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Three Views on the Rapture & Change

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There are three basic models among Futurists and Preterists regarding the fate of those alive at Christ's return. These are 1) the Literal Rapture view; 2) the Covenantal view; and 3) the Translation/Change at Death view. In this article we will briefly survey these views and conclude that the Translation at Death view is the most scripturally defensible.

The Literal Rapture View

The view held by the great majority of Christians is that, at Jesus' return, the dead will be physically raised to life; those still alive will then be "caught up" with the resurrected dead, and together simultaneously translated to heaven. Preterists who believe in the literal rapture view, reject the physical body resurrection of the dead, but otherwise agree that the living were miraculously changed at Christ's return and

translated to heaven in a manner similar to Enoch and Elijah. Futurists holding the literal rapture view also believe that Christ's return will mark the end of the physical universe. Belief in the sudden end of the cosmos is closely related to the view that the living are to be translated to heaven at Christ's return, since otherwise they must share the fate of the wicked, who it is believed will be consumed in the fiery conflagration that will supposedly end earth's history. Passages supposed to teach that the earth and wicked will be consumed in fire at Jesus' coming include I Cor. 3:12, 13, II Thess. 1:7-10, II Pet. 3:10, and Rev. 20:9:

I Cor. 3:12, 13 - "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 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."

II Thess. 1:7-10 - "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."

II Pet. 3:10 - "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."

Rev. 20:9 - "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

It is easy to see how belief in the rapture or translation of the living fits neatly into view that the world is to end at Jesus' return. But what if the language of a fiery end of the earth is merely figurative and symbolic? What if earth was not to end at all, but life was to continue in a "new heavens and earth" under the government of Christ, seated from the right hand of God in heaven; a "new earth" in which the church is the new Jerusalem, the covenantal habitation of the saints, which serves as the capitol city of Christ's earthly kingdom? Wouldn't that prove most inconvenient to the view that the living saints were to be borne away to heaven at Christ's return? One rather suspects it must, for if the church, the bride, is carried off to heaven, who will inhabit the new Jerusalem? Revelation specifically states that "God will dwell with men" (Rev. 21:3). If the city has been depopulated by the rapture of the saints, with whom would God dwell? The symbolic nature of the language underlying belief in the fiery end of the universe at Christ's return was early on pointed out by Origen (AD 184-254):

"The divine word says that our God is 'a consuming fire,' and that 'He draws rivers of fire before Him;' nay, that he even entereth in as 'a refiner's fire, and as a fuller's herb,' to purify His own people. But when He is said to be a 'consuming fire,' we inquire what are the

*things which are appropriate to be consumed by God? And we assert that they are wickedness, and the works which result from it, and which, being **figuratively** called 'wood, hay, stubble,' God consumes as a fire. The wicked man, accordingly, is said to build upon the previously-laid foundation of reason, 'wood, and hay, and stubble.' If, then, any one can show that these words were differently understood by the writer, and can prove that the wicked man **literally** builds up 'wood, or hay, or stubble,' it is evident that the fire must be understood to be material, and an object of sense. But if, on the contrary, the works of the wicked man are spoken of **figuratively**, under the names of 'wood, or hay, or stubble," why does it not once occur (to inquire) in what sense the word 'fire' is to be taken, so that 'wood' of such a kind should be consumed? For (the scripture) says: "The fire will try each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work be burned, he shall suffer loss."¹*

If the fire that was to consume the wicked and their works at Christ's return was not literal, and the wicked (Jews and Romans persecuting the church) died of "natural causes" (war, famine, pestilence) resulting from God's super-mundane visitation and judgment, would it not therefore follow that the righteous also departed earth by natural causes? Why would there be a miraculous translation of the living saints if earthly life was to continue as before? Yes, why? For futurists, belief in the sudden end of the world and rapture of the living are logically and necessarily connected, for if there is no rapture, then the righteous must be consumed in the conflagration that destroys the wicked. But for Preterists, who reject the notion that earth was to end in a fiery conflagration, there is a logical gap; there is no reason provided why they should be whisked away from earth. That said, let us turn to the passages relied upon in support of a literal rapture. These include I Cor. 15:50-52; I Thess. 4:13-17; Phil. 3:21; I Jn. 3:2.

I Cor. 15:50-52 - "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption

¹ *Contra Celsus*, IV, xiii; Ante-Nicene Fathers IV, pg. 502. For an article showing Origen was a Preterist, see our article http://www.preteristcentral.com/Origen%20Was%20a%20Preterist.html#_ftn16

inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for a trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

There are three possible interpretations of this passage: 1) It teaches the *actual* translation of the living to heaven at Christ's return; 2) the "change" is legal and covenantal; *viz.*, the passage is *figurative*; 3) the change occurs *later than* the general resurrection; *viz.*, at the individual's death.

My Wrong Turn into "Covenantalism"

Most Preterists reject the actual translation or rapture of the living as lacking historical support and running against their better interpretative instincts. Hence, many Preterists have sought refuge in a spiritualized view, which interprets the change "covenantally." This is the view I took for many years, but recently was forced to abandon. Faced with the language of the passage that appears to require the change of the living occur *simultaneously* with the general resurrection of the dead, and at a loss how otherwise to explain in what way the living then put on incorruption and immortality (v. 54), I adopted the covenantal view. Although I never accepted the covenantal view of the resurrection many fellow Preterists were teaching, the lack of alternatives regarding the "change" forced me to adopt that approach here. Specifically, I took the view that *putting on immortality* here was equal to *justification from sin*, which I supposed was in some form or manner *held in abeyance* during the *betrothal period* from the cross to AD 70, when the marriage of the Lamb and bride was *consummated* at Christ's coming.

For some years, I had begun noticing many discrepancies in the covenantal approach as applied to other areas of eschatology. For example, the covenantal approach sees the second coming as essentially a "local" Judean event, focused on the fall of Jerusalem and the supposed termination of the Old Testament, when in fact many passages show that the Old Testament ended at the cross and Christ's coming was "world-wide" (Gk. *oikumene*, inhabitable earth), enveloping most of the Roman Empire. But as Christ's coming against Rome and the provinces of Europe and Asia Minor does not fit the covenantal paradigm, having no significance in terms of the change from the Old Testament to the New, this inconvenient fact, so plainly taught in scripture, is simply overlooked (Ps. 2:8, 9; 110:5, 6; Dan. 2, 7; Haggai 2:22).

This and many other discrepancies caused me to question the validity of the covenantal approach as applied to the "change." After all, if it was false in other areas, why should it be true here? One of the passages that finally caused me to abandon that view entirely was Eph. 5:25-27, which teaches that the bride was washed and justified from sin *during the betrothal period*, so that Christ could present it to himself pure and without spot at the consummation. Obviously, if the church was washed from sin during the betrothal period, the idea that justification was held in abeyance until the consummation at AD 70 is false. Therefore, the consummation was *not* the point at which the New Testament came into force and sins were remitted, which actually occurred at the cross (Heb. 9:17). Rather, the consummation was the point where Christ began to *co-habit with the church*, having gone into a far country to receive a kingdom and return (Lk. 19:12). Jewish law treated the marriage covenant *fully effective* and binding upon the parties as man and wife during the betrothal period. Infidelity was punished as adultery equally before the consummation as after (Deut. 22:23, 24; Matt. 1:18, 19). In Exodus, the Old Testament came into force at Sinai, even though it was not until the tabernacle was reared a year later that God consummated the Old Testament marriage by dwelling among the Israelites (Ex. 40: 17, 34; *cf.* Rev. 21:2, 3). In the same way, the New Testament came into force at the cross, but it was not until A.D. 70 that Christ took up permanent habitation with the saints in the new Jerusalem (the church). Hence, the covenantal approach to the "change" is unsustainable and false, and I was compelled to abandon it.

One Trumpet or Two? That is the Question!

