



The Sword & The Plow

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Fulfilled Eschatology, the Calendar, and the Kingdom of Christ

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In this article, we investigate many interesting facts from scripture relative to dating time, and look at the religious and civil facets of the calendar, and its testimony to the kingdom and coming of Christ.

Genesis tells us that God so arranged the heavenly bodies to create the seasons, and provide man a means of marking time:

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the

stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day" (Gen. 1:14-19).

Earth's movement through space and the motion of the heavenly bodies provide a clock-work by which man measures time even today. The earth's revolution upon its axis gives us day and night; its orbit around the sun provides us the seasons and the year. The moon's orbit around the earth gives us the month, and the zodiac or twelve signs further serve to gauge the months and seasons.

The Day

There are two principal forms of the day; the natural and the civil. The natural day is the whole period between two sun sets; one day ending at the set of the sun and the next day then beginning. "And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:4). The civil day is established by custom or usage. Among the Romans, the civil day began at midnight; a custom has obtained ever since. The day is divided into 24 hours. The first hour of the natural day is sunrise, though 6 A.M. has been settled upon as the nominal hour of sunrise. Twelve hours are nominally assigned to the day and twelve to the night, though we know that these, in fact, vary with the season of the year. When Jesus says, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" (Jn. 11:9), he alludes to this division. Likewise, when the gospels speak of the sixth or tenth hour of the day or the like (Jn. 4:6; 1:39), they mean the hour of the civil day measured from the nominal hour of sunrise at 6 A.M. However, when Mark says it was the third hour when they crucified Jesus (Mk. 15:25), in apparent contradiction to John who says it was the sixth hour (Jn. 19:14), Mark is probably best understood to mean it was the hour from Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate, not the hour of the morning (cf. Matt. 27:45; Lk. 23:44). A further measurement is the division of the night into military watches, of which the Romans had four (6-9, 9-12, 12-3, 3-6). These watches also represented hours of divine office in the temple and among monastic orders today, whose names are Vespers (6 p.m.), Compline (9 p.m.), Matins (12 a.m.) and Lauds (3 a.m.) (Ps. 92:2; 134:1; I Chron. 9:33).

The Week

Most probably take for granted that the week is an inherent and universal unit of time-keeping. It is not. The week is not a natural division of the month (except for the anomalous month of February), nor is it a natural division of the year, the nearest multiples coming short in each case. The week comes to man directly from the Bible, where it marked God's rest from the creation (Gen. 2:2, 3); it was then given to the Jews as a token of their rest from slavery (Ex. 20:8-11); thence to the Christians, who assembled each first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper (Act 20:11; I Cor. 11:20-34, 16:2).

The Roman "week" originally contained eight days, and the month was divided between the "*Kalends*," "*Nones*," and "*Ides*" (see more below). There were eight days between the *Nones* and *Ides*, from which the *Nones* received their name (nine days to the *Ides* reckoning inclusively), and two eight week periods from the *Ides* to the end of the month. It was not until the reign of Constantine (A.D. 306-337) who set aside

the first day of the week for prayer and worship, that the seven day week attained formal place in the Roman calendar.

He enjoins the General Observance of the Lord's Day, and the Day of Preparation.

HE ordained, too, that one day should be regarded as a special occasion for prayer: I mean that which is truly the first and chief of all, the day of our Lord and Saviour. The entire care of his household was entrusted to deacons and other ministers consecrated to the service of God, and distinguished by gravity of life and every other virtue: while his trusty body guard, strong in affection and fidelity to his person, found in their emperor an instructor in the practice of piety, and like him held the Lord's salutary day in honor and performed on that day the devotions which he loved. The same observance was recommended by this blessed prince to all classes of his subjects: his earnest desire being gradually to lead all mankind to the worship of God. Accordingly he enjoined on all the subjects of the Roman empire to observe the Lord's day, as a day of rest, and also to honor the day which precedes the Sabbath; in memory, I suppose, of what the Saviour of mankind is recorded to have achieved on that day. (1) And since his desire was to teach his whole army zealously to honor the Saviour's day (which derives its name from light, and from the sun), (2) he freely granted to those among them who were partakers of the divine faith, leisure for attendance on the services of the Church of God, in order that they might be able, without impediment, to perform their religious worship. Eusebius, Life of Constantine, Bk. IV, chapter xviii.

The precedent of Constantine has obtained among Christian nations ever since, who suspend the business of government and the courts on the first day of the week as a time of worship.¹ And because the Christian nations of the West close, business and governments throughout the world are compelled to follow suit, making the "week" universal among mankind, and a token of Christ's dominion in the earth.

The Month

We first encounter the month in Genesis where it occurs in connection with the flood.

¹ "If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a law, in like Manner as if he had signed it . . ." U.S. Constitution, Art. I, sec. 7.

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened...and the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days...and the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. 7:11, 24; 8:4).

Moses says the flood prevailed five months to the day. Since he says this was also equal to 150 days, this would make the months thirty days long, just better than the length of one lunar cycle.

Months in the Roman calendar were either "pleni" (full), containing 31 days, or "cavi" (hollow), containing 30 days.² The Romans divided the month into *Kalends*, *Nones*, and *Ides*. In all cases, the *Kalends* were the first day of the month. In full months of 31 days, the *Nones* were the seventh and the *Ides* the fifteenth. March has always contained 31 days, and the *Ides* of March have been permanently marked in history by the death of Julius Caesar.

Caesar:

Who is it in the press that calls on me?
I hear a tongue shriller than all the music
Cry "Caesar!" Speak, Caesar is turn'd to hear.

Soothsayer:

Beware the ides of March.

Caesar:

What man is that?

Brutus:

A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 1, scene 2, 15-19

In hollow months of 30 or less days, the *Nones* were the fifth and *Ides* the thirteenth. Dates were expressed by enumerating *backward* from these days. Days

² *Calendarium*, an article by Thomas Hewitt Key, M.A., Professor of Comparative Grammar in University College, London, on pp 222-233 of William Smith, D.C.L., LL.D.: *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, John Murry, London, 1875. [A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, John Murray, London, 1875.](#) However, Numa's calendar divided these between 31 and 29 days.

between the *Kalends* and *Nones* were enumerated backward from the *Nones*; those between the *Nones* and *Ides*, backward from the *Ides*. Days subsequent to the *Ides* were enumerated backward from the *Kalends* of the following month. The Romans reckoned inclusively, so that the day *from* and the day *to* which the enumeration was made were both counted. Thus, 8 days before the *Kalends* of January is December 25th, seven days remaining to December including the 25th, plus January 1st.

