

GOSPEL ESCHATOLOGY

A “BETTER RESURRECTION”

***JESUS PROMISED TO RETURN IN THE LIFETIME
AND GENERATION OF THE INSPIRED N.T.
WRITERS - IN A.D. 70 HE KEPT HIS PROMISE!***

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SOVEREIGN GRACE GOSPEL ESCHATOLOGY *A “BETTER RESURRECTION”*

“And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, *I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes*” (Mt.10:22-23).

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

“Verily I say unto you, *This generation* shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Mt.24:34).

“But *the end of all things is at hand*: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

“For yet *a little while*, and he that shall come will come, and *will not tarry*” (Heb.10:37).

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants *things which must shortly come to pass*; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John” (Rev.1:1).

1) THE QUESTION TO “END” ALL QUESTIONS: WHO’S REALLY “CONFUSED,” “MISTAKEN,” OR “IGNORING” THE DISCIPLES QUESTIONS ABOUT “THE END OF THE AGE” – THE DISCIPLES OR JOHN MACARTHUR, THOMAS ICE, KENNETH GENTRY, R.C. SPROUL, N.T. WRIGHT...?

Virtually every futuristic eschatological view interprets the Olivet Discourse to be addressing two prophecies: 1) The destruction of Jerusalem and her temple in A.D. 70, and 2) A future return of Jesus to destroy the planet, end time, or bring an end to the current Christian age. Because they all fail to consistently take the discourse in its original **context** and see that the judgment upon Jerusalem and the destruction of her temple in A.D. 70 is **the same thing** as the end of the **old covenant age**, they can never agree on what verses address AD 70 events and what verses address alleged future ones. A classic example of this futuristic confusion over identifying which events speak to A.D. 70 events and which ones are alleged future events can be found in the written debate between premillennial dispensationalist author Thomas Ice and reformed postmillennial partial preterist author Kenneth Gentry in their book, *THE GREAT TRIBULATION PAST OR FUTURE?* I will be interacting with both of these authors throughout my interpretation of the Olivet Discourse since they have both sought unsuccessfully to disprove exegetical preterism or my favorite term – Gospel Eschatology. I will also be refuting my former Pastor, College President, and author John MacArthur. MacArthur has also come out in print attempting to disprove my view and the view of another former pastor and friend of mine Ward Fenley. Therefore, I will examine MacArthur’s claims that Jesus “virtually ignores” the disciples questions about the destruction of the temple and his eisegesis of the discourse in general. I will be interacting with a wide range of positions and authors but primarily Thomas Ice, John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, Kenneth Gentry, Gary DeMar, and N.T. Wright.

As far as a flow and topics to be considered in our exegesis of (Mt.24:3), I will be answering the question of whether or not the disciples were “confused” on associating Christ’s return with the destruction of the temple and thus identifying what “end of the age” they were asking about in light of Jesus prediction of the destruction of the temple. In identifying what “end of the age” the disciples are asking about it is imperative to go back through Matthew’s gospel to identify what Jesus taught them concerning the time

frame of His return (Mt.10:17-23; Mt.16:27-28) and the declarations of Jesus' ministry of an "at hand kingdom." It is at this point that the theme of John the Baptist's declarations of an "at hand" kingdom, judgment, and harvest/resurrection will be woven in and out throughout this section.

My exegetical propositions and presuppositions for debate with any of the authors I cite and refute in this book are as follows:

1. ***The disciples were not confused*** in associating the return of Christ with the destruction of the temple and the end of the age. Nor did Jesus "ignore" their questions or interject a second topic – the end of the physical planet or the end of time. Nor did Jesus go on to discuss something that they never asked about – the end of the planet earth and time as we know it.

2. In the ***immediate context***, the "end of the age" in association with the temple's destruction is speaking to the end of the old covenant age or the mosaic age of the law and not the end of the Christian age.
 1. The context of Daniel's prophecy predicted the abominations and desolation or destruction of the temple as the time when the judgment, tribulation, inheriting the kingdom, and the resurrection of the dead would be fulfilled (Dan.7; Dan.9:24-27; Dan.12:1-7).
 2. According to Jesus and Daniel, these texts were predictions dealing with the "holy people" and the destruction of their temple as the point **in redemptive history** that would mark the "the time of the end" (not the end of time!), and would consummate all of the eschatological promises made to Israel in the law and prophets (Mt.24:15-34; Lk.21:20-32).
 3. The "end of the age" was predicted to occur by Jesus within the contemporary "***this generation***" of the first century church (Mt.24:34).

3. Theologically and contextually, the phrase "end of the age" or similar N.T. phrases NEVER speak to the end of the Christian or new covenant age but always to the end of the old covenant or Mosaic age of the law. Jesus' "this age" judgment and harvest/resurrection in (Mt.13:49) is the identical "at hand" judgment and harvest/resurrection John had warned of earlier in the gospel of Matthew (Mt.3:2; 10-12).

4. Therefore, what was LITERALLY "at hand" for John the Baptist as the Elijah to come to prepare the way for the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" was likewise LITTERALLY "at hand" in the N.T. writers day and spoke to Christ returning in judgment in A.D. 70 (Jms.5:7-9; 1Pet.4:5; 7; 17; Heb.9:26-28/Heb.10:37). The "at hand" coming of the messianic kingdom at the "end of the age" was neither

“postponed” nor different than the kingdoms arrival at the “at hand” second coming. The time statements in the gospel’s and the N.T. are addressing a literal “near” fulfillment and are not to be spiritualized away based on a twisting of (2Pet.3:8). Nor are the time statements to be “projected” past A.D.70 (1Pet.1:4-12; 1Cor.10:11). Any attempt to do so is to “go beyond what is written.”

I will have to deal with a wide range of futurists errors over what age would end at Christ’s parousia and which one would take its place. Because futurists can’t agree upon what verses are A.D. 70 events and which ones speak of an alleged future return of Jesus and they seem to be divided at times as to the meaning of the “end of the age,” it will take some time to sort through the various views and point out the flaws in each of them. Most futurists cannot deal with the straight forward statements of Jesus in the discourse that state “all these things” would be fulfilled in Jesus’ “this generation.” And for those futurists that have attempted to take a biblical definition of “this generation” in the Olivet Discourse as speaking to A.D. 70 events -- are then forced to interpret “**all** these things” as “**some** of these things” or they end up with the doctrine of two second comings, one to destroy Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Mt. 24:1-34) and another one in the alleged future (Mt. 24:36f.). At this point the reader is saying, “Man this is going to be confusing!” And yes, thank you for making my next point which is, the interjection of a topic that isn’t in the text to begin with - “the end of the Christian age” or planet earth, as opposed to the end of the OC age, makes the discourse very difficult to understand let alone explain, chart out, and refute the many faulty approaches that have sought to interact with preterist theologians.