It is a basic premise of Preterism that the general, Hadean resurrection occurred in A.D. 70. The simplest most direct proofs of this proposition are Daniel 12:2, 7, and Rev. 11:2, 15-17, both of which place the resurrection at the fall of Jerusalem. Scripture teaches that the dead would be raised by the voice of the Archangel (Christ) and the trump of God (I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16; Rev. 11:2, 17; *cf.* Jn. 5:28; Dan. 12:1, 2).

I Cor. 15:52	I Thess. 4:16	Rev. 11:2, 17
Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall	For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ	And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying...the nations were angry and thy wrath is come, and the time of

sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed	shall rise first.	the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name.
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The mistranslation of the almost all English Bibles gives the impression that there is *but one* trumpet in I Cor. 15:52, the passage we are examining. However, the Greek allows for two trumpets. Compare the two translations below and see if this is not so.

Authorized (King James) Version	Green's Literal Translation
Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.	Behold, I speak a mystery to you: indeed we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in a glance of an eye, at the last trumpet; for a trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised in corruptible, and we shall all be changed.

The difference in these translations is the addition of the definite article "the" in the KJV, to reflect the translators' assumption that the trumpet, which raises the dead, is the same as the last trumpet that marks the change of living. However, the Greek does not have the definite article, as reflected in Green's literal translation. As used in the KJV, the definite article attached to the trumpet that raises the dead is referential; it points *back* the last trumpet that changes the living:

"We shall all be changed...at the last trumpet: for [←] the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised and we shall be changed."

Thus, the trumpet that raises the dead is assumed to be the *same trumpet* that changes the living; the definite article points *back* to the trumpet mentioned in the preceding clause. This use of the definite article is very common in scripture; where it occurs, it always points *back* to the first occurrence of the thing referred to. Here are a couple examples:

- Rev. 12:3 - "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon.

- Rev. 12:4 - "And *the dragon* stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered."
- Rev. 12:7 - And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against *the dragon*; and *the dragon* fought and his angels."
- Rev. 13:2 - "And *the dragon* gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority."
- Rev.13:11 - "And he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as *a dragon*."

In the first passage we are introduced to "a dragon." Since this is the first appearance of this character, he is introduced with the indefinite article "a" ("a great red dragon"). However, all subsequent references to this dragon use the definite article "the" ("the dragon"). Thus, in Rev. 12:3, the indefinite article introduces the dragon, but in vv. 4, 7, and 13:2, the definite article is employed to show the same dragon is in view. But notice Rev. 13:11. Here the indefinite article is employed. The earth-beast looks like a lamb, but speaks like "a dragon." The absence of the definite article shows the word "dragon" in this instance does *not* point back to the "great red dragon" of earlier mention. The same dragon is *not* in view. The earth-beast speaks dragon-like *generally*, without reference to the great red dragon *specifically*.

Compare this with I Cor. 15:5: the absence of the definite article shows that the same trumpet is *not* in view. The translators have supplied the definite article, making the trumpet that raises the dead appear to be the same trumpet that changes the living. But the Greek does not have the definite article, showing that it is *not* the same trumpet. "We shall all be changed...at the last trumpet...for a trumpet will sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (at the last trumpet that calls each us out of this world at physical death)." We have added the paraphrase at the end of the verse to help understand what we are proposing; *viz.*, that there are two trumpets contemplated by the passage: one that raised the Hadean dead and another that calls each of us out of this world at physical death.

I Cor. 15:52 Two Trumpets	
The Last Trumpet Calls the living out of world at physical death, when they are thus changed and go to be with the Lord in heaven.	The Voice of the Archangel and Trump of God Raised the Hadean dead at Christ's Second Coming

In support of what we are saying, consider that the "we all" who are to be changed includes you and I who live on this side of the eschaton. There is no limitation on the last trumpet placed by Paul. Paul does not say "we who are alive *when Christ returns* shall be changed." That is the assumption some make, but the passage never says this at all. Why would those alive when Christ returned be wafted out of the world if the earth was not going to be destroyed? If life on earth was to continue, why limit the "change" to those alive at Christ's return? Futurists have a logical reason to limit the "change" to those alive at Christ's coming since by their view the world is to end. Preterists have no similar justification. They assume the "change" applies only to those alive at the general resurrection, but can provide no logical explanation why this should be so. Thus, Preterists who argue a literal rapture borrow the Futurist paradigm with none of the logical suppositions to support their view.

In fact, what Paul says is that "*we all (those who do not sleep in Hades) will be changed.*" "We all" includes us alive today! There is no qualifying phrase limiting this to the distant past. Has Hades been destroyed? Yes! Will we sleep in Hades? No. What then is to be our fate at death? We will be changed! If natural death marks our change, would not natural death have marked the change of those alive when Christ returned? Of course it would (to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, II Cor. 5:6-8). Natural death was also the way the wicked departed this world. *Thus, there is no model that supposes a supernatural departure.* Moreover, if the change of the righteous was preceded by the "last trumpet" calling them out of this world, will not our change be preceded by the last trumpet as well? We believe it will. Such at least is the solution we offer for the passage.

More Passages Relied upon for a Literal Rapture

I Thess. 4:16, 17 - "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

The assumption underlying this passage is that the catching up the living is contemporaneous with the resurrection of the dead. But this assumption cannot be proved. Paul says the dead would be raised first, "then" those who are alive and remain, will be caught up together with the risen dead into ethereal realms above. The word "then" shows that the catching up is *subsequent* to the resurrection of the dead. How long

afterward cannot be determined by the passage. But if the living are changed *subsequent* to the trumpet that raises the dead, doesn't this prove that the trumpet that raises the dead is not the same as the "last trumpet" that marks the change of the living? Of course it does! Where I Cor. 15:51 says the resurrection and change happen simultaneously in the "twinkling of an eye," I Thess. 4:16 specifically disallows this, saying the dead would be raised "first," and only then *later* would the living be caught up. Unless we are prepared to argue for a "delayed reaction" that raises the dead and then shortly, sometime later changes the living, they cannot be the same trumpet! Thus, I Thess. 4:16 proves what we said before about I Cor. 15:52 and that two trumpets are contemplated by the text.

But to return to I Thess. 4:16, doesn't the word "together" signify that the catching up occurs at the same time as the dead were raised? Not at all. If there was a political movement in the land and some were "caught up together" with men from other states in the movement, would that mean they all joined at the same time? Of course it wouldn't. "Together" does not signify the time of joining, but their *unity in the movement itself*. In the same way, being "caught up together with the dead in the clouds" does not signify unity in time, but *unity in destination*. The living will be caught up together with those that had gone on before, to thus meet the Lord in the air.

Phil. 3:20, 21 - "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

This verse does not say that the change would occur at Christ's second coming. That is the assumption many make, but the passage never actually says this. In fact, the passage does not mention Christ's coming at all! It merely says that Christians look for the Savior, who will change their bodies. Will the Savior change the bodies of those who live on this side of the eschaton? Yes, of course. At what point will that change occur? Physical death. But if the our change occurs is physical death, then that is also the time at which we look for Christ our Saviour to affect the needed change, not second coming.

I Jn. 3:2 - "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Those who cite this verse as proof of a rapture assume that it describes the change of the believer's body that would occur at Christ's coming. But the passage actually says none of this. Although adoptive sons of God, the saints could only imagine the "powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5) that would be theirs in the resurrection. However, the power of Christ at his coming against his enemies (Jews and Romans) would show believers "what we shall be." At Jesus' appearing, they would "see" him as he is in power and glory, and thus see what was in store for themselves, for "we shall be like him" (cf. Rom. 8:29; I Tim. 6:14, 15). In other words "when he appears" is not the point at which believers would be changed, but the point at which they would gain insight into the power of resurrection life as sons of God. As always, the change follows physical death, not prevents it.

