



# The Sword & The Plow

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## Why I am a Preterist

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In this article, the first in a series of *Why I am a Preterist*, we survey 37 New Testament time texts, which unanimously place Jesus' return in the first century.

### **Eschatology: The Study of "Last Things"**

The study of the "latter days" and the "time of the end" is referred to as "eschatology," the study of "last things" (Greek "eschatos" = last + "ology" = study of). There are four schools of eschatological interpretation: 1) Futurism; 2) Continuous Historical; 3) Idealism; and 4) Preterism. Futurism teaches that the end times and second coming of Christ are still future. Futurists typically believe that Christ's second coming will be *bodily and visible*, and will mark the *end of the world*. However, many Futurists believe that the second coming will issue in a *millennial reign* of Christ *on earth* seated on David's throne in Israel.

The Continuous Historical school is type of Futurism, which has it that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation provide a *continuous survey of history* until the world's end. This school was popular with the Reformers who saw the Catholic Church and papacy in the imagery of Daniel and Revelation, and thought they were thus living in the time of the end. This school has been discredited over time, as men have come to recognize that the papacy is nowhere alluded to in scripture. No serious scholars embrace it today.

Idealism sees events described in prophecy as neither past, present, nor future, but representative of larger ideals and principles. Eschatological prophecy deals with the ongoing struggle between the forces of light and darkness, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Its message is purely a spiritual one, an allegory of the spiritual path, which is equally relevant in all ages and for all people. Augustine's allegorical interpretation of Revelation in his *City of God* may thus be defined as a type of Idealism, being anchored

to no particular events in history, but standing as an allegory of God's spiritual kingdom versus that of the world. Against this view it may be pointed out that Revelation is definitely tied to specific events in history; the book opens and closes with affirmations that the events described were "at hand" ([Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 7, 12, 22](#)). Obviously, this same objection is equally applicable to Futurism.

The word Preterism is from the Latin "*prae*" (before) and "*ire*" (to go), whose past participle is "*praeteritus*," meaning the subject *has gone past*. The word occurs in the future tense in the Latin Vulgate at [Matt. 24:34](#) thus: "*non praeteribit haec generatio donec omnia haec fiant*" ("this generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled"). Preterism takes a *contemporary-historical* view of eschatology, holding that Revelation and related prophecies describe events contemporary to those to whom they were addressed. Specifically, Preterism views the latter days and second coming as being bound up in the world events marked by the persecution of Nero Caesar (AD 64-68), the Roman civil wars that erupted upon Nero's death ("the year of four emperors") (AD 68-70), and the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome (AD 67-70).

It is this writer's belief that Preterism is far and away the most Biblically defensible view. Virtually all prophetic announcements, Old Testament and New, concerning the coming of Christ and his kingdom, the latter days, and related events are tied to a *specific time* in history that is now millennia past. It is a well recognized fact that the kingdom and coming of Christ would occur in the days of the Roman Empire, the Jerusalem temple, and "Elijah the Prophet" (John the Baptist - [Matt. 17:12,1,3](#); [Mal. 4:5, 6](#)) Futurists, particularly Dispensationalists, thus find it necessary to speak about a "revived Roman Empire" and "third temple" and another "Elijah."<sup>1</sup> Rome's historical connection with the kingdom and coming of Christ likewise figured in the Continuous Historical school's belief that the papacy was the antichrist, based upon the assumption that the Catholic Church was a continuation of the Roman Empire.

Futurists are compelled to look for revival of these historical characters this way due to preconceived notions about the *nature* of prophecy's fulfillment.

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<sup>1</sup> John Walvrod, *The Book of Revelation* (Mood Press, 1966), pp. 176 (a future temple); 178-180 (Elijah still to come); 197, 204 (revived Roman Empire).

Dispensationalists look for a worldly kingdom with Christ seated upon a political throne in earthly Jerusalem. Since this did not occur during the historical era of Rome, "Elijah" and the Jerusalem temple, they are forced to bring these characters upon the world stage a *second time* so prophecy can be fulfilled in the way they believe it must. Futurists who look for the sudden conflagration of the cosmos at Christ's coming are forced for obvious reasons to similarly ignore the historical anchorage of prophetic announcements. Again, the expected *nature* of fulfillment determines their outcome.

But if the nature of fulfillment is the only justification for ignoring the historical context of prophecy, are not Futurists building upon a weak foundation? This is particularly true given the *symbolic nature* of prophecy, whose metaphoric and mystical language makes the nature of fulfillment its least certain and predictable facet. Surely the safer course is to bring our understanding of the nature of prophetic fulfillment into line with objective criteria of historical context, and not *vice versa*. The time texts and characters/events should guide our interpretation of the symbolism, and not the symbolism overrule the time and characters. This three story pyramid of interpretation - time texts, characters/events, and symbolism - is the method of Preterist interpretation, which we will investigate in this series of articles. We will confine the rest of this article to the time texts, the base of the pyramid, reserving for future articles the characters/events and symbolic nature of prophetic language.

### **The Time Texts: A Matter of Biblical Credibility**

The most compelling evidence in favor of the Preterist interpretation is the *time texts*, which universally attest that Christ's second coming would occur in the lives of the apostles and first generation of believers. They serve as the foundation upon which all other interpretation is built. Here follow some of the more compelling texts, with our comments following.

#### **Testimony of Matthew**

*Matt. 10:23 - "But when they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."*

This was spoken to the disciples who first carried the gospel message. Jesus indicates his soon return, saying they would not have time to preach in every city of Israel before he had come. This not only

places Jesus' return in the disciples' lifetimes, it also links it to the Jewish war with Rome and the fall of Jerusalem, as subsequent passages make clear.

*[Matt. 16:27, 28](#) - "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."*

Here we have an express statement, placing Christ's coming within the lives of his audience. Mark's gospel words this a little differently, saying, the kingdom would come "with power" (Mk. 8:38; 9:1). In other words, it would come *in force*, overwhelming all that stood in its way. Christ would then sit upon the throne of his glory, judging men and nations ([Matt. 25:31-46](#)), which judgment continues today.

*[Matt. 21:40-45](#) - "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them."*

Although this parable does not give an express statement of time, in saying the Pharisees understood it of them, together with its prediction that Christ would come against the Jewish nation and its leaders, places its fulfillment by the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

*[Matt. 23:36-39](#) - "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed in he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*

This passage should be linked with those that went before. In [Matt. 23:34](#), Jesus mentions how the Jews would persecute his prophets and wise men "from city to city" just like [Matt. 10:23](#). He then says that all the righteous blood shed upon the earth would be required of that generation, and would be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. Directly or indirectly, the blood of all earth's martyrs had all been spent on behalf of the gospel and the cause of righteousness. Since the gospel was the culmination of God's purpose, the Jews' rejection of the gospel meant that all the blood down through the ages spilled in its behalf would be required of them. The desolations would be so great, even the Jews would acknowledge Christ's divine visitation upon the nation.

*[Matt. 24:30, 34](#) - "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory...Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*

This passage repeats the prediction of Christ's coming within the very generation of those then living. The context is expressly tied to the fall of Jerusalem ([Matt. 24:1-3](#)), being a continuation of the things predicted in [Matt. 23:34-39](#).

