

Questions & Answers About Preterism

(Taken from David Green's website www.preteristcosmos.com)

QUESTION 1: God gave the Old Testament Church detailed worship guidelines (Deuteronomy and Leviticus), but in the preterist view, the Kingdom is now fulfilled spiritually, and the New Testament does not give many specific guidelines as to what "the sons of the Kingdom" are supposed to do in their worship. Doesn't preterism thus put the Church in a kind of "limbo" state?

QUESTION 2: If a preterist believes that the Old Testament law is no longer binding, then how is he different than the dispensationalist when dealing with ethics?

QUESTION 3: Calvinists deny that obedience is necessary for salvation. Doesn't the Bible contradict that notion?

QUESTION 4: Do you believe that all the graves of saints are already empty?

QUESTION 5: If the resurrection and destruction of the ungodly has happened, then who would have been left to preach and repopulate the earth?

QUESTION 6: Revelation 21:22-24 says that there is no temple in the New Jerusalem, because God and the Lamb are its Temple. If the New Jerusalem is the Church and if the Church is the temple of God, how can it be that there is no temple in the City?

QUESTION 7: Was anyone regenerated in the Old Testament?

QUESTION 8: Doesn't Romans eleven teach that Yahweh still has a definite plan for Israel, whom He loves with an irrevocable love?

QUESTION 9: If preterists believe that the Great Commission is already fulfilled, then it seems that they have no reason or basis to "make disciples of all nations." Isn't preterism thus *anti-evangelical*?

QUESTION 10: What about people who have died who have never heard the name of Christ, the only name by which you can be saved, and people who just don't understand the gospel. How do the preterists see these things?

QUESTION 11: Can you possibly deny that preterism is anti-semitic?

QUESTION 12: From a preterist perspective how are we to understand Romans 11:28-29? "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

QUESTION 13: Is God not concerned with the evil in the world like famine, wars, disease, environmental damage, etc.? Preterism teaches that the Kingdom is already here in its fullness. So this is the fulfillment? Why would God create a world that will *never* be rid of sin and suffering? Optimists say that this is the best of all possible worlds. Some futurists say that this is the best way of becoming the best of all possible worlds --which I find tenable through the eyes of faith. What do preterists say about the world? Will injustice and suffering go on forever?

QUESTION 14: The Old Covenant (the law) passed away and the New Covenant (covenant of Grace) was established. Since the Old Covenant was the Law, doesn't that prove that we are not bound to the law in any way, shape or form because the law no longer exists today?

QUESTION 15: Acts 1:11 says that Jesus is going to come back in the SAME manner He left. My Bible says He left visibly and physically. You, on the other hand, say He will not come back in the flesh. How do you defend yourself against Acts 1:11, a verse that is an obvious contradiction of preterism?

QUESTION 16: The Bible says that because Christ is in us, we have "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). In other words, because Christ is in me today, I can look forward to "the blessed hope" that I will one day be like Jesus. Preterists on the other hand say our hope is *already* fulfilled. How do preterists explain Col. 1:27?

QUESTION 17: I agree that the "Parousia" spoken of so often in the New Testament took place in A. D. 70 (I can't get around the time statements.), but why can't the Parousia that took place in the first century be a "type" of a future, greater Parousia?

QUESTION 18: The New Testament tells believers not to be in bondage to "the elements" of the world (Gal. 4:3,9; Col. 2:8,28). Then in II Peter 3:3,10,12, it says that "the elements" were going to be destroyed in the end of the Last Days. As preterists, we know that the Greek word for elements (stoikion) means "principles" or "laws." We also know as preterists that "the elements" were destroyed in A. D. 70. Doesn't this prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that in A. D. 70 the principles of *the law of Moses* were destroyed? Doesn't this mean that now we are not bound to obey the book we call "the Old Testament?" Aren't we bound now only to obey the certain commandments in "the New Testament" that apply to this age?

QUESTION 19: The Bible promises curses for disobedience in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Yet you say that our salvation in the New Testament age is totally unconditional. How can our salvation be absolutely unconditional if God promises us throughout His word that liars, murders, etc. cannot inherit the Kingdom? Also, we are told to disfellowship brothers who are in sin. Obviously, life in the Kingdom today is conditional. If we want to enter the Kingdom, then we have to not practice sin. That is a "condition." Repentance is necessary. Can you possibly deny this?

QUESTION 20: Preterist say that "the creation" of Romans 8:21 which will be "set free" was the old covenant people (God's "covenant creation"). Don't preterists thus show a disdain for the physical creation by spiritualizing what scripture says about it? **ANSWER**

QUESTION 21: Is hell, according to the full preterist, a place of only spiritual torment for the non-believer, or is there a physical and bodily torment involved as well?

QUESTION 22: How does the Bar Kokhba rebellion of A. D. 132-135 relate to your understanding of the Eschaton.

QUESTION 23: Didn't Paul say that making Gentiles conform to the Old Testament law is legalism?

QUESTION 24: Doesn't II Tim. 2:17-18 disprove preterism? Aren't preterists obviously teaching the heresy of Hymeneus who taught that, "The resurrection is past already" (I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:17-18)?

QUESTION 25: In Acts 6:14, Stephen was accused of saying that Jesus would "destroy this place" (the Temple) and change the customs of Moses. During his defense (Acts 7:2-53), Stephen didn't appear to directly answer the accusations. Did his silence imply that he had in fact been teaching the soon destruction of "this place?"

QUESTION 26: What relationship does preterism have to the doctrine of the Deity of Christ?

QUESTION 27: The Parable of the Pounds / Minas in Lk. 19:12-27 says that at the Second Coming of Christ, the saints will be given authority over "cities." Some will rule over ten. Others will rule over five, etc. In preterism, the saints must be currently ruling cities. Then which ones?? Can you give me one city today that is ruled by a saint?

QUESTION 28: I have a real problem when things are not congruent. God in the Old Testament has the Israelites killing every man, woman, and child (in some instances). How do you reconcile the Old Testament carnage with the God of the New Testament who pursues us with such tremendous love?

QUESTION 29: I realize you feel strongly about the traditional, orthodox "Trinity" doctrine, but we have to keep in mind that this subject is a phenomenon of 4th century political debate, and not of any concern to the apostles or their Jewish detractors. Can you show me one place in Scripture where we find the apostles trying to convince anyone of the "Deity of Christ?" I didn't think so.

QUESTION 30: Paul rebuked the Corinthians for acting as if they had already begun to reign. The text is clear that he thought neither he nor they had begun to reign. Yet preterism says that Christians were already reigning, for forty or so years from cross to judgement? How do you explain I Cor. 4:8ff?

QUESTION 31: The "old-covenant" world included works-religions other than Judaism. If God's judged the whole world in A.D. 70, why were those religious institutions not destroyed the same way Jerusalem was?

QUESTION 32: In Acts, when talking to the gentiles, Paul talks about a day when God will judge all nations. (Acts 17:30-31) How is the fall of Jerusalem seen as a judgment on all nations, Jew and gentile?

QUESTION 33: I have heard some preterists out there say that the "preterist hermeneutic" demands a ruthless reassessment of all Orthodoxy. They say if the church was wrong about the Parousia, how can we be sure it was not wrong about many other things, or even every other thing? On this basis, these preterists teach other people to question or even reject the doctrine of the Trinity. They say they are in the "demolition business." Does the preterist movement have any kind of "defense mechanism" or "restraint" against people like this?

QUESTION 34: Preterists admit that Christ ascended in a *literal* "cloud." They use that "cloud" as the reference point for His return "in like manner," "with the clouds." But preterists take the "clouds" of Christ's return to be *metaphorical and apocalyptic* "clouds." In other words, preterists say Jesus entered heaven in a *literal* cloud, and then say His return was "in like manner" because He returned in *figurative clouds*! Isn't this blatantly dishonest? Isn't it a form of exegetical equivocation / sleight of hand?

QUESTION 35: Daniel and Revelation both prophesy God's judgment on the Roman Empire. Doesn't that skew the whole "in this generation" interpretation of all prophecy, since Rome fell in A.D. 455?

QUESTION 36: Rome conquered God's people in A.D. 70. Wasn't this a victory for the Beast? A victory that has not been reversed even to this day, thus proving that the book of Revelation was not fulfilled in A.D. 70?

QUESTION 37: I assume that you do not believe in "soul sleep" such as the JW's. So since the soul is not asleep but rather it is at "Abraham's bosom" and since you do not believe in a physical resurrection of any sort for believers, what was "sleeping" in the verses which speak of "sleeping?" "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." (I Thess. 4:14)

QUESTION 38: Didn't Jesus say, "I am with you always, until the end of the age?" But since the age has ended, then He is no longer with us. God is our only Lord. Wouldn't this follow?

QUESTION 39: If Christ gave up the Kingdom to God the Father in A.D. 70, then why is Christ still reigning? Shouldn't He no longer be reigning if He gave up the Kingdom? What in your view does giving up the Kingdom entail? And if this happened in A.D. 70, then what was different in A.D. 30-70?

QUESTION 40: Ken Gentry has said repeatedly throughout his writings that Nero's persecution of the Church lasted 3 1/2 years, and that this persecution fulfilled Rev. 13:5-7, where the beast (Nero/Rome) made war on the saints for "forty-two months" (3 1/2 years). Here is my question: Where is Nero's 3-1/2-year persecution of the Church recorded in history? I can't find it anywhere.

QUESTION 41: I have read in different places that the siege of Jerusalem lasted 3 1/2 years, in fulfillment of Rev. 11:2? Is this true? If so, where can I find this 3-1/2-year period recorded in history?

QUESTION 42: Do preterist believe that Jesus Christ will ever return here to earth? Do they believe there will be the end of the world?

QUESTION 43: When did the seven years of tribulation take place?

QUESTION 44: I would like to know since Jesus has already returned then what happens to us when we die? For I was raised thinking that we are waiting on Jesus to come back for his people.

QUESTION 45: According to preterists, who are the two witnesses? Please be more specific than answers I have received in the past.

QUESTION 46: It's universally held that the Apostle John lived to a very old age. Why isn't there anything from him through Polycarp or any other early Christians regarding the Second Coming?

QUESTION 47: Did the angels gather the elect already? (Matt. 24:31) And was this referring to believers that had died?

QUESTION 48: Should the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Lk. 16:19-31) be taken at face value as the story of a man who died and suffered torments in Hades? Or is it an allegory? I ask this because I've seen preterists say that this story had nothing to do with what happened under the old covenant when people died, but that it was only symbolic of the Judgment in A.D. 70.

QUESTION 49: If Jesus has already returned then why is it that it seems as though the world is going in the direction of a one world government?

QUESTION 50: I heard a preterist author say that Jesus did not possess all the attributes of omniscience because of what Luke 2:52 says about Jesus increasing in wisdom. He also relates this to the fact that Jesus did not know the time of His return in Matthew 24:36. Does this mean He didn't have total omniscience? That statement kind of bothered me a little. If Jesus is fully God and fully man, how can anyone say He didn't have total omniscience?

QUESTION 51: How would you explain the Great White Throne Judgment and the Judgment Seat of Christ from the preterist perspective? When do these judgments take place?

QUESTION 52: How do we reconcile Romans with James? Are we "*justified by faith apart from works*?" (Rom. 3:28; 4:6) Or are we "*justified by works, and not by faith alone*?" (Jms. 2:24) This seems somewhat confusing and contradictory to me. Any help here would be much appreciated.

QUESTION 53: Why is preterism so popular among the "Reformed?"

QUESTION 54: Doesn't the existence of sin and of God's enemies on Earth show that we are in a worse state today than before the Fall?

QUESTION 55: I believe that Jesus is God, the Son, the Messiah. I believe we are saved by grace through faith in the blood of Jesus, and not through any works. However, I sometimes find myself doubting my own salvation. How can I know if I'm one of the elect and really saved?

QUESTION 56: A preterist recently wrote that futurism is an error that "cuts at the heart of the Gospel." Do you agree with that statement? If so, why do you still consider futurists to be Christian brothers?

QUESTION 57: What do you think about Matt. 27:52-53? It says that "*many bodies of the saints*" were raised, and they came out of their graves after the resurrection of Jesus. Were they raised with glorified bodies?

QUESTION 58: The Bible clearly says that if we are under ANY part of the Law, then we are under ALL of the Law *in its entirety*, and are thus in bondage. As a preterist, you know that the old covenant (the Law) VANISHED in 70. Yet in your Q&A's #2, 14, 18, and 23, you actually say that we are *still under SOME of the laws of Moses* (i.e., the so-called "non-shadow / non-fleshly" laws). According to the Bible, by making PARTS of the old covenant *binding* today, you are putting Christians back under ALL of the Law. It's all or nothing. How do you answer?

QUESTION 59: Are Isa. 66:8 and Matt. 21:43 prophetic references to the events that happened on the day of Pentecost? Are there any more references to the Church being the "nation" of God?

QUESTION 60: What do you do with Job 19:26 where it speaks of a fleshly resurrection?

QUESTION 61: How do you interpret Matt. 5:17-20?

QUESTION 62: In Revelation it says that, "*God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.*" How is this fulfilled?

QUESTION 63: In your article *New Covenant Salvation*, you said that we are saved by grace "*through faith*." My question is this: Is "faith" something that man can attain, grasp or acquire through his own effort? Can man *decide* of his own volition to believe God? If so, then doesn't this mean that salvation is contingent upon man's effort? If grace is dependent upon our first meeting "*the obedience of faith*," (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) then isn't salvation actually *conditioned upon obedience*, and therefore not really received "by grace?"

QUESTION 64: Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote in his work *Against Heresies* (c. 180-190) that the Apostle John saw the Revelation "*toward the end of the reign of Domitian.*" (*Against Heresies* 5:30:3) Domitian's reign ended in A.D. 96. Thus Irenaeus dated the book of Revelation at about A.D. 95. My question is this: How do preterists get around this external evidence for the late date of Revelation, and what external evidence do preterists have that suggests that the book of Revelation was written before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70?

QUESTION 65: You have said that the Law is engraved on believers' hearts and minds, since we are under the New Covenant. (Heb. 8:10-13) Does this mean we still follow the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbaths?

QUESTION 66: How do preterists explain I Thess. 4:13-17? (the "Rapture")

QUESTION 67: Jesus told His disciples that He would come again and receive them to Himself, that where He is (i.e., *in Heaven*) they would be also. How has this been fulfilled? This sounds to me like a literal "rapture" off the planet into Heavenly glory.

QUESTION 68: In May of 2002, an article was published that teaches that the entire Church of true believers was literally and physically "raptured" (removed) from planet Earth in the first century. The article says that this is what J. Stuart Russell taught a hundred years ago in his book *The Parousia*. Is this really what Russell taught?

QUESTION 69: Isaiah 66:8 says, "*Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.*" Isn't it obvious even for a preterist that this verse was fulfilled in 1948 when Israel was reborn as a nation "*in one day*," on May 5th?

QUESTION 70: Where in Scripture is it taught that "death" means "separation from God?"

QUESTION 71: According to Heb. 12:26-27, Hag. 2:6 was not yet fulfilled when the book of Hebrews was written. Yet God said that Haggai 2:6 would be fulfilled "*in a little while*." That was over 500 years before the book of Hebrews was written! Doesn't this prove that "*a little while*"

can mean over 500 years, and that it could conceivably even mean "2,000 years?" Doesn't this prove therefore that we need not interpret the eschatological "imminency statements" in the New Testament literally?

QUESTION 72: Please explain Romans 9:15-24. Do we have a will?

QUESTION 73: A human being is a body AND a soul AND a spirit. Preterists say that the Church will never be raised from physical death. Ergo, preterism clearly teaches that dead believers are *disembodied spirits forever and ever*. They are no longer truly human. What's your defense against this?

QUESTION 74: *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* is possibly the earliest uninspired, orthodox Christian work in existence. When was it written? And what is its eschatological message?

QUESTION 75: What do preterists believe about the Lord's Supper? Do they still practice it today, or do they think it was abolished in A.D. 70?

QUESTION 76: If Christ returned in A.D. 70, does that now relegate the Holy Spirit to a non-functional role?

QUESTION 77: The prophets predicted peace in the Kingdom after the coming of the Messiah. If the Messiah has come, and if the Church is the Kingdom, then why has the Church been fragmented and divided for centuries? Fragmentation and division is not "peace." Something is very wrong here, wouldn't you say? **ANSWER**

QUESTION 78: How do you interpret Daniel 7 (specifically, the little horn; and the ten kings, three of which were uprooted) and Rev. 17:10-11 (the seven kings, five fallen, one is, the other is not yet, and the Beast is an eighth)?

QUESTION 79: What is "*the creation*" in Rom. 8:19-22? In what sense was it "*subjected to vanity*?" How was it suffering "*the pains of childbirth*?" And what does it mean that it was "*set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God*?"

QUESTION 80: Doesn't Zechariah 14:4-5 plainly teach that Jesus will come back and stand on the Mount of Olives and cause it to be split in two? How can preterists possibly spiritualize that away and claim that it was fulfilled in the first century?

QUESTION 81: God tells us in Isa. 65:20 that there will come a time when there will be no more infant deaths, a time when a hundred years old will be considered young. Obviously, Isaiah was talking about a time in our future (the Millennium) when people will have longer life spans than we have now. As a preterist, how do you get around the plain and obvious teaching of Isa. 65:20?

QUESTION 82: When was Matt. 23:39 fulfilled?

QUESTION 83: Eph. 4:11-13 says that the gifts of "*apostles*," "*prophets*," "*evangelists*," "*pastors*" and "*teachers*" were given to believers "*until*" the Church reached maturity. If that Scripture was fulfilled in A.D. 70 does this mean that "*evangelists*," "*pastors*" and "*teachers*" existed only "*until*" A.D. 70 and that they no longer exist today?

QUESTION 84: The historic Church told us which books belong in the New Testament. Therefore, the only way we can be 100% certain that we have the true words of God in the New Testament is to believe in the infallibility of the Church, because if the Church is fallible then it would be possible that the Church made a mistake and put uninspired books in the New Testament. How can you avoid this logic? **ANSWER**

QUESTION 85: In your Q&A #84 you said that one reason that we can be "SURE" that the post-apostolic Church chose only God-breathed books for the "New-Testament" canon is that "the Church hears only the Lord's voice, and will not hear another (Jn. 10:5,27)." Aren't you in essence saying that the Church "*hears infallibly*?"

QUESTION 86: Assuming that the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats was fulfilled in A.D. 70, my question is *how* was it fulfilled? Was it fulfilled symbolically on Earth, or was it fulfilled in Heaven?

QUESTION 87: Do preterists believe that certain gifts were for the 1st century church only and have since ceased?

QUESTION 88: The Bible says that one would be taken and one would be left. This is obviously talking about the Rapture. How was this prophecy fulfilled?

QUESTION 89: How do you interpret the "*thousand years*" of Rev. 20? Assuming you believe the Millennium was fulfilled in A.D. 70 (as most other preterists today seem to believe), how do you exegetically justify spiritualizing away a "thousand years" to mean merely a literal 40 years?

QUESTION 90: In Heb. 11:5, it says that Enoch "*did not see death*." But then in Heb. 11:4-13, it says that Abel, *Enoch*, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah "*all died in faith*." See the apparent contradiction? Also, Heb. 9:27 says that "*it is appointed for men to die once*." (Heb. 9:27) Which is it? Did Enoch *not see death*? (Heb. 11:5) Or did he *die "once"* (Heb. 9:27) / *die "in faith"*? (Heb. 11:13)

QUESTION 91: I recently read in a preterist article that since believers are citizens of a heavenly Kingdom (Christ's Kingdom is "*not of this world*"), and since no outward law can change people's hearts (Only Christ can change the heart.), it therefore follows that God has not called the Church to be involved in enacting worldly laws (We should only pray and preach the Gospel.), and that the Church also should not pledge allegiance to a worldly government (We should pledge allegiance to Christ and His Kingdom alone.). Do you agree with those arguments from that preterist author?

QUESTION 92: Luke 21:24 seems to say that FIRST, the Jews would be "*led captive into all the nations*" (in A.D. 70), and THEN, Jerusalem would be "*trampled under foot by the Gentiles*" (until 1948? until our future?) What exactly are "*the times of the Gentiles*?" When did those "*times*" begin and when will they (or did they) end?

QUESTION 93: In I Cor. 15:1-19, Paul said that some at the church in Corinth were saying, "*There is no resurrection of the dead*." Were those resurrection deniers saying that it was unbelievable that decomposed, dead bodies could be raised back to life? Were they annihilationists? Or did they believe in "bodiless soul-immortality?"

QUESTION 94: Why is death considered to be an enemy and how can it be destroyed, if it is the only gate of blessedness? (1 Cor. 15:26)

QUESTION 95: Jesus said that "*not one stone*" of Jerusalem or of the temple would be left upon another. (Matt. 24:2; Mk. 13:2; Lk. 19:44; 21:6) But even preterists know that the Wailing Wall still stands in Jerusalem to this very day. So it goes without saying that Matthew 24 was NOT fulfilled in A.D. 70, and that Matthew 24 remains unfulfilled as long as the Wailing Wall stands intact, stones and all. Okay, how are you going to spiritualize this one away?

QUESTION 96: How do you interpret Daniel's "Seventy Weeks?"

QUESTION 97: You said that the "*seventy weeks*" lasted about 600 years. But doesn't "*seventy weeks*" mean "seventy weeks of years," that is, 490 years?

QUESTION 98: Do you believe in "replacement theology?" Was Israel replaced by the Church? Since the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, does that indicate that Jews are an accursed race because of what they did to Christ?

QUESTION 99: Matt. 24:14 and several other scriptures reveal that Christ came again *after* the Gospel was preached in the whole "world." Yet Matt. 10:23 says that Christ came again *before* all the cities of Israel were covered. How do we reconcile Christ's statement in Matt. 10:23 with His statement in Matt. 24:14?

QUESTION 100: Jesus said, in Matt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25; Lk. 20:34-36, that in the age to come there would be no more marriage. I've heard preterists explain this by saying that ever since A.D. 70, there has been no more marriage *in a spiritual sense*. They point out that now the children of the covenant are spiritual only, and that there is also "*neither male nor female*" today. (Gal. 3:28) Do you agree with that interpretation?

QUESTION 101: Jesus said that if you call your brother "*fool*," you will be liable to be thrown into the fire of Gehenna. Does this mean that the word "*fool*" is a taboo word that can bring damnation if we utter it?

QUESTION 102: Hebrews 9:8-10 plainly tells us that when Hebrews was written in about A.D. 65, the temple *already* no longer had a "*standing*" in God's sight, and that the animal sacrifices of Moses were *already* no longer "*imposed*." Yet preterists boldly contradict God's word and say *the exact opposite!* They say that when Hebrews was written (some 35 years *after* the Cross), Herod's temple *still* had "*standing*" in God's sight and that the animal sacrifices of Moses were *still* "*imposed*." How can preterists have such a low view of Christ's work and of Scripture that they blatantly contradict God and make the temple services and animal sacrifices actually *continue to be imposed by God years after Christ's work on the Cross*?

QUESTION 103: The book of First John is dated around A.D. 85-95, yet it speaks of a future coming of Christ. Doesn't this disprove preterism?

QUESTION 104: Galatians 3:28 says that for believers, "*there is neither male nor female*," because all of us together are "*one in Christ Jesus*." Doesn't this mean that in the New-Covenant world, men and women are now *absolutely equal in every way* ("*one*") and that men no longer have *any authority of any kind whatsoever* over women?

QUESTION 105: The Apostle Paul made it clear that believers were no longer under the Jewish Law. Doesn't this contradict Christ who said in Matthew 5:18 that not one law of Moses would pass away until all things were fulfilled?

QUESTION 106: In Question 105, you mention that gentile Christians were "never called to partake of the body of the Mosaic ordinances, because gentile believers were becoming sharers in Israel's promised spiritual things, not in Israel's decaying system of "shadow." But if water-baptism was an old-covenant ritual that symbolized a greater spiritual reality to come (Matt. 3:11), then why were gentile Christians commanded to be baptized?

QUESTION 107: In Rom. 8:11, Paul said that God was going to give life to the "mortal bodies" of believers. How exactly was this fulfilled at a first-century Parousia of Christ? If the "mortal bodies" of those pre-parousia saints were cast off and remain in the dust to this day, how could their "mortal bodies" have been made alive?

QUESTION 108: We cannot find even *one* full preterist *anywhere* in history until *the 19th century*. If the historic Church is "*the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth*," how could the Church have totally missed the greatest events in all redemptive history: The Second Coming and the Resurrection of the Dead? If the Church was so radically blind and deaf and steeped in error that it could not see and teach the fulfillment of those cardinal doctrines *for about 1,800 years*, then the historic Church was the Pillar and Foundation of a LIE. Therefore, as orthodox Christians, we must conclude that preterism, *and not the historic Church*, is the damnable Lie. If you preterists claim to be Christians, how do you get around this devastating logic?

QUESTION 109: I have a question about your article on tongues. I cannot argue with anything in the article as far as fulfillment. However, why would there not be churches today that prophesy and speak in tongues en masse, of course "in order"? As you said, there is a possibility God would have someone do it today. He is God. He can do as he pleases. Why would He not have it en masse for the same reason today as in the 1st century A.D., for the unbelievers?

QUESTION 110: What does Matthew 11:12 mean? Who were "the violent" ones who were causing the kingdom of heaven to suffer "violence" since the days of John the baptist?

QUESTION 111: How does the doctrine of perseverance change, if at all, with a realized point of view? So much of the exhortation of the epistles addressed the perseverance of the saints (through times of tribulation and suffering), emphasizing the work of God to bring them to a successful "conclusion." Is post AD70 salvation/perseverance organically different in some way(s)? I am also thinking specifically of Paul's "filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Jesus Christ." Do we still do that?

QUESTION 112: In Matt. 16:18,19, Jesus promised Peter that he (Peter) would be the "*rock*" upon which Jesus would build His church. Jesus then gave Peter "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*." In Isa. 22:22, when God gave Eliakim "*the key of the house of David*," that meant that Eliakim had been uniquely placed into a dynasty as "prime minister" under the king. Since Eliakim had successors, this must mean that Peter was the first in a line of successors who are "prime minister" under the King. As history makes clear, the unbroken line of successors of Peter's bishopric in Rome have been the Popes. Thus the Pope, sitting in the inherited seat of Peter as the "*rock*," always rules as head of the one, holy Catholic Church. How do you answer these arguments?

QUESTION 1: God gave the Old-Testament Church detailed worship guidelines (Deuteronomy and Leviticus), but in the preterist view, the Kingdom is now fulfilled spiritually, and the New Testament does not give many specific guidelines as to what "*the sons of the Kingdom*" are supposed to do in their worship. Doesn't preterism thus put the Church in a kind of "limbo" state?

ANSWER: The fact that there aren't as many specific guidelines prescribed for the Church's worship today as there were under the Law, has to do with the *maturity* of the Church in the New Covenant. Before the coming of the Redeemer, worshipers had to follow highly detailed, step-by-step instructions that God had given to them through Moses. Like slave-children, they were kept under the strict tutelage of the Law and were burdened by its myriad ordinances, all of which condemned them because of the Sin that indwelt them (Acts 15:10).

In stark contrast, the Church today is "mature" in regard to its service to God. Instead of being under the yoke of hundreds of fleshly ordinances that symbolize a future redeemer, the Body of Christ now worships the Father "*in spirit and in truth*" (Jn. 4:23). The Church has been purified by the blood of Christ, and is now itself "*the Tabernacle of God.*" The Church worships God face to face, through no other Mediator than Christ Himself.

The relatively few New-Testament guidelines for worship in comparison to the vast number of ordinances under the old covenant does not suggest a "limbo state" for the Church today. It suggests that we have been freed from the burden and the curse of the Law, and it therefore implies *simplicity* of worship.
"*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matt. 11:30).

QUESTION 2: If a preterist believes that the Old Testament law is no longer binding, then how is he different than the dispensationalist when dealing with ethics?

ANSWER: The difference between the dispensationalists and the preterists on this issue is that the dispensationalists see a radical separation, a total disconnect, between the Old Testament age and the New Testament age. In their system:

Old Testament = plan A

New Testament = plan B ("the parenthesis age")

Millennium = back to plan A

Since they put the New Testament Church in a historical/covenantal "vacuum," they think the Law of Moses (plan A) is irrelevant for us in this allegedly temporal "age of grace" (plan B).

(See: <http://www.preteristcosmos.com/ncs.htm>.)

In contrast to the dispensationalists, most preterists see the change of the covenants more in this way:

When the Old Covenant ("heaven and earth") disappeared in 70 (Heb. 8:13), the fleshly ordinances (foods, drinks, baptisms) were abolished (Col. 2:16,17; Heb. 9:10), and the man-made temple-system was destroyed. However, the Law of the old covenant was *not* destroyed, but was *fulfilled* (Matt. 5:17). In fact, the Law of God is at the *heart* of the eternal, New-Covenant world. As Heb. 8:10,16 says:

"For this is the [New] Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my *laws* into their mind, and write them in their hearts" (Heb. 8:10).

Also unlike the dispensationalists, preterists do not believe that there are two laws of God, Old Testament and New Testament. Instead they believe there was an earthly administration (Old Testament) of the one Law of God, and there is a heavenly administration (New Testament) of the one Law of God.

We must not attempt to obey the Law of God today by worshiping "according to the [Old Testament] letter" (II Cor. 3:6).

Today we obey the Law of God as it stands *fulfilled* in Christ -- in the Spirit (II Cor. 3:6,8). The Christological Fulfillment must be the guiding Principle in all of our interpretations of God's Laws. Here are four basic examples of how this is so:

1. Instead of sacrificing bulls and goats (the letter of the law), we sacrifice our living bodies/our selves (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 2:17), our praise (Heb. 13:15), etc., and Christ is our sacrifice. In this way, we obey the Law "according to the Spirit."

2. Instead of being bound to circumcise our new-born males on the eighth day (the letter of the law), we know in Christ that circumcision is meant to teach God's people about the Christological removal of sin from our lives, and that true circumcision is "of the heart."

3. Instead of being bound to ceremonially abstain from certain animal flesh (the letter of the law), we understand in Christ that the animal food laws were given to teach Israel about separation from gentiles. In Christ, the wall of separation was removed so that "what God has cleansed [gentiles in general], do not call common" (Acts 10:12-15). Also, we learn from the Old Testament prohibitive food laws that we are to separate ourselves from worshiping with those who reject the Gospel (II Cor. 6:17).

4. When we read in the law of Moses that, "You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn," we know in Christ that God's great concern in that law was not for oxen, but He gave the law "altogether for our sakes," that we may be rewarded for our work in Him (I Cor. 9:9,10).

Civil and governmental applications of God's Law for present-day nations is needful and good, but again, the Christological Fulfillment must be the guiding Principle in all of our interpretations of God's Laws. For this reason, we cannot simply "cut and paste" the Law of Moses and make it our nation's constitution, but we must wisely apply it in Christ, as in Christ there was a change (Fulfillment) in the Law.

QUESTION 3: Calvinists deny that obedience is necessary for salvation. Doesn't the Bible contradict that notion?

ANSWER: I (and other Calvinists) do not believe in a divorce of salvation and obedience. It is *hyper-calvinistic* and damnable to teach that a life of disobedience pleases God and can result in salvation.

I (and other Calvinists) agree with James that obedience (works) justifies a believer in that it *perfects* his already justifying faith, (Jms. 2:22) and in that it *fulfills* and *demonstrates* God's work in having *already* justified the believer by faith (Jms. 2:18, 23).

While works are not an effectual contributor in regeneration, they are, according to the Scriptures, absolutely inseparable from the day-to-day working out of the believer's salvation (Phil. 2:12).

In other words, true good works are the God-ordained (predestined) result of having been regenerated (Eph. 2:10). They are the justifying work of *God* from the *believing*, to the *willing*, to the *doing* (Phil. 2:13; cf. Jn. 6:29), so that boasting is removed and all glory is God's:

Isa. 26:12: "Lord, You . . . have wrought all our works in us."

QUESTION 4: Do you believe that all the graves of saints are already empty?

ANSWER: Yes. Ezekiel 37:1-14:

"The hand of the Lord ...carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, ...and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. ...Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, *Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts.* Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, *O My people, I will open your **graves**, and cause you to come out of your **graves**, and bring you into the land of Israel.* And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when *I **have opened your graves**, O my people, and brought you up out of your **graves**, and shall put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land*" (Eze. 37:1,2,5-14).

This passage equates the resurrection of Israel out of their "graves," with God putting His Spirit in them and placing them in their own Land.

Preterists see this as having been completely fulfilled in 70, when the New Jerusalem (which replaced the old, destroyed Jerusalem) came down from God. The New Jerusalem is that "Land of Israel" to which the patriarchs of Israel (and Ezekiel) looked:

Hebrews 11:10: [Abraham] looked for a City which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. (cf. Rev. 21:14)

Hebrews 11:16: [People like Abraham] desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.

When the Heavenly Country/Land/City came down from heaven in 70, then God made His eternal Spirit-dwelling in Israel (the Church --Eph. 2:22), having brought His elect out from their "graves" of spiritual death into their eternal dwellings of spiritual life.

QUESTION 5: If the resurrection and destruction of the ungodly has happened, then who would have been left to preach and repopulate the earth?

ANSWER: The resurrected saints who inherited the new earth, and the "dogs" "outside the city" on the new earth both populate the earth today.

It was the ungodly *in God's Kingdom* (the Pharisees, etc.; Matt. 13:41) who were destroyed in 70. It was the world of "His Kingdom" that was purged, not the planet. Generations of godly and ungodly men continue.

QUESTION 6: Revelation 21:22-24 says that there is no temple in the New Jerusalem, because God and the Lamb are its Temple. If the New Jerusalem is the Church and if the Church is the temple of God, how can it be that there is no temple in the City?

ANSWER: F. W. Farrar's *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*:

"Their city of residence *is* their temple; it contains within it no temple whose walls or doors intervene between them and the God they adore. God is temple to the city, and the city is temple to God."

"To him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out, and I will write upon him the name of . . . the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God . . ." (Rev. 3:12).

QUESTION 7: Was anyone regenerated in the Old Testament?

ANSWER: God's Spirit cleansed and renewed hearts before the Day of Pentecost, (Ps. 24:4; 51:10) and all the saints before Pentecost had been justified by God's choice through faith. (Ps. 65:4; Hab. 2:4; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:11; Heb. 11)

However, those saints had not yet received the Promise of the indwelling of God's Spirit. (Ps. 51:11; Eze. 36:26-27; 37:14; Jn. 7:38-39; Acts 2:38-39; Heb. 11:39) They had not yet become the Temple of God. (Acts 15:14-16; I Cor. 3:16) They had not yet become the "fulness" and "Body" of Christ. (Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:19-20) They had not yet been made redemptively "perfect." (Heb. 11:40; 12:23) They were not yet the children of the spiritual / heavenly Kingdom of promise. (Matt 18:3; Jn. 3:3; Heb. 11:16)

None of those New-Covenant blessings were realized for the saints who lived before Pentecost because Christ had not yet died and eternally redeemed them from their transgressions:

"...He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the Promise of the eternal Inheritance." (Heb. 9:15)

To be "regenerated" (reborn) is to be "born from above" --"born" of the spiritual Jerusalem for which Abraham and all the saints looked. (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 11:10) That heavenly City / Kingdom "gave birth" to her children when the word of Christ was preached, from Pentecost to the fall of the earthly Jerusalem. (Rev. 3:12)

Thus that time-period was called "*the Regeneration*." (Matt. 19:28) It was then that God caused His people to be "born again," and to be "made new," (Rev. 21:5) through the revelation of the Gospel of Christ. (Rom. 16:25; II Tim. 1:10; I Peter 1:3,23)

John the Baptist was the greatest of all the saints from Adam until Christ. Yet John was inferior to a regenerated (Spirit-indwelt, blood-perfected, Jerusalem-born) believer:

"Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11)

Another saint who had already been justified by faith (like Abraham before him) and who was already offering acceptable worship to God, but yet stood in need of regeneration / salvation, was Cornelius.

Before Cornelius had heard the Gospel, he was a truly devout, righteous and God-fearing man who gave many alms to God's people, and who prayed to God continually. (Acts 10:2,22) God heard Cornelius' prayers. And his prayers and his alms ascended as a memorial before God. (Acts 10:4,31) Yet, Cornelius was not saved. (Acts 11:14) He needed to hear the Gospel of the Kingdom and to be regenerated through the indwelling Holy Spirit:

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message [Cornelius and his household]. And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 'Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?' ...'And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 10:44-47; 11:16)

The saints who lived before the Cross / Pentecost were not yet regenerated. This does not imply that before Pentecost God accepted a natural, humanistic (Spirit-less) "faith" that was generated by man's own "freewill." Rather, it implies that *there is a dynamic difference between the Spirit-generated faith that looked forward to Christ, and the Spirit-generated faith in the shed blood of Christ*. Both faiths (Rom. 1:17) were granted to individuals by God's sovereign choice through the inner working of His Spirit (Rom. 9), but only the latter faith --faith in the shed blood of Christ-- is the faith of God's indwelling Presence, of rebirth, of re-creation, of redemptive perfection, of the Kingdom of Heaven and of eternal life.

QUESTION 8: Doesn't Romans eleven teach that Yahweh still has a definite plan for Israel, whom He loves with an irrevocable love?

ANSWER: "All Israel" (Rom. 11:26) was saved in A. D. 70. Here's how:

When the first-century righteous remnant (Rom. 11:5,14) plus the righteous dead (Rom. 11:28) of ages past were all resurrected together into the spiritual Kingdom of Christ at the end of the "ministration of death" (II Cor. 3:7), then was realized the "fulness of Israel" (Rom. 11:12), Israel's "life from the dead" (Rom. 11:15). With "the fullness of the gentiles" having come into Israel in that Day, Israel was made *new*. She was transformed into the universal, spiritual nation of God, and God became All in all.

Hebrews 11:39,40:

"And these all [old-testament saints], ...received not the Promise, God having provided some better thing [the Promise] for us [the last-days remnant], that they [old testament saints] without us [the last-days remnant] should not be made perfect."

QUESTION 9: If preterists believe that the Great Commission is already fulfilled, then it seems that they have no reason or basis to "make disciples of all nations." Isn't preterism thus *anti-evangelical*?

ANSWER: From a futurist perspective, when the Gospel has finally gone into all the world, then God will close the doors of grace forever on this present earth. But from the preterist perspective, "the end" which historically followed the worldwide preaching of the gospel *opened* the doors of the Gospel of Christ to the world. For the preterist, the spread of the gospel into all nations was the *establishment* and not the termination of God's Gospel-grace to the continuing generations of the world.

While the doors of grace were closed to that last unbelieving generation of the Old Testament age, the grace of the everlasting Gospel was divinely set in place for all mankind forever. The fulfillment of the Great Commission by the Spirit-led church of the Last Days was the true beginning of Gospel-healing for the nations.

Most forms of futurism overtly teach an eventual *abolition* of the grace which Christ died on the cross to establish, but past fulfillment necessarily means the praise and magnifying of God's Gospel on earth into all generations, world without end. Amen. (Eph. 3:21)

QUESTION 10: What about people who have died who have never heard the name of Christ, the only name by which you can be saved, and people who just don't understand the gospel. How do the preterists see these things?

ANSWER: In my understanding, a preterist world view, scripturally applied, strongly reinforces the necessity of true obedience in all men, as it is in the preterist teaching that the holy "God Himself" (Rev. 21:3) lives among us, and in us, in perfect fulfillment of all things written. He is not in some sense absent from us, or looking down on men's iniquities from a distance. And to the degree that He is among men, all people are that much more accountable to have a saving knowledge of Him.

It is because God is pure and holy that the Scriptures tell us that, "Nothing impure will *ever* enter [the City and Tabernacle and Kingdom of God, which is the universal Church], nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). Only the imputed righteousness of the Lamb received by faith can make any man able to stand in the Presence of God.

QUESTION 11: Can you possibly deny that preterism is anti-semitic?

ANSWER: I cannot deny that there are some modern-day "Jew"-haters who use preterism to teach that all "Jews" since A. D. 70 are under a special curse of God and that therefore people like Hitler aren't such bad guys after all.

However, that teaching is an abominable perversion of preterist doctrine and those who spread it should be avoided by everyone.

Yes, I can deny that preterism is anti-semitic. As surprising as it may seem, it is actually consistent *futurism* that logically fosters "Jew"-hatred. Here are some verses that show this to be true:

And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the Great City which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. (Rev. 11:8)

This verse designates Jerusalem as "*Sodom and Egypt*" because it was in Jerusalem that the Lord Jesus was crucified. If we are to say this verse refers to a time in our future and is not yet fulfilled, then we must also say that Jerusalem *remains* the spiritual "*Sodom and Egypt*" to this very day because of its Messianic blood-guilt, and that it must remain so indicted until the Judgment of Rev. 11:13-19 is fulfilled sometime in our future. This conclusion is inescapable if the passage has yet to be fulfilled.

And if Rev. 11:13-19 is yet unfulfilled, this logically implies that Paul's indictment against Jews must also *remain intact* to this very day, specifically, that "*the Jews [who "killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets"] ...are ...hostile to all men*" and that "*they always fill up the measure of their sins.*" (I Thess. 2:14-16)

Consistent futurism logically produces a very dangerous ambiguity and ambivalence toward modern-day "Jews" in that, on the one hand, they are in some sense "God's chosen people," while on the other hand they remain a blood-guilty *race of enemies* (Rom. 11:28) who are opposed to all men, and whose metropolis is "Egypt" and "Sodom" until Revelation 11 is fulfilled. This is the hateful fruit of consistent futurism.

In the preterist doctrine, in contrast, Jerusalem was "*given to the nations*" by God in the late 60's, A.D., and the Great City was then trampled under foot until it was destroyed in A. D. 70. In those terrible "*days of vengeance*," the wrath of God against the Jews came *to the utmost* (I Thess. 2:16; Heb. 10:26-31) and they *paid the price* for their Messianic blood-guilt

to the last penny (Lk. 12:54-59).

After that day, the blood-descendants of Abraham became --covenantally speaking-- simply one of the many ethnic classes in the family of man (Eph. 3:15). There is not one ethnic group (or "race") of men today that is *in any sense* rejected by God or favored by God over others, but all are freely accepted in Christ and are made One through faith in Him.