The Year

As we have seen, the Noahic calendar had 30 days to the month, and thus 360 days to the year (12 x 30 = 360). A circle contains 360 degrees. Earth advances in its annual course around the sun about one degree per day. However, because earth's orbit is not a perfect circle, but slightly elliptical, it takes just less than 365 1/4 days to complete its annual course around the sun. Hence, the Noahic calendar would have required the intercalation of five days annually to keep the lunar and solar year in synchronization. Herodotus reports that this was done by the Egyptians:

"The Egyptians were the first to discover the year, which they divided into twelve parts; and they say that they made this discovery from the stars; and so far, I think they act more wisely than the Grecians, in that the Grecians insert an intercalary month every third year, on account of the seasons; whereas the Egyptians, reckoning twelve months of thirty days each, add five days each year above that number, and so with them the circle of the season comes round to the same point." Herodotus, *Euterpe*, II, iv.

Julius Caesar is usually credited with the solar calendar of 365 days, but here we see the Egyptians discovered it long before Caesar and doubtless the men of Noah's day long before even the Egyptians. In calendars based upon the solar year, months lose all relation to the phases of the moon; they become blocks of time upon the calendar, which come and go independently of the lunar cycle. Ancient peoples kept lunar calendars primarily because of religious festivals connected with the moon, which are lost or obscured in solar calendars. That the Noahic calendar was solar shows that there were no sacrifices coordinated with the moon at that time in sacred history. However, this changed under Moses.

The Jewish month was marked by the appearance of the new moon, at which time specific sacrifices were made (Num. 28:11; 10:10). The Psalmist thus declared *"Blow the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day" (Ps. 81:3)*. The nation's Exodus from Egypt occurred on the fifteenth

of the month Abib at the full moon (Ex. 12:18-51; 13:3, 4). Abib thus became the first month in the Jewish calendar (Ex. 12:1). The Exodus was commemorated each year in Abib by the feast of Passover. Passover occurred at the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox (Ex. 12:3-10). Rabbinic writings confirm that the month was based upon actual observation of the new moon.

*"The testimony of at least two witnesses was required to establish that the new moon had been seen. So important were the observations of these witnesses that, for the fixing of the new moons of Nisan and Tishri, the pivotal points of the year in the spring and fall, they might even exceed the travel limit of two thousand cubits on the Sabbath day to bring their report to Jerusalem"*³

The connection between the Jews' religious festivals and the moon meant that the solar year of the Noahic calendar was replaced with a lunar calendar tied to the actual phases of the moon. The moon's cycle is just better than 29 1/2 days. Half days were counted for by alternating months between 29 and 30 days, so that a year consisted of six months of 29 days, and six months of 30 days. Twelve lunar months contain 354 days. Since the solar year consists of just less than 365 1/4 days, the lunar year is eleven days shorter than the solar year. To bring the two back into synchronization, the Jews and other ancient peoples intercalated an extra, thirteenth month seven times in nineteen years, or about every third year. Among the Jews this month was added at the end of the year so as to bring the first month, when Passover was celebrated, back into synchronization with the vernal equinox, which is a fixed point in the solar year.⁴

The ancient Romans also used the lunar calendar. The day that the Romans called the *Ides* was associated with the full moon, and Macrobius states that many agree the word *Ides* is derived from the Greek "οἶον ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους," because on that day the moon presents its full appearance (*quod eo die plenam speciem luna demonstret*).⁵ Scholars believe that the Roman method of counting days backward from the *Kalends*, *Nones*, and *Ides* is the equivalent of saying "It wants so many days to the new moon, to the first quarter, and to the full moon."⁶ The religious character of lunar calendars

is also seen among the Romans, for it was the duty of the pontifices to watch for the new moon, who then sang a hymn, offered a sacrifice, and announced the number of days remaining until the *Nones*, whether five or seven.⁷ The priests had the further responsibility to insert intercalary months to regulate the lunar and solar years. Macrobius and other writers report that 22 or 23 days were added every other year, for a total of 90 days in eight years, but that in the third octoennial period of a 24 year cycle, only 66 were added.⁸ The priestly college is reported to have added or subtracted from the year by corrupt and capricious intercalations so as to lengthen or shorten the period a magistrate remained in office, and to injure or benefit the farmer of the public revenue.⁹ Suetonius states that the negligence of the pontiffs had so long disordered the calendar through their privilege of adding months or days at pleasure, that the "harvest festivals did not come in summer or those of the vintage in the autumn."¹⁰

The Julian Calendar

The Roman calendar was in such a state when Caesar attained the supreme power over his countrymen. In 45 B.C., Caesar thus set his hand to reform the calendar by abolishing the lunar calendar, and substituting a solar calendar of 365 1/4 days in its place. It will be recalled that Herodotus attributed the Egyptians with discovery of a year of 12 months of 30 days, adding five days to fulfill 365, so bringing the year to its starting point again. Caesar accomplished this same result by dividing the months between 30 (April, June, September, November), and 31 (January, March, May, July, August, October, December) save February, which has only 28. The additional six hours Caesar believed the year contained was dealt with by adding an extra day to February every 4th year.

Caesar's reform of the calendar, making it a civil/solar calendar, rather than a lunar/religious one, was providential in timing. The dawn of Christianity marked an end to monthly observances tied to the moon typical of the Jewish and pagan nations. Paul's comment to the Galatians, whom Judaizers had seduced to keep the mosaic law, is telling:

³ Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Henrickson, 1998), §§73-76, pp. 36-37.

⁴ Finegan, §80, p. 38, 39.

⁵ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I, xv, 16.

⁶ Thomas Hewitt Key, *Calendarium*

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I, xiii, 1-13.

⁹ Thoms Hewitt Key, *Calendarium*

¹⁰ Suetonius, *Caesar*, XL

"Howbeit the, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have know God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Gal. 4:8-10).

Paul's rebuke makes clear that he deemed the calendrical observances of Jews as having no essential difference from pagan observances. Both were the elemental stuff of the world and could not save from sin. There being no reason to keep a lunar calendar but religious, the Julian calendar anticipated the conversion of the nations to Christ, supplying in advance a calendar suited to the new faith.

Paschal Controversy

The change from a lunar and solar calendar soon made itself felt in the infant faith. Annual commemoration of Christ's Passion caused no little controversy in the early church. On the night of his betrayal, Luke reports that Jesus said:

"With desire I have desire to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come" (Lk. 22:15-18).

