) we take the language

of Revelation literally, it is clear that an earthquake so large that it hit the entire globe has never happened. The objector concludes:

“Ancient histories written by Roman historians indicate that there were three earthquakes in the first century Roman world. Writing in A.D. 77, Pliny the Elder described a massive earthquake that destroyed a large section of Asia Minor (Turkey) in the year A.D. 17. It was so devastating that the Roman emperor suspended taxes for five years to enable the citizens to recover from the damage. Pliny says that this was “the greatest earthquake in human memory.” If the earthquake in A.D. 17 was described by a historian writing in A.D. 77 in this way, obviously there was no massive earthquake at the time of the destruction of the Jewish Temple in A.D. 70.

“Josephus recorded that some priests considered the destruction of Jerusalem to be God’s judgment on the Jews. While this was devastating to the Jews in Jerusalem, it is historically disingenuous to think what happened then was the ‘great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

There are several major problems with the objectors’ claims, the first of which is the presupposition that we must take the book of Revelation literally. And yet, we are told emphatically at the very beginning of the book that the message of the book was symbolic (Rev 1:1-3). The dispensational insistence that we ignore this symbolic genre is untenable.

As a corollary to this, we must honor the fact that Revelation is a book of Hebraic Apocalyptic language. The Western reader wants to think prosaically, while the Hebraic world was one of metaphor, poetic imagery, and hyperbole. To insist that we ignore the very nature of Hebraic literature and impose a rigid, Western literalism on the text is simply wrong. As N. T. Wright has noted, when examining this kind of language:

“It is crass literalism, in view of the many prophetic passages in which this language denotes socio-political and military catastrophe, to insist that this time [in the teaching of Jesus, DKP], the words must refer to the physical collapse of the space-time world.” (N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1996, 361).

Likewise, Paul Minear, commenting on the “end of the world” language of 2 Peter 3, makes this observation:

“As one recalls Old Testament passages like these [those cited in 2 Peter 3, DKP], one is forced to conclude that every constituent essential feature in the New Testament prophecies was an echo of these. No Christian prophet tried to explain the meaning of these references to solar disasters, a fact that suggests that the audience was expected to understand the language. Modern readers, therefore, must compare this idiom not with modern views of the cosmos, but with an ancient outlook within which an intelligible message was conveyed without undue difficulty.” (Paul Minear, *New Testament Apocalyptic*, (Nashville; Abingdon, 1981, 52f).

It is truly a miscarriage of hermeneutic to impose a Western world view onto the ancient Hebraic writers.

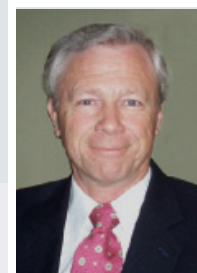
As a related note, it should be observed that most

Earthquake of Revelation 16 occur in AD 70?

eschatology.org bibleprophecy.com

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dispensational writers claim that Jesus predicted that earthquakes would dramatically increase in the “last days.” Yet, there is not one word in the Olivet Discourse to support that claim. And, many writers have chronicled that the first-century generation saw an incredible number of earthquakes (far more than the objector acknowledges in his article, by the way). For an interesting and revealing examination of the claim that Jesus said earthquakes would increase, see the article: <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/04/16/Earthquakes-on-the-Increase-Or-Warning-of-Judgment-to-come.aspx>.

Gary DeMar, citing different sources, documents that in the first century there were earthquakes in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodoea, Hieropolis, Colosse, Campania, Rome and Judea, Pompeii. (Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, Powder Springs, GA; American Vision, 1999, 80f). It is interesting, and perhaps revealing, that the objector is seemingly unaware of this evidence, or conveniently failed to mention it.

Other scholars have surmised that: “Perhaps no period in the world’s history has ever been so marked by these convulsions as that which intervened between the Crucifixion and the destruction of Jerusalem.” (Edward Hayes Plumptre, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, London, Cassell; 1897, 6:146).