How many lives would have been saved if this preterist view of Israel in Bible prophecy had been taught instead of consistent futurism?

Probably millions. (Please see Q&A #98.)

QUESTION 12: From a preterist perspective how are we to understand Romans 11:28-29? "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

ANSWER: Even though God's old-covenant people in their last generation were being hardened, and excluded from the coming Inheritance, that did not mean that God had rejected historic, old-covenant Israel (Rom. 11:1,2).

Although it may have looked like Israel was being utterly cut off in her last generation, the truth was that old-covenant Israel was being *saved* in her last days. God was actually saving all of historic Israel --fulfilling His promises to "the fathers"-- *partly by means of* the hardening of her last generation.

Here is how:

1. Through old-covenant Israel's transgression/failure and rejection in her last days, riches and reconciliation were coming to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:18). "They are enemies *for your sakes*."
2. The salvation of the gentiles was making last-days Israel "jealous," so that a remnant was becoming zealous for righteousness and being saved (Rom. 11:2-10,11,13,14).
3. The hardening, or reprobation, of old-covenant Israel in her last generation was to continue until the fullness of her Messiah was realized in the gentiles (Rom. 11:25).
4. In this manner, or by this process, all of historic, old-covenant Israel was going to be saved (Resurrected) with the last-days remnant and with the believing gentiles at the Presence of Messiah in A. D. 70, according to the promises made to the fathers (Rom. 11:26). "They are beloved *for the fathers' sakes*."

In the unsearchable wisdom and judgment of God, each member of the universal and elect covenant-Body was dependent upon the other in the working out of their salvation (cf. I Cor. 12:12-26):

The old-covenant dead could not be resurrected without the Christological perfection of the remnant, or firstfruits (Heb. 11:40; Jms. 1:18), and of the believing gentiles. The believing gentiles (the grafted in wild branches) could not be saved without Israel (the olive tree) and her partial hardening. And all of God's chosen remnant in Israel were not to be saved without the believing gentiles to make them zealous for the good things that were being granted the gentiles in Christ Jesus.

"As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes" Meaning: Through the hardening of Israel, the Gospel came to the gentiles.

"But as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." Meaning: God promised the fathers that He would redeem His chosen nation, which came from their loins; and so God fulfilled His "gifts" and His "calling" to old-covenant Israel in 70, when through the power of the Gospel He raised her children from the dead and united the Jew/Gentile Body of Messiah into the true Tabernacle of God among men (Eph. 2:21,22; Rev. 21:3), in fulfillment of all the promises made to "the fathers."

"It is He Who will build the Temple of the Lord, and He will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on His throne. And He will be a priest on His throne. And there will be peace between the two" (Zech. 6:13).

QUESTION 13: Is God not concerned with the evil in the world like famine, wars, disease, environmental damage, etc.? Preterism teaches that the Kingdom is already here in its fullness. So this is the fulfillment? Why would God create a world that will *never* be rid of sin and suffering? Optimists say that this is the best of all possible worlds.

Some futurists say that this is the best way of becoming the best of all possible worlds --which I find tenable through the eyes of faith. What do preterists say about the world? Will injustice and suffering go on forever?

ANSWER: First, most Christians believe in eternal, or everlasting, punishment. Even if we propose that it is the Devil and "*the beast and the false prophet*" (Rev. 20:10) who are the only ones who suffer eternally, that would still add up to a cosmos wherein sin and suffering continue forever and ever. To have planet Earth free from sin and suffering while sin and suffering continue elsewhere for eternity ("*the lake of fire*") does not solve the philosophical problem of the existence of sin and suffering. Therefore the idea of a universe in which sin and suffering continue for eternity is not at all a uniquely preterist problem. Unless you are a Universalist or an annihilationist, it seems that your objection may have more to do with *the locale* of sin and suffering than with the existence of sin and suffering.

It is true that preterists (or at least most preterist) see no prophecy in the Bible which says or implies that every individual on planet Earth will one day be absolutely and literally and in every sense free from all sin and suffering. In fact, preterists see verses that indirectly say that the existence of sin will continue "forever." Here are some of those verses:

Ps. 110:4: "*Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*"

Since Christ is a Priest on behalf of sinners "forever," we can infer that sinners will exist on earth "forever" to enjoy the ministry of forgiveness of sins in Christ.

Rev. 14:6: "*...the Everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth...*" (Rev. 14:6).

Since the Gospel, *which is for sinners that dwell on the earth*, is "everlasting," we can infer that sinners will be born on earth everlastingly to enjoy the blessings of the Gospel.

In Rev. 22:2, on "the new earth," we see "*the Tree of life*" that yields fruit every month, the "*leaves*" of which are "*for the healing of the nations*" (Rev. 22:2). This teaches us that in the new earth, "*the nations*" are in need of continual healing.

We must also infer from the above verses that the continued *existence* of sin in the "new earth" in no way implies *the victory* of sin. Nor does the continued existence of sin in the universe at all imply a "stalemate" between righteousness and sin. If it did, then we would be forced to say that God has as of yet won *zero* decisive victories over sin (except in Christ Himself), since sin still exists. The idea that the existence of sin in the universe implies the non-victory of righteousness in the universe is an existential philosophy that *devalues all that has thus far been wrought by the death and resurrection of Christ*.

It seems that many cannot be satisfied with anything less than a literal utopia that is characterized by absolute "behavioral errorlessness" throughout the entire universe (except for in the lake of fire). But does the existence of sin on Earth really imply an un-done-ness of God's purposes? God says that He created "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" in order "that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy." Although sin exists, God is *victorious over sin every day*: "*Every morning I will destroy all the wicked of the Land, so as to cut off from the city of the Lord all those who do iniquity*" (Ps. 101:8).

God's "created order" is certainly not "the best of all possible worlds" for the unbelieving (if we define "best" as what best contributes to their blessedness and success). But it *is* the best of all possible worlds, "*to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Rom. 8:28).

Now, to narrow in on your question, "**What do preterists say about the world?**":

In view of the fact that God said His creation is "very good," and remembering that God promised to never again curse the ground or destroy mankind as He promised after the Flood, we cannot possibly expect that God will bring a cataclysmic judgment to end the generations of mankind. It should further come as no surprise to find that the Scriptures tell us that the kingdom, and the generations of man, and the earth itself are all to continue "forever" (Ps. 104:5; 145:13; Eccl. 1:4; Dan. 4:3,34; 7:14,18,27; Lk. 1:33; Eph. 3:21).

Whether or not "forever" is literally *infinite* aeons or *indefinite* aeons with a theoretical end, it is still as far into the future as the Bible goes. The Bible says nothing of a termination to the forever-ness of Christ's kingdom on Earth. We can biblically say nothing about a "post-Christian age," because there is no such thing.

Some will say that if this is the case, if history is to continue indefinitely with the existence of sin and with no "Second Coming" to bring it to a termination, then that must mean that mankind is stuck in a "status quo" cycle of endless, "go-no-where" history. But to see that history cannot be so characterized in the preterist view, we need only consider the *conquering nature* of Christ's kingdom.

The Bible describes the Kingdom of Christ on earth as a kingdom that will increase until it covers "*the whole earth*" "*as the waters cover the sea*" (Isa. 11:9; Dan 2:35; cf. Matt. 13:33). According to the Scriptures, it will increase on earth until all of God's enemies are "*under His feet*" (I Cor. 15:25). The Scriptures further say that the Kingdom will bring blessing to "*all the families of the earth*" (Gen. 12:3; Ps. 22:7); to "*all the nations*" (Matt. 28:19; Ps. 72:17; Ps. 86:9); to "*all men*" (Isa. 66:23), even to "*the very ends of the earth*" (Ps. Ps. 2:8; 22:27; 72:8; Isa. 11:9; Zech. 9:10; Acts 1:8; 13:47).

Though (full) preterists see the above "dominion verses" as being fulfilled in 70 (and so interpret the verses synecdochically and hyperbolically), preterists necessarily *infer* from those passages what is the divine *character/nature* of the Church. The above descriptions of the Church's first-century victory in the world invariably betoken the Church's *progressive dominion throughout history*. The Church did not stop being the Church after it was established in 70. Rather, it was born conquering, it was established conquering and it forever conquers to the glory of Christ! As the Scriptures teach:

"May his name endure forever; May his name increase as long as the sun shines...." (Ps. 72:17).

"There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore...." (Isa. 9:7).

Yet futurists ask incredulously, "Toward what is history progressing if sin continues to exist and history is not going to end?"

The goal is none other than that the elect of every generation hear the gospel and that all who trust in the sin-atoning blood of Christ attain unto that for which mankind was created: To love God with all his heart, soul and mind, and his neighbor as himself (Matt. 22:37-39; Mk. 12:30-31; Lk. 10:27-28). We must not think that the continued existence of sin on earth invalidates the possibility or the perfection of the realization of that goal.

Preterists do not know future events, but we are fully confident in the fact that whatever the conquering Savior pleases to do, He does, on earth as in heaven (Ps. 135:6). And when we consider the divine eternity of the Church on earth and her progressive divine dominion, we know that her future, and hence the future of humanity, will be filled to overflowing with innumerable blessings which are even now *utterly impossible* for us to grasp. What wonders will God work in and through His more-than-conquering Church after 10,000 years, or after 1,000,000 years of victory? Only God can know (Eccl. 3:11).

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).

QUESTION 14: The Old Covenant (the law) passed away and the New Covenant (covenant of Grace) was established. Since the Old Covenant was the Law, doesn't that prove that we are not bound to the law in any way, shape or form because the law no longer exists today?

ANSWER: I agree that the old covenant passed away (Heb. 8:13). I also agree that the Church is not "bound" to the Law (Rom. 7:6); that the Law does not "rule over" the Church (Rom. 7:1); that the Church "died to the Law" (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:19); that the Church was released and made free from the Law (Rom. 7:6; 8:2); and that the Church is "not under the Law" (Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:18).

Those Scriptural statements though do not mean that Christ "destroyed the law" (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 3:1; 6:1,15). We are not "bound to the law" insofar as in Christ our Righteousness, sin is not able to condemn and kill us through the Law and make us perpetual slaves to the Law (Rom. 7:11).

Since the universal Church was forgiven of all her transgressions in 70 (Rom. 4:24; Heb. 9:8), she is no longer bound as a slave to the Law, but is bound to Christ Who resurrected her and gave her a heart and mind that freely and willingly obeys the Law of God (Heb. 8:10) as it stands totally fulfilled and realized in the Body of Christ. The passing away of the Law as *our covenant* does not imply the destruction of the Law.

QUESTION 15: Acts 1:11 says that Jesus is going to come back in the SAME manner He left. My Bible says He left visibly and physically. You, on the other hand, say He will not come back in the flesh. How do you defend yourself against Acts 1:11, a verse that is an obvious contradiction of preterism?

ANSWER: The Lord was going to come in the same manner as He entered heaven. How did He enter heaven? Hidden from the eyes in a Cloud. (vs. 9) He was going to "*come in like manner.*"

The apostles wanted Jesus to come out of the Cloud, to be lowered back down and to be with them again in the flesh. But

the two men corrected the apostles by telling them that Jesus was going to come, not in the manner He left, but *in the manner He entered Heaven*. The Coming of the Son with His Father to indwell the Church was not going to be a coming in His flesh, but in His Divinity, in the Glory-Cloud of Yahweh God. (I Tim. 3:16)

The spiritual nature of Christ's Parousia is confirmed by a comparison of Matt. 16:28 and Lk. 17:21: In Matt. 16:28, Jesus taught that His Coming was going to be "*in His Kingdom*." In Lk. 17:20-21, He taught that His Kingdom was going to come "*not with observation*." If the Kingdom was going to come "*not with observation*," then it follows also that the King in that Kingdom (II Cor. 4:18) was also going to come "*not with observation*."

QUESTION 16: The Bible says that because Christ is in us, we have "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). In other words, because Christ is in me today, I can look forward to "the blessed hope" that I will one day be like Jesus. Preterists on the other hand say our hope is *already* fulfilled. How do preterists explain Col. 1:27?

ANSWER: "Christ in you" in Col. 1:27 is not what gives us hope of one day realizing the Biblical Hope. "Christ in you" *is itself* the Biblical Hope. When Jesus spoke of His Second Coming to His apostles, He described it as the time when He and the Father would come and make their Abode within the Church (Jn. 14:18-20;23). "Christ in you" is necessarily that Hope Fulfilled.

The last-days Church was actually awaiting the fulfillment of that "blessed hope" ("Christ in you") which we enjoy today, as is indicated in the future dimension of the following verses:

Eph. 2:21,22: "In Whom all the building [the Church] fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

I Peter 2:5: "...yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up, a spiritual house...."

Gal. 4:19: "My children, for whom I again travail until Christ should be formed in you...."

II Peter 1:19: "...until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

"*Christ in you*" is what the apostolic Church anticipated. Christ in the heart is "*the Tabernacle of God among men*" (Rev. 21:3). This glorious blessing from Above was realized with finality when the hand-made tabernacle of God was thrown down in 70 (Matt. 24:2; II Cor. 5:1).

QUESTION 17: I agree that the "Parousia" spoken of so often in the New Testament took place in A. D. 70 (I can't get around the time statements.), but why can't the Parousia that took place in the first century be a "type" of a future, greater Parousia?

ANSWER: According to the book of Hebrews, Christ *cannot* appear a third time. As Heb. 9:27 argues, as men die only once and are then judged only once, so Christ died for sins only once and was then to appear for salvation only once. A "third coming" is not a biblical option.

The book of Hebrews further says that Christ's once-for-all Appearing for salvation was going to take place "in a very little while," "without delay" (Heb. 10:37), and that when He Appeared, the covenant mediated by Moses was going to "disappear" (Heb. 8;13) and "the way of the holy places" was going to be "manifested" (Heb. 9:8).

Today the condemning old covenant is ancient history and we dwell securely in the heavenly places in our Redeemer. These things are realities today because of Jesus' once-for-all Appearing "for salvation" in A. D. 70.

Let us be content with the Manna from Heaven, and yearn not for the "quail" of futurism (Num. 11:4-33).

QUESTION 18: The New Testament tells believers not to be in bondage to "the elements" of the world (Gal. 4:3,9; Col. 2:8,28). Then in II Peter 3:3,10,12, it says that "the elements" were going to be destroyed in the end of the Last Days. As preterists, we know that the Greek word for elements (stoikion) means "principles" or "laws." We also know as preterists that "the elements" were destroyed in A. D. 70. Doesn't this prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that in A. D. 70 the principles of THE LAW of Moses were destroyed? Doesn't this mean that now we are not bound to obey the book we call "the Old Testament?" Aren't we bound now only to obey the certain commandments in "the New Testament" that apply to this age?

ANSWER: While I agree with you that the word "elements" refers to "principles," I strongly disagree that the "elements" in Gal. 4:3,9; Col. 2:8,28; II Peter 3:10,12 were the principles of the Law of God.

Let's take a look at the usage of the word in the context of the book of Galatians:

Some Christians at Galatia were deserting God for a "different gospel" (Gal. 1:6), a distortion of the Gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7), a "gospel" that brought a "curse" (Gal. 1:8-9). It was the "gospel" that the Apostles rejected in Acts 15. It was the false doctrine that God will justify us through Christ only if we first obey Him (Gal. 2:4-5,16-21).

Using human obedience as a help in producing salvation is futile and brings "the curse of the Law" (Gal. 3:13); whereas faith in the Righteousness of the Messiah alone redeems men from "the curse of the Law."

Foolishly, some at Galatia were adding their works to the work of the Savior in an effort to justify themselves before God. In order to be justified "under Law" (Gal. 4:21), they were getting circumcised and were observing "days and months and seasons and years" (Gal. 4:10). In striving for self-justification, they were *going back* to the slavery and bondage of the "weak and worthless" " **elements** (principles) of the world" (Gal. 4:3,8-9).

Paul cogently summed up the error of the "weak and worthless elements," in Gal. 5:4: "You have been severed from Christ, **you who are seeking to be justified by law....**"

The "elements" in the book of Galatians were the human principles of *justification by law*.

The book of Colossians confirms this:

All who depended on Law for justification were perpetually indebted to the Law because they were perpetually condemned by it, but Christ "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). Therefore those who trust in Messiah for righteousness are redeemed from the curse and condemnation of the Law (Gal. 3:13). They are justified by God.

For this reason, Paul told the Colossian believers to let no one act as their "judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day," things which were a shadow of the Messianic Body that was about to come (Col. 2:16-17). Paul continued his exhortation:

"If you have died with Christ to the **elements** (principles) of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!' ...in accordance with *the commandments and teachings of men?*..." (Col. 2:20-23).

The "elements" in Col. 2:20 were in accordance with "the commandments and teachings of men," *not* in accordance with God or His Law.

Earlier in the book of Colossians, Paul spoke in the same manner of the "elements," warning the Colossians to "see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to *the tradition of man*, according to the **elements** (principles) of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

The "elements" in Col. 2:8, as in Col. 2:20, were "according to the tradition of man," and *not* in accordance with God or Christ or His Law.

The "commandments," "teachings" and "traditions" of man that Christ and the apostles rejected throughout the Last Days Writings were those false doctrines that were based on the fleshly, Pharisaical principle that *salvation is achieved with the help of our obedience*.

The "elements" in the book of Colossians (and hence, in the book of Galatians) were: The human principles of *justification by law*.

The holy Principles (elements) *of God* will never pass away.

Yes, the Law **as outward Condemner** was nailed to the Cross, and yes the Law **as conditional covenant** disappeared, and yes the "shadow" of the Law was done away (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 8:4,5; 9:10; 10:1; but the Law **as our inner delight** was fulfilled, established and engraved in our hearts and minds by the faith of Messiah --so that all of "the Israel of God" may sing today with the Psalmist:

"O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. ...Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble" (Ps. 119:97,165).

It was the corrupt "principles" of self-justifiers that were burned up in 70. It was the "works" of unprincipled Gospel-

distorters that were going to be "laid bare" when their bankrupt "elements" melted with intense heat before the Presence of Christ (II Peter 3:10,16-17).

"*The Law of God is truth*" (Ps. 119:142).

"*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law...*" (Matt. 5:17).

QUESTION 19: The Bible promises curses for disobedience in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Yet you say that our salvation in the New Testament age is totally unconditional. How can our salvation be absolutely unconditional if God promises us throughout His word that liars, murders, etc. cannot inherit the Kingdom? Also, we are told to disfellowship brothers who are in sin. Obviously, life in the Kingdom today is conditional. If we want to enter the Kingdom, then we have to not practice sin. That is a "condition." Repentance is necessary. Can you possibly deny this?

ANSWER: According to Heb. 8:8-12, the old covenant ended because the people were disobedient, and the new covenant in contrast will never end because it is conditioned upon Christ's eternal Righteousness alone. Heb. 8:8-12:

"...Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* (Heb. 8:8-12).

God's unconditional Covenant with us does not mean that we can practice sin. It means that we prove our New Covenant sonship through loving and obeying Christ or disprove our sonship by practicing sin.

According to the Scriptures, we are to discipline members in the church, and we are to treat as an infidel anyone who acts like an infidel. Fellowship in the church community is definitely conditional, but no one ever gains or loses New-Covenant sonship through their obedience or disobedience. Membership in a local church and salvation are not synonymous. Our heavenly sonship is dependent upon Christ alone.

QUESTION 20: Preterists say that "the creation" of Romans 8:21 which will be "set free" was the old covenant people (God's "covenant creation"). Don't preterists thus show a disdain for the physical creation by spiritualizing what scripture says about it?

ANSWER: Let's take a look at Romans 10:18:

"*But I say, surely they [the Jews] have never heard [the Gospel], have they? Indeed they have; **Their voice has gone out into all the world.***"

The quote in Rom. 10:18 is from Ps. 19:4, the context of which was "the heavens ...telling of the glory of God," and the "expanse ...declaring the work of His hands," and "the sun" rising and setting.

The context of Rom. 10:18 speaks of the verbal, Gospel-proclamation, and Paul quoted Ps. 19 in that context. This indicates to me that God means for us to understand from Ps. 19 (and like passages) that the physical creation was made to testify to the truth of the eternal Gospel:

Thus in Psalm 19:1-6, believers are like "stars in the firmament" (Phil. 2:15; Dan. 12:3) telling of the glory of God and declaring the work of His hands day and night throughout all the earth (Col. 1:23). Among them is "the Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. 4:2), "the Bridegroom," (Matt. 25:10) "the strong Man," (Matt. 12:29) from Whom nothing is hidden (Heb. 4:13)

The use of "creation language" in reference to New-Covenant things should not indicate a *disdain* for the physical creation. Since creation testifies to God's existence and character, and since God uses the creation in His Word to teach us about His special grace, this should prove to us that the physical creation is good and that it was made for a *spiritual and eternal* purpose: To glorify and reveal God.

We also know that the Church is destined to ever-increasingly use all of God's good creation to His further glory. We know that because of the worldview of the Gospel (Christianity), modern science came into being and there have since been incredible advancements in communication, medicine, agriculture, etc., etc. These are tangible blessings that have come

about because Christ changed His people's hearts and minds. Such physical benefits of the Kingdom will literally fill the heavens as the aeons continue. In this way the inanimate, physical creation is progressively sanctified by the Cross of Christ.

I realize there are some fringe preterists who believe that the physical creation has no connection with the spiritual. They see a "creation" text like Ps. 19 as being instructive of spiritual things, but they do not see the physical creation *itself* (of which the text speaks) as being of spiritual value or as being necessarily given to the man to physically / scientifically use and shape for God's eternal glory. These preterists tend to view our bodies as little more than sensual "containers" that hold us and distract us until we are rid of them. Such a "Gnostic" notion is not a biblical application of preterism.

QUESTION 21: Is hell, according to the full preterist, a place of only spiritual torment for the non-believer, or is there a physical and bodily torment involved as well?

ANSWER: The word "hell" does not always refer *strictly* to the "afterlife" state. Ofttimes it has application to the judgment of people on Earth. For instance, in Matt. 11:23; Lk. 10:15, Jesus said of the city of Capernaum, "*You ...who have been exalted to heaven, will be thrown down to hell* (Greek: Hades)." (KJV) What "Hades" immediately --but not exclusively or ultimately-- referred to there was Capernaum's physical destruction. She was going to be "*brought down to hades*" even as she had been "*exalted to heaven*."

Similarly, Matt. 5:29,30; 18:9; Mk. 9:43,45,47, speaks of "*the whole body*" being thrown into "hell" (Greek: Gehenna). The "body" in those verses is a church-body, and the proximate reference for "Gehenna" there is a physical judgment on Earth, specifically the biblical Judgment that came upon the world in the first century A. D. according to Rev. 3:10 --the same judgment in which Capernaum was thrown down to Hades.

The fact that the terms hell / Hades / Gehenna (and their Hebrew counterparts) at times have an application to a physical, bodily judgment on Earth, has led some unqualified exegetes in the preterist camp (and others) to conclude that there is actually no such thing as hell (eternal conscious punishment) after physical death, that "hell" means only a judgment that can result in the *annihilation* of the body and soul.

These preterists irrationally conclude that the presence of "hell-torment" on Earth somehow necessarily *precludes* "hell-torment" after death. They see a verse like Matt. 10:28, which speaks of "both soul and body" being killed in hell (Gehenna), and conclude that since the "body" is *utterly destroyed* in death, then the "soul" must also be utterly and absolutely destroyed (annihilated) when it dies. The annihilationists rush to this conclusion even though the Scriptures speak throughout of souls that were "killed" or were "dead" and yet continued to consciously exist. See for example: Rom. 7:9,11; 8:6; II Cor. 3:6; Eph. 2:1,5; 5:14; Col. 2:13; Heb. 9:27; Jms. 1:15; I Jn. 3:14; Jude 12.

Luke 16:23 explicitly speaks of a physically dead man "in torments in hell (Hades)." It has been disturbing to see annihilationists brazenly claim that the story takes place in a *make-believe* setting, that its portrayal of a physically dead man in torments has absolutely *no basis in reality* whatsoever and that Jesus was actually using *pagan mythology* as the backdrop for His teaching. The annihilationists annihilate the facts of the story of Lazarus and the rich man in order to justify their denial of the Scriptural teaching that God eternally punishes the unredeemed.

The terms "Hades" and "Gehenna" do sometimes have an application to God's judgment of certain people on Earth --a *physical, bodily* torment and death-- but the terms further and ultimately speak of God's judgment of sinners *after* their physical death. We would be correct to say that Capernaum was metaphorically thrown down to Hades when it was physically destroyed, and that its wicked dead ones forever and consciously *remained* in Hell / Hades / Gehenna from that point onward, as Matt. 25:46 teaches:

"These shall go away into eternal (eonian) punishment, but the righteous into eternal (eonian) life."

Luke 12:5 likewise teaches that **after** the death of the unredeemed, God casts them "*into Gehenna*," the eternally burning fire of God's wrath:

"But I will warn you whom to fear: Fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" (Lk. 12:5)

May we all listen to Jesus in Luke 12:5, and not to the annihilationists' sugarcoating of God's Eternal Judgment!

Now, having established that people physically and bodily taste "the judgment of hell (Gehenna / Hades)" on Earth, and having shown that the annihilationists shut their eyes to the "afterlife" reality of hell, here is a direct answer to your question about what preterists believe about the nature of eternal punishment after death:

Since all preterists deny that the Resurrection of the dead (Acts 24:15) was fleshly / biological, all preterists necessarily believe that the eternal punishment of the dead is a spiritual torment.

I noticed in your question that you asked if preterists believe that Hell is "only" spiritual. I gather from that wording that you may think that a "spiritual" torment is by definition less severe than a "physical" torment. If that is what you were suggesting, remember that Satan, who is a spirit, is said to be in the Lake of Fire, being "*tormented day and night forever and ever*" (Rev. 20:10). We should not suppose that his "spiritual" torment is less severe than any "physical" torment.

QUESTION 22: How does the Bar Kokhba rebellion of A. D. 132-135 relate to your understanding of the Eschaton.

ANSWER: The Bar Kokhba rebellion was doomed to failure from the beginning, because Christ's reign had already been established for the aeons, 65 years earlier, at the Consummation of the Eschaton (in 70). Bar Kokhba and his men were trapped under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ from the very day they were conceived.

Their fruitless rebellion belongs in the same category as the incident that took place after Emperor Julian (361 - 363) actually attempted to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem for the express purpose of discrediting Jesus' prophecy that not one stone of the Temple would be left standing on another. When Julian's plan was announced, Jews from all over came to Judea with funds to contribute to the project. To their consternation, the work was abruptly terminated.

The Pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus related what happened:

"[Julian] planned at vast cost to restore the once splendid Temple at Jerusalem.He had entrusted the speedy performance of this work to Alypius of Antioch... But though this Alypius pushed the work on with vigor, aided by the governor of the province, *terrible balls of fire kept bursting forth near the foundations of the Temple and made the place inaccessible to the workmen, some of whom were burned to death; and since in this way the element persistently repelled them, the enterprise halted*" (Ammianus Marcellinus: XXIII; 1; 1-3)

The rebels under Bar Kokhba, like Julian, were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, and simply did not know it (Rev. 3:17). In their endeavours to restore the old things that God Himself had brought to an eternal end, they were sealing their fate as those who were in abject, spiritual destitution, confirming that they had never been clothed with God's true, eternal Temple that had come down from Heaven.

The prophecy of Zech. 14:16-19 specifically applies to such men and their followers:

"Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths" (Zech. 14:16-19).

QUESTION 23: Didn't Paul say that making Gentiles conform to the Old Testament law is legalism?

ANSWER: Gentile believers were not to conform to the "shadow" of the Law --foods, drinks, baptisms, festivals, sabbaths, animal sacrifices, circumcision-- because doing so constituted a rejection of the Body that those fleshly ordinances foreshadowed (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 9:10). It constituted justification by works.

The Law of Moses **had** a shadow (Heb. 10:1) which was not imposed upon gentile believers, and which was to pass away. The entire Law was not the "shadow":

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

Whatever the Lord meant by "fulfill" here, He definitely did not mean "abolish." What was "abolished" in 70 was the "shadow" of the Law --the corrupted worship-system that was centered around the hand-made Temple (Matt. 24:2; II Cor. 5:1).

No doubt for Paul, the Law was an impotent redeemer and a condemner of natural men. But at the same time, Paul was working to "establish" the Law through the Gospel (Rom. 3:31). Christ's imputed righteousness fulfills the requirements of that which is holy, righteous, good, useful, spiritual and living, i.e., the Law (Acts 7:38; Rom. 7:13-14; 8:4; I Tim. 1:8). Therefore, those who have the Spirit of God have been called into the "glorious Liberty" of walking in God's Laws without fear of condemnation (Rom. 8:21):

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (Eze. 36:25-27).

There is only one righteous, spiritual attitude toward the Law: Agreement / Submission (Rom. 7:16; 8:7). Once the Law is rejected, all that remains is corruptible, "human judgment" (I Cor. 9:8).

QUESTION 24: Doesn't II Tim. 2:17-18 disprove preterism? Aren't preterists obviously teaching the heresy of Hymeneus who taught that, "The resurrection is past already" (I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:17-18)?

ANSWER: *But shun the profane, empty babblings; for they will advance to more ungodliness, and their word will have feeding as gangrene; of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus, who concerning the truth missed the mark, saying the Resurrection has already come, and overturn the faith of some* (II Tim. 2:16-18).

II Tim. 2:16-18 neither proves nor disproves preterism or futurism. How we interpret that passage depends entirely on which eschatological assumption we take to it.

If we read the passage with the futurist assumption we will reason that Hymeneus and Philetus were not only wrong about the *timing* of the Resurrection but that they were also wrong about the *nature* of the Resurrection. We will reason that they must have been denying a biological Resurrection of the dead and were teaching instead a purely spiritual or inward Resurrection, since that is the only way they could have convinced anyone that *the biological Resurrection of the Dead* was past. We will conclude that the faith of some was overturned because Hymeneus and Philetus had led them to reject the doctrine of the fleshly Resurrection of the Dead. (In the futurist view, the seriousness of Hymeneus and Philetus' error had to do with the nature of the Resurrection, even though Paul condemned only the timing.)

If we read the passage with the preterist assumption we will reason that the error of Hymeneus and Philetus was that they were teaching that the Resurrection was *realized under the Law* (I Tim. 1:8; Titus 1:10; 3:9). We will reason that they were teaching that "*the Hope of Israel*" (Acts 23:6; 24:15, 21; 28:20) was already fulfilled and that *there would therefore never be a Parousia of Christ to bring about a termination of the old-covenant age* (II Tim. 4:8; II Peter 3:4). We will conclude that their error implied that fleshly Israel had inherited the Kingdom and would remain God's nation forever.

If the Resurrection was fulfilled and the old-covenant kingdom continued, that meant that the apostate, reprobate, authority-reviling, Gentile-excluding and saints-persecuting enemies of Christ, and their spiritual ancestors, were revealed to be the true sons of God. Thus the doctrine of a pre-A.D.-70 Resurrection was anti-Gospel, anti-grace and anti-Christ. It was without a doubt a faith-overturning *blasphemy* (I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:18).

We don't know what date Hymeneus and Philetus assigned to the Resurrection, but they possibly believed that the Jewish Revolt against Rome which began in November of A.D. 66 signified the coming of the Resurrection (II Timothy was written in about A.D. 67.). Whatever pre-70 date they proposed though was a malignant, judaizing falsehood. Contrary to their error, the fact that the earthly house (the old-covenant world) was still standing proved that Death had not yet been finally placed under the feet of Christ (I Cor. 15:24-27; Heb. 2:8) and that the universal body of the saints had therefore not yet been raised up to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven (II Cor. 5:1-4; Heb. 9:8).

QUESTION 25: In Acts 6:14, Stephen was accused of saying that Jesus would "destroy this place" (the Temple) and change the customs of Moses. During Stephen's defense (Acts 7:2-53), he didn't appear to directly answer the accusations. Did his silence imply that he had in fact been teaching that Jesus would soon destroy the Temple and change the customs of Moses?

ANSWER: "*And they put forward false witnesses who said, 'This man incessantly speaks against this holy place, and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us'*" (Acts 6:13-14).

Apparently the false witnesses told a half-truth. Stephen had certainly not spoken against the Temple or against the Law, but he *had* evidently said that Jesus would destroy the Temple and alter "the customs of Moses."

Stephen implicitly admitted saying those things in his quoting from Isaiah:

"*...Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things....*" (Isa. 66:1-2a)

Not only did that quote imply the inadequacy of the hand-made "holy place," but the very next verse in Isaiah implied the inadequacy of the "customs" of Moses:

"He who kills an ox is one who slays a man; He who sacrifices a lamb is the one who breaks a dog's neck; He who offers a grain offering is like one who offers swine's blood; He who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol. As they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations" (Isa. 66:3).

In the next verses in Isaiah's prophecy, God indicted Israel; and in the next verses of Acts 7, Stephen reiterated Isaiah's indictment. According to both prophets, the recompense was coming because Israel:

1. Rejected the Law (Isa. 66:3-4; Acts 7:51,53)
2. Had an unclean, evil heart (Isa. 66:3-4; Acts 7:51)
3. Refused to listen to God (Isa. 66:4; Acts 7:51)
4. Persecuted the godly (Isa. 66:5; Acts 7:52).

And Stephen added, ominously, that they were "betrayers" and "murderers" of "the Righteous One" (Acts 7:52).

The very next verse in Isaiah 66 is the consummation of the prophecy of Recompense that Stephen quoted and was reiterating. In that verse, Isaiah designated the holy "Temple" as the center of God's wrath against His people:

"A sound of roaring from the City! A sound from the Temple! The sound of Yahweh repaying recompense to His enemies!" (Isa. 66:6)

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he [Stephen] gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'" (Acts 7:54-55).

In quoting and reiterating Isaiah 66:1-6, Stephen had implied that Jesus is Yahweh God; that He would soon come and pay back those men for their lawlessness, wickedness, rebellion and murders; that He was going to destroy them, and their City, and their Temple (cf. Dan. 9:26).

"But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out of the City, they began stoning him...." (Acts 7:57-58).

QUESTION 26: What relationship does preterism have to the doctrine of the Deity of Christ?

ANSWER: Before the Parousia, it was not yet fully manifested that Jesus is Yahweh the Savior (I Jn. 3:1-5,16). It was not yet fully manifested that the worshipers of Jesus Christ were worshiping "the true God" (I Jn. 5:20). It was not yet fully manifested that those who believed that Jesus Christ is Yahweh were the true children of God (Rom. 8:19).

The covenant-world that crucified Yahweh (Zech. 12:1,10) was still in power, and the Church was being accused of blasphemy by that world for her teaching that Jesus is Yahweh the Savior (Isa. 25:9; I Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 25). The only way the Church was going to be vindicated in its worship of Jesus as Yahweh the Savior, and thus fully "manifested" as the pure children of God, was through the Parousia.

When Yahweh appeared in 70 (Deut. 33:26; Ps. 68:33; 104:3; Isa. 2:11; Matt. 21:33; Mk. 12:1-9; Lk. 20:9-16; I Thess. 4:14; Titus 2:13; Jude 14; Rev. 1:4,8; 4:8), the Church's enduring faith in His blood (Acts 20:28) conquered and overthrew the covenant-world that rejected Jesus as Yahweh (I Jn. 5:4). The redemption and purification of the Church that had been wrought through the death and resurrection of Yahweh (Isa. 59:16) was then consummated, and death was forever nullified.

The Church was perfectly transformed into the Image of Yahweh (II Cor. 3:18). She became "like Him" (Zech. 12:8) through His Own incorruptible blood --the holy blood of the Covenant (Heb. 10:29). Those who devalued the blood of Yahweh were swept away like dross in the terrifying wrath of God (Heb. 10:29-31); but those who worshiped Jesus Christ and received His Righteousness became pure just as He is pure (I Jn. 1:7; 2:20; 3:3).

QUESTION 27: The Parable of the Pounds / Minas in Lk. 19:12-27 says that at the Second Coming of Christ, the saints will be given authority over "cities." Some will rule over ten. Others will rule over five, etc. In preterism, the saints must be currently ruling cities. Then which ones?? Can you give me one city today that is ruled by a saint?

ANSWER: After the Lord ascended into Heaven to receive the Kingdom (Lk. 19:12; cf. Dan. 7:13-14) He poured out His Spirit upon all flesh (Lk. 19:13). Some men bore fruit in the Spirit as they grew in the Lord and led others to righteousness (Lk. 19:16-19). Other men believed in vain and produced no fruit (Lk. 19:20-21), and other men rejected the ministry of the Spirit altogether (Lk. 19:14).

Those who were fruitful in the Spirit received the Kingdom of God when Christ returned in 70 and destroyed the enemies in His Kingdom (Lk. 19:27; cf. Matt. 13:41). The Church then, with finality, was given its kingly and priestly authority over the nations of the earth (Lk. 19:17,19; cf. Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10). The Church was no longer a revolutionary movement within the Kingdom of God under the old covenant. In 70, it became the very Possessor of the Kingdom. It absolutely replaced the Pharisees and earthly priesthood as God's Nation of Kings and Priests (Rev. 1:6). Since that great Day, the Israel of God forever produces the fruit that God desires (Matt. 21:43).

God has given the Church the Divine "power / authority" to break the nations with "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). The Church "reigns" over the earth in that she perpetually and eternally brings the honor and the glory of the nations unto God and the Lamb (Rev. 21:24-26). Without God's Tabernacle (the Church) among men (Rev. 21:2-3), there would be only alienation, condemnation and death. Without the Body of Christ, there is absolutely zero hope for the nations of the earth. Thus, the Church's great "authority / power" over the world is wielded primarily in evangelism and teaching.

The "cities" in the Parable of the Minas (Lk. 19:17,19) are no more literal than the other elements of the parable, e.g., the nobleman, the distant country, the money, the handkerchief, the bank.

Why was one servant given authority over ten cities and another servant given authority over only five cities? For the same reason that some believers bring forth "a hundredfold" and "some sixty, and some thirty" (Matt. 13:8,23; cf. I Cor. 3:7; 12:11).

QUESTION 28: I have a real problem when things are not congruent. God in the Old Testament has the Israelites killing every man, woman, and *child* (in some instances). How do you reconcile the Old Testament carnage with the God of the New Testament who pursues us with such tremendous love?

ANSWER: God ordained "carnage" and "killing" under *both* covenants. The difference is that the God-appointed "carnage" in the death of His Son was infinitely more appalling and shocking than all of the sufferings and deaths combined of those who were by nature children of wrath in the Old Testament (Eph. 2:3).

Not only did Jesus say that He came to accomplish the carnage-filled purpose of God, but He Himself also sent His own followers out "as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. 10:16), for the very purpose that His followers would be persecuted, scourged, crucified and killed (Matt. 23:34). Additionally, one of the purposes of Christ's New-Covenant Parousia was for the slaughter of millions of men, women and children.

It is evident that Jesus' mission, ministry and teachings were not foreign to, incongruent with or irreconcilable with the "killing" God of the Old Testament. In both Testaments, the God of love ordains and causes suffering and calamity (Isa. 45:7). This fact is only a "problem" if one imagines that God cannot be loving and wrathful and just at the same time.

"Behold then the kindness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22).

QUESTION 29: I realize you feel strongly about the traditional, orthodox "Trinity" doctrine, but we have to keep in mind that this subject is a phenomenon of 4th century political debate, and not of any concern to the apostles or their Jewish detractors. Can you show me one place in Scripture where we find the apostles trying to convince anyone of the "Deity of Christ?" I didn't think so.

ANSWER: No Trinitarian expects, or should expect, to find a "Deity of Messiah" debate between the apostles and the Jews. The Jewish leaders already *agreed* that Whoever the Messiah / Son of Man / Son of God would be, He is *God*. The Deity of the promised Messiah was a "given" among the Jewish leaders.

For example, when Jesus referred to Himself as "the Son of Man ...Coming with the clouds of heaven," the Jewish leaders understood that, in applying those Old-Testament prophecies to Himself, Jesus was calling Himself God (Deut. 33:26; Ps. 68:33; 104:3; Dan. 7:13; Mk. 14:61-64; Matt. 26:63-66; Lk. 22:69-71; cf. Jn. 5:18).

Because the Jewish leaders *already agreed* with the Church that the Messiah / Son of Man / Son of God is *God*, there was no conceivable reason for a debate on that issue. What the Jews could not accept was that JESUS CHRIST was the Messiah / Son of Man / Son of God.

The wildly extra-biblical notion of a "non-Yahweh Messiah" --such as Superman-- was rejected prima facie by the 1st-century Jewish leaders and the Church. It is a blasphemy that you would also do well to reject.

QUESTION 30: Paul rebuked the Corinthians for acting as if they had already begun to reign. The text is clear that he thought neither he nor they had begun to reign. Yet preterism says that Christians were already reigning, for forty or so years from cross to judgement? How do you explain I Cor. 4:8ff?

ANSWER: The first-century church (including the Corinthians) was already reigning with Christ, according to Eph. 2:6. It had begun to reign, but it was waiting for the consummation when it would reign over the earth as God's "Kingdom of priests" (Rev. 5:10). This was to happen after God's old City of worship, earthly Jerusalem, was destroyed, and when God's fleshly children, the church-persecuting Jews, were disinherited from the Kingdom and put under the feet of Christ.

In the context of I Cor. 4:8, the Corinthians were "reigning" like "kings" in that they were, in practice, forsaking the rule of the Apostles and were walking on their own (in the flesh). The Corinthians were "puffed up" one against the other and were living as if all the blessings of the Kingdom which they were enjoying had not been given to them by God through the Apostles. The Corinthians were living boastfully, as if Christianity was the child of their heroes' wisdom. They were living like they had no need of the Apostles' example of humbly dying to human righteousness and human wisdom. They were "reigning" as if they had no use for spiritual growth through the ministry of the Apostles.

Paul was being sarcastic when he said that the Corinthians were "reigning" as "kings." But Paul sincerely wished that he and the Corinthians were really, truly and actually reigning over the earth. In other words, he wished that they were already living in the time when the enemies in Christ's Kingdom were finally cast out and placed under His feet, when the Church would finally find relief from its world-liberating struggle:

"For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those [THE JEWS] who afflict you, and to give relief to YOU [THE CHURCH] who are afflicted and to US [THE APOSTLES] as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire [IN A.D. 70]" (II Thess. 1:6-7).

