

SPRING 2018

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 1

FULFILLED! *Magazine*

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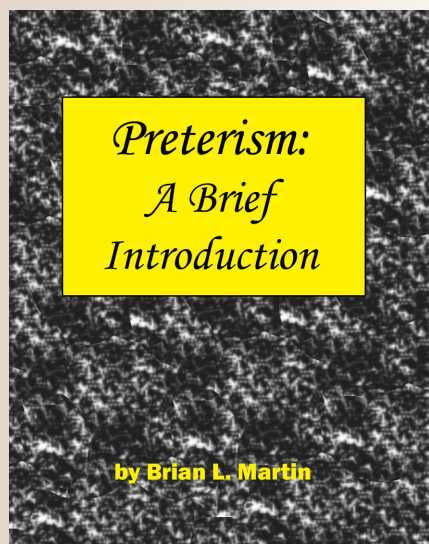


Calling All Full-Preterists: If you, like so many out there, are looking for others of similar eschatology, this is for you. To decide if you would like to take part in a program of networking full-preterists in the US and Canada together in specific locales, please take a moment to read about the database Tony Denton is compiling! Just visit this web site:

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Preterism: A Brief Introduction

This concise, 20-page booklet covers the basics of preterism:

- Literal vs. Spiritual Fulfillment
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- Timing Passages
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- Cloud Comings

Written by Brian L. Martin and distributed by Tony Denton, this booklet is priced for ordering in bulk and giving away copies to friends and family.

To order, contact Tony Denton using the contact info in the ad just above.

(Please note that this booklet is currently not available from FCG.)

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**Iron sharpens iron, and one
man sharpens another.
Proverbs 27:17 (ESV)**



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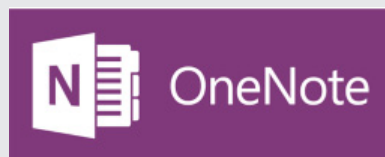
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Editor's Note...

... I'm looking for some Microsoft OneNote gurus to help me on a project I'm considering.



In this issue Jerel Kratt wraps up his series on the Resurrection. While I imagine that there are at least some CBV readers who did not enjoy his series, I found it well-researched and thought-provoking. I believe that a situation in which a person reconsiders or changes their theological view offers an opportunity for others who still hold the previous view to critique their own theology. For example, in the last few years several former staunch full preterists have renounced full preterism in favor of some other eschatological view. Do we have answers for their objections? Can we defend our position from Scripture? This is an opportunity for us full preterists to consider potential weaknesses in our beliefs that we may have overlooked.

In my mind, this is “iron sharpening iron” in practice. I further believe that the sharpening process is at its best when the different views being examined are presented by individuals who actually hold those views. If, like me, you grew up in church, you are well aware of the many times we were told what “those” people believed and why they were wrong. Be they atheists, cultists, or members of other denominations, proponents of our view were also presenting their view to us. Even with the most well meaning and trying-to-be-fair attitude, when someone presents a view they never held there is bound to be some short-comings and subconscious bias in the presentation. That’s why I try to read material from others who hold opposing views. If we only read material from those within our own camp we tend to fall into a “preaching to the choir” trend and can subconsciously focus on our strengths while glossing over the weaknesses in our position. Reading

opposing views can jolt us back into reality. I’ve been surprised at how familiar some atheists are with the Bible!

Many thanks to all of you who responded to my financial update in the previous issue. We are grateful for your financial support, and I was especially relieved that many of you assured me that I didn’t come across as begging for money. Several readers also took advantage of Amazon’s Smile program, in which Amazon donates a percentage of your purchase to the charity of your choice. You pay the same amount, while Amazon sends a donation equal to 0.5% of your purchase to your designated charity.

After over a year of patient prodding by Tony Denton, we finalized an article I had written several years ago titled Preterism: A Brief Introduction. Tony has formatted the article into a booklet and is having a local print shop print copies as needed. This small booklet is a concise introduction to preterism, and they are priced (less than \$1 each I believe) for distribution. Please note that Tony Denton is handling the distribution and the booklets are not available from FCG. See page 2 for more details.

Thanks to Ed Stevens for the photo of Pella on this issue’s cover, which he took during his recent trip to the Middle East.

In closing, I’m looking for some Microsoft OneNote gurus to help me on a project I’m considering. If you’re a OneNote power user and would be interested in sharing your knowledge with me, email me at fcg.brian@gmail.com

Blessings,

Brian

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matt 24:14, ESV)

Prophecy	Fulfillment
And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world (Gk. oikoumene) as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matt 24:14, ESV)	But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world (Gk. oikoumene).” (Rom 10:18, ESV)
And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations (Gk. pas ethnos). (Mark 13:10, ESV)	Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations (Gk. pas ethnos) . . . (Rom 16:25-26, ESV)
And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation (Gk. pas ktisis).” (Mark 16:15, ESV)	. . . the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation (Gk. pas ktisis) under heaven . . . (Col 1:23, ESV)

Jesus proclaimed that the gospel would be preached throughout the whole world, and then the end would come. Scripture affirms that this mission was accomplished in the first century. If the end did not then come as Jesus predicted, He was a false prophet. We can't claim different definitions for Jesus and Paul's use of “world,” for the exact same Greek words were used by both. Rather, we should understand that in first-century Palenstine, the “world” was the Roman Empire.

*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the **world** (Gk. oikoumene) should be registered. (Luke 2:1, ESV)*

*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire **Roman world**. (Luke 2:1, NIV)*

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Perspectives

Corporate vs. Individual

by TJ Smith

MY ARTICLE FOR THIS issue is about choosing Corporate over Individual. However, I was a little deceptive in my title (Oh the Horror!), as this choice of 'Corporate' is not about the resurrection, covenant, or things eschatological, but about choosing others over self.

At the end of 2017 I read a book titled *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* by Richards and O'Brien. I discovered our Western biblical view has been shaped by not only 2000 years of changing languages, customs, and cultures, but also by our American ruggedness and individuality. I'm not bashing America, as I am very proud that we have always been able to "power through" problems and stand alone, but in some ways, this leaves us vulnerable as we prefer the 'army of one' over strength in numbers. In fact, the army once used the recruiting slogan of "An Army of One" to push the individual aspect.

Since America "beat the odds" by establishing a free nation, producing GDP and exports like no other, and successfully balanced the perilous tight-wire of a republic, all this makes it more difficult for us as believers to understand how and why the ancient Jews placed such an importance on the "group/clan/tribe/family/nation."