Upon reading *Paradise Restored* on one of my breaks from The Master’s College I traveled to David Chilton’s home and began asking him many questions as to why he seemed to divide the OD into two different comings of Christ. I struggled why David didn’t go any farther in the OD in his writings than he did and I struggled with his lack of an answer to my straight forward questions. David didn’t even bother answering the questions I gave him on any exegetical level let alone had much to say about them, but simply **smiled** and said, “It sounds to me like you need to read a book by James Russell.” Of course I wasn’t real impressed with the interaction of my new eschatological hero at the time, but I did take his advice and began to read Russell’s exegesis of Mt.24 – 25 and felt like a burden rolled off my back! Here was a man that had written an exegesis of Mt.24 – 25 that was not divided into two different comings of Christ – but one. So in honor of him and David Chilton who eventually made it through the smile of being a partial preterist in writing but a closet full preterist in conscience and then eventually in writing and public testimony as well, I shall quote Russell here at length in order to identify what “end of the age” the disciples asked about and what “end” is consistently discussed throughout the discourse and the rest of the N.T for that matter:

“It is not easy for the ordinary reader to follow the ingenious critic through his convoluted scheme; but it is plain that the disciples must have been hopelessly bewildered amidst a rush of crises and catastrophes from the fall of Jerusalem to

the end of the world. Perhaps we shall be told, however, that it does not signify whether the disciples understood our Lord's answer or not: it was not to them that He was speaking; it was to future ages, to generations yet unborn, who were destined, however, to find the interpretation of the prophecy as embarrassing to them as it was to the original bearers. There are no words too strong to repudiate such a suggestion. **The disciples came to their Master with a plain, straightforward inquiry, and it is incredible that He would mock them with an unintelligible riddle for a reply. It is to be presumed that the Saviour meant His disciples to understand His words, and it is to be presumed that they did understand them.**

3. The interpretation which we are considering appears to be founded upon a misapprehension of the question put to our Lord by the disciples, as well as of His answer to their question.

It is generally assumed that the disciples came to our Lord with three different questions, relating to different events separated from each other by a long interval of time; that the first inquiry, 'When shall *these things be?*'—had reference to the approaching destruction of the temple; that the second and third question—, 'What shall be the sign of *thy coming*, and of the *end of the world?*'—referred to events long posterior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and, in fact, not yet accomplished. It is supposed that our Lord's reply conforms itself to this threefold inquiry, and that this gives the shape to His whole discourse. Now, let it be considered how utterly improbable it is that the disciples should have had any such scheme of the future mapped out in their minds. We know that they had just been shocked and stunned by their Master's prediction of the total destruction of the glorious house of God on which they had so recently been gazing with admiration. They had not yet had time to recover from their surprise, when they came to Jesus with the inquiry, 'When shall these things be?' etc. Is it not reasonable to suppose that one thought possessed them at that moment—the portentous calamity awaiting the magnificent structure, the glory and beauty of Israel? Was that a time when their minds would be occupied with a distant future? Must not their whole soul have been concentrated on the fate of the temple? And must they not have been eager to know what tokens would be given of the approach of the catastrophe? **Whether they connected in their imagination the destruction of the temple with the dissolution of the creation, and the close of human history, it is impossible to say;** but we may safely conclude, that the uppermost thought in their mind was the announcement which the Lord had just made, 'Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down.' **They must have gathered from the Saviour's language that this catastrophe was imminent; and their anxiety was to know the time and the tokens of its arrival. St. Mark and St. Luke make the question of the disciples refer to *one* event and**

one time—‘When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?’ It is not only presumable, therefore, but indubitable, that the questions of the disciples only refer to *different aspects of the same great event*. This harmonises the statements of St. Matthew with those of the other Evangelists, and is plainly required by the circumstances of the case.

4. The interpretation which we are discussing rests also upon an erroneous and misleading conception of the phrase, end of the world, (age) [sunteleia ton aiwnov]. It is not surprising that mere English readers of the New Testament should suppose that this phrase really means the destruction of the material earth; but such an error ought not to receive countenance from men of learning. We have already had occasion to remark that the true signification of aiwn is not *world*, but *age*; that, like its Latin equivalent *aevum*, **it refers to a period of time: thus, ‘the end of the age’ [sunteleia ton aiwnov] means the close of the epoch or Jewish age or dispensation which was drawing nigh, as our Lord frequently intimated. All those passages which speak of ‘the end’ [to telov] ‘the end of the age,’ or, ‘the ends of the ages’[h sunteleia tou aiwnov ta telh twn aiwnwn], refer to the same consummation, and always as nigh at hand. In #1Co 10:11, St. Paul says ‘The ends of the ages have stretched out to us;’ implying, that he regarded himself and his readers as living near the conclusion of an aeon, or age.**

So, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find the remarkable expression: ‘Now, once, close upon the end of the ages’ (erroneously rendered, The end of the world), ‘hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself’; {#Hev 9:26} **clearly showing that the writer regarded the incarnation of Christ as taking place near the end of the aeon, or dispensational period. To suppose that he meant that it was close upon the end of the world, or the destruction of the material globe, would be to make him write false history as well as bad grammar. It would not be true in fact; for the world has already lasted longer since the incarnation than the whole duration of the Mosaic economy, from the exodus to the destruction of the temple. It is futile, therefore, to say that the ‘end of the age’ may mean a lengthened period, extending from the incarnation to our own times, and even far beyond them. That would be an aeon, and not the close of an aeon. The aeon, of which our Lord was speaking was about to close in a great catastrophe; and a catastrophe is not a protracted process, but a definitive and culminating act. We are compelled, therefore, to conclude that the ‘end of the age,’ or [sunteleia ton aiwnov] refers solely to the approaching termination of the Jewish age or dispensation.¹**

We all know that in archery if one is the slightest bit off in his aim of the target at the outset, by the time the arrow reaches the point of destination it is quite removed from the bull's-eye. In the case of futurism in claiming that the Olivet Discourse and the destruction of the temple is somehow describing the end of the church age instead of the "end" of the OC or Mosaic age of the law, futurists aren't even attempting to aim at the bull's-eye but are rather shooting into the crowd and maiming anyone attending their performance. To miss the context and bulls-eye of identifying the "end of the age" with the OC age and the one to replace it as the "age about to come" as the NC Christian age, is to miss THE TIME FRAME AND MEANING OF EVERY ESCHATOLOGICAL PASSAGE IN THE BIBLE. I will go one step further and say if one misses it here on their eschatology, they have missed it in the soteriology as well. Are you sitting there thinking to yourself, "Hey man I'm a Calvinist and understand my soteriology! Maybe I'm still working through my eschatology but that's okay." No it's not "okay" and if you don't adhere to gospel eschatology, you not only do not consistently believe in the sovereignty of God, but you proclaim a Christ who FAILED. I reject the Christ of Arminianism who cannot save all He came to save, and I reject the futurist Christ who cannot save all He came to save WHEN He promise to save them! One cannot separate their soteriology from their eschatology – this kind of thinking has surfaced from a systematic theology approach to Scripture rather than developing a progressive redemptive approach.

The futurists first and most crucial error in seeking to defend that the OD is about the end of the planet and church age and not the OC age, other than just assuming it, ***is to try and create a problem that isn't in the text and they will go on to "fix" that problem with their particular brand of futurism.*** They state that the disciples were "confused" in thinking that the destruction of the temple they were looking at and the one Jesus is stating will be destroyed in their generation - A.D. 70 has anything to do with his parousia or the "end of the age." If they can persuade their audience that the disciples were "confused" in thinking that the destruction of the temple somehow meant the end of the planet earth, then they can come along a "fix" their confusion for us – thereby slipping in this alleged second topic (the end of time) into the discourse at this early stage. I will demonstrate that this is a purely an eisegetical assumption that cannot be proven and rips the OD out of it's immediate context and the context of the entire Bible for that matter. But first let's examine those who are guilty of this folly before giving an answer to them lest they think they are wiser than the disciples and our Lord in the Discourse. Let's take a look at how a "PhD" "prophecy expert" attempts to make the case that the Olivet Discourse is addressing two prophesied events and not one. Please pay close attention at how these writers create a problem that is not in the text and then their approaches to "fix" it. Within these quotes are some excellent admissions that I will use later on:

"However, they (the disciples) **were wrong** to relate the impending judgment upon Jerusalem and the Temple with the return of Messiah."