*[Matt. 26:64](#) - Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."*

The pronoun "ye" is directed to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, who would witness Christ's divine visitation and judgment in the fall of Jerusalem not forty years hence. "Coming in the clouds of heaven" is a metaphoric phrase common to the Old Testament prophets, signifying God's providential judgment upon a people or nation ([Isa. 19:1](#); Ps. 18:10; [Ezek. 1:4](#)), and answers the kingdom coming in power. It also has specific reference to Daniel's vision of the heavenly coronation of Christ (Dan. 7:13, 14), which was repeated by Stephen at his trial for saying Christ would destroy Jerusalem and the temple (Acts 6:13, 14; 7:56)

Thus, in Matthew alone there are six direct statements placing Jesus' return within the lives of the first disciples. Whatever presuppositions we may have about Christ's second coming, the time texts are clear and unequivocal and must guide our understanding. We cannot avoid their force without doing violence to their language. Further, the context

of these passages ties them to *characters* and *events* within the generation of the apostles. Christ's coming in his kingdom in power entailed judgment upon the Jewish nation for rejection of his gospel and the persecution of his church. Since we know that Jerusalem did in fact fall in AD 70, there is every reason to uphold the word of God and affirm Christ's return within the lives of the first disciples.

### Testimony of John

The synoptic gospels of Mark and Luke contain identical statements to Matthew, so we pass over them here and look instead at John:

*Jn. 21:22 - "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."*

In [Matt. 16:28](#), Jesus stated some of the disciples would live until he returned. Here, Jesus specifies that, although Peter would give his life in martyrdom (v. 18), the apostle John would live until he had come again. History confirms that John lived in Ephesus until the time of Trajan.

### Testimony of Acts

[Acts 6:13, 14](#) - *"This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered us."*

Although this passage is not a time text proper, because of its connection to the statements in Matthew tying Jesus' return to the destruction of Jerusalem, we have included it here. Stephen was tried before the Sanhedrin on an accusation that he had blasphemed the temple by saying it would be destroyed. Given that Stephen says Jesus would destroy the city and temple, it is clear that Christ's coming would be *spiritual and providential*, not physical and personal; it would take the form of divine visitation and judgment executed in world events, guided by heaven's hand. In the course of his trial, Stephen defended the charge that he had blasphemed Moses and the temple by pointing out that God himself had destroyed the temple before at the Babylonian captivity ([Acts 7:42, 43](#)). He then quotes the prophet Isaiah:

*"Howbeit, the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? Saith the Lord: or what is the place of*

*my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"*  
[Acts 7:48-50](#)

Stephen's purpose in quoting this passage is to show that the temple was only qualifiedly holy; it was not the actual place of God's habitation, but merely a symbol. The Jews' devotion to the temple, but murder of Christ, showed that they were adhering to outward forms of religion, while rejecting God who was its very object. Stephen quoted only the beginning of Isaiah's warning. In the rest of the passage, Isaiah goes on to describe the Jews' persecution of Christians and the coming destruction of the city and temple. First he describes the continuing temple service as an abomination equal to murder and idolatry:

*"He that killeth an ox is if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and shoes that in which I delighted not." [Isa. 66:3, 4](#)*

Next, Isaiah addresses Christians who were being "cast out" (excommunicated) by their fellow Jews for Jesus' name sake. Even before Jesus was crucified, the rulers of the Jews had decreed that anyone who confessed Christ was to be cast out (Jn. 9:22, 34; 12:42). The "appearing" of the Lord refers to his second coming.

*"Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your breath that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." [Isa. 66:5](#)*

Finally, we see the Lord's wrath upon the Jews as he came in providential judgment upon the nation.

*"A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies...for behold the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." [Isa. 66:3-6, 15](#)*

Although Stephen did not quote the passage in full, the Sanhedrin could not fail to see the connection: The destruction of the city and temple Stephen was

foretelling was nothing more than that foretold by the prophet Isaiah. This should have provided a full defense to the charge he had blasphemed. Instead, the Jews hardened their hearts and stopped their ears, and condemned Stephen to death. For us, Stephen's statements, coupled with the prophecy of Isaiah and statements of Christ, provide time texts for the coming of the Lord and related events.

### Testimony of Romans

*[Rom. 13:11, 12](#) - "And that, knowing the time, that now is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand."*

*Rom. 16:20 - And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

The persecution of the church that began in Judea did not remain there, but was carried by the Jews throughout Asia Minor and the world. The book of Acts relates how everywhere Paul carried the gospel he met with resistance and persecution from the Jews. The historian Suetonius relates that the emperor Claudius was even forced to banish all Jews from Rome and Italy because of their riots against "Chrestus."<sup>2</sup> This is corroborated by Luke in [Acts 18:2](#), where Paul met Aquilla and Pricilla, who had lately come from Italy "because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome." With the death of Claudius, Nero came to the throne and the ban against the Jews was relaxed: Nero's wife Poppaea Sabinus was sympathetic toward Judaism, if not a proselyte.<sup>3</sup> The Jews slowly filtered back into Rome, and doubtless caused considerable trouble to the church. They would eventually inveigle Nero and the Empire in their war against the gospel. The first imperial persecution broke out in AD 64-68. It was widely believed that Nero was responsible for the burning of Rome (AD 64), and historians are agreed that he seized upon Christians as a scapegoat.<sup>4</sup> It is

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<sup>2</sup> "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome." Suetonius, *Claudius* XXV, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Josephus calls her a "religious woman." *Ant.* XX, viii, 11.

<sup>4</sup> "But neither human help, nor imperial munificence, nor all the modes of placating Heaven, could stifle scandal or dispel the belief that the fire had taken place by order. Therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero

against this background that Paul called the Jews "enemies of the gospel" (Rom. 11:28) and "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," which God had borne with much longsuffering. Paul exhorted Christians not to avenge themselves, but to give place to wrath (Rom. 12:19). They were to rouse themselves and watch, lest falling into spiritual slumber they be unprepared when the time of persecution preceding Christ's coming arrived. However, the "night" of persecution and oppression would soon be over and the "day time" of Christ's dominion would arise. The Roman and Jewish adversary ("Satan") would shortly be bruised beneath believers' feet.

### Testimony of Corinthians

*[1 Cor. 1:6-8](#) - "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye are come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The testimony of Christ received confirmation in the Corinthians by their obedience to the gospel. They then received the gifts of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the apostle's hands (*cf.* Acts 8:17; 19:5, 6). The gifts of the Holy Ghost were merely temporary and provisional, belonging to the period between the cross and the second coming of Christ. Hence, Paul says the gifts were given to the Corinthians while waiting for the Lord's return, when they would cease. The passage assumes that the Corinthians will be alive in the day of Christ.

*1 Cor. 3:13 - "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."*

Although it contains no express declaration of time, this verse assumes the Corinthians would live until the day of testing by fire, which was to precede the coming of Christ. This almost certainly refers to the persecution under Nero, which would try the saints and prove what their work of faith was made of.

*1 Cor. 7:29 - "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none."*

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substituted as culprits...Christians." Tacitus, *Annals* XV, xliv.

Here we see again that a very short while remained until the time of the end overtook the first generation of believers; so much so that not even the obligations of married life should be permitted to distract them from what lay ahead. The end time would include the persecution under Nero and the cataclysmic judgments attending Christ's coming in vindication of his gospel and martyrs.

### Testimony of 1st Thessalonians

*[1 Thess. 1:9, 10](#) - "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."*

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians contain a great deal of eschatological material. From the book of Acts, we learn that Paul was in Thessalonica hardly more than the space of three weeks ([Acts 17:1-10](#)). Although with the Thessalonians such a small space, it is clear that Paul invested much time instructing them about the second coming of Christ. This would make little sense if it was thousands of years away. But we see here that Paul's teaching and expectation was that Christ would come within his reader's lifetimes. The "wrath to come" may refer to events that would overtake the world, but more likely refers to the wrath awaiting men in the next life who fail to obey the gospel.