This "corporate" concept is a constant thread woven throughout Paul's letters. He constantly referred to "You" as the collective body of believers. Since there was no way for Paul to intrinsically know every individuals' personal walk with Christ, Paul spoke to them as the Church, "all yooz guys" (sorry, couldn't resist the Yankee humor. We Texans love ya'll up there!)

This "corporate" mentality should be explored more in-depth. The whole point of this article is "How can we unify and promote preterism"? More time is spent arguing minutia than in creating effective ways of sharing the truth of the Gospel through the lens of preterism.

During September 21st-23rd, Texas will host its first Fulfilled Covenant Conference—"Big Tex Conference 2018." I am also working with believers in the Houston, Fort Worth, Weatherford, San Antonio, Midland, and Austin areas to organize occasional dinners at local restaurants to encourage fellowship and networking in those cities. As much as preterism is growing, there are still plenty of believers out there who haven't found

fellowship. It is my focus this year to try to make that happen. Thanks to Tony Denton for his continued efforts in this matter to bring us together with his Preterist Network.

If you have been around preterism any time at all, you have witnessed the "splintering" within FCT (Fulfilled Covenant Theology), to the point where some parade their dirty laundry on Facebook with no concern for how it makes "those preterists" appear. The "individual" belief is so vital and important that no one is concerned about "collateral damage" to the body or how it makes us look to our extended family (futurist). This is neither good nor beneficial to the body of Christ.

I understand that we are very passionate about what we study and believe. We sincerely want others to "get" it as well, but the constant in-fighting and drawing the line in the sand is hurting the cause and must cease. I've been guilty of it as well. While reading *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, I was processing it through the lens of how to unify this gem we were given (the New Covenant). What I came away with was the impression that we need to study other successful "movements" and learn from them.

Here's an example (it's a focus on politics so don't skip the page yet): No matter your political views, I think it has been demonstrated that Democrats know how to push an agenda, and Republicans still haven't figured it out. I voted for Reagan twice so that tells you where I stand, but I am perplexed that my party has never figured out how to win a battle. Republicans could learn a thing or two from the Democrats. As much as I really don't want to brag on Dems, I applaud them—they figured out how to fight a battle.

The Dems will put aside their own individuality and personal likes to push the party bus. It's all "hands on the bumper."

NOT JUST ANOTHER BOOK

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"TJ takes a fresh perspective on the parables and gives them a cultural and grammatical context."
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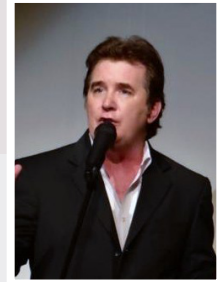
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Can We Stand United?

TJ Smith

TJ Smith is a professional entertainer and commentary contributor to the Fulfilled Covenant Bible. TJ and his wife also lead worship at their church

tjsmithmusic@yahoo.com
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When they don't like some piece of legislation or the person behind it, they go into their attack mode and everyone seems to know exactly what to say and do. Almost like an invisible office memo went directly into their brains and they all say the exact same thing, and rail with the exact same indignant outrage with identical talking points and verbiage. Republicans never seem to get a hold of this as a legitimate means of winning.

But how does this relate to preterism and the Church? Glad you asked. It seems to me that the mainstream Church employs this same tactic to label our biblical interpretive method of prophecy as "heresy." Or, more accurately, "HERESY!!!!" All mainline preachers, teachers, talking heads, and experts have all watched each other cast their vote and have collectively decided that demonizing preterism is the best way to suffocate it. They took the preeminent strike and have yet to relent from the carpet bombings.

What is interesting is that these "leaders" are from all different eschatological backgrounds. Not only do they believe that preterists are wrong, they believe the other guy is wrong too. The pre-trib pastor thinks the post-trib pastor can't interpret Scripture. The amil doesn't get along with the pre-mil, yet they can put aside their differences to unite on this one thing: preterism is of the devil! (Gee, maybe we really did succeed in uniting the Church!)

We as preterists need to find a way to unite on some "negotiable" items; those things which divide us and make

us appear fractured and rudderless. We need to find a way to put the corporate interests of general preterism over our individual interests in our particular flavor of preterism. This may mean a lot of things to a lot of people. It might mean not using the word "preterist" or "preterism," pulling the lingo off our websites and not using it in future

books. It has always seemed to be such a divisive word as people lump it in with "Adventist," "Islamist" and "Mormonism." It's just another "ist" and "ism." David Curtis, Pastor of Berean Bible Church, has said that BBC is not a preterist church, but rather a Christian church that studies Scripture and interprets matters of eschatology through preterist eyes.

This is a great way to explain it. Not everything in the Bible is prophecy, but those parts that are prophecy are interpreted through preterist eyes. To put the corporate first will mean refusing to engage in rude conversations on Facebook, and replying to others only with patience and a spirit of peace. Stop pointing out the things we don't agree with (at least in public venues—I'm all for personal interaction and dialog. After all, *"as iron sharpens iron . . ."*). Especially those considered leaders. It's counter-productive to call each other out on websites simply for disagreeing. We need to be the "adults in the room."

We all offer something victorious to the Church. Good news that can shared. If futurists want a "Hope of Glory," we can give it to them—the "hope" that their children and grand-children will grow up to attend school and have children of their own someday. "Hope" because the world will never end, won't burn up, or blow up. No Boogie Man is coming! That is "hope!"

Our conference takes place September 21st-23rd, 2018 in Kerrville, Texas, and will have break-out groups to discuss and develop these issues. If we can act "corporately" to help push this bus, instead of individuals building our own little kingdoms, we can build momentum and start spreading the Gospel more effectively. I know this sounds somewhat nebulous, but all it takes is some good ideas and discussion about how to promote the basics of preterism to the collective "Borg" (there's a bone for all you Trekkies), while keeping our debates about the details "in house."