History: A Final Objection to the Literal Rapture View

A final objection to the notion of a literal rapture is the complete lack of historical support. Could hundreds of thousands of believers simply vanish from earth and no mention of it appear anywhere in history? Surely, that is asking too much. The only "gathering" of the righteous portrayed in scripture is the harvest of the saints by martyrdom under Nero (14:9, 13-16; cf. Matt. 3:12; 13:37-43; II Thes. 2:1-9; Dan. 7:21, 22). Likewise, the one passage that actually describes the saints ascending to heaven in a cloud is so plainly symbolic that not even rapture proponents use it as proof, and it too describes the persecution under Nero (Rev. 11:11). Moreover, at the resurrection, the very point we would expect to see a rapture of believers, no such image appears at all. The dead are raised from Hades, but no mention is made of a rapture in any way, shape, or form portrayed (Rev. 20:11-15). Just the opposite, the "new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:2, 9, 10), showing that God came down to dwell with the saints, not whisked them out of the world to live with him above (Rev. 20:11-15; cf. Jn. 17:15).

The lack of historical corroboration is compounded by an abundance of testimony showing the historical continuity of the church. Where we would expect a "hole" in history had a rapture occurred, we find instead complete continuity. For example, Jesus said some of those alive during his ministry would live to see his kingdom come in power, which could hardly be the case if the church was whisked out of the world (Matt. 16:27, 28). Moreover, Jesus specifically named John as one who would live to his return (Jn. 21:22; cf. Rev. 10:11). It is clear from John's account, that many early believers thought this meant John would not die, but would be translated to heaven. However, John

expressly discounts the notion he would not die, and in so doing contradicts the notion of a rapture. Jesus did not say those alive when he came would not die, he said "some of them standing here shall not taste of death *until*" they saw him coming in his kingdom, then they would die. Rapture theorists ignore the word "until."

The fourth century church historian, Eusebius, gives an account of the church from its beginning. Eusebius describes the "apostolic succession" of the church, providing the names and records of those who lived through the various persecutions and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. If there was any source where we would expect testimony of a rapture, it is here. Instead, of a rapture we find that life went on as normal. Men died and their places were filled by those left behind. Not one place can be cited where there is a "gap" in the record. Concerning the "bishopric" of Jerusalem, Eusebius writes:

*"After the martyrdom of James and the capture of Jerusalem which immediately followed, the story goes that those of the Apostles and of the disciples of the Lord who were still alive came together from every place with those who were, humanly speaking, of the family of the Lord, for many of them were then still alive, and they all took counsel together as to whom they ought to adjudge worthy to succeed James, and all unanimously decided that Simeon the son of Clopas, whom the scripture of the Gospel also mentions, was worthy of the throne of the diocese there. He was, so it is said, a cousin of the Saviour, for Hegesippus relates that that Clopas was the brother of Joseph."*²

Eusebius also gives the succession of the bishopric of Rome, naming Linus, Anencletus, and Clement as those who followed in succession after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul.³ Concerning the bishopric of Alexandria, Egypt, Eusebius says that in the fourth year of Domitian, Ananias died after occupying that position 22 years. Domitian acceded to the throne in September AD 81. His fourth year would have answered to the calendar year, AD 85. The 22 year bishopric of Ananias would thus have spanned AD 63-85. Why wasn't Ananias raptured, seeing he lived through the relevant period? Thus, in Jerusalem, Rome, and Alexandria we find complete historical continuity. No gaps or holes consistent with a rapture is found

² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, xi; Loeb edition.

³ *Ibid*, III, ii; III, iv, III, xv

anywhere. And need we mention the apostle John, who was specifically named by the Lord as one who would live to see his coming? The universal testimony of the church is that, following the persecution of Nero, John lived in Ephesus until the days of Trajan, dying in ripe old age.

"And all the presbyters who had been associated in Asia with John, the disciple of the Lord, bear witness to his tradition, for he remained with them until the times of Trajan."⁴

This testimony, provided by Irenaeus, is echoed by Clement of Alexandria:

"For after the death of the tyrant he passed from the island of Patmos to Ephesus, and used also to go, when he was asked, to the neighbouring districts to the heathen, in some places to appoint bishops, in others to reconcile whole churches, and in other to ordain some one of those pointed out by the Spirit."⁵

Thus, the testimony of history accords fully with scripture that "some of those standing here shall not taste of death until they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:27, 28). In Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria, Ephesus, apostles, disciples, family members of the Lord survived the relevant period, providing historical continuity and contradicting the notion of a literal rapture.

The Covenantal View

This view has it that the resurrection and "change" of I Cor. 15:51-52 are "covenantal," having reference to the change from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and the resurrection and translation of the saints from Judaism to Christianity. Putting on incorruption and immortality is spiritualized and equated with justification from sin:

"Paul wanted to attain unto the resurrection of the dead (ek nekron, out of the dead) or from the among the dead as represented in the Jewish system...Phil. 3:21 deals with the resurrection of the body or the church from

the Jewish body into its heavenly inheritance at the fall of Judaism."⁶

"But how was death swallowed up in victory? The answer is quite obvious. Where was death resident? Did it not reign in the mortal or natural body of Judaism? Paul calls it the 'ministration of death.' But when that body died, and from it arose a spiritual body clothed with incorruption and immortality, death was defeated."⁷

"Paul wanted to attain unto the resurrection of the dead as represented in the Jewish system?" This is perfect folly. How can anyone ask us to take anything so absurd seriously? It insults our intelligence to put such a notion forward. Paul was crucified with Christ to the world, including especially Judaism (Gal. 6:14; cf. 2:20). He was "raised up" with Christ by repentance and baptism (Eph. 2:1, 6; Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 2:12, 13). The only resurrection Paul was looking for was the resurrection of from Hades unto eternal life (I Cor. 15:55). Moreover, Paul is writing to Gentiles living in Philippi and Corinth who had never been under the law or part of Judaism. To suggest that these men were looking for the fall of Jerusalem so they could be freed from Judaism and the law makes absolutely no sense. Besides, AD 70 was irrelevant in terms of man's reconciliation. Nothing happened in AD 70 relative to man's atonement or justification. The law terminated at the cross when the veil of sin separating man from God was "rent in twain," showing that reconciliation, atonement, and access to God had been opened by the death of Jesus (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 9:8, 10:19). No man can have two wills at one time. The new *always* revokes and supersedes the old. With the death of the Testator (Heb. 9:17), the Old Testament was legally nullified, and the New Testament came into force.

"He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...For by one offering he that perfect for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:9-14).

Sanctification, justification, reconciliation, atonement, and if there be any other word or phrase describing man's being set in a right position with God, all happened at the cross, not AD 70. Thus, the

⁴ Ibid, III, xxiii.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Max R. King, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (1971, Warren, OH), pp. 194, 195.

⁷ Max R. King, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (1971, Warren, OH), pp. 201, 202.

"covenantal" view of the resurrection and change must be rejected as hopelessly at odds with scripture.

The Translation/Change at Death View

All Preterists universally admit is correct today; all concede that at death the saints now receive their immortal body and are translated to heaven. The only question is what happened at Christ's coming in AD 66-70? Was there a special rapture or covenantal change? On both counts we feel the evidence says "no." Thus, what is universally agreed to be true today must also have been true then: The translation/change came only after physical death. Of the two or three verses that appear to teach a rapture, only I Cor. 15:51 presents any real challenge. I Jn. 3:2 merely says that while it did not yet appear what resurrection life held in store for the sons of God, when Jesus appeared believers could then see the power of the world to come that they would share in the resurrection, for they would be like Jesus (*cf.* Rom. 8:29). I Thess. 4:16, 17 by its express terms says that the dead would be raised first, *then* (later) the living would be caught up together with them unto ethereal realms. "Then" shows that the catching up is subsequent in time. The only question is how long. We believe this occurs as each of us dies, and not before.