*[1 Thess. 2:14-20](#) - "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."*

We read in Acts about Jewish opposition throughout the world to the gospel message. In its way, the book of Acts is an apologetic defense of the destruction of the Jewish nation, providing a detailed account of

their resistance to the gospel and persecution of believers, and the righteous judgment of God in taking the nation away. This is nowhere more true than in Thessalonica. The Jews there not only stirred up persecution against Paul, forcing him to prematurely leave the city, but when they learned he was preaching in Berea, they came and stirred up trouble there as well, again forcing Paul to depart ([Acts 17:1-15](#)). The passage quoted here thus predicts the coming wrath that was to overtake the nation in the war with Rome. Even Jews in foreign cities would become a prey, as the nation lost the protection of law at home and abroad (see below). Read in isolation, the connection between God's wrath upon the Jews and the coming of Christ may be unclear, but when taken in light of the rest of the New Testament, the connection is clear.

*[1 Thess. 3:13](#) - "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."*

Every chapter of I Thessalonians speaks about Christ's coming; and every chapter places it in the Thessalonians' lifetimes.

*[1 Thess. 5:1-4](#) - "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."*

We read in Josephus that the Jewish population in many cities was destroyed when they revolted against Rome: 20,000 Jews were slain in Syria, and Caesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants; 13,000 were slain in Scythopolis; 2,500 were slain in Askelon; 2,000 in Ptolemais, similar numbers were slain in Tyre, Hippos, and Gadara. 50,000 were slain in Alexandria.<sup>5</sup> We can only imagine what occurred in the rest of the world, for the Jews were universally detested.

### Testimony of 2nd Thessalonians

*[II Thess. 1:4-10](#) - "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment*

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<sup>5</sup> Josephus, *Wars*, II, xviii.

*of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."*

The epistles to the Thessalonians are believed to have been written while Claudius was still upon the throne (AD 41-54), probably in the 50's. The Jews' war with Rome did not break out until AD 66. The saints' longsuffering and patient endurance under persecution would finally be vindicated, and they would come into a time of rest when Jesus came in wrath against those who troubled his church. Clearly, this would offer small consolation if the events described were thousand of years off.

[II Thess. 2:1-12](#) - *"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."*

This passage states that the time was not "at hand," and thus seems to argue against a contemporary-historical fulfillment. However, since it is clear that the Thessalonians were taught to expect Christ's coming within their lifetimes, the fact that it was not then *immediately* at hand does not mean it was not fulfilled in the years following. The Reformers supposed the papacy and Catholic Church are referred to here, but nobody believes that today. Paul states that the man of sin and son of perdition (the antichrist) was *already present*, but had not yet been revealed upon the world stage because something and/or someone hindered him, who must first be taken out of the way. Since the papacy would not grow up for hundreds of years, this clearly is not the solution. Rather, we must look for a contemporary-historical explanation.

We believe that Nero and the first imperial persecution are in view here. The Thessalonians were shaken and troubled that Lord's coming and that their "gathering together unto him" was at hand. If their gathering entailed the translation or rapture of the church in a manner similar to Enoch and Elijah there would be nothing to disturb them, for this is universally supposed to be a good thing. Rather, the better view is that the gathering was a harvest by martyrdom, in which members of the church would be reaped into the eternal kingdom by death. This is clearly seen in [Rev. 14:9-20](#), where two harvests are portrayed, one of the wicked (the grapes) in wrath and vengeance (vv. 17-20), the other of the church (the wheat) in martyrdom under the beast (vv.9-16). The persecution the Thessalonians suffered from the Jews and their own countrymen (I Thess. 2:14-16; [II Thess. 1:6-10](#)) apparently led them to believe that the eschatological persecution was then at hand. However, Paul reminded them that the time was not then fully ripe. Claudius Caesar was still upon the throne.

It was Claudius' policy to protect the church by extending the *religio licita* to it. Roman law preserved to the nations of the empire the right to worship their own gods and keep their own laws, saving the power of death (*ius gladii*), which was reposed in the Roman governor. It was this policy of Roman law in withholding the power of death from local peoples that permitted the church to grow and spread, as otherwise the Jews would have extinguished the gospel as soon as ever the light of salvation was lit (recall the persecution over Stephen). Acts records that the Jews disturbed the peace throughout the empire, persecuting Paul everywhere he carried the gospel. Indeed, the Jews raised their tumults to such a pitch in Rome that Claudius saw fit to banish from Italy ([Acts 18:2](#)). In

the same chapter we learn of the banishment, we read how the Roman consul, Gallio (Seneca's brother), refused to sit in judgment of issues of Jewish law religion, when the Jews sought judgment against Paul (Acts. 18:12-16). However, Claudius would soon be "taken out of the way;" he was poisoned by Agrippina, Nero's mother, in order to secure Nero's succession to the throne. Nero was but 16 when he came into power, and for the first ten years of his government was under the tutelage of Seneca and Burrus, who restrained his vicious temperament. Eventually, however, Nero threw off all restraint and began a reign of terror, culminating in the persecution of the church (AD 64-68). Yet, Nero would be destroyed by Christ's coming and judgment, and Rome itself thrown into a succession of civil wars that left Italy in ruins and the capital destroyed. The Jewish nation, which was ultimately responsible for the persecution, would be completely destroyed.

### **Testimony of Timothy**

*I Tim. 6:14 - "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Timothy, Paul's companion in his work and travels, was expected to live and see Christ's return (cf. [II Tim. 4:1-4](#)).

### **Testimony of Hebrews**

*[Heb. 10:25](#) - "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."*

*[Heb. 10:37](#) - "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."*

The Hebrew Christians were under persecution from unbelieving Jews, who put them out of the synagogues and imposed such penalties upon them as they might, including beating with rods, imprisonment, excommunication, and forfeitures. They were thus tempted to turn back to the temple ritual and Mosaic law. The thrust of the epistle is to demonstrate the superiority of Christ and the invalidity of the law, and its complete inability to save. They are warned that to forsake Christ and turn back to the law is apostasy and will cause them to lose their salvation (Heb. 10:26, 27). Hence, they needed the strength derived from their mutual faith and should thus continue assembling together, and the more so as the day of open persecution drew near. They were to draw strength from the assurance that it

was but a short while more before the day of national judgment against the Jews arrived, when Christ would exact vengeance for the blood of his martyrs. Their reward was in heaven, and might thus bear the loss of mortal life happily (Heb. 11:16; 12:4).

### **Testimony of James**

*[Jm. 5:5, 8, 9](#) - "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh...Behold, the judge standeth before the door."*

This epistle is something of a companion to the book of Hebrews, being addressed to Jewish believers, many of whom were under persecution for unbelieving Jews. It is sometimes argued that in addressing the book to the "twelve tribes scattered abroad" James employs a metaphor for spiritual Israel. However, the better view is that James is addressing *actual Jews*. He characterizes those addressed as "first fruits" from among God's creatures, which term is specifically applied by John to the 144,000 taken from the Jews ([Jm. 1:18](#); [Rev. 14:4](#)). James says they ought not to show partiality to the rich entering their assemblies, and especially in light of the fact that the rich "blaspheme the worthy by which ye are called" ([Jm. 2:7](#)). The word rendered "assembly" here is "synagogue," betraying a distinctly Jewish setting. And blaspheming the name of Christ and Christianity would have been prominent among the Jews, but far less so among the Gentiles. James also mentions how the rich had heaped treasure together for the last days, which, in view of the coming destruction of the Jewish nation, would have special meaning. He says, too, that they condemn and kill the just, which was not yet true among the Gentiles, for no general persecution had yet broken out, but was true among the Jews, who had raised a great persecution against the church in the days of Stephen. James also uses a distinctly Jewish term "Lord of the sabaoth" to describe Jesus as the Lord who provides seed for crops and rain in due season, a term that would have no meaning among Gentiles ([Jm. 5:4](#); cf. Rom. 9:29; [Isa. 1:9](#)). In all, there is good reason to see the epistle is addressed primarily to Jewish believers, and the coming of Lord, which he describes as drawing nigh, in reference to the calamity that brought the nation's end and relief from persecution.