You can register for the 'BigTex' 2018 Conference by going to www.bigtex2018.info. You can also reserve a hotel room at a discounted price. Speakers will be David Curtis, Brian Martin, Charles Meeks, Don Stephens, Adam Maarschalk, myself and my wife Maria, who will share a special message from a woman's perspective of preterism and how it impacts families and generations to come. God Bless! TJ ✝

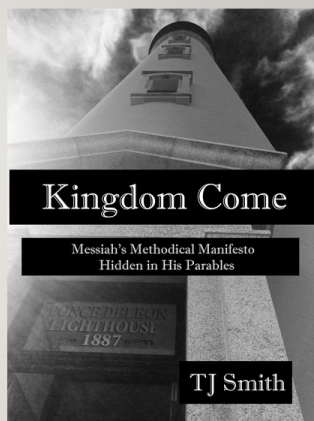
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Perspectives

A Critique of the Corporate Body View of the Resurrection of the Dead (pt. 3)

by Jerel Kratt

IN OUR PREVIOUS TWO articles, we discussed how the plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun “*our body*” (Rom 8:23, Phil 3:21) does not dictate that there is only one singular body being raised, and how the present passive indicative verb “*are raised*” (1 Cor 15) does not demand an ongoing process of resurrection (*are* [being] *raised*). We also examined 2 Corinthians 3-5 and determined that a corporate body view (CBV) *must* be imposed on the context. In this final article we will discuss “*the hope of Israel*” and the meaning of “death.”

A primary CBV argument is that Paul preached “*the hope of Israel*,” which was “*nothing other than the Law and the Prophets*” (Acts 23:6; 24:14-15; 26:6-8, 22-23). This is absolutely true. But does this mean that a corporate resurrection was the *only* resurrection predicted in the Law and the Prophets? Was corporate resurrection the only hope of Israel? I believe that the CBV is neither the only resurrection hope in the Law and Prophets nor is it the full expression of the “hope of Israel.”

Individual Resurrection

In the Acts passages listed above, the “*dead ones*” that Paul mentioned were actual deceased people in Hades. Paul set the Sadducees (who denied a resurrection) against the Pharisees (who affirmed a resurrection) as a defensive tactic during his trial by crying out, “*I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!*” To what degree Paul agreed with the Pharisees about the nature of the resurrection is not stated, only that he believed and hoped there would be one.

The “*resurrection of the righteous and the wicked*” in Acts 24:15 echoes back to Daniel 12:2, where resurrection was not described as a singular corporate “body” but as “many” individual dead people, including Daniel himself. Daniel hoped that he himself would be raised unto his inheritance at the end of the age (Dan 12:13).

When Jesus discussed the resurrection of the dead with the Pharisees, He said: “*And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living*” (Matt 22:23-33, ESV). Jesus mentioned these three individual dead Old Testament saints as ones who would participate in “*the resurrection of the dead*.”

Martha also clearly had a hope in an individual resurrection of the dead on the “last day,” and Jesus Himself confirmed her hope without correction:

“Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’” (John 11:23-26, ESV; emphasis mine)

Notice the singular pronoun “*he*” in the phrase “*though he die*,” referring to both Lazarus and also to any other individual who would believe in Jesus but die biologically prior to the Resurrection. Indeed, this is a critically important passage for supporting the importance of individual resurrection in the new covenant: Jesus even weeps over the individual! Though most Jews were desirous of the reestablishment of the nation of Israel under the Messiah, the deepest concern of Jewish believers was not “will all Israel be raised,” but “will he/she/I be raised.”¹

One of the problems with the CBV, whether intended or not, is that it sees the restoration of Israel into a new covenant people as an end unto itself. Often times this results in some adherents believing that redemption in this life alone is the full scope of the prophets’ message, with no specific reference to an individual afterlife other than a couple of inferences here and there. We are supposed to derive the “implications” of an afterlife from this covenant standing, but no one can say to any degree what those implications are. This is surprising, given how in the first century the vast majority of all Jewish and Greek writings were fixated on the nature of life after death. For those in the CBV who disagree, I would ask them to provide a list of passages discussing the afterlife and clarify whether or not they see resurrection as anything beyond a corporate issue (especially in those pertaining to individuals in Sheol/Hades). I certainly want to be fair and not paint everyone with the same broad brush.

In contrast, one can see a focus on the individual at the core of Jesus’ teaching, from the Sermon on the Mount in which He espouses individual responsibility, to apostolic descriptions of living as individual priests, to being raised as individuals like Daniel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were to be. God fulfilled His promise of restoration to Israel, but that restoration transcended the corporate sense and pointed ultimately to the individual. In fact, one might argue that the story of the corporate salvation of Israel pointed to the individual salvation of each person coming into the kingdom. By denying the individual body component of the covenantal transition, we do disservice to the power of God to incorporate these two elements together: the promise to resurrect both Israel as a nation *and* biologically dead individuals from Sheol.

Who Were the “Dead Ones”

With this assessment, we come back to 1 Corinthians 15 and ask the question, who were “*the dead* (ones)?” Some Corinthians were saying, “*there is no resurrection of the dead*” (15:12), so we need to examine what or who “*the dead*” were to draw a conclusion.

Sam Frost has advanced that there were “some” in Corinth who were denying participation in Christ to the Jews because they initially rejected Him as their Messiah, and therefore they had missed out on the blessings of Christ and would not

Rethinking the Resurrection

Jerel Kratt
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be raised into the body of Christ.²

I performed an exhaustive biblical search of “*the dead*” to see if its common use would shed any light on 1 Corinthians 15. I began with the Old Testament, and searched for all instances of “*the dead*.” Excluding references to animals, I found 39 references. These mostly were references to either corpses (buried or unburied) or departed spirits in Sheol. A few did not specifically say *spirits*, but simply referred to people who had died. The following references utilize the Hebrew word *muth*, the typical Hebrew word for *die/death/the dead*: Num 16:48; Deut 18:11; Jud 16:30; 2 Sam 14:2; Psa 88:5, 10; Ecc 9:5; Isa 8:19; Isa 26:14 (cf. Isa 14:9); and Ezek 24:17. *Muth* is also the root word found in Genesis 2-3 pertaining to Adam’s sin.

Turning to the New Testament, I narrowed my search to the specific phrase “*from the dead*” (thus focusing on resurrection). This phrase is found 53 times in 52 verses. Here are all 53 examples (due to space constraints I encourage you to look them up): Matt 14:2; 17:9; 27:64; 28:7; Mark 6:14; 9:9-10; 12:25; Luke 9:7; 16:30, 31; 20:35; 24:46; Jn 2:22; 12:1, 9, 17; 20:9; 21:14; Acts 3:15; 4:2, 10; 10:41; 13:30, 31, 34; 17:3, 31; 26:23; Rom 1:4; 4:24; 6:4, 9, 13; 7:4; 8:11; 10:7, 9; 11:15; 1 Cor 15:12, 20; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; 5:14; Phil 3:10, 11; Col 1:18; 2:12; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Tim 2:8; Heb 11:17-19; 13:20; 1 Pet 1:3, 21.