Unless this points to celebration of the Pasche in heaven (for the kingdom of God carries this signification also), we must conclude the Lord here had in view the commemoration of his Passion by the church. And if this does not look solely to the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, then it must also contemplate its annual remembrance each the Paschal season, for Christ is the Christian's "Passover" (I Cor. 5:8). But as the Passover is governed by the lunar calendar, and therefore does not occur the same time year to year, now occurring in March, now in April, now on this day of the week, now on that, the question early arose whether the Passion and Resurrection should be a moveable feast following the moon as Passover was with the Jews, or a fixed holyday. Eusebius thus records:

"At that time no small controversy arose because all the dioceses of Asia thought it right, as though by more ancient tradition, to observe for the feast of the Saviour's Passover the fourteenth day of the moon, on which the Jews had been commanded to kill the lamb. Thus it was necessary to finish the fast on that day, whatever day of the week it might be. Yet it was not the

custom to celebrate in this manner in the churches throughout the rest of the world, for from apostolic tradition they kept the custom which still exists that it is not right to finish this fast on any day save that of the resurrection of our Saviour" (Ecclesiastical History, V, xiii; Loeb ed.).

Those that favored following the moon were called "Quartodecimans," signifying the 14th day of the lunar month when the moon is first full. These celebrated the Resurrection the third day from the full moon following the vernal equinox, no matter what day it was, be it Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. The better view, however, and that which prevailed, opted for a set day of the week, fixing the feast the first Sunday following the full moon of the vernal equinox, thus preserving the weekly sequence of events as given in the gospels. For our Lord suffered Good Friday and rose again the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1). And as it was set in the church by the apostles that we should assemble every first day of the week and partake of Communion (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:17-34; 16:2), it is fitting that annual commemoration of Christ's Passion and Resurrection should not interrupt, but complement, this ordinance. The Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) therefore established that the Pasche should be kept as we have described the first Sunday following the full moon on or after the vernal equinox, and if Sunday falls on the full moon (as this year April 17, 2011, it did), then it is observed the Sunday following. (See also, *Ceolfrid's Epistle to Naitan*, Bede, *Historical Works*, II, xxi).

The Error of the Julian Calendar and its Testimony of the Birth of Christ

Another happy circumstance of Caesar's calendar is the unwitting witness it lends to the date of Christ's birth. The Julian calendar set the year at 365 1/4 days. However, this is 11 minutes 14 seconds longer the actual year. In the period between 45 B.C. and the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325), this excess caused the civil year to gain almost three days (2.862 days). The four natural divisions of the year are the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and the summer and winter solstices. The equinoxes had anciently been fixed at the March 25 and September 25, and the solstices at June 25 and December 25. To establish the uniform celebration of the Pasche (Easter), the Council of Nicea corrected the vernal equinox to March 21, and decreed that the Pasche should be celebrated the first Sunday following the full moon on or after the vernal equinox. But as this is four days correction, and the calendar had grown out of synchronization less than three days in the period from its start, it is clear that the equinox already anticipated March 25 by a little better than a day when Caesar inaugurated his reforms. Now, the

earliest testimony of the church is that Christ was born Dec. 25th¹¹ when it was still associated in men's minds with the winter solstice.¹² But the church very early on, almost from the very beginning, knew of the error in the Julian calendar and that the dates traditionally fixed for the equinoxes and solstices did not correspond with the astronomical events. And as the discrepancy grew more obvious and acute with the passing centuries, like a beacon growing ever wider the further it shines from its source, it is clear that the tradition placing Christ's birth on Dec. 25th, when men still associated that day with the winter solstice, necessarily hales from a time very near, if not actually that of, the apostles themselves. For if the feast of the Nativity was first celebrated Dec. 25th hundreds of years after Christ's birth, as is often alleged, its association with the winter solstice would have never come about, the men of later times well knowing the correspondence between the solstice and Dec. 25th did not exist when Jesus was born.¹³

¹¹ The earliest testimony is Theophilus, Bishop of Caesarea (A.D. 115-181): *"We ought to celebrate the birth-day of our Lord on what day soever the 25th of December shall happen."* *Magdeburgenses, Cent. 2. c. 6. Hospinian, de orign Festorum Chirstianorum.* Next is Hippolytus of Rome (A.D. 170-240) in his commentary on Daniel: *"For the first advent of our Lord, that in the flesh, in which he was born in Bethlehem, took place eight days before the kalends of January, the 4th day of the week, while Augustus was in his forty-second year, but from Adam five thousand and five hundred years."* The eighth before the kalends of January is the twenty-fifth day of December. Dating from the death of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., the forty-second year of Augustus would be 2 B.C.

¹² Augustine, *Epistle 118*: *"It chiefly behooves us that upon the day of our Lord's nativity, we should receive the sacrament in remembrance of him that was born upon it, and upon the return of the year to celebrate the very day with a feasting devotion."* "Return of the year" signifies the winter solstice when the days begin to grow longer; cf. *Sermon In Natali Domini xi*: *"Jesus was born in the season when the length of the day increases."*

¹³ For the full argument, see John Selden, *Theanthropos, or God Made Man, A Tract Proving the Nativity of our Savior to be on the 25th of December* (London, 1661).

Measuring Time: Where Do We Stand in History?

Thus far we have been looking at the calendar in terms of measuring the year and its subdivisions. What about the year as it stands in relation to the past or future? How did the Jews and other ancient peoples date time?

Among the Gentiles, the distant past beyond the memory of man was wrapped in myth. Without the scriptures to provide a reliable account of historical fact, the imagination of the poets had to fill the gap. We thus read of a time when all things were different than they are now; a time of Olympian gods, centaurs, satyrs, and the age of heroes. Censorinus reports of Varro's division of the past thus:

"And if the origin of the world had come into human's range of knowledge, then that is where we would start from; but as it is I shall treat that interval of time that Varro calls "historical." For he gives three divisions of time epochs first from the beginning of mankind to the first flood, which because of our ignorance of it is called "unclear", second from the first flood to the first Olympiad, which, because many fabulous things are reported in it, is names "mythical", third from the first Olympiad to us, which is called "historical", because the events that happened in it are contained in true histories. For the first epoch of time, whether it had a beginning or whether it always existed, it is certainly not possible to comprehend its number of years." (DN 20:12-21.2)¹⁴

Between the mythical time and the first Olympiad stands the fall of Troy, which serves as a sort of borderland between the two, representing a mixture of myth and historical fact. Reference to the great flood is universal among the nations, and attests to the common origin of man and the truth of the Biblical narrative. Another point of contact is the existence of giants, bound at death with chains in Hades, doubtless answering the angels" or "sons of God" that sinned and perished in the deluge and thus bound in Tartarus (II Pet. 2:4; cf. I Pet. 3:19, 20; Gen. 6:1-4).¹⁵

¹⁴ As quoted in Denis Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar* (A.D. 1007, Univ. Berkeley Press), p. 81.

¹⁵ "What if I should reveal the pools of Styx, riverbanks crackling with fire? What if, by my agency, you saw Eumenides, saw Cerberus shaking his ruff, shaggy with snakes, and the Giants in chains? What fear would you feel then, you cowards - men afraid to look at shades!" Lucan, *Pharisalia*, IV, 660-665.