QUESTION 31: The "old-covenant" world included works-religions other than Judaism. If God judged the whole world in A.D. 70, why were those religious institutions not destroyed the same way Jerusalem was?

ANSWER: The most holy place in the pagan Roman world was **the Temple of the Capitoline Jupiter**. It burned to the ground on December 19th, A.D. 69, less than a year before the Jewish Temple was destroyed (Tacitus, *Histories*, III, 48; Josephus, *Wars*, IV, XI, 4).

After the events of A.D. 68-70, both the pagan Roman Empire and Judaism continued to exist. Both entities continue even to this day, in one form or another. Yet those things were forever stripped of their former glories.

The Roman Empire had been founded under the "Julian Dynasty." That dynasty came to a disgraceful termination with Nero in A.D. 68. The decline of the Empire continued when from the 90's onward it was ruled by foreigners. Christianity weakened the unity of the Empire and gradually transformed it from a militaristic state to a state in religious turmoil. By 395, the ancient pagan religions of the world became culturally irrelevant and the Empire was divided in two (East and West). A few years later, looting Barbarians began to overrun the Empire, until Rome fell in 455.

The Jews had "the greater sin" (Jn. 19:11) in that they knowingly delivered their King to Rome to be put to death (Matt. 21:38). The Jews received "the greater condemnation." (Matt. 23:14) The Jews were sent to the "tormenters," (Matt. 18:34) until they were consumed with fire in A.D. 70 (Rev. 17:16). The Roman Empire on the other hand, having a "lesser sin" and a "lesser condemnation," died a more gradual and less hideous death.

QUESTION 32: In Acts, when talking to the gentiles, Paul talks about a day when God will judge all nations. (Acts 17:30-31) How is the fall of Jerusalem seen as a judgment on all nations, Jew and gentile?

ANSWER: First, the Gospel was to be preached into all the world as a witness. (Matt. 24:14) This was fulfilled by the time the book of Colossians was written (c. A.D. 60):

"...*The Gospel ...was proclaimed in all creation under heaven....*" (Col. 1:23)

Then, at the end of redemptive history, a time of great tribulation and upheaval was to take place in order to test the faith of all who had heard the Gospel (i.e., the world). That time of tribulation and testing was centered in its intensity with the Jews, at Jerusalem, yet it was also worldwide and involved the gentiles. It was "about to" take place when the book of Revelation was written:

"Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth." (Rev. 3:10; cf. Matt. 24:7)

From the years A.D. 68-70, Jerusalem was locked in the raging fires of the Great Tribulation, and the nations of the world were in veritable chaos:

Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Preface, 2:

"Now at the time when this great concussion of affairs happened, the affairs of the Romans were themselves in great disorder. Those Jews also who were for revolution, then arose when the times were disturbed; they were also in a flourishing condition for strength and riches, insomuch that the affairs of the East were then exceeding tumultuous, while some hoped for gain, and others were afraid of loss in such troubles; for the Jews hoped that all of their nation which were beyond Euphrates would have raised an insurrection together with them. The Gauls also, in the neighborhood of the Romans, were in motion, and the Geltin were not quiet; but all was in disorder after the death of Nero [A. D. 68]."

When that time of testing was finished, God judged the world: The old-covenant world (which had accommodated human "righteous," and under which the gentiles had remained ignorant) was destroyed, and its shadows were fulfilled in the Body of Christ (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 8:13). In other words, the temporal kingdom of the world became the eternal Kingdom of God and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15).

Those who had rejected the Gospel were no longer allowed entrance into the Kingdom (as were both Jews and gentiles under the old covenant, through circumcision). But those who had obeyed the Gospel inherited all things (1 Cor. 3:21-23; Rev. 21:7), and were revealed to be the true sons of God (Rom. 8:19).

"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." (Matt. 13:41-43)

QUESTION 33: I have heard some preterists out there say that the "preterist hermeneutic" demands a ruthless reassessment of all Orthodoxy. They say if the church was wrong about the Parousia, how can we be sure it was not wrong about many other things, or even every other thing? On this basis, these preterists teach other people to question or even reject the doctrine of the Trinity. They say they are in the "demolition business." Does the preterist movement have any kind of "defense mechanism" or "restraint" against people like this?

ANSWER: Yes. The fact that the historic Church was wrong about eschatology only indicates that eschatology is not something which the Church must necessarily believe **accurately** in order to be saved. Traditional Futurism is a serious, but **nonfatal**, error. The Church's eschatological misunderstanding does not, and indeed **cannot**, indicate that she might have been wrong about **everything**. Since the Church is "*the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth*," she could not "always and everywhere" be steeped in a false gospel.

The Church cannot have been wrong throughout history about the Deity of Christ (the Trinity) because being wrong about the Deity of Christ inescapably constitutes believing a false gospel. If Christ is not God, and the universal Church has worshiped Him as God, then the Church is damned because it "always and everywhere" worships a false god. Therefore, either the Body of Christ has been the pillar and foundation of a Lie throughout history, or these Trinity-denying preterists are Liars.

If these fanatical preterists do not repent, their "ruthless reassessment of all Orthodoxy" will end in a "ruthless" judgment of themselves.

Regarding their being in the "demolition business": I realize there is a time and place to demolish, but (and I'm sure you agree) being in the "demolition business" is a reviler's work. "Building up" is the life's work of a godly man.

QUESTION 34: Preterists admit that Christ ascended in a *literal* "cloud." They use that "cloud" as the reference point for His return "in like manner," "with the clouds." But preterists take the "clouds" of Christ's return to be *metaphorical and apocalyptic* "clouds." In other words, preterists say Jesus entered heaven in a *literal* cloud, and then say His return was "in like manner" because He returned in *figurative clouds*! Isn't this blatantly dishonest? Isn't it a form of exegetical equivocation / sleight of hand?

ANSWER: "*Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*" (Lk. 21:27)

Jesus entered heaven in "**a cloud**" in Acts 1:9.

"In like manner," (Acts 1:11) He returned **"in a cloud"** in Luke 21:27.

It is interesting that Luke, who penned both Lk. 21:27 and Acts 1:9-11, is the only New Testament writer who used the singular **"cloud"** instead of the plural **"clouds"** in reference to the "Coming" of Christ.

When Matthew, Mark and John all used the plural "clouds" in Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mk. 13:26; 14:62 and Rev. 1:7, they were no doubt employing imagery from the Old Testament. (cf. II Sam. 22:12; Ps. 18:11-12; Ps. 36:5; 57:10; 68:34; 97:2; 104:3; 108:4; Dan. 7:13; Joel 2:2; Nahum 1:3; Zeph. 1:15) But perhaps when Luke used the singular **"cloud,"** he was referring to another aspect of Christ's Parousia: ***The Glory-Cloud of Yahweh God.*** The same Glory-Cloud that overshadowed Peter, James and John on the "Mount of Transfiguration." (Matt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:34-35) The same Glory-Cloud in which Jesus went into heaven in Acts 1:9-11.

There is no historical or exegetical reason to doubt that Jesus returned in the Divine Glory-Cloud when the Temple fell in A.D. 70. It would not have been the only such sign that appeared in heaven in those days:

c. April/May A.D. 66: "...before sunset, ***chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds,*** and surrounding of cities." (Josephus, *Wars*, VI, V, 3)

"...and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven." (Lk. 21:11)

QUESTION 35: Daniel and Revelation both prophesy God's judgment on the Roman Empire. Doesn't that skew the whole "in this generation" interpretation of all prophecy, since Rome fell in A.D. 455?

ANSWER: I don't believe the fall of Rome in 455 was the fulfillment of a prophecy. It was an implication of fulfilled prophecy.

The Roman Empire's reign over God's kingdom (beginning in c. 63 B.C.) was broken to pieces in the years A.D. 30 to 70, by the power of Jesus Christ. In 70, when the saints finally received the Kingdom, (Dan. 7:18,22,27; Matt. 21:43) Rome's dominion over God's people was forever taken away. (Dan. 7:26) No longer could Rome regulate Israel's worship or destroy her peace. Israel now reigned over the Earth as God's kingdom of priests (Heb. 8:10; Rev. 5:10), and Rome was hopelessly lost without her. Thus the Roman Empire went from being the Iron Ruler of heaven and earth, to being a needy subject of the King of Kings in the New Heavens and Earth.

The increase of Christ's established Government in history (Isa. 9:7; Acts 9:31) necessarily means the decline, and eventual fall, of every human empire. The Roman Empire was one of the first to go.

QUESTION 36: Rome conquered God's people in A.D. 70. Wasn't this a victory for the Beast? A victory that has not been reversed even to this day, thus proving that the book of Revelation was not fulfilled in A.D. 70?

ANSWER: Israel was under the dominion of the Roman Empire beginning in 63 B.C., when Pompey captured Jerusalem, forcefully entered into the Holy of Holies and took authority over Israel's worship by installing her High Priest. But that dominion over God's people ended in A.D. 30-70, when Israel entered into her "spiritual things." (Rom. 15:27) The earthly holy of holies was fulfilled in the heavenly Holy of Holies; the earthly high priest was fulfilled in the heavenly High Priest; and the earthly Jerusalem was fulfilled in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Today, neither Rome nor any other power can possibly touch "the Israel of God." (Gal. 6:16) Jerusalem is "free indeed" (Jn. 8:36; Gal. 4:26).

Yes, Rome conquered the land of Judea in 70, but that tract of real estate ceased to exist as the Land of the Kingdom of God. When Rome conquered the children of the flesh, (Rom. 9:8) she had merely conquered the "dross" that King Jesus had swept out of His Kingdom.

QUESTION 37: I assume that you do not believe in "soul sleep" such as the JW's. So since the soul is not asleep but rather it is at "Abraham's bosom" and since you do not believe in a physical resurrection of any sort for believers, what was "sleeping" in the verses which speak of "sleeping?" "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." (I Thess. 4:14)

ANSWER: "Fell asleep" and "asleep" are euphemistic ways of saying "died" and "dead." Modern sayings such as, "passed away" and "laid to rest," have similar meanings. Expressions like these are not descriptive of an "after-life" condition. In the Old Testament, "sleep" describes the death of the wicked and the righteous alike.

QUESTION 38: Didn't Jesus say, "I am with you always, until the end of the age?" But since the age has ended, then He is no longer with us. God is our only Lord. Wouldn't this follow?

ANSWER: "Until I come, give attention to the reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching." (I Tim. 4:13)

"Until" did not mean that Timothy was to stop reading, stop exhorting and stop teaching after Paul came. In the same way, the word "until" in Matt. 28:20 did not mean that Jesus was to be no longer "with us" (Matt. 1:23) after the end of the age.

God "and the Lamb" reign on Earth, "among men," "forever and ever":

"And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'" (Rev. 5:13)

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them. ...And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. ...And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him." (Rev. 21:3,22; 22:3)

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our dwelling with him.'" (Jn. 14:23)

QUESTION 39: If Christ gave up the Kingdom to God the Father in A.D. 70, then why is Christ still reigning? Shouldn't He no longer be reigning if He gave up the Kingdom? What in your view does giving up the Kingdom entail? And if this happened in A.D. 70, then what was different in A.D. 30-70?

ANSWER: The Son submissively delivered all things to the Father, because the Father had authoritatively delivered all things to the Son (Matt. 11:27; Lk. 10:22; Jn. 3:35; 13:3; 16:15; I Cor. 15:27-28). The submission of the Son to the Father means the Son co-reigns under the Headship / authority of the Father (Jn. 5:22,26,30; 14:28; 15:8; I Cor. 11:3).

When the Son delivered up the Kingdom to the Father, God became "All things in all [the saints]." (I Cor. 15:28) The universal Church became the Tabernacle of "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb." (Jn. 14:23; 17:21,24; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:22; 3:19; Heb. 11:10, 39-40; Rev. 21:22) The Holy Spirit's eschatological work in constructing this New-Covenant Temple was consummated when the ministry of Death and condemnation vanished in 70. (Lk. 21:28; I Cor. 15:26; II Cor. 3:7,9; 5:1; Heb. 8:13; 9:8)

"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it...." (Rev. 22:3)

QUESTION 40: Ken Gentry has said repeatedly throughout his writings that Nero's persecution of the Church lasted 3 1/2 years, and that this persecution fulfilled Rev. 13:5-7, where the beast (Nero/Rome) made war on the saints for "forty-two months" (3 1/2 years). Here is my question: Where is Nero's 3-1/2-year persecution of the Church recorded in history? I can't find it anywhere.

ANSWER: It has been popularly repeated that Nero's persecution of Christians began in November A.D. 64 and that it ended, roughly 3 1/2 years later, with his death in June A.D. 68. The fact is though that no one knows for certain what month Nero's persecution began. November is only a guess that was proposed by the Lutheran historian J. L. von Mosheim in his *Historical Commentaries*, I:138-139 (pub. 1753). All we really know is that Nero's persecution began in A.D. 64, some weeks or months after Rome had burned in July of that same year.

It is also uncertain whether or not the persecution even extended beyond Rome. Only later historians, writing hundreds of years after the fact, said that it did. And it is uncertain whether or not the persecution continued until Nero's death in June 68. For all we know, it may have lasted for only a few months. Nobody knows. If it did end with Nero's death though, then his persecution lasted for roughly three years and six months, or perhaps for as long as three years and ten months, depending on what month it began.

Based on the historical evidence alone, the Neronian Persecution may or may not have lasted for 3 1/2 years. Only if we begin with the presupposition that the "forty-two months" of Rev. 13:7 refers to Nero's/Rome's persecution of Christians, does it then become tempting to speculate that the Neronian Persecution may have lasted for 3 1/2 years.

Our most detailed and reliable information on Nero's persecution comes from Tacitus (c. A.D. 55-120) in his *Annals*, 15.44, and from Suetonius (c. A.D. 70-140) in his *The Twelve Caesars: Nero*, 16:2. (See also *I Clement*, 6.)

QUESTION 41: I have read in different places that the siege of Jerusalem lasted 3 1/2 years, in fulfillment of Rev. 11:2? Is this true? If so, where can I find this 3-1/2-year period recorded in history?

ANSWER: The siege of Jerusalem did not last 3 1/2 years. It is unfortunate that a number of partial preterists have said that it did, including the late David Chilton. (*Days of Vengeance*, chapter 11, note 5) The siege of Jerusalem did not begin until A.D. 70.

Vespasian was about to march against Jerusalem in c. July A.D. 68, (about two years before the end) but he decided against it after he heard that Nero had died. (*Wars*, iv, 491, 502) The actual siege of Jerusalem began about a year and a half later in early A.D. 70, under Titus. Titus' army breached Jerusalem's walls in April or May, about five months before the end.

(Incidentally, that five-month period might possibly have been a literal fulfillment of the "*five months*" of "locusts" in Rev. 9:5,10. Interestingly enough, May to September are the actual months of the season of literal locusts.)

Other preterists have stated that the Jewish-Roman War *in general* lasted 3 ½ years. They might very well be correct. Here is what we know:

The Jews defeated the army of Cestius Gallus, Roman proconsul of Syria, in **November of A.D. 66**. Josephus gives us this date in *Wars*, ii, 555.

After this incident, many of the most eminent Jews abandoned Jerusalem. Among them were three men who went to Cestius Gallus, (*Wars*, ii, 556) who in turn sent them to Nero in Achaia "to inform him of the great distress they were in." (*Wars*, ii, 558)

After Nero heard of Cestius' defeat, he deliberated about whom he should send to punish the Jews. (*Wars*, iii, 1-3) He decided on Vespasian, and sent him to take command of the armies in Syria. (*Wars*, iii, 7)

Vespasian sent his son Titus from Achaia (where he was with Nero) to Alexandria to bring troops back with him, while Vespasian himself crossed the Hellespont [Dardanelles] and then went by land into Syria and gathered his forces there. (*Wars*, iii, 8) From Antioch, Syria, Vespasian marched to Ptolemais. (*Wars*, iii, 29)

His son Titus, in the meantime, had sailed from Achaia to Alexandria, "and that sooner than the winter season did usually permit" and took the forces he was sent for. He then marched "with great expedition" and "came suddenly to Ptolemais," and found his father Vespasian already there. (*Wars*, iii, 64-65)

At Ptolemais, Vespasian sent some of his troops to Sepphoris in Galilee. (*Wars*, iii, 33) After some of his troops stationed there had ravaged the surrounding area, the Jews tried to capture Sepphoris and failed. The Romans retaliated and began to treat the country in Galilee "according to the law of war." (*Wars*, iii, 62)

This was the true beginning of Nero's war against the Jews. Night and day, all of Galilee was filled with fire, blood, misery and calamity. (*Wars*, iii, 62-63)

After Vespasian and his son Titus had spent "some time at Ptolemais," Vespasian marched to the boundaries of Galilee, where he pitched camp and made final preparations for battle. (*Wars*, iii, 110,115,127) He then marched to Gadara, "and took it upon the first onset." He killed all the youth and mercilessly killed people of all ages. He set fire to the city and all the surrounding villas and towns, and carried the survivors into captivity. (*Wars*, iii, 132-134)

After that, Vespasian began to march to Jotapata. On the way, his soldiers leveled the ground, as it was impassable for his horsemen. (*Wars*, iii, 141) This project was undertaken in **June of A.D. 67**. Josephus gives us this date in *Wars*, iii, 142.

Historians have gathered from this sequence of events and from the time-indicators that Josephus gives us therein, that Nero sent Vespasian to make war with the Jews probably in **about February of A.D. 67**, and that Vespasian's troops first did battle with the Jews (in Galilee) in the spring (March/April/May) of the same year.

If Nero truly sent Vespasian against the Jews in February A.D. 67, then we might say that the War was "declared" 3 1/2 years before the fall of the Temple in August A.D. 70. Or if the war truly began in March (early spring) A.D. 67, then the War lasted for 3 ½ years, until the fall of Jerusalem in September A.D. 70.

However, whether we measure from Nero's "declaration of war" in February(?), or from the first battle in the war in March(?), in neither case did Roman armies tread "Jerusalem" underfoot for 3 ½ years, in fulfillment of Rev. 11:2. Nero's armies never touched Jerusalem before A.D. 70. Most of the 3 1/2 years of Rome's war with the Jews was spent in conquering Judea.

If there was a literal fulfillment of the "forty-two months" of Rev. 11:2, I believe that J. Stuart Russell's interpretation is correct:

"During the three years and an half which represent with sufficient accuracy the duration of the Jewish war, Jerusalem was actually in the hands and under the feet of a horde of ruffians, whom their own countrymen describe as 'slaves, and the very dregs of society, the spurious and polluted spawn of the nation.' The last fatal

struggle may be said to have begun when Vespasian was sent by Nero, at the head of sixty thousand men, to put down the rebellion. This was early in the year A.D. 67, and in August A.D.70 the city and the temple were a heap of smoking ashes." (J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia, Part III, The Parousia In the Apocalypse, The Measurement of the Temple*) [Emphasis added.]

As the inhabitants of Jerusalem were preparing for war with Rome, Josephus tells us of the futile attempts in the City to "restrain the madness of those that had the name of Zealots." (*Wars*, ii, 651) And as Roman armies toppled the cities of Galilee in the early days of the war, then it was that every worthless shred of human debris across the Land began slithering its way into the lawless City of Jerusalem. What those so-called "Jews" (Rev. 3:9) did to the Holy City was far worse than anything the merciless, pagan armies of Rome were doing to Judea. Those men (the bandits, Zealots, Sicarii, etc.) were the ones who trampled upon the Holy City; and they were the direct cause of its abominations, and of its desolation. (*Wars*, iv, 135-137, 163, 262).

QUESTION 42: Do preterists believe that Jesus Christ will ever return here to earth? Do they believe there will be the end of the world?

ANSWER: Preterists believe that Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit are here on Earth, in fulfillment of all the promises that God made to the fathers. Preterists believe that God abides with, in, and among believers forever. Preterists believe that the Church is God's Body and Temple for all generations, forever and ever. Preterists believe that the "world" that was about to end in the New Testament was the pre-Christ, old-covenant world. There will be no end to the Christian Age, because it is the age that was created through the power of Jesus' blood.

See: Psalms 72:17; 78:69; 89:36-37; 93:1; 96:10; 104:5; 119:90; 145:13; 148:4,6; Eccl. 1:4; Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; 4:3,34; 7:14,18,27; Lk. 1:33; Eph. 3:21; Heb. 7:24-25; Rev. 22:2,5,14-15.

QUESTION 43: When did the seven years of tribulation take place?

ANSWER: In my opinion, the "three and a half years" / "forty-two months" / "one thousand two hundred and sixty days" / "time, times and half a time" (and the implied "half week" in Dan. 9:27) are symbols of a time of trouble or distress. They are "broken sevens," as others have put it. The expressions occur in "apocalyptic" contexts. (Dan. 7,9; Rev. 11,12,13)

I do not believe that we should add three and a half years of persecution of Christians (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5) to three and a half years of tribulation upon the Jews/Jerusalem, (Dan. 12:1-7; Rev. 11:2) and come up with a total period of seven literal, consecutive years of tribulation.

I believe there is good and sufficient evidence that the Abomination of Desolation took place, and that the Great Tribulation began, in about February of A.D. 68 (about two years and seven months before the destruction of Jerusalem):

As Judea was increasingly overflowing with blood and fire during Vespasian's campaign in the first year of Rome's war against the Jews, (A.D. 67-68) Jerusalem was sinking into anarchy. The Zealots there had been tyrannizing the people for some weeks or months, pillaging, imprisoning, and eventually torturing and murdering the most respected citizens in the City. (Josephus, *Wars*, iv, iii, 4-5; iv, iv, iii)

The Zealots had annulled the succession of priests and replaced the legitimate priests with criminals and ignoramuses. The Zealots even installed their own mock "high priest" and paraded him before the people as though he was a clown on a stage. (*Wars*, iv, iii, 3-6,8)

In the height of their arrogance, the Zealots took up their residence in the very Temple of God. They filled it with abominations and turned it into "a shop of tyranny." Like "wild beasts," they trampled upon the holy places while their hands were warm with the blood of their own countrymen. (*Wars*, iv, iii, 3,10-11)

When the people attempted to overthrow them, the Zealots polluted the floor of the Temple with their own blood and retreated into the Inner Court. From there, they made the House of God their fortress, and their place of carousing and drinking. (*Wars*, iv, iii, 7,9-12; iv, iv, 3) (II Thess. 2:3-4)

Almost immediately after this, 20,000 Idumeans (Edomites) marched to Jerusalem to fight with the Zealots against the people. (*Wars*, iv, iv, 2) (This was when the Lord intended his children in Jerusalem and in Judea to instantly drop everything and flee to the mountains.)

That very night, there was an incredibly violent lightning storm and an earthquake. (*Wars*, iv, iv, 5) During the storm the Idumeans secreted their way into the City, (*Wars*, iv, iv, 6-7) joined the Zealots, and launched a surprise attack on the unsuspecting populace. Everyone throughout the City was astonished at the Judgment of God that was suddenly coming upon them. (*Wars*, iv, v, 1)

After a night of terror and carnage, the morning saw 8,000 dead bodies in the outer Temple. (*Wars*, iv, v, 1) The Idumeans then proceeded to murder the two eldest high priests. They cast out their naked corpses and left them unburied to become food for dogs and wild animals. (*Wars*, iv, v, 2)

These abominations were the beginning of the end for Jerusalem. After that awful day, things progressively became worse and worse in the Holy City. Within the next two years and seven months (approximately), Judea was reduced to ashes and Jerusalem became an unspeakable chamber of demoniacs. (*Wars*, v-vi)

For the sake of God's chosen ones among the Jews, those days were cut short, and in September of A.D. 70 the power of the holy people was finally shattered. (Dan. 12:7) The City and the Sanctuary were razed to the ground by the Romans, (Lk. 19:41-44) and the inhabitants of Judea were taken captive into all nations. (*Wars*, vii)

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the City depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the City, because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the Land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the nations until the times of the nations be fulfilled." (Lk. 21:20-24)

QUESTION 44: I would like to know since Jesus has already returned then what happens to us when we die? For I was raised thinking that we are waiting on Jesus to come back for his people.

ANSWER: This is one of the wonderful things about the preterist doctrine. In futurism, when we die our spirits go directly to be with God in Heaven, only to be taken away from Him some day and put back into our reconstituted, physical bodies on Earth.

In contrast, preterists do not believe that Christians in Heaven have been waiting for centuries to leave Heaven and to be put back on a refurbished planet Earth. Preterists believe that when we die, we not only go immediately to be "with Christ," (Phil. 1:23) but we *stay with Him forever*. "*So shall we ever be with the Lord.*" (I Thess. 4:17)

After we die, we "rest" and are "blessed," because our "deeds" "follow with" us. (Rev. 14:13) To live on Earth is to do the works that our Father has ordained for us. (Eph. 2:10) To die is "gain." (Phil. 1:21)

After we die, we are judged. "*It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.*" (Heb. 9:27) We are saved by grace through faith in Christ's blood, and when we die we are rewarded according to the works we did while we were in the body. (I Cor. 3:14; II Cor. 5:10)

After we die, we become "like angels." (Matt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25; Lk. 20:36) In Heaven we will be spirits. (Heb. 12:23) Not naked, disembodied phantoms hovering about, but spirits in the way that God Himself is a Spirit (Jn. 4:24), and that the angels are spirits (Heb. 1:7;)

After we die, we enjoy every blessing that futurists on Earth today think we will not obtain until an allegedly future Parousia at an alleged end of the New Covenant Age.

When I think about what it will be like when we die, I think of Moses and Elijah on the "Mount of Transfiguration." Those two men lived in glorious splendor and talked with Jesus, (Lk. 9:31) Who Himself was as radiant as the sun and as a flash of lightning before them. (Matt. 17:2; Lk. 9:29) Moses and Elijah were so glorious in their "afterlife state" that one of the Lord's apostles wanted to build tabernacles for them. (Matt. 17:4)

Yet the Bible also tells us this: Not only was John the Baptist greater than Moses and Elijah, (Matt. 11:11; Lk. 7:28) but the very weakest of all Christians is greater than was John the Baptist:

"He that is least in the Kingdom is greater than [John the Baptist]." (Matt. 11:11; Lk. 7:28)

The glory of Moses (II Cor. 3:13) and Elijah, and of John the Baptist, as bright and as consuming as it was, was **nothing** in comparison to the eternal and transcendent Glory of "Christ in you." (II Cor. 3:10-11; Col. 1:27; Heb. 11:39) The eternal Glory of the Kingdom of God (Lk. 17:21) is "*exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. ...Amen!*" (Eph. 3:20)

One of the three things that forever "remains" throughout the Christian Age is "Hope" (I Cor. 13:13). As individual believers today, our living Expectation (I Peter 1:3-4) is to be forever with the Lord and His holy ones in the unimaginable joys of Heaven.

"Comfort one another with these words." (I Thess. 4:18)

QUESTION 45: According to preterists, who are the two witnesses? Please be more specific than answers I have received in the past.

ANSWER: I don't think there is a consensus among preterists as to who "*the two witnesses*" were. I personally believe the "*two witnesses*" were symbolic of *the Church in the last days*. Here are seven reasons why I believe this:

1. God gave His "*two witnesses*" authority to lock up heaven so that there would be no rain while they prophesied, to turn the waters into blood and to smite the Land with every calamity. (Rev. 11:6)

These judgments against Israel were the judgments of *the saints, apostles and prophets*, in Rev. 18:20. In Rev. 16:2-12 these judgments were "*poured out*" on the wicked *by means of the Church* (in the symbol of the "*seven angels*"). Compare Rev. 15:6 and Rev. 19:8,14; and compare Rev. 21:9 and Rev. 22:8,9.

Through the faith and prayers of the Church, the destroying Mountain of Israel was violently cast into the sea, turning the waters into blood. (Jer. 51:25; Matt. 21:21; Rev. 8:8)

2. Fire came out of the mouth of the "*two witnesses*," and it devoured their enemies. (Rev. 11:5)

This symbol was taken from Jer. 5:14:

"...Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it will consume them."

The prophetic words of the Church consumed the people in the Last Days, just as the prophetic words of Jeremiah consumed the people in his day.

Utterance and wisdom was "*given*" to believers that none of their enemies were able to resist or refute. (Matt. 10:19-20; Mk. 13:11; Lk. 21:15)

3. No one could harm the two witnesses. (Rev. 11:5) In Lk. 10:19, Jesus gave believers "*authority*" to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, so that *nothing could injure them*.

4. The two witnesses were the "*two olive trees and the two lampstands*." (Rev. 11:4)

In Zech. 3-4, these symbols represented Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the king. In the New Testament, *the Church* is God's "*kingdom and priesthood*." (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6)

5. The beast made war with the two witnesses, conquered them and killed them. (Rev. 11:7)

This parallels Rev. 13:7-9, where the beast made war with *the saints*, conquered them and killed them.

6. The two prophets "*stood on their feet*" after "*a breath of God*" entered them, and they ascended into Heaven. In that very hour, their enemies became terrified and Jerusalem's downfall began. (Rev. 11:12-13)

This parallels Eze. 37, where the house of Israel was symbolized as "*a valley of dry bones*." The "*breath of God*" entered the slain of Israel and "*they stood on their feet*" and became a vast, conquering army. (Eze. 37:9-14)

The Church was persecuted and martyred, until God raised her up, when He came and paid back affliction to those Jews who were afflicting her. (I Thess. 2:14-16; 4:13-18; II Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 6:10-17)

7. The peoples "*rejoiced*" and made merry and gave presents to one another when the two prophets (witnesses) who had prophesied in sackcloth were killed, (Rev. 11:3,9-10) but the two prophets were later raised up. (Rev. 11:12)

This is a reiteration of Jesus' words concerning the Church:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but **the world will rejoice**; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy." (Jn. 16:20).

I believe the symbol of the "*two witnesses*" is based on Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16:

"On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death....."

The prophetic witness of the Church against fleshly Israel was *faithful and true*.

"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony [witness]. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be delivered up even by parents and

brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all on account of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives. But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand." (Lk. 21:12-20)

QUESTION 46: It's universally held that the Apostle John lived to a very old age. Why isn't there anything from him through Polycarp or any other early Christians regarding the Second Coming?

ANSWER: Very few Christian writings from the decades following A.D. 70 have survived to this day. Even quotations of those writings in other writings are scarce. If John did write after A.D. 70, his writings of those years have been lost.

What we can see however from the scant surviving documents of those decades after the fall of Jerusalem, is that the post-apostolic Church adjusted, or "developed," the original eschatology of John and the other Apostles.

As you may know, believers who lived in the Apostolic era believed that Jesus was going to return in their own lifetime. This expectation was in strict accordance with the Lord's own Word:

"Jesus said to His disciples, '...The Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.'" (Matt. 16:24,27-28)

But after Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, and the Second Coming and the destruction of heaven and earth had not happened **literally**, sub-apostolic teachers then came up with the concept of the "Parousia delay." We see this concept most notably in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (written shortly after the fall of Jerusalem) and in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. (c. A.D. 85-140)

In the *Epistle of Barnabas*, it was taught that because Jerusalem had recently fallen, believers could be sure that Jesus was about to come **at any moment**. And the *Shepherd of Hermas* was written to explain why there had been a delay in the Church's original, Apostolic expectation.

The Second Coming of Christ and the fall of Jerusalem were gradually *dichotomized* in the years that followed A.D. 70. As the centuries rolled on, the two events eventually became *unrelated* in the mind of most.

The early abandonment of the eschatology of the Apostolic era was not a reflection on the teaching abilities of the Apostles, but it was a reflection on our slowness in comprehending some of the more difficult teachings of the Apostles. (II Peter 3:16) Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, (c. A.D. 150) was refreshingly humble and honest in this regard:

"For neither am I, nor is any other like unto me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul..." (Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, 3:2).

Preterism is condemned by many futurists today as a damnable heresy. Yet there is little debate on the following point:

The first century, apostolic Church expected the Parousia to take place within the lifetime of the Apostles.

It necessarily follows from that admission that every doctrine today that teaches that the Parousia of Christ did **not** take place within the lifetime of the Apostles is a flat denial of the original eschatology of the Church.

Since preterism (the doctrine that the Parousia was to take place within the lifetime of the Apostles) was the original eschatology of the Apostolic Church, we can rest assured that it is infinitely more trustworthy and authoritative than all of the "eschatologies," so called, that were "developed" subsequently.

The original and infallible eschatology that God revealed to the Apostolic Church, and which was believed and taught by the Church from A.D. 30-70, should be believed by us with all of our hearts and minds, that is, if we truly believe that the Apostles and prophets are the foundation of the eternal City of God. (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14)

A momentous work of the modern Church in coming days will be its **eschatological reformation**, its submission to Apostolic / preterist eschatology. May certain Church leaders today emulate the humility of Polycarp, and cease in their virtually unqualified veneration of the Creeds, and at last confess the possibility that the historic Church has erred in its eschatology.

In thus humbling ourselves in the sight of the Lord, we will discover a more biblical worldview, and will bring glory to the Eternal Gospel. Amen.

(Note: A preterist author named Samuel M. Frost has recently written a book called *Misplaced Hope* that deals with this

issue in detail. The book is sometimes difficult to read, but it has many strong arguments as to how and why the early Church abandoned Apostolic / preterist eschatology. The book was published by a liberal publisher, but the author himself is Reformed. You can purchase a copy of the book directly from the author by e-mailing him at GClark105@aol.com.)

QUESTION 47: Did the angels gather the elect already? (Matt. 24:31) And was this referring to believers that had died?

ANSWER: I believe the angels gathered the elect in A.D. 70, and that the elect consisted of the dead and the living.

The elect were gathered at "*the great sound of a trumpet*." This was "*the trump of God*" in I Thess. 4:16, at which the dead and the living were "*caught up together*," (I Thess. 4:17) and gathered (II Thess. 2:1) to a "*meeting with the Lord in the air*." (I Thess. 4:17)

Rev. 10:7 reveals the exact meaning of the "trumpet." When the seventh and last trumpet sounded, (I Cor. 15:52) "*the mystery of God*" was perfected. "The mystery" was none other than that the Gentiles would be "*fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel*." (Eph. 3:4-6) The trumpet was the Gospel-Voice of Christ. (Compare Jn. 5:25-28; I Thess. 4:16-17) It was the uniting (gathering) of the saints in His "one Body" at the annulment of "the ministry of condemnation" in 70. (II Cor. 3:9; Col. 2:16-17)

QUESTION 48: Should the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Lk. 16:19-31) be taken at face value as the story of a man who died and suffered torments in Hades? Or is it an allegory? I ask this because I've seen preterists say that this story had nothing to do with what happened under the old covenant when people died, but that it was only symbolic of the Judgment in A.D. 70.

ANSWER: I believe the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man depicted what happened to people like Lazarus and the rich man in the afterlife before the time of Christ. Here are two reasons why I do not agree with the interpretation that the story is purely symbolic of the Judgment in 70:

1. A comparison of Lk. 16:23 and Rev. 20:13 shows that the historical setting of the story was pre-A.D. 70:

"*In Hades [the rich man] lifted up his eyes...*" (Lk. 16:23)

Then later, in A.D. 70:

"*Hades gave up the dead...*" (Rev. 20:13)

2. Abraham appealed to the old covenant ("*Moses and the Prophets*") as that which made the rich man's brothers accountable to repent. (Lk. 16:29) The historical-judicial context of that condemnation was pre-Cross. (Lk. 16:16; cf. Lk. 18:18-27)

Under the old covenant, the Israelites had "*Moses and the prophets*" to call them to righteousness. In the Last Days, they had the One that the Law and the prophets had foreshadowed and predicted, i.e., Christ, His words, His work, and His Church.

The reason a number of preterists allegorize this story is because the Old Testament says nothing about "torments" in the "afterlife" before Judgment Day. So the mention of "torments" in the story leads them to identify the rich man's "torments" with the torments of the A.D.-70 "Lake of Fire" in Rev. 20:10.

I believe there is another explanation for the Old Testament's silence about the "torments" of the wicked dead in Hades before the time of Christ. II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 teach that angels who sinned in ancient times were *kept in eternal bonds in pits of darkness, waiting for the Judgment of the Great Day*. The doctrine of the perpetual suffering of these angels throughout the ages before the time of Christ *is not found in the Old Testament*. Though the doctrine was a truth that had already been taught in Israel (in the Book of Enoch), it was not officially included in the Canon until the time of the Apostles.

It was the same for the doctrine of the punishment of wicked men in Hades before the time of Christ. It was one of many other already-established truths that was *confirmed* in the Apostolic Scriptures. When the Lord uttered the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man, He *reiterated* and *approved* that which had already been revealed through non-canonical prophecies. Josephus related that teaching of the Jews in His *Discourse To The Greeks Concerning Hades*: "*Hades*" [is a] *...region* *...wherein the souls of the righteous and unrighteous are detained,* *...a place of custody for souls, in which angels are appointed as guardians to them, who distribute to them temporary punishments, appropriate to every one's behavior....*" (Paragraph 1)

"*In this region there is a certain place set apart, as a lake of unquenchable fire, in which ...no one has yet been cast; but it*

is prepared for a day foreordained by God, in which one righteous sentence shall deservedly be passed upon all men; when the unjust ...shall be judged to this everlasting punishment, ...while the just shall obtain an incorruptible and never-fading Kingdom. These are now indeed confined in Hades, but not in the same place wherein the unjust are confined." (Paragraph 2)

*"...The just have dwelt [in] ...a region of light ...from the beginning of the world, ...with whom there is no place of toil, no burning heat, no piercing cold, nor are any briars there; but the countenance of the fathers and of the just, which they see always smiles upon them, while they wait for that rest and eternal new life in Heaven, which is to succeed this region. This place we call **the Bosom of Abraham.**"* (Paragraph 3)

"But as to the unjust, ...they see the place [or choir] of the fathers and of the just. ...For a chaos deep and large is fixed between them; insomuch that a just man who has compassion upon them cannot be admitted, nor can one that is unjust ...pass over it." (Paragraph 4)

(See *The Book of Enoch* (Section 1, Chapter 22) which also taught a separation or partitioning of the dead before Judgment Day.)

QUESTION 49: If Jesus has already returned then why is it that it seems as though the world is going in the direction of a one world government?

ANSWER: Let's say that in the year 2007 the world becomes "One Government," and let's say that this "One Government" cruelly persecutes Christians.

Would these events indicate that preterism is false? No.

Why not? Because in the preterist view of Scripture and history, every Christ-hating empire is destined to fall in the course of history. It is either destroyed or it gradually disintegrates. Evil empires, no matter how powerful they become, are little more than a pack of mad dogs outside the eternal City of the great King. (Ps. 48:2-8; Rev. 22:15)

Zech. 14:16-18 refers directly to every person and nation that refuses to worship Christ in the years following the Parousia in 70:

"Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths." (Zech. 14:16-18)

After the Coming of the Messiah (Zech. 14:5) and the eternal establishment of the New Jerusalem, (Zech. 14:11) there have been "*families of the earth*" that do not worship the King, the Lord of hosts. What happens to these "Egyptians" today, among whom God does not dwell? According to the Scriptures, they have "*no rain.*"

They need to hear and obey Hosea 10:12:

*"Sow with a view to righteousness. Reap in accordance with kindness. Break up your fallow ground. For it is time to seek the Lord **Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.**"* (Hosea 10:12; cf. 6:3)

Today, in the Messianic (Christian) Age, God's enemies --individuals and states-- have "*no rain.*" They "*lick the dust.*" (Ps. 72:9) They are on the "outside." They rise for a season, but they soon vanish like a vapor. Their goals are sheer futility. (Eccl. 1:2ff)

Where is the Assyrian Empire today? The Babylonian Empire? The Egyptian Empire? The Grecian Empire? The Ottoman Empire? The Persian Empire? The Roman Empire? The Nazi Empire? The Soviet Empire?

They are all licking the dust. They had no rain and they perished, because they were not founded on the *imperishable* Word of Christ. **And it will be the same for any other empire in our future that rises up against Jesus, the King of kings.**

In contrast to those empires, where is the Church?

She is ever-increasing, (Ps. 72:17; 115:14; Isa. 9:7; Jn. 3:30) and has been perpetually worshiping the Father and the Lamb for almost 2,000 years now. We will continue to serve God, and to have peace and fellowship with Him **without interruption**, "*to all generations forever and ever*" (Eph. 3:21) --no matter what cruelties an evil empire or religious

institution might inflict upon us for a moment in history. (II Cor. 4:17)

"Let them fear You while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. May He come down like rain upon the mown grass, like showers that water the Earth. In His days may the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace till the moon is no more. May He also rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. Let the nomads of the desert bow before Him; And His enemies lick the dust." (Ps. 72:5-9)

QUESTION 50: I heard a preterist author say that Jesus did not possess all the attributes of omniscience because of what Luke 2:52 says about Jesus increasing in wisdom. He also relates this to the fact that Jesus did not know the time of His return in Matthew 24:36. Does this mean He didn't have total omniscience? That statement kind of bothered me a little. If Jesus is fully God and fully man, how can anyone say He didn't have total omniscience?

ANSWER: "...Christ Jesus, Who subsisting in the form of God, esteemed it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, having taken the form of a servant, and having become in the likeness of men. And having been found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, having become obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:5-8)

As we agree, Jesus did not simply "resemble" a human. He did not remain in His divine, heavenly Glory and merely "project" a "fantom image" of a man (as the Gnostics taught). The Son *truly* gave up the Glory which He had with the Father from eternity past, (Jn. 17:5) and became a Man. A Man Who was *truly* in one place at one time. A Man Who *truly* became hungry and thirsty. A Man Whose body was *truly* weak. A Man Who was *truly* vulnerable to His enemies, even to the point of death.

Jesus' limited knowledge was not a unique aspect of His humility on Earth. "*In the days of His flesh,*" (Heb. 5:7) He had humbled and limited Himself in regard to His divine Glory and Power. In the same way, when He became "*a little while lower than the angels,*" (Ps. 8:5-6; Heb. 2:7-9) He did not retain the *infinite* knowledge of the Deity.

Jesus of Nazareth was Yahweh the Son, emptied and humiliated. The humbling of the second Person of the Godhead -- whether in glory, or in strength or in knowledge-- is not a dilemma, but it is a *profound "mystery."*

"And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory." (I Tim. 3:16)

QUESTION 51: How would you explain the Great White Throne Judgment and the Judgment Seat of Christ from the preterist perspective? When do these judgments take place?