If you read the passages above, you would see that the term “*the dead*” was, in all but three instances (Eph 5:11; Rom 6:14; 11:15), a reference to previously biologically deceased individuals and most often in reference to Jesus. Someone might respond that Jesus’ death and resurrection was not merely biological, but was also of great spiritual and covenantal importance. Indeed it was! Such meaning can be found in some of the passages above (e.g., Col 1:18 and 1 Pet 1:3). Does this covenantal aspect mean that “*raised Him from the dead*” precludes that Jesus was raised personally and individually from both Hades and the literal grave? Absolutely not. In fact, the vast majority of these references contain the eyewitness accounts of Jesus in Jerusalem after His bodily resurrection. For example, consider Matthew 27:64, where the chief priests and scribes use the phrase “*he has risen from the dead*.” Clearly, the priests and scribes weren’t worried about the disciples claiming that Jesus had overcome spiritual death; rather, they were singularly worried about the claim that He came back from biological death.

The point is, one cannot claim that the most common use of “*the dead*” in either the Old or New Testaments was only or primarily referring to spiritual death. The overwhelming use of the phrase pertains to the biologically dead—that is, to individuals in (or formerly in) Hades.

You can’t have a discussion of “*the dead*” without looking at the “death” of Adam. A very important part of the argument for a corporate body view of “*the dead*” in 1 Corinthians 15 is the relationship of death with Adam (15:21, 22, 45). Because Adam died “*the day he ate*,” the very day his “*eyes were opened*,” his death must have been spiritual (covenantal) rather than biological, since he continued to live physically

for hundreds of years. Therefore, according to the CBV, the death being overcome in 1 Corinthians 15 cannot be biological death, but rather “covenantal death,” i.e., the death Adam died on the day he ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

I agree that biological death was not the death Adam incurred the day he ate. I also agree that biological death was not a consequence of Adam’s sin, nor is it the death being “ended” in 1 Corinthians 15. I believe that biological death existed before the time of Adam, and familiarity with this death was the foundation upon which the concept of covenantal separation or death would have been understood. And yes, there are references in the New Testament to the spiritually dead who were still biologically alive (e.g., John 5:24f). That said, the other side of the coin pertaining to Adam’s physical death is detention of the soul in some sort of realm of the dead (Sheol/Hades) after biological death as a consequence of sinning against a holy God. We see this aspect of death woven throughout the Bible, and it was a grave concern (pun intended) for many of God’s people. Had Adam not sinned, it is reasonable to conclude (as most covenant eschatology and covenant creation preterists do) that Adam would have immediately entered heaven after his biological death. It is with this understanding that we can see Jesus’ biological resurrection as a “sign” (John 20:26-30) of His overcoming both a corporate, covenantal death and a personal, individual death.

The “death” of which Old Testament people were afraid from the beginning was biological death, but not so much the act of dying, but being cut off from the presence of God in Sheol. We see glimmers of a hope of deliverance from Sheol in Job and Psalms³ (and possibly with Abraham), but it is not fully revealed until much later in the prophets and finally the Apostles (see Heb 2:14-18).

So while Adam’s death was a “fellowship” death suffered that very day because of his sin, the consequence (and remedy) of that death is the story of the rest of Scripture. How would this breach of fellowship be fixed? By God becoming like His brothers in every respect, sharing in flesh and blood, and overcoming death in all its aspects, both covenantal and biological. Why did the Old Testament saints fear biological death? Because that was the moment when the ultimate price would be paid for sin—separation from God. As long as one was still alive, they had “coverings” allowing them to be in a limited presence of God. This is the other side of the “death” coin that is often missed.

Sam Frost made the argument (based on Max King) that the problem Paul was dealing with in Romans (specifically 11:11-24)—that some Gentiles were claiming Jews were cut off so that they could be grafted in—is the same problem in 1 Corinthians.⁴ Some Gentiles, Frost says, were of the “Paul party” while some Jews were of the “Peter party” (citing 1 Cor 1:12). The argument is that some Gentiles in Corinth were denying total participation in resurrection life (i.e., salvation) for the Jews who were “dead” because they were under the

Resurrection

by Jerel Kratt

... continued from p. 9

Law (Old Covenant), which brought death. However, there is no indication that Paul was addressing this concern at any point in 1 Corinthians. The “I am of Cephas, I am of Apollos” remarks were not based on Jew/Gentile distinctions, but on personal preferences in styles of preaching and rhetoric for the different evangelists, as clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 1:17 - 4:21.

Frost then argues that Paul makes a *modus tollens* argument (*modus tollens* is an “if/then” argument: “If p, then q; q is not, therefore p is not”) in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, which supposedly establishes that the resurrection deniers were not denying resurrection to themselves, to Jesus, or to those asleep in Jesus, but only to some other group called “the dead” (i.e., the Jews, according to Frost). Paul’s argument goes something like this: “If the dead are not raised, then Christ is not raised. If the dead are not raised, then you (Corinthians) are still in your sins.” Gordon Fee raised this issue in his commentary on Corinthians, which Frost borrowed to make his argument. According to Frost, in order for this *modus tollens* argument to work on the Corinthians, they would have to reject the “q” or the consequences (that they are still in their sins, that Jesus hasn’t been raised, etc.), to change their belief on “p” (that the dead are not raised).

I agree that Paul used a *modus tollens* argument to demonstrate the absurdity (*reductio ad absurdum*) of the Corinthians’ belief that “the dead are not raised.” There is a problem, however, with Frost’s conclusion of claiming that Israel was the only group being denied resurrection. If we accept that the Corinthian resurrection deniers were not denying Christ’s resurrection, or that of themselves, or those asleep in Christ, then who remain as the “dead ones”? Obviously more than just the Jews, since people of all nations who died apart from Christ would be denied a resurrection to life. Resurrection applied to all of the just and the unjust among the nations in that world (John 5:28-29; Acts 17:22ff; Rev 20:11-13), not just the Jews.⁵

Epicurean and Stoic Thought in Resurrection

A more logical view is that these Corinthian Greeks believed, albeit inconsistently, that although Christ was raised, no one else who was dead would be raised. It makes more sense that the “some” who were denying the “resurrection of the dead” were the typical Greeks of the day who held that there is no resurrection of the dead. The dead either live forever in Hades as “shades” or their “pneuma” (spirit) returns to the heavens (stars), since that is the material of which the stars were made.⁶ One of the common cosmological views of the day did allow for special heroes, kings, and warriors to be resurrected, though this was a very rare occasion, so it would be possible for a Hellenistic Corinthian to believe that Jesus was raised but, in general, not anyone else. Corinth was only 40 miles from Athens, where the concept of Jesus’ resurrection was ridiculed (Acts 17:16-34). What was taught to Greeks in Athens was more than likely also taught to Greeks in Corinth, so it is much more plausible that we have

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Corinthian Greeks who were denying the general concept of resurrection from the dead yet inconsistently affirming Jesus’ resurrection.⁷

Paul, in my mind, was addressing recent Greek converts who became Christians by believing in the resurrected Christ but didn’t realize the implications of their new belief. Though their former belief systems of Stoicism and Epicureanism didn’t believe in resurrection, they had accepted the resurrection of Christ because it was fundamental to the gospel message. What they hadn’t realized was that if they accepted Christ’s resurrection, then by implication they were supposed to also accept the resurrection of everyone else.