"The disciples **apparently thought** that all three elements - the destruction of the Temple, the sign of Christ's coming, and the end of the age - **would occur at the same time. Yet this is not what Jesus was saying.**"

"The disciples asked Jesus, "Tell us, when will these things be...? (Matthew 24:3). Thus, the first question relates to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70."²

"J. Dwight Pentecost tells us: 'The questions showed that they had arrived at certain conclusions... To these men Christ's words concerning the destruction of Jerusalem was the destruction predicted by Zechariah that would precede the advent of the Messiah. ***In Jewish eschatology two ages were recognized: the first was this present age, the age in which Israel was waiting for the coming of the Messiah; the second was the age to come, the age in which all of Israel's covenants would be fulfilled and Israel would enter into her promised blessing as a result of Messiah's coming.***'³

"Stanley Toussaint echoes this notion: 'This sequence is so clearly in view that Luke records the question concerning the destruction of Jerusalem **only** (Luke 21:7). **That is, the disciples took the destruction of Jerusalem to be completely eschatological.** Therefore, Luke records this question only, as though Jerusalem's destruction would mark the coming of the King to reign. Bruce is correct when he asserts, **'The questioners took for granted that all three things went together: destruction of temple, advent of Son of Man, end of the current age'**"

"While the disciples merged these three events into a single time period, **Christ did not.** In fact, **Matthew and Mark do not deal with the destruction of Jerusalem in their accounts of the Olivet Discourse (what?!?).** Rather, they focus upon the future days of tribulation leading up to Christ's return. Only in Luke's account do we find Christ's comments about Jerusalem's impending destruction (21:20-24). But Luke goes on to deal with future days of tribulation and Christ's return as well (21:25-36). For whatever reason, Matthew and Mark's entire focus is upon Jesus' answer regarding "the sign of [His] coming, and of the end of the age."⁴

According to Ice's *erroneous presuppositions* that he *imposes* upon the text, the disciples ask "mistaken" questions that for "whatever reason" (Ice's dispensational "reasons") Jesus doesn't address at all in Matthew or Mark but arbitrarily does in Luke! He admits that in Matthew and Mark the disciples ask about the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in regards to "when will **these things** be...", but then states that Matthew and Mark in their accounts NOT ONCE deal with the A.D. 70 "these things" which are GRAMATICALLY LINKED to "...**and** what will be the sign of your coming **and** the end of the age?" It is impossible to separate the phrase "these things" from "the signs" "the coming" and "the end of the age" that the disciples asked about! Jesus clearly goes on to discuss in Matthew, Mark, and Luke the "when will **these things** be" and they are inseparably linked with "the end" ("end of the age"), the signs, and Christ's coming! And "all these things" would be fulfilled in the contemporary generation of Jesus and the disciples (Mt. 24:34, Mrk. 13:30, Lk. 21:32). This is a deplorable attempt at exegesis of the parallel harmony of the Olivet Discourse among the gospel writers indeed.

To suggest that the "these things" in Luke's account is not the same "these things" in Matthew's and Mark's is simply untenable and we will cover this faulty approach more when we get to that section of the discourse but I can't help but cover some of it here. Ice realizing that he has to find some reference to the A.D. 70 prediction to the disciples question "when will these things be...", **arbitrarily** decides that Luke's desolation and

the flight of the Jews from Judea in that account is a DIFFERENT desolation and flight from Judea than the ones recorded in Matthew and Mark's accounts. In Luke Jesus says that the flight and desolation He speaks of is in fulfillment of "**all of the prophets.**" In Matthew and Mark's accounts, Jesus says it's in fulfillment of **Daniel's prophecy.** How in the name of reason can one make these speak of two different events separated by thousands of years?!? Obviously "Daniel's prophecy" is included in "**all of the prophets!**" According to Jesus did Daniel foretell **two** "time of the end" abomination of desolations in which the disciples were to flee the city when they saw it's approaching fulfillment with the Zealot or Roman armies (Dan. 9:27, 12:11; Mt.24:15f.; Lk.21:20f.)? The pure exegetical observation and obvious reading of the text is that He did not. It doesn't take a PhD to figure out that Luke describes the same abomination of desolation and flight that Matthew and Mark do, but *differently do to his gentile audience.* And before leaving this issue, somehow the "you" throughout the Olivet Discourse in Matthew and Mark according to Ice's eisegesis is not an audience related to the disciples or their contemporaries, nor does the "you" speak of them in Lk. 21:8-19, only does "you" take on a contemporary meaning in (Lk.21:20 - 24), and then magically "poof" from (vss. 25f.) they somehow refer to people 2000 + years away.

John MacArthur in his book attempting to refute preterism or gospel eschatology, makes similar assumptions upon the text and Jesus' reply to the disciples that I find disturbing not only on an exegetical level, but on a moral level:

"Whether they fully realized it or not, the disciples were actually raising multiple questions in Matthew 24:3. "When will these things be?" refers to the destruction of the temple and the events surrounding that catastrophe. "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" deals with a larger eschatological subject – the question of how Christ's victorious coming as Israel's Messiah fits into the whole prophetic timetable.

As we shall see in chapters to come, **Jesus' answers by no means erased all the mystery from those questions.** The interpretation of the Olivet **Discourse is no easy undertaking.**⁵

Hence according to MacArthur,

"...Christ's only explicit remarks about the destruction of the temple are those recorded in verse 2, as Jesus and the disciples were departing from the temple (v.1). **In the Olivet Discourse itself He makes no clear reference to the events of A.D. 70.** His entire reply is an extended answer to the more important question about the signs of His coming and the end of the age. **Virtually ignoring their initial question, He said nothing whatsoever about when the destruction of Jerusalem would occur. That is because those events were not really germane to the end of the end of the age.** They were **merely a foretaste** of the greater judgment that would accompany His return, **previews** of what is to come ultimately."⁶

Wow, Jesus "ignores" their question and does not tell the disciples when the destruction of Jerusalem would occur because it wasn't really that important?! The only "mystery" here is how MacArthur can't see that the OT prophets taught that when the temple was destroyed and judgment rendered upon Jerusalem was the event that would mark and bear witness of "Christ's victorious coming as Israel's Messiah!" The "end" that the

disciples are asking about in regards to the destruction of the temple and the “end” that Jesus discusses throughout the discourse (hardly “ignoring” it!), is found in (Dan.9:24-27; Dan.12). When judgment of the “Holy City” and thus the abominations and a desolation of Her temple occurs is when Messiah comes in His victory and consummates ALL not some of Israel’s salvation promises! Therefore MacArthur with some eisegetical slight of hand seeks to *minimize the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70* (Jesus allegedly “ignoring it”) so that he can **replace** the temple that is under discussion by Jesus and the disciples with the destruction of **another future temple** associated with a future tribulation period somewhere at the end of the Christian age which he obviously has to read into the context with his dispensational “previews” of things to come. It is very clear at this early point that John MacArthur is imposing his carnal dispensational system upon the text and thus violating all sound and normal rules of hermeneutics. John’s statements are not just completely removed from the context of Jesus bring up the temple, the context of the disciples question about that temple, the context of Jesus answering their question, the context of Daniel’s prophecy, but the context of all the OT prophets - because they ALL predicted their fulfillments to come in the disciples day and generation (Lk.21:22/Mt.24:15/1Pet.1:4-12/1Cor.10:11) and were NEVER described as “foretastes” or “previews” of something more “ultimate” to come! As Christian’s apparently we are in need of ANOTHER BIBLE, *The MacArthur Study Bible* to teach us these things since we can’t seem to be finding them from the teachings of Christ or His inspired writers of the NT!