Ancient cities had their own local time and manner of calibration. As nations grew up and entered the world stage, time involved synchronization of local with foreign persons or events. Plutarch gives a date for the battle of Plataea, saying,

"They fought this battle on the fourth of Boedromion, according the Athenians, but according to the Boeutians, on the twenty-seventh of the month Panenus" (Arist. 19:7).

Establishing the year had equal challenges. Diodorus Siculus described the year 384 B.C. thus:

"At the conclusion of the year, in Athens Diotrepes was Archon and in Rome the consuls elected were Lucius Valerius and Aulus Mallius, and the Eleians celebrated the ninety-ninth Olympiad, that in which Dicon of Syracus won the footrace" (15.14.1).

As this passage suggests, the Greeks dated by those holding office of Archon and from Olympiads, but the Romans by consuls, the year of an emperor's reign, or from the founding of Rome (*ab urbs condita*, A.U.C.).

Among the Jews, no one reference or comprehensive scheme occurs in scripture. Any number of dating methods are found. Genesis dates are consecutive, not accumulative. Rather than saying an event occurred so many years from creation or from Adam, they are dated to the time a particular person lived or the year of his life. Continuity of dates is attained only by totaling the years between successive births. Thus, from Adam to Noah were 1056 years, and from Noah to Abraham 890 years, and from Abraham to the death of Joseph 361 years.¹⁶ The whole period covered by Genesis is therefore 2307 years.

Years to Birth of Sons

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Adam 130 yrs | Noah 500 yrs | Abraham 100 |
| Seth 105 | Shem 100 | Isaac 60 |
| Enos 90 | Arphaxad 35 | Jacob 91 |
| Cainan 70 | Salah 30 | Joseph 110 (dies) |
| Mahalaleel 65 | Eber 34 | |

¹⁶ Joseph was 30 when he stood before Pharaoh; Jacob entered Egypt when he was 130 years old while five years remained of famine, or nine years after Joseph left prison. Thus, Joseph was born when Jacob was 91. See Gen. 41:46; 45:6; 47:9.

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Jered 162 | Peleg 30 | |
| Enoch 65 | Reu 32 | |
| Methuselah 187 | Serug 30 | |
| Lamech 182 | Nahor 29 | |
| Noah | Terah 70 | |
| | Abraham | |
| Total 1056 yrs | Total 890 yrs | Total 361 yrs |

After Genesis, this method of dating disappears, and dates are provided from important events. Thus, there were 430 years from Abraham entering Canaan to the Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12:40, 51; Gal. 3:16, 17). These 430 years were evenly divided between 215 years from when Abraham entered Canaan at age 75 until Jacob entered Egypt at age 130 (Gen. 12:4; 47:9), and 215 years from entering Egypt until the Exodus. So Josephus:

"They left Egypt in the month Xanthicus, on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt" (Ant. II, xv, 2)

From the Exodus to the completion of Solomon's temple was 487 years (I Kng. 6:1, 38). And from completion of Solomon's temple until its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar was 459 years (see Ezek. 4:5, 6 where there are assigned 430 years God bore with the Jews, dating, it seems, from the divided kingdom 29 years after the temple was built; but see Jos. *Ant.* X, viii, 5 where the length is given as 470 years from the building of Solomon's temple until its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar). From the burning of the temple until the decree to rebuild the city by Artaxerxes Longimanus given to Nehemiah was 132 years (586 B.C. to 454 B.C.). And from the decree to rebuild the city to the baptism of Christ in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Nov. 8, A.D. 29) was 483 years (Dan. 9:25). Thus, it was 2021 years from Adam until Abraham entered Canaan at age 75. 430 years from Abraham's entering Canaan to the Exodus. 1078 years from completion of Solomon's temple until the decree of Artaxerxes, and 483 years then until the baptism of our Savior when he was 29 years old, but 454 years until his birth. The whole period from Adam until the birth of Christ (by our reckoning) was 4012 years, though Ussher gives it as 4004 years.

Another method of dating that occurs in scripture is the regnal years of kings. During the monarchical period of the Jewish nation, the scriptures often time dated events according to a king's reign. Thus, we read that in the eighth year of Josiah's reign "while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his

father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images" (II Chron. 34:3). But of Zedekiah we read

"And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah" (Jer. 52:4).

The Babylonia captivity ended the Jew's monarchy until the birth of Christ. During the period of the four world empires (Babylon, Mede-Persia, Greece, Rome), dates reference the regnal years of the Gentile world-rulers. Dozens of references to the regnal years of Gentile rulers are found in Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah (Dan. 2:1; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1; 10:1; Est. 1:3; 3:7; Ezra 1:1-3; Neh. 2:1; Hag. 1:1; 2:10; Zech. 1:1). In these, we have the beginning of a universal dating referent as the various nations assimilated into the world monarchies adopt the regnal year of the ruler to gauge time. These four world empires were preparatory to the dominion of Christ, in which the gospel was carried into all the world and Christ took up the government of the nations. As men dated events by the regnal year of the Gentile monarchs of the four world empires, it is appropriate that time is now dated from the birth of Christ, who is earth's only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Anno Domini

Use of the term "Anno Domini" is usually attributed to Dionysius Exiguus, a sixth century Sythian monk. The term is Latin for "in the year of our Lord" and signifies the regnal years of Christ. Dionysius used the birth of Christ to date the era in his Paschal (Easter) Tables. Dionysius substituted the "era of the martyrs" or the "Diocletian era" that had obtained until that time, with the incarnation of Christ. Dionysius adopted his method because he did not want to perpetuate the memory of Diocletian who had bitterly persecuted Christians. The custom of nominating the era by *Anno Domini* did not become dominant in Western Europe until it was used by the Venerable Bede to date the events in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People, which he completed in 731. Other terms used to describe the era of Christ's kingdom include *Anno Salutis* ("in the year of salvation"), *Anno Nostrae Salutis* ("in the year of our salvation"), *Anno Salutis Humanae* ("in the year of the salvation of men"), and *Anno Reparatae Salutis* ("in the year of accomplished salvation"). Since the eighteenth century, *Anno Domini* has been used exclusive of these other phrases.

However, in the last fifty years or so, *Anno Domini*, which used to occur in all sorts of legal instruments and official documents, including deeds, conveyances, and legislative acts, has declined and is now replaced with CE and BCE (Common Era and Before our Common Era) as more politically correct. However, even these referents date the era from the birth Christ, and therefore tacitly admit what they implicitly deny.