So, in my opinion, Paul’s logic in the chapter unfolds like this:

1. (vv. 1-11) He reiterates the gospel by which they (former Stoics and Epicureans) were saved, employing Hebrew Scriptures as well as eyewitness proofs to demonstrate that Christ was in fact raised.
2. (v. 12) He recognizes that some of them don’t believe in the resurrection of dead people.
3. (vv. 13-15) He points out that if the dead are not raised, then Christ cannot have been raised. Conversely, if Christ is raised (which they believed) then the possibility of resurrection for all exists.
4. (vv. 16-28) His logic loops around a few times to prove the universality of resurrection.
5. (vv. 29-34) He goes on to address specific problems that Epicureans would have had with their new religion.
6. (vv. 35-49) He then adopts and reimages some Stoic cosmological assumptions to explain the actual nature of resurrection.
7. (vv. 50-58) He completes his task by demonstrating how resurrection is the culmination of the Hebrew Scripture prophecies.

One thing CBV advocates cannot do is explain why Paul interacts so much with Epicurean and Stoic worldviews in this chapter. Reading 1 Corinthians 15 is much like listening to one half of a phone conversation; we are left surmising what the other half of the conversation is. If the key to understanding Paul is discerning the other half of the conversation, I think we are doomed to failure without engaging those groups from which the majority of Gentile converts in that part of the world would have come.

One last thing before moving on. Notice 1 Corinthians 15:32, which is an Epicurean maxim (and is quoted in the LXX version of Isa 22:13):

What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” (ESV)

The death of “tomorrow” for Paul in this text was not covenantal death, it was clearly biological death. That was the context for Epicureans, just as it was for Isaiah. This solidifies that “the dead” for Paul and the Corinthians were all those

who had died biologically and were in Hades, not just the covenantally dead people under the Old Covenant.

The Nature of the Resurrection Body

If the resurrection of the dead occurred in AD 70, but physical graves were not emptied, there is a need to explain how an invisible (“spiritual”) resurrection took place. The early pioneers of preterism wrestled with how to explain this from a preterist (AD 70) perspective. King relied heavily on the book *The Body* by John A. T. Robinson, which King references throughout his massive volume *The Cross and the Parousia*.

Robinson’s *The Body* takes the basic approach that there were two different concepts of the body present in the New Testament—a Greek view and a Jewish view. The Greek view, according to Robinson (who quotes another), is that man was described as “an angel in a slot machine, a soul incarcerated into a frame of matter.”⁸ The Hebrew view was that man was “an animated body, not an incarcerated soul.”⁹ Robinson argued that the Greeks had a Platonic view of man, whereas the Hebrews had a holistic view of man connected to his community. Therefore, Robinson offered only two concepts of a bodily resurrection into which King could plug a preterist resurrection: either the body was the shell of a human (the flesh) or it was a collective group of people (the “body of Christ”). Since a corpse resurrection doesn’t resolve with an AD 70 fulfillment, King was left with the corporate body view. The result was a resurrection view (CBV) in which every single *eschatological* instance of “the resurrection of the dead ones” represents the covenantal transition away from the Law of Moses via the lens of spiritual regeneration and restoration of fellowship with God through Christ.

Scholars today claim that Robinson’s depiction of Greek and Hebrew cosmologies incorrectly represented those of the first century.¹⁰ Not only did Robinson’s view ignore the diversity of cosmologies within ancient Judaism, as well as the fact that many Jews such as Philo of Alexandria held very Platonic concepts of the “body,” it also was based on questionable assumptions about Greco-Roman culture; mainly, that the first-century Greek culture dichotomized “body” and “soul,” which we now know is not true.

Platonism had begun to wane before the first century, and the Roman world started embracing the basic worldview of the Stoics (and to a lesser degree, the Epicureans and Skeptics), experiencing its peak during the time of Christ. This doesn’t mean they practiced Stoicism or Epicureanism; rather, the way they understood the nature of man and the universe was couched in basic terms developed by these Greek thinkers. It was common “scientific” language on the street throughout the Empire. It would be as common to them as gravity or a superficial understanding of the Theory of Relativity is to us today. Just because everyone today knows what gravity is doesn’t mean everyone is a physicist. The same was true in the first century regarding Stoic and Epicurean cosmology.

In Stoicism, the Greek word *pneuma* (spirit) represented

the most refined, pure material that held all things together, and, in large enough quantities, became a sort of life force. Humans had far more and far better *pneuma* than rocks. God (or the gods) had a perfect quality and quantity of *pneuma*. This Stoic view overlapped to a large extent with the Hebrew concept of spirit (Heb. *ruach*) being the breath of God.

Forcing a corporate body concept upon all uses of “body” in resurrection texts does not work, as demonstrated in parts 1 and 2 of this series. A corpse (or flesh) resurrection does not work within a preterist schema for a variety of historical, archeological, and theological reasons. But a resurrection of a body consisting solely of *pneuma* does work on all levels—theological, grammatical, and historical.

When dealing with Greeks, Paul could draw on the Stoic system of physics to explain the Hebraic concept of *pneuma* as an animating force as well as the “matter” of which the resurrection body is comprised. For example, notice how Jesus used *pneuma* in His discussion with Nicodemus in John 3:8. The same Greek word underlies the translators’ words *wind* and *spirit*. *Pneuma* was like the rarest, highest quality “gas” (in primitive understanding) that represented the person’s body in the invisible realm. As a person became a Christian he was issued God’s *pneuma*. God’s *pneuma* interacted with a given Christian’s *pneuma*, renovating it and becoming the source for a kind of empowering “data-link,” if you will, between not only God and man but also between Christian and Christian. In this sense, a *pneumatic* resurrection can encompass all three aspects of resurrection: soteriological, covenantal/corporate, and individual.