On this note, it is perhaps relevant to cite Josephus’ description of some of the events of the War:

“For there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continued lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake. These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and any one would guess that these wonders foreshadowed some grand calamities that were coming” (*Wars of the Jews*, 4:4:5).

Clearly, from the Jewish perspective, the earthquake during the siege had tremendous religious, covenantal meaning.

The objector, who believes Israel and Jerusalem are delivered from the Great Tribulation at the Second Coming of Christ, fails to consider the situation that is described in Revelation 16. Let me make a few crucial observations.

A. FOCUS ON BABYLON

The judgment occurring at the earthquake—in fact, I would aver that *the focus of the earthquake*—is upon the city Babylon. This is critical since Revelation’s Babylon is none other than Old Covenant Jerusalem.

Dispensationalists often posit Babylon as literal Babylon in Iraq. This view was extremely popular prior to the first Gulf War. Saddam Hussein was supposedly the “reincarnation” of Nebuchadnezzar. Thomas Ice cited Charles Dyer with approval, “What are the specific signposts that can serve as indicators of God’s end time program for the world? The third sure signpost is the rebuilding of Babylon” Ice then says, “Is Babylon being built in our day? Yes it is!” The rise of ancient Babylon in our day constitutes another sign of the times that sets the stage.” (Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *Prophecy Watch*, Eugene, OR; Harvest House, 1998, 71). I should note that in other works, Ice identified Babylon as corrupt Christianity (Thomas Ice, *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy*, Eugene, OR; Harvest House, 42). So, on the one hand, Ice posits Babylon as literal Babylon in Iraq but on the other hand, Babylon is apostate Christianity!

Of course, with the overthrow of Hussein and the end of his “rebuilding” efforts, the dispensational claims about literal Babylon in Iraq have for the most part died down and been dispelled.

Who was Babylon? It was the city “where the Lord was slain” (Rev 11:8). Many dispensationalists say “the great city” in Revelation 11 is in fact Jerusalem, which will be attacked in the coming Tribulation period, and that Babylon was another city. This is untenable, as Revelation 16 demonstrates.

Revelation 16 states that at the earthquake, the great city would be “remembered” before God. It is critical to understand that the word “remembered” is a covenantal word. The word translated remembered is used some 37 times in the Old Testament. Only six times does it not indicate remembrance *within a covenantal context*. The word can be used to remember the covenant in a positive manner for blessing, or in a negative manner for cursing.

It is truly a miscarriage of hermeneutic to impose a Western world view onto the ancient Hebraic writers.

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This means that whoever Babylon was, *she had to be in a covenant relationship with God*, but, as a result of her sin (killing the prophets [Rev 16:6], and the apostles and prophets of Jesus [Rev 18:20-24]), God was about to bring horrific *covenantal judgment* on her. It is significant that in Revelation the judgments portrayed as coming against “Babylon” are covenantal judgments directly from the Torah (Lev 26; Deut 28-30; Deut 32, which is called the Song of Moses). Significantly, the Song of Moses is about Israel’s last days, when Israel herself would become like Sodom (32:20-32).

It should go without saying, but, to reinforce the point, it cannot be argued that literal Babylon in Iraq was ever in a covenant relationship with God. She also never killed a single Old Covenant prophet, and she most

... whoever Babylon was—
or is—*she had to have been in a marriage covenant relationship with the Lord.*

Supporting this identification of Babylon is the fact that Babylon is called the harlot and the mother of harlots in Revelation 17-18. The Great Earthquake is God’s covenantal wrath on her for her harlotry. What is so often missed is that the word “harlot” in Scripture has a powerful and undeniable covenantal connotation. Sebastian Smolarz illustrates the point in graphic fashion by showing that in 86 of the 91 occurrences of the word harlot in the Old Testament, the reference is to either a literal wife that committed adultery (violating the marriage covenant), or, Israel as the wife of YHVH that violated the marriage covenant (Sebastian Smolarz, *Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage in Biblical Thought*, Eugene, OR; Wipf and Stock, 2011, 8).