### **Testimony of Peter**



[I Pet. 4:7](#) - *"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."*

*I Pet. 4:17 - "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"*

These verses affirm the imminence of Christ coming and the events associated with the end (fulfillment) of age. God was bringing to a close the world-age that was marked by dominion of the unbelieving in the earth, for the government of the world had been given to Christ at his ascension, and he would thenceforth rule the nations in righteousness.

[II Pet. 3:10-14](#) - *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."*

This passage is often supposed to teach that the physical cosmos was to be destroyed at Christ's coming, but this mistakes the figurative nature of prophetic utterance. The promise of a new heaven and earth is from the prophet Isaiah, and describes the world under the government of Christ, after the persecutors of his people have all been destroyed. We cited the same prophecy earlier in our discussion about the trial of Stephen and the destruction of Jerusalem (see comments under Acts, above), whereby the reader may see that the heavens and earth and their elements describe, not the physical world, but the socio-political world gathered together in persecution of the church and gospel (Isa. 65, 66). Peter makes abundantly clear that the day of the Lord was hastening upon them and would overtake those then living. Hence, they should be diligent to be found blameless before Christ.

### **Testimony of John**

*I Jn. 2:18, 19 - "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now*

*are there many antichrist; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."*

The "last time" in the Greek is "last hour." John gives as evidence of the last hour the fact that many antichrists were then present in the world. The "antichrist" refers to St. Paul's "man of sin" and "son of perdition" described in II Thessalonians, or Nero, who would wage war against the church at the Jews' instigation, seeking to eradicate it from earth. Those who "went out from us" correspond to the "apostasy" Paul said would precede the persecution of Nero and doubtless points to Judaizers who abandoned the faith, teaching that the law was still valid and that Christians must be circumcised to be saved. James uses the identical phrase following the Jerusalem council, saying "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which *went out from us* have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ye must be circumcised, and keep the law," etc. ([Acts 15:24](#)). The phrase may also include Gentiles who apostatized from the faith and had turned to become persecutors, but we think those primarily referred to are Jews.

### **Testimony of Revelation**

[Rev. 1:1, 3](#) - *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servant things which must shortly come to pass...Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

Here we have the opening words of Revelation, assuring first century readers that the time was *at hand*. Revelation describes the persecution under Nero and the destruction of Rome and Jerusalem by the coming of Christ. The book is intended to strengthen the saints in Asia Minor and the world against the coming persecution; to assure them that Christ is fully aware of the suffering they will endure for his name's sake. He is the Lord who was dead and is alive and holds the keys of death and Hades; he will reward them with eternal life if they are faithful unto death.

[Rev. 2:5](#) - *"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."*

The Ephesians were resting upon the strength of past works for their present and future salvation. Christ tells them that they must persevere in their first love and works, or risk his rejection at his coming. It has been argued that this refers to a special coming in judgment against that particular church, but this seems unlikely. Peter said "*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God*" (I Pet. 4:17), which judgment was connected with the time then overtaking the world, and not a special judgment confined to the church. What was true in Peter, is equally true in Revelation.

[Rev. 2:16](#) - "*Repent: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*"

[Rev. 2:25](#) - "*But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.*"

The first quote was said to the church at Pergamos, the second to Thyatira. Both passages affirm Christ's coming within the lives of those addressed.

[Rev. 3:3](#) - "*Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*"

[Rev. 3:11](#) - "*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*"

These quote address the churches of Sardis and Philadelphia, respectively. It has been suggested that these churches represent distinct ages until the Lord's coming, but there is no exegetical support for this notion. The notion is but an invention to try to salvage Futurist interpretation and transfer the prophecies of Revelation to our own day or beyond. In reality, the need to invent such fantastic notions testifies to the true *contemporary-historical* moorings of the book and prophecies.

[Rev. 16:15](#) - "*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*"

[Rev. 22:6, 7](#) - "*And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the saying of the prophecy of this book.*"

As the book draws to its close, there are repeated affirmations of Christ's soon advent. The righteous would be harvested into the eternal kingdom by martyrdom under Nero and the Jews; the wicked would be destroyed in the wars and calamities that overtook Rome and Judea.

[Rev. 22:10-12](#) - "*And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*"

When Daniel wrote, he was told to "seal up" the sayings of his book, because the time was long away off ([Dan. 12:4, 9](#)). The distance from Daniel to John was approximately 600 years. John is here told *not* to seal the book, because its events were "at hand." Based upon a comparison with Daniel, it is impossible that the events of Revelation belong to our time, for by no standard of measure can two thousand years be deemed "at hand" in light of 600 years in Daniel being a long way off. So close were the events, that the time remaining would hardly afford men time to change their accustomed habits, and would thus take the wicked and just as it found them. However, it is a mistake to conceive that all men were judged in the events described in Revelation, for Christ is enthroned as judge still today. One by one as each of us dies are haled before the judgment seat of Christ, that we may receive the things done in the body, according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad ([II Cor. 5:10](#)).

[Rev. 22:20](#) - "*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*" **Summary and Conclusion**

We have now surveyed the time statements of the New Testament. Old Testament time texts, particularly from the book of Daniel, are consistent with all that has been said, but will be examined separately in a subsequent article. Of the 37 passages we have examined, all unanimously affirm Christ's coming within the lives of the first disciples. Where can such an array of witnesses be produced on behalf of Futurist models? It can't.

Why am I Preterist? Because dealing openly and honestly with the simple statements of scripture prevents otherwise. We urge you to join the growing crowd of students and scholars "*affirming Christ's second coming fulfilled.*"

# The Intermediate State

*Adapted from Vol. IV, Orthodox Church Magazine (Anglican), Feb. 1803*

1. Matt. 5:22 – “In danger of HELL-fire.” The word in the Greek, here rendered HELL, is *Gehenna*. This word *Gehenna* relates, in its primary sense, to that dreadful doom of being burnt alive in the valley of *Hinnom*, where the idolatrous Jews (in that particular spot of the valley called *Tophet*) burnt their children in sacrifice to Moloch; and in its secondary sense, it means the place, or the state, of the damned. *Beza* subjoins to this verse a note, which has an imposing air of research into Jewish polity. He enumerates the “*quatuor Suppliciorum Genera Hebraeis usitata; Strangulatio, Gladius, Lapidation, Ignis*” [four kinds of capital punishment (literal: supplication, kneeling, viz., torture) used by the Jews: strangulation, sword, stoning, and fire]. To this our excellent *WHITBY* seems to allude in his Commentary; and, with more straightforward simplicity, thus determines the meaning of the passage. “*He that represents and censures his brother as a child of Hell, shall be obnoxious to Hell-fire. – Gehenna* mean here *the place of torment* in the life to come; and it occurs in a singular sense in the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> verses of this chapter.” *Principal Campbell*, in his very curious “preliminary dissertations” to his Translation of the Four Gospels, says that the word *Γεεννα* does not occur in the version of the LXX. It certainly does not. But in Josh. 18:16, the word *Γαιεννα* represents what in our English Bible is denominated the valley of *Hinnom*: this gives us the primary meaning of the word.