The disciples were not “mistaken” nor did Jesus “ignore” their questions per Ice and MacArthur, for they and Jesus understood that the destruction of the temple they were looking at would bring an “end” to the Jewish or OC age. Ice is quite correct though in quoting Dwight Pentecost when he states that the Jews understood from the prophets that there were **only two ages** - “this age” (the OC age), and then the one to come - ushered in by Messiah (the NC age). Daniel clearly prophesied it and Jesus reinforced Daniel’s teaching. Both Daniel and Jesus clearly taught that when the “time of the end” which was also described as when “the power of the holy people was completely shattered” [the temple and judgment upon Jerusalem], was when “all of these things”, that is all of the eschatological things [The judgment, abomination of desolation, great tribulation, & resurrection would occur (Dan. 12:1-7→ Mt. 10:17-23→ Mt. 13:40-49→ Mt. 24:15-34=Lk. 21:20-32). So no the disciples were not “mistaken” in either understanding Daniel’s prophecy or Jesus’ teaching leading up to His Olivet Discourse concerning the “end of the age.” Jesus clearly asked the disciples if they understood His teaching on the parables concerning the kingdom and the “end of the age” and they stated:

“Jesus said to them, Have you **understood all these things**? They say unto him, **Yes, Lord.**” (Mt. 13:50)

It is clear that the disciples understood Jesus’ teaching about the resurrection and kingdom occurring at then end of “this age” (v.40) as the OC age - the one in which they were living and the one that was experiencing the harvest/resurrection (Jn.4). According to futurists the NC age (their alleged “this age”) hadn’t even begun yet so how can “this age” even remotely be considered the Christian age?! The only ones “mistaken” and “confused” on the identity of the “end of the age” are futurists in their various degrees.

In dealing with the Dispensationalists statements and to a certain degree partial preterists, the variations of the questions in Matthew are due to his Jewish audience as even the additional use of parables (over that of Mark and Luke's accounts) would validate. Any good Jew knew that according to Daniel's prophecy the destruction of the temple and the coming of the Son of Man would be the "time of the end." If Matthew is recording a second and separate question [per futurist and some partial preterists such as Greg Bahnsen and others] regarding a completely different topic "and the end of the age/world," then this would portray Mark and Luke as fools to miss such very important information on Christ's teaching in the Olivet Discourse. More importantly, the Holy Spirit would have only brought back to remembrance Jesus' teaching concerning "things to come" for Matthew but failed to bring them to Mark and Luke's remembrance in regard to a major question introducing the alleged "second topic." Besides if according to Thomas Ice Matthew and Mark are in harmony in predominately addressing only the future second coming associated with the end of the planet, then why doesn't Mark like Matthew record this from the beginning in the form of the question? According to Ice's unsound theory, if it were to be recognized, we might consider Luke's omission of "and the end of the age?" (Since he is the only one allegedly dealing with some A.D. 70 events - per Ice) but if Matthew and Mark are so in tune with each other in regard to post A.D. 70 second coming events then we would expect that harmony in the form of the questions as well.

Remember we today have the privilege of reading all three accounts but most likely the readers of Mark and Luke had to rely on those accounts alone. Mark and Luke correctly gave their readers the accurate information - that the disciples only wanted to know when the temple would be destroyed and what signs would precede it's destruction. No other separate subject was in view and therefore needed to be given. Matthew's account of the questions agrees with Mark's and Luke's except adds *Jewish overtones* to the destruction of the temple, which would be when the "coming of the Son of Man" would occur thus the "end" of her "age/world." Therefore, no separate subject matter in Matthew is added outside the destruction of the temple context for the destruction of the temple is equivalent to the end of the OC age and thus perfectly harmonizes the same subject matter in all three accounts.

When we acknowledge this we can see that in the case of synoptic gospel parallel's all three accounts are accurate and no *vital information* is lost to the respected audiences. Matthew's account of the Olivet Discourse in using "and the end of the age" is not introducing a new topic (the end of the planet), but this phrase and Greek word for "end" is used only in His gospel account (Mt. 13:39, 40, 49; Mt. 23:3; Mt.28:20). The only other example of a complete synoptic parallel is found in the great commission (Mt. 28:20, Mk.16, Lk. 24:47). When we examine these texts I don't see anyone concluding that Mathew's use of "end of the age" is addressing a different time frame or subject matter than the variations of the same teaching in Mk and Lk's accounts. Just as there is no reason to do it in regard to the great commission, there is no need to do here in the OD. The only other place this word or phrase is used is in another Jewish audience setting found in the book of Hebrews (Hebs. 9:26) which is addressing the superiority of the in-breaking spiritual new covenant age/kingdom upon and over against the physical old covenant age/kingdom and has nothing to do with the planet earth or time ending at Christ's return! Taking these matters in consideration, Matthew is only communicating

that “the end” and destruction of the temple are equivalent with each other and describing the end of Israel’s OC age!

We shall examine another futuristic brand that seeks to portray the disciples as “bewildered” - even postmillennialist partial “preterist” Kenneth Gentry in his debate with Thomas Ice in their book, *The Great Tribulation Past or Future?* claims the disciples were confused and likewise divides the discourse into two prophetic subject matters:

“In these questions we sense once again the **bewilderment** among the disciples at Jesus’ teaching—a bewilderment such as is seen elsewhere in Matthew, as in their confusion about the “leaven of the Pharisees” (16:6-12), Christ’s death (vv. 21-23), the purpose of the Transfiguration (17:4-5), Christ’s interest in children (19:13-15), and the nature of kingdom service (20:20-25). Quite clearly Christ divides their question into two episodes in His answer: (1) He speaks about the coming Great Tribulation resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 (24:4-34, which is in “this generation,” v. 34); and (2) His distant future second coming at the end of history (24:36-25:46, which is after a “long time,” 25:19).”^z

And joining hands in the fundamental error of Thomas Ice Gentry writes,

“As House and Ice admit: “It is probably true that the disciples thought of the three events (the destruction of the temple, the second coming, and the end of the age) as one event. But as was almost always the case, **they were wrong**.” Thus, Christ divided up the events for them. The coming “tribulation” (24:36; 24:34; cp. 1Thess. 2:16) and was to be foreshadowed by certain signs (Matt. 24:4-8). But the Second Advent was to be at “that” far day and hour, and was not to be preceded by particular signs of its nearness, for no man can know it (24:36).”⁸

But according to another partial preterist R.C. Sproul, Gentry is the one who is confused and not really arguing within preterist hermeneutic or frame work. Sproul when he points out the error of John Calvin on the disciples question in regard to the “end of the age,” likewise refutes fellow partial preterist Gentry whom he quotes extensively in his book. Sproul writes,

“Calvin regarded as erroneous the disciples’ assumption that the destruction of Jerusalem would coincide with the coming of Christ and the end of the world. **This means that Jesus was answering a question that contained false assumptions.** The preterist view of J. Stuart Russell differs sharply from the view of Calvin. Russell argues that the disciples’ assumption was correct – with one crucial qualifier: the disciples were asking not about the end of the world, but about the end of the age. This distinction is critical not only to Russell, **but to virtually all preterists**. The end in view is not the end of all time but the end of the Jewish age.”⁹

Hence,

“Fundamental to preterism is the contention that the phrase “the end of the age” refers specifically to the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the age of the Gentiles, or church age. J. Stuart Russell begins his exposition of this concept by referring to the content of Matthew 13:”

“...Kosmos in ver. 38, 40, refers to a period of time, and should be rendered age or epoch... It is of the greatest importance to understand

correctly the true meaning of this word, and of the phrase “the end of the aion, or age.” Aion is, as we have said, a period of time, or an age. It is exactly equivalent to the Latin word aevum, which is merely aion in a Latin dress; and the phrase, sun-teleia tou aionos, translated in our English version, “the end of the world, should be “the close of the age.”¹

Russell argues that the end of the age signals not merely an “end,” but a consummation of one age that is followed immediately by another. This was part of the traditional view of the Jews with regard to their Messiah. The new age that would be called the “kingdom of heaven.” The existing age was the Jewish dispensation, which was drawing to a close. ***This idea was central to the preaching of John the Baptist, who spoke of the time that was “at hand.”***¹⁰