The concept of being indwelt by Christ, of Christ becoming a life-giving spirit, and everyone in Christ being one body can be seen as quite real with this understanding of *pneuma*. Paul saw this new man (both corporate and individual) as a superior creature to simply the flesh (“natural man”) that represented all unbelievers. It also explains the horror of Christians having sex with a pagan temple prostitute.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is simply saying that the body that is resurrected from Hades (the flesh having decayed in the ground) is made of *pneuma*, which is a substance that is suitable for existence in heaven.¹¹ I believe Paul thought very corporately in many instances, and there is much we are still learning about how ancient Near Eastern cosmic-temple theology buttressed his thinking; but the texts don’t support the premise that he thought the resurrected body was *only* corporate or covenantal. I encourage you to read 1 Corinthians 15 again with this background in mind.

Does this change anything for us today, since Hades is no more? I think for us it simply means that rather than having to wait after we die (as those in Hades had to), our change is immediate and the *pneuma* within us takes on the heavenly form of Jesus (see 1 John 3:2; Rev 14:13). I think it also gives us more concrete evidence that there is an afterlife in the heavenly realm—something we don’t yet experience, but for which it is worth living and hoping. †

1. See my 2014 Preterist Pilgrim Weekend speech “Exploring the Hope of Israel,” available from Preterist Research Institute.
2. Sam Frost audio lectures on 1 Corinthians 15 (privately obtained) and Frost, Samuel *Exegetical Essays on the Resurrection*.
3. See Job 7:7-10; 14:7-14; Ps 22:29; 49:7-11, 14-15.
4. Frost, *ibid*.
5. Acts 17:26 is an interesting reference to Deuteronomy 32:8-9, which refers in Genesis 10-11 to the 70 nations.
6. See Long, A. A. *Hellenistic Philosophy*; Lee, Michelle Paul, *the Stoics, and the Body of Christ*; Martin, Dale *The Corinthian Body*; Rasimus, T; Engberg-Pederson, T; and Dunderberg, I. *Stoicism in Early Christianity*; Engberg-Pederson, T. *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*.
7. Paul (vv. 32-33) employs at least two quotes from Greek philosophers, so it is unlikely that the deniers were Jewish Sadducees, since quoting Greek philosophers would hardly have been effective.
8. Robinson, John A. T. *The Body*. p. 14.
9. *Ibid*, p 14.
10. See note 6 above.
11. See my 2014 Preterist Pilgrim Weekend speech “Stoics and Gnostics,” available from Preterist Research Institute.

Saints at Pella after AD 70?

by Ed Stevens

DOES IT MATTER IF there were any *true Christians* left alive in Pella in the first twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem? It matters to Futurists, who see the silence and ignorance of those supposed Christians about the fulfillment of the Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment as proof that those end-time events did not occur.

This documentation problem cannot be resolved by spiritualizing the fulfillment. For instance, those who hold to the Collective Body View (CBV) claim that the pre-AD 70 saints in Pella and elsewhere merely had a “change of status” or “change of stance” after the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet there is no testimonial evidence (written or otherwise) from any of those supposed remaining saints claiming such a “change of status,” or that the Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment had just occurred.

As Dr. Charles Hill notes, “An early Christian writer who is even aware of a hyper-preterist eschatology in the church has yet to be found” (Keith Mathison, ed., *When Shall These Things Be?* p. 107). This silence and ignorance about the fulfillment led C. F. D. Moule to note that “it is hard to believe that a Judaistic type of Christianity . . . would not have . . . made capital out of this signal evidence that they, and not non-Christian Judaism, were the true Israel. But in fact our traditions are silent” (*The Birth of the New Testament*, p. 123).

Rupert Furneaux went further: “How did Christianity record this event of epoch-making consequence to itself? The answer is by *silence, complete and absolute*. The fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of its sacred Temple . . . the collapse and disappearance of the Apostolic Body . . . and the fate of the original followers of Jesus *went unrecorded in Christian literature* until the fourth century” (*The Roman Siege of Jerusalem*, pp. 246-248).

Moreover, even if that silence about the fulfillment seems to point toward a non-occurrence of the end-time events, we would still have to wonder why the post-70 Christians did not express their “bitter disappointment over the postponement of the Parousia [and the] shattering of the early Christian communities by the delay in the Lord’s return” (Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (100-600). Vol. 1, pp. 123-125). Yet all we hear from those post-AD 70 saints is deafening silence—no boasting about the fulfillment, nor complaints and disillusionment about the non-fulfillment.

This is a very strange silence, which indeed should “cause pause” to every preterist. But non-fulfillment is not the only option for explaining it. If every one of

those saints who experienced the Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment were no longer around after AD 70, their absence could easily explain their *silence*.

Our first step in solving this dilemma is to determine whether or not those saints who experienced the fulfillments were still around after AD 70. This is where Pella, and the saints who were supposedly living there after AD 70, comes into the picture. So we need to re-examine the historical evidence to see if there really were *true Christians* in Pella immediately after the war. And if there were, why were they so silent and ignorant about the occurrence of the Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment?

Some Saints Did Flee to Pella

Eusebius (4th century) wrote, “The church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there *before the war*, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella” (3 Euseb 5:3).

John A. T. Robinson notes that “the only tradition we have as to what Christians actually did, or were told to do, is that preserved by Eusebius apparently on the basis of the *Memoirs of Hegesippus* used also by Epiphanius” (*Redating the New Testament*, p. 16).

Most patristic scholars agree that some Christians fled from Judea and went to Pella when they saw the signs which Jesus gave them (Matt 24:15-16 and parallels). And Pella was a safe place to go before the war, since it was a Hellenized city that was not under the Sanhedrin’s control.

But there is another factor here which helps us date the first departures from Jerusalem. It is the Neronian persecution, which began two years before the outbreak of the war (AD 64). If the Jewish Christians had stayed in Judea until the war (May AD 66), they would have been either killed in the Neronian persecution or coerced by the Zealots to join the war effort. That is why the warning to flee from Judea had to come “before the war” (as Eusebius says).