2. Matt. 10:28 – “Both soul and body in HELL.” *Εν Γεενν*. Here too the word is used in its secondary sense. – By the way, what do *materialists* say to this distinct mention of “both soul and body,” *χια ψυχων σωμα*”

3. Luke 12:5 – The parallel passage to the preceding. HELL. *Γεενναν*.

4. Matt. 11:23 and the parallel text, Luke 10:15 – “Shalt be brought down to HELL.” *Εωσ (τοπον subaudit.) Αδης* is derived from *a* primitive, and *ιδαν* to see; and indeed the word was spelt *Αιδης*

by the older Greek writers, at least the poets. Thus Homer IX, IL, 312. “*Αιδαιο πυλυσιν*,” “the gates of hell.” *Αιδαιο ΑΕλοιξε* for *Αιδε*. “The Hebrew sheol the Greek *Αδης*, the Latin orcus, (says the very learned Bishop of St. Asaph, in his critical notes appended to his elaborate translation of HOSEA) are words of one and the same import; signifying *the place appointed fro the habitation of departed souls, in the interval between death and the general resurrection*. In the New Testament two words are indiscriminately rendered, in our English Bible, by the word HELL, *Αδης* and *Γεεννα*· the latter a word of Hebrew origin, translated into the Greek language, as the appropriate name of the place of the damned; which was generally called so by the Jews of the Apostolic age. This use of the word HELL, in the English New Testament, has imposed a sense upon it quite foreign to its etymology, and abhorrent from its more general application.” Our English, or Saxon word HELL, means a place *concealed or unseen*; in which it agrees with the Greek word *Hades*. “Another inaccuracy (says the Bishop) obtains in our English Bible; the Hebrew sheol being perpetually in the Old Testament, and the Greek *Αδης* sometimes in the New, rendered improperly by the word grave, which neither signifies. The Hebrew names of hell and the grave are never confounded, nor the Greek by the sacred writers. No two things can be more distinct; hell is the mansion of the departed spirit, the grave the receptacle of the dead body.” I find *Hades* translated grave but once in the text of the English New Testament, I Cor. 15:55; and once in the marginal rendering, Rev. 20:14. The words tomb or sepulcher are translations of *Μμαν*, or *μννειον*; though this latter word is more than once rendered grave

The situation of *Hades* is always described as far beneath the surface of the earth; where a large vacuity is represented, part o which forms *Hades*; and a part lower still, nearer the centre of the earth’s hollow sphere, in the site of *Gehenna*, the place of the damned, answering to the *Tartarus* of the ancient poets. The Scriptures speak of three places inhabited

by intelligent Beings; Heaven, Earth, and what is styled under the Earth. Rev. 5:3, in Heaven, **εν τω ουρανω**; in Earth, **επι της γης**; and under the Earth, **υποκατω της γης**; are distinctly enumerated. **Υποκατω της γης**, can refer to no place except one within the crust of this earth's ball. Rational being are scripturally denominated **επαρانيοι, επιγειοι, and καταχθονιοι**. Thus at the name of Jesus every knee must bow **επαρانيων, και ειπηριοι, and καταχθονιων** Phil 2:10. To go into the lower parts of the earth, or into the pit, is to die; to come back to life, is to rise again. There is a word which may explain what I would here urge – “the DEEP” – the abyss; Rom. 10:7. **“την Αβυσσου.”** Who (say the Apostle) shall descend into the *deep*? (the abyss – Hades – the place of the separate spirits) that is, to *bring up* Christ again *from the dead*; - **αναγαγειν**.

The meaning of the expression then in the two text Matt 11:23 and Lk. 10:15 is this – “Thou, Capernaum, which are now very highly exalted, shalt be abased and brought low hereafter, by the just judgment of God.” – Hades is here used in a figurative sense.

I have treated upon the words *Gehenna* and *Hades* the more diffusely on their first occurrence; because if we rightly apprehend their meaning in the outset, the progress of our inquiry will be much facilitated.

5. Matt. 15:18 – “And the gates of HELL shall not prevail against it;” (see the Church of Christ) **Πυλαι αδου** the gates of Hades: the confines of death. The word is here used figuratively; and the expression, as Whitby has proved at length, amounts to this; “My church shall continue for ever, it shall never perish.”

6. Matt. 18:9 – “To be cast into HELL-fire.” **“ΕΙΣ την Γεενναν το πυροσ.”** Here, as well as in the parallel passages, Matt. 9:43, 45, 47, the meaning is the same with that laid down under No. 1.

7. Matt.23:15 – “The child of HELL.” **“Υιου Γεεννης.”** Verse 33. “The damnation of HELL.” **“Της κριανθς της Γεεννης.”** HELL here means the torment, where burns the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels **“το πυρ το αιωνιον, το ετοιμασμενον τω διαβολθ και τοι Αγγελιοσ αυτο.”**

8. Lk. 16:23 – “In HELL he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” **“Εν το Αδο.”** The rich man is here described as in torments; and therefore he must be

supposed to be in that lowest abyss, (already mentioned under No. 4.) which, though in Hades, may be considered as *Gehenna* [better, *Tartarus*, Editor]. This passage occurs in a parable; but it is more than probable that it is couched in terms agreeable to truth, and coinciding with the popular belief of the Jews. The ancients, generally, held the same opinion. Homer's Hades, Virgil's infernal regions, are formed on the same model. You descend below the earth's surface; you behold the receptacle of separate spirits; and the place of the damned is comprehended beneath the same tremendous vault. The “Descensus Averni” leads to both to Elysium and Tartarus. (See No. 12.) Abraham's bosom is Paradise, the receptacle of happy, and that part of Hades which we may call *Gehenna* of guilty souls.

9. Acts 2:27 – Thou wilt not leave my soul in HELL.” **“ΕΙΣ αδου.”** Verse 31. “Not left in HELL.” **“ΕΙΣ Αδου.”** This passage refers to Ps. 16:10 where the word is Sheol, Hades. Our Lord's sufferings terminated at his death on the cross. There is was that he said, **“τετελεσται,”** consummatus est, it is finished. He had nothing to undergo in the palce of torment. The expression means only “Thou wilt not leave my soul in the receptacle of separate spirits; it shall be re-united to my body, and I shall rise again.” Our Lord told the repentant thief that he should be with him that day in Paradise – doubtless that place where the souls of the righteous are reserved, “in happy rest and tranquil hope,” in the enjoyment of some portion of felicity, till the day of judgment.

A great deal has been surmised, and a great deal affirmed concerning I Pet. 3:18, 19, 20. “Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing.” Bishop Horsley interprets it in this way, that “the soul of Christ went and preached to the souls not in prison, as we read in our English Bible; but **εν φυλαχη** “in safe keeping,” (if that text of St. Peter is to be understood literally, and I know not how it can be understood otherwise,) which had been disobedient (**απειθησσι ποτε**); but, as the expression “one while had been” implies, were at length recovered from that disobedience, probably by the preaching of Noah, and before their death had been brought to repentance and faith in the redeemer to come. To these souls our Lord Jesus Christ went in his soul and preached. But what could he preach to them? Not repentance. They had repented of their disobedience before they were separated from the body by death, or they had not been found in the bundle of life. But, if he went and proclaimed to them

(εκηρυξεν) the great tidings that he had actually offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was now about to enter into glory; this was a preaching that would give new animation and assurance to their hope of the consummation, in due season, of their bliss. And this, by the way, I take to be the true sense of this text of St. Peter. (Critical notes upon Hosea, p. 158.)