ANSWER: The terms "*Great White Throne*" (Rev. 20:11) and "*Judgment Seat of Christ*" (II Cor. 5:10) refer to God's Judgment of all men, which took place in 70.

Here are Scriptures that show that the Apostolic church was living in the final days of crisis before the Resurrection of the dead and the Judgment:

"...There is about to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.' ...And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment which is about to come...." (Acts. 24:15, 25; Jn. 5:28-29)

"...He has fixed a Day in which He is about to judge the world..." (Acts 17:31)

"...Christ Jesus, Who is about to judge the living and the dead." (II Tim. 4:1)

"...The Judge is standing right at the door." (Jms. 5:9)

"...They shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." (I Peter 4:5)

"...but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which is about to consume the enemies. (Lk. 19:27)

Revelation 11:1-18 reveals that God judged the living and the dead, the just and the unjust, at the fall of Jerusalem. After Jerusalem was trodden under foot for 3 1/2 years, (Rev. 11:2) a tenth of the City fell in an earthquake (Rev. 11:13) and seven thousand men were killed. (Rev. 11:13) Then "*quickly*" afterward, (Rev. 11:14) "*the kingdom of this world*" became the eternal Kingdom of the Father and the Son. (Rev. 11:15)

"The kingdom of this world" was the kingdom of the Pharisees and chief priests. (Amos 9:8; Matt. 8:12; Heb. 9:1) The Church became the eternal Kingdom of the Father and the Son (Compare Jn. 14:23; Rev. 22:3) when the unredeemed sons of the kingdom were cast out in 70 (Matt. 8:12):

"Therefore I say to you [chief priests, Pharisees and elders], *the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.*" (Matt. 21:43)

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." (Lk. 12:32)

"But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come." (Dan. 7:18)

"...until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. (Dan. 7:22)

Revelation 11:18 reveals what happened when the Kingdom was taken from the Pharisees and given to the Church:

"And the nations were wrathful, and Your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to Your bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

The Pharisees, chief priests and the elders saw their Judge seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven, in God's calling out and empowering of His Church throughout the Last Days. (Matt. 26:64; I Cor. 14:21-22) By 70, all the tribes of the Land understood as well, (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7) when they fell by the sword and were led captive into all the nations, (Lk. 21:24) and when the Temple and the Holy City were reduced to rubble. (Lk. 19:44; 21:5,6)

In that Great Day, the dead were raised, both the just and the unjust, and were judged according to their works. (Dan. 12:1-2) The sons of the flesh were cast out, but the Church was perfected, confirmed, and established, and was given eternal dominion over the earth as God's Kingdom of priests. (Dan. 12:3; I Peter 5:10-11; Rev. 5:10; 22:5)

"Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His Kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him." (Dan. 7:27)

QUESTION 52: How do we reconcile Romans with James? Are we "*justified by faith apart from works*?" (Rom. 3:28; 4:6) Or are we "*justified by works, and not by faith alone*?" (Jms. 2:24) This seems somewhat confusing and contradictory to me. Any help here would be much appreciated.

ANSWER: "Justification" in Romans 4 refers to *the forgiveness of sins through faith in the redemptive work of Jesus.* (Rom. 3:21-30)

"Justification" in James 2 refers to the *vindication* of a believer. (cf. Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:35) A believer is justified or vindicated by works insofar as his works *demonstrate / prove* his (already-justifying) faith (Jms. 2:18; Gen. 22:12) and *perfect / bring to maturity* his (already-justifying) faith (Jms. 2:22) and *fulfill God's word that He had reckoned the believer's faith to him as righteousness.* (Jms. 2:23)

Romans 4: God demonstrated beforehand that justification (i.e., salvation / redemption) would be granted through faith (belief), when He justified our father Abraham by faith "*apart from works.*" (Rom. 4:6) Abraham had not yet met any conditions of obedience when God justified him through faith. (Rom. 4:10-11)

Every attempt at salvation / redemption through our obedience to God invariably brings down the wrath of God upon our souls. (Rom. 3:14-15) Therefore, salvation from sin (i.e., justification) can *only* be received by God's unconditional, unmerited favor, through *faith* (belief) in the risen Savior. (Rom. 4:16-25)

James 2: James speaks of daily Christian living, and not of justification at conversion. Can a genuine believer live a workless life? (Jms. 2:14,17,20) Can a genuine believer willfully neglect his brother or sister who lives in daily need of clothing and food? (Jms. 2:15-16) Absolutely not. Even demons have that kind of dead faith. (Jms. 2:19)

We were all justified by faith "*apart from works,*" but our faith must not, and indeed **cannot**, remain "*alone.*" (Jms. 2:17,24) If it does, we were never justified by faith (saved) in the first place, and the love of God does not dwell in us. (I Jn. 3:17)

A man is justified (*saved / redeemed / forgiven / made a participant in the Divine nature*) by his faith in God's Son. That same man is then justified (*vindicated / proven just / brought to maturity*) by his God-ordained, God-empowered endurance and works. (Rom. 4:18-24; I Cor. 15:10; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13; Jms. 2:24)

As the Reformers said, we are justified (saved) by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.

QUESTION 53: Why is preterism so popular among the "Reformed?"

ANSWER: I can think of seven reasons why preterism is popular among Reformed believers:

1. Reformed believers love the Reformation doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*: "By Scripture only." They strive to believe what the Bible says and to reject every tradition that contradicts it. They change their beliefs, if they are convinced they are in disagreement with Scripture.

Regrettably, some Reformed leaders presuppose that preterism must be a *misinterpretation of Scripture*, because they believe that the future-ness and biological-ness of the Second Coming and the Resurrection of the dead are cardinal, nonnegotiable elements of the Biblical Faith. Ironically, their blind faith in the eschatological interpretations of the Church Fathers is "Roman Catholic" to the core. The sad result is that they are attempting to resolve this substantive theological issue by reference to historical traditions, without searching the Scriptures. (The Reformers would be rolling over in their graves ...if they weren't already resurrected, that is.)

2. Preterism is systematic. Reformed believers love to see the system of "the whole counsel of God" in the Scriptures. (e.g., the five points of Calvinism) Along these lines, preterism often attracts scholarly, intellectual Christians, and the Reformed camp is known for its doctors and great thinkers.

3. Preterism is a non-sensational, spiritualizing eschatology, much like the amillennialism of many reformed churches. It is also a "long term world view" eschatology, much like the postmillennial, partial preterist and theonomic doctrines of so many other Reformed churches. (Calvin himself was a partial preterist theologian.) In principle --that is, from a general hermeneutical and "worldview" standpoint-- preterism is not very different from many Reformed doctrines.

4. Preterism magnifies God's sovereignty in history in that it perfectly and wonderfully demonstrates the power of God in working out the "*fulfillment of all things written*." Reformed believers love the doctrine of God's sovereignty.

5. Preterism is almost wholly concerned with "covenant." It is Christ-centered and not "events"-centered (as with many forms of futurism), and it is "Body of Christ"-centered and not individual-centered. These things all harmonize well with the *Covenant Theology* of most Reformed believers.

6. Reformed believers are used to being God's "spoilers," so to speak. Neither Calvinism nor preterism make popular, mainstream Christians in general "feel good." Calvinism robs us of our "free will," and its doctrine of "limited atonement" makes God unjust and cruel (in the eyes of many Christians). Similarly, preterism robs us of our Rapture out of this world, and it robs us of our biological resurrection-bodies on an absolutely perfect planet Earth.

Reformed believers are accustomed to believing what many other Christians deem to be "unbelievable." This makes the "horse pill" of preterism easier for Reformed believers to swallow, than for many other Christians.

7. Preterism is Reformed Theology realized and confirmed in history:

God brought an entire covenant-world to a cataclysmic end because it is *absolutely impossible* for man to become justified through an act of faithful obedience to God. (**Total Depravity**) If there had been any conceivable way that man could have found life through a faithful act of obedience to God, then there would not have been any need for the Cross of Christ, or for the fiery destruction of the world of human "righteousness," or for the establishment of the eternal New Covenant of God's Righteousness.

God created a *spiritual* nation from within the nation that embodied man's "righteousness." This was accomplished sovereignly by God's Spirit, despite the sinfulness, ignorance and weakness of every man who was chosen. (**Unconditional Election, Irresistible Grace**) God had mercy on the spiritual nation that He created, but He sovereignly hardened the fleshly nation. (**Limited Atonement**) God's New Covenant nation --the Church-- is permanent and eternal. Therefore, so are her children. (**Perseverance of the saints**)

QUESTION 54: Doesn't the existence of sin and of God's enemies on Earth show that we are in a worse state today than before the Fall?

ANSWER: Before "the Fall," there was the Enemy, and people who did not have eternal life, and who were vulnerable to Death under a covenant of works.

Now because of the Cross and the Parousia of Christ, the Accuser is dead. We have been redeemed and forgiven, and

have unbreakable fellowship with God. We are invulnerable to Death. (Rev. 2:11) Unlike Adam and Eve in the Garden, we have been "*blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ*" (Eph. 1:3). Our "state" is far better than was the state of man before the Fall.

The existence of God's enemies outside of the Church in Rev. 22:15 does not make the perfection of Rev. 21-22 "a worse state" than that which existed in Gen. 1-2. Even the "dogs" are put on Earth according to God's purpose, (1 Peter 2:8) for His glory, and for the eternal good of His Church:

"The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil." (Prov. 16:4)

"What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." (Rom. 9:22-24)

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28)

QUESTION 55: I believe that Jesus is God, the Son, the Messiah. I believe we are saved by grace through faith in the blood of Jesus, and not through any works. However, I sometimes find myself doubting my own salvation. How can I know if I'm one of the elect and really saved?

ANSWER: Love God and keep His commandments, and love your brothers in work and in truth:

"And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 Jn. 2:3)

"...By this we know that we are in Him: The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." (1 Jn. 2:5-6)

"...We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." (1 Jn. 3:14)

"...Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him." (1 Jn. 3:18-19)

"...And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." (1 Jn. 3:24)

"...If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." (1 Jn. 4:12-13)

"...By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments." (1 Jn. 5:2)

QUESTION 56: A preterist recently wrote that futurism is an error that "cuts at the heart of the Gospel." Do you agree with that statement? If so, why do you still consider futurists to be Christian brothers?

ANSWER: Yes, I do agree with the statement that futurism cuts at the heart of the Gospel, because futurism has implications that, **if followed through consistently**, would overthrow the Gospel itself:

Futurism means that "*the way of the Holy Places*" has not been revealed. (Heb. 9:8) In other words, it means that Christ our High Priest has not appeared "*a second time*" to His anxiously awaiting people, (Heb. 9:28) after presenting His Sacrifice to the Father in "*the Holy Places*." (Lev. 16) It means that atonement for our sins is not complete today.

Christ was "*about to*" (Heb. 9:11) appear "*in a very little while*," without "*delay*," (Heb. 10:37) at the disappearing of the old covenant, (Heb. 8:13) when the worldly tabernacle fell. (Heb. 9:8) If His Appearing out of the heavenly Holy Places did not take place at that appointed time, then it irresistibly follows that **Jesus' Word failed, and our High Priest's Sacrifice was rejected by the Father, and we are still dead in our sins.**

These implications of futurism are damnable heresies that would have been received with great delight by the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. And they have been thrown in the face of the Church by atheists and liberals of our own day.

So why do I (and all other Reformed preterists) still consider futurists to be our brothers in Christ even though the implications of their belief ultimately serve to destroy the Christian Faith? Because futurists are not thoroughgoing in their futurism. They believe that Christ's atonement for our sins was completed. They do not believe in or confess the heretical implications of futurism. They confess (inconsistently but truly) all of the cardinal elements of the Faith.

The fault of the futurists is ignorance, misunderstanding and inconsistency, not blasphemy. Nevertheless, futurism is a serious error, not only because of what it necessarily implies, but because of what it inevitably creates: "**consistent futurists**," i.e., **liberals and atheists**. It gives occasion to these enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

Without a doubt, it is high time to awake from the destructive slumber of futurism. God is always reforming His Church. May He reform us in our eschatology, so that we will defeat the liberals within, refute the atheists without, and build up His Kingdom in its most holy Faith. If the Lord is willing, these things will be done when we humble ourselves in His sight and let His Word say what it says.

QUESTION 57: What do you think about Matt. 27:52-53? It says that "*many bodies of the saints*" were raised, and they came out of their graves after the resurrection of Jesus. Were they raised with glorified bodies?

ANSWER: "...Coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy City and were **manifested** [or "**disclosed**"] to many." (Matt. 27:53) (Greek: *emphanizo*. See Jn. 14:21,22; Acts 23:15,22; 24:1; 25:2,15; Heb. 9:24; 11:14.)

Compare this with Acts 10:40:

"God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible, ["manifest" / "disclosed"] not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God...." (Acts 10:40) (Greek: *emphanees*. See Rom. 10:20.)

It is possible that as Christ was manifested only to certain witnesses before He was taken up, these resurrected saints were also manifested only to select witnesses and were then taken from the earth.

Whether or not though these saints had "glorified bodies" is something that I think cannot be determined from the text. Assuming that they did miraculously appear before witnesses, and that they then miraculously disappeared, these things would not necessarily mean that these saints had "glorified bodies." Philip was "*snatched away*," and he "*found himself*" in another location about thirty miles away, in Acts 8:39-40. He miraculously disappeared and miraculously appeared, but he did not have a "glorified body."

I think that all we can ascertain from Matt. 27:52-53 as to the nature of these resurrected saints' bodies is that 1.) they had fallen asleep, 2.) they were raised, 3.) they came out of the tombs, 4.) they entered into Jerusalem and 5.) they were manifested or disclosed to many. Beyond these facts, we can do little more than speculate. Some have said that they left Earth with Jesus sometime between Jn. 20:17 and Jn. 20:27. Perhaps that is true, but it is only speculation.

(Incidentally, if these resurrected saints were miraculously manifested only to chosen people and were then miraculously "snatched away," that could help explain why this event was not mentioned in Josephus' histories.)

It is possible that these resurrected saints had been previously martyred. If that was the case, then their entrance into the holy City might have served as a terrifying sign to the murderous leadership there (Lk. 13:33) --a sign not only of the divine power of the resurrection of Jesus, but also that God was about to raise up a supernatural, avenging army against the Great City.

When we interpret Matt. 27:52-53, we should keep in mind that it is a "stand alone" passage, with no parallel or explanatory reference, and that it contains very few details. These facts should cause us to be very careful when we draw our conclusions. We should also be careful not to attach too much eschatological significance to this lone passage. By this I mean that we should not attempt to turn it into "*the first resurrection*" of Rev. 20:5-6, or the "*first fruits*" of Rev. 14:4, or the resurrection of "*many*" in Dan. 12:2, or into Christ's leading "*captive a host of captives*" (NASB) in Eph. 4:8, as some interpreters do.

(For a fanciful elaboration on Matt. 27:52-53, see [The Gospel of Nicodemus](#), Greek form, Chapter 17ff. c. A.D. 400)

QUESTION 58: The Bible clearly says that if we are under ANY part of the Law, then we are under ALL of the Law *in its entirety*, and are thus in bondage. As a preterist, you know that the old covenant (the Law) VANISHED in 70. Yet in your Q&A's #2, 14, 18, and 23, you actually say that we are *still under SOME of the laws of Moses* (i.e., the so-called "non-shadow / non-fleshly" laws). According to the Bible, by making PARTS of the old covenant *binding* today, you are putting Christians back under ALL of the Law. It's all or nothing. How do you answer?

ANSWER: The Scriptures do not say that if we keep one old-covenant law then we are in "bondage" to the whole Law since we are unable to obey every commandment without falling short.

James 2:10 does say this: "*Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, ...has become guilty of all.*"

However, James' point was not that believers must abstain from all the laws in the Old Testament.

According to the context, James' point was this: The fact that we keep the old-covenant precept to believe in the one true God (Deut. 6:4; Jms. 2:9) does not mean that we have a license to ignore the rest of God's laws. In other words, just because we obey the old-covenant law forbidding adultery, that does not mean we are free to disobey the old-covenant law forbidding murder. (Jms. 2:11)

Christians are called to *obey all of God's laws*. Even though we all "*stumble in many ways*," (as James says eighteen verses later in 3:2) our failures do not put us in bondage to the Law, because we have been redeemed from "*the curse of the Law*." (Gal. 3:13) We have been given God's Spirit and have been set free to walk in God's laws without fear of condemnation. This is the glorious *liberty* of the Christian.

The only way someone can put himself "in bondage" to the Law is to perform an act of obedience in order to appease God's eternal wrath against sin. This constitutes a rejection of Christ's sacrifice for sins, and is in effect, a call for the reinstatement of the sacrificial system of Moses ("the Law"). This is how people put themselves under the curse of the Law. When unredeemed men look to the Law (good deeds) for salvation, that is when failure to keep one law results in bondage to all the laws:

*"For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.' Now that **no one is justified by the Law before God** is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.'" (Gal. 3:10-11)*

*"And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, **you who are seeking to be justified by law**; you have fallen from grace." (Gal. 5:3-4)*

Under the old covenant, God's laws were the **condition** (Ex. 19:5) and the **condemnation** that stood between God and men. In this way, God's servants were "*under the law*." In the New Covenant, in contrast, God has sovereignly engraved His laws on our hearts by His Spirit Who indwells us. For God has forgiven us of all our transgressions through His Own blood, so that we now love Him with an incorruptible love, and keep His commandments. (Heb. 8:10-12) Thus, by God's surpassing grace in us, we *establish* the Law. (Rom. 3:31)

The Mosaic system of condemnation vanished when the "*shadow*" of the Law (i.e., foods, drinks, baptisms, festivals, new moons, Sabbaths, the priesthood, gifts, sacrifices, offerings, fleshly ordinances, etc., etc.) passed away in 70. (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 8:5,13; 9:10; 10:1) Yet at the same time, the "*more acceptable*" and "*better*" laws (I Sam. 15:22; Prov. 21:3) that were contained in and foreshadowed in that earthly system (e.g., to love God, to love your neighbor, to do justly, to love mercy, to have the knowledge of God, to walk humbly with Him, etc.) were fulfilled and established. (Prov. 21:3; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Matt. 5:17; Mk. 12:33; Rom. 3:31) Such "non-shadow," "non-fleshly" laws are God's great "*delight*." (I Sam. 15:22) Such laws were not "reinstated" in the New Covenant, for they were never **de**-instituted. They are the truth of God. From eternity to eternity, God's laws stand.

"...All His precepts are sure. They are upheld forever and ever..." (Ps. 111:7-8)

"I will keep Your Law continually, forever and ever." (Ps. 119:44)

"Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your Law is truth." (Ps. 119:142)

"The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting." (Ps. 119:160)

"...[Moses] received living words..." (Acts 7:38)

"...The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good." (Rom. 7:12)

"...The Law is spiritual..." (Rom. 7:14)

QUESTION 59: Are Isa. 66:8 and Matt. 21:43 prophetic references to the events that happened on the day of Pentecost? Are there any more references to the Church being the "nation" of God?

ANSWER: "*Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.*" (Isa. 66:8)

This prophecy is parallel to Isa. 54:1:

"Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child. Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; For the sons of the desolate one are more numerous than the sons of the married woman," says the Lord." (Isa. 54:1)

According to Gal. 4:27, Isa. 54:1 (and by implication Isa. 66:8) is fulfilled in the Church. The Church was born "*in one day*," "*all at once*," as soon as she travailed. (cf. Rev. 12:1-2) Before the pangs of birth had come, (A.D. 60's) (Matt. 24:8; Mk.

13:8) the Church had already become "more numerous" than Israel according to the flesh. (Gal. 4:24-31)

The Church had been "not a nation" and "not a people," "without understanding" and in "darkness." But in the Last Days, (Acts 2:17) God raised up His elect from within the "sinful nation," (Isa. 1:4) and by His Spirit created His New Covenant nation (Rom. 10:19; Deut. 32:21):

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (I Peter 2:9-10)

In Hebrews 11:13-16,39-40, the Church is the better, heavenly "City" and "Country" (or "Fatherland") which the saints of old welcomed "from a distance."

"All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a Country [Fatherland] of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that (country) from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better (country), that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a City for them.And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11:13-16; 39-40)

Matt. 21:43:

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it."

This Scripture was fulfilled when "the chief priests and the Pharisees" were brought "to a wretched end" and were scattered "like dust" in A.D. 70. (Matt. 21:40-45)

The Church is the "Land," the "Country," the "City," the "Nation," and the "Kingdom." It is "Zion," "the Israel of God." (Isa. 66:8; Matt. 21:43; Gal. 4:26-31; 6:16; Heb. 11:14-16; I Peter 2:9-10; Rev. 21:2-3)

QUESTION 60: What do you do with Job 19:26 where it speaks of a fleshly resurrection?

ANSWER: Here is a literal translation of Job 19:25-26:

"For [or "Yet"] I know that my Kinsman-Redeemer [or "Avenger" or "Vindicator"] is living, and at last He shall arise [or "stand"] on the dust [or "earth"]. Even after they surround [or "destroy"] my skin, yet this: From [or "without"] my flesh I shall see God...." (Job 19:25-26)

...and at last He shall arise [or "stand"] on the dust [or "earth"]...

In this statement, Job could have been prophesying of a time after his death when God would vindicate and deliver him. (Job 3:21-22; 6:8; 7:5-10,15-16,21; 14:14; 16:18; 17:1,13-16) Or Job could have been prophesying of a day within his lifetime when God would vindicate and deliver him. (Job 10:9; 13:15-21; 11:20-22; 23:10; 17:9; 23:10; 29:1-25; cf. Ps. 3:7) Either interpretation is possible.

...Even after they surround [or "destroy"] my skin....

Who were "they?" "They" could have been the "worms" and "dust" that were "covering" Job's skin while he was yet alive, (Job 7:5) or they could have been the "worms" and "dust" of the grave. (Job 17:14; 21:26; 24:20) Or "they" could have been God's "troops," i.e., Job's accusers and former friends who were "encompassing" him and who could not, metaphorically speaking, get enough of his "flesh." (Job 10:17; 16:13; 19:12-20,22; 30:1-15; 31:31; Ps. 14:4; 27:2) Any of these interpretations is possible.

...From [or "without"] my flesh I shall see God...

Here Job could have meant, "from the vantage point of my flesh," that is to say, "looking out from my flesh I shall see God." Or Job could have meant, "from outside of my flesh," that is, "free from my flesh I shall see God." Either interpretation is possible.

In light of the above possible interpretations, there are four basic possibilities as to the meaning of Job's prophecy:

1. Job expected to die from his afflictions, and to be delivered and vindicated at a non-fleshly resurrection at the Last Day.
2. Job expected to die from his afflictions, and to be delivered and vindicated in Sheol.
3. Job expected to be vindicated and delivered from all his afflictions, and to see God within his own lifetime, before he died, while still in his flesh.
4. Job expected to die from his afflictions, and to be delivered and vindicated in a "resurrection of the flesh" at the Last

Day. Due to the difficulties in translating this prophecy, expositors and translators have rendered Job's meaning in these four different lights. Which position one takes depends not simply on one's skill as a translator or on one's understanding of the overall meaning of the book of Job, but to an extent on one's personal eschatological presuppositions.

All preterists reject #4, which option incidentally enjoys the least amount of scholarly support, and is the only option that contradicts the preterist view. (This option is also quickly eliminated when we see that Job **explicitly denies a resurrection of the flesh** in Job 14:7-12.)

I think that the majority of modern scholarly opinion has gone with #2, although it seems to me that Job 10:21-22; 17:13-16 contradicts the idea that Job was expecting a deliverance / vindication in Sheol. Most preterists, if I'm not mistaken, choose option #1. Personally, I lean toward option #3. Here is how I would explain the prophecy in Job 19:25-29:

Job's Redeemer arose on the dust when He answered Job out of the whirlwind. (Job 38:1) After God's "archers" / "troops" (Job's accusers) surrounded and devoured Job, and after Job was filled up with the afflictions of his flesh, he was redeemed from his sufferings and was vindicated as "*a perfect and upright man,*" and his enemies were judged.

(Compare Job 19:29 and 42:7-9) Thus, Job from his flesh saw God:

"*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye has seen You.*" (Job 42:5)

QUESTION 61: How do you interpret Matt. 5:17-20?

ANSWER: Matt. 5:17-20: "*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*"

"*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish....*"

Jesus came to destroy the Temple, (Mal. 3:1-2; Matt. 24:2; Mk. 13:2; Lk. 21:6; Acts 6:14; II Cor. 5:1) but He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. He did not come to refute and overthrow the commandments and prophecies contained in Genesis through Malachi. He did not come to topple and replace the precepts and the prophecies of God. He did not come to demolish or throw down "*all Scripture.*" (II Tim. 3:16) (the Law and the Prophets) Rather, He came to **fulfill** "*all things written.*" (Lk. 21:22) (the Law and the Prophets)

"*...but to fulfill...*"

Jesus fulfilled the Law through His perfect righteousness and obedience. He fulfilled the Law through the sacrifice of Himself for our transgressions of the Law. He fulfilled the Law through the imputation of His divine righteousness to us through faith in His blood. He fulfilled the Law through the pouring out of His Spirit, Who teaches us and enables us to love God because He laid down His life for us, (I Jn. 3:16) and to keep His commandments from our heart, and to love our brothers in work and in truth. (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 13:8; Gal. 5:14) This is the perfect, Law-fulfilling righteousness that comes through the heavenly birth, and that surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. (Matt. 5:20,48; 18:3; Jn. 3:3)

Jesus fulfilled "the Prophets" by His birth, ministry, death and resurrection, by the pouring out of His Spirit, by the proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles, by the building up of His Church (the New Covenant Tabernacle) and by "*the days of vengeance*" that culminated in the destruction of the temple. (Lk. 21:22; 24:44-47)

"*...until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.*"

According to the Scriptures, "*heaven and earth*" passed away and all was accomplished when the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. (Matt. 24:34-35; Mk. 13:29-31; Lk. 21:23,32; II Peter 3:10; Rev. 21:6,10; cf. II Cor. 5:7) Until that time, Jesus said, not one jot or tittle (KJV) would pass away from the Law. (See Acts 21:20-26; 24:17)

Jesus did not preach a radical discontinuity. He did not come to repudiate the law and to replace it with another law, but He came to meet the requirements of the Law while the Law was still imposed. (Heb. 9:10) Only *after* He fulfilled the Law could any jots and tittles pass away from it (in A.D. 70).

"*Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments...*"

Doctrines of self-justification (which were based on the Law) were dissolved in A.D. 70. (II Peter 3:10-11) The separation and enmity between Jew and Gentile and between man and God (which was based on the Law) was abolished in A.D. 70. (Eph. 2:14-15) The bondage of God's children (which was based on the Law) was finally loosed in A.D. 70. (Lk. 21:28; Rom. 7:2-6; 8:23) And the old covenant itself (the terms of which were the commandments of the Law) was abolished in

A.D. 70. (II Cor. 3:7; II Peter 3:10-12) Yet the Law and the Prophets (i.e., "*the Scripture*") were not "annulled" or destroyed or broken. (Jn. 10:35) They were fulfilled.

In other words: *As covenant, as condemner, as master, and as a means for appeasing God's eternal wrath* (as men so misused the Law), the Law was utterly swept away in A.D. 70.

Yet the Law, as *the Law*, was fulfilled and *established*:

"Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law." (Rom. 3:31)

Since the sum of the Law is love, to walk in accordance with it is to be the servant of all. This is why believers who keep and teach God's laws are "*great in the Kingdom*." (Matt. 20:26-28; Lk. 9:48) To walk in the Spirit is not to reject the Law (i.e., "the Old Testament"). To walk in the Spirit is to **agree** with the Law, because *the Law is spiritual*. (Rom. 7:14-16)

At the Parousia of Christ in A.D. 70, all things came to pass, heaven and earth passed away, and the Law was fulfilled. Before that Day, the Law had a "*shadow*." (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; 10:1) (that is, a body of symbolic, reminder-of-sin laws that foreshadowed the Redeemer) (Heb. 10:3) For this reason, the fulfillment of the Law in 70 necessarily meant the passing of "*jots and tittles*" (i.e., commandments) from it.

Jesus our heavenly High Priest made His people perfect through His one sacrifice. (Heb. 10:11-14) Since His blood continually cleanses us from all sin (I Jn. 1:7) and His Spirit teaches us to walk in love in fulfillment of the Law, (Matt. 5:48) there is no longer any need for the symbolic Levitical priesthood that made daily sacrifices for sins. In Christ then, the priesthood, and therefore *the Law*, was "*changed*." (Heb. 7:11-12)

Even as Christ "*put away*" (annulled, voided) sin by the sacrifice of Himself, (Heb. 9:26) so did He "*set aside*" (annul, void) the laws concerning the Levitical priesthood, (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 9:10) because of their "*weakness and uselessness*." (Heb. 7:18) Jesus changed the customs of Moses. (Acts 6:14; Heb. 1:12) At His Second Appearing, many jots and tittles passed away from the Law, as the Law was fulfilled and changed, and eternally established, in spirit and in truth: "*For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts....*" (Heb. 8:10)

QUESTION 62: In Revelation it says that, "**God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.**" How is this fulfilled?

ANSWER: "*They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.*" (Rev. 7:16-17)

"And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no longer; nor mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

"...And there shall no longer be any curse..." (Rev. 22:3)

Before the Advent of the Savior, God's servants were under the curse of the Law. (I Cor. 15:56; Gal. 3:13) Though God had blessed them in many ways, they were ultimately alienated from Him, and cried out to Him with tears as they wandered through a sun-scorched "wilderness" of sin and condemnation:

"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry. Do not be silent at my tears. For I am a stranger with You, a sojourner like all my fathers." (Ps. 39:12)

The Savior wiped away the tears of His saints when He forever wiped away their sin and condemnation and saved them from Death. (Acts 3:19; Col. 2:14; Heb. 2:15; 5:7) In His Presence, His children no longer mourn for their perpetual sin and condemnation before Him. No longer do they hunger and thirst for want of Christ's Righteousness. (Matt. 5:6; Jn. 6:35) No longer do they wander in the desert wilderness, longing to enter into His Rest. (Heb. 4; 11:13-16) No longer do they suffer the pain (sting) of Death. (Acts 2:24; I Cor. 15:55-56; Heb. 2:15)

In the new heavens and earth, the Lamb is our Shepherd, so that there is no more outcry for salvation from sin and Death. For He leads us to the springs of living water (Jn. 4:10; 7:38) under the shade of the Tree of Life. In Him, there is "*no longer any curse*":

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." (Eph. 1:3)

QUESTION 63: In your article **New Covenant Salvation**, you said that we are saved by grace "*through faith*." My question is this: Is "faith" something that man can attain, grasp or acquire through his own effort? Can man **decide** of his own volition to believe God? If so, then doesn't this mean that salvation is contingent upon man's effort? If grace is dependent upon our first meeting "*the obedience of faith*," (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) then isn't salvation actually **conditioned upon obedience**, and therefore not really received "by grace?"

ANSWER: While it is true that.....

Our hearts are cleansed through faith. (Acts 15:9)
We are sanctified through faith. (Acts 26:18)
We receive the Righteousness of God through Faith. (Rom. 1:17; 3:22; 9:30; Phil. 3:9)
We are justified through faith. (Rom. 3:28,30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:8,24)
We have access through faith into the grace of God. (Rom. 5:1-2)
We receive the Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:2,5,14)
We become sons of God through faith. (Gal. 3:26)
We are saved through faith. (Eph. 2:8; II Thess. 2:13; 3:15)

It is also true that.....

God gives us our faith. (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 1:29)
Our faith is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8)
God chose us to be saved through faith. (II Thess. 2:13)
Jesus is the Author and Perfector of our faith. (Heb. 12:2)
We have access to God through **Jesus' faith**. (Eph. 3:12)
We receive faith through the righteousness of Jesus. (II Peter 1:1)

Faith in the blood of Jesus is not attained, grasped or acquired by "man's effort." You may "decide" or "will" to trust in Him, but only insofar as, "*it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*" (Phil. 2:13) Faith is acquired by God's sovereign choice / election. (Rom. 9:11-18) Faith is the gift of God. He is the Originator of it. Our faith is the faith of Jesus, which we receive through His righteousness.

While it is true that we receive grace "*through faith*," this does not mean that grace (salvation) is "dependent" on the exercise of our faith. For it is equally true that ***we receive faith through grace.***
"*...those who had believed through grace.*" (Acts 18:27)

Our faith in the blood of God (Acts 20:28; I Jn. 3:1-16) is of Divine origin. It is the life-transforming evidence that we have become "*partakers of the Divine Nature.*" (II Peter 1:4; cf. Heb. 11:1) This is why our faith is more precious than gold. (I Peter 1:7) This is why it is impossible to please God without faith, (Heb. 11:6) and this is why our faith in God's word is "*reckoned as Righteousness.*" (Rom. 4:5,9)

"*The just shall live by His faith.*" (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38)

QUESTION 64: Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote in his work *Against Heresies* (c. 180-190) that the Apostle John saw the Revelation "*toward the end of the reign of Domitian.*" (*Against Heresies* 5:30:3) Domitian's reign ended in A.D. 96. Thus Irenaeus dated the book of Revelation at about A.D. 95. My question is this: How do preterists get around this external evidence for the late date of Revelation, and what external evidence do preterists have that suggests that the book of Revelation was written before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70?

ANSWER: *We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, toward the end of Domitian's reign.* (*Against Heresies* 5:30:3)

A number of scholars since the 1700's have questioned the meaning of the last sentence of this statement. There is some question as to whether that which was "seen" was "*the apocalyptic vision*," or "*him who beheld the apocalyptic vision*," i.e., John. If Irenaeus was saying that "*John*" was seen "*toward the end of Domitian's reign*," (which makes sense in the context) then Irenaeus' statement here has little or no bearing on the early or late date of Revelation, but has more to do with the longevity of John.

Ironically, a piece of external evidence that preterists claim for the "early date" of Revelation is in the very same book by Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, two paragraphs earlier. In 5:30:1, Irenaeus makes reference to "*all the most approved and ancient copies*" of the book of Revelation:

Such, then, being the state of the case, and this number [of the Beast] being found in all the most approved and ancient copies [of the book of Revelation], and those men who saw John face to face bearing their testimony to it...

Does it make sense that Irenaeus would refer to "*all the most approved and ancient copies*" of the book of Revelation, and then state that John saw the Revelation "*no very long time since, but almost in our day?*" I don't think so. What does make sense is that the book of Revelation was "*ancient*," and that John lived many years after he wrote it and was seen "*almost in our day.*"

Clement of Alexandria (head teacher at the Catechetical School at Alexandria) was a contemporary of Irenaeus. He wrote

his *Miscellanies* (or *Stromata*) in c. A.D. 190-195. In 7:17, he condemns certain teachers who were writing counterfeit scriptures. Clement explained that those teachers and their scriptures were counterfeit because they had appeared after the close of the teaching of the Apostles. According to Clement, the close of the teaching of the Apostles (which includes the writing of the Scriptures) "*ends with Nero*." Nero died in A.D. 68. Clement of Alexandria thus implied that the "New Testament," including the book of Revelation, was written before A.D. 68.

The Muratorian Canon (c. A.D. 170-200) contains this statement:

...the blessed Apostle Paul, following the rule of his predecessor John, writes to no more than seven churches by name.

The *Canon* teaches that John wrote to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 1:4) *before* Paul wrote to Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae and Thessalonica. Paul wrote these epistles from c. A.D. 50 to c. A.D. 65. The *Canon* therefore implies that John wrote the Revelation well before c. A.D. 65, and possibly as early as the 50's, A.D. .

The apparent reference to Rev. 21:14 in Heb. 11:10 possibly indicates that the book of Revelation was written before the book of Hebrews (which was written in c. A.D. 64):

And the wall of the City had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Rev. 21:14)

For he was looking for the City which has the foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (Heb. 11:10)

And the possible allusion to Rev. 10:7 in I Cor. 15:52 could even indicate that the book of Revelation was written before I Corinthians (which was written in c. A.D. 55 / 56):

...but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound [the seventh and last trumpet (Rev. 8:6 - 9:13)], then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets. (Rev. 10:7)

...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (I Cor. 15:52)

(For more evidence for the early date of the book of Revelation, see Ken Gentry's book, *Before Jerusalem Fell*.)

QUESTION 65: You have said that the Law is engraved on believers' hearts and minds, since we are under the New Covenant. (Heb. 8:10-13) Does this mean we still follow the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbaths?

ANSWER: Yes, God still commands us to obey the Ten Commandments. Every Christian believes we must obey the first three commandments, as well as the last six; but as you indicate in your question, the fourth commandment seems to present a problem.

In Ex. 31:12-17, the Lord said that anyone who profaned the Sabbath by doing "*any work*" "*shall surely be put to death*." God forbade the people from kindling a fire in their dwellings on the Sabbath, (Ex. 35:3) and in Numbers 15:32-36 He commanded that a man who had been caught "*gathering wood*" on the Sabbath be stoned to death outside the City.

If believers are called to obey the fourth commandment today, it would seem that almost every believer should be put to death. For how many of us have done the equivalent of lighting a fire (turning on a light bulb?) or of gathering wood, (turning up the thermostat?) on a Sabbath day? And if the Sabbath law was indeed written on our hearts, how is it that most (if not all) believers continue to violate the ordinance?

The answer is in Col. 2:16-17:

*Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or **Sabbaths**, things which are a shadow of what is to come; but the body is Christ.*

The Sabbath law was a "[fore]shadow" of Christ. (Heb. 10:1) It was a "*sign*" that He alone is our Sanctifier. (Ex. 31:13)

Today, the shadow and sign is fulfilled in the Body. In Him, we enter into "*complete rest*." (Ex. 31:15; Lev. 23:3) He has redeemed us from our "*slavery*" to sin "*by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm*," (Deut. 5:12-15) and has gathered us under His wings. (Lev. 23:3)

The Sabbath foreshadowed salvation, "*by grace through faith, ...and not of works*." (Eph. 2:8-9) When we trust in the blood of our heavenly High Priest and forsake our own *works*-righteousness, we enter into "*His Rest*," i.e., the "*Sabbath Rest*" of Israel. (Heb. 4:1-11) We keep the Sabbath today, not according to "*the letter*," (II Cor. 3:6) but "*in spirit and in truth*," by denying our own ways and our own words, and by delighting in our sovereign Redeemer, and honoring Him in the heavenly Land of promise. (Isa. 58:13-14; Heb. 11:16)

If this is true, if the Sabbath was a shadow / sign that was fulfilled spiritually in Christ, and if we keep it by daily trusting in His Righteousness, does this mean that God no longer commands us to literally rest on every seventh day? Are believers expected to earn their living seven days a week without resting? Or has God left us without a precept that touches on this aspect of our lives?

I believe that John Calvin gave a biblical answer to this question, in his *Commentary on Genesis*. He said that in the beginning, (many centuries before God gave the Sabbath law to Moses) God rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:3) in order that His own example would be a perpetual rule for the whole human race in all ages, that all men should imitate God and consecrate every seventh day, that they might enjoy rest from their daily labors and dedicate themselves to celebrate God and to meditate on Him.

Calvin then added:

Afterwards, in the Law, a new precept concerning the Sabbath was given, which should be peculiar to the Jews, and but for a season; because it was a legal ceremony shadowing forth a spiritual rest, the truth of which was manifested in Christ. Therefore the Lord the more frequently testifies that he had given, in the Sabbath, a symbol of sanctification to his ancient people. Therefore when we hear that the Sabbath was abrogated by the coming of Christ we must distinguish between what belongs to the perpetual government of human life, and what properly belongs to ancient figures, the use of which was abolished when the truth was fulfilled... (John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis, 2:3*)

QUESTION 66: How do preterists explain I Thess. 4:13-17? (the "Rapture")

ANSWER: I've seen three preterist interpretations of "the Rapture":

#1. Believers were literally "raptured" off the planet shortly before the A.D.-70 destruction of the City and Sanctuary. This was J. Stuart Russell's view in his book *The Parousia*.

The most common objection to this view is the unlikelihood of there being no historical record of the sudden vanishing of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people across the Roman Empire. This view also conflicts with the doctrine of the *establishment* of the Church in A.D. 70. (Rev. 3:12; 21:2) If the Church was literally raptured, then the Church had been built up for 40 years only to be *disestablished*. Jn. 17:15 also contradicts the "literal rapture" view:

"I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

#2. The "rapture" describes what happens to believers upon physical death.

There is no question that all believers today are "raptured," as it were, out of their bodies into the blessedness of the "afterlife" when they die; and this is indeed the "hope" and "comfort" of all believers today. However, I believe that the context and the phraseology of I Thess. 4:17 indicate that the "Rapture" in question is not a description of individual death-experiences, but that it was a *collective Event*. (More on this below.)

#3. Believers were spiritually / symbolically "raptured" shortly before the A.D.-70 destruction of the City and Sanctuary.

This is the view I espouse. Here is how I understand I Thess. 4:13-17....

The Thessalonians had been enduring, and were continuing to endure, "*persecutions*" / "*sufferings*" / "*afflictions*." (I Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 3:3-4; II Thess. 1:4-6) Because of this, Paul had been as a father "*consoling*" them, (I Thess. 2:11-12) and was concerned that they might be "*drawn aside*," or "*swayed*," by their afflictions." (I Thess. 3:2-5)

If this happened, then the Thessalonians might have grieved over their sufferings "*as do the rest who have no hope*." (See II Cor. 7:10) For this reason, Paul encouraged them to continue to endure, to be strengthened in the Faith, and not to be "*drawn aside*." (II Thess. 2:16-17)

It was because of this need for comfort in the midst of persecutions that Paul reminded the Thessalonians that they would soon be glorified with their loved ones who had "*fallen asleep through Jesus*," (I Thess. 4:17-18; 5:10-11) and that they would thenceforth be "*forever with the Lord*."