Another era, related to that we have been discussing, is the "latter days." This phrase describes the closing days of the world-course or age (Eph. 2:2) marked by the reign of sin and death, and the dominion of earth by heathen powers. Christ destroyed the dominion of sin and death by his substitutionary death and atoning sacrifice. He put his enemies beneath his feet in the cataclysmic judgments visited upon the Jews and Romans in the years A.D. 68-70, which witnessed the "year of four emperors" among the Romans and the destruction of the Jewish temple and nation. This was the Stone smiting the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:34-44); the time when the ancient of Days came in judgment upon the "little horn" of Daniel seven (Nero Caesar) who had persecuted the saints for 3 1/2 years, but was destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming and the spirit of his mouth (Dan. 7: 21, 22; II Thess. 2:3-8). Unless these things are true and these prophecies fulfilled, we may not properly nominate the present era *Anno Domini*, for if Christ has not put his enemies beneath his feet nor rules the nations with a rod of iron then he does not possess the dominion and era is not his own. Eusebius is quite correct when he states that the latter days were marked by the coronation of Christ and destruction of the Jewish state:

"For we must understand by 'the end of the days' [viz., the "last days", LXX Gen. 49:1] the end of the national existence of the Jews. What, then, did he say they must look for? The cessation of the rule of Judah, the destruction of their whole race, the failing and ceasing of their governors, and the abolition of dominant kingly position of the tribe of Judah, and the rule and kingdom of Christ, not over Israel but over all nations, according to the word, 'This is the expectation of the nations.'" Eusebius, Demonstratio Evangelica, VIII, ccclxxv; Ferrar ed.

The Gregorian Calendar

The defect of the Julian calendar, which caused it to grow 4 days out of synchronization with the solar year by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, caused it to grow almost 10 days out of synch by 1582. To correct this, and to re-synchronize Easter with the vernal equinox, Pope Gregory promulgated a Papal bull establishing

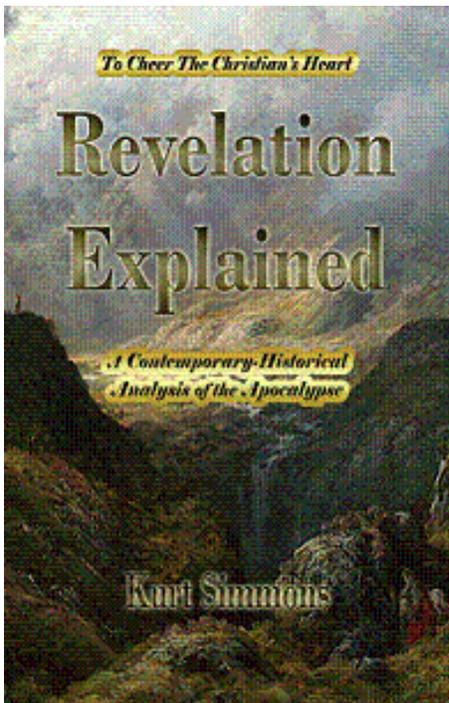
what is today called the Gregorian calendar. The reforms called for

- Omission of ten days from the calendar, so that the day following Thursday, October 4, 1582 would be deemed Friday October 15, 1582.
- Leap years were changed so that a year became a leap year (1) it is divisible by 4 but not by 100 or (2) it is divisible by 400. Thus, a year that is divisible by 4 is a leap year unless it is also divisible by 100, but not by 400.
- The extra day of the leap year was moved from the day before February 25th to the day following February 28th.
- New rules for determining the date of Easter were adopted.

The correction of the Pope Gregory introduced was not the length of the year, but the intercalation of leap years, to keep the solar year and calendar from growing out of synch as they had with the Julian calendar. The reforms were adopted immediately by several Catholic states, including Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Poland, followed later by France and Luxembourg, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Hungary followed in 1587, but it was not until 1752 that Britain adopted the Gregorian calendar. Use of the Gregorian calendar is now world wide, with the exception of certain Eastern Orthodox Churches, which still use the Julian. Dionysius' system of numbering the present era from the birth of Christ has also prevailed until the present time. Let us work and pray it always will.

-oo0oo-

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Letters from our Readers

Question: What does Matt.5:17-19 mean if the law was not to be kept? It appears to mean it was to be kept until heaven and earth passed away. I don't believe that is to a literal H/E but must mean the Jewish way of life. I believe you are right but Paul was still keeping the Law as well as others in Acts 21. Please explain what they were doing in transition period and why they felt it necessary to keep the law. I feel Matt. 5:17-19 must be in their minds. Thanks for your great work.

Answer: The thrust of Matt. 5:17-19 is *fulfillment* of the law and prophets. Jesus said *"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."* The phrase *"I am come to fulfill"* clearly contemplates Jesus' *first coming* to die on Calvary, not his second coming to put his enemies beneath his feet. Thus, "heaven and earth" are not used as enigmatic references to the Jewish law and economy, but are parabolic; they stand for something firm and immutable. But if the heavens and earth are firm and immutable, the word of God and his promised redemption in Christ are even more certain and unailing. That this is the meaning is seen in the parallel passage in Luke 16:17 where Jesus said *"it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one jot or tittle of the law to fail."* In other words, it is easier that the whole physical creation should vanish away than the prophetic types and shadows of the law should fail to be fulfilled in Jesus' death on Calvary.

The blood sacrifices, national feasts, priesthood, and temple ritual were a grand object lesson showing man his sin, the need for atonement, and a priestly intercessor. Paul said that the law was a "shadow" of good things to come, "but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:17). A shadow ENDS where the body BEGINS. Thus, the law ends where the gospel and New Testament start. The question thus becomes, when did the gospel and New Testament become of force and effect? At Calvary or AD 70? Here there can be no question: the gospel and New Testament began at Calvary. Jesus said *"the law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it"* (Lk. 16:16). "Kingdom of God" here is equal to the gospel. The law and Moses were preached until John, but the New Testament was already begun to be announced. Hebrews says *"a testament is of force after men are dead"* (Heb. 9:14). The New Testament therefore came into force and effect at Calvary, at Jesus' death. No man can have two wills at one time, the Old Testament then ceased to be legally effective. That the atonement was then and there effective and the way into God's presence opened is shown by the fact the veil of the

temple was "rent in twain" at Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51), showing the whole temple service was now obsolete. Pointing to the removal of the law and its segregation of Jews and Gentiles in the temple worship, where a physical wall actually separated them, Paul says *"For his is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances"* (Eph. 2:14,15). Thus, the whole law of the temple service was done away in Christ's flesh. *"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law"* (Heb. 7:12).