But Bishop Pearson says, that “Christ preached **τοις εν φυλακη πνευμασι**), by the same spirit by virtue of which he was raised from the dead; but that spirit was not his soul, but something of a great power. 2dly, That those to whom he preached were such as were disobedient. 2dly, That the time when they were disobedient was the tem before the flood, while the Ark was preparing. It is certain then, that Christ did preach unto those person, which in the days of Noah were disobedient all that time the long-suffering of God waited, and consequently so long as repentance was offered.”...” It remaineth therefore, that the plain interpretation be acknowledged for the time that Christ did preach unto those men which lived before the flood, even while they lived.”...” For though this was not done by an immediate act of the Son of God, as if he personally appeared on earth, and actually preached to that old world; but by the ministry of a prophet, by the sending of Noah, the eighth preacher of righteousness; yet to do any thing by another not able to perform it without him, as much demonstrates the existence of the principal cause, as if he did it of himself without any intervening instrument.” (Bishop Pearson on the Creed, p. 113, 10<sup>th</sup> edition.) The Bishop is here discussing the pre-existence of Christ before his incarnation. In his exposition of the article of the Creed “he descends into Hell;” after recapitulating this comment on the text in question, he refers his readers to the passage quoted. (p. 229.) [Editor: the better view is the latter, that Christ preached to the spirits in Tartarus *now* (when Peter wrote) through the Holy Spirit in Noah *when* the ark was preparing; not that he preached to the souls in Hades following his death upon the cross.]

I Cor. 15:55 – The word HELL occurs in the margin here. In the text we have the well-known apostrophe, “O grave! Where is thy victory?” **Ho συ, αδη, το νικος;** Grave here, and Hell in the margin, mean only the place of separate spirits, out of which “the prisoners of hope” shall come forth at “the resurrection of the just.”

11. Jam. 3:6 – “It is set on fire of HELL.” **Φυλογοιζομενη (η Γλωσσα) υπο της Γεεννης.** In this passage, though used figuratively in an

hyperbolic sense, the word means the place of everlasting fire, the place of torment.

12. II Peter 2:4 – “Cast them down to HELL.” **“Ταρταρθσας;”** casting them into Tartarus. The word hell here undoubtedly signifies the place of punishment prepared for the devil and his angels, “the angels that sinned.” [Editor: Better, Tartarus was the intermediate place of punishment and confinement pending final execution of judgement and sentence in Gehenna; *viz.*, eternal death. The “angels” who sinned should be interpreted as the “sons of God” (*viz.*, the sons of Seth or children of faith) who apostatized before the flood by marrying unbelieving women.]

13. Rev. :18 – “And I have the keys of HELL and Death.” **“Και εχω τασ κλεις το θανατος και το Αδυ.”** Of Death and of Hades. HELL means here the palce of separate spirits.

14. Rev. 6:8 – “Death and HELL followed with him.” **Θανατος καιο Αδης ακολοθει μετ αυτο.”** The same.

15. Rev. 20:13 – “Death and HELL delivered up the dead which were in them. **“Ο Θανατολς και ο Αδης εδωχαν τασ εν αυτοις νεκροσ.”** These two passages (the last quoted and this), says Bishop Horsley, afford the boldest personifications of Hell and which occur to my memory.” Stript of its figurative form, and once more disembodied, Hades in each instance has the same meaning. The bishop says (p. 159), “I am inclined to think, but suggest it only to the examination of the learned, without venturing to assert, that death and hell are always conjointly personified by the sacred writers, never one without another.” I submit tot the learned a passage where HELL is personified alone. Isa. 14:9 0 “HELL from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee (the King of Babylon) at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee.”

16. Rev. 20:14 – “And Death and HELL were cast into the lake of fire.” **Και ο θανατος και ο Αδης εσληθησαν εις την λιμην το πυροσ.”** Hades has here the same meaning as in the two last quoted passages. IT appears evidently that there is a place lower than Hades; into which abyss, being personified, together with Death, it is cast. **Εις την λιμην τα πυροσ,** is, I conceived, a phrase of the import as **εις την Γεενναν τα πυροσ.**

Gehenna and Hades are perfectly well distinguished from each other in the New Testament, and are no more confounded than Sheol and Keber in the Old.

Bishop Horsley, to whom the Christian world is under lasting obligation for his translation of Hosea, specifies six instances where Sheol may seem to be used for Keber. We have found but one where Hades appears to have the sense of Gehenna; that which I have already explained under No. 8.

I have noticed twenty-three places where the word HELL occurs in the text in our English Bibles, and one where it is found in the margin; which we may call twenty-four in all. In *thirteen* of these, the word in the original is Γεεννα, and in one Ταρταρος; for this later word is wrapt up in the participle ταρταρωσας; and in these it is to be deemed *the place of torment*; and in the remaining eleven, including the instance where it stands in the margin, it must be counted *the receptacle of separate spirits*.

Bishop Horsley, I perceive, (Hosea, p. 46) says, “we find the word Hell in our English Bibles in twenty-one passages.” His lordship, though he counts three verses in Matt. 5 22, 29, 30, in which the word occurs; counts but on in Mark 9, viz, verse 47; but it occurs also in verses 43 and 45; and stands in the margin opposite the word grave in I cor. 15:55.

The bishop says, it signifies simply the region of departed spirits in twelve places. Now, even taking in the marginal instance, I can find but eleven places where it has this signification; and in proof of my assertion, I refer, very humbly, to the above recital of particular passages. His lordship has not specified the texts where it has this latter meaning.

I subjoin a table of all the places in the New Testament wherein the word HELL is found; distinguishing those expressed in the original by the word Gehenna, from those where the word in the Greek is Hades.

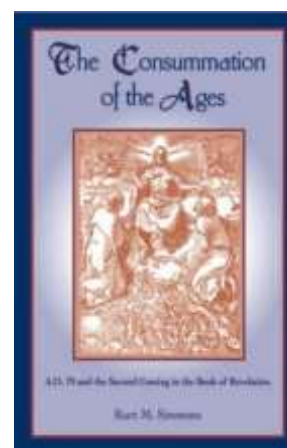
Gehenna	Hades
1. Matt. 5:22	1. Matt. 11:23
2. Matt. 5:29	2. Luke 10:15
3. Matt. 5:30	3. Matt. 16:18
4. Matt. 10:28	4. Luke 16:23
5. Luke 12:5	5. Acts 2:27
6. Matt. 18: 9	6. Acts 2:31
7. Mark 9:43	7. I Cor. 15:55 margin
8. Mark 9:45	8. Rev. 1:13
9. Mark 9:47	9. Rev. 6:8
10. Matt. 23:15	10. Rev. 20:13
11. Matt. 23:33	11. Rev. 20:14
12. James 3:6	
13. I Pet. 2:24	

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# Cursory Remarks on the Word Hades

*Adapted from Vol. IV, Orthodox Church Magazine (Anglican), April 1803*

The communication of your very respectable correspondent, the *London Curate*, in your Number for February last, “on the common receptacle of departed spirits,” has excited my attention to the meaning of the word *Hades*, as it occurs in scripture. I send you the result of my investigation, not so much with the idea of throwing any new light on the subject, as with the view of giving a specimen of the use, which, as I conceive, ought to be made of such ingenious invitations to theological discussion:

The opinion entertained by Bishop Horsley, that the word *hades* signified the “place appointed for the habitation of departed souls, in the interval between death and the general resurrection,” is that which was held by Lord Chancellor King, in his “History of the Apostles’ Creed,” in which is contained a long and learned dissertation on the subject. Dr. Hey, however, who will seldom be found to advance an opinion unsupported by good reasons, says, “a word answering exactly and properly to the word *hades* would express the habitation of *man* after death, and so include the receptacle of *bodies* as well as of *souls*.” Norris’s *Lectures*, vol. 2. p. 377. Dr. Hey refers to Lord King’s opinion, which he thinks to be scarcely correct. This is said in a note. In the text of which the note may be considered as a correction, Dr. Hey had said, that “ἡ ψυχή εἰς ἅδα may either mean the body in the grave, or the soul in the place of departed souls, nor both; that is, the man in the state of men after death.” As the doctrines, which have any dependence on the sense of this word, will remain much the same whichever of the sense now mentioned be admitted, it may seem of no great consequence to determine which of them is the true one. I am of opinion, however, that it is always worth a student’s while to obtain as accurate a knowledge of the sense of scriptural words, as he possibly can. The way then, seems to be, to examine the context of the several passages of the Old and New Testament, in which the word *sheol* in Hebrew and *hades* in Greek occurs; for, in the Septuagint, the latter is generally, if not always, the translation of the former.