Sproul is saying that according to “virtually all preterists,” himself and Gentry included, the disciples are **not** asking questions with false assumptions. In other words the disciples are not confused or need “correction” (per Gentry and Ice) in associating “the end of the age” with Christ coming to bring judgment upon Jerusalem and lay waste her temple. We wish that Mr. Sproul were correct on this point but partial preterist Kenneth Gentry apparently does not *consistently* admit or make the “critical distinction” that needs to be made in order to cease from falsely accusing the disciples of being confused – and thus promoting his confusing “exegesis” of the discourse. And if Sproul sees no false assumptions made by the disciples in the form of their question(s), then how does Sproul justify Christ teaching a future return of Himself to bring an end to the planet or end to the current Christian age when this was never the topic to begin with? No matter what version of the partial preterist position you take (which is confused futurism), you have the introduction of an end of an age and coming of Christ that is not in the context (or in the OT for that matter) and thus the partial preterist is just as guilty of eisegesis (reading something into the text) at this early stage of interpreting the Olivet Discourse as is the premillennialist (historical or dispensational), amillennialist, or postmillennialist.

N.T. Wright has become a popular and controversial N.T. scholar over the last 10 years or so and has made some helpful comments regarding the context, harmonizing the gospel accounts of the questions, allowing the disciples to have a more Jewish and apocalyptic understanding of the OT Scriptures than is commonly admitted, and identifying the age to come with Christ’s parousia in A.D.70. I will quote his comments on the OD and the disciples questions about the end of the age and likewise quote some more of his statements about the “end of the age” that he has made elsewhere in the gospel of Matthew and briefly critique them. He states:

“The questions the disciples ask Jesus are explicitly related to this prediction. In Mark (13.4) there is no unclarity about this: ‘When will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to happen?’ In Luke (21.7) it is even clearer: ‘When will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?’ We have already seen that Matthew’s use of the word parousia is not a sign that he has altered this meaning...” “...that has given scholars, and popular readers and preachers, the idea that the discourse is really about the end of the space-time universe. There was no reason, either in their own background or in a single thing that Jesus had said to them up to that point, for it even to occur to them that the true story of the world, or of Israel, or of Jesus himself, might

include either the end of the space-time universe, or Jesus or anyone else floating down to earth on a cloud. They had not yet even thought of his being taken from them, let alone that he might come back; nor did they have any idea of another figure, earthly, heavenly, or something in between, who would one day come on a literal cloud.¹⁰² Had Jesus wished to introduce so strange and unJewish an idea to them he would have had a very difficult task; as often find in the gospels, their minds were not exactly at their sharpest in picking up redefinitions even of ideas with which they were already somewhat familiar.

The disciples were, however, very interested in a story which ended with Jesus' coming to Jerusalem to reign as king. They were looking for the fulfillment of Israel's hopes, for the story told so often in Israel's scriptures to reach its appointed climax. And the 'close of the age' for which they longed was not the end of the space-time order, but the end of the present evil age (ha'olam hazeh), and the introduction of the (still very much this-worldly) age to come (ha 'olam haba') – in other words, the end of Israel's period of mourning and exile and the beginning of her freedom and vindication.¹⁰³ Matthew 24.3, therefore, is most naturally read, in its first-century Jewish context, not as a question about (what scholars have come to call, in technical language) the 'parousia', but as a question about Jesus 'coming' or 'arriving' in the sense of his actual enthronement as king, consequent upon the dethronement of the present powers that were occupying the holy city.¹⁰⁴ The disciples were pressing Jesus to give them details of his plan for becoming king, as David had become king, in the city that was at present still rejecting him. They were longing for their own version of the great event for which all Israel had been on tiptoe. Matthew is not, in other words, out on a limb from Mark and Luke at this point.¹⁰⁵ The question at the start of all three versions, seen from within the story the disciples have in their minds, must be read to mean: When will you come in your kingdom?¹⁰⁶ When will the evil age, symbolized by the present Jerusalem regime, be over?"¹¹

In another work of Wright's he states of the "age to come,"

"The final promise, that Jesus will be with his people 'until the close of the age' (hōs tes synteleias tou aionos), belongs closely within the 'two-age' structure of chronology which we have seen to be characteristic of mainstream Pharisaic/rabbinic Judaism, and also of early Christianity, particularly Paul.⁴² The point here is that the 'age to come' has now been launched with Jesus' resurrection, and that the risen Jesus represents and embodies this new age, and hence becomes the human bride between it and the present one. His promise to be 'with you always' is thus at the same time the fulfillment of the Emmanuel promise, and with it of YHWH's promise to be with even a small group of worshippers as though they were actually in the Temple itself.⁴³ It is also the sign that in him the eschaton has come to birth, so that his people are guaranteed safe passage through the present age and into the long-awaited age to come." Footnote 42 reads, "**On 'the close of the age' in Mt., cf. 13:39f., 49; 24:3 (where it is linked with the fall of Jerusalem and the parousia of Jesus).** See too Heb. 9:26; 1 En. 16.1; 4 Ezra 7.113."⁴²

Futurist N.T. Wright is correct here in identifying Christ's parousia in the OD with the dethronement of the then present powers of the holy city and thus Christ coming into

His kingdom. However, Wright and others such as Gary DeMar paint themselves into a corner and violate the analogy of Scripture when they separate the time frame of Jesus' parousia in the OD from Paul's parousia in (1Cor.15:23). Wright and DeMar play Paul against Jesus when allegedly Paul is now discussing a different parousia, a different "end," and covering a different time period of Christ ruling over His enemies than Jesus predicts in the OD. But according to Jesus, ALL the OT prophets and the N.T. inspired ones, bore testimony to a fulfillment no further than the contemporary generation or lifetime of the first century church (Lk.21:20-32/1Pet.1:4-12/1Cor.10:11).

How can Wright claim that Paul like Jesus identified "this age" with the OC age and the "age to come" with the NC age of the Church and *then seek to defend at the same time* that they are teaching two completely different resurrection/harvests at the end of the same "this age" – one in A.D. 70 at the end of the OC age in (Mt.13) and then a second resurrection/harvest taught by Paul some 2000 + years away in (1Cor.15) that none of the OT prophets predicted or Jesus discussed in relation to His teaching on the time frame of His parousia? Wright states the parousia, judgment, and resurrection/harvest in (Mt.24-25 and Mt.13) are the same and occurred at the end of the OC "this age" in A.D. 70. The problem with this is that Jesus is referencing Daniel 9 and 12 in both of these passages and if the resurrection had occurred in A.D. 70, then the ENTIRE fulfillment of the 70 weeks has been fulfilled. This of course is what I believe as well, but for Wright to admit that the resurrection in (Mt.13) occurred at the end of the OC age in A.D. 70, is to admit that the resurrection Daniel foretold occurred at this time as well (Dan.12:2-3/Mt.13:42-43). To admit this is to admit that everlasting righteousness and an end to sin came in A.D. 70. To claim that the parousia and resurrection in Mt.24, Mt.13, and Dan.12 happened in A.D.70 is to claim that ALL of the 70 weeks prophetic events occurred at that time as well. Therefore, exegetically and logically, to say that (Dan.12 and Mt.13) were fulfilled at the end of "this age"—the OC age in A.D.70, is to believe that Christ "put an end to sin" and that ALL prophecy has been fulfilled – "seal up vision and prophecy." But to believe that Christ put an end to sin at His parousia in the OD is to believe that Christ at the same time would bring the victory over the sting of death which was SIN, and thus the victory over the power of SIN which was THE LAW (Dan.9:24-27/1Cor.15:55-57). To believe that Dan.9 and Dan.12 were fulfilled at the end of the OC age in A.D.70 is once again to claim that all prophecy contained in the law and prophets has been fulfilled. But wait, isn't (Dan.7, 9, 12; Ps.110; Isa.25:7-8 and Hos.13:14) of which Paul quotes or echoes in (1Cor.15) apart of the "jots and tittles" of the "law and prophets" (Mt.5:17-18)?!?