I Cor. 15:51 has always been a difficult passage because the mistranslation of the text makes the

"change" appear simultaneous with the resurrection of the dead, by making it appear that only one trumpet is mentioned. However, short of a "delayed reaction" in the trumpet that raises the dead in I Thess. 4:16 cannot be the same trumpet that catches the living away from earthly life. Hence, we submit that the last trumpet that calls each of us out of this world at physical death is not the same trumpet that would mark the resurrection of the Hadean dead. The Greek certainly allows for this, although our mistranslated English Bibles do not. If this is not the solution to the passage, then perhaps another solution will suggest itself at a later time. In the meanwhile, given that all Preterists agree that the saints are now changed and translated at death, we have no hesitancy in recommending to you that what is true now, was also true then. Indeed, do not Jesus' own words require it? "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" (Mat. 16:28). Some would live until Jesus' return, and then die. Could it be clearer?

Conclusion

Of the three views of the rapture, only the "translation/change at death" model cannot be excepted to. The "covenantal" model is hopeless at odds with the cross, and the "literal rapture" view cannot be squared with history.



*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*

Questions from our Readers

Q: Dear Kurt Simmons,

Thank you for your most recent edition of *Sword & Plow*. I enjoy reading it for it forces me to find biblical proof for what I believe. On page two of the Sept 2011 issue, you present the following:

“Angels cannot sin; the seed of all sin is the flesh (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:19-21; Jam. 1:14-15). Since angels are spirit and not flesh, they cannot be tempted with sin.”

Do you have a previous document where you expand this thought? I had thought that Satan had been an angel that didn't like his position in relation to God. Wouldn't that be sin?

Thank you,

A: Thanks for writing. The "tradition" or "myth" that Satan is a fallen angel has long roots, going back many centuries. However, there is no sound Biblical evidence supporting this notion. The passages typically relied upon for the idea Satan is a fallen angel are really talking about men. Isaiah 14 is the source of the name "Lucifer" and is believed by many to refer to a fallen angel, but a close reading will show is talking about the king of Babylon, probably Belshazzar:

"Take up this proverb against the king of Babylon...How thou art fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Isa. 14:4, 12.

The name "Lucifer" is actually from the Latin Vulgate translation by Jerome, and is a contraction of Latin words "lux" ("light") and "fere" ("to bear, the same root for our word "trans-fer" to carry/bear over/across). Lux-fere means "light bearer," referring to the morning star, which brings day light. Lux-fere contracted becomes lucifer. The capitalization, turning it into a proper name, does not occur in the Latin Vulgate, but grew up separately by men misinterpreting the reference a fallen angel.

Another passage that is supposed to refer to a fallen angel is Ezekiel 28:2, 14, where the king of Tyre is called the "anointing cherub that covereth." This is an allegory about the king of Tyre being lifted up in his heart, supposing he is equal to God (v. 2). He is called a "cherub" because of the protection Tyre afforded Jerusalem by political alliance, going back as early as Solomon (the king of Tyre helped build the Jerusalem

temple). Tyre "shadowed" or "covered" Jerusalem, affording it protection on its north/west border. However, the king grew proud and lifted himself up against heaven, like so many other kings and potentates recorded in scripture.

A final passage relied upon is Rev. 12, where the "great red dragon" fights with Michael the Archangel. However, the merest reflection will show that this imagery actually describes the world civil power, Rome, often symbolized by a great serpent "Leviathan" who is the enemy of God's people, in the Old Testament various representing Egypt, Assyria, etc.

The scriptures are clear that the source of temptation is the flesh and carnal appetites. Angels do not have flesh and therefore cannot be tempted with its lusts or with sin. If they can, then we will still be subject to temptation in heaven, and this contradicts all Bible teaching.

My own take on the demons and devils in the Bible is that they are personifications of mental illness, physical maladies, and the inherent tendency toward evil in our fallen condition. There are some difficult passages that suggest there is a supernatural being that is responsible for all evil, like the book of Job. But Job is numbered among the books of poetry, not history, and the "sons of God" who come together are just as easily interpreted as men (see Gen. 6:2). In fact, if you will search your concordance, you will find that the word "satan" actually means "an adversary" and that it is used many times of men. But, that is just my view. Obviously there are many others who think there were/are real demons. Let everyone be persuaded in their own mind.

Hope that helps. Write again anytime!

Q: Hi Kurt!

So I talked with another guy at church on Sunday. He's one that has seen the AD 70 view before, was turned off by the aggressive way it was presented, and saw a huge blowup within a church about it. But thankfully, as expected, he was open to hearing it again and we're setting up some studies with the preacher and the two of us. This guy is a well respected deacon within the church. So maybe it'll help. :)

Also, I found out that when the former preacher did a sermon about Realized Eschatology a couple of years

ago, it was as a result of another local preacher. This guy had set up a "Youth Forum" and invited lots of young people and new converts to his house for lessons. He goes into Realized Eschatology and weirded some folks out, who then went back and told their parents. Our elders and preacher at the time met with some other local men and studied it, critiqued it, then offered to let him present some lessons at our church with the understanding that he would be critiqued, and he declined. They were upset that he approached the young and weak folks first. Not to mention that he was in favor of the corporate body view and the "Heaven Now" idea. To me those are pretty strange. I think you've done a good job explaining how Full Preterism is NOT Realized Eschatology in those regards.

Anyway, I hope your doing well. Thank you for your continued encouragement. I'm hopeful that things may turn out a little better if I handle this right. We'll see :)

Have a great day!

A: Hey Kurt,

I've had a lot of new realizations recently. Several years ago, maybe in 2004 or 2005, I had a discussion with my brother and somehow, his belief that AD70 fulfilled Jesus' return, popped up quickly. I shrugged it off back then and we never really discussed it except for his passing statement.

We used to race SCCA events from 1997 - 2003 and our team name was "Witness Racing." We always talked about Christian things and he was always a very moral guy. Around the same time that our AD70 short talk happened, he moved to NYC from small town Georgia, and quickly started leading a completely different lifestyle. Drunkenness, Cursing, Fornication, which still continue to this day. I originally thought it was just because he moved to NYC and had bad influences, but he's smarter than that. I couldn't understand what happened.

After reading many of your articles on Preterism and Universalism and seeing some critics of Preterism who say it leads to Universalism, I'm convinced that his new found preterism, coupled with his predestination/original sin belief has led him down that road. I always knew that he held a very Calvinistic belief, including predestination and original sin. We argued about those things in the distant past! But this helps me understand "what happened!" to my role model older brother.

It really has given me a little bit of hope that maybe I can refer him to some of your articles discussing that

topic. I haven't discussed it yet with him as I'd rather deal with the church folks first without his input. He can be quite the antagonistic older sibling! :) haha

Maybe over time, he can be persuaded to let go of those other doctrines and repent of his current lifestyle.

Have a great day!

A: I am sorry about your brother. It is true that there seems to be a historical connection between Calvinism and Universalism. Calvinism's doctrines of total depravity, predestination, and limited atonement seem to lead to an overcorrection to Universalism. After all, if God unconditionally condemned all men based upon what Adam did, doesn't it stand to reason that God unconditionally justifies all men based upon what Jesus did? It is also true that Universalists like the shelter of fulfilled eschatology, since it allows them to argue that all divine wrath and judgment was expended in AD 70 and that all men are reconciled to God by removal of the law. That is the route that led to Max King's undoing.

Write any time.

A: Well it's a really great deal! I'm really looking forward to reading ADUMBRATIONS. I read CONSUMMATION several years ago. It's a fine commentary.. Looking forward to a reread now that I understand Preterism better.

Q: I will tell you that some views in Consummation I have since rejected. I used to believe that our justification was in some form or manner held in abeyance until AD 70. I thought that the "change" of I Cor. 15:51 was "legal and covenantal" and spoke to consummating the marriage covenant. I have since rejected this view entirely and see it as false and dangerous, detracting from the cross of Christ. I now see that justification was full and free from and after the cross and that the consummation of the marriage did not mean justification from sin. The bride was washed and made pure at the betrothal stage, so Jesus could present her to himself pure and holy. The "change" I now see as speaking to receipt of our immortal bodies when called out of this life by the last trumpet marking each of our deaths. Just a note so that you read Consummation knowing I have changed that view and others related to it.