The disciples continued to keep the law, yes, but ONLY lest they be an offense to the Jews. This is why Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts:16:1-3), not because circumcision was valid anymore, but lest Timothy's lack of circumcision become an obstacle to Jews receiving the gospel message. This is also true of Acts 21, where Paul offered sacrifice and took a vow and underwent ritual purification. He was merely trying to alleviate Jewish prejudice that he was an apostate from God by showing that he still had a conscience toward God and worshipped the same God as they did. Peter did the same thing. When among the Gentiles he ate with them, showing the law that had forbidden Jews to keep company with Gentiles was done away (Acts 10), but when some Judaizing men came from Jerusalem, he drew back and separated himself from the Gentiles. Peter did this because the law had forbidden casual table fellowship with Gentiles and he did not want to offend, but Paul rebuked Peter for his duplicity (Gal. 2:11-14). What Peter was required to do while at Jerusalem while living and preaching among the Jews there, he had no excuse for doing while away, living and preaching among the Gentiles, so Paul rebuked him.

Finally, note that the argument of some about Matt. 5:17-19 is that ALL the law was valid until NONE of it was valid. A friend of mine says this dozens of times in his books. He sets this argument up against futurists, so he can say that if Jesus' second coming has not occurred, then we are still under the law. He says Matt. 5:17-19 teaches that the law all stood or fell together. "Not one jot would pass until it *all* passed." The other side of this argument is that if even one law can be shown to have passed, then all of it had passed.

Well, what does the New Testament show? Does it show that *all* the law was still binding, or does it show that at least portions of it were invalid? Here there can be no doubt: We have numerous direct statements by

Peter and Paul saying that portions of the law (dietary restrictions, association with Gentiles, circumcision, etc.) were *not valid* or binding any more. Therefore, if all the law was valid until none of it was valid, then it is clear none of it was valid during the period of Acts and the Gentile mission. The argument from Matt. 5:17-19 proves too much and that the law ended at the cross.

Question: This morning the Lord pointed me to a portion of the Word I know very, very well. It was Ephesians 2 and specifically verses 14–16: “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross.”

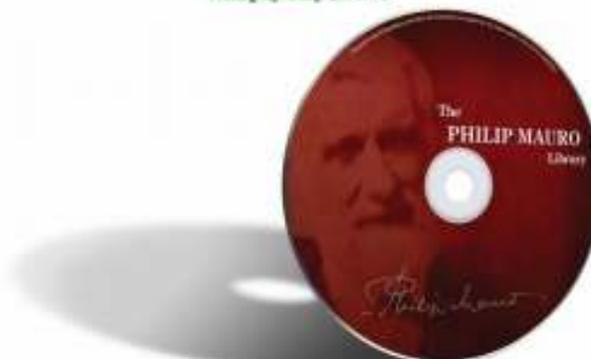
It is evident that God's purpose had always been to reconcile Jew and Gentile to God in one body through the cross. However, the words that leapt of the page were “by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances” which clearly indicates that everything of the old Jewish rituals and ordinances were abolished and nullified at the cross and not in 70 AD. The Holy Spirit then also reminded me of Jeremiah 31:31–33: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after

those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” The people broke the covenant long before the birth of the Lord Jesus. In Hebrews 8 we find a reference to this: Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord” (Hebrews 8:8–9).

If this covenant which the people had broken not only once on their way to the promised land but twice and if God was going to establish another, new covenant with His new people, the Israel of God, where do Max King and ----- find grounds in the Bible to suggest that 70 AD was the conclusion of the old covenant? There is no such indication and all they do is water down the effect and impact of the cross. I find this another gospel, a perversion.

Answer: I regret that I must agree with you. ---- is a beloved brother it grieves me greatly that he has been ensnared by Max King's doctrine. The idea that the Mosaic law was in force and justification did not come until AD 70 means that nothing happened at the cross. There is virtually nothing those subscribing to King's doctrine are willing to say arrived at the cross; they postpone all to AD 70, when they say the atonement was complete. I believe this is a perversion of the gospel and diminishes the cross, but one I, too, was formerly guilty of, in part, and therefore hope and trust those ensnared one day escape and find their way clear.

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What is the "Creation" of Romans 8:19-23?

A friend recently asked about the "creation" of Rom. 8:19-23. We answer that question.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

The "creation" of Romans 8:19-23 refers to **humankind**. The creation/humankind was subjected to the futility and vanity of physical and, ultimately, eternal death. God did **not** subject man to this vanity **willingly, but in hope** that man would search out God and repent from sin, and so attain to immortality through Jesus Christ.

There are two groups in the text: **"they"** and **"ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit"**. "They" refers to the **Gentiles**. "Ourselves which have the first fruits of the Spirit" refers to the **Jews**. The Jews were the firstfruits of the Spirit by the gospel. (Eph. 1:12; Jam. 1:18; Rev. 7:1-8; 15:4).

The **"whole creation"** equals **"every nation"** of the great commission (Mk. 16:15, 16) or all mankind. All nations of men groaned and travailed in pain, waiting for "manifestation of the sons of God" or resurrection from the dead. Not "they" (the Gentiles) only, but "we ourselves which have the first fruits of the Spirit" (the Jews). Both groups groaned in travail for salvation from the bondage to sin and death.

The "redemption" and "adoption" of "our body" (v. 23) refers to the **receipt of the individual's immortal body in heaven** above. We are adopted sons now through faith, repentance, and baptism (Gal. 4:5, 5; Rom. 8:15), but the fullness of our sonship will not be realized until receipt of our eternal inheritance in heaven above.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29, 30).

"Being conformed to the image of Christ" looks to our glorification in heaven at our resurrection. The eschatological resurrection occurred in AD 70 (Dan. 12:2, 7; Rev. 20:11-15). This was announced by a trumpet (I Cor. 15:52). This trumpet was inaudible to mortal man on earth, being directed only to the spirits in Hades, and is best understood as the voice of Christ, the Archangel of God (I Thess. 4:16). However, it is my opinion that there is *another* trumpet mentioned by Paul: "the last trumpet" that calls each of us from this world to the next, which also marks the "change" of our body from physical to spiritual and mortal to immortal. "For we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet" (I Cor. 15:52). That the trumpet which raises the dead and the "last trumpet" are not the same trumpet is seen in the absence of the definite article in the Greek. Paul says "the last trumpet" will mark each of our change, but "a trumpet" would raise the dead. And since the dead are already raised, but you and I have not been changed, then there must be a last trumpet that will call each of us out of this world and will mark the time when we put on immortality.

What is the Coming for Salvation of Hebrews 9:28?

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27, 28).

Some believe the second appearance of Christ in this passage is to save from sin; viz., that justification was somehow held in abeyance until the second coming. But this is clearly wrong.

The salvation of Heb. 9:28, by its own terms, is not for sin. The writer says this explicitly. Jesus accomplished this salvation at his first coming to die on Calvary. *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).* Thus, we must search for other possibilities.