Wright cannot claim that Israel's prophecies found in the law and the prophets were all fulfilled by A.D. 70 and then claim at the same time that (Isa.25:8, Hos.13:14) have yet to be fulfilled and are prophecies predicting the end of the Christian age. Were not these resurrection passages that Paul quotes in (1Cor.15) made too and thus included into "**the hope of Israel**" (Acts 24, 26, 28:20)?! Was it not Paul's testimony and defense that he said **no "...other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come"** (Acts 26:22)? This destroys the partial preterist (futurist) position that try's to dichotomize between resurrection promises made to Israel that ended her OC age at "a" parousia of Christ in A.D. 70; but then invents another resurrection promise to occur at the end of the current Christian age at another or "the" parousia of Christ. This is an eisegetical myth propagated by those "scholars" who want to keep their high

paying jobs funded by creedal employers and their financial supporters but having nothing to do with being faithful to the Gospel Eschatology of Scripture. However, we should thank Mr. Wright in at least having the boldness to correctly identify the “end of the age” or “this age” in (Mt.13) with A.D.70 even if it’s in a footnote. To Wright’s credit, by at least addressing (Mt.13) and making this A.D. 70 admission goes farther than most partial preterists as we will now take a look at.

Popular partial preterist speaker and author Gary DeMar admits that the “end of the age” in the OD refers to A.D.70 and does a fair job of developing the context:

“The “woes” of Matthew 23 and the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem were a result of all that **John the Baptist and Jesus had been warning the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests regarding the judgment that would come upon them if they did not repent. “All these things,” Jesus cautioned, “shall come upon *this* generation” (23:36).** It is after hearing about the desolation of their “house” – the temple – that the disciples ask about the “temple buildings” (24:1). Jesus answered the disciples’ questions relating to the time and signs of Jerusalem’s destruction, always with the background of Matthew 23 in view, since His comments in that chapter had precipitated the questions (24:3). **The Old Covenant order would end with the destruction of Jerusalem. This would be the “sign” of the “end of the age,” the end of the Old Covenant, and the consummation of the New Covenant.**”¹³

Gary does a good job of laying the immediate context of the OD by discussing Jesus’ prediction in (Mt.23) and likewise the impending “at hand” kingdom judgment that John the Baptist warned was coming in (Mt.3). In this same book *Last Days Madness*, Gary DeMar also attributes the coming of Christ and judgment of (Mt.10:22-23; Mt.11-12; Mt.16:27-28; Mt.21:33-45) as referring to A.D.70. But did you notice something? There is absolutely no reference anywhere in his book where he discusses the end of “*this* age” in (Mt.13:36-51). Notice in the above quote how DeMar italicizes “*this* generation” and applies it to AD 70 **but avoids a discussion** of (Mt.13:40) “*this* age” when identifying “the end of the age” in (Mt.24:3) as A.D.70! DeMar elsewhere in his book claims that had Jesus intended the generation under discussion to be speaking to a future generation some 2000+ years away he would have stated “*that* generation.” Apparently partial preterists want to make the argument that “*this* generation” is referring to Jesus contemporary audience but when it comes to the resurrection occurring in Jesus’ contemporary “*this* age” it just can’t be so – for the creeds don’t allow it! DeMar is also deficient in (Mt.3:10-12) in only acknowledging an “at hand” judgment but what of the harvest/resurrection?!? I challenged Gary publicly on (Mt.13:40/Mt.24:3ff.) and it’s inseparable time frame link with (Dan.12:1-7) on the Preterist Archive web site and Gary just said, “I’m still studying Daniel 12” and that he

“didn’t have time to pursue these things with preterists.” This is after what, at least **15 years** of being confronted by full preterists on these issues! Gary DeMar has had more than enough time he just sees the contradictions in his hermeneutics and doesn’t want to face them. We will later discuss the teaching of N.T. Wright and Gary DeMar in their attempts to claim that (Mt.24 & 25) were fulfilled in A.D.70 and continue to be fulfilled but that the resurrection was not associated with that parousia of Christ. While Kenneth Gentry is another partial preterist who doesn’t go as far into an A.D.70 fulfillment as Gary DeMar, he nonetheless has mastered the art of avoiding these questions and texts and has been “ducking” a formal debate with exegetical or full preterists for years now.

Now getting back to the question of the disciples and their alleged “confusion” about the “end of the age” in relation to the temple’s destruction. Granted the disciples were amazed at Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of their temple but they also knew that according to Dan.9:24 and Dan.12:7 that Israel’s “end” would be when “the power (that resided in the temple sacrificial system) of the holy people has been completely shattered.” As I will soon demonstrate and supported by the comments above by futurists N.T. Wright and indirectly and directly stated by R.C. Sproul, and Gary DeMar, by the time we reach (Mt.24) the disciples **correctly understood** that judgment upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple would be the end of their OC age **and no other!**

What Gentry, Ice, and other futurists don’t tell their readers is that Jesus clearly asked the disciples about His teaching on the kingdom parables concerning the “end of the age” (Mt.13:49) or “**THIS** age” in (Mt.13:40) and if they understood and they answered, “**yes** Lord” (Mt. 13:51). The only “bewilderment” here is how Gentry deceitfully overlooks the disciples understanding that the parable was speaking to the end of their “this age” as to the OC age and then try’s to give the reader some “proof texts” that the disciples experienced “bewilderment” over this phrase in (Mt.24:3) because of their history of “confusion” elsewhere in the gospel of Matthew. In other words Gentry is likewise guilty of trying to create a problem in the text that isn’t there. He wants to “prove” the disciples’ confusion at this point to justify the Olivet Discourse teaching a *second topic* - the end of the planet/history Second Advent (Mt. 24:36f.) into it’s discussion. **How can any discussion of whether the disciples were confused or not confused over the term “end of the age” in (Mt.24:3) be taken seriously when futurists deliberately do not examine the rest of Matthew’s teaching on this phrase let alone a passage where the disciples are explicitly asked whether or not they understand Christ’s teaching on the “end of THIS age” (Mt.13:40)?!** In Gentry willfully passing over this crucial text he likewise passes over a crucial hermeneutical step, and then goes on to pretend that he is doing some kind of thorough exegesis of this phrase and whether the disciples were confused or not when they asked Jesus about it. Enough said on what Gentry obviously can’t deal with and now on to what he seeks to deal with in order to “prove” his case of the disciples’ “bewilderment.” Will these “proof texts” that Gentry offers prove his case or strengthen mine?

The first text Gentry cites is (Mt. 16:6-12) where the disciples were confused over the “leaven of the Pharisees.” The text clearly states that they didn’t understand and thought Jesus was talking about literal bread (v.7) and then Jesus rebukes and corrects them (vss.8-11). From there Matthew tells us that they then understood (v.12) “then

they understood.” So on the first “proof text,” it only proves our case in that when the disciples are confused about something Matthew explicitly states it!

The second text Gentry cites is (Mt. 16:21-23) where the disciples are confused over Jesus’ statements of His impending crucifixion. The text clearly explains this confusion in the words of Peter trying to correct Jesus and then the following rebuke of Jesus (vss.22-23). Again, where there is confusion or error Matthew clearly points it out.