According to "*the word of the Lord*," the dead in Christ were to rise first. (I Cor. 15:23,52) They were to rise out from their place of resting and waiting, (cf. Rev. 6:9-11) and God was going to bring them "*with Him*" at His Parousia. Thereupon, the living were to be "*caught up together with them*" in glory, as the Lord poured out His wrath on the enemies:
...*Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!* (Zech. 14:5)

...*so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.* (I Thess. 3:13)

Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds that they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. (Jude 14-15)

...*Behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages*

war. ...And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. (Rev. 19:11,14; cf. Rev. 19:19)

The suffering and dying believers of the Last Days, such as those at Thessalonica, were soldiers of God's heavenly armies, (I Cor. 14:21-22; Rev. 19:14) and judges in His heavenly court. (Dan. 7:22-27; I Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 18:20; 20:4) Through their enduring faith and prayers, (Rev. 8:3-5) the "destroying mountain" of persecuting Israel was cast into the sea. (Jer. 51:25; Matt. 21:21; Mk. 11:23; Rev. 8:8) The cursed "fig tree" was cast into the flames, (Matt. 21:19; Mk. 11:14; Rev. 14:19) and the world of the evil one was conquered. (I Jn. 5:4,19) These things happened when God poured out His vengeance upon Israel for all the blood of His holy ones. (Matt. 23:35; Lk. 18:8; 21:22; Heb. 10:26-31; Rev. 6:9-11; 19:2)

In that Great Day, the Lord Jesus descended from Heaven in the glorious City of God, the "New Jerusalem," (I Thess. 4:16; Rev. 3:12; Rev. 21:2,11,23) that is, **the universal Church**. (Jn. 3:29; Rev. 19:7; 21:2,9; cf. Matt. 16:28; Lk. 17:20-21) He was "formed" in the hearts of His people, (Gal. 4:19; II Peter 1:19) when He and the Father made Their Abode / Dwelling in each and every believer. (Jn. 14:3,23; Eph. 3:17)

The universal Church was "gathered" (Matt. 3:12; 24:31; 13:30; Mk. 13:27; Lk. 3:17; II Thess. 2:1) in that it became the eternal "Tabernacle of God." (Rev. 21:3; II Cor. 5:8; Eph. 2:21-22) In this sense, God "changed" the Church (I Cor. 15:52) so that she became "like Him," (I Jn. 3:2) and attained "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13; cf. I Cor. 15:49)

Believers were revealed with the Lord in spiritual, heavenly glory ("air" / clouds") when God's wrath against Israel made it manifest that Jesus' disciples are the true sons of God. (Rom. 8:17,19; Col. 3:4; II Thess. 1:6-10)
Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie-- behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. (Rev. 3:9)
God "snatched" (raptured), or rescued, His believers from His wrath (I Thess. 1:10) and from the persecutions of the evil one. (I Thess. 3:5; II Thess. 1:7; 3:3) He "plucked" them out of the then-present "evil age." (Gal. 1:4) This happened when the fury of the Roman Empire came against the Jews, and when the Jews were consumed by civil war. These catastrophies befell the sons of the old covenant with increasing intensity from A.D. 66-70. It was in those years that the Church on Earth found "relief" (II Thess. 1:7) and was protected from her afflictions, as her persecutors (the Jews) were "shattered." (Dan. 12:1-7)

Since our Lord came with His saints and destroyed the earthly temple in A.D. 70, (Heb. 9:8) "God Himself" has dwelt "among men;" (Rev. 21:3) and through the power of His resurrection, the Church of all ages, the living and the dead, lives and reigns in glory with Him forever. (Rom. 6:8; II Cor. 13:4; II Tim. 2:11-12)
For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. (Rom. 14:8-9)

QUESTION 67: Jesus told His disciples that He would come again and receive them to Himself, that where He is (i.e., in Heaven) they would be also. How has this been fulfilled? This sounds to me like a literal "rapture" off the planet into Heavenly glory.

ANSWER:"...In My Father's house are many dwellings; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, you may be also." (Jn. 14:2-3)

Jesus was not going to take the Church "out of the world" into Heaven. (Jn. 17:15) He and the Father were going to descend "out of Heaven" and make Their Dwelling in the Church:

"Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him, and make Our Dwelling with him.**" (Jn. 14:23)

The "Place" that Jesus was going to "prepare" for His disciples was the New Jerusalem:

"But as it is, they desire a better Country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for **He has prepared a City for them.**" (Heb. 11:16)

The heavenly "Tabernacle" / "Dwelling" / "Place" / "Country" / "City" / "House" of God descended "**from out of Heaven**" to be "among men." (II Cor. 5:2; I Thess. 4:16; Rev. 3:12; 21:2-3,10) The Church was "clothed" with that Dwelling (I Cor. 15:52-54; II Cor. 5:2-4) --which is *Christ Himself*, (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; 4:19; Eph. 3:14-16; 4:13; II Peter 1:19) the incorruptible "New Man." (Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:1)

Jesus went to the Father so that He might pour out the indwelling "Spirit of truth" upon His elect. (Acts 2:33; Jn. 14:16-17) It was through the Holy Spirit that He "prepared" (Rev. 19:7; 21:2) His heavenly "House." (I Peter 2:5; Heb. 3:5-6) When the temporary, worldly, earthly, hand-made house was thrown down, (in A.D. 70) it was manifest that the Father and the Son had made Their eternal Habitation in and among believers. (Jn. 14:20; Rom. 8:13-14; II Cor. 4:18 - 5:1-2; Heb. 9:1-10; I Jn. 2:24; Rev. 21:22)

Since that Day, God's children are where Jesus is: with the Father (Jn. 10:38; 14:10-11) in the Holies. (Heb. 9:8-10;

10:19) Through the incorruptible blood, believers are granted face to Face fellowship and union with the Father and the Son. (Jn. 17:15-21; I Jn. 1:3; 2:24; II Jn. 1:9) This is the unfading and transcendent Glory of the New Covenant. (Jn. 17:24; II Cor. 3:7-18)

QUESTION 68: In May of 2002, an article was published that teaches that the entire Church of true believers was literally and physically "raptured" (removed) from planet Earth in the first century. The article says that this is what J. Stuart Russell taught a hundred years ago in his book *The Parousia*. Is this really what Russell taught?

ANSWER: No, that is not what Russell taught. He did teach a literal rapture in the first century, but he suggested that it was a "partial rapture"; not a rapture of "the whole body of the faithful," but a rapture of "a very great number of the faithful." (J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia, Preface to the New Edition*, pg. 5. Or in the 1999 edition, *Afterword*, pg. 566)

Russell's "partial rapture" doctrine is generally not accepted by preterists today and is considered to be a relatively minor error, from a theological standpoint. (Most preterists now hold to a non-physical rapture view.) The new doctrine that came out in May 2002 however cannot be considered to be merely a minor error, for this reason: It explicitly denies the "continued Presence" of the Body of Christ on Earth.

This *radical, covenantal discontinuity* inherent in this new rapture doctrine bluntly conflicts with Scripture: In Dan. 2:35, the Stone that grew into a great Mountain and filled the earth *was not removed from the earth as soon as it filled the earth in the first century*. In Rev. 5:10, the priesthood of believers on the earth *was not removed from the earth as soon as it was established on the earth in the first century*. And in Rev. 21:2-3, the rebuilt Tabernacle of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit *was not removed from among men on Earth as soon as it was established on Earth among men in the first century*.

In a word, that which the Lord died to establish on Earth was not *disestablished* from the earth the very moment it was established on the earth.

If the Father did remove His New-Covenant Temple from among men, then it irresistibly follows that He thereby left the inhabitants of the world covenantally naked and homeless. The Kingdom of Heaven did not fill the earth only to be uprooted from the earth, leaving the earth formless and void as it was before the advent of the Son.

I understand that the few people who are teaching this "*Corpus Interruptus*" doctrine deny that it implies the discontinuation of the New Covenant in the first century. Remarkably, they find covenantal continuity in the idea that the false Christians were left behind to "carry on." (!) If that is their answer for Kingdom-continuity on Earth, then these men have apparently forgotten Daniel 2:44: "*The Kingdom will not be left for another people...*" (cf. Isa. 65:22a; Jn. 17:15)

The new rapture doctrine inexorably leads to the conclusion that the New Covenant ended in A.D. 70. If it spreads, others will later be more thoroughgoing, and will themselves boldly teach that the New Covenant (i.e., Christianity) ended in the first century. At that time, the legitimacy of the Church will be under a new and truly *hyper-preterist* attack. May this new rapture doctrine be promptly rejected by all before it overthrows the faith of any.

QUESTION 69: Isaiah 66:8 says, "*Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.*" Isn't it obvious even for a preterist that this verse was fulfilled in 1948 when Israel was reborn as a nation "*in one day*," on May 5th?

ANSWER: Verses 1-6 of that chapter speak of Israel's rebellion, (Isa. 66:3-4) Israel's persecution of the Church, (Isa. 66:5; cf. Jn. 16:2) God's subsequent wrath upon Israel, (Isa. 66:4) the doing away of animal sacrifices, (Isa. 66:1-3) and the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. (Isa. 66:6; cf. Acts 7:49-50)

Verses 7-14 do not suddenly leap ahead 1,878 years to A.D. 1948. These verses tell us of the New Jerusalem, which is the Church, the bride of Christ. (Rev. 19:7; 21:9) She was born in one day, *on the Day of Pentecost* in c. A.D. 30. Isa. 66:8 is parallel to Isa. 54:1, which according to the Apostle Paul was fulfilled in the Church ("*the Jerusalem above*"). (Gal. 4:26-27)

In the Parousia of the Son of Man in 70, (Isa. 66:15-16) God executed judgment upon all in His Kingdom who profaned His holy ordinances (Isa. 66:3-4) and who persecuted His holy ones; (Isa. 66:5) but He extends peace like a river to those who are humble, contrite and who tremble at His Word. (Isa. 66:2,5,12) May we therefore let His Word say what it says, and not impose upon it artificial "gaps" and fleshly futurologies.

QUESTION 70: Where in Scripture is it taught that "death" means "separation from God?"

ANSWER: "*The mind set on the flesh is death,because the mind set on the flesh is enmity toward God....*" (Rom. 8:6-7; cf. Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13)

Death is the "*wages*" of sin. (Rom. 6:23) Death is what sin produces. (Rom. 7:13) Death is what sin brings forth. (Jms. 1:15) "Death" is therefore the state of being under God's *condemnation* because of sin. (Rom. 5:16-18)

Adam and Eve died in the day that they sinned. (Gen. 2:17) They were dead (condemned, alienated) when they hid in shame "*from the Presence of the Lord God.*" (Gen. 3:8; 23-24; cf. Col. 1:21)

QUESTION 71: According to Heb. 12:26-27, Hag. 2:6 was not yet fulfilled when the book of Hebrews was written. Yet God said that Haggai 2:6 would be fulfilled "*in a little while.*" That was over 500 years before the book of Hebrews was written! Doesn't this prove that "*a little while*" can mean over 500 years, and that it could conceivably even mean "2,000 years?" Doesn't this prove therefore that we need not interpret the eschatological "imminency statements" in the New Testament literally?

ANSWER: Within only *four years* ("*in a little while*") after the prophecy in Hag. 2:6-9; 21-23 was given, God overthrew all the nations, (i.e., He "*shook the heavens, the earth, the sea and the dry land*") and the desire (or wealth) of all nations came, and the earthly temple was filled with glory (with gold, silver, etc.). (Compare Haggai 1:15; 2:10 and Ezra 6:15)

This all took place when Darius King of Persia overturned Israel's enemies, who for years had been preventing the rebuilding of God's house. Darius decreed, "*May God ...overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem.*" (Ezra 6:11-12) Darius forced Israel's enemies themselves to pay the full cost of the rebuilding, as well as the full cost of all the daily, priestly services. (Ezra 6:8-10)

The power of Israel's enemies was broken. They had tried to turn the king against Israel, (Ezra 5) but God turned their own stratagems against them. He made them subservient to His people, taking their own wealth for the building of His glorious, earthly house. God had thus "*moved heaven and earth*" to keep the covenant that He had made with His people through Moses. (Ezra 6:18; Hag. 2:5)

The fulfillment of Haggai 2:6-9; 21-23 in Zerubbabel's generation was *typological*. It *foreshadowed* the fulfillment of the better promise (Heb. 8:6) that was fulfilled in Christ's generation. Israel's building of the greater, earthly house in Zerubbabel's generation was an *example* of the building of the true, heavenly "*House*" in Christ.

Numerous Old Testament prophecy fulfillments are revealed in the New Testament to have been "*types*" of Christ. Perhaps the most prominent example of this "apostolic hermeneutic" is found in Israel's inheritance of the promised Land under Joshua. That Old Testament fulfillment of prophecy is revealed in the New Testament to have been a type / foreshadow of the promised, heavenly Inheritance in Christ. (Heb. 4) Many other examples of this method of interpretation can be found throughout the New Testament. Compare, for instance, Isa. 7:14-8:4 with Matt. 1:23-25.

How did the prophecy in Hag. 2:6-9; 21-23 find its "*true*" fulfillment in Christ? (Heb. 8:2; 9:24) Within perhaps only *four years* ("*in a little while*") after Hebrews 12:26 was written, (Hebrews was written probably in about A.D. 66.) God overthrew all the nations. He "*shook the heavens, the earth, the sea and the dry land.*" The desire of all nations came, and God's Temple was filled with Glory.

This happened when God overturned His enemies who, in their persecution of the Church, had furiously resisted *the construction of His New-Covenant Temple*. (Eph. 2:21,22; I Peter 2:5) Despite the rage of the enemies, God enlisted countless multitudes of His enemies to build His new House (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21; Rev. 5:9). And those enemies who resisted to the end were crushed, and were cast out of the Kingdom in A.D. 70. (Matt. 8:12; 21:43; Lk. 13:28; Acts 4:25-28; Gal. 4:30; Rev. 3:9)

God "*moved heaven and earth*" to keep the Covenant that He made with His elect through the blood of Christ. Now the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwell eternally in the universal Church, which is the New-Covenant House of promise. (Jn. 14:23; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 2:21-22; 3:17; Col. 1:27; II Peter 1:19; Rev. 3:20; 21:2-3) Through the power of the eternal Gospel, the desire of the nations flows into "*the more perfect Tabernacle*" today and forever, (Heb. 9:11; Rev. 21:26,27) and God Himself is its unfading Glory. (Rev. 21:23)

QUESTION 72: Please explain Romans 9:15-24. Do we have a will?

ANSWER: Yes, we do have a will. However, our receiving of the Promise in no way depends on our will. Our receiving of the Promise through faith is not conditioned upon our "*willing*" or "*striving*" to believe. (Rom. 9:16) It is conditioned upon God's purpose, choice and (effectual) calling. (Rom. 9:11-12)

God chose to create some of mankind ("*the elect*") for mercy, and others for hardening. (Rom. 9:18) God's choice was made long before any of us did anything good (such as exercise faith) or bad. (Rom. 9:11) Is it unjust or unfair of God to harden people who could not possibly have resisted His will / purpose / decree? (Rom. 9:14,19)

No, for three reasons:

1. Though they did not choose to be created "*for ruin*," (Isa. 54:16) nevertheless those whom God hardens *truly* deserve His wrath. They are "*by nature children of wrath*." (Eph. 2:3) What is "unjust," or incredible, is that God has mercy and compassion on *any* of His enemies. (Rom. 5:10; 9:14-15)

2. God uses "*vessels of wrath*" to display and make known His power, to spread His name in all the earth, to display His wrath against sin, and to make known the riches of His glory to His elect. (Rom. 9:18,22-23) This is why God "*bears with much patience vessels of wrath*." (Rom. 9:22) The enemies might flourish for a number of generations, but when their iniquity is complete, (Gen. 15:16) God judges them. He therein makes His power, wrath and glory known throughout all the earth, and this results in *mercy* to those who hear and put their trust in Him. Egypt was judged at the Red Sea. The sinful Kingdom was judged in A.D. 70. In both cases the result was the same: God was revealed and glorified; His Name was spread abroad, and the chosen among His enemies were called. Many other examples throughout history can be given. The judgment in Afghanistan is a very recent example.

3. God has the "*right*" to create from one lump of clay (humanity), vessels for honor and vessels for dishonor. (Rom. 9:21) Who are we to answer back to God and to protest what He does? We are clay, and He is the Potter. (Rom. 9:19-20) We are dust, and He is the eternal One. It is folly to quarrel with our Maker, (Isa. 45:9) and to say to Him, "*What are you doing?*" (Job 9:1-24) For apart from what God has revealed to us, we know *absolutely nothing*. The only wise thing to do then is to "*cease striving*," (Ps. 46:10) and to trust in His Righteousness. (Jer. 33:16; I Cor. 1:30)

QUESTION 73: A human being is a body AND a soul AND a spirit. Preterists say that the Church will never be raised from physical death. Ergo, preterism clearly teaches that dead believers are *disembodied spirits forever and ever*. They are no longer truly human. What's your defense against this?

ANSWER: If we must be in our bodies in order to be "truly human," then all those who have died and supposedly await the "Resurrection of the Flesh" are *not truly human today*. They must be "unhumans" who cannot be human again until they are reunited with their bodies at the end of history.

Futurists who argue that "man" minus "his body" equals "non-man," argue recklessly. They "prove too much." They in effect deprive our departed loved ones of their *humanity* until the end of the world. The Bible nowhere suggests that those who die become "non-humans" until they are resurrected. The Resurrection of the dead is never characterized as the restoration of former humans back to their lost humanity.

Jesus in fact made reference to a "*man*" in Hades, (Lk. 16:22-23) and Paul spoke of the possibility that a "*man*" was caught up, "*out of the body*," to "*the third heaven*." (II Cor. 12:2) In both of these instances, the "*man*" was the spirit of the man, out of the body. (cf. I Cor. 2:11) The departed spirit (and soul) of the believer is a *human* spirit, and it corresponds to the "*inner man*" (i.e., the inner *human*). (Rom. 7:22; II Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16; 4:23)

The departed spirit of the believer is not an inhuman, wraithlike phantom, like some sort of an exorcized demon; and it is not a quivering, shapeless "mist" like some kind of escaped gas. In contrast to such wildly extra-Scriptural notions, the Bible teaches us that the spirits of the saints in Heaven (Heb. 12:22-23) are "*like the angels*," (Matt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25; Heb. 1:7) and that they are not "naked," but are "*clothed*" with everlasting Righteousness. (Rev. 6:9-11; 14:13; 15:6; 19:8,14)

QUESTION 74: *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* is possibly the earliest uninspired, orthodox Christian work in existence. When was it written? And what is its eschatological message?

ANSWER: Assuming that I Clement is genuine and that it has survived substantially uncorrupted, it is safe to say that it was written between c. A.D. 67 and 70, and that its eschatological message is *preterism*.

For Clement, the Parousia, the Resurrection of the dead and the Judgment were all about to happen at the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem.

We know that Clement's epistle was written shortly after c. A.D. 67, because he says in chapter six that Paul and Peter were martyred "*in our own generation*," and that they were "*the most recent spiritual heroes*." (Chapter 5) Along with them, Clement adds, "*a great multitude ...endured many indignities and tortures...*" (Chapter 6)

The “*indignities and tortures*” of Paul, Peter and the “*great multitude*” were probably part of the Neronian persecution (or more precisely, *the Jewish-Neronian persecution*) that began in c. A.D. 64. According to tradition, Peter and Paul were martyred in that persecution in c. A.D. 67.

We can infer that Clement's epistle was written before A.D. 70, because he speaks in four places of the Temple in Jerusalem:

In chapter 32: “...*For from him have sprung the priests and all the Levites who minister at the altar of God...*”

In chapter 40: “...*He has enjoined offerings and service to be performed at the appointed times and hours. ...Those, therefore, who present their offerings at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed; for inasmuch as they follow the laws of the Lord. ...For his own peculiar services are assigned to the high priest, and their own proper place is prescribed to the priests, and their own special ministrations devolve on the Levites...*”

In chapter 41: “...*Not in every place, brethren, are the daily sacrifices offered, or the peace-offerings, or the sin-offerings and the trespass-offerings, but in Jerusalem only. And even there they are not offered in any place, but only at the altar before the temple, that which is offered being first carefully examined by the high priest and the ministers...*”

In Chapter 23, Clement not only implies that the Temple is still standing, but he places the Resurrection of the dead in the day of its destruction.

Some at Corinth had doubts about the impending Resurrection, because so many years had passed by with no change. To impress upon the Corinthians the nearness of that Day, Clement told them to compare themselves to a vine. “*In a little time,*” he said, it sheds its leaves; it buds; it puts forth leaves; it flowers; it produces sour grapes, and then ripened and mature grapes. Even so, said Clement, “*soon,*” “*suddenly*” and “*speedily*” He would come and would “*not tarry.*” “*The Holy One*” would come “*to His Temple.*”

Thus before A.D. 70, Clement taught the Corinthians that when they reached maturity “*in a little time,*” the Judge would come to His Temple and raise the dead. (cf. Mal. 3:1-2)

Clement's eschatology was pure, biblical preterism.

In this light, compare these two pairs of verses from I Clement and the book of Acts:

I Clement, Chapter 24: “...*The Lord continually proves to us that the resurrection which is about to come will be...*”

Acts 24:15: “*There is about to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*”

I Clement, Chapter 28: “...*Through His mercy, we may be protected from the judgment about to come...*”

Acts 24:25: “*As he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment about to come...*”

QUESTION 75: What do preterists believe about the Lord's Supper? Do they still practice it today, or do they think it was abolished in A.D. 70?

ANSWER: Preterists are divided on this issue, although it seems that most preterists today hold to the continuation of the Lord's Supper. Below are the eight primary “Continuation-Versus-Cessation” arguments that are being discussed among preterists. (The first five are Cessation arguments with Continuation responses, and the last three are Continuation arguments with Cessation responses.)

1. “Until”

Cessation argument: “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*” (I Cor. 11:26) The Lord came in A.D. 70. This means that after that time, the Church was no longer commanded to proclaim the Lord's death by means of “the Lord's Supper.” The Greek word used for “*until*” in I Cor. 11:26 usually (though not always) implies a cessation or end. And whenever the word is connected with the word “*fulfilled,*” it *always* implies a cessation. (Matt. 2:14,15; Lk. 1:20; 21:24; Matt. 5:17 & Heb. 9:10; I Cor. 11:26 & Lk. 22:16; Rev. 6:11. The Lord's Supper was to be observed “*until*” (I Cor. 11:26) it was “*fulfilled*” (Lk. 22:16) and made “*new*” (Matt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25) in the Kingdom of God in A.D. 70.

Continuation response: The word “until” does not *necessarily* imply a termination. For example, Christ was to reign “*until*” He put all His enemies under His feet. (I Cor. 15:25; cf. I Tim. 4:13) “Until” cannot mean a termination in that verse because Christ reigns forever. (Dan. 7:14; Lk. 1:33; Heb. 1:8) “Until” in I Cor. 11:26 implies a culmination and establishment, not a termination.

2. "Fulfilled"

Cessation argument: "*For I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*" (Lk. 22:16) The Lord's Supper was an *unfulfilled* sign / type. It was an eschatological rite that typified "*Christ in you.*" It was a kind of *foretaste* of the Fellowship of Christ. Therefore it was "fulfilled" (filled full, completed) when Christ made His Dwelling in the universal Church in A.D. 70. (Jn. 14:23; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 2:21-22; 3:17; Col. 1:27; II Peter 1:19; Rev. 3:20; 21:2-3) Since that day, all the saints, living and dead, dine with Him in the Kingdom, and no longer have need of the symbolic, flesh-ordinance that was imposed only "*until*" it was "*fulfilled*" and made "*new*" in A.D. 70.

Continuation response: "Fulfilled" does not necessarily imply a change from material to non-material. The truth that the Lord's Supper represents was brought to fullness in Christ in A.D. 70, but that does not mean that the Lord's Supper itself was to cease. Christ partakes of the Lord's Supper with us now in the Spirit as we partake of it physically on Earth.

3. "New"

Cessation argument: "*But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that Day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" (Matt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 22:16-18) The Lord's Supper was made "*new*" in A.D. 70. The Greek word for "*new*" is the adjective "*kainos*," and it modifies "*it*" (fruit/wine). In eschatological contexts, "*kainos*" describes something that is *new in kind*, and that is **different than / other than** that which, in comparison, is old or outdated. Thus the rite was going to be fulfilled and *changed* in the Kingdom of God. It was made "*new*" in the Parousia in the same sense that Jerusalem was made "*new*," and in the same sense that the heaven and the earth were made "*new*": It "*passed away*" and was "*fulfilled*" in That which it typified, which was the "*new*" ("*kainos*") bread and wine (*the universal fellowship of Christ*) in the Kingdom of God. (Matt. 9:17; Mk. 2:22; Lk. 5:37-39)

Continuation response: Since A.D. 70, the Lord's Supper is no longer a somber remembrance; it is a "*new*" celebration feast. Now He has Communion with us spiritually when we partake of the literal bread and wine.

4. "Foods, Drinks and Baptisms"

Cessation argument: "*...They relate only to foods and drinks and various baptisms, even ordinances of the flesh imposed until a time of reformation.*" (Heb. 9:9,10) This verse speaks of the flesh-ordinances of the Levitical temple-system. Though neither the Lord's Supper nor Christian baptism were Levitical ordinances (strictly speaking), the principle laid down in Heb. 9:9,10 applies to both of them. Because the Lord's Supper (food and drink) and Christian baptism were ordinances for the flesh (i.e., ceremonial rites), they were, like the Levitical flesh-ordinances, imposed only until the time of reformation in A.D. 70. God did not replace old flesh-ordinances with new flesh-ordinances. Rather, He "*fulfilled*" *all* the flesh-ordinances (including the two eschatological ordinances) and made them "*new*." They were imposed only "*until*" they were realized in the heavenly glories they typified.

Continuation response: Heb. 9:9,10 refers only to the rites of the Levitical temple-system. It has no relevance to the Lord's Supper or to Christian baptism. Those two rites are not "ordinances of the flesh," they are New-Covenant ordinances.

5. Manna

Cessation argument: The Manna that the Israelites ate and the drink that they drank in the wilderness represented the Lord's body and blood. (Jn. 6:31-56; I Cor. 10:3-4) The Lord's Supper also represented the Lord's body and blood. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the representative food and the representative drink ceased. Likewise, when the Church entered the spiritual Promised Land in A.D. 70, the representative food and drink (the rite of "*the Lord's Supper*") ceased.

Continuation response: The manna and the Lord's Supper are not *likened to each other* in Scripture. They are *contrasted*. In Jn. 6:31-56, the manna is *contrasted* with the Lord's Supper, i.e., with Christ's "flesh and blood." The manna was temporary. The Lord's Supper (His "flesh and blood") is an eternal New Covenant ordinance. Likewise in I Cor. 10:3-4, the manna and the water in the wilderness were temporary, but the Lord's Supper (of which Paul speaks in the same chapter) is eternal.

6. Passover

Continuation argument: The Israelites took the Passover while they awaited their redemption in Egypt. Then after they entered the Promised Land, they continued to observe the Passover throughout the entire old-covenant age. The Lord's Supper is the fulfillment / antitype of the Passover. The New-Covenant Church took the Lord's Supper while it awaited its redemption from the old-covenant age. (Lk. 21:28; Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30) Then after the Church entered the (spiritual) Promised Land (in A.D. 70), it was to continue taking the Lord's Supper throughout the entire New-Covenant Age. Just like the Passover, the Lord's Supper is an age-long Covenant-ordinance.

Cessation response: "*The Lord's Supper*" could not have been the fulfillment / antitype of the Passover, because the Passover was not "*fulfilled*" until A.D. 70. (Lk. 22:15,16) Paul taught that the Passover would be fulfilled through *non-*

ceremonial means, i.e., by means of sincerity and truth: "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. **Let us therefore celebrate the [Passover] feast**, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (I Cor. 5:6)

7. Gentiles

Continuation argument: The Lord's Supper was given to Gentile believers. This proves that it was not an "old covenant ritual." It is therefore a New Covenant ordinance and is to be observed forever.

Cessation response: The Lord's Supper was a "transition ritual," just like the revelatory gifts (tongues and prophecy) were "transition gifts" that were given to both Jews and gentiles, until the gifts were fulfilled and done away in A.D. 70. "The Lord's Supper" was a sign of covenant-confirmation given to the Jew-gentile Church in anticipation of the impending New-Covenant world. It was also a sign to the Jews, to "*proclaim the Lord's death*" in all nations until He came and destroyed the hand-made, old covenant temple. (I Cor. 11:26)

8. Sign and Seal

Continuation argument: God always gave ritual "signs and seals" with His covenants. This is the pattern of Scripture. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant. (Gen. 17:10-14; Rom. 4:11) Under the New Covenant, we now have two "signs and seals": Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Cessation response: The New Covenant is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. The "sign" of that covenant (circumcision) was fulfilled and replaced with *spiritual circumcision* (i.e., "*the circumcision of Christ*" in Col. 2:11), not with "the Lord's Supper" and ritual baptism. Christ Himself came to dwell in and among all the saints in A.D. 70 in fulfillment of *all* the "signs" and of *all* the flesh-ordinances (including "the Lord's Supper"). He Himself is now our Bread (flesh) and Wine (blood). The New Covenant is the covenant of substance and fulfillment, not a covenant of more God-imposed covenant-signs.

QUESTION 76: If Christ returned in A.D. 70, does that now relegate the Holy Spirit to a non-functional role?

ANSWER: The Holy Spirit did have an eschatological work that He finished, even as the Son had an eschatological work that He finished. That does not imply though that the Son or the Spirit ceased to "function" after A.D. 70.

The Last Days work of the indwelling Holy Spirit was to give the Lord's revelations, doctrines, commandments, miracles and gifts to the Church, (Mk. 13:11; Lk. 12:12; Jn. 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7,13-14; Acts 2:4,17; 13:2,4; 15:8; 16:16; 19:6; 20:23,28; 21:11; Heb. 2:4; I Peter 1:12) and to thereby build up the Church to become the sanctified Temple of the Father and of the Son. (Rom. 15:16; Eph. 2:18-22; 4:11-13)

When that work of temple-building was completed, and the Father and the Son came to indwell the Church, (Jn. 14:23) the Spirit did not then leave His Temple, or cease to "function." The Spirit's eschatological work ceased in 70, but His New Covenant ministry "*remains*" in glory forever. (I Cor. 3:8-11) The eternal ministry of the Holy Spirit, and of the Son, and of the Father is revealed in the terms of the New Covenant:

"...*This is the [New] Covenant...: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. [THE HOLY SPIRIT] And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. [THE FATHER] ...I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.*" [THE SON] (Heb. 8:10-12)

It is through the Holy Spirit that God writes His laws upon our hearts; (I Cor. 2:11; II Cor. 3:3-8) that we are enabled to trust in Jesus; (I Cor. 2:14; 12:3) and that we are saved, cleansed and made new. (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Titus 3:5)

This is why believers were baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son *and the Holy Spirit*. (Matt. 28:19) It is through the Holy Spirit that God pours out His love into our hearts; (Rom. 5:5) that we have fellowship with one another; (II Cor. 13:14) and that we pray for one another and are comforted. (Acts 9:31; Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18; Jude 1:20)

The Kingdom of God itself is "*righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*." (Rom. 14:17; cf. I Thess. 1:6) From the heart of God's Kingdom flows the "*River of the Water of life*," from the throne of the Father and the Lamb. (Rev. 22:1) That River is *the Holy Spirit*. (Jn. 7:38)

The New Covenant Age is not an age wherein the Holy Spirit no longer functions. It is the age wherein the Holy Spirit flows forth like a mighty river from the Father and the Son, and gives life to the world through faith in the blood of the Lamb. (Jn. 6:63; II Cor. 3:6; Heb. 9:12-14) It is the age wherein the Triune God dwells in us and with us forever: "*And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, [The Holy Spirit] that He may be with you forever. ...He abides with you, and will be in you. ...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We [the Father and the Son] will come to him, and make Our abode with him.*" (Jn. 14:16-17,23)

QUESTION 77: The prophets predicted peace in the Kingdom after the coming of the Messiah. If the Messiah has come, and if the Church is the Kingdom, then why has the Church been fragmented and divided for centuries? Fragmentation and division is not "peace." Something is very wrong here, wouldn't you say?

ANSWER: "Something is very wrong here" if the prophecies of the Kingdom are interpreted using a wooden or nationalistic literalism, and if we thus expect to see "world peace," or perfect ecclesiastical harmony after the Parousia.

The fragmented and divided Church (i.e., the "visible Church," which includes false believers) is not the Kingdom that God purged in A.D. 70. (Matt. 13:41; Rev. 21:27) His Kingdom is "*righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*" (Rom. 14:17) It is the fellowship of *true* believers who love one another in Christ. (Heb. 8:11; I Jn. 4:12) It is "*Christ in you.*" (Lk. 17:21; Col. 1:27)

The "peace" of His Kingdom is primarily the peace we have "*with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" (Rom. 5:1) and the absence of the "*wall of partition*" that divided the elect before the Advent of the Son. (Eph. 2:14) The Kingdom is not a wooden or nationalistic fulfillment of the prophets. It is the great Mystery that the prophets described, as it were, *from behind a veil.*

This is not to say that God cares only about the Kingdom (or the "invisible Church") and has no concern about the peace of the "visible Church." Though the "visible Church" and the Kingdom *are* distinct, they are *not* separate. As the Kingdom increases and does its healing work, the "visible Church" reforms and more faithfully reflects the Kingdom, to the glory of God.

If we are troubled by a perceived lack of progress in the historic, "visible Church," we should remember that in the preterist worldview we are still in the early days "*of the increase of His Government.*" (Isa. 9:7) We are still in the early stages of "*the healing of the nations.*" (Rev. 22:2) In a very real sense, the New Covenant Church has only just begun. Therefore, to be skeptical of the Presence of Christ now because of the Church's sins is not only short-sighted, but it is an unrighteous judgment by appearance. (Jn. 7:24)

Though the "visible Church" has been fragmented for centuries, there are better days and better millennia ahead, as God illumines the hearts of His saints in every generation, (Eph. 1:18) and as the Church continually reforms in doctrine and in practice, and as the Kingdom continually spreads and transforms mankind throughout history. What was true of the Kingdom in the 1st century is equally true today:

"...God ...always leads us in triumph in Christ... The weapons of our warfare are ...divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." (II Cor. 2:14; 10:4-5)

Not even the "visible church," with its multitude of sins, and its multitude of conflicting doctrines and traditions, can withstand the onslaught of God's ever-increasing Kingdom. In time, by the grace and power of God, the historic Church, united in truth, will follow the example of the saints of that eschatological generation, and will obey the divine exhortation: "*...that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" (I Cor. 1:10)

QUESTION 78: How do you interpret Daniel 7 (specifically, the little horn; and the ten kings, three of which were uprooted) and Rev. 17:10-11 (the seven heads, one wounded; the seven kings, five fallen, one is, the other is not yet, and the Beast is an eighth)?

ANSWER: Most partial preterists and preterists interpret "*the Beast*" of Dan. 7; Rev. 11,13-17,19-20 as the Roman Empire generally and as Nero (the little "*horn*") specifically. The "*seven kings*" of Rev. 17:10 are usually interpreted as the first seven Caesars (Julius Caesar to Galba); and the "*eighth*" in Rev. 17:11 as either Vespasian or Titus (although neither of them "*went to perdition*" in A.D. 70). I have never seen an explanation as to who the "*three kings*" were that were supposedly "*uprooted*" before Nero. (Dan. 7:8)

The above is the majority answer. Some (full) preterists though have interpreted "*the Beast*" and / or the little "*horn*" as being *apostate Israel of the last days*. The explanation I offer here is similar to that view. The following is only my personal opinion and I welcome any comments or corrections, publicly or privately.

First the short answer:

Daniel's "*ten kings*" were the first ten kings of the Roman Empire (Julius Caesar to Vespasian). The three "*uprooted*" kings were the seventh, eighth and ninth kings of the Roman Empire (Galba, Otho, Vitellius). The "*seven kings*" in Rev. 17:10 were Daniel's "*ten kings*" minus the three "*uprooted*" kings. The wounded "*head*" in Rev. 13:3,12,14 was the death of the fourth king of the Roman Empire (Caligula). The "*eighth*" (which is also "*the Beast*") in Rev. 17:11 was the same as Daniel's little "*horn*," which was the same as "*the Man of sin.*" (II Thess. 2:3)

"*The Beast*" was a spirit (or perhaps a legion of spirits) through which apostate Israel united with the Roman Empire in order to destroy Jesus' disciples. (A.D. 64-68) "*The Beast*" was the "*king*," the "*destroyer*," the "*exterminator*" that rose up from the abode of demons. (Rev. 9:11) It was the spirit that led the Antichrists of the last days. (I Jn. 2:18,22; 4:3; II Jn. 1:7) It was "*the natural Man*" gone wild with murderous self-deification. It was "*all men*" / "*all nations*" united in hate against Christ's Church. (Matt. 24:9; Mk. 13:13) In the end of the age, (A.D. 68-70) the home of "*the Beast*" was apostate Israel.

Now the long answer:

The "*ten kings*" of the fourth beast / kingdom in Daniel 7:7,20,24 were the ten Caesars who reigned until A.D. 70:

1. Julius Caesar (49 - 44 B.C.)
2. Augustus (31 B.C. - A.D. 14)
3. Tiberius (A.D. 14 - 37)
4. Caligula (A.D. 37 - 41)
5. Claudius (A.D. 41 - 54)
6. Nero (A.D. 54 - 68)
7. Galba (A.D. 68 - 69)
8. Otho (A.D. 69)
9. Vitellius (A.D. 69)
10. Vespasian (A.D. 69 - 79)

Galba, Otho and Vitellius were the "*three kings*" out of the ten who were "*uprooted*" before "*the little horn*." (Dan. 7:8,20,24) The "*ten kings*" minus the three "*uprooted*" kings are the "*seven kings*" of Rev. 17:10-11:

1. Julius Caesar
2. Augustus
3. Tiberius
4. Caligula
5. Claudius ("*Five have fallen*.")
6. Nero ("*One is*.")

-1. "*Uprooted*": After ruling for seven months, Galba was mutilated and beheaded by his soldiers in the streets of Rome.

-2. "*Uprooted*": After ruling for three months, Otho committed suicide with a knife after his army was defeated by Vitellius' troops.

-3. "*Uprooted*": After ruling for eight months, Vitellius was butchered and dismembered by a mob in the streets of Rome.

7. Vespasian ("*The other has not yet come*.")

The seventh king, Vespasian, remained "*a little while*" (Rev. 17:10) until the Kingdom came in A.D. 70 (though he lived on as Caesar after that time).

The "*eighth*" (corresponding to Daniel's "*little horn*," before whom three of the seven Caesars were "*uprooted*") was the "*king*" of the Abyss; the spirit of Antichrist. It was the unholy union of apostate Israel with Rome against the Church. In the end of the age, the body of "*the Beast*" was revealed to be apostate Israel.

Three Objections Answered:

Objection 1: The "*seven kings*" were seven individual, gentile kings. Therefore, the "*eighth*" must also have been an individual, gentile king and not a spirit, or a group of men who were not even kings themselves.

Answer: The Lord never prophesied the advent of one individual False Christ, or of one individual "False Prophet" or of one individual Persecutor. He spoke only of *many* false christs, *many* false prophets and *many* persecutors; and most of the persecutors of whom He spoke were *Jewish* (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 17,21). (The Lord did prophesy of gentiles persecuting the Church in the Last days, but in the context of *the Jews* betraying and handing over believers to pagan rulers.) In the same way, the Apostle John never spoke of one individual "*Antichrist*," but of "*many Antichrists*," who together made up the one Antichrist. (I Jn. 2:18; II Jn. 1:7)

When "*the Beast*" first appeared in the book of Revelation, it killed the saints *in Jerusalem* (not in Rome). (Rev. 11:7-8) Likewise, even though it was "*the Beast*" that killed the saints throughout the book of Revelation, it was in "*Babylon*"

(**Jerusalem**) that the blood of the saints was found. (Matt. 23:35-36; Rev. 18:24)

Furthermore, it is easy to overlook the fact that the "seven heads" were not *only* seven gentile Caesars, but *they were first and foremost*, "seven mountains" where Jerusalem was sitting as Queen. (Rev. 17:9; 18:7) The "seven heads" primarily symbolized Jerusalem's *world-dominion*, i.e., the Kingdom that she had over all the peoples and kings of the whole earth. (Rev. 17:1,15,18).

The "seven heads" were firstly *Jerusalem's kingdom*, ("the kingdom of this world" --Rev. 11:15) and secondarily *seven gentile Caesars*. It was through the manipulations and instigations of the Jews that the rulers of the Roman world killed believers --even as it was through the Jews that the Roman governor Pilate handed over the Lord of glory to be crucified. It was Israel, *not the Roman Empire*, who had "*the greater sin*" on the day the Lord was betrayed and murdered (Jn. 9:11), and it was the same when the children of Queen Jerusalem united with the King in Rome (Nero) to persecute the saints in c. A.D. 64. (Lk. 12:47-48)

Lastly, one aspect of "*the Beast*" that has been largely ignored is that "*the Beast*" was not *only* a "*flesh and blood*" entity or power (such as Rome, or Nero, or apostate Israel), but it was ultimately a *spirit, angel or demon*, or a collective of demons, as was Legion.

The Beast was likely the "*king*" of the "*locusts*," "*the angel of the Abyss*," who was called Abaddon ("Destruction") and Apollyon ("One that Exterminates"). (Rev. 9:11) His coming "*up out of the Abyss*" (the abode of demons) indicates that he was a demonic force --one of the "*world forces*" that had been unleashed against the Church in the Last Days:

Eph. 6:12:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

I Jn. 4:3:

"Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world."

Apostate Israel became the home of "*the Beast*" out of the Abyss. The destroying spirit of the age of the gentile Roman Empire came to dwell in the reprobate Jewish nation:

Matt. 12:43-45:

*"Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. "Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits ["the Beast"] more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation." (cf. Lk. 23:21)
(More on this point below.)*

Objection 2: Israel was not "*of*" the seven Caesars. (Rev. 17:11)

Answer:

"As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, 'If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.'" (Jn. 19:12)

"They therefore cried out, 'Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.'" (Jn. 19:15)

"...They all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." (Acts 17:7)

The apostate Jews of the last days were not Jews. (Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3; Rev. 2:9; 3:9) They had become gentiles. They were "*of this world*." (Jn. 8:23) They were blasphemers, idolaters and false messiahs, *just like the pagan Caesars*. The only difference was that the apostates committed their atrocities after receiving the full knowledge of the Truth, and hypocritically covered up their iniquities with a "*form of godliness*." (II Tim. 3:5)

Objection 3: Israel did not cause the "*uprooting*" of Galba, Otho and Vitellius.