The Hebrew Christians were under a time of persecution, being pressured by unbelieving Jews to abandon Christ and return to the ritual of the law. This is clear from the whole context of the letter and is why the writer states, *"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (12:4).* Heb. 10:32-35 makes specific reference to the persecutions believers had formerly endured (probably the persecution over Stephen), urging them to persevere the present persecution, assuring them that Christ's coming was in a "very, very little while" (v. 37). Thus, the coming in Heb. 10:37 by its express terms was to save the church from persecution. But if the coming in Heb. 10:37 is to save out of persecution, so is that of Heb. 9:27, for they are the same coming.

The coming for salvation in Heb. 9:28 would save the saints from the persecution of the Jews, who were pressuring Christian Hebrews to abandon Christ and return to the old law.

An Open Letter to Mac Deaver

Note: Mac Deaver holds a PhD in theology and is minister at the Sherman Drive Church of Christ in Denton, Texas. He debated Don Preston in March at the Carlsbad Eschatology Conference. This is a republication of a letter we wrote Mac in 2008.

Dear Mac,

I appreciated your debate with Don Preston and admired your command of God's word. I respect your learning and labor in the Lord greatly. Bill Fangio showed me your letter to him dated 5/6/08. I thought it might be profitable if we could correspond a bit on the topic of eschatology. Your letter mentioned two topics, so I will try to confine myself to them: 1) the new heavens and earth; 2) the resurrection of I Cor. 15.

In preface, let me say that the church of Christ of the Stone/Campbell Movement has never been strong in eschatology. In fact, there is a tendency to avoid it. Few congregations would feel comfortable or capable of undertaking a study of Revelation or even comparably simple passages like Matthew 24. Ask the average minister who the "man of sin" refers to and you will not receive a definitive answer. We seem to be comfortable not knowing, as if these parts of God's word are better left alone.

There is also a tendency to avoid Old Testament studies, or at least to down-play these as "unnecessary." Most of our members are unfamiliar with the language of the prophets, if they study them at all, and are ill-equipped to make a studied judgment about the literalness of the language they employ. When they encounter language in the New Testament about the "day of the Lord" or of a "collapsing universe" they are totally unequipped to approach it in an intelligent way. Identical language to that used by Peter in his second epistle occurs all through the Old Testament to describe times of divine judgment upon the nations. Yet our people, completely ignorant of those examples, must grope in the darkness, assuming that the

language is purely literal. Any suggestion that this language is figurative is thought incredulous, not because examples cannot be brought forward to demonstrate that proof, but because our people have never heard it before. We are not the “Bible toting, Bible quoting” people we once used to be.

Our people’s lack of grounding in the Old Testament is the more disconcerting when we consider that the New Testament is the Old Testament *fulfilled*. How strange that the Old Testament nowhere predicts the destruction of the earth at Christ’s second coming. Just the opposite, the Messiah was to bring in a kingdom and reign of ever-lasting righteousness, a time of renewal and unprecedented peace, when men and nations were reconciled to each other and to God. But we teach that Jesus’ ultimate objective is to destroy the whole earth! (I am reminded of James and John who asked if they should call down fire on the Samaritans, and the Lord’s answer, the Son of Man came to save, not destroy.) Where is it ever taught by the prophets that the Messiah would destroy the earth?!! The standard eschatology of our churches introduces a total disparity between the testaments when they affirm that Christ will come to destroy the earth and cosmos. Far from the New Testament being the fulfillment of the Old, it is as if there were a total break in the eschatology of the Old Testament and the New! My challenge: Identify a single Old Testament passage that unambiguously affirms the cosmos would be destroyed by Christ.

Just a short time ago it would have been deemed heretical to teach that Revelation spoke to events fulfilled in the first century. The moving figures of the Restoration Movement were not of this mind (Campbell’s Millennial Harbinger thought the Millennium was near at hand, not on the basis of what the Bible taught, but upon his idea of world population and the necessity for Christ’s return to save us from overpopulation!). Yet, in the 1900’s we begin to witness a very definite movement toward the view that Revelation was mostly, if not totally, fulfilled by A.D. 70. Names like Ulrich Beeson and Foy E. Wallace, among countless others, began teaching a contemporary-historical fulfillment of Revelation in the mid 1900’s. One brother – Clifton Voss (Chickasha, OK) – had his tombstone engraved about 1955 with a time-line affirming Christ’s coming in A.D. 70, and that we are today living in the new heavens and earth

(if you would like, I will email you pictures of the Voss headstone, it is a great human interest piece). Needless to say, these men (much like Campbell, and others before them) met with scorn and derision in their time from the “faithful brethren” but, lo and behold, today Sunset School of Preaching, Lubbock, TX, teaches Revelation from a fulfilled perspective! Marvels never cease. Yesterday’s heresies are admitted facts today. My point in this is to show that our churches are in a state of flux on questions of eschatology. There has been a tendency to avoid these questions in the past, but as we study them we are definitely moving - *as a brotherhood* - in the direction of a contemporary-historical analysis, if not full Preterist, certainly at least partial Preterist in approach. And this movement is by no means confined to the churches of Christ. From rejecting the “late date” of Revelation, to the significance assigned to the number of the beast as Nero’s name, the trend toward interpreting eschatology in light of a contemporary-historical analysis (Preterist) is breaking out all over.

You agree in your letter that the new heavens and earth seem in some form or manner to speak to present era and church (citing Isa. 65:17). I am encouraged that you agree Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled. Certainly, this is the way Stephen must have understood it when he cited the prophecy before the Sanhedrin, when accused of saying Christ would come and destroy the temple and change the customs Moses delivered to the people (Acts 6:14; 8:48, 49). Effectively, Stephen’s defense was that he was not saying anything Isaiah had not prophesied long before. Stephen’s only addition was to announce that it was coming to fulfillment in their day. Isa. 66:15 specifically mentions the Lord coming in “fire” with whirlwinds and chariots to avenge the persecution of his saints and the Jews’ obstinate refusal to abandon the temple service and acknowledge the sacrifice and priesthood of Christ (Isa. 65:3-6). Obviously, such language becomes enormously important when we encounter New Testament prophecies like those contained in Matthew 24, Acts 2:14-40 (*cf.* Joel 2:28-32), Heb. 10-12, II Pet. 3 and Revelation. Hebrews 12:26 specifically mentions shaking the heavens and earth; II Pet. 3 and Revelation both close with the theme of a new heavens and earth that would obtain following a time of world wrath in which the powers that be were shaken, and the thrones of kingdoms overthrown (*cf.* Haggai 2:6). Given the historical context of