The third text Gentry cites is (Mt.17:4-5) concerning the disciples confusion over the transfiguration. Again, the text states their error of seeking to pitch tents for Moses and Elijah because the Father rebukes them (v.5). I will have more to say on the transfiguration later. The first part of the disciples confusion was in their seeking the abiding (“let’s make tents”) of the glory of the OC (Moses = law & Elijah = the prophets) with the EVERLASTING NC (Jesus = NC), (cf. Also 2Cor. 3 & 4; Mt. 24:35). The second thing they were confused on was why Jesus didn’t want them to speak of the vision (vss.9-10)? After all wasn’t Elijah coming in the vision a fulfillment of prophecy they asked (v.10)? Jesus corrects their understanding of this by pointing out that Elijah’s prophecy had already been fulfilled in John (vss.11-12). Then Matthew the narrator clearly tells the readers that then they “understood” (v.13).

The fourth text that Gentry gives is the disciples being rebuked by Jesus because they were rebuking those who were bringing children to Him (Mt. 19:13-15). Jesus rebuking them makes it clear in the text that the disciples were in error and then He instructs them on the kingdom using the children. Again, the text is clear.

The fifth example Gentry gives is that of the disciples understanding of being great in the kingdom (Mt. 20:20-25). Jesus clearly states, “**You do not know what you are asking,**” (v.22). Then He proceeds to instruct them that there can be no crown in the kingdom without suffering first (vss.22-23). Then He follows this with instruction on humility (vss. 24-27).

To conclude these “examples” in Matthew’s gospel we are forced to a DIFFERENT conclusion than Gentry. For in each of these Matthew is a very responsible narrator and explains when there is confusion on the part of the disciples and when there isn’t. When we come to the one question broken down in three parts in (Mt.24:3) there is no hint at all from Matthew that the disciples were confused let alone Jesus “correcting them” or “ignoring” (MacArthur). **At this point Gentry is just as an irresponsible “exegete” as MacArthur and Ice and has read his personal creedal confusion of the second coming into the Olivet Discourse.** We should however thank Mr. Gentry for taking the time to go over these passages that explain when the disciples were confused over something for in doing so *Gentry has proved too much and made our point!* And that is according to Matthew’s gospel if the disciples were confused in the OD Matthew would have pointed it out to his readers *as he does everywhere else.* But on the topic of “bewilderment” I should ask some questions in regard to Mr. Gentry’s statements quoted below where he seeks to speak out of the other side of his mouth and be a “preterist” in addressing the “end of the age,”

“Christ’s teaching here is extremely important to redemptive history. He is responding to the question of His disciples regarding **when the end of the “age” (Gk., aion) will occur (24:3). In essence, His full answer is: when the Romans lay waste the temple...**”¹⁴

And that,

“The **change of the age** is finalized and sealed at the destruction of Jerusalem; allusions to the A.D. 70 transition abound: “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1)”¹⁶.

And therefore this “change of the age” judgment in the context of the gospels is to be found earlier on in John the Baptist’s teaching,

“Matthew records John’s warning that “the axe is *already* laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (3:10). Here John draws his imagery from God’s judgment against Assyria (Isa. 10:33-34): that sort of judgment soon will break upon Israel. Indeed, “his winnowing fork is in his hand” *already* (Matt. 3:12).”¹⁶

Gentry unconsciously or consciously opposes another partial preterist and his mentor Dr. Greg Bahnsen because when I asked Dr. Bahnsen when I invited him to the Master’s College in the early 90’s where he saw the introduction of a different coming of Jesus than the one on Jerusalem to allegedly destroy the planet and to end time in the Olivet Discourse he stated, “In the disciples question – ‘and the end of the age?’” At least Bahnsen was seeking to be a *consistent futurist* at this point and interpret “the end of the age” to the church age but in reading Gentry one gets the feeling that he can’t make up his mind what arguments he wants to use - preterist ones or futurist ones, especially when he agrees with Ice in claiming that the disciples were confused in understanding all of the things they asked about to be fulfilled in one event ie. the destruction of Jerusalem. It is clear that Gentry then begins speaking out the other or preterist side of his mouth by telling us that the destruction of Jerusalem is the “full answer to the disciples question” in regard to “end of the age” and identifies it with the end of the Jewish or OC age. Well, WHICH IS IT? If the destruction of Jerusalem marks the “end of the age” (OC age) per Gentry, and that was the age the disciples asked about, then how does that make the disciples confused again?!?

The only reason Gentry has to agree with Dispensationalist Thomas Isce and others that the disciples were allegedly confused is because Gentry like Dispensationalists has to SLIP in or *read into the text* the end of the Christian or NC age (Mt.24:35ff.) to justify a future (to us) second (or third – per partial “preterism”) coming that IS NOWHERE IN THE DISCUSSION - either in the form of the disciples question or in Jesus’ response to their question.

EXAMINING THE PARTIAL PRETERISTS (FUTURIST) ADMISSION OF (MT.3:2, 10-12; MT.10:22-23; MT.16:27-28) AS SPEAKING TO AN AD 70 FULFILLMENT COMING AND JUDGMENT OF CHRIST

We are told by Kenneth Gentry, Gary DeMar, N.T. Wright, and R.C. Sproul that prior to Jesus’ teaching in the OD that He instructed the disciples He would return in the their **contemporary generation**: “in this adulterous and sinful generation,” to reward every man according to what they had done at the fall of Jerusalem in (Mk.8:31 - 9:1/Mt. 16:27-28). Therefore, if He returned with His angels and “rewarded every man” at “the end of the OC age” which was the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, then why is the judgment scene in Mt. 24:36 - Mt.25 linked to a different coming of Christ and a different judgment?

In regard to Gentry's statements of John's declaration that an "at hand" time for **Israel's harvest and judgment** of "unquenchable fire" and Sproul's earlier quote in linking John the Baptists preaching of the kingdom of heaven with the end of the OC age and the fall of Jerusalem; we must ask these men how and why is this fire judgment and harvest resurrection different than the one pictured in (Mt.13; Mt. 24:36 - Mt. 25; Rev. 14; and Rev. 20)?!? And if according to Gentry when he is speaking out of the preterist side of his mouth - that Jesus' "full answer" to the disciples question as to when the "end of the age" in Mt.24 was going to take place was when the Romans would "lay waste the temple," then how does this prove that the disciples were "bewildered" again?!? I think the real "confusion" here lies in the question of whether Gentry wants to be a preterist or futurist? According to R.C. Sproul a four point "Calvinist" is really "a confused Arminian." I would agree with that statement but would add to it that a "partial preterist" such as Gentry, DeMar, Wright, and Sproul are really "confused futurists." And as the Arminian gospel proclaims a Christ who fails to save whom He wants, so the partial preterist gospel fails to save all He came to save WHEN and HOW He promised too!

Since Sproul sees no confusion on the part of the disciples question I challenge him to produce the exegetical evidence that demonstrates that Jesus goes on to talk about the end of **another age** (the end of the Christian/Church or NC age) which is not associated with the temple's destruction (per partial preterism) and in which it is allegedly taught will bring an end to the planet earth – per Gentry, Sproul, and "orthodox preterism"? I publically ask and challenge these men with the question - ***"Does not the abominations and destruction of the temple mark the "end" to ALL and not some of the eschatological "things" predicted by Daniel's prophecy (Dan.9:24-27, Dan.12:1-7)?!? And is not the resurrection that Daniel foretold included within the list of "these things" that would occur when the abomination of the temple would take place?!?"*** If partial preterists such as R.C. Sproul, Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, and the like, admit that John the Baptist and Jesus early on in the Gospels are discussing Israel's "at hand" kingdom/age, and thus Israel's "at hand" judgment and harvest/resurrection, *and* that the "full answer" to the "end of the age" in (Mt.24) *is* the end of the OC or Jewish age, then, why is the "end of the age" in Mt. 24 different from the "end of this age" as found in (Mt. 13)? Partial "preterism" becomes unraveled at an exegetical level when these questions are asked.