He makes the following point in regard to John’s use of this imagery in Revelation: “If John had Old Testament prophetic development in mind, for a city to be called a ‘harlot’ would require her to have had an earlier covenant relationship with God. This would surely not be the case with Rome, but it certainly was the case with Jerusalem” (ibid., 238f).

A great deal more could be added on this, but, suffice it to say that if Revelation’s Babylon was Old Covenant

assuredly did not kill Jesus’ apostles and prophets. Only Old Covenant Jerusalem “fits the bill” in this regard.

Jerusalem, the entire dispensational paradigm—including the objection about the Great Earthquake—falls to the ground, since *Old Covenant Jerusalem ceased to exist in AD 70!*

B. KILLING THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

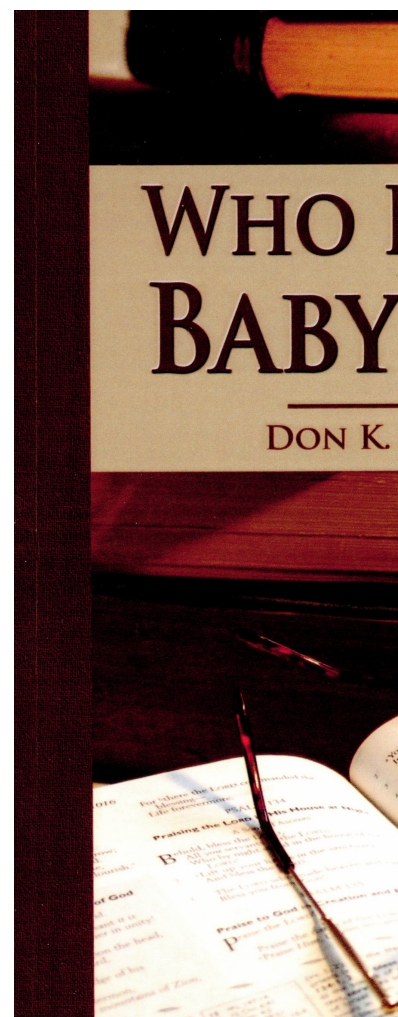
As just suggested, the judgment of Babylon in Revelation 16—including the great earthquake—was for her internecine guilt of killing the prophets and Jesus’ apostles and prophets. That judgment was the Great Day of the Lord for the avenging of the martyrs. When we consider the concrete biblical teaching on the avenging of the martyrs, we are forced to the conclusion that only one city was guilty of what Revelation states Babylon had done—that city was Old Covenant Jerusalem.

Jesus identified Jerusalem as the city guilty of killing the Old Testament prophets, and predicted the Jews would kill Him, and they would (and did) kill His apostles and prophets (Matt 21, 23; Luke 11:49f).

Paul likewise said it was Old Covenant Jerusalem who killed the Old Testament prophets, had killed Jesus, and was persecuting Jesus’ apostles and prophets (1 Thess 2:14-16).

In Revelation, Babylon is depicted as having killed the Old Testament prophets (16:6), as the location where the Lord was slain (11:8) and as killing Jesus’ apostles and prophets (18:20-14).

Jesus, Paul, and John explicitly stated that the judgment of the persecuting city was to occur in that first-century generation—not 2000 years and counting later. Thus, unless we can clearly demonstrate that another “Babylon” can be guilty of the things that are laid at her feet—the things that Jesus and Paul limited to Old Covenant Jerusalem, then we must realize that



the prophecy of the Great Earthquake in Revelation belongs to the first-century judgment of Old Covenant Jerusalem.

C. AD 70

The objector claims that the Great Tribulation, together with the Great Earthquake and judgment of the Great City, simply could not have been associated with the

fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. I cannot develop that here, but in my book *Blast From the Past: The Truth About Armageddon* I give definitive, powerful proof that the Great Tribulation was in fact directly connected to the first-century judgment of Old Covenant Jerusalem. But very quickly, note that while the objector says the Tribulation does not fit the judgment on Jerusalem, the text of Matthew 24 says differently.

Jesus said that the Abomination of Desolation would be set up in “the holy place.” This can only be referent to Israel, the city or the Temple. The key point is that the setting up of the Abomination—in Israel—would cause the Great Tribulation.