God's blessings,

A: Hi Kurt!

I've been digging into your Adumbrations and Consummation of the Ages book recently and am very impressed with the detail you go into in each of them.

Q: couple of questions have come to mind that I was hoping you could help me with. I know God destroyed National Israel and the Jews back in 70AD. What is your view on the current state of Israel and the existence of Jews? Is it just men attempting to create something that is named Israel? I know it has no significance to God as far as his "chosen people" but I can see people trying to use this as an argument of sorts.

A: The current state of Israel has no Biblical or prophetic significance. The whole thing grew out of the Balfour Declaration at the close of the First World War. The Ottoman Turks controlled Arabia and Palestine and Egypt at the outset of WWI. The British interest in the area was the Suez canal that gave them direct route to India, which was part of their empire. When Turkey took the side of Germany in that war, Britain felt it was advantageous to back independent Arab states and also an independent Jewish state on the boarder of Egypt, where the canal was. There is no Biblical significance to the nation of Jews today. They are antichrist and one must expect that heaven's divine wrath will overtake them again some day.

Secondly, the Kingdom of God is said to be a place where "neither do they learn war" and where peace

reigns. Is it a spiritual context? We are at peace with people of other nations who claim Christ? And we do war within the spiritual kingdom? I'm struggling to understand how that is. Especially when people say "why then is there still war and hardships and hurting people, and Christians being oppressed?"

The prophecy about the mountain of the Lord's house being exalted above the hills and its members not learning war any more points is about the spiritual kingdom, the church. When the Jews settled Canaan, "learning war" was a punishment for sin and rebellion. "Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof" Judges 3:2. Read, the passage in whole, and I think you'll see that "learning war" was a penalty of sin and disobedience. The prophecy of Isaiah (and Micah) seems to be that the history of successive invasion by neighboring nations would no longer be true. The church would enjoy unprecedented security as Christ guides history for the benefit of the gospel. This does not mean that we are immune to chastisement or that nations can apostatize and not suffer wrath. To the contrary. Even so, the general course of history from the gospel announcement until now is the advancement of the kingdom and dominion of the saints in earth.

Hope that helps.

Thanks for the encouraging word!

Kurt

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Simmons' Response to Tim Martin's "Covenant Creationism"

(Editor's Note: This is a reprint from an earlier edition of The Sword & The Plow).

Tim Martin is a great guy and I consider him a friend and brother. Our families have much in common, in both size and values, and our children played long hours together when Tim attended the Carlsbad Eschatology Conference last March. However, I strongly disagree with Tim's hermeneutical methods and theory of "Covenant Creationism." In the brotherly spirit of open discussion, I offer this short critique of Tim's recent article in Fulfilled Magazine (Winter 2009).

Faulty Methodology

The basic methodology of Martin's "Covenant Creation" theology can briefly be described as *a priori*. *A priori* (Latin, "from an earlier") is a method of reasoning that is usually deemed tenuous or defective and can be defined as

- involving deductive reasoning **not supported by fact**; for example, "an *a priori* judgment"
- derived by logic, **without observed facts**
- **based on hypothesis or theory rather than experiment**

In other words, an *a priori* argument is one that bases subsequent premises and conclusions upon the assumed soundness of earlier premises and conclusions, but for which there is *no direct or substantive proof*. This describes Tim's method perfectly. Consider "Covenant Creationism's" basic assumptions:

- The "end" treated of by the prophets was figurative; therefore, the "beginning" must also be figurative.
- The "heavens and earth" that passed away at the eschaton were figurative; therefore the "heavens and earth" of the creation must be figurative.
- The "new heavens and earth" are the New Testament and its people; therefore the old "heavens and earth" of the Genesis creation were the Old Testament and its people.

In each case, there is no direct evidence to support the ultimate conclusion. The truth of each proposition regarding Genesis and the beginning rests upon

conclusions abstracted from the end. Direct proof sustaining his conclusions about Genesis does not exist! *No prophet, no apostle, not Christ or any other inspired writer, or any ancient source can be cited in support of the position Tim takes.* The whole panoply of sacred writers and every page of the sacred text assumes the literalness of the Genesis creation. That is why Tim is forced to build his case from *a priori* arguments about the end.

Normal methods of proving the poetic nature of a passage would entail demonstrating that an inspired author spoke of the Genesis creation as if it were parabolic or a mere allegory. For example, if it could be shown that Moses treated the creation account in terms suggesting it was symbolic, this would stand as good evidence against its literalness. But, to the contrary, Moses *always* treats Genesis in very literal terms. From the commandment to keep the Sabbath to the chronologies of men's births and the rise of the separate nations, Moses always treats Genesis as a fully literal, historical account of how the physical cosmos began. In Exodus, Moses thus writes "For in six days God created the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that in them is" (Ex. 20:11). The whole debate about the literalness of Genesis can just about be debated upon the strength of this one verse. Moses' language simply allows no room to argue for an old earth or long ages of time in creation. Nor does it admit of an allegorical treatment that would make the heavens and earth, or stars and planets mere symbols. Moses repeats himself in Exodus 31:16: "It is a sign [*viz.*, the Sabbath] between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in **six days** the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed." The Jews were commanded to keep the seventh day because God did. Can Moses' intention to set out a literal account of creation seriously be disputed? If Moses wanted to be understood literally, is there language he could use that would better convey the point? No. On the other hand, if Moses wanted us to understand he was speaking in metaphors, there are many ways he could have made it know. But on the contrary, nowhere does Moses suggest Genesis is merely an allegory or symbolic. And all subsequent writers agree, never once departing from the literalness of the account (*cf.* Ps. 33:6; Heb. 1:10; Mk. 10:6).

Another method of proving that language is figurative would be to show that similar language and imagery is employed elsewhere to describe similar conditions or events. For example, it is no secret that the Old

Testament prophets made liberal use of metaphoric language to describe times of national and world judgment. When we encounter identical language and imagery in the New Testament in connection with times of judgment, we are justified in our estimation that it is intended to be understood the same way. Our decision in this case rests upon a sound hermeneutical principle called the *analogy of faith and scripture*: Like interprets like; analogous passages should be interpreted in an analogous way. But we would NOT be on safe ground to use apocalyptic language of judgment and destruction as proof that the *creation* is figurative. The two are *not* similar (indeed, they are opposites) and therefore cannot be compared or serve as guides for interpreting one another.

Moreover, figurative language of creation (*e.g.*, the new heavens and earth) in an *obviously* symbolic context such as Isaiah 65, 66 or Revelation 21, 22 cannot be marshaled as proof that the creation in a predominately historical book, which is *not* obviously symbolic, was intended to be understood in a figurative way. The two are not similar and therefore may NOT serve as interpretative guides to one another. There are books of poetry and books of history. One cannot interpret the other. Poets use the things of nature in non-literal and figurative ways. But the opposite is not true; historians and scientists do not employ metaphors and similes to describe what is real. If they did, we could never interpret their writings; the use of metaphors and similes would throw all into doubt. But this is precisely what Tim does; he uses the highly charged imagery of apocalyptic prophecy as an interpretive guide to the historical. For example, Daniel and other writers refer to the armies of Israel in symbolic terms as the host of heaven (*e.g.* groups of stars or constellations). Other writers make the ruling orbs of the sun and moon similes for earthly kings and potentates. Tim points to these examples and turns them *back* on Genesis and says “see, the creation account is a metaphor!” But this is absurd. Does the occurrence of figurative language in books of poetry make books of history and science mere fictions? According to Tim’s method, every book of history and science would be turned into a metaphor the moment some later writer used its language in a figurative way.

Reduced to a logical syllogism, Tim’s argument looks like this:

Major Premise: The prophets used figurative language borrowed from creation (nature) to describe the end.