Answer: Daniel did not actually say that the little horn directly *caused* the uprooting of the three kings. Dan. 7:8 says that the three kings were *uprooted "before"* the little horn; and Dan. 7:20 says that the three kings *fell "before"* the little horn. And Dan. 7:24 says that the little horn "*humbled*" the three kings. (See Jay P. Green's Literal Translation and Young's Literal Translation.)

These descriptions of the relationship between the little "*horn*" and the three kings harmonize with what happened in the days of Galba, Otho and Vitellius:

The great Rebellion of the Jews in Judea was a clear and present danger to the stability of the Roman Empire. After Rome had suffered an inexplicable and humiliating defeat at the hands of the Jews in A.D. 66, Nero Caesar was in a state of terror as to whether or not he could put down the Jews and keep their rebellion from spreading to other nations. (Josephus, *Wars*, iii, i, 1-8)

Nero eventually sent the veteran General Vespasian to put down the rebellion. After Vespasian and his son Titus and their vast armies had been fighting the war against the Jews for about a year, Nero committed suicide on June 9th, A.D. 68, and the Empire quickly fell into anarchy because of widespread rebellion. As a result, Vespasian and Titus were forced to suspend the war, and the rebels in Judea became the temporary victors over Rome. It was in those dark days that Galba, Otho and Vitellius were "*uprooted*" in rapid succession.

It may even be that if Vespasian, Titus and their legions had not been away putting down the great Rebellion of the Jews - a rebellion that was already destabilizing the Empire-- Rome might not have descended into lawlessness after the death of Nero. If that is the case, then it was the Rebellion of the Jews that indirectly caused the anarchy that humbled and uprooted the three kings, Galba, Otho and Vitellius.

In Rev. 13:3,12,14, one of the "*seven kings*" (one of the "*seven heads*") received a "*death-wound*" by "*the sword*." (Rev. 13:14) This could refer to the murder of one of the seven Caesars with a literal sword, or it could refer to a special judgment of one of the seven Caesars by "*the Word of God*." (Or it could mean both.) If we take "*the sword*" to mean a literal sword, then *Caligula* (the fourth king) is the king that received the "*death-wound*," as he was the only king out of the seven who was killed with a literal sword. Some of his own soldiers killed him with their swords. (Julius Caesar was killed with daggers; and Nero killed himself with a dagger.)

But if we take the death-wound of "*the sword*" to mean "death by a special judgment of the Word of God," Caligula is still the outstanding king among the seven. Caligula's assassination was, for God's people, a miraculous deliverance from certain destruction. In A.D. 40 Caligula, in his insanity, had ordered his statues to be erected in the Temple of God in Jerusalem. After the Jews refused to obey his command, and after a standoff that lasted for months, Caligula ordered the unconditional destruction of the Jewish nation.

Remarkably, the delivery of Caligula's command to his general in Judea was delayed for three months because of a storm at sea, so that a subsequent letter containing news of Caligula's death arrived in Judea twenty-seven days before Caligula's orders of destruction finally arrived. Because Caligula was dead, his belated command to destroy the Jews was null and void. (Josephus, *Antiq.*, xviii, viii, 9; *Wars*, i, x, 5)

That episode has not received much attention as being an event of much, if any, eschatological significance. Yet in A.D. 40 (when Caligula ordered Israel's destruction), *the Gospel had not yet been preached to the gentiles. The destruction of the Jewish nation in A.D. 40 might have meant the complete destruction of the infant Church* (especially if it had happened on a feast day). Caligula's command then was nothing less than Satan's (and the Beast's) first attempt to *destroy and exterminate the Church*.

When God thwarted that attempt through the death of Caligula, God had inflicted a "*death-wound*" upon one of the "*seven heads*" of the Beast, and God cast the exorcised demon (which perhaps had literally possessed Caligula) into the Abyss.

Thus when the book of Revelation was written, (during the reign of the sixth king, Nero) "*the Beast*" was "**not**." (Rev. 17:8,11) Then later, probably in c. A.D. 64, (the year that the Jewish-Neronian, i.e., *worldwide*, Persecution of the Church began) the unclean / gentile spirit was "resurrected" from out of the Abyss, and it entered into the "*eighth*," the little "*horn*," "*the Man of sin*," "*the Antichrist*": **Apostate Israel in its adulterous union with Nero Caesar against Christ.**

Not only was it the apostate Jews who used the power of Caesar to "*crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*," (Heb. 6:6) but it was the apostate Jews themselves who hated Jerusalem, who made her desolate and naked, and ate her flesh and burned her with fire. (Rev. 17:16) The Roman armies under Titus simply effected the final end of the wild Beast who, on the Last Day, was cornered and trapped in the doomed City:

c. December A.D. 69:

"[The rebellion in Jerusalem is] *like a wild beast grown mad, which, for want of food from abroad, fell now upon eating its own flesh*." (Josephus, *Wars*, v, i, 1; cf. *Wars*, iv, iv, 3)

1. Julius Caesar (49 - 44 B.C.)
2. Augustus (31 B.C. - A.D. 14)

3. Tiberius (A.D. 14 - 37)
4. Caligula (A.D. 37 - 41) (**Death-wound of the Beast**)
5. Claudius (A.D. 41 - 54) ("*Five have fallen.*")
6. Nero (A.D. 54 - 68) ("*One is.*")

- 1. Galba (A.D. 68 - 69) (**Uprooted**)
- 2. Otho (A.D. 69) (**Uprooted**)
- 3. Vitellius (A.D. 69) (**Uprooted**)

7. Vespasian (A.D. 69 - 79) ("*The other has not yet come. ... "He must remain a little while" [i.e., until the end in A.D. 70]*")

8. "*an eighth*" / the little "*horn*": *Antichrist Israel of the last days united with the Roman world against the Church (c. A.D. 64) (The "the Beast" came out of the Abyss, its death-wound healed; and it was destroyed shortly thereafter in the fire of A.D. 70.)*

QUESTION 79: What is "*the creation*" in Rom. 8:19-22? In what sense was it "*subjected to vanity*?" How was it suffering "*the pains of childbirth*?" And what does it mean that it was "*set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God*?"

ANSWER: Compare Rom. 8:19,21 with Heb. 11:39-40:

"...*The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. [the New Covenant Church] ...The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God [the New Covenant Church].*" (Rom. 8:19,21)

"*And all these [the saints who died before the coming of Christ], having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us [the New Covenant Church] they should not be made perfect.*" (Heb. 11:39-40)

These two passages have a common theme: Those who were longing for the promise and who were to receive it only with the Last Days Church.

The above comparison is one reason I believe "*the creation*" in Romans 8 was the "*world*" of the faithful "*in Adam*"; (Jn. 3:16-17; Rom. 5:15-19; I Cor. 15:22) the saints who had not yet received the promised indwelling Spirit of God; (as is implied in Rom. 8:23; cf. I Cor. 15:47-49; Heb. 11:13,39) especially those saints who were under the Law of Moses. (Rom. 5:20; 7:13; Heb. 9:15)

Vanity

All of the saints in Adam had been "*subjected to futility*" and were in "*slavery of corruption*" insofar as they had remained *condemned*, despite their desire to live righteously before God. (Rom. 8:3; Heb. 10:3-4) Sin, not Christ, had made its home in them. (Rom. 7:17,20) Despite their holiness, they had been led into captivity and slavery to the law of sin, and into the fearful death of Sheol. (Rom. 7:23; 8:15; Gal. 4:24; 5:1; Heb. 2:15) The commandments of God, which they loved, ultimately had served to kill them because they were sinful (unredeemed). So they groaned in bondage and in the vanity of their existence, longing for the Redeemer, because *their works of faith had resulted only in death.* (Rom. 7:5,24)

As Solomon wrote:

"*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?'*" (Eccl. 1:2-3)

And as Isaiah wrote:

"*For Sheol cannot thank You; death cannot praise You. Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness.*" (Isa. 38:18)

Travailing, Anxiously Awaiting the Sons of God

"*The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.*" (Rom. 8:22)

The Last Days were a time of great upheavals, or "*birth pangs*," not only for the Church on Earth (Rev. 12:2), and not only for the wicked on Earth, (who were "giving birth" to "destruction" and "wind") (Isa. 26:17-18; Matt. 24:8; Mk. 13:8; I Thess. 5:3), but also for the dead. Hades (Sheol) was *under siege*, (Matt. 16:18; Rev. 12:7) and the departed saints in Adam were anxiously longing for their impending redemption in Christ, (Lk. 18:7-8; I Peter 4:6; Rev. 6:9-11) and were eagerly expecting to be set free (resurrected) at the revelation of the New Jerusalem (the New Covenant Church). (II Cor. 3:17; Heb. 11:10; Gal. 4:22-31)

The eventual *birth*, or "*rebirth*," of the dead (Matt. 19:28; cf. Isa. 26:19 NASB, NIV) would not happen apart from the eschatological saints in Christ, who were enduring, suffering and dying with Christ on behalf of the dead. (Matt. 23:34-35; I

Cor. 15:29-32; Rev. 6:9-11) The Church, as "firstfruits," had first to be perfected through suffering with Christ before the dead would be "*harvested*," or gathered, in the end of the age. It was only as the Last Days Church endured to the end that the dead were preserved through the eschatological time of "*childbirth*" and finally set free (resurrected) in A.D. 70.

Paul reiterated this doctrine in I Tim. 2:15:

*"And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. **But she [Eve] shall be saved through the childbearing if they [the women of Paul's generation] continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.**"* (I Tim. 2:14-15)

Though Paul was writing concerning women, (vs. 9ff) the doctrine he was teaching was not limited to women (Compare I Peter 3:6). The righteous descendants of Adam and Eve were suffering the eschatological pains of "*childbearing*," and would be preserved through their throes only as the Body of Christ on Earth endured in the Faith and attained unto the Resurrection of the dead. (Phil. 3:11)

The Revelation of the Church

In that Day, the pre-Cross world of sin, death, condemnation and alienation melted with "*fervent heat*." The man-made Tabernacle was thrown down by the judgment of God and the children of the flesh were swept away. What remained was the Body of Christ, vindicated and confirmed to the world as the true and purified Tabernacle of the God of Israel. Then all of the elect, the living and the dead, were redeemed, and were gathered together under His wing; and they became *One in Him*. (Col. 1:20)

Today we live in a "*new heavens and a new earth*." "*Vanity*" ("*futility*") is a thing of the past for all who dwell in the City of God, who have been "*set free*" through faith in the blood of Christ. The members of our bodies no longer bear fruit unto Death. In Him, our works of faith are now *incorruptible*. They are of eternal value, and they follow us into Heaven. (Rev. 14:13)

Now instead of futility, slavery and the corruption of *sin, condemnation and death*, the children of God in all of Heaven and Earth have eternal redemption, forgiveness, freedom, sonship, and unfading glory through the incorruptible Righteousness of the indwelling Son of God.

Summary:

God had subjected the saints in Adam to futility through His commandments. His commandments had served to increase transgressions and to reveal His unredeemed saints to be bound to the law of sin and death. But God had given them hope (Rom. 8:20) that they would be delivered from the bondage of corruption ("*sin, death, condemnation*") into the glorious liberty ("*no condemnation*") of the New Covenant Church. (Rom. 8:21)

In the Last Days, the saints in Adam were earnestly expecting and eagerly awaiting the manifestation of believers in Christ as the true sons of God. (Rom. 8:19) The whole body (of the saints in Adam) was groaning and suffering the pains of childbirth together. (Rom. 8:22)

Their time of waiting, expecting, groaning and travailing came to an end when the children of the flesh (the unbelieving Jews) were disinherited, and the followers of Jesus were vindicated and revealed to the world to be the true sons of God. In that Day, the universal convocation of the saints was united in Christ. Through His blood they were adopted, redeemed and gathered into His eternal Kingdom --the Kingdom in which we dwell today through faith.

QUESTION 80: Doesn't Zechariah 14:4-5 plainly teach that Jesus will come back and stand on the Mount of Olives and cause it to be split in two? How can preterists possibly spiritualize that away and claim that it was fulfilled in the first century?

ANSWER: "*And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!"* (Zech. 14:4-5)

If one begins with the presupposition that the Parousia is yet future and that it is going to be a literal descent and landing of Jesus in the flesh, then one would be tempted to interpret this prophecy as referring to a literal splitting of the literal Mount of Olives. (After all, Jesus already literally stood on the Mount of Olives, so why should He not do it again at His Second Coming?)

While this approach to Zech. 14:4-5 seems credible at first, there are problems with it even in a futuristic framework -- problems that have caused most futurist interpreters throughout the ages to interpret the prophecy *symbolically*.

First, the immediate context mentions *events that took place in the first century*. Most notable is the prophecy of the "living water" (Zech. 14:8). A comparison of Jn. 7:38-39 and Acts 2:17-21 confirms that the coming of the "living water" which would flow out from Jerusalem was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

Since verse 8 was fulfilled at Pentecost, a futuristic interpretation of verses 3-7 would force us to impose a 2,000-year "leap" or "gap" upon Zechariah 14 --from the yet future Second Coming in verses 3-7, back to the day of Pentecost 2,000 years ago in verse 8, forward to a yet future "millennial reign" in verse 9.

(Such exegetical "ping ponging" through the aeons may be acceptable to one who clings to a dispensationalist framework, but it is offensive to any who would reverently let God's Word say what it says.)

Second, there is no other prophecy in Scripture that speaks of the "landing" of Jesus, or the resulting split of the Mount of Olives. If we interpret this prophecy literally, we turn it into a "stand alone" prophecy with no parallel in Scripture. We make it a weak proof text.

A literalistic approach to Zech. 14:4-5 is contextually awkward and exegetically wanting, but a symbolic approach finds that Scripture illumines the prophecy:

"...so will the Lord of hosts come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill" (Isa. 31:4).

"For behold, the Lord is coming forth from His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will be split, like wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place." (Micah 1:3-4)

"He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, the ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting." (Hab. 3:6)

These Scriptures, and their contexts, reveal that the prophetic image of God standing on a mountain, or on mountains, and causing it to split or shatter or melt under Him is a symbol of God waging war against His enemies and delivering His saints.

Note that in Zech. 14:4-5, a mountain became a valley of salvation; and what were once valleys became mountains. *This is virtually the same metaphor that was used by Isaiah, Matthew and Luke:*

"...Make ready the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough roads smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Isa. 40:3-4; Matt. 3:3; Lk. 3:4-5)

According to this prophecy, whatever stood in the Church's way was going to be removed. Instead of a rough and winding highway over a mountain range (the wearying burden of the corrupted Jewish leadership), the Church would be given a straight and smooth road (the easy yoke of Christ). The Way of escape and salvation would overcome all that opposed it.

So in Zech. 14:4-5, the obstacle that opposed the Church would be shattered and overcome by a great valley that would extend to the other side of the obstacle. This is why Zechariah mentioned "the Mount of Olives" by name. That mountain stood in front of the City of Jerusalem, in the path of any who would flee directly to the East away from the City. The Mount of Olives thus served as a physical symbol of a *spiritual obstacle or barrier*, because of its location in front of Jerusalem.

As Zechariah's obstacle was split and made into a way of salvation, so through Christ Jesus was the "veil" of condemnation torn in two and replaced with the Way of salvation for all men. (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 9:8; 10:19-20) So too was the barrier of "the dividing wall" torn down and replaced with the peace of Christ in all nations. (Eph. 2:14-15) And so too was the destroying "mountain" of Babylon (the Jerusalem of slavery) burned up, cast into the sea, and replaced with the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Jer. 51:25; Matt. 21:21; Mk. 11:23; Rev. 8:8)

Zech. 14:4-5 is a prophecy of Gospel salvation. Before God destroyed His enemies in A.D. 70, He removed the barrier between His elect and their salvation. He provided a Way of escape and of salvation for His Church. That "Way" was Christ, His Word, His Gospel. At the sound of His Gospel-Voice, His disciples fled from the corruption of the world and from the wrath of God (Matt. 3:7; Lk. 3:7; 21:36; Rom. 2:3; Heb. 2:3; 6:18; 12:25; II Peter 1:4; 2:20; Rev. 12:6; 18:4). Abiding in His Word, they were hid under the refuge of the shadow of His Wings, in the valley of His Mountains. (Zech. 14:5)

QUESTION 81: God tells us in Isa. 65:20 that there will come a time when there will be no more infant deaths, a time when a hundred years old will be considered young. Obviously, Isaiah was talking about a time in our future (the Millennium) when people will have longer life spans than we have now. As a preterist, how do you get around the plain and obvious teaching of Isa. 65:20?

ANSWER: "There shall no longer be thence an infant of days, nor an old man who has not filled his days: for the child will die a hundred years old; but the sinner being a hundred years old will be accursed." (Isa. 65:20)

If we interpret this verse as a promise of *biological longevity*, we are faced with a contradiction:

1. "There shall no longer be ...an old man who has not filled his days."

2. "The child will die a hundred years old."

If a hundred years old will be the age of a child, and if there will be children who will die at that age, then those children will not grow old and fill their days. Yet Isaiah says that *everyone* will grow old and fill their days. These two promises cannot both be literally true.

This apparent contradiction can only be resolved when we interpret Isa. 65:20 in its context, which is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem (in A.D. 70), and the coming of *the New Jerusalem* (the Church in the New Covenant world) *and her spiritual children* (believers). In light of this context, we should expect to see Isaiah speaking of *eternal, spiritual life*, and not of biological longevity.

Here is a summary interpretation of Isaiah chapter 65:

Verse 1a: The coming in of the gentiles through the Gospel. (This verse is quoted in Rom. 10:20, and establishes the first-century context of Isaiah 65.)

Verses 1b-5: God's indictment of Gospel-resisting Israel. The sins of their fathers to be repaid into their bosoms. (This was fulfilled in Christ's generation, at the destruction of Jerusalem / "Babylon," according to Matt. 23:35; Rev. 18:24)

Verses 6-7: God's promise of vengeance against His rebellious nation. (This was fulfilled in the Great Tribulation that was consummated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, according to Lk. 21:22ff)

Verse 8-16a: Four contrasts between the chosen remnant and God's enemies:

REMNANT	ENEMIES
1. Inherit the Promise (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:7-10)	1. Slaughtered with the sword (Lk. 21:24)
2. Eat and drink (Matt. 5:6; Lk. 6:21; Jn. 4:13-15; Rev. 7:16-17)	2. Hunger and thirst (Lk. 6:25; Jn. 6:35)
3. Rejoicing (Lk. 6:21,13,23)	3. Shame, mourning, broken heart (Lk. 6:25; Rev. 3:18; 16:15)
4. Called by God's name (Acts 15:14; II Thess. 1:12; I Peter 4:14; Rev. 2:17; 3:12; 14:1; 22:4)	4. Name left for a curse. (Mal. 4:16; Gal. 3:10; Rev. 14:11; 19:3)

Verses 16a-19: God's promise to abolish the former things, i.e., the terrible curses that came upon His nation because of their perpetual sin under the old covenant (See the four points under "ENEMIES" above.), and to create a New Covenant world (a New Heavens and a New Earth; a New Jerusalem where there would no longer be any mourning for the nation because of God's curse upon it).

Verse 20: In the New Covenant world, the sons of the New Jerusalem never die, neither as a result of a weak birth (I Peter 1:23) nor as a result of old age. They all have life, and have it abundantly. (Jn. 10:10) Even if they die at the age of one hundred, they are but youths (Ps. 103:5; II Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10), *and they live on.* (Jn. 11:25) But those outside the City, even if they live to be a hundred years old, are accursed. (Compare Rev. 21:6-8.)

Verse 21-23: Under the old covenant, God sent foreign nations to conquer and destroy His sinful nation, so that the works of His people were done in vain. In the New Covenant world, His people will never be cursed by Him, or conquered or destroyed by another nation. They will never be plundered of the fruits of their labors (Rev. 14:13). They are established as a tree. (Ps. 1:3; 52:8-9) Throughout every generation, they outlive their works. (In other words, believers have eternal life.)

Verses 24-25: God brought all of this into being by His election of grace. Through the Gospel, He made peace where there was enmity, having brought His enemies into His fold. (Rom. 5:21; Col. 1:21) He made an end to war in His Kingdom, having replaced the warring hearts of His enemies with hearts of gentleness and servanthood. And those who resisted His Kingdom to the end, He put to shame through the sin-forgiving grace and world-conquering power of His Gospel. (Micah 7:15-18; I Cor. 1:27; Titus 2:8; I Peter 3:16; I Jn. 2:28; 5:4; Rev. 3:18; 16:15)

The next verses of Isaiah, to the end of the book, continue the themes of the creation of the Church and the destruction of the city and sanctuary in A.D. 70. Isa. 65:20 does not speak of an alleged "millennial longevity." That doctrine is not only foreign to the surrounding context, but it is also foreign to any other text in the whole of Scripture.

Isa. 65:20 foreshadows the Gospel: All who are in Christ have incorruptible life. Even if we die physically at the ripe old age of a hundred, we are yet young. But the one who rejects the work of the Savior (Isa. 53:5,8,10) cannot escape the curse of death, even if he should live to be a hundred years old.

QUESTION 82: When was Matt. 23:39 fulfilled?

ANSWER: *"For I say unto you [Jerusalem, the scribes, the Pharisees], You shall not see Me henceforth, till you shall say, 'Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Matt. 23:39; Lk. 21:35)*

All the tribes of the Land of Judea saw Jesus again and acknowledged Him as King in A.D. 70:

"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the Land will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen." (Rev. 1:7)

"...Then all the tribes of the Land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the heavens with power and great glory." (Matt. 24:30; Mk. 13:26; Lk. 21:27)

"...Hereafter you [Caiaphas the high priest, the scribes, elders, chief priests, the whole Sanhedrin] shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matt. 26:57-64; Mk. 14:53-62)

"Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie-- behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you." (Rev. 3:9; cf. Isa. 60:14)

"And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the Face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of Their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?'" (Rev. 6:15-17)

Most futurists interpret Matt. 23:39 as an implied promise of salvation for "the Jews" in our future. They see the verse as a declaration that the Jews would go through a long time of spiritual blindness until they are converted to Christ shortly before His Second Coming at the end of "the Church Age."

That interpretation seems credible in a futuristic framework. However, the context (Matt. 23-24) indicates that the verse is a promise of *judgment against the first-century Jews*; and as other Scriptures (some cited above) reveal, Jerusalem did "see" Jesus again when He Appeared the second time (Heb.9:28) *to destroy the holy City and its Sanctuary*, (Dan. 9:24-27; Heb. 9:8) *and to set up His eternal Throne among believers*. (Rev. 22:3)

Matt. 23:39 was a prophecy of *final subjugation*, (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:44; Mk. 12:36; Lk. 20:43; Acts 2:35; I Cor. 15:25, 27; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 1:13; 2:8; 10:13) not of salvation. When the Son of Man came in the cataclysm of A.D. 70 to violently take the Kingdom from His enemies (i.e., the scribes, Pharisees, etc.) and give it to His Church (Matt. 21:43), the unbelieving Jews were *forced to see* (perceive, understand, know) and *forced to admit* that Jesus is the King, the Son of God --though their recognition and confession of Him in that mournful hour was too little and too late:

"Many will say to Me on that Day, 'Lord, Lord...' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" (Matt. 7:22-23; cf. Heb. 10:26-27; 12:17)

QUESTION 83: Eph. 4:11-13 says that the gifts of "apostles," "prophets," "evangelists," "pastors" and "teachers" were given to believers "until" the Church reached maturity. If that Scripture was fulfilled in A.D. 70 does this mean that "evangelists," "pastors" and "teachers" existed only "until" A.D. 70 and that they no longer exist today?

ANSWER: *"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:11-13)*

Neither the cessation nor the continuation of any of the gifts can be inferred from the word "until" in verse 13. The word "until" only implies, "reaching a point." "Until" implies nothing as to whether a state that existed until a point, continued or ceased after the point was reached. Sometimes the word "until" is used in a context of *continuation* (Rom. 5:14; I Tim. 6:14) and sometimes it is used in a context of *cessation* (Matt. 13:30; Heb. 9:10), but the word need not be used in a context of *either* continuation *or* of cessation. "Until" in Eph. 4:13 is in such an ambiguous context.

There is nothing in the context of Eph. 4:13 that implies whether any of the gifts were to cease or were to continue after the Church became the completed Body of Christ in A.D. 70. Neither the issue of cessation nor the issue of continuation is addressed. The only issue in view is the eventual attainment of the Church to maturity / perfection through the gifts of the Spirit. We must go elsewhere in Scripture to find out if any of the gifts were to be abolished in A.D. 70. (Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 13:1-6; I Cor. 13:8-11; 14:21-22; Heb. 1:1-2)

QUESTION 84: The historic Church told us which books belong in the New Testament. Therefore, the only way we can be 100% certain that we have the true words of God in the New Testament is to believe in the infallibility of the Church, because if the Church is fallible then it would be possible that the Church made a mistake and put uninspired books in the New Testament. How can you avoid this logic?

ANSWER: Because the Church is no longer a source of divine revelation, the Church is necessarily *fallible*. Because the divinely inspired Scriptures are the only source of revelation since the close of the prophetic age in A.D. 70, the "uninspired" Church's authority since then is invariably *subordinate* to the Scriptures. Because the Church is no longer receiving new prophetic revelation / knowledge, the Church is *able to err* in its "official decrees," and must therefore submit its fallible knowledge to the authority of the Word of God.

Though the Church is fallible (not a source of revelation), there are many reasons we can be sure that the Church chose only God-breathed books for the "New Testament." Perhaps the most basic reason is the word of Scripture that the Church hears only the Lord's voice, and will not hear another (Jn. 10:5,27). We may infer from this precept that the book that the historic Church has always held as the Word of God, is the Word of God.

Preterists especially can see how that *history itself* wonderfully demonstrates both the fallibility of the Church and the incorruptibility of the Scriptures:

For nearly 2,000 years the historic Church has officially held to "futurism." If the Church had not been guided by God's sovereign hand in history, the Church would have certainly inserted futurist writings into the canon, such as *The Shepherd of Hermes*, *The Epistle of Barnabas* or one of many other ancient, futurist books. Yet despite the futurism of most, or all, of Christendom for centuries upon centuries, the books that remain in the canon are the books that uniformly contradict the established eschatology of the very Church that formed the canon! For preterists, this must serve as solid, faith-building evidence of God's sovereign care and preservation of His Holy Scriptures.

We must also remember that preterism teaches the timely fulfillment in Christ's generation of all things written, which doctrine *demonstrates yet again* the divine inspiration of the New Testament. (Deut. 18:22) In contrast to preterism, traditional eschatology sees prophecy-postponement (or even prophecy-failure), which inevitably casts a shadow of doubt on the inspiration of the New Testament. It is no wonder that many futurists have eventually felt compelled to rely on "ecclesiastical infallibility" to validate God's Word, since the futuristic interpretation ultimately serves to undermine the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture.

God's Word stands firm, not thanks to a church that supposedly receives infallible, prophetic revelation / knowledge today, but thanks to *God's historical providence and faithfulness in keeping His promise to preserve His Word in His Church*. Though human doctrines (such as "futurism") will come and go with the winds of history, His words "*shall not pass away*." (Isa. 40:8; Matt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33; I Peter 1:24-25)
"*Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven*." (Ps. 119:89)

QUESTION 85: In your Q&A #84 you said that one reason that we can be "SURE" that the post-apostolic Church chose only God-breathed books for the "New-Testament" canon is that "the Church hears only the Lord's voice, and will not hear another (Jn. 10:5,27)." Aren't you in essence saying that the Church "*hears infallibly*?"

ANSWER: In a manner of speaking, yes.

The historic Church is what it is: The hearer and follower of Christ. The historic Church cannot NOT be what it is. "The Word of Christ" that the historic Church has recognized, heard and followed as "the Word of Christ" is necessarily the Word of Christ, because the Church is what it is: The hearer and follower of Christ.

In the same way, the Gospel that the Church has historically preached is necessarily the true Gospel, because the Church is what it is: The hearer and follower of Christ. If the historic Gospel that the Church has "always and everywhere" preached is not the true Gospel, then the historic Church is not the true hearer and follower of Christ. The historic Church necessarily is and does that which defines it as the Church.

The above describes a tautological, pan-historical "infallibility." (The Church is forever the Church.) It does not involve new revelations or new knowledge or new divine utterances, as in the charismatic and Catholic views. It in no way implies that any individuals or councils after the apostolic era have ever spoken infallibly. Conciliar decrees may be confirmed by the historic Church in subsequent millennia to have been *inerrant*, but that does not imply that any councils were or are, at any point, *unable to err* in their decrees.

QUESTION 86: Assuming that the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats was fulfilled in A.D. 70, my question is *how* was it fulfilled? Was it fulfilled symbolically on Earth, or was it fulfilled in Heaven?

ANSWER: The prophecy of Matt. 25:31-46 was fulfilled in Heaven. It was a prophecy (not a "parable") of the Judgment of the dead of Christ's generation.

Sequence of events:

1. First the Coming of the Son of Man in A.D. 70 (Matt. 25:31)
2. Then the gathering of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:32)
3. Then the separation of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:32)
4. Then the casting out of the wicked into the eternal fire (Matt. 25:41,46)

The same order of events is given in the parable of the Wedding Banquet:

"...But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire. THEN he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matt. 22:7-13)

1. First the destruction of the City in A.D. 70 (the Coming of the Son of Man) (Matt. 22:7)
2. THEN the gathering together of the righteous and the wicked (the sheep and the goats) (Matt. 22:8-10)
3. Then the separation of the righteous and the wicked (the sheep and the goats) (Matt. 22:11-13)
4. Then the casting out of the wicked (the goats) into outer darkness, the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:13)

The prophecy of the Sheep and the Goats is a reiteration of the prophetic teaching of the parable of the Wedding Banquet. In both passages, the gathering and judgment of the righteous and the wicked (the sheep and the goats) take place *after* the destruction of Jerusalem. Both passages were fulfilled *after God's eschatological judgment on Earth was finished in A.D. 70*, (Lk. 12:59) which means that both passages were fulfilled in Heaven, which means that the post-Parousia Judgment was the Judgment of *the dead*. As Rev. 11:18 says:

"And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged..."

In the parable of the Wedding Banquet, the gathering of the good and the evil (the sheep and the goats) after the destruction of the city represented the gathering of the dead of Christ's generation to His heavenly Tribunal after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The man in the parable who was cast out of the banquet (Matt. 22:13) represented the murderers ("the goats" / the Pharisees, etc.) who were destroyed when Jerusalem was burned, (Matt. 22:7) and who were then raised to "a resurrection of condemnation." (Jn. 5:29)

Rev. 20:11-15 is another parallel Scripture to the prophecy of "the Sheep and Goats," and it confirms again not only the post-Parousia time of the Judgment of the sheep and the goats, but also, more strikingly, the heavenly location of that Judgment:

"And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:11-15)

In Rev. 20:11-15; Matt. 22:7-13; 25:31-46, we see the following:

1. The passing away of Heaven and Earth (the end of the old-covenant world / the Coming of the Son of Man / the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70)

2. THEN the gathering together of all men (the righteous and the wicked / the sheep and the goats) for Judgment
3. Then the judgment of all men (the righteous and the wicked / the sheep and the goats) according to their deeds
4. Then the casting of the wicked (the goats) into the fire; outer darkness, the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Rev. 20:11-15 reveals not only that the Judgment took place after the consummation of God's eschatological purging of His Kingdom on Earth, but also that those who were judged were "*the dead*" --those who had been gathered from out of "*the sea*" and from out of "*death and Hades*."

Lastly, Matt. 8:11-12; 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:42; Lk. 10:12,14; 11:31; 13:25-28 also lead us to interpret the prophecy of the Sheep and the Goats as having been fulfilled in Heaven, as those verses tell us that at the Judgment, "the goats" saw the peoples of past generations:

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you [the Jews to whom Jesus was preaching as He made His way to Jerusalem] shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves cast out." (Lk. 13:28)

Summary interpretation of the prophecy:

Though the post-Parousia Judgment was a judgment of all generations from Adam to Christ, the prophecy of the Sheep and the Goats is concerned only with the judgment of the dead of Christ's generation. God's "scapegoat" was that reprobate generation that despised and rejected the Body of the coming King. (Matt. 23:45)

The "goats" were those of that generation who had no compassion for the King's suffering brothers (as the Rich Man had no compassion for Lazarus). The "goats" were chiefly the Jews of Judea, in union with their brothers who were scattered among "*all the nations*" of the Roman world. (Matt. 25:32; Jn. 11:48-52)

They had excluded believers from the synagogues and from the commonwealth of Israel. They had not only persecuted them, but they stood idly by, justifying themselves, while their brothers suffered deprivation and imprisonment through the hatred that the whole world had held against Christians. (Matt. 7:22; Jms. 2:14-17; I Jn. 3:17; Rev. 11:10)

The "sheep" were those who had loved and cared for the King's suffering brothers (as the Good Samaritan had compassion and cared for the man on the road from Jerusalem). They were believers; those whom the Father predestined to eternal life from the foundation of the world; those who love their brothers. (Matt. 10:40-42; I Jn. 4:16-17)

By about September of A.D. 70 (the fall of Jerusalem), immense multitudes of Christians had been murdered, and even greater legions of Jews and Pagans had been slaughtered in wars. When Christ's eschatological judgment on the earth was finally finished in A.D. 70, He gathered the vast myriads of the dead of that generation to His Judgment-Seat.

He gave His brothers (who had been "*last*" in the world) the Kingdom in which we dwell today through faith; the Inheritance of eternal life that fills Heaven and Earth. But He sent the "goats" (who had been "*first*" in the world) into the punishment of the eternal fire. (Matt. 22:13; 25:41; Rev. 20:10)

Since that Day, the Judgment-Throne of our King remains, and His rule will *never end*:

"But of the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.'" (Heb. 1:8)

Therefore,

"Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." (Ps. 2:11-12)

QUESTION 87: Do preterists believe that certain gifts were for the 1st century church only and have since ceased?

ANSWER: I think that most preterists are cessationists when it comes to the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge, i.e., the "revelatory gifts." (I Cor. 13:8-13)

The cessationist interpretation of I Cor. 13:8-13 is that the revelatory gifts were abolished when the Church became the perfected Temple of God through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. This happened at the "*fulfillment of all things written*," when Christ came to indwell His Church in the consummation of the old-covenant age. I take this position in my two articles, [The Gift of Tongues and That Which is Perfect](#) and [With Unveiled Face: A Response](#).

I've seen two "continuationist" explanations of I Cor. 13:8-13:

1. I Cor. 13:8-13 teaches only that spiritual gifts are "made useless" or unprofitable whenever immature Christians misuse them through a lack of love. In this view, the passage says nothing of any abolition or cessation of any gifts, and all the gifts continue today exactly as they did in the 1st century. This is the view taught at [Preteristvision](#).

2. I Cor. 13:8-13 teaches the abolition and cessation of new Truths about God's Kingdom (new doctrines, new Scriptures), but the passage does not imply the abolition or cessation of revelatory gifts for particular purposes. The revelatory gifts continue today in local and individual situations, but their "universal" use for the entire covenant-community has ceased. That is the position of [Dr. Richard Leonard](#).

QUESTION 88: The Bible says that one would be taken and one would be left. This is obviously talking about the Rapture. How was this prophecy fulfilled?

ANSWER: The prophecy of some being "*taken*" and others being "*left*" (Matt. 24:26-28, 37-42; Lk. 17:23-37) is not a prophecy of the "rapture." It is a prophecy of the terror and death that was going to take place throughout the city of Jerusalem. Here are four reasons why I believe this:

1. Those who were going to be "*taken*" were not righteous, but were *wicked people*:

"For as in those days which were before the flood . . . they did not understand until the flood came and **took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there shall be two men in the field; one **will be taken**, and one will be left.**" (Matt. 24:38-40)

Noah's flood *took the wicked away*. Thus would be the coming of the Son of Man: Many would be *taken away*. Those who were to be "*taken*" (destroyed) were the *wicked*. This was why the Lord added this warning:

"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming." (Matt. 24:42)

If His disciples were not alert in that sudden catastrophe, and failed to immediately flee from the city as the Lord had commanded them, they would have been in grave danger of being trapped in the city and sharing in the fate of the wicked.

2. Those who were "*taken*" were "raptured" to a horrible death.

The disciples asked the Lord "*where*" the "*taken*" ones were going to be taken. (Lk. 17:37) The Lord's reply was not, "Heaven," or "to My right hand" or "into clouds." Rather, His answer was ominous and dreadful:

"Where the corpse is, there also will the vultures be gathered." (Lk. 17:37)

The "*taken*" ones were going to be carried away and left unburied, to be eaten by vultures. This is exactly what happened to those who were trapped in Jerusalem throughout the Great Tribulation. The whole city eventually became littered with unburied corpses.

3. The time when some would be "*taken*," and the time of the gathering / rapture were two separate times.

The time when some would be "*taken*" was going to be synchronous with the time that the Christians were fleeing the city. (Lk. 17:31-37) Not only does it not make biblical sense that the Church would flee in haste out of the city to escape the looming wrath of God, only to be "raptured" away into Heaven after escaping the wrath, but Matthew 24 reveals that the time of the Christians fleeing the city (and therefore the time when some would be "taken") took place well *before* the "gathering" / "rapture" of the Church (Matt. 24:15-31; II Thess. 2:1).

4. The time when some would be "*taken*" did not happen "*in the twinkling of an eye*."

The time when some would be "taken" was going to happen at "*night*" (Lk. 17:34) when the people of Jerusalem slept, and it was also going to happen in the daylight when the people of Jerusalem were working (at the mill, in the field, etc.). This means that the event was not going to be a pin-point in time, but that it was going to *continue* for some time -- for days, or months or years.

This was a significant difference between the days of Noah and Lot and the Coming of the Son of Man. The days of Noah and Lot were *sudden extinctions*. They were virtually *instant destructions* of the wicked. But the Revelation of the Son of Man was not going to be the same in that regard. It was going to be a time of "*Great Tribulation*," a time of affliction, terror and slaughters.

The Son of man was going to come suddenly and unexpectedly, as in the days of Noah and of Lot. And the righteous were going to be taken out of the way (by fleeing the city by the Lord's command), as in the days of Noah and of Lot. And the wicked were not going to escape, as in the days of Noah and of Lot. But the difference was that in the Coming of the Son of Man, the destruction of all the enemies was going to take place over many days of great terror and bloodshed.

The Coming of the Son of Man was also not going to be like the coming of a prophet who might appear in the wilderness

or in inner rooms. It was going to be a great calamity that would be recognized immediately by all the inhabitants of the city, like a lightning-flash that filled the heavens. Then His fiery Presence was going to continue throughout the remaining days of tribulation and slaughter. (Matt. 24:26-28; Lk. 17:23-24)

What is depicted in the Lord's prophecy of some being "*taken*" and others "*left*" was a time of peril and atrocities. Many were going to be slain throughout the city, and carried away ("*taken*") to be eaten by dogs and vultures, while many others were going to be left alive, only to envy the dead. (Rev. 9:6) The Church, in contrast, immediately fled the city by the Lord's command and escaped the horrors of His wrath. (A.D. 68-70) See Josephus, *Wars*, iv, 121 - vii, 4.

QUESTION 89: How do you interpret the "*thousand years*" of Rev. 20? Assuming you believe the Millennium was fulfilled in A.D. 70 (as most other preterists today seem to believe), how do you exegetically justify spiritualizing away a "*thousand years*" to mean merely a literal 40 years?

ANSWER: I interpret the "*thousand years*" of Rev. 20 to symbolize the eschatological "*fulness of the times*," when all things were fulfilled and filled up in Christ. (Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10, 23; 4:10)

Ps. 50:10 is often cited, usually by postmillennialists, to teach that "*a thousand*" symbolizes literally "*many thousands or millions*":

"For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." (Ps. 50:10)

The postmillennialists reason that God owns the cattle on **every** hill, therefore "*a thousand hills*" symbolizes or represents "many thousands or millions of hills." Thus, they reason, we are led by Scripture to interpret the "*thousand years*" in Rev. 20 to mean "many thousands or millions of years."

That reasoning sounds solid at first glance. However, the context of Ps. 50:10 does not lead us to a principle that a symbolic "thousand" always signifies "many thousands." Rather, it leads us to the principle that a symbolic "thousand" signifies "*all*" (of something), or more specifically, the "*fulness*" (of something). Ps. 50:10 is in fact reiterated and its "*thousand*" is interpreted for us two verses later:

"...The world is Mine, and the **fulness** thereof." (Ps. 50:12b)

In Ps. 90:4 a "*thousand years*" is as "*yesterday*" and as "*a watch in the night*." In II Peter 3:8 a "*thousand years*" is as one "*day*." In those verses, a "*thousand*" (and "*yesterday*" and "*a watch*" and a "*day*") is used to denote how that God *fills up time itself*, whether the time of yesterday or of a day or of a night or of an aeon. (Compare Job 7:7; Ps. 39:5; 90:2; 144:4; Heb. 13:8; Jms. 4:14.)

In Ps. 105:8, a "thousand" corresponds with "*forever*," i.e., *eternity*:

"He has remembered His covenant **forever**, the word that he commanded to a **thousand generations**." (Ps. 105:8)

In Scriptural usage, a symbolic "thousand" can correspond to "1" (day / yesterday / a watch in the night), or to "13,169,103" (hills), or to "eternity" ("*forever*"). A "*thousand*" can be likened unto, or used to represent, a number lesser or greater than a literal thousand. Only its context can determine its literal numerical meaning. The basic idea that is communicated by the symbol is "**fulness**."

As I understand it within a preterist framework, the biblical and eschatological context of Revelation 20 should lead us to interpret the "*thousand years*" to signify *the fulness of the times of the Christological fulfillment and filling up of all things*.

The exact, literal, historical dates for the beginning and the end of "the millennium" are sometimes a subject of debate among preterists. Generally though, the beginning of the millennium is placed somewhere between Christ's first Appearance and the beginning of Paul's ministry to the gentiles. And the end of the millennium is generally placed in the years A.D. 66-70 (the years of the Jewish War that ended in the fiery destruction of the persecuting, old-covenant world).