The result of that examination, so far as I have proceeded in it, is, that it sometimes signifies the *place or state of departed souls*, and sometimes the *place or state of the dead*, without meaning to distinguish between the *soul* and the *body*; but that it never clearly signifies the grave, or the place of the *dead body only*, tho’ often rendered in that sense by our translators.

The common Lexicons, indeed, interpret the Hebrew word *sheol* by *sepulchrum*, and it is generally, if not always, so interpreted in the Latin translation of the Old Testament by *Tremellius* and *Junius*. This interpretation, however, is not, in any of the places which I have examined, supported by the context. The Latin Vulgate generally, if not always, translates *sheol* and *hades* by *in infernum* or *ad inferos*, which seems accurate, whether we consider it as the place of the departed soul only, or of the man, as compounded of soul and body. Indeed, we ought to consider, that, when this word was first made use of, the distinction between soul and body was not understood exactly in the same sense in which it is understood at present. The ancients seem to have had no notion of a soul, which had not at least the *form* of a body. In their infernal regions, the shades, however purified and refined, retained the appearance of the living man on earth. Even in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, as delivered in the Scriptures, they are both represented in *hades* as possessed of their bodily limbs and organs. The truth is, we do not know how to speak intelligibly of the human soul, any more than of the Deity, or other spiritual beings, without attributing to it the *form*, tho’ not the *grossness*, of the body.

Mr. Green, in his translation of the Psalms, generally renders *sheol* and *hades* by *grave*. He does this even in Psalm 16:10, where, if any where, as it should seem the rendering of it by a word, which denotes the receptacle of departed souls, is peculiarly proper. Near the beginning of the 88<sup>th</sup> Psalm, as it stands in the translation adopted into the Liturgy, occur the words *hell*, *pit*, and *grave*, answering to ἀδης, λαχχος, and ταφος in the Greek. This distinction is preserved in the Latin Vulgate by the words *infernum*, *lacus*, and *sepulchrum*; but in the translation by Tremellius and Junius, they are all rendered by the word *sepulchrum*. In our Bible translation, as also in that by Mr. Green, the rendering is made by the words *grave*, *pit*, and *grave*.

Mr. Green says, “I have not adhered so strictly to the original, as always to translate the same Hebrew by the same English word”; and it appears by this, that neither does our Bible translation aim at this exactness. It seems to me, however, that, in a translation of the Holy Scriptures, scriptures “given by inspiration of God,” this exactness, supposing the sense of the original word to be the same, well

deserves to be attended to; for, in many cases, we have no means of knowing what may be the consequence of departing from it. In the following passage, and its parallels, the word grave is a translation of *sheol* and *hades*. “If mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave” (Gen. 42:38). Here, it must be acknowledged, the word grave sufficiently expresses the meaning, and the English reader, perhaps, would be unwilling to have it changed; yet here, as in other places, it would be more exact to say, “with sorrow to the dead,” or “with sorrow to the mansions of the dead.”

Some mischief has actually ensued from confounding the words *hades* and *gehenna*, and translating both by the word *hell*; for hence has arisen the opinion, that our Saviour, after his decease, went into the place of torment; an opinion, for which there is not any just ground, and which is likely to lead into other errors. We may, I think, venture to affirm, that the word *hades* is never used to signify the *place of torment*. In the Old Testament, in which the knowledge of future rewards and punishments was not clearly revealed, we are not likely to find it in that sense, (nor is there, that I know of, any word in the Old Testament, which has that sense,) though it seems sometimes to have been so understood by our translators; nor is it by any means clear, that it ever has that sense even in the New Testament. The only passage in the New Testament, in which with any appearance of reason it has been thought to have that sense, is in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; and even there, it is evidently comprehends the state of both the *happy* and the *miserable*; for Lazarus, as well as the rich man, was in *hades*, though there was a great gulf between them. The words *heaven* and *hell*, however, are so frequently used in contrast, that it seems scarcely possible so to change the common use of the word *hell*, as that it may not signify the place of torment; otherwise, I should prefer to have the word *hades* in both the Old and the New Testament always translated *hell*, according to the original meaning of that word, and to express the place of torment by the Scriptural word *gehenna*. I propose, therefore, that only the latter word be translated *hell*, and that, wherever the word *hades* occurs, it be either left untranslated, (which, as in the case of *Logos*, and a few other words, might be best of all,) or translated by a term or terms which denote the state of the dead; *without noticing the distinction, it may not always appear whether the state of departed souls, or the state of the dead, is spoken of, yet no erroneous notion will be thus conveyed.*

This might be the case, if we proceeded further; for, at present, it does not seem to be clearly ascertained

in what places the word *hades* signifies the state of departed souls, and in what it signifies merely the state of the dead. In the Creed for instance, where the state of departed souls is evidently set meant, instead of saying, “he descended into hell,” an expression, I fear, which generally excites a wrong idea, I would say, “he descended into *hades*,” or “he descended to the mansion of the dead.” In all the passages of the New Testament, in which, according to the table given by the London Curate, the word *hades* occurs, the translation of it by these latter terms may, I think, be admitted with propriety; and with respect to the passages of the Old Testament, in which it occurs, the propriety will probably be still more evident.

I am not aware that so much inconvenience can arise from translating *hades* by the grave, as from translating it by the word *hell*, though, as we have seen it be not the right sense of it. We ought, however, as I have said, always to aim at exactness in our translation of Scripture, even in cases where we see no reason to apprehend inconvenience from the want of it; and, when the proper time for a new translation of the Scriptures shall arrive, these particulars, in common with others of the like kind, will probably not be unattended to.

April 9, 1803. I am, Gentlemen, your, &c. E. Pearson.

P.S. If there be any word or expression of the O.T. which signifies the place of torment, or what we vulgarly call *hell*, it seems to be the “house or assembly of the giants,” so called in reference to the supposed situation of the disobedient race of men before the flood; see Gen. 6:4. It must be acknowledged, that Mr. Mede (B. 1. Dis. 7) has given plausible reasons for such an acceptance of this expression, as it occurs in Prov. 16:16, which, however, our translators render “the congregation of the dead.” Both the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render it “the congregation of the giants.” In Prov. 2:18, where the Heb word is also giants, and which our translators also render “the dead,” the Septuagint uses the word *hades* with a periphrasis, *παρα τω αδω μετα των γηγενων*, “in *hades* with the giants.” In the parallel passages, Prov. 7:27, and Prov 9:18, where *sheol* is in the original, the Septuagint, as usual, has *hades*, and our translation has *hell*. In both these passages, Tremellius and Junius have *sepulchrum*, which, as before, I take to be wrong. In all the three passages, the Lat. Vulgate has “*ad inferas*,” which, on the whole, as being an indeterminate expression, I still think to be right. In the last, the Septuagint render it by *γηγενεις* giants, while, as before, our translators render it “the dead.”



## Josephus's Discourse to the Greeks concerning Hades

1. NOW as to Hades, wherein the souls of the of the good things they see, and rejoice in the righteous and unrighteous are detained, it is necessary to speak of it. Hades is a place in the world not regularly finished; a subterraneous region, wherein the light of this world does not shine; from which circumstance, that in this region the light does not shine, it cannot be but there must be in it perpetual darkness. This region is allotted as a place of custody for souls, ill which angels are appointed as guardians to them, who distribute to them temporary punishments, agreeable to every one's behavior and manners.