Minor Premise: Language describing nature occurs in the creation account; therefore

Conclusion: The creation account is figurative.

It does not take a logician to see that the conclusion does not follow from the premises. “All crows are black. This bird is black. Therefore, this bird is a crow.” Really? Does being black make a bird a crow? What about ravens, black birds, grackles, and vultures? All preterists recognize the use of figurative and symbolic language in the prophets. The fact that a book of history like Genesis refers to objects in nature that prophets and poets used figuratively does not make the creation account symbolic, no more than books of history make books of mythology real. Each stands alone and cannot serve as a basis for interpreting the other. Moreover, the presence of covenants, promises, or even prophecies does not consign Genesis to the literary genre of the apocalyptic or justify interpreting its language figuratively. Almost every book of the Bible records at least *some* prophetic material, but no one would affirm that histories of Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers are therefore “apocalyptic” or intended to be understood other than according to their literal terms.

This is the fundamental failure of Covenant Creationism’s methodology: it assumes *a priori* the existence of one fact, based upon the presumed existence of another fact. Evolution assumes that because living species change over time that therefore life developed independently from nothing over time. But this conclusion does not follow nor is it sound. Men’s atheism drives them to this position because they are unwilling to accept God. In the same way, “Covenant Creationism” (driven by extraneous assumptions about the age of the earth) assumes that, because later prophets and writers employed figures of speech, therefore the first sacred writer used figurative speech. Because Tim’s conclusions do not follow from the premises, “covenant creationism” is logically and academically unsound.

Poorly & Inconsistently Reasoned

In the first edition of his book, Tim floated his “local, covenant creation” idea. He there *admits* that it was invented by Old Earth Creationists as an alternative to the gap theory, as a way of “rewriting” Genesis to avoid a young earth and the six days of creation. Tim states, “*in the mid-19th century another view was presented that explains the creation account of Genesis 1 as a local creation event...The Local Creation View as presented by John Pye Smith is a variation on the gap theory.*”⁸ Of course, if the “local creation” theory originated in the mid-19th century, no one would be silly enough to suggest that it was in the mind of God

⁸ Timothy P. Martin, *Beyond Creation Science* (2005), pp. 199.

when Moses penned Genesis. Moses would have known and his subsequent writings, as well as other sacred authors, would have reflected this fact. However, Tim cannot cite a single inspired author who agrees with him or who treats Genesis as an allegory. Hence, that should be the end of the matter. Case closed: the local creation idea is a modern innovation and we need not give it a moment's entertainment. Unfortunately, Old Earth Creationists never let the originality of their theories deter them from imposing them on us or the Bible. We are treated to a constant flow of new theories to explain away the Bible.

After admitting the "local creation" is a novel idea whipped up by Old Earthers to avoid Genesis' obvious meaning, Tim goes on to reject it. That's right, *reject it*, saying it makes no sense and would require taking all occurrences of "heavens and earth" symbolically, leaving no account of God's creation of the universe. He also notes that it violates important Biblical hermeneutical principles and patterns:

"A Local Creation interpretation is possible once we understand the covenant use of "heavens and earth" but it is *not textually required* in Genesis 1...There are some *theological challenges* for a Local Creation interpretation as well. Preterists rightly emphasize the common biblical pattern in redemptive development of 'first the physical, then the spiritual.'...A Local Creation approach *violates this Biblical pattern* by limiting the original creation to covenantal and spiritual realities. A creational, cosmological reading of the 'heavens and earth' in Genesis 1 fits with the overall pattern in Scripture of 'first the physical, then the spiritual.'"

After noting these objections and surveying other passages, Tim concludes that "a local creation interpretation in Genesis 1 is *highly doubtful*."⁹

Highly doubtful! Tim states that the local creation theory is a *highly doubtful*; that it is *dubious*; that it will *not* withstand normal scrutiny; that it's *not* to be credited by men of normal intelligence. Yet, Tim now embraces what he formerly urged us to reject! What caused him to change? The Bible? No! His lifelong commitment to the errors of Old Earth Creationism that will not allow him to accept the Biblical account of creation! He thus goes about to *rewrite Genesis* so it will be consistent with his extra-biblical views. *That,*

⁹ Timothy P. Martin, *Beyond Creation Science* (2005), pp. 199-106.

dear reader, is the long and short of the whole thing. We are not dealing with a question of preterism or eschatology or even hermeneutics, but Old Earthism and Tim's unwillingness to receive the Biblical account of creation. Nothing more; nothing less. In the new edition of his book, he all but admits this of his coauthor, Jeffery Vaughn: "*Jeff realized that the two issues of prophecy and creation are related, and has dedicated his theological study to developing a common and consistent view of both ends of the Bible.*"

This is not the method of science or academia; we do not go about "to develop a common and consistent" interpretation of writings. Rather, we interpret writings according to *intention of the author*. The ONLY interpretation that is correct is the one God intended it to have. For Old Earth Creo-evolutionists (for this is what they truly are, requiring billions of years for God's creation to *evolve* and come to perfection before it was suitable for man), for Old Earth Creo-evolutionists, I say, the intent of the author *will never do*. The Bible MUST be reinterpreted according to a forced paradigm that will accommodate billions of years.

A Brief Detour

It is my belief that men's inability to receive the Biblical account of creation is because they judge the universe too large and God too small; they imagine that anything so vast must be billions of years old. But let us take an imaginary journey to the beginning and see if the need for billions of years to create the universe cannot be dispelled. Let us imagine God seated upon his throne. Let us next imagine that he speaks, and by the breath of his mouth calls into existence a small cloud like those we are accustomed to see on a cold day when a man speaks, a cloud, hardly more than a puff of air, about the size of a man's hand. This cloud does not disappear into vapor like men's breath, however. Instead, it lingers, hovering before the throne. The angelic host crowds around to view with awe this new wonder. Let us next imagine that in this cloud are billions of particles of dust and vapor swirling aimlessly about. Now let us imagine that these particles are whole galaxies. Contained within these galaxies are smaller particles, containing suns and planets. Amongst these myriad galaxies is one called the Milky Way, home to planet earth. As the angelic host gazes with amazement upon the small cloud, God speaks again and says "let there be light." Suddenly, flashes are seen here and there within the cloud, like tiny static electric sparks crackling in a blanket in a dark room. So begins the creation of our world. Can it be imagined that God, whose breath brought this small cloud, this puff of air into existence required billions of years to make it so? It is such a

small, trivial thing, after all. From the inside looking out, it seems terribly great. We are told that for light to travel from the nearest star requires millions of years before it arrives at earth. Yes, from the inside looking out it may seem vast and that it surely has existed for eons. But, when we recall that the whole physical universe is less than a puff of breath, spoken into existence by the Word and Spirit of God, no larger than a man's hand, then the very idea of its great age and immensity suddenly becomes horribly absurd, and the notion that it has been around for billions of years becomes a sorry joke. Yes, I am convinced that our all too human perspective causes us to fall into many errors regarding how truly great God is.

We Return

Tim, unable to receive the Biblical account of creation, wants to rewrite Genesis. Thus, Genesis is about the creation of a local "covenant relationship with Adam and Eve" and with one fell swoop he opens the door to evolution and an earth billions of years old. *The creation of whales, fish, birds, sun, moon, stars, and light is all window dressing and has no literal meaning.* According to Martin, Genesis provides no account of God's creation of the physical universe at all!

"The original 'heavens and earth' is the creation of God's people, using symbolic animals and elements of creation."

God's people are the "original" heaven and earth? God made people first, then the world to put them in, so that the figurative and spiritual preceded the actual and physical? *And we are supposed to take this seriously?* I do not say this unkindly. Remember, Tim says that the local creation model is "**highly doubtful.**" It just happens that I agree with him. But Tim cannot make up his mind. Earlier in the *same article* he affirms that the Genesis creation is actual and literal, using real people and events:

"The Genesis creation is a symbolic statement, involving real people in real history, describing the 'beginning of God's covenant world."