D. TEMPORAL PARAMETERS

Finally, the objector clearly ignores or denies the temporal parameters established by the Apocalypse. The Father Himself gave the message of Revelation’s imminent fulfillment (Rev 1:1-3). Repeatedly throughout the book we are told that the fulfillment was *at hand*, it was *near*, and it was *coming soon*.

See for instance Revelation 22, where we find no less than six powerful declarations that fulfillment was at hand. How much more emphatically could the Spirit, sent from the Father, have communicated objective imminence? Keep in mind that proper exegesis demands that we apply Revelation’s

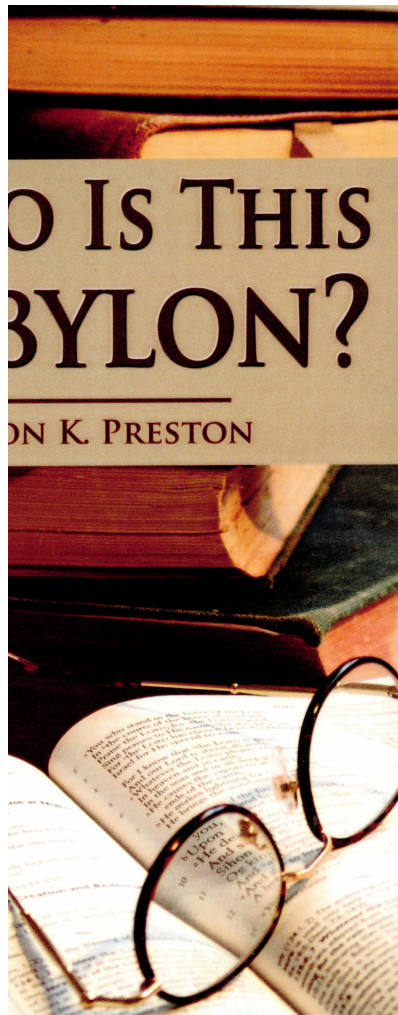
original audience’s understanding of these terms. For the dispensational paradigm—and the objection—to have any merit, it is necessary to completely ignore or deny these temporal parameters, and that is hardly proper exegesis.

CONCLUSION

So, there is an array of evidence that gives us valid reason to reject the objection:

- It ignores the symbolic nature of Revelation.
- It ignores the nature of Hebraic Apocalyptic.
- It ignores the historical reality of a massive number of earthquakes that occurred in the first century.
- It wrongly identifies Babylon of Revelation—the focus of the judgment of the earthquake—as modern day Babylon in Iraq, or apostate Christianity. These identifications violate the actual text of Revelation. Neither literal Babylon nor apostate Christianity are guilty of the sins of which Revelation’s Babylon is accused.
- It ignores the overtly covenantal nature of the language describing the impending judgment of Babylon, language that demands that whoever Babylon was—or is—*she had to have been in a marriage covenant relationship with the Lord*. But, due to her violation of that (marriage) covenant, God brought the penalty provisions of that covenant against her. This can only mean that Babylon was Old Covenant Jerusalem and that the penalties of Torah (Lev 26; Deut 28-30, 32) were being applied to the harlot city. Since the Law of Moses—the source of those Covenantal judgments—has been removed, this means that Revelation stands fulfilled!
- It ignores the emphatic, explicit, repeated declarations that the fulfillment of the Apocalypse was near when John wrote. See my book *Who Is This Babylon?* for an extensive discussion of the dating and application of Revelation to the first-century judgment of Jerusalem.

For these and other reasons, the objection is overruled! †





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Preterism . . . *it's about time!*

It's about the time Jesus told His disciples that He would return—this(His) generation!

It's about the time the New Testament authors told their readers Jesus would return—soon, near, at hand, shortly!

It's about time for a scriptural explanation other than delay!

It's about time for a “last days” view that doesn't conjure up gaps and parenthetical ages!

Preterism
Preterism
Preterism

...maybe it's about time you looked into it!