QUESTION 90: In Heb. 11:5, it says that Enoch "*did not see death*." But then in Heb. 11:4-13, it says that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah "*all died in faith*." See the apparent contradiction? Also, Heb. 9:27 says that "*it is appointed for men to die once*." (Heb. 9:27) Which is it? Did Enoch *not see death*? (Heb. 11:5) Or did he *die "once"* (Heb. 9:27) / *die "in faith"*? (Heb. 11:13)

ANSWER: Enoch's father Jared died (Gen. 5:20) and Enoch's son Methuselah died (Gen. 5:27), but Enoch himself was uniquely "*transferred*" by God from the earth so that "*he did not see death*." (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5)

When Heb. 11:13 says that "*all these died in faith*," "*all these*" does not refer back to Abel, Enoch and Noah in verses 4-7. "*All these*" refers only to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah in verses 8-12. We know this from verses 13-16, which describe "*all these*" as those who never took the opportunity to return to the country from which they had departed: "**All these died in faith**, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that **they** were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that

they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if **they** had been thinking of that country from which **they** went out, **they** would have had opportunity to return." (Heb. 11:13-15)

"All these" (verse 13) are "*they*" (verses 13-16) who lived as strangers and aliens on the earth after having left their country by God's command. Neither Abel, Enoch nor Noah wandered about as aliens outside their home country. Only Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob did that. (Gen. 12:1-5; Heb. 11:8-12) "*All these*," therefore, does not refer to Abel, Enoch or Noah, but only to Abraham and his family (Heb. 11:8-12).

Concerning Heb. 9:27: Enoch was by no means the only exception to the rule that "*it is appointed for men to die once*." Not only was Elijah a similar exception (II Kings 2:11), but so were those who were raised from the dead throughout the Old Testament. Those people died *not once*, but *twice*. The writer of Hebrews was aware of the exceptions to Heb. 9:27 when he said that, "*women received back their dead by resurrection*." (Heb. 11:35) (There is no hint in the Bible that those who were raised from the dead in the Old Testament were "raptured" to Heaven before they could die a second time.)

Summary: Enoch was not included in "*all these*" who died in Heb. 11:13. "*All these*" were Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob. (Heb. 11:8-12) While it is appointed unto men once to die, (Heb. 9:27) there are biblical exceptions to that rule. Enoch and Elijah did not die at all, and others died twice.

QUESTION 91: I recently read in a preterist article that since believers are citizens of a heavenly Kingdom (Christ's Kingdom is "*not of this world*."), and since no outward law can change people's hearts (Only Christ can change the heart.), it therefore follows that God has not called the Church to be involved in enacting worldly laws (We should only pray and preach the Gospel.), and that the Church also should not pledge allegiance to a worldly government (We should pledge allegiance to Christ and His Kingdom alone.). Do you agree with those arguments from that preterist author?

ANSWER: Yes and no.

I agree that God did not call the Church to be a legislative body in the civil realm. On the other hand though, God is pleased when civil justice is administered. And that happens only when civil authorities pass just laws and uphold them justly. And that happens only *when just men are themselves in authority*.

"*When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan*." (Prov. 29:2)

Therefore, God is pleased when His just ones exercise civil / legislative authority. Though civil rule is not the calling of the Church, it *is* the calling of many believers to hold civil / legislative power, and to do so in accordance with God's precepts, i.e., justly.

I also agree that laws don't change people's hearts. (That was never God's purpose for imposing laws.) That in no way changes the fact though that unjust laws were, are, and always will be *an abomination to God and an affront to all who love justice*. Therefore, Christians who hold legislative power are called to administer laws that please God.

"*Woe to those who enact evil statutes...*" (Isa. 10:1)

I also agree that the Church is a spiritual Kingdom / Nation and that its "allegiance" is to the King of kings. That does not mean though that God has not also ordained lesser, earthly authorities to which Christians are to be subject. The Apostle Paul identified himself as a citizen of the beastly Roman Empire, (Acts 22:25,27) and he told believers to "*be in subjection*" to that empire, because like all other human authorities, it was "*established by God*" as an authority among men. (Rom. 13:1-2) And even though the beastly Roman Empire systematically made war against the Church, the Apostle Peter likewise told believers to, "*submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority*." (I Peter 2:13)

We believers are sons of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Christ is our transcendent King, and under His rule we are called to willingly put ourselves in "*subjection*" to the civil government under which we live (even if that government is as antichrist as Nero's Rome). Though there is a time for godly disobedience against earthly authority (Acts 5:29), we are nevertheless called to be committed and faithful to our civil government and, if only implicitly, to pledge our allegiance to it *under God and for His sake*.

QUESTION 92: Luke 21:24 seems to say that FIRST, the Jews would be "*led captive into all the nations*" (in A.D. 70), and THEN, Jerusalem would be "*trampled under foot by the Gentiles*" (until 1948? until our future?) What exactly are "*the times of the Gentiles*?" When did those "*times*" begin and when will they (or did they) end?

ANSWER: "*And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*." (Lk. 21:24)

The "*times of the nations*" were the times of war, (Lk. 21:20,24) "*vengeance*," (Lk. 21:22) "*great distress*" and "*great tribulation*," of fleeing and of "*wrath*." (Matt. 24:21; Lk. 21:21,23) They were the "*times*" in which the peoples of Judea were slaughtered and subjugated, (Lk. 21:24) and in which Jerusalem was "*trodden down*" or "*trampled*" by "*the nations*." (Lk.

21:24) Those "*times*" began between late A.D. 66 and early A.D. 68, and reached their fulfillment (completion) in Jerusalem's prophesied "*destruction*" in A.D. 70. (Lk. 21:20)

The first half of Lk. 21:24 describes the state of things in Judea ("*the Land*" in verse 23) during the "*times of the nations*," while the second half of Lk. 21:24 describes the state of things in Jerusalem during the "*times of the nations*."

Here is a summary of Josephus' history of those "*times*":

In the summer of A.D. 66, in the midst of great signs and wonders in the heavens and earth, (*Wars*, vi, 288-309) a revolt against Rome broke out in Jerusalem. The city became divided into two warring factions, pro-Rome and anti-Rome. During the revolt, perpetual slaughters took place in the city until September of that year, when the anti-Roman faction finally took control and treacherously murdered the last Roman garrison in Jerusalem. (*Wars*, ii, 277-456)

On that very same day, the Judean uprising against Rome began, and Judea became a bloodbath. From then onward, terror filled the Land, and the people of Judea *fell by the edge of the sword and were every day led captive into all the nations*. (*Wars*, ii, 457-512)

Later in September of A.D. 66, the rebels at Jerusalem fought the armies of Cestius Gallus, the Roman proconsul of Syria, who had come to Jerusalem to put down the revolt. Unexpectedly, the rebels defeated Gallus' forces in November, killing 5,680 of his soldiers. (*Wars*, ii, 513-555)

That victory over Rome meant inevitable doom for Jerusalem, because overwhelming vengeance from Nero was sure to come. The city mourned, and many fled, but the rebels appointed generals for war with Rome. More "*signs*" of doom were seen at this time, and the Zealots now began their rise to absolute power in the City of God. (*Wars*, ii, 556-654)

About four months later, in about March of A.D. 67, Vespasian and Titus began Nero's war in Judea, intending to conquer Jerusalem last of all. (*Wars*, iii, 1-8) By this time, Judea was overrun by reprobates. The whole Land was filled with wickedness, so that, "*those people that were the dearest to one another, brake through all restraints with regard to each other . . . All the people of every place betook themselves to rapine; after which they got together in bodies, in order to rob the people of the country, insomuch that for the barbarity and iniquity of those of the same nation did no way differ from the Romans; nay, it seemed to be a much lighter thing to be ruined by the Romans than by themselves.*" (*Wars*, iv, 132-134; Matt. 24:12; II Thess. 2:7)

Soon the leaders of the rebels joined together "*from all parts*" and "*became one band of wickedness*," and crept together into Jerusalem --which was by this time in near anarchy. Those men, who were to become the direct cause of Jerusalem's fall, began to murder people in the city in broad daylight, even cutting the throats of the most prominent citizens. (*Wars*, iv, 135-146)

Eventually their arrogance reached such a height that they even disannulled the succession of high priests and made a laughingstock of both the priesthood and the Law. They hailed a mock "priest" and adorned him as if they were acting out a play. The legitimate priests wept at the spectacle. (*Wars*, iv, 147-157)

At last, the rebels took their seat in the Temple of God itself and made it their strong hold and their shop of tyranny: "*...The House of God [is] full of ...abominations, [and] these Holy Places [are] trodden upon at random, filled with the feet of these blood-shedding villains. ...Will you bear to see your Sanctuary trampled on? Will not you pluck [these profane wretches] down from their exaltation? For even by this time they had proceeded to higher enormities, if they had been able to overthrow any thing greater than the Sanctuary. They have seized upon the strongest place of the whole city; you may call it the Temple, if you please, though it be like a citadel or fortress. ...Some that have been born in this very country, and brought up in our customs, and called "Jews," do walk about in the midst of the Holy Places, at the very time when their hands are still warm with the slaughter of their own countrymen.*" (*Wars*, iv, 163-183)

Up until this time there was still resistance to the rebels in Jerusalem, and many were hoping to overthrow them and save the city. But those hopes were utterly and forever dashed in about February of A.D. 68.

At the invitation of the Zealots, twenty thousand Idumeans (Edomites) marched against Jerusalem. The city became "*besieged on both sides*" --by the Zealots within the walls and by the Idumeans without the walls. (*Wars*, 4, 283)

And on the night the Idumeans arrived, "*there broke out a prodigious storm..., with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual 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.*" (*Wars*, 4:286-287; Lk. 21:26)

It was during that upheaval that the Idumeans secretly entered the city and joined forces with the Zealots. The city was

caught completely by surprise, as it were by a flash of lightning. A night of horror and carnage ensued. The combined army of Zealots and Idumeans slaughtered the two most respected high priests. They cast out their naked corpses and left them unburied. After that night, the morning saw the outer courts of the Temple overflow with the blood of 8,000 corpses. (*Wars*, iv, 300-325)

That very day marked the beginning of the end of the Great City --and the true beginning of "*the Great Tribulation*." From then on, Jerusalem was utterly trampled under and made desolate under the feet of demon-possessed tyrants. (*Wars*, iv, 318-325)

Abject terror gripped the city. The rebels began mercilessly to torture and murder its inhabitants by the thousands so that the living began to envy the dead. (*Wars*, iv, 326-333) Many tried to flee the city every day to find safety with the Romans. But their flight was extremely difficult, because the Zealots killed everyone who attempted to escape. And along all the roads from the city laid vast numbers of corpses in heaps. (*Wars*, iv, 377-380)

Over two years later, during Titus' siege of the city (c. May of A.D. 70), many of those who were fleeing, and who had actually made it to the Romans, had bellies that were swelled with hunger because of the plague of famine that was ravaging the city. (The rebels within the city had insanely destroyed the city's food supply.) And when these poor souls who fled ate the food that the Romans gave to them, they "*all on the sudden overfilled those bodies that were before empty, and so burst asunder*." (*Wars*, v, 548-549)

Others who fled the city in those days met an even worse fate. Because some of them had been caught swallowing pieces of gold to smuggle out of the city, many who fled were captured by certain troops of Roman soldiers, who promptly "*cut up those that came as supplicants, and searched their bellies. In one night's time about two thousand of these deserters were thus dissected*." (*Wars*, v, 550-552)

In the two and a half years that followed the night that the Idumeans entered the city, things went from ghastly to unthinkable ghastly. Not only did the rebels every day inflict unspeakable atrocities upon the people of the city, and not only did they fill the city with abominations and perversions, but they also warred against each other in a mad self-destruction. Thus they themselves brought the city of Jerusalem to its desolation and ruin.

Finally, in about August of A.D. 70, the armies of Titus threw up a bank (rampart, trench) before Jerusalem and surrounded the city. Later that month the Temple of God was destroyed; and in September, Titus' armies leveled the Holy City to the ground, along with the reprobates who were destroying her from within her walls. And the Romans left not "*one stone upon another*." (Lk. 19:43-44; *Wars*, vi, 220 - vii,4)

Thus ended the God-ordained "*times of the nations*," with the destruction of the old, earthly Jerusalem and its hand-made, earthly tabernacle.

What Josephus could not perceive was that in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, the Son of Man had come and had cast His enemies out of His Kingdom and had redeemed His bride, His Church. And in His Parousia, all of His chosen and sanctified people, the living and the dead, had become *the City and Tabernacle of God*. Never again shall Jerusalem be under the curse of God:

"*And I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no longer; nor mourning, nor crying, nor distress shall be any longer; because the former things are passed away.'*" (Rev. 21:2-4)

QUESTION 93: In I Cor. 15:1-19, Paul said that some at the church in Corinth were saying, "*There is no resurrection of the dead*." Were those resurrection deniers saying that it was unbelievable that decomposed, dead bodies could be raised back to life? Were they annihilationists? Or did they believe in "bodiless soul-immortality?"

ANSWER: The short answer:

The error in the church at Corinth was not an objection to the idea of dead bodies being raised back to life. The error was not a scientific skepticism about the reanimation of decomposed corpses. Nor was it a belief in annihilation or in bodiless soul-immortality. The error at Corinth was a denial that the *pre-Christian saints* would be raised up in Christ with the Church in the end of the age. The resurrection-of-the-dead deniers looked forward to the resurrection of the Body of Christ, (the Church) but they denied that the pre-Cross world (the dead) had any part in that Body.

The long answer: The reason that some believers in the church at Corinth could not accept the doctrine of the

resurrection of the dead was because they believed that the dead had no *body* with which they could be raised. (I Cor. 15:12-13, 35)

In our deeply engrained futurist mindsets, the meaning of the error under discussion in First Corinthians chapter fifteen seems, at first, simple and straightforward. Our futurist ears tell us that there were some at Corinth who thought that it was beyond belief that dead *bodies* could be reconstituted and brought back to life. We reflexively think that some at Corinth were saying:

How could the dead come back to life? They will have no bodies with which to rise. Their bodies have decomposed and turned to dust over time.

Futurism has greatly clouded First Corinthians chapter fifteen. It has caused countless interpreters to disagree with other countless interpreters as to its meaning. Even as preterists today, we find it difficult to read the chapter apart from deeply entrenched futurist assumptions. The chapter has thus always been, in varying degrees, an enigma for futurists who study it closely, and it remains even now a passage of some contention among preterists.

One aspect of First Corinthians chapter fifteen that makes it difficult to interpret for both futurists and preterists is the implicit nature of Paul's arguments. Reading Paul's refutation of the error at Corinth is a bit like listening to one side of a phone conversation. We read what Paul said against the error, but we do not see the error itself described in much detail.

The only way to understand the error at Corinth correctly is to draw numerous inferences from Paul's refutation of it. If we do not make the correct inferences from Paul's arguments, we will not only misunderstand the error, but we will also misunderstand the defense against the error. And that in turn will cause us to misinterpret Paul's teachings about the resurrection of the dead.

And because First Corinthians chapter fifteen is the lengthiest dissertation on the resurrection of the dead found in all of Scripture, correctly understanding the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead depends very much on our making correct (biblical) inferences from the chapter.

I believe that in order for us to understand Paul's teaching concerning the resurrection of the dead in First Corinthians chapter fifteen, there are two primary inferences that we must draw from his refutation of the error at Corinth:

1. The resurrection-of-the-dead deniers believed in previous resurrections:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. (I Cor. 15:13-16)

In the above Scripture, Paul showed the resurrection deniers the monstrously absurd results of their error. He reduced their doctrine to conclusions that they did not assert. What we may infer from Paul's *reductio ad absurdum* is that the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers already agreed with Paul on these points:

1. Christ HAD been raised.
2. The apostolic preaching was NOT vain.
3. The faith of believers was NOT vain.
4. The apostles were NOT false witnesses of God

The resurrection-of-the-dead deniers believed in the physical / biological, historical resurrection of Christ (who Himself had raised Lazarus from the dead after four days), (I Cor. 15:13,16) and they believed in the authority and veracity of the apostles (who themselves had raised dead people back to life). (I Cor. 15:14-15) (We might also add that the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers were members of the church at Corinth, which was filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including healings and miracles).

Yet the resurrection deniers could not accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, because they could not conceive of how the dead could have a *body* with which to be raised. (I Cor. 15:35) The very idea was *beyond their belief*.

How could this be?

Futurism causes us to impose an absurdity upon the chapter. It forces us to maintain that the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers could not conceive of how dead *bodies* could be raised back to life, even though they believed in the resurrected and resurrecting Christ and were followers of the dead-raising apostles and were members of the gift-filled (and perhaps even dead-raising) church at Corinth.

Granted, the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers at Corinth were ignorant and foolish as to the implications of their doctrine, but it is not reasonable to portray them as arguing in *schizophrenic non sequiturs* (believing in the resurrection of dead people and *not being able to conceive of the possibility at the very same time*).

It is much more likely that our futurist premise is flawed, that the resurrection deniers were not objecting to a future "Resurrection of the Flesh," and that their objection, "*With what body...*," (I Cor. 15:35) was not an objection to physical / biological resurrections (resuscitations).

2. The resurrection-of-the-dead deniers believed in future resurrections.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we are hoping in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (I Cor. 15:17-19)

Paul here continued his argument to absurdity. If the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers were right, then other doctrines -- doctrines that they did not assert-- were also true. What we may infer from the above Scripture is that the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers agreed with Paul on the following points:

1. Christ HAD been raised.
2. The faith of believers was NOT vain or worthless.
3. Believers were NOT still in their sins.
4. Those who had fallen asleep in Christ had NOT perished (i.e., They had NOT died in their sins).
5. The apostolic preaching was NOT vain.
6. The apostles were NOT found to be false witnesses of God.
7. The apostles did NOT have an empty and fleeting "*hope*" in Christ, and were therefore NOT of all men most to be pitied.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then the sufferings that the apostles were experiencing "*in this life*" were the sum total of their "*hope*" in Christ, and they were of all men most to be pitied. Paul's argument above implies that the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers rejected that notion. They, along with the apostles, had an eschatological "*hope*," (I Tim. 4:8) and they also believed that those who had fallen asleep in Christ were waiting with them for the fulfillment of that Hope.

Paul and the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers agreed that the apostles and all believers were hoping in Christ, and they agreed that believers continued to hope in Christ after they had fallen asleep in Christ. And the Hope of all believers was the Resurrection at the Parousia. The hope of Paul and of the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers was that they and all Christians, living and dead, would be raised up *the spiritual Body*. See verse 46:

However, the spiritual [body] is not first, but the natural [body]; then the spiritual [body]. (I Cor. 15:46)

The implication of that argument is that the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers believed in the Christological, spiritual body, but denied its connection to the first, Adamic, natural body. Their error was like denying that trees come from seeds. (I Cor. 15:37)

Though the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers denied that "*the dead*" were going to be raised, they agreed that those who had fallen asleep in Christ (the dead in Christ) had not perished and were waiting, with living believers, in hope of being raised with the spiritual body, i.e., *the body that will be*, in I cor. 15:37.

Again, either the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers were steeped in abject absurdity --believing in the resurrection of dead people and being unable to conceive of the fact at the very same time-- or we need to consider that our fleshly assumptions about the nature of the resurrection of the dead are not in harmony with the assumptions of both Paul and the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers.

How could they have believed in previous resurrections, including the resurrection of Christ, and yet have been unable to conceive of the very possibility of future resurrections? And how could they have believed in the future resurrection of Christians (the spiritual "*body that will be*") and yet deny the future resurrection of "*the dead*?"

In the futurist framework, these questions are unanswerable. The questions themselves seem invalid. But in the preterist framework, the answers come to light:

The Corinthians knew that the resurrection of the dead was *about to* happen when Paul wrote First Corinthians. (Acts 24:15) It was going to happen before all of Paul's contemporaries fell asleep. (I Cor. 15:51; cf. Matt. 16:27-28) The resurrection-of-the-dead deniers and all believers of Christ's generation were acutely aware that they were living in the consummation of the ages. (I Cor. 10:11) They knew that the time had been shortened (I Cor. 7:29) and that the old, pre-Christ world was passing away. (I Cor. 7:31)

In that historical-covenantal moment, there was a distinction between the great cloud of saints who had before lived and

died in the now-fading old world, and the members of the Body of Christ who were now about to inherit the eternal Kingdom. (I Cor. 15:18; I Thess. 4:16) There was a distinction between those saints who, for millennia, had gone to Sheol / Hades, and Christians who died in Christ and who now immediately went to be with Christ in anticipation of coming back quickly with Him to judge the world, the living and the dead. (Phil. 1:23)

The "*dead ones*" in the context of First Corinthians chapter fifteen were those "*out from among*" whom Christ had been raised. (I Cor. 15:12,20) Christ had been among the Hadean dead. When He was dead, He was among the generations of saints who had died from Adam (I Cor. 15:21-22,45,47) until the Cross. He was raised out from among those souls. Those were the dead ones whose resurrection some in the church at Corinth denied.

The resurrection-of-the-dead deniers did not deny the resurrection of Christians, living or dead. They denied only that the dead would have any part with the soon-to-be-resurrected Church. They believed that all the pre-Cross generations had fallen asleep without hope of receiving forgiveness of sins in Christ, and that those dead ones would therefore not inherit the Kingdom of God with the Body of Christ.

The root error of the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers was that Christ had not died for the pre-Christian world.

Contrary to futurist myth, the objection of the resurrection-of-the-dead-denying believers at Corinth was *redemptive, not scientific*. Neither Paul nor those in error at Corinth knew anything of a "Resurrection of the Flesh" on the Last Day. There was no cause for the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers to raise objections about molecules, or about the food chain. Their objection was not that it was impossible for God to re-assemble dust particles of decomposed corpses. (It is more than probable that the miracle-believing resurrection-of-the-dead deniers would have agreed that such a re-assembly is indeed easy for God to accomplish.) Paul was not defending such a re-composition and neither were the resurrection deniers objecting to the possibility of such a re-composition.

The error at Corinth was not a belief in the impossibility of physical resurrections. For the resurrection deniers believed in the resurrection of Christ and in other resurrections. They also were waiting in the "hope" that all Christians, living and dead, would be raised up on the Last Day.

The error at Corinth was not a belief in annihilation. For the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers believed that dead Christians had not perished and were waiting in "hope" along with the living.

Nor was the error a belief in soul-immortality. For the resurrection-of-the-dead deniers believed that dead believers were, with the living, hoping in Christ, looking forward to the consummated spiritual Body, the Body that would come in the Resurrection of life. (Jn. 5:29)

The error at Corinth was that the pre-Christian world (the dead, i.e., Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Malachi, etc.) would not participate in the impending Resurrection. The resurrection-of-the-dead deniers looked forward to the Day when the Body of Christ would inheriting the Kingdom of God, (I Cor. 15:50) but they excluded "*the dead*" from that Hope.

QUESTION 94: Why is death considered to be an enemy and how can it be destroyed, if it is the only gate of blessedness? (1 Cor. 15:26)

ANSWER: Physical death is, as you said, a "gate of blessedness" for those who are in Christ. (Rev. 14:13) But it was not always such a "gate" for God's children. Before Christ came, physical death was a gate to Hades. (Matt. 16:18)

Hades was a mysterious place (or state) that the saints dreaded. (Heb. 2:15) They feared the other side of this life because they were still dead in their sins, under the power of the devil. (Heb. 2:14) *Death in sin* (spiritual death) made physical death a thing of futility / vanity for the saints of old. Because their sins were not yet done away in Christ, physical death for them was a cutting off from the covenant- and worship-community, and a loss of all the works they had done. Thus the ultimate Enemy of the people before the Advent of Christ was the Death of Adam, which was *alienation from God through sin*. (Gen. 2:17)

In the redeemed Kingdom today, there is "*no more Death*." (Rev. 21:4) It was utterly destroyed, along with the Devil, through the Atonement (the Cross and the Parousia) of Christ.

Though believers continue to die physically, *they never die in sin; (Jn. 11:26) they never become separated from the City of God; and they never lose the fruit of their labors, because there is now no condemnation for us who are in Christ*. And so, because of the destruction of the Adamic Death, physical death itself is now become a "gate to blessedness" (i.e., a "gate" to eternal rewards for our works in Christ).

Because of the age-changing work of the Life-Giving Spirit (in A.D. 30-70), all of the saints in Heaven and on Earth (from Adam to the present day) are resurrected and alive in the Kingdom of God. We are no longer alienated, but we are one in Him, "*Who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.*" (1 Thess. 5:10; cf. Eph. 1:10) "*Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your victory? O Hades, where is your sting?*" (1 Cor. 15:54,55)

QUESTION 95: Jesus said that "*not one stone*" of Jerusalem or of the temple would be left upon another. (Matt. 24:2; Mk. 13:2; Lk. 19:44; 21:6) But even preterists know that the Wailing Wall still stands in Jerusalem to this very day. So it goes without saying that Matthew 24 was NOT fulfilled in A.D. 70, and that Matthew 24 remains unfulfilled as long as the Wailing Wall stands intact, stones and all. Okay, how are you going to spiritualize this one away?

ANSWER: Jesus was not implying that if one searched through the rubble after the destruction of Jerusalem and found one stone literally on top of another stone that that would be the signal that the prophecy had not actually been fulfilled after all. We *strain at a gnat* if we demand that the ruins of the city had to be an area where each and every single stone was flat on the ground with no other stones beneath them.

Jesus was using a figure of speech. (We use a similar figure today when we say that, "We left no stone unturned." We mean that we made a *complete* and *thorough* search.) The meaning of the Lord's prophetic hyperbole was that **the city and temple of God were going to come to their *final end*. They were about to be permanently thrown down (destroyed, demolished, dismantled, dismembered) and leveled (dashed, razed) to the ground.** (Lk. 19:44)

That happened in 70, in fulfillment of all things written. (Lk. 21:22) The existence of some stone monuments of Roman victory in no way diminishes that fact. (Josephus, *Wars* vii, 1-3)

QUESTION 96: How do you interpret Daniel's "Seventy Weeks?"

ANSWER: "*Seventy weeks have been determined for your people and your holy city, to shut up the transgression, to seal up sin, to cover over iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.*" (Dan. 9:24)

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and trench, even in times of distress. (Dan. 9:25)

Then after the sixty-two weeks the Anointed One will be cut off and nothing shall remain to Him [or, "but not for Himself"]. And the people of a coming prince [or, "of [the] coming Prince"] will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will be with the flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. (Dan. 9:26)

And He will confirm a covenant with the many for one week, and in the middle of the week he will cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and on a wing [or, "overspreading"] of abominations will come a desolator, even until the end. And that which was decreed shall pour out on the desolator." (Dan. 9:27)

Here is a short answer to your question (with approximate dates):

The first seven "weeks" began in 538 B.C. with the issuing of the word of Cyrus to rebuild the temple and the city.

The first seven "weeks" ended and the sixty-two "weeks" began in 445 B.C. when Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem.

The sixty-two "weeks" ended and the last "week" began in A.D. 28, with the anointing of the Lord at His baptism. During that "week," He confirmed the New Covenant with "*the many*" (His disciples). Also in that week, in A.D. 30, He was "*cut off.*" (murdered)

The cessation of "*sacrifice and offering*" that took place "*in the middle of the week*" might refer to the atoning death (cutting off) of the Messiah. (I will discuss below other possible meanings of the cessation of "*sacrifice and offering.*")

"*The Desolator*" was the body of Jewish reprobates who captured and desecrated the temple, and who flooded the city with war, abominations and desolations in A.D. 66-70.

The last "week" ended and the "*seventy weeks*" were fulfilled in A.D. 70, when God poured out His wrath on "*the Desolator,*" when the people of a coming prince (or Prince) destroyed the city and the sanctuary. The people of the coming prince might refer to the Roman armies of Caesar. (I will discuss below other possibilities as to who the "*prince*" and the "*people*" might have been.)

Christ's "week"-long work of Covenant-confirmation then came to an end. The old covenant disappeared and the New Covenant was established. The reign of Sin and Death was abolished, and everlasting righteousness was brought into Israel and Jerusalem. "Vision and prophet" were sealed up (brought to an end / abolished), and the Most Holy Place (the universal Church) was anointed.

The "seventy weeks" covered a period of roughly 600 years, from about 538 B.C. to A.D. 70, *from the time of the fall of Babylon to the fall of "Babylon" (Jerusalem).*

(To see why I do not interpret the "seventy weeks" as "seventy weeks of years," (490 years) please see [Q&A #97.](#))

Here is a more detailed exposition of Dan. 9:24-27:

When Daniel received the prophecy of the "seventy weeks," the people of Israel including Daniel himself were in captivity in Babylon. The City of Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians, and they remained in ruins.

Jeremiah had prophesied that after seventy years of captivity were completed, God would destroy Babylon and would restore the people of Israel to Jerusalem. (Jer. 25:11,12; 29:10-14) Daniel understood that he was living in the last hour of that seventy-year Babylonian captivity, and this is what prompted him to pray (Dan. 9:2,3):

"O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us. So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name." (Dan. 9:16-19)

VERSE 25: The first "seven weeks" were God's answer to Daniel's prayer for his people and for his holy city, and it was in less than a year after Daniel received the prophecy of the "seventy weeks," in about 538 B.C., that the first "seven weeks" began. After the Kingdom of Babylon fell in 538 B.C., the Persian king Cyrus issued, "the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." (II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; Isa. 44:24,26,28; 45:13; Dan. 9:25; Josephus, *Antiquities*, xi, 6,12) Thousands of Israelites immediately packed their belongings and began the journey back to Judea.

The end of Israel's seventy-year Babylonian captivity was the beginning of the "seventy weeks." The two periods of time were *consecutive*.

The first "seven weeks" lasted about ninety years and ended with the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Nehemiah in about 445 B.C. (Neh. 2:5; 6:15) The "times of distress" during which the city was rebuilt are related in Neh. 1:3 - 6:13. Because the city had no walls and no gates, the people were constantly being mocked, demoralized, threatened, accused, deceived and terrorized by their enemies. (Neh. 2:19; 4:1-3,7,8,11,12,14,16-23; 6:1-13) Because of these things, the nation was in "great distress" and "reproach." (Neh. 1:2-4; 2:3,13,17) The times of anxiety ended with the completion of Jerusalem's walls and gates in about 445 B.C.

The "sixty-two weeks" were from the completed rebuilding of Jerusalem by Nehemiah until the first appearing of the "Anointed One," ("Messiah") "the Prince," ("the Ruler," "the Leader"). The "sixty-two weeks" ended at the beginning of Christ's ministry, when God "anointed" Him with the Holy Spirit and power in about A.D. 28. (Lk. 3:22-23; Acts 10:38) The "sixty-two weeks" covered the intertestamental centuries from Nehemiah / Malachi to the anointing of Jesus. It was a period of roughly 470 years.

VERSES 26 & 27: The last "week" was from Christ's first appearing at His baptism to His Second Appearing at the destruction of "the city and the sanctuary" in A.D. 70. It was from the anointing of Messiah the Prince to the anointing of the Most Holy Place. The last "week" lasted about 42 years. It was the period of time in which *Christ the Ruler*, through His earthly ministry and through the Holy Spirit, confirmed the New Covenant with "the many":

"For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers." (Rom. 15:8)

Because the last "week" began with the baptism of Christ, the "covenant" that was confirmed during that week can be none other than *the New Covenant*. There was no other covenant that began to be confirmed at the beginning of Christ's ministry.

Within that "week" of Messianic Covenant-confirmation, Messiah was "cut off." He was rejected by the leaders of the people and put to death outside the city in about A.D. 30.

"And in the middle of the week," He caused "sacrifice and offering to cease." (Dan. 9:26) Here are three possible ways of interpreting what this means:

1. For those who put their trust in the blood of Christ, there was "no longer any offering for sin." (Heb. 10:18) For believers, Christ's sacrifice ended the need for animal sacrifices. If this is the meaning, then the *cutting off* of the Messiah and the cessation of "sacrifice and offering" are virtually synonymous, and both took place in the "middle" of the "week."

2. The Messianic cessation of "sacrifice and offering" could refer to God's giving up of fleshly Israel to reprobation. After the nation had thoroughly rejected the blood of the New Covenant, Israel became apostate, and there no longer remained a "sacrifice for sins." (Heb. 10:26,27) In this interpretation, the cessation of "sacrifice and offering" refers to a spiritual, national catastrophe. This, I think, is in harmony with the symbol of the "middle" of the week (a "broken" time of tragedy). Also, if the cessation of sacrifice is God's reprobation of the apostates, then the "abominations" in the next phrase are the direct and immediate result of that national reprobation. (This second interpretation is the one I prefer.)

3. The Messianic cessation of "sacrifice and offering" might be taken in a strictly literal sense. As a consequence of the offering-ceasing sacrifice of the Messiah, (Heb. 10:18) and of the national cessation of "sacrifice for sins" due to Israel's apostasy, (Heb. 10:26) Jerusalem became flooded with abominations and wars, until the daily animal sacrifices literally ended in about August of A.D. 70, shortly before the city and the sanctuary were destroyed. (Josephus, Wars, vi, 94) In the time of Israel's apostasy, in about A.D. 66, a "Desolator" came "on a wing of abominations." The "Desolator" filled the Holy City with abominations and desolated it with the flood of war, until "the end."

"The end" was when God poured out His wrath on the "the Desolator," when the people of a coming prince (or "of the coming Prince") completely destroyed the city and the sanctuary, along with the Desolator, in August-September A.D. 70.

"On a wing of abominations": The word "wing" could be a reference to the temple (a wing or pinnacle of the temple). If this is the meaning, then the phrase could mean that the "abomination of desolations" (Septuagint) issued forth from the temple of God and filled the city. This agrees with the history of the times:

In about A.D. 67, the Zealots captured the temple and made it their fortress and their "shop of tyranny." (Josephus, Wars, iv, 151) From God's house, they terrorized the people and spread abominations and desolations throughout Jerusalem until the city was utterly consumed in the "flood" of war in A.D. 70.

Or the word "wing" might instead be a metaphorical reference to the "overshadowing" or "overspreading" (KJV) of abominations throughout the city. In this interpretation the basic meaning is the same, but there is no reference to the temple. In either case, the entire city was going to be filled (covered, overspread) with abominations.

Compare Isa. 8:7,8, which uses both the metaphors of a flood (Dan. 9:26) and of overshadowing "wings" (Dan. 9:27):
"Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks. And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel." (Isa. 8:7,8)

"The Desolator": The Desolator, as we have said, filled the city with abominations, desolations and war until the end, when God poured out His wrath on the Desolator in the destruction of the city and the sanctuary. History tells us that the Jewish reprobates in Jerusalem, from about A.D. 66 to 70, filled the temple and the city with abominations and desolations during their continual wars. Their beastly desecrations of the holy places and their slaughters of the people did not cease until "the end," when Titus and his legions leveled the city, along with the reprobates, in September of A.D. 70.

Let us look for a moment at the wording of Dan. 9:26:

"...The Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary..." (Dan. 9:26)

In this verse, the destruction of "the city and the sanctuary" in A.D. 70 immediately followed the cutting off of the Messiah in A.D. 30. We should infer from this that the destruction of Jerusalem was the direct consequence of the cutting off of Messiah the Prince.

This means that the desolators who were destroyed in the city were themselves guilty of crucifying Christ. (See Rev. 1:7) Jesus confirmed this teaching in Matt. 21:37-45; 22:7. The chief priests and the Pharisees murdered ("cut off") the Messiah, and because of that crime, God brought those murderers to a "wretched end" when He sent "His armies" and destroyed the City and the Sanctuary, in fulfillment of Daniel's "seventy weeks."

"The people of a coming prince": Here are three ways of interpreting what this might mean:

1. The Roman armies of Caesar (Vespasian or Titus): If this is the meaning, then this reference to Caesar the "prince" is a parenthetical statement between two statements about Messiah the Prince. (This, incidentally, was John Calvin's interpretation of "the people of the coming prince.")

2. The Roman armies of Christ: The Romans could have been designated the *people / armies of Messiah the Prince* because they were sent by His decree and for His purpose. (Compare Matt. 22:7.)

3. The followers of Christ: Christians destroyed the city and the sanctuary through their faith, (Matt. 21:21; Mk. 11:23; Rev. 8:8) through their prayers (Lk. 18:7) and through their God-given judgment on the Last Day. (Zech. 14:5; I Thess. 4:14; Jude 1:14,15; Rev. 17:14; 18:20) Believers were the Lord's invading army. (I Cor. 14:21-22) The "angels" (messengers) who poured out the wrath of God upon apostate Israel in the book of Revelation were *Christians*. (Compare Rev. 21:9 and 22:9; KJV, NASB) The term "*coming Prince*" may be a reference to Christ's *Second Coming* after His having been "*cut off.*" (This third interpretation is the one I prefer.)

Some preterists have proposed that *the Jews* were "*the people of the coming Prince,*" because the Jews were Christ's people, and it was the Jews themselves who destroyed Jerusalem. In my opinion, that interpretation conflicts with the history of the event. Though the reprobate Jews did bring Jerusalem to *ruin and desolation*, they did not "*destroy the city and the sanctuary.*" It was the hands of the Romans that brought upon the Jews that final stroke, against the will of the rebels within the city. (Lk. 19:43,44)

VERSE 24: In the end of the "*seventy weeks,*" seven things were fulfilled *concerning Daniel's "people" and concerning his "holy city":*

1. The destruction of the city and the sanctuary

And then:

2. The shutting up of the transgression

3. The sealing up of sin

4. The covering over of iniquity

5. The bringing in of everlasting righteousness

6. The sealing up of vision and prophet

7. The anointing of the Most Holy Place

These last six things were all *in process of being fulfilled* during the last "*week,*" the "*week*" of *Messianic Covenant-confirmation*. These blessings were not fulfilled for *Daniel's "people"* and for his "*holy city*" before A.D. 70. Daniel's "*people*" (i.e., "*all Israel,*" the elect, the living and the dead, including Daniel himself) were not freed from sin until the Parousia:

"And thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom. 11:26)

"Transgression" / "sin" was not "finished" for the "holy city," until after the abominations came to an end in the city in A.D. 70. Only after Jerusalem was destroyed did God cleanse Jerusalem of all her sins and make her "new":

"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband . . . and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21:2,7)

The "*wages*" of sin is Death (condemnation and alienation with God). But when Death was destroyed in the Kingdom of God in A.D. 70, sin was "*shut up*" and forever "*sealed.*" Death no longer issues forth from the sins of God's children, because the power of His Cross swept away the Ministry of Condemnation and Death (the Law) in A.D. 70, robbing sin of its power, and robbing Death of its sting. Through the work of the Son, Death is nullified and Sin is defeated. In the New Heavens and New Earth, the sins of all God's holy ones, living and dead, are "*covered over,*" buried in the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19), forever forgotten, and hidden from the eyes of God:

"... The former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." (Isa. 65:16,17; cf. Deut. 32:43)

The Advent of the New Heavens and the New Earth in A.D. 70 also marked the consummation of the Advent of "*eternal righteousness*":

"But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." (II Peter 3:13; cf. Rom. 4:23,24; Gal. 5:5)

"For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness." (Gal. 5:5)

Also at that time (A.D. 70), "*vision and prophet*" were sealed up (brought to an end). This is parallel to I Cor. 13:8-10, where God said that when "*that which is perfect*" came, (i.e., the perfected Most Holy Place) then prophecy, tongues and knowledge (i.e., revelatory gifts) would be *abolished*. This happened when all things were fulfilled, when the sinful city and the hand-made sanctuary fell, and when the *sinless City* and the *God-made Sanctuary* came down from out of Heaven in A.D. 70. (Lk. 21:22; I Peter 4:7)

Finally, it was through the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit that the whole City of Jerusalem became "*the Tabernacle of God,*" when the worldly Holy Place fell in 70. (Heb. 9:1,8) Under the old covenant, every article of God's tabernacle was consecrated by the anointing of oil. (Ex. 30:25-30; 40:9; Lev. 8:10,12) In the same way, in the Last Days, God taught His elect ones the truth of His Gospel through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, (II Cor. 1:21,22; I Jn. 2:20,27) until all of them had come to know Him. (Jn. 6:39) Then came "*the end,*" (Dan. 9:26) when *the whole Body of God's holy ones, the living and the dead, was raised up to become His anointed (Spirit-taught) "Most Holy Place" in the New-Covenant world.* (Jn.

6:44,45; Eph. 2:21,22; Heb. 8:11-13; Rev. 21:3)

One final thought: To the prophet Daniel, the prophecy of the "seventy weeks" might have sounded contradictory. Gabriel first told him (in verse 24) that at the end of "seventy weeks," the transgression would be finished, an end would be made of sins, atonement would be made for iniquity, everlasting righteousness would be brought in and the Most Holy Place would be anointed. It is safe to say that Daniel rejoiced when he heard these promises.

But then when Gabriel came to the end of the prophecy, he said that the Messiah would be killed and that the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed. Gabriel offered no further explanation.

How could the devastating ending of the "weeks" in verses 26 and 27 be compatible with the joyful ending of the "weeks" in verse 24? How could the "seventy weeks" be consummated in both the *destruction* of the temple (Dan. 9:26) and in the *anointing* of the temple? (Dan. 9:24) Or how could the resurrection of the dead and glorification of the saints be fulfilled when the power of the holy people is *shattered*? (Dan. 12:1-3,7)

This paradox is the heart of the preterist interpretation of Bible prophecy. It is what the futurists and the "Jews" have missed for centuries upon centuries: The destruction of (earthly) Jerusalem meant the advent of (heavenly) Jerusalem, and the destruction of the (earthly) Most Holy Place meant the consummated anointing of the (heavenly) Most Holy Place. The (spiritual) sons of the kingdom inherited the kingdom when the (fleshly, unbelieving) sons of the kingdom were cast out of the kingdom. (Matt. 8:12; 13:38,43) This is the preterist key that unlocks the meaning of the "seventy weeks."

QUESTION 97: You said that the "seventy weeks" lasted about 600 years. But doesn't "seventy weeks" mean "seventy weeks of years," that is, 490 years?

ANSWER: Before I answer that question, let me first answer another question:

When did the "seventy weeks" end?

Perhaps the most common view among preteristic interpreters is that the "seventy weeks" ended around A.D. 35, or so. Many say at the martyrdom of Stephen. Here are four reasons why I disagree with that view and hold to an A.D.-70 consummation of the "seventy weeks":

1. If the "seventy weeks" were fulfilled in about A.D. 35, then the Parousia and the destruction of "the city and the sanctuary" are reduced to a *supplemental appendix* or an *addendum* to Gabriel's prophecy of the "seventy weeks." The Parousia becomes a *subordinate episode* in the prophecy, an event that took place some 35 years after the time that was determined for Israel and the Holy City. It seems to me that to relegate the Parousia to such *secondary status* is strangely out of step with the spirit of the prophets.