Tim says Adam and Eve were literal people and the account is fully historical ("real history"), but then turns right around and affirms that the animals and everything else in the narrative are symbolic and figurative. Which is it? He cannot have it both ways. Either it is real history or it is allegory, but not both. What basis is there for saying Adam and Eve are actual, but everything else is figurative? Can actual people inhabit a figurative world? If they are not living

in an actual world, surrounded by real animals and trees, under the real canopy of heaven, where are they living? Please tell us. What is the basis for choosing those parts that are literal and those that are figurative? One's private judgment? The mere circumstance that the phrase "heavens and earth" occurs? Because God enjoins a covenant upon the couple?

This sort of discrepancy is all through "Covenant Creationism." For example, Genesis actually describes in *literal terms* the covenant God made with Adam and Eve. Moses is very plain that God charged the couple not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16, 17). *This was the covenant imposed upon the couple.* But if Moses has described in literal terms the covenant God made with the first couple, then it is plain that language describing the creation of the sun, moon, stars, whales, cattle and creeping things cannot be descriptive of the same events in symbols! What would be the purpose in that? Yet, if we follow Tim, Moses goes through this elaborate metaphor of God's creating light, air, water, earth, plants, trees, animals, fish, whales, cattle, creeping things, and men, all this we say, without ever hinting that it is a metaphor we are about. All this Tim asserts is mere window dressing whose only purpose is to teach us that God entered a covenant with Adam and Eve.

Mistaken Premises

The basic premise underlying all of Tim's "Covenant Creation" theory is that the eschaton was merely "local and covenantal"; that is, that it was somehow principally concerned with the AD 70 fall of Jerusalem and end of the "old covenant world," which Tim equates with the "heavens and earth." Therefore, to prove his thesis, Tim must show that

- the eschaton was primarily concerned with events in Palestine,
- involved primarily the removal of the old law and mosaic economy,
- the "heavens and earth" that passed away at the eschaton referred only to Palestine and the mosaic economy.

Conversely if it can be shown that the eschaton was

- not merely local or covenantal,
- was in fact *world-wide* and that
- the "heavens and earth" of prophecy do *not* refer to the Old Testament, but
- embrace the thrones and dominions of world governments and powers

if, we can prove these things, I say, then Martin's *whole hypothesis* is in error, together with everything built thereon. Indeed, while Tim must prove EACH point to sustain his proposition, because they are

interdependent, I can overthrow his entire thesis by negating only ONE! This is a heavy burden for Tim to carry and we believe that no reasonable interpretation of scripture can sustain it. Let us proceed.

Local Eschaton

Martin consistently ignores important passages and whole chapters of scripture that show the second coming was *world-wide*.¹⁰ We have shown these to Tim in the past, but to my knowledge he has failed to refute or respond to them even once! His academic methodology seems to be to simply ignore whatever does not fit his paradigm. I do not say that uncharitably. Tim is a beloved brother for whom I have great affection. But the word of God is sacred and cannot be dealt with in such cavalier manner. We want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! *Ignoring passages of scripture that show the eschaton was world-wide will not do!*

Some of the most obvious passages showing the eschaton was world-wide occur in Daniel. Daniel chapters two and seven deal with the latter days and time of the end. Yet, both chapters fail *once* to so much as mention Israel, Judea, Jerusalem or the Jews. Rather, they deal exclusively with the world-dominion of the Gentiles from Babylon to Rome, Rome's persecution of the church in the last days, and Christ's second coming against the Roman power. These two chapters alone are sufficient to stand Martin's whole theory upon its head! We encourage the reader to study Daniel two and seven for themselves. There simply is no avoiding the fact that these chapters have *nothing* to do with the AD 70 fall of Jerusalem or the Old Testament ritual.

James Jordan, in his new commentary on Daniel, falls into the common error of novice preterists of attempting to explain *everything* about the "latter days" in terms of the fall of Jerusalem and the Old Testament. He attempts to explain the "clay" of the feet and toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in relation to Herod the Great and Roman dominion of Judea. John Evans, in his book on Daniel 2, does the same thing. The proof text relied upon is the parable of Jeremiah 18 where the prophet watches a potter forming a pot on his wheel. When the pot is marred in the potter's hand, he took the lump and made it into something new. God then propounds a parable, saying, "O house of Israel, cannot

¹⁰ Throughout this article we define "world-wide" in reference to the civilized world of the greater Mediterranean man, including the Roman Empire and peoples bordering thereon.

I do with you as this potter?...At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it...etc" (Jer. 18:6, 7).

We preterists often focus on only one part of a passage and say "Aha!" but in our haste overlook the rest of the text. How many times have we seen this?! In this case, preterists (Jordan, Evans, and others) see the clay and God's reference to Israel and say "Aha, the Jews are in Daniel two; the Jews are the clay!" But, the passage is very clear that *all nations* are typified by clay in God's hands, not just the Jews. God expressly states as much. "At what instant I shall speak concerning *a nation*, and *a kingdom*." The armies of Nebuchadnezzar conquered the entire ancient world, from Elam in the east to Egypt in the west. As God punished other nations by Nebuchadnezzar's armies, so he punished the Jews. And as God punished the Jews in AD 70, he also punished other peoples and nations, particularly the Romans and persecutors of his church. Thus, it is an extremely selective reading that attempts to force the Jews into Nebuchadnezzar's dream; it is a case of our hermeneutic driving our conclusions. We correctly identify that the second coming was in AD 64-70 and that the fall of Jerusalem was deeply involved with the eschaton. In our desire to validate this conclusion, we attempt to explain *everything* by those terms. But this is wrong. The eschaton was *world-wide*. Consider these passages from scripture, which clearly show that Jesus' second coming was also against the heathen. We have produced these before. We produce them here again because, in order for "Covenant Creationism" to be valid, Tim must negative these texts and prove that the eschaton was not world-wide (e.g., did not embrace the whole *oikumene* world of Rome and civilized man). He cannot, and therefore his theory is invalid.

- Ps.2:8, 9 – Ask of me, and I shall give thee *the heathen* for thine inheritance, and the *utmost parts of the earth* for thy possession. Thou shalt *break* them with a rod of iron; thou shalt *dash them in pieces* like a potter's vessel.

This Psalm is about the resurrected, glorified Christ and the kingdom given him of the Father. Christ's kingdom is more than just the church; it includes all earth's nations, which he rules with a rod of iron, dashing to pieces those that disobey. *The dashing here corresponds to the dashing of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.* It is *world-wide* and is *eschatological*.

- Ps. 110:5, 6 – The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the *day of his wrath*. He shall *judge among the heathen*, he shall

fill the places with the *dead bodies*; he shall wound the heads over *many countries*.

The “day of wrath” is the second coming. The Psalmist thus states that Christ’s second coming would be *world-wide*; it would entail judgment upon the heathen and fill many countries with death bodies.

- Hag. 2:6, 7; 3:21, 22 – For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the *heavens*, and the *earth*, and the *sea*, and the *dry land*; and *I will shake all nations*, and the desire of *all nations* shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts...I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will *overthrow the throne of kingdoms*, and I will *destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen*.”

This verse is important because it is quoted by the Hebrew writer as about to be fulfilled in his day. Its first application is to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple under Zerubbabel; its second and ultimate application was to the kingdom and church of Christ. Haggai foretold a time when the wealth and power of the nations would accrue to the benefit of the Jerusalem temple, by the fall of worldly powers. This became a type of the victory of the church at the eschaton.

As preterists we have read this passage as quoted by the Hebrew writer (Heb. 12:26) only in terms of Jerusalem’s fall, but, as we see, its *actual, original, and intended* scope was universal – the eschaton would be a time when *all nations* were shaken and the throne of *heathen kingdoms* overthrown.

We should also note that the *heavens and earth* in this context point to higher powers and earth’s governments; they have *no covenantal significance*.