It seems that Gentry *arbitrarily* uses the "end of the age" to be both the end of our current Christian or Church age, and the end of Jerusalem's / OC age both at the same time in some places and however he feels like using it in others to satisfy "Mother Church"!

If John the Baptist's "at hand" kingdom, judgment, and harvest/resurrection for Israel was understood by the disciples to be speaking to their day in (Mt.3), then how would they not understand Jesus' kingdom parables of judgment and harvest at the "end of **this** age" as anything other than the end of the age in which they lived – the OC or Mosaic age? Since there is consensus among futurists whereby they agree that the prophets, the Jews of Jesus' day, and the NT writers only taught two redemptive ages "this age" and the "age about to come," and that the "this age" would give way to Messiah's ETERNAL age/kingdom to come, why would Jesus be teaching, or the disciples to be understanding Him to teach - an end to an age and kingdom that the OT prophets predicted would have no end? Is Jesus such an irresponsible communicator

and exegete of the OT Scriptures - or Matthew such an irresponsible narrator that their use of the phrase "end of the age" or the "end of THIS age" mean two totally different things in (Mt.24) and (Mt.13)?! Only in the confused presuppositional world of futurism – *no matter what form it is found in.*

I should press the matter further by asking partial preterists Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, R.C. Sproul whom admit (Mt.10) discusses a "near" kingdom that is associated with Christ's "coming" to bring and "end" to the OC kingdom in A.D.70 (Mt.10:7; Mt.16-23) why and how when we come to (Mt.24) do the terms the "end" and "coming" of Christ get arbitrarily changed to the end of the Christian age? Approaching (Mt.24) there was nothing in Jesus' earlier teachings about the kingdom, His coming, judgment, the "end," harvest/resurrection, etc. that would warrant them being "confused" about the time frame of His parousia in associating it with the "end of this age" or "end of the age" as being anything other than the end of the age in which they were living – the OC or Mosaic age. Jesus does nothing but explain the *spiritual nature* of the kingdom throughout Matthew for those who have "eyes to see" and "ears to hear" and emphasises it's "at hand" appearance and judgment when He further bears witness to John's ministry - stating very clearly that **John was the predicted Elijah to come (Mt.11)**. John came to "prepare the way" not just for Jesus' earthly ministry but for the judgment coming of Christ which is described as the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal.3-4, see also context of Isa.40 – time of rewards and judgment). The phrase to "prepare a way" was a military phrase. If you saw someone outside your country preparing a way and laying level ground (Isa.40:4) it meant that they were making a road to come and conquer you. When we hear the word "way" we tend to only think in salvation and blessing terms such as a "highway of holiness" or "I am the Way..." but in Isaiah and the theological context of John being the Elijah to come before the "great and notable day of the Lord" this phrase marks a conquering "way" of judgment for those who had pierced and rejected Him as their King.

After going into a "far country" first, Christ would come back to this city as a victorious king to destroy those murderers in avenging Himself and his disciples. Although His kingdom and attended judgment was still very much "at hand" it would not occur "immediately" for He would come again and bring vengeance upon those "murderers" and "citizens" of the OC kingdom who questioned His authority to rule over them. He would do all of this by destroying and burning their city and thus transferring the OC kingdom/nation to the NC kingdom/nation within their existing generation – ie. AD 70 (Lk.19:11-27; Mt.21:33-45; Mt.23:29-36). Granted some of the people who had heard Jesus teach an "at hand" kingdom and judgment thought it to come "immediately" so Jesus corrects this notion in the parable of the pounds (Lk.19:11f.). Both premillennial dispensationalist Thomas Ice and postmillennialist partial preterist Kenneth Gentry error in thinking the parable of the pounds along with (Mt.24:48 and Mt.25:5, 19) teach a 2000 + year "long time delay in Christ's return."¹⁷

These texts however teach no such notion but do exhibit how an audience could get confused as to an "at hand" kingdom coming judgment to mean something that could happen "immediately" when the truth was that "some standing here will not taste of death," and "this generation" or 40 year period was actually a "long time" to someone who was in their 20's or 30's when Jesus made these predictions. There is no inconsistency here for Scripture or the one defending gospel eschatology or preterism.

In terms of redemptive history a period of forty years was "at hand" but in terms of those who thought these events would transpire "immediately" in their lifetimes, forty years may also be considered a "long time" to them. Thus when the lifespans of the original audience is consistently adhered to, "at hand" and "long time" are easily and exegetically reconciled.

WERE THE SOVEREIGN PURPOSES OF GOD IN ESTABLISHING HIS KINGDOM OR "AGE TO COME" "POSTPONED"? COULD THE CONTINGENCIES OF MAN'S ALLEGED "FREE WILL" POSTPONE THE KINGDOMS "AT HAND" TIME FRAME EITHER IN HIS FIRST OR SECOND COMING?

Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'" Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him. (Ps.2, cf. Act 2- 4).

*"My **covenant will I not break, nor alter** the thing that is gone out of my lips.*

*Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and **as a faithful witness** in heaven. Selah."(Ps.89:34-35)*

*"**Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,'"**
(Isaiah 46:10)*

He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth;

And the coastlands shall wait for His law." And "Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them." (Isa.42:4,9)

"And in the days of these kings (The Roman Empire) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. (Dan.2:44)

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, **and my understanding returned to me**; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; **He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"** (Dan.4:34-35)

"While we were still weak, **at the right time** Christ died for the ungodly".(Rom.5:6)

"But when **the time had fully come**, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Gal.4:4)

"**as a plan for the fullness of time**, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him, **according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory**. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, **which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory**.

(Ephs.1:10-11)

In relation to the real “confusion” on the part of the disciples - they like modern day dispensationalists, were “slow of heart” (Lk.24:25) to understand how the cross fit in with the OT Messianic kingdom plans. They like dispensationalists thought the cross defeated and brought an end to Christ’s “at hand” declarations. In dispensational theology the declarations of an “at hand” kingdom and parousia judgment to usher in the eschatological “end” in (Mt.3 and Mt.10) were intentioned and decreed by God to take place then, but then somehow the God who declares that He is not like man to change His mind (1Sam.15:29) actually ends up doing just that and opts for “Plan B” – a *postponed* kingdom. And the God that says no one can restrain His hand in the outworkings of His kingdom plans among the nations and men (Dan.4:35) ends up getting restrained by the “sad” rejection of His Son. Apparently if dispensational theology is correct Jesus’ declaration of, “**The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel** (Mrk.1:15),” should be changed to, “the time is *potentially* fulfilled, the *earthly and literal* kingdom of God *might be* at hand if everyone of you accepts my gospel offer...” I have yet to find a translation of this verse that fits dispensational theology. Nor when going through the gospels studying “fulfilled” do I ever see a “potentially fulfilled” concept! The kingdom’s “at hand” fulfillment was never conditioned upon the entire nation of Israel accepting Jesus as their Messiah! The “at hand” time frame of the kingdom not only predicted the coming salvation pictured as the harvest resurrection gathering into the barn of those who would believe in Him as their Messiah, but likewise predicted the “at hand” and currently “in hand winnowing fork” that would burn up those who would reject Him (Mt.3:2-12). Somehow in the mind of dispensationalists, “refusal” to have Christ reign over them in means that Christ postpones His “at hand” kingdom plans of salvation for the remnant and judgment for the “rejectors.” Not only are some of them confused on the “rejection” aspect of the “at hand” kingdom and judgment, but some have a hard time admitting the what the clear statement of “at hand” even means,

“When Christ presented Himself as Israel’s king, it was incumbent upon the Jews to repent of their sins in order for the messianic rule to begin. The issue of