2. In this region there is a certain place set apart, as a lake of unquenchable fire, whereinto we suppose no one hath hitherto been cast; but it is prepared for a day afore-determined by God, in which one righteous sentence shall deservedly be passed upon all men; when the unjust, and those that have been disobedient to God, and have given honor to such idols as have been the vain operations of the hands of men as to God himself, shall be adjudged to this everlasting punishment, as having been the causes of defilement; 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.

3. For there is one descent into this region, at whose gate we believe there stands an archangel with an host; which gate when those pass through that are conducted down by the angels appointed over souls, they do not go the same way; but the just are guided to the right hand, and are led with hymns, sung by the angels appointed over that place, unto a region of light, in which the just have dwelt from the beginning of the world; not constrained by necessity, but ever enjoying the prospect of the good things they see, and rejoice in the expectation of those new enjoyments which will be peculiar to every one of them, and esteeming those things beyond what we have here; with whom there is no place of toil, no burning heat, no piercing cold, nor are any briars there; but the countenance of the and of the just, which they see, always smiles 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.

4. But as to the unjust, they are dragged by force to the left hand by the angels allotted for punishment, no

longer going with a good-will, but as prisoners driven by violence; to whom are sent the angels appointed over them to reproach them and threaten them with their terrible looks, and to thrust them still downwards. Now those angels that are set over these souls drag them into the neighborhood of hell itself; who, when they are hard by it, continually hear the noise of it, and do not stand clear of the hot vapor itself; but when they have a near view of this spectacle, as of a terrible and exceeding great prospect of fire, they are struck with a fearful expectation of a future judgment, and in effect punished thereby: and not only so, but where they see the place [or choir] of the fathers and of the just, even hereby are they punished; for a chaos deep and large is fixed between them; insomuch that a just man that hath compassion upon them cannot be admitted, nor can one that is unjust, if he were bold enough to attempt it, pass over it.

5. This is the discourse concerning Hades, wherein the souls of all men are confined until a proper season, which God hath determined, when he will make a resurrection of all men from the dead, not procuring a transmigration of souls from one body to another, but raising again those very bodies, which you Greeks, seeing to be dissolved, do not believe [their resurrection]. But learn not to disbelieve it; for while you believe that the soul is created, and yet is made immortal by God, according to the doctrine of Plato, and this in time, be not incredulous; but believe that God is able, when he hath raised to life that body which was made as a compound of the same elements, to make it immortal; for it must never be said of God, that he is able to do some things, and unable to do others. We have therefore believed that the body will be raised again; for although it be dissolved, it is not perished; for the earth receives its remains, and preserves them; and while they are like seed, and are mixed among the more fruitful soil, they flourish, and what is sown is indeed sown bare grain, but at the mighty sound of God the Creator, it will sprout up, and be raised in a clothed and glorious condition, though not before it has been dissolved, and mixed [with the earth]. So that we have not rashly believed the resurrection of the body; for although it be dissolved for a time on account of the original transgression, it exists still, and is cast into the earth as into a potter's furnace, in order to be formed again, not in order to rise again such as it was before, but in a state of purity, and so as never to be destroyed any more. And to every body shall its own soul be restored. And when it hath clothed itself with that body, it will not be subject to misery, but, being itself pure, it will continue with its pure body, and rejoice with it, with which it having walked righteously now in this world, and never having had it as a snare, it will receive it again with great gladness. But as for the unjust, they will receive their

bodies not changed, not freed from diseases or distempers, nor made glorious, but with the same diseases wherein they died; and such as they were in their unbelief, the same shall they be when they shall be faithfully judged.

6. For all men, the just as well as the unjust, shall be brought before God the word: for to him hath the Father committed all judgment : and he, in order to fulfill the will of his Father, shall come as Judge, whom we call Christ. For Minos and Rhadamanthus are not the judges, as you Greeks do suppose, but he whom God and the Father hath glorified: CONCERNING WHOM WE HAVE ELSEWHERE GIVEN A MORE PARTICULAR ACCOUNT, FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE WHO SEEK AFTER TRUTH. This person, exercising the righteous judgment of the Father towards all men, hath prepared a just sentence for every one, according to his works; at whose judgment-seat when all men, and angels, and demons shall stand, they will send forth one voice, and say, JUST IS THY JUDGMENT; the rejoinder to which will bring a just sentence upon both parties, by giving justly to those that have done well an everlasting fruition; but allotting to the lovers of wicked works eternal punishment. To these belong the unquenchable fire, and that without end, and a certain fiery worm, never dying, and not destroying the body, but continuing its eruption out of the body with never-ceasing grief: neither will sleep give ease to these men, nor will the night afford them comfort; death will not free them from their punishment, nor will the interceding prayers of their kindred profit them; for the just are no longer seen by them, nor are they thought worthy of remembrance. But the just shall remember only their righteous actions, whereby they have attained the heavenly kingdom, in which there is no sleep, no sorrow, no corruption, no care, no night, no day measured by time, no sun driven in his course along the circle of heaven by necessity, and measuring out the bounds and conversions of the seasons, for the better illumination of the life of men; no moon decreasing and increasing, or introducing a variety of seasons, nor will she then moisten the earth; no burning sun, no Bear turning round [the pole], no Orion to rise, no wandering of innumerable stars. The earth will not then be difficult to be passed over, nor will it be hard to find out the court of paradise, nor will there be any fearful roaring of the sea, forbidding the passengers to walk on it; even that will be made easily passable to the just, though it will not be void of moisture. Heaven will not then be uninhabitable by men, and it will not be impossible to discover the way of ascending thither. The earth will not be uncultivated, nor require too much labor of men, but will bring forth its fruits of its own accord, and will be well adorned with them. There will be no more generations of wild beasts, nor will the

substance of the rest of the animals shoot out any more; for it will not produce men, but the number of the righteous will continue, and never fail, together with righteous angels, and spirits [of God], and with his word, as a choir of righteous men and women that never grow old, and continue in an incorruptible state, singing hymns to God, who hath advanced them to that happiness, by the means of a regular institution of life; with whom the whole creation also will lift up a perpetual hymn from corruption, to incorruption, as glorified by a splendid and pure spirit. It will not then be restrained by a bond of necessity, but with a lively freedom shall offer up a voluntary hymn, and shall praise him that made them, together with the angels, and spirits, and men now freed from all bondage.

7. And now, if you Gentiles will be persuaded by these motives, and leave your vain imaginations about your pedigrees, and gaining of riches, and philosophy, and will not spend your time about subtleties of words, and thereby lead your minds into error, and if you will apply your ears to the hearing of the inspired prophets, the interpreters both of God and of his word, and will believe in God, you shall both be partakers of these things, and obtain the good things that are to come; you shall see the ascent unto the immense heaven plainly, and that kingdom which is there. For what God hath now concealed in silence [will be then made manifest,] what neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.

8. In whatsoever ways I shall find you, in them shall I judge you entirely: so cries the END of all things. And he who hath at first lived a virtuous life, but towards the latter end falls into vice, these labors by him before endured shall be altogether vain and unprofitable, even as in a play, brought to an ill catastrophe. Whosoever shall have lived wickedly and luxuriously may repent; however, there will be need of much time to conquer an evil habit, and even after repentance his whole life must be guarded with great care and diligence, after the manner of a body, which, after it hath been a long time afflicted with a distemper, requires a stricter diet and method of living; for though it may be possible, perhaps, to break off the chain of our irregular affections at once, yet our amendment cannot be secured without the grace of God, the prayers of good men, the help of the brethren, and our own sincere repentance and constant care. It is a good thing not to sin at all; it is also good, having sinned, to repent; as it is best to have health always, but it is a good thing to recover from a distemper. To God be glory and dominion for ever and ever Amen.