First Exodus from Judea in April, 62 AD

Eutychius of Alexandria (10th century) claims that one “group of disciples,” who were connected with James, fled from Jerusalem after James’ execution, and went to the region of Perea and the Decapolis (the area around Pella):

Qistus [Festus], governor of Jerusalem, died [AD 62] and the city was without any authority or sovereign to govern it. The Jews then arose and rioted and killed James, son of Joseph, known as the “brother of the Lord,” stoning him to death. Then they harassed a group of

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disciples and expelled them from the city. The Christians abandoned Jerusalem, crossed the Jordan and settled in those places [i.e., in the region of Perea and Decapolis]. [Eutychius of Alexandria (10th century), *The Annals of Eutychius of Alexandria*, ch. 9 sect. 7.]

We do not know from whom Eutychius received this information. It could have been from Hegesippus or Papias, or some other early source. He indicates that those Judean saints began their exodus from Jerusalem as early as April AD 62, right after the high priest Ananus II killed their leader, James. That group had much in common with the Judaizers, who considered James their bishop. If that group was a Judaizing sect of Jewish Christians, then it would be easy to link them to the Nazareans and Ebionites in Pella.

It seems that Epiphanius (4th century) makes that very connection when he claims that the Nazareans (and Ebionites?) in Pella were directly associated with the group that fled from Jerusalem:

*According to Epiphanius, the Nazarenes [and Ebionites?] were the descendants of those Christians who were Jewish and came from Jerusalem (Haer. 29,7; 30,18). [Angelo Di Berardino, "Pella", *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014, vol. 3, p. 131]*

What Happened in Pella?

So this places some Judean Christians "in the region of Perea and Decapolis" (near Pella) as early as AD 62. That was two years before the Neronic persecution (AD 64) and four years before the Zealot rebellion (AD 66). What happened to these Christians after they fled to this region?

Soon after the Zealot rebellion began in May AD 66, the Greek and Syrian residents of the Decapolis cities (including Pella) evicted and killed many of their Jewish residents (Josephus *Wars* 2:477-480). The Zealots retaliated soon afterward and killed many of the Greek, Roman, and Syrian residents, as well as any Jews who would not join their war effort (Josephus *Wars* 2.458 [2.18.1]). The Zealots then put a garrison in Pella and the other cities of Perea.

Later in the war (March to April AD 68), after he subjugated Galilee, Vespasian sent Placidus with cavalry and soldiers to wipe out all of the Zealot fortresses on the entire east bank of the Jordan (Perea), from Gadara and Pella all the way down to the Dead Sea (see Josephus *Wars* 3:46 and 4:413 for the boundaries of Perea, as well as *Wars* 4:419-438 for the story about this campaign of Placidus in Perea).

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So Pella suffered three hits during the war. This is why patristic historians do not think any Christians were still alive in Pella after the war. Pella was not safe for anyone (Jews, Gentiles, or Christians) after the war broke out. It was evidently a safe haven before the war, but it was certainly not a good place to be after the war broke out in AD 66. Thus, it appears that there were no Christians of any kind left in Pella after the war. Nor was there a church left in Jerusalem to which they could return.

Pella 'Christians' Were Not True Christians

Angelo Di Berardino, in his article on "Pella" in the *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, explains why modern patristic experts seriously question the idea that true Christians were found in Pella after the war, and whether they went back to Jerusalem:

*According to Eusebius of Caesarea (HE 3.5.3; see Epiphanius, *Haer.* 29, 7; *De Mens. et Pond.* 15), during the Jewish war the Christians of Jerusalem took refuge in the Transjordan and the Decapolis, or communities were established, esp. in the city of Pella. . . . Scholars once considered these reports reliable, but today they pose numerous problems: When did the Christians flee (before or after the siege)? How were they able to cross between territories during the war? How were they received in a city that was primarily Hellenic? Had not Pella already been destroyed by the Jews (Josephus, *De bello Iud.* 2,18,1)? What happened to the [Christian] communities of Jerusalem? How did they return after the year AD 70? For this reason many scholars tend to consider the information reported by Eusebius and Epiphanius as lacking historical substance; instead, they maintain that they were invented by the Jewish Christians of Pella to affirm their original connection with an apostle [James] and the primitive communities of Jerusalem, and to justify their particular form of Jewish [Ebionite] Christianity (Luedemann, Verheyden). . . . Koester, however, acknowledges the veracity of the escape to the Decapolis, but denies their apologetic character for justifying the Jewish Christian [Ebionite] community of Pella as a historical heir to the one in Jerusalem. [Angelo Di Berardino, "Pella", *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014, vol. 3, p. 131; emphasis added]*

Berardino notes that "many scholars" see these stories about fleeing from Jerusalem and returning to Jerusalem as being "invented by the Jewish Christians of Pella to affirm their original connection with an apostle [James]"

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and the primitive communities of Jerusalem, and to justify their particular form of Jewish [Nazarean or Ebionite or Judaizing] Christianity.” This points to the fact that those Jewish Christians who showed up in Pella after Jerusalem’s destruction were not true Christians. They were Judaizers.

Pella ‘Christians’ Were Nazareans and Ebionites

Epiphanius (4th century) links Pella with the origin of the two Judaizing sects of Jewish Christians known as Nazareans and Ebionites:

The Nazoraean sect exists in Beroea near Coele Syria, in the Decapolis near the region of Pella, and in Bashan in the place called Cocaba, which in Hebrew is called Chochabe. That is where the sect began, when all the disciples were living in Pella after they moved from Jerusalem, since Christ told them to leave Jerusalem and withdraw because it was about to be besieged. For this reason they settled in Peraea and there, as I said, they lived. This is where the Nazoraean sect began. [*Panarion* 29:7:7-8]

After all those who believed in Christ had generally come to live in Perea, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis of which it is written in the Gospel and which is situated in the neighborhood of the region of Batanaea and Basanitis, Ebion’s preaching originated here after they had moved to this place and had lived there. [*Panarion* 30:2, 7]

The Ebionites and Nazareans were both Judaizers, requiring circumcision of their Gentile converts. The Ebionites denied the virgin birth and Deity of Jesus. And both groups tended to believe that Jesus would reign on a physical throne in Jerusalem.

This further confirms that the supposed “Christians” who showed up in Pella a few decades after the war were Nazareans and Ebionites (Judaizers)—not true Christians. This explains why those “Christians” did not experience the benefits of the Parousia, and were thus unaware that the end-time events had occurred.