Isaiah's prophecy as defined by Stephen, and Joel's prophecy as defined by Peter (both in Acts), any fair analysis must own that the events of the first century claim the most probable period of fulfillment. Peter said "Save yourself from *this* untoward generation" (Acts 2:39). This day of the Lord (v. 20) would overtake Peter's generation. Must we not conclude it is the *same* day of the Lord of his second epistle? What justification could there be to look past the first century to our time and beyond? Certainly, many prominent church men down through the centuries have understood these prophecies are already fulfilled. One very early source that may be cited in proof of fulfillment is Origen:

"We do not deny, then, that the purificatory fire and the destruction of the world took place in order that evil might be swept away, and all things be renewed; for we assert that we have learned these things from the sacred books of the prophets...And anyone who likes may convict this statement of falsehood, if it be not the case that the whole Jewish nation was overthrown within one single generation after Jesus had undergone these sufferings at their hands. For forty and two years, I think after the date of the crucifixion of Jesus, did the destruction of Jerusalem take place."[1]

Another is our own Foy E. Wallace Jr, who said:

"The heaven and earth, and troubled sea, having passed away and represented as being no more, indicated the changed conditions within the existing governments and society to make them favorable for the prosperity of the cause of Christ and his church throughout the empire...the vision represented the new conditions to surround the church in the changed world."[2]

Both of these writers thus affirm the new heavens and earth are a present reality. To these may be added famous names like Bishop John Lightfoot, John Owen, Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, and others. All this to say, the burden of proof must be *very heavy* indeed for those that would argue, as you do, that there is some further fulfillment of these prophecies remaining. Peter mentions a promise. What and where is that promise, if not Isaiah? If Isaiah is applied by Stephen to his day, by what process or justification do we apply it to our future? Is it the "sound" or "feel" of the language Peter

employs? What of it? This kind of language has a long history in the prophets, who consistently use it figuratively. Sir Isaac Newton said this about the *usus loquendi* of the prophets regarding the "heavens and earth":

"The figurative language of the prophets is taken from the analogy between the world natural and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly, the world natural, consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people, or so much of it as is considered in prophecy; and the things in that world signify the analogous things in this. For the heavens and the things therein signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them: and the earth, with the things thereon, the inferior people; and the lowest parts of the earth, called Hades or Hell, the lowest or most miserable part of them. Great earthquakes, and the shaking of heaven and earth, are put for the shaking of kingdoms, so as to distract and overthrow them; the creating of a new heaven and earth, and the passing of an old one; or the beginning and end of a world, for the rise and ruin of a body politic signified thereby. The sun, for the whole species and race of kings, in the kingdoms of the world politic; the moon, for the body of common people considered as the king's wife; the stars, for subordinate princes and great men; or for bishops and rulers of the people of God, when the sun is Christ. Setting of the sun, moon, and stars; darkening the sun, turning the moon into blood, and falling of the stars, for the ceasing of a kingdom."[3]

Before we cast aside long, established usage and treat Peter's language literally, we ought to require a solid exegetical basis. I put forth my challenge again: name one Old Testament prophet who taught the Messiah would come and destroy the cosmos. And if this is not what the prophets taught, why do we put these words into Jesus' and the apostles' mouths?

Regarding the resurrection, there does appear to have been some misunderstanding in the debate, as you suggest. Most people probably felt you believed in the resurrection of physical bodies or seemed to change positions midway in the debate. I am glad to see (and will pass along to others) that what you actually believe is a resurrection *from* physical death. In this you and I are wholly agreed. However, I fail to see how you can postpone man's deliverance from the

power of sin and death to the future. The deliverance of man from Hades was, perhaps, the most urgently looked-for promise of the Messiah. Isaiah and Hosea spoke specifically to this work; it is also implicit in many of the Psalms; the “sure mercies” of David looked to the ransom of the soul from death. Certainly, resurrection was the great object of the apostle’s preaching. What is redemption from sin if our only hope is to molder away in the grave or languish forever in Hades?

Daniel 12:2, 7 makes very clear that the resurrection of the multitudes who “slept” would occur at the time of Jerusalem’s fall. The fall of the city and temple appears thus to have been a sign that man’s banishment from God’s presence, as typified in the ceremony of the temple, where God was remote from the worshiper and could be approached through a mediator and the blood of sprinkling, was done away in the cross and that man can now approach “boldly” the throne of grace (Heb. 6:19; 10:19). But if the *legal* barrier of sin is done away in Jesus’ cross (signified by the veil being rent in twain at his death Matt. 26:51), what claim does Hades still have over the dead? Jesus quotes Daniel 12:11 regarding the abomination of desolation in Matt. 24:15; he quotes Dan. 12:2 in John 5:28, 29. The whole thrust of the latter text is that the resurrection predicted in Daniel was *imminent*. When Daniel 12, Matt. 24, and John 5 are read in each other’s light, what is to put off the resurrection from Hades? I can only conclude that it is bare tradition. We have already seen that Foy E. Wallace Jr., Origen, and many others teach Revelation is all or nearly all fulfilled, and that we are in the new heavens and earth, the government of the Messiah. Rev. 21, 22 both make very plain that the imagery is not of heaven; the new Jerusalem is going the wrong way! New Jerusalem comes down *out of* heaven, not goes up! Outside the city are lost, unregenerate men (Rev. 22:15). The nations bring their glory into the church as they obey the gospel (Rev. 21:24; 22:2); the gates are open night and day, in every direction, inviting men to come in and partake of the waters of life (gospel of Christ) (Rev. 21;25; 22:17). The point of the imagery is that the believer is in restored fellowship with God through Christ; God tabernacles with us through the church (Rev. 21:3; Eph. 2:21). It would be difficult to miss the meaning of the symbolism. But - *and here is the point* - Rev. 20:11-15 portrays the resurrection as

happening *before* the new Jerusalem descends and the new heavens and earth come about. Affirming as you do that Isaiah’s promised new heavens and earth are a present reality would seem to require that the resurrection be an accomplished fact. If not why not? What is there in scripture or logic to postpone the resurrection from Hades? How is the believer today better advantaged by the blood of Christ than the saints of old if all are still waiting for the resurrection from Hades these two thousand years?

Perhaps a friendly rematch between you and I is in order. I would propose a written debate, four affirmatives, four negatives apiece, 20 page limit, single spaced, Times New Roman. The debate can be published in our respective newsletters, on the web, and in book form. Think it over; let me know; I am certain it would be profitable for all.

[1] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, IV, xxi-xxii; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV, p. 505, 506.

[2] Foy E. Wallace Jr., *The Book of Revelation* (1963, Wallace Publications, Ft. Worth), p., 426.

[3] Isaac Newton, *Observations on the Prophecies, Part i. chap. ii*



"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" I Cor. 1:18.