2. Gabriel's prophecy begins with this statement: "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city..." (Dan. 9:24) Then the prophecy ends with the destruction of the holy city. It is reasonable to infer from the words of the prophecy that the shattering of the power of Daniel's "people" (Dan. 9:24; 12:7) and the complete destruction of Daniel's "holy city," (Dan. 9:24,25,26) were both included in the things that were "determined" for Daniel's "people" and for his "holy city."

3. In the previous Q&A, we saw that the six blessings of Dan. 9:24, which all took place in the end of the "seventy weeks," were consummated in A.D. 70, in the destruction of "the city and the sanctuary."

4. If the destruction of Jerusalem falls outside of the seventy weeks, then we are forced to "hopscotch" through verses 26 and 27. The first part of verse 26 is within the "seventy weeks," but then the second part of verse 26 is some 35 years after the fulfillment of the "seventy weeks." And then the first part of verse 27 is within the "seventy weeks," and then the second part of verse 27 is some 35 years after the "seventy weeks."

Now to answer your question: Doesn't "seventy weeks" mean "seventy weeks of years," that is, 490 years?

Because the "seventy weeks" were consummated in Christ's Parousia in A.D. 70, they could not have been speaking of a literal 490 years, for two reasons:

1. There were more than 3 ½ years (or even 7 years) between the cutting off of the Messiah and the destruction of the city and the sanctuary. That makes the last week at least 40 years long.

(Some preterists have proposed a "gap" in or before the last "week," between the cutting off of the Messiah and the Jewish Wars that led to the destruction of Jerusalem. This was Max King's position in his 1971 book *The Spirit of Prophecy*. In my opinion, that "solution" is an attempt to force fit the "weeks" into the mold of a literal 490 years.)

2. Because the "seventy weeks" were consummated in the Parousia, the "seventy weeks" could not have been a *literal*

chronology. If they were, it would have become *possible to calculate the years to the Parousia*. Since no man could know the times or the seasons or the day or the hour, *not even the Son of Man*, (Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7) the "seventy weeks" had to have been meant symbolically.

The "seventy weeks" were *seventy undefined periods of time* that were to be consummated in the fulfillment of all "vision and prophecy." In using the symbolic word "weeks," the angel Gabriel was being *intentionally indefinite* as to the time that would reach unto the Parousia. "Seventy weeks" (or "seventy sevens") is no more literal than "seventy times seven" in Matt. 18:22. It signified the "completion" or "fullness" of redemption that would come at the Parousia, at the destruction of the earthly city and sanctuary.

QUESTION 98: Do you believe in "replacement theology?" Was Israel replaced by the Church? Since the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, does that indicate that Jews are an accursed race because of what they did to Christ?

ANSWER: Abraham's descendants were not cut off and "replaced" by a gentile church. The Jews never became an accursed race.

Yes, there was a wicked and perverse generation of accursed Jews in the Last Days. (Matt. 25:41; Mk. 11:21; Gal. 3:10) And yes, after A.D. 70 Abraham's descendants were no longer in any sense *uniquely* God's chosen people. But those facts in no way indicate that the Abrahamic blood-line became accursed.

Israel was hardened "in part" in the Last Days. (Rom. 11:25) It was through the world-changing, Last-Days work of the Holy Spirit that the "firstfruit" remnant of Israel was saved, (Rom. 11:5,16) and that "the fulness of the gentiles" was brought **into Israel**, (Rom. 11:25) and that the pre-Cross saints ("the dead" / "all Israel") were resurrected. (Rom. 11:15,26,28) All were *gathered together* at the Parousia of Christ and *united* into one eternal, spiritual, resurrected Body. (Rom. 11:26)

In the ages before the Advent of the Son, God's people were not only separated from Him (as the animal sacrifices testified) and separated from each other (the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah) and separated from the unclean, gentile world, but wars with each other and wars with gentiles, and ultimately Death itself, separated every son of the kingdom from the worship of the Father.

Through the power of the Cross of Christ, those "old things" of "tears," "death," "sorrow," "outcry" and "pain" passed away in the end of the age. (Rev. 21:4) In His Parousia, the historic kingdom was transformed. It was changed from having been a worldly, hand-made kingdom that embodied Condemnation (separation), Sin and Death (Heb. 9:1,11,24), to being the God-made Kingdom "from out of Heaven" (II Cor. 5:2; Rev. 21:2,10) in which *all* the elect, *the living and the dead, Jew and gentile*, were united and made alive in Christ, never again to be separated from God or from each other.

Now *all* the saints are granted free and equal access to the throne of grace, through faith in the Son. (Heb. 7:12) Now *all* the saints are "priests of God." (I Peter 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10) Now *all* the saints worship Him "face to Face." (I Cor. 13:12; Rev. 22:4) Now *all* the saints are *One* in Christ. (Jn. 17:11-23; I Thess. 5:10)

The Church, which *Israel's Messiah* bought with His own blood, was not the replacement or condemnation of biblical Israel. (Jn. 3:17) It was its *fulfillment*. Christ's Kingdom today is the full and perfect realization of the hope and goal of Old-Testament Israel. (Please see Q&A #11.)

QUESTION 99: Matt. 24:14 and several other scriptures reveal that Christ came again *after* the Gospel was preached in the whole "world." Yet Matt. 10:23 says that Christ came again *before* all the cities of Israel were covered. How do we reconcile Christ's statement in Matt. 10:23 with His statement in Matt. 24:14?

ANSWER: "...*You shall not finish the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes.*" (Matt. 10:23)

This verse does not say that the Son of Man came before all the cities of Israel heard the Gospel. It says that the disciples did not finish the cities of Israel "until" the Son of Man came. It says, in other words, that *the disciples finished the cities of Israel when the Son of Man came*.

Here is a paraphrase of Matt. 10:23:

"When the Son of Man comes against the cities of Israel (c. A.D. 66-70), *only then* will your mission to Israel be fulfilled. *Only then* will your work of calling Israel to repentance be finished. *Only then* will your sufferings in Israel be filled up. You must endure the hatred of this people until 'the end,' when the Son of Man will finally come to cast them out of His Kingdom." (Matt. 13:41)

QUESTION 100: Jesus said, in Matt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25; Lk. 20:34-36, that in the age to come there would be no more marriage. I've heard preterists explain this by saying that ever since A.D. 70, there has been no more marriage *in a spiritual sense*. They point out that now the children of the covenant are spiritual only, and that there is also "*neither male nor female*" today. (Gal. 3:28) Do you agree with that interpretation?

ANSWER: "*For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*" (Matt. 22:30)

"*For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*" (Mk. 12:25)

"*The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.*" (Lk. 20:34-36)

Jesus did not say that there would be no more marriage in the age to come (the Christian age). He said that in "*the resurrection from the dead*," "*when they rise from the dead*" (meaning, on the Last Day when the dead would rise from out of Hades), those who rose from the dead would not marry or be given in marriage. (Mk. 12:25; Lk. 20:35)

The Sadducees' question and Jesus' answer concerned only *those who died* and who were to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Those saints did not get (re)married when or after they rose from the dead in A.D. 70, because they were not raised back into the cycle of reproduction and death. They were instead raised to a non-biological, death-less Life, having become "*equal to angels*."

QUESTION 101: Jesus said that if you call your brother "*fool*," you will be liable to be thrown into the fire of Gehenna. Does this mean that the word "*fool*" is a taboo word that can bring damnation if we utter it?

ANSWER: The context of Jesus' warning about calling a brother a "*fool*" concerns those who have an *unjustified and murderous* anger against their brother. (Matt. 5:21,22) Jesus was speaking specifically of Jews who were soon to be casting "*insults*" (such as "*Raca!*" and "*Fool!*") at His disciples, persecuting them and saying all kinds of evil against them *falsely*. (Matt. 5:11; Acts 9:1)

It was as a result of their unlawful hatred of the Lord's disciples, and their refusal to become reconciled with them, that the Jews of that generation were cast into the "*prison*" of the Great Tribulation, and were not let out until the last cent was paid in 70. (Matt. 5:23-26; Lk. 19:43,44; Rev. 18:2).

That generation was not condemned because it used the word "*fool*." "*Fool*" is not taboo. It is not a word to be superstitiously avoided or neurotically dreaded. (Matt. 23:17,19; I Cor. 1:25; 3:18; 4:10; cf. I Cor. 15:36) It is only a word. What brings down the fire of God's wrath is the baseless, slanderous, derisive and murderous hatred that the word "*fool*" denotes in the context of Matt. 5:22.

QUESTION 102: Hebrews 9:8-10 plainly tells us that when Hebrews was written in about A.D. 65, the temple *already* no longer had a "*standing*" in God's sight, and that the animal sacrifices of Moses were *already* no longer "*imposed*." Yet preterists boldly contradict God's word and say *the exact opposite!* They say that when Hebrews was written (some 35 years *after* the Cross), Herod's temple *still* had "*standing*" in God's sight and that the animal sacrifices of Moses were *still* "*imposed*." How can preterists have such a low view of Christ's work and of Scripture that they blatantly contradict God and make the temple services and animal sacrifices actually *continue to be imposed by God years after Christ's work on the Cross?*

ANSWER: The King James translators erred repeatedly in their translation of Heb. 9:6-10. There are *thirteen* critical KJV errors in those five verses. Here they are in red:

"*Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*" (Heb. 9:6-10)

Here is a more accurate translation:

"*And these things thus having been prepared, the priests are going into the first tabernacle through all, completing the services, but into the second the high priest [goes] alone once in the year, not without blood, which he is offering for himself and the ignorances of the people; the Holy Spirit showing by this that the way of the Holies has not yet been*

manifested, while the first tabernacle is yet having standing; which [is] a parable for the present time, according to which both gifts and sacrifices are being offered which are not being able as to conscience to perfect the one serving, but [stand] only on foods and drinks and various baptisms, even ordinances of flesh, being imposed until a time of setting things right." (Heb. 9:6-10)

(Compare: Friberg's *Analytical Greek New Testament*, Thomas Newberry's *Englishman's Greek New Testament*, Jay P. Green's *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, the New American Standard Version, the New Revised Standard Version*, Richard Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech* and various other translations.)

The KJV's mistranslations in Heb. 9:6-10 mislead the reader to think that the old-covenant temple system ceased to stand and ceased to be imposed, *on the day that Christ died and the veil of the earthly temple was rent in twain in A.D. 30.*

According to the KJV:

1. The way into the holies had *already* been made manifest. (Heb. 9:8)
2. The first tabernacle was *already* no longer "standing." (Heb. 9:8)
3. The ordinances of Moses were *already* no longer imposed. (Heb. 9:10)
4. The time of reformation had *already* come. (Heb. 9:10)

Yet the scripture actually says that when Hebrews was written:

1. The way into the holies had *not yet* been made manifest.
2. The first tabernacle *still* had standing.
3. The ordinances of Moses were *still* imposed.
4. The time of reformation had *not yet* come.

The worldly temple order, with its first / outer tabernacle (the Holy Place) and its second / inner tabernacle (the Most Holy Place), was "*prepared*" under Moses; and that worship-order continued to be "*imposed*" after the Cross into the apostolic era (Acts 21:26; 24:17), during which time the Levitical priests continued to complete the services in the first tabernacle, and the high priests continued to offer blood in the second tabernacle once a year.

The continuation, or "*standing*," of the earthly, Mosaic worship-order into the apostolic era was a "*parable*" or figure for the "*present* [apostolic] *time*." By it the Holy Spirit was demonstrating to the apostolic church that "*the way of the* [heavenly] *Holies*" had not yet been manifested. Whenever believers saw the worldly temple still standing in Jerusalem and saw the Levitical priests still performing their fleshly services, they knew from this that all things had not yet been put into subjection to the Son (Heb. 2:8), and that "*the way of the Holies*" had therefore not yet been manifested.

"*The way of the Holies*" was not manifested until the worship-order of "*the worldly tabernacle*" (the world of Law, Sin and Death) was loosed / dissolved in the (yet-future-to-the-book-of-Hebrews) "*time of setting things right*." That "*time*" came in 70, when the worldly tabernacle, and the entire old-covenant worship-order ceased to have "*standing*" and was "*thrown down*." (Matt. 24:2; Mk. 13:2; Lk. 21:6; II Cor. 5:1)

When the worldly house fell and the old covenant vanished *through the cosmos-changing power of the Cross of Christ*, (Heb. 8:13) the "*Most Holy*" (the Father and the Son) came down "*from out of Heaven*," (Jn. 14:2,3,23; II Cor. 5:2; I Thess. 4:14,16; Rev. 21:2,10) and indwelt and clothed the Spirit-sanctified Church; and the saints in Christ became God's "*Most Holy*."

Thus were the saints "*manifested*" with Christ in His Parousia, when the worldly sanctuary fell. They were "*changed*" into His "*image*." They became "*like Him*." They became the Tabernacle of "*God Himself*." (I Cor. 15:49-52; Col. 3:4; I Jn. 3:2; Rev. 21:3)

QUESTION 103: The book of First John is dated around A.D. 85-95, yet it speaks of a future coming of Christ. Doesn't this disprove preterism?

ANSWER: If John wrote First John in about 85-95, then he would have been one of the only, if not *the only*, surviving Apostle at the time. But I Jn. 1:1-5 implies that when John wrote, the other apostles were still alive and laboring in the Gospel.

Also, many or most scholars believe that John wrote his three epistles at about the same time that he wrote his Gospel. John 5:2 indicates that John wrote his Gospel before A.D. 70.

More important evidence though for a pre-70 date of First John is found in I Jn. 2:18:

"*Even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.*" (I Jn. 2:18)

The knowledge that John and his readers were living in "*the last hour*" was based on the promise of the Lord. Jesus prophesied on the Mount of Olives that *just before the end* (i.e., just before the destruction of the temple in their generation [Matt. 24:1,2,34]), many false christs and false prophets would appear and perform great signs and wonders. (Matt. 24:23-31; Mk. 13:21-27)

When John wrote his epistle, "*many antichrists*" (false christs and false prophets) had appeared. "*From this,*" based on the word of the Lord, John and his readers *knew* beyond a shadow of a doubt that they were living in "*the last hour*" before the fall of the temple and the vanishing of the old covenant. (Heb. 8:13)

"*The world is passing away.*" (I Jn. 2:17)

When John wrote those words, he echoed what Paul wrote in I Cor. 7:31:

"*The form of this world is passing away.*"

Paul wrote those words about fifteen years before the fall of the temple. He was anticipating the "*passing away*" and abolition of *the old-covenant world*. (II Cor. 3:7-18)

So was John.

John and all the other apostles lived in the last days prior to "*the end*" of the Mosaic age. (Matt. 24:3,6,14) The only difference is that John, when he wrote his epistles, was living in "*the last hour*" of those last days.

QUESTION 104: Galatians 3:28 says that for believers, "*there is neither male nor female,*" because all of us together are "*one in Christ Jesus.*" Doesn't this mean that in the New-Covenant world, men and women are now *absolutely equal in every way ("one")* and that men no longer have *any authority of any kind whatsoever over women*?

ANSWER: Some preterists have interpreted Gal. 3:28 that way. However, that interpretation is based on three unbiblical premises, which are these:

Unbiblical Premise #1: "*One*" means "absolutely equal in every way."

Unbiblical Premise #2: "Authority" implies "separation" / "division."

Unbiblical Premise #3: "Subjection to authority" implies "bondage."

In contrast to those three premises, the Scriptures teach us that the Father and the Son are "*One*" and that the Father has "*authority*" over the Son. (Jn. 10:18,30; 17:22; I Cor. 15:24,28)

"Union" ("oneness") and "authority" co-exist in the Trinity. Yet according to the three faulty premises above, if the Father and the Son are "*One*," then the Father has no authority over the Son, and the Father and the Son are "absolutely equal in every way," and the doctrine of the Trinity is a falsehood.

Also according to the three false premises above, if the Father has authority over the Son, then the Father and the Son cannot be "*One*," and the Father and the Son are separated, and the Son is in "bondage" to the Father, and the doctrine of the Trinity is again turned into a falsehood.

The three false premises above are premises of *theological Feminism*.

Thus a feminist interpretation of Gal. 3:28 serves to destroy the Faith.

Contrary to theological feminism, "union" and "authority" are not mutually exclusive. They are not incompatible. They are not contradictory. If they are, then the Trinity is a lie, and a different religion than Christianity, such as *Islam*, is the truth. (One of the ironies of Feminism: It validates Islamic theology.)

Male and female are "*one*" in Christ Jesus because in Him, "*all*" are priests unto God. In Him, "*neither male nor female*" stand in need of men (such as the Aaronic priesthood) to minister before God on their behalf.

It is in this sense that in Christ, men no longer "*rule*" over women, (Gen. 3:16) nor over any other social class in the Kingdom. Within the context of the question of who may worship God, there are no class distinctions today (such as "*Jew*," "*free man*" or "*male*") as there were before Christ. Instead, in Christ "*all*" are united in the Father. We are "*all*" sons of God through faith in Christ. We "*all*" bear His Image and co-reign with Him through the Gospel.

This is the union of the saints, male and female, in Christ. This union in no way conflicts with, contradicts or nullifies the authority-structure that God instituted between a man and a woman before the Law, and before the Fall, in the beginning. (Gen. 2:23; I Tim. 2:12,13)

Biblical marriage, wherein the husband is the head (authority) of the wife, is a living reflection of the union of Christ and the Church. (Eph. 5:22-24) And the authority of a man over a woman in the Church is a living reflection of Christ's authority over man. (I Cor. 11:3,7) The Christ-like authority of a man over a woman was instituted in the Garden of Eden. (I Cor. 11:9,10) Therefore that authority is "very good." (Gen. 1:31) It is not "bondage." It is a *distinction*, not a separation, in the "one" Body.

The authority of a man over a woman is based on the authority of Christ over the Church, which is based on the authority of the Father over the Son. Therefore, if men and women are *absolutely equal in every way*, according to the feminist interpretation of Gal. 3:28, then Trinitarian Christianity is a false religion. It follows then that we must choose between modern theological Feminism and Christianity.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION: You implied that the Father and the Son are "not absolutely equal in every way." But I thought that the doctrine of the Trinity states that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are "co-equal." Doesn't this mean that They are "absolutely equal in every way?"

ANSWER: Though the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, one Substance / one Essence, equal in eternality, glory and incomprehensibility, They are nevertheless three *distinct* (not absolutely equal) Persons. They are not three Fathers or three Sons or three Holy Spirits. The Son is begotten of the Father; the Father is not begotten of the Son. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father; the Father does not proceed from the Holy Spirit. The authority of the Son and of the Holy Spirit comes from the Father. The Son and the Holy Spirit do the will of the Father. Therefore the three Persons, though unfathomably One God, are not absolutely equal in Person, office, work or authority.

QUESTION 105: The Apostle Paul made it clear that believers were no longer under the Jewish Law. Doesn't this contradict Christ who said in Matthew 5:18 that not one law of Moses would pass away until all things were fulfilled?

ANSWER: Paul taught *gentile* believers to refuse to be bound to the fleshly ordinances of Moses, but Paul never taught *Jewish* believers to abandon Moses. Paul himself, as a Jewish Christian, continued to observe the Mosaic rites and taught other Jewish believers to do the same:

"...*They have been told about you [Paul], that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. ...Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses in order that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law. ...Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple, giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.*" (Acts 21:21-26)

See also Acts 24:17,18:

"*Now after several years I [Paul] came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; in which they found me in the temple, having been purified...*"

The God-imposed obligation of Jewish Christians to observe the Mosaic flesh-ordinances remained upon them until the old covenant vanished in A.D. 70. (Heb. 8:13; 9:8-10; Col. 2:17) As Jesus said, He did not come to destroy the Law of Moses. He did not come to refute it and replace it with a separate and unrelated law. He came to *fulfill* the Law, to *transform it from within by bringing Israel into that which the Law itself foreshadowed.*

If the Apostles and all the other Jewish believers had instantly abandoned the rites of Moses on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, while the old covenant remained imposed until A.D. 70, that would have meant that the Church had cut itself off from Israel. It would have meant that Christianity was a completely new and different religion than the one that God had given to His covenant-people. It would have meant that Christ had come to tear down and refute the Law and the Prophets, to exclude the dead from His Kingdom, to overthrow the God of Israel and to set up His own revolutionary kingdom. (I Cor. 15:27)

But Christ came to save the world, not to condemn it. (Jn. 3:17) *The Church was Israel fulfilled*, not Israel replaced. A.D. 30-70 was the time of Israel's transformation, not her destruction. Israel was "*changed*," not abandoned, through the world-regenerating work of the outpoured Holy Spirit; and that change was consummated when the Lord Jesus, the promised Messiah, came to inhabit the Jew-gentile Church in the "*time of restoration*" in A.D. 70.

That is when the old things (the Mosaic "shadow," the "reminders of sin") were finally abolished and fulfilled in the heavenly Antitype. That is when **all** the saints, Jew and gentile, living and dead, were finally redeemed from the curse of the Law of Moses and were raised up together and united in the one, universal Body of Israel's Messiah.

Every "*jot and tittle*" of the Mosaic Law remained imposed upon Jewish believers until "*heaven and earth*" (the old-covenant world) passed away in A.D. 70. Gentile Christians however were never called to partake of the body of the

Mosaic ordinances, because gentile believers were becoming sharers in Israel's promised *spiritual things*, not in Israel's decaying system of "shadow." (Rom. 15:27; Col. 2:16,17)

QUESTION 106: In Question 105, you mention that gentile Christians were "never called to partake of the body of the Mosaic ordinances, because gentile believers were becoming sharers in Israel's promised spiritual things, not in Israel's decaying system of "shadow." But if water-baptism was an old-covenant ritual that symbolized a greater spiritual reality to come (Matt. 3:11), then why were gentile Christians commanded to be baptized?

ANSWER: Christian water-baptism was not an old-covenant ritual. It was an eschato-Christological ritual that heralded the impending fulfillment of the prophets. Compare Isa. 32:15; 44:3; 45:8; 52:15; Eze.36:25; 39:29; Zech. 12:10 with Jn. 1:25. As with the eschatological gift of tongues, one of the primary purposes of Christian water-baptism was to *manifest the Son of God to unbelieving Israel* in the Last Days (Jn. 1:31; I Cor. 14:22).

Christian water-baptism was a sign that was in process of fulfillment, and it was fulfilled by the Advent of that which it signified: *The clothing of the Church with the perfected, anointed Most Holy Place (Christ Himself) from out of Heaven* (Dan. 9:24; I Cor. 15:53,54; II Cor. 5:2,4).

Although Christian ritual-baptism was not one of the Levitical sprinklings and pourings (baptisms) of the old covenant, it was nevertheless, like the Levitical baptisms, an outward "*purifying of the flesh*" that God "*imposed*" until the "*time of making things right*" came in A.D. 70. (Jn. 3:25,26; I Peter 3:21; Heb. 9:10,13) The eschatological rite remained imposed while the Kingdom of God emerged from out of its *natural body* (the Adamic world of types and signs), until the body was finally "*changed*" through the indwelling of the Spirit of the Father in A.D. 70. (Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 15:51,52; Heb. 1:12) "*Behold, I am making all things new.*" (Rev. 21:5; I Cor. 15:51)

QUESTION 107: In Rom. 8:11, Paul said that God was going to give life to the "mortal bodies" of believers. How exactly was this fulfilled at a first-century Parousia of Christ? If the "mortal bodies" of those pre-parousia saints were cast off and remain in the dust to this day, how could their "mortal bodies" have been made alive?

ANSWER: "*And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the indwelling of His Spirit in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*" (Rom. 8:10-13)

The word "*body*" / "*bodies*" in Rom. 6:6,12; 7:24; 8:10,11,13,23 (and in parallel Scriptures) does not mean "the physical part of man." The "*body*" does not refer to a *part* of man. The "*body*" is man. It is "man" himself (Rom. 6:11,13,16) in the context of his covenant-world. Whether the word is used in reference to a collective humanity or to individuals, the "*body*" is *man as he is defined by and wholly summed up in Adamic Sin or in Christological Righteousness*.

The constituent parts of man in Adam (i.e., the "*members*" of the Adamic body) were the sinful practices committed under the condemnation of God's commandments:

"Therefore **put to death your members** on the earth: **fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry**" (Col. 3:5).

"...If you through the Spirit **put to death the practices of the body**, you shall live." (Rom. 8:13)

Whereas the "*members*" of man in Christ (i.e., the "*members*" of "*the new man*," the Christological body) are the Spirit-empowered practices of those who are no longer under the condemnation of God. The two contrasting *bodily* states in Rom. 6-8 therefore depend on neither physicality nor non-physicality. They depend only on one's relation to Adam or to Christ. They depend on whether one is *in Adam* (i.e., of the old world, under the law and dead in Sin) or *in Christ* (of the new world, under grace and indwelt by the life-giving Spirit). Whether biologically alive or not, all the elect before Christ were the very *embodiment*, fullness and habitation of Sin. But now in Christ, through faith in His shed blood, all of His saints in heaven and on earth are together the embodiment, fullness and habitation of God Himself.

As a comparison of Col. 2:11 and Col. 3:9 confirms, **the "body" of Sin was the "old man"** (Rom. 6:6; 7:24):

"...the **putting off of the body** of the sins...." (Col. 2:11)

"...having **put off the old man** with his practices." (Col. 3:9; cf. Eph. 4:22)

Compare also Rom. 6:6 and Rom. 8:10:

"...**Our old man is crucified** with Him..." (Rom. 6:6)

"If Christ be in you, **the body is dead**..." (Rom. 8:10)

The "*body*" of Sin was pre-Christ humanity. It was *man as the whole organization of Sin and Death*. It was man in slavery and bondage under the reign of Sin and Death (Rom. 6:1,2,7,9,13,14,17,19,20-23; 7:6,9-11,13,14,23; 8:2,6,10,15,21). It

was unredeemed man alienated from God, under the condemnation and obligation of the letter of the law (Rom. 6:14; 7:4,6; 8:4,7,12,23). It was man in futility and fruitlessness, under the control of Sin, unable to avoid the condemnation of God's law (Rom. 7:4,5,15,18,19,21,23; 8:7-9,13,20). It was man living in spiritual "weakness," "dishonor," "corruption" and "mortality" under the sin-increasing power of Sin through the law (Rom. 5:20; 7:8,13). It was "natural" / "fleshly" man indwelt by *Sin* instead of by the Spirit of God (Rom. 7:5,14,17,18,20,23,25; 8:3-5,9,12,13).

In the Last Days of the Adamic ages, the Holy Spirit made His dwelling in believers through the righteousness of Christ; and through that indwelling, their *body* of Sin and Death (their old *world-identity*, they're Adamic "*man*" or *self*) died (Rom. 8:9). Through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, believers were buried *bodily* with Christ into His death (Rom. 6:3-5). They died *bodily* with Christ to the old world of Sin (Rom. 6:2,7,8,11). Their "*old man*," the "*body of sin*" --the whole Adamic *cosmos*-- was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 6:14). Insofar as believers were being conformed to Christ's death through the eschatological, covenant-changing work of the Holy Spirit, their old, Adamic *selves* were *dead* and their life was hid with the soon-to-be-revealed Savior of the world (Rom. 6:11,13; Phil. 3:10; Col. 3:3).

Believers "worked out" their *death with Christ* in the last days of the Adamic ages by daily putting to death their old "*man*," that is, by daily "*mortifying*" the practices, or *members*, of their "*earthly* [Adamic] *body*" or humanity. The goal of their dying was that the "*body of Sin*" would be abolished in Christ and that Sin and Death would no longer reign through Adam (Rom. 6:12; 8:13; Col. 3:5).

Thus, it was through the *same indwelling* of the Holy Spirit that their *mortal bodies* were consummately *changed* and *made alive* on the Last Day. As Paul said later in his epistle to the Romans, believers were putting off the works of darkness (*putting to death the deeds / members of the body*) and were putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. Each individual believer was putting off the body of Sin and Death and was **putting on the body of Christ** (i.e., the new Christological Humanity which would be the eternal embodiment and habitation of the Righteousness and Life of Christ) (Rom. 13:12-14).

The world-changing / man-changing / body-changing work of the indwelling Holy Spirit was consummated in the Parousia of Christ, when God swept away the Adamic, pre-Christ world of Sin, Death, condemnation, slavery and futility; when God threw down the earthly, mortal, man-made tent / house / body (the old-covenant world) and clothed His Spirit-sanctified, universal Church with the eternal Tabernacle / House / Body of God from out of Heaven in A.D. 70 (I Cor. 5:1-4).

That is when all the saints, living and dead, were redeemed. That is when their Adamic "*body*" / "*man*" was made new, was conformed to the image of the Son of God (sonship), and was made the eternal Temple of the Triune God (Rom. 8:23,29; I Cor. 15:49; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:5). That is when their "*mortal bodies*" (their old, sinful *selves* in Adam) were abolished, resurrected, transformed / changed and clothed with eternal life (Rom. 6:6; 8:11; I Cor. 15:22; Phil. 3:21).

QUESTION 108: We cannot find even *one* full preterist *anywhere* in history until *the 19th century*. If the historic Church is "*the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth*," how could the Church have totally missed the greatest events in all redemptive history: The Second Coming and the Resurrection of the Dead? If the Church was so radically blind and deaf and steeped in error that it could not see and teach the fulfillment of those cardinal doctrines for *about 1,800 years*, then the historic Church was the Pillar and Foundation of a LIE. Therefore, as orthodox Christians, we must conclude that preterism, *and not the historic Church*, is the damnable Lie. If you preterists claim to be Christians, how do you get around this devastating logic?

ANSWER: I agree that it is impossible that the historic Church has been preaching a damnable Lie. However, as every believer agrees, it is *possible* for the Church to be caught in an eschatological error and to remain at the same time "*the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth*." It is therefore *not* impossible that the historic Church was caught in an eschatological error for 1,800 years and at the same time remained "*the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth*."

Eschatological error does not necessarily imply radical, Gospel-overthrowing blindness, deafness and heresy. Even a major eschatological error is not necessarily a Gospel-nullifying Lie. For instance, premillennialism contradicts the orthodox eschatology of the Apostles' Creed itself. The Creed states that when Christ comes back, He will "judge the quick and the dead." Yet premillennialists maintain that when Christ comes back He will *not* judge the quick and the dead, but will instead set up his earthly kingdom for a thousand years. Premillennialists are thus diametrically opposed to a cardinal element of traditional, creedal, eschatological orthodoxy.

But who among those who believe the eschatology of the Apostles' Creed would say that all premillennialists must be excommunicated from the universal Church? Or who among premillennial believers would say that all who believe the eschatology of the Apostles' Creed must be excommunicated from the universal Church?

If we agree then that a significant or major eschatological error is not necessarily a damnable error and that believers can be steeped in eschatological error and still be saved, we must also agree that the traditional, creedal, historic Church

could have been caught in a major eschatological error (futurism) and at the same time remained "*the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth*."

Usually the ecclesiastical implication of preterism –that the historic Church missed the fact that all things have been fully fulfilled– seems outlandish because many people unwittingly approach preterism using futurist categories. It would indeed be unbelievable that the Church missed a literal "*thousand years*," and a literal return of Jesus-in-the-flesh, and a literal "rapture," and a literal "*resurrection of the dead*," and a literal destruction of the universe, and a literal "*new heavens and new earth*." Thinking in those futurist terms, the suggestion that all the Scriptures that predicted those events were fulfilled without the Church knowing that those Scriptures were fulfilled is preposterous.

This is why we must think in terms of the preterist paradigm if we are to judge preterism righteously. From the preterist perspective it is not unbelievable that the historic Church had *an exegetical misunderstanding* about the fulfillment of all things written *if* the events were fulfilled spiritually according to the preterist interpretation. And from the preterist perspective, the Church's failure to recognize that many prophetic passages are fulfilled does not imply that the Church "missed" the fulfillment of those passages. It only implies that the Church failed to connect all the right Bible verses to the Christological fulfillment that the Church *truly and knowingly sees and embraces*.

Despite futurist errors regarding various prophecy-texts, the Church has actually been teaching (full) preterism for nearly two thousand years now. For instance, according to preterism the Parousia was the Coming of Christ Himself to destroy the enemies in His sinful (old-covenant) Kingdom and to indwell His saints. Many or most of the Church Fathers believed that the indwelling of Christ Himself in His Church (in consummation of the work of the Holy Spirit) was already fully fulfilled in history. For example, Mathete's *Epistle to Diognetus*, chapter 7 (written about sixty years after the fall of Jerusalem):

...Truly God Himself, Who is almighty, the Creator of all things, and invisible, has sent from Heaven, and placed among men, Him who is the Truth, the holy and incomprehensible Word, and has firmly established Him in their hearts.

The early Church, from the preterist perspective, did not "totally miss" the Parousia. The Church consciously recognized the coming of Christ Himself to indwell His people, and that indwelling, in the preterist framework, is itself the full fulfillment of "*the Hope of Israel*."

In Ignatius' *Epistle to the Ephesians* (written about fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem), in chapter 19, he said that the destruction of Death took place from the time of the Incarnation to the destruction of "the old kingdom." Ignatius and other Church Fathers likewise connected the abolition of Judaism with *the gathering of the elect*.

From the preterist point of view, it is not a stretch to say that many or most of the Church Fathers perceived the Parousia-Presence of Christ ("*Christ in you*") and perceived the destruction of Death and the establishment of the Kingdom in the destruction of Jerusalem ("the old kingdom"). They understood those preterist realities. They recognized them. They described them. They had a preterist understanding of their timing, nature and benefits. They praised God for them. They in no way failed to see them. Their only error was that *they failed to connect what they knew and saw and embraced to all the right Bible texts*.

The failure of the Church Fathers to connect all the right Bible verses to what they saw and embraced, is a long, long way from the Church Fathers "totally missing" what they saw and embraced.

In order to "totally miss" the fulfillment of all things written, one would have to deny the abolition of Judaism, and deny the gathering of the universal elect in the Christian age, and deny the establishment and presence of "*Christ in you*," and deny the establishment and presence of the Kingdom of God, and deny the presence of the Church as the established New-Covenant Temple of God, and deny the presence of all the saints, living and dead, as being one body or "communion" in Christ. Those realities are the sum total of (full) preterism. Therefore, **if you believe in all those things (and many futurists do), you are a preterist, even if you are an exegetical futurist.**

The Church Fathers did not "totally miss" the fulfillment of all things written. They exegetically mis-categorized it. They merely *appended* an extra-biblical scheme of future events onto their biblically sound, soteriological (full) preterism. The only thing the post-70 Church "totally missed" was the fact that it did not miss the fulfillment of all things written.

So from the standpoint of the preterist interpretation, the eschatological error of the historic Church was not a radical or fatal error. And since it is historically possible that the Church could have been steeped in a non-fatal eschatological error, the historical possibility remains open that preterism is true and that it represents a God-ordained correction of the historic Church's understanding of certain eschatological texts.

QUESTION 109: I have a question about your article on tongues. I cannot argue with anything in the article as far as fulfillment. However, why would there not be churches today that prophesy and speak in tongues en masse, of course "in order"? As you said, there is a possibility God would have someone do it today. He is God. He can do

as he pleases. Why would He not have it en masse for the same reason today as in the 1st century A.D., for the unbelievers?

ANSWER: If churches speak in tongues en masse today, then tongues did not "cease" (I Cor. 13:8,10,11). Then "that which is perfect" (i.e., the perfect Man, the Mature Body of Christ, the completed Temple of God, the more perfect Tabernacle, the House from out of Heaven) never arrived through the consummated work of the Holy Spirit at the Parousia in A.D. 70 (II Cor. 5:1,2,6; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 2:21,22; 4:11-13; Col. 1:27; Heb. 9:8,9,11; I Peter 2:25). Then prophecy was never "abolished" and "sealed up" (I Cor. 13:8,10,11; Dan. 9:24,27). Then the prophets were never removed (Zech. 13:1-6). Then the old covenant never passed away and God's people have never yet worshiped Him face to Face (I Cor. 13:12; II Cor. 3:6-18). In other words, if churches speak in tongues en masse today, we are lost.

When I admitted the possibility that God could cause someone to miraculously speak in a foreign language today, I was speaking in terms of theoretical possibility. Does the cessation of tongues allow for the possibility of isolated occurrences of tongues throughout the centuries? I don't know. What we know for certain though is that tongues ceased. God can do what He pleases, but He cannot please to contradict Himself. Therefore, the phenomenon of tongues no longer exists as it did up to A.D. 70, because God said it would "cease."

Tongues was not a "sign" of spiritual power in general. It was a sign to the Jews ("those not believing") that signified that an army which spoke a foreign tongue (like the Assyrians in the book of Isaiah) was storming the gates of the kingdom and that fleshly Israel's destruction and disinheritance was impending (I Cor. 14:21,22a; Isa. 28:11,12).

QUESTION 110: What does Matthew 11:12 mean? Who were "the violent" ones who were causing the kingdom of heaven to suffer "violence" since the days of John the baptist?

ANSWER: *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force."*

"The violent" ones in Matt. 11:12 were believers ("every man" in Lk. 16:16). Those who believed the Gospel of the Kingdom were "forcing their way into" and "seizing" the Kingdom of Heaven. The "violence" was not bloodshed or persecution. It was the storming of believers into the Kingdom against the will of the scribes and Pharisees, who had shut its door and had taken away its key (Matt. 23:13; Lk. 11:52).

QUESTION 111: How does the doctrine of perseverance change, if at all, with a realized point of view? So much of the exhortation of the epistles addressed the perseverance of the saints (through times of tribulation and suffering), emphasizing the work of God to bring them to a successful "conclusion." Is post AD70 salvation/perseverance organically different in some way(s)? I am also thinking specifically of Paul's "filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Jesus Christ." Do we still do that?

ANSWER: The last-days church was living in a unique time and undergoing a unique experience. It was being built up to become the Temple of God (Eph. 2:21,22). It was suffering the eschatological attacks of Satan, who was working in a furious panic to keep the building of that Temple from being completed (Rev. 12:12). The Holy Spirit sovereignly led and "preserved" the elect through that once-for-all time of intense, age-changing suffering. Because of the Spirit's work in that generation, the Accuser is today in the Lake of Fire and the universal Church of the redeemed is the eternal Habitation and City and Kingdom of the triune God.

Unlike the church in the New Testament, we're not being carried through a time of universal Body-suffering and Body-death for the purpose of overcoming the pre-Christ world and establishing the New-Covenant world. The Church is no longer putting to death the Adamic body in order to become the resurrected Body of Christ. That Spirit-empowered work was consummated in the resurrection and change of "the Body" in A.D. 70.

Believers still suffer, and stumble in sin, and battle temptations, and forsake sin, and learn obedience, and grow in the faith, and endure to the end of their earthly lives through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God; but the Body of Christ is no longer undergoing the eschatological, covenant-changing process of cosmic suffering and "dying with Christ" and "dying to Sin" and "dying to the world" and being "buried with Christ."

Though those doctrines have individual applications for us today, their primary world-changing meaning was applicable only to the eschatological church. Believers today are not putting to death the dead-in-Sin, unredeemed world of God's people. Believers today are covenantally defined, not by suffering and death, but by "newness of life," because the Adamic/Mosaic world-body of the Law, Sin and Death was long ago swept away through the consummated, world-mortifying work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, at the Parousia of the Father and the Son in A.D. 70.

The doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints" is not changed, but it is established in the New-Covenant world, because

it is only in the Messianic world that those who were chosen of the Father are finally granted eternal (uninterruptible) life and righteousness. The New-Covenant world is defined by the Holy Spirit sovereignly transforming the hearts and minds of the elect, by the Son sovereignly forgiving the elect of their sins, and by the Father sovereignly uniting His elect in one universal Body. Life for Israel under the New Covenant is the sovereign work of God, from beginning to forever:

"*This is the [New] Covenant: ...I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more*" (Heb. 8:10-12).

QUESTION 112: In Matt. 16:18,19, Jesus promised Peter that he (Peter) would be the "rock" upon which Jesus would build His church. Jesus then gave Peter "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*" In Isa. 22:22, when God gave Eliakim "*the key of the house of David,*" that meant that Eliakim had been uniquely placed into a dynasty as "prime minister" under the king. Since Eliakim had successors, this must mean that Peter was the first in a line of successors who are "prime minister" under the King. As history makes clear, the unbroken line of successors of Peter's bishopric in Rome have been the Popes. Thus the Pope, sitting in the inherited seat of Peter as the "rock," always rules as head of the one, holy Catholic Church. How do you answer these arguments?

ANSWER: Before the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the scribes and the Pharisees had been in possession of the "key." But they refused to open the door so that men could enter the kingdom (Matt. 23:13; Lk. 11:52). On the day of Pentecost, Peter became *the first*, though not the only, believer to receive "*the keys*" and open the door of the kingdom of heaven through the preaching of the knowledge of Christ (Acts 2:14-41).

The "key" of the kingdom is the gospel, and everyone who walks according to the gospel possesses the "key" of the kingdom (I Peter 1:10,11). At Pentecost, Peter commenced the apostolic work of dispensing "*the keys*" to all who believed. (Note the plural "keys," in contrast to Eliakim's "key.") It was through the foundational ministry of Peter and then of the other apostles and of the Christian prophets that Christ built up His church in the last days (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20).

As the first, but not the only, "rock" of the church's establishment (Rev. 21:14), Peter's office/position was foundational, not multi-generational. He was the first of many "*foundation stones*" in his generation; he was not a universal head. He was "*the apostle to the circumcision,*" not the apostle to the universal church (Gal. 2:7). Peter was the first to preach the gospel to the Jewish church, and he nurtured, fed and led that foundational assembly according to Christ's commission to him in Jn. 21:15-17.

Through Peter's ministry in those formative decades, the Jewish church endured in the faith of the gospel until an "*entrance*" (i.e., an unlocked and open door) into the kingdom was supplied to her, when she conquered Death and Hades and inherited eternal life in the consummation of the ages (Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 15:55; II Peter 1:10,11; Rev. 20:13,14).

Eliakim's worldly authority in Isa. 22:22 was merely a type of the spiritual gospel-authority that was given first to the apostle Peter, and then to the whole "*royal priesthood*" of believers (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 5:10; 20:6; 22:5).