No Evidence of True Christians until AD 90

When Beth and I were in Jerusalem (September 2016), I met with *Father Eugenio Alliata*, superior of the *Franciscan Institute*, and director of their school of archaeology. I asked him specifically about the archaeological remains of post-AD 70 Christians that they had found in their excavation work all over Palestine. He said the same thing I had heard previously from numerous other patristic historians and archaeologists. There is no literary, archaeological, or

inscriptional evidence of any true Christians anywhere in Israel for at least two decades after AD 70. There is evidence of *Ebionites* (Judaizing Unitarian millennialists), *Gnostics*, and other heretical forms of Judaism and Christianity, but no evidence for true Christians until after AD 90, when they began to reappear on the historical scene.

On that same trip to the Near East, we crossed over into Jordan and visited Pella. Our tour guide, *Hussien Al-Jarrah*, was one of the Jordanian archaeologists who lives nearby and performed excavation work at Pella. I repeatedly asked him if there is any archaeological evidence of Christians living there before, during, or in the first two decades after the war. He replied, “No.” There was plenty of evidence of Jewish, Syrian, Greek, and Roman occupation of Pella before, during, and after the war, but nothing for Christians before, during, or immediately after the war. This is the same thing that modern historians and archaeologists are saying about Pella.

True Christians Disappeared Before the War

None of the ancient historians mention any true Christians involved on either side of the Jewish-Roman war, or dwelling anywhere in Palestine after the war began in AD 66. The New Testament mentions over 100 individuals by name, yet not a single one of them ever reappeared after AD 70 to write anything, start any new churches, do any more mission work, refute the heretics who were proliferating at that time, or proclaim the fulfillment of all of the eschatological events. It was not until AD 90 that we see any Christians being mentioned, and even then they are not the kind of Christians that we see before the war.

Josephus wrote in AD 93, over twenty years after the war, “The tribe of Christians are not extinct at this day” (*Antiq.* 18:64 [18.3.3]). Historians wonder what he meant. Was he bemoaning the fact that Christians were not extinct as the Jews had hoped? The Neronian persecution almost wiped out Christianity. But Jesus promised to keep some of his elect alive until His return, at which time he would gather them to himself (Matt 24:21-31). So by the time Josephus wrote in AD 93, there were enough Christians back in existence that he could say that they were not extinct. However, that statement does not imply lots of Christians were around at that time, since the word “extinct” implies there were very few. And he would not have needed to say this if Christians were numerous and well known at that time.

The *Talmudic* writings do mention a few scattered Christians in some parts of Palestine after the war. The rabbis had some interaction with them in their synagogues.

R. Travers Herford in his book, *Christianity in Talmud & Midrash*, mentions several of those encounters, and quotes the rabbinical statements about it. The rabbis described these Christians as half-Christian and half-Jewish. In other words, they were not true Christians, nor even true Jews. They were Judaizers. They still required circumcision and law-keeping from the Gentiles. They also denied Jesus' virgin birth, thus denying that Jesus was God in the flesh. They were not true Christians, but they were the only kind of "Christians" documented in Israel, or in the trans-Jordan area, during that first 20 years after AD 70.

Was Hegesippus Promoting the Ebionite Cause?

Both Eusebius and Epiphanius used Hegesippus as their information source about the flight of Jewish Christians to Pella. Hegesippus (mid-2nd century) wrote a five-volume work entitled *Memoirs*, which recorded the traditions about the apostolic preaching to refute the errors of the Gnostics. He allegedly came from one of the Ebionite or Nazarean sects of Jewish Christians in Palestine (possibly Pella), and went to Rome about AD 155 to unite with them in opposing the Gnostics.

This raises a serious question about why the true Jewish Christians, who were the real successors of the apostolic church in Jerusalem, did not rise up and assert their true succession from the apostles, but instead remained silent and allowed the Judaizers (Ebionites and Nazareans) to assert their fraudulent linkage to the apostolic church in Jerusalem. Apparently true Christians were nowhere to be found in Palestine, and the Judaizers took advantage of that absence to promote their cause. Hegesippus could never have pulled off this charade if any of the successors of the true apostolic church in Jerusalem were still living in Palestine.

Conclusion

According to *Epiphanius*, the only kind of "Christians" we find in Pella after AD 70 were the Nazareans and Ebionites. They were Judaizers who had "*severed themselves from Christ*" (cf. Gal 5:4). Since they were not true Christians and did not experience the benefits of the Parousia nor recognized its occurrence, they could not speak up and set the record straight when the second-century writers (e.g., Papias, Polycarp, Ignatius) began teaching that the Parousia was still future.

There are absolutely no historical statements coming from any true Christians after AD 70 claiming that the destruction of Jerusalem was the time when the Parousia,

Resurrection, and Judgment took place, nor that AD 70 was proof that they were the true Israel of God.

The few "Christians" we find after AD 70 are totally ignorant about the occurrence of the Parousia. They are confused, doctrinally deviant, and caught up in Gnosticism, Judaizing, or other heretical ideas.

We have numerous writings coming from heretical authors during the first forty years after AD 70, but nothing from any true Christians. How can it be that the heretical writings survived, but the true Christian writings did not? It is no wonder, then, that patristic historians describe the first two decades after AD 70 as being a very "*obscure dark period*" for the post-AD 70 Church (Dr. Wayne McCown lecture at Northwestern Seminary, Rochester NY, September 16, 2004. See also W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church: From the Beginnings to 461*, pp. 35-36; and Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, pp. 30-31). This was when the Gnostics, Judaizers, and other heretics were proliferating unopposed, without any correction coming from the pre-AD 70 saints who were supposedly still around after AD 70.

This puts us preterists in a dilemma. We need to explain why no true Christians spoke up and claimed the fulfillment of the end-time events. Futurists see this silence as proof that the Parousia did not occur. But James Stuart Russell suggested that the post-AD 70 Christians were *silent* about the fulfillments because the saints who experienced those things were *absent*. They could not talk about it because they were gone—taken to heaven at the Parousia.

So it appears that those true Christians were "gathered up by the angels" at the end of the Neronian persecution ("immediately after the tribulation of those days" Matt 24:29-31) just before the wrath was poured out ("*rescues us from the wrath to come*" 1 Thess 1:10). When the Zealot rebellion broke out, it very effectively "cut short" the Neronian "tribulation" (Matt 24:22). It was precisely then that Josephus says they saw the angelic armies in the sky, which signaled the arrival of Jesus to rescue his saints and pour out his wrath upon the unbelieving Jews (*Wars* 6.299-300). This was when all mention of true Christians "disappeared from history without a trace" [Hans Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973. p. 18]. ✚

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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

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