- Rev. 1:7 – Behold, he cometh with clouds; and *every eye* shall see him, and *they also which pierced him*: and *all kindreds* of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

This last passage can be translated in more narrow terms to say “*all the tribes of the land* shall wail because of him.” But no translation in print does this, nor would it fit within the imagery of Revelation which portrays the eschaton in universal terms, far surpassing Judea and Jerusalem (the dragon and beast and clearly Roman). Moreover, the word “also” – *they also which pierced him* – meaning the Jews, signifies that they too would see him in *addition* to earth’s other peoples.

- Matt. 25:31, 32 – When the Son of man *shall come* in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him *shall be gathered all nations*: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.
- Acts 17:30, 31 – And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth *all men everywhere* to repent: because he hath appointed *a day*, in the which he *is about* to judge (*melle krinein*) *the world* (*kosmos*) in righteousness.

These are just a few of the passages holding out a world-wide coming. Nobody who is willing to deal honestly with the scriptures can deny it. Yet, Tim ignores these passages, never once attempting to interact with them in a meaningful way. How can “Covenant Creationism” recommend itself to critical thinkers if it does not meet normal academic standards? How can we subscribe to a theory that *ignores* vast portions of scripture in order to make it work? Let me emphasize again that I have a great affection and respect for Tim. I say none of this with the least anger or malice. But let also say that I fear God and reverence his holy word! As Christians we simply have to demand higher standards of academic scrutiny than “Covenant Creationism” will withstand or has demonstrated thus far.

Heavens & Earth NOT “Covenantal”

The second basic assumption of so-called Covenant Creationism is that the “heavens and earth” are symbols for the Old Testament and that the “new heavens and earth” are symbols of the New Testament. We have already shown in other articles that the wicked are in the new heavens and earth and therefore they cannot symbolize the New Testament (Rev. 21:8; 22:15; *cf.* 21:27). We have also shown that those who do affirm that the new heavens and earth symbolize the New Testament have historically ended up teaching Universalism (e.g., Tim King and Presence Ministries). The better view is that the city, the new Jerusalem is the covenantal habitation of the saints, not the new heavens and earth. *The new heavens and earth are symbols for the world under the dominion of the reigning Christ*. The briefest review of Isa. 65, 66 and II Pet. 3 will confirm this. The world that formerly was under the dominion of the Gentile powers (including apostate Jews) who oppressed and persecuted God’s people is now under the reign of Christ, who rules in righteousness from God’s right hand with a view toward the advancement of his gospel and the chastisement of those that resist and disobey. But if the

new heavens and earth are not the New Testament, then it stands to reason that old heavens and earth are not the Old Testament, and “Covenant Creationism” collapses upon itself.

Tim relies upon passages like Rom. 8:19-23 in support of the idea that God’s people are the covenantal “heavens and earth.” He asserts that the “creation” of that passage is the God’s people, the Jews. But, this is mistaken. Paul says “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” (Rom. 8:22, 23).

Notice that *two* groups are under contemplation; those who have the first fruits of the Spirit; and those that do not. Those with the firstfruits are the Jews; the gospel was first preached to them and they are specifically named by John as the first fruits to the Lamb in Rev. 14:4. Other passages confirm this priority of the Jews (Eph. 1:12,13; cf. Acts 3:26; 13:46; Rom. 2:9; James 1:18). The “whole creation” is given as “every creature” in the margin and refers to the Gentiles. The Greek is *πασα η κτισις*. The identical phrase occurs in the great commission in Mark: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (*παση τη κτισει*) he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk. 16:15, 16). The identical phrase occurs in Colossians when Paul says that the gospel had been preached in to “every creature” (*παση τη κτισει*) which is under heaven (Col. 1:23). Therefore, what Paul is saying in Romans is that every race and people—both Jews and Gentiles—were groaning together in pain looking for salvation from the bondage of sin and death. God subjected the human race to vanity; not willingly, but in hope that they might seek after him and follow after his promises. In the gospel, the creature is delivered from the bondage of corruption; not all men, for not all will obey. But those that do obey attain unto the adoption and glorious liberty of the children of God, Jew and Gentile alike. Hence, there is nothing to the idea that the “creation” or “heavens and earth” of Genesis speaks to the Jews or the Old Testament.

There are numerous passages in the Old Testament where the symbolism of the “heavens and earth” is employed in the fall of Gentile kingdoms and powers. It is not used exclusively this way; sometimes it is also used of the Jews. But, Tim must prove that it is used ONLY of the Jews or people of God if his theory is to hold up, which he cannot do. Use of the “heavens and earth” to describe the fall of Gentile dominions precludes entirely the interpretation that they are

symbols for the covenant people of God. A single example will suffice:

“Come near ye *nations*, to hear; and hearken, ye *people*: let the *earth* hear, and all that is therein; the *world*, and all things that come forth of it. The indignation of the Lord is upon *all nations*, and his fury upon all their armies; he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the *host of heaven* shall be dissolved, and the *heavens* shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree” (Isa. 34:1-4).

This is one of preterism’s chief passages; it is solid evidence that the heavens and earth of the prophets are poetic and figurative for the world’s *thrones and dominions*. The nations of this passage are not Jewish; they are Gentile. Verse six specifically names Idumea as among those to come under a time of wrath. This completely flies in the face of Covenant Creationism’s basic premise that the heavens and earth have specific reference to God’s covenant people and *only God’s covenant people*. Yet, Tim simply ignores this and other passages that don’t fit his paradigm (Isa. 13:10, 13 - *Babylon*; Ezek. 32:7, 8 - *Egypt*; Hag. 2:7, 21 - *Persia and miscellaneous Gentile nations*; Nahum 1:3-6 - *Nineveh*). There simply is no credible way to maintain that these nations are in covenant relation to God or that the symbolism of the heavens and earth in these passages have reference to the Old Testament or mosaic economy or any other covenantal relationship. Thus, the second basic assumption of “Covenant Creationism” is seen to be patently false.

Isaac Newton gives the following correct explanation of the heavens and earth in prophetic language. We have produced this before, but include it here for new readers:

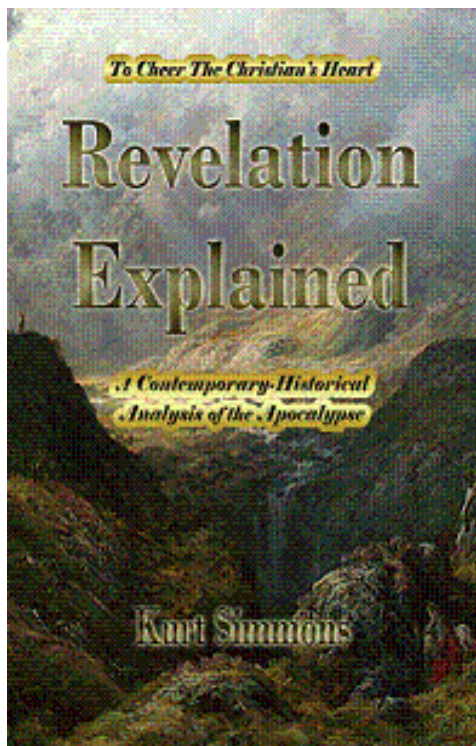
“The figurative language of the prophets is taken from the analogy between the world natural and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly, **the world natural, consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people, or so much of it 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." (*Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel*, Part i. chap. ii)

Conclusion

Each basic assumption of Covenant Creationism is erroneous. The eschaton was *not* primarily confined to Palestine, but was world-wide. Christ's second coming involved *more* than the removal of the mosaic economy and included a time of wrath upon Rome and the persecutors of his church wherever they were found; the symbolism of the heavens and earth NEVER refers to the Old Testament, but ALWAYS speaks to thrones and dominions of the world's governments and powers. Covenant Creationism cannot withstand close scriptural scrutiny and should be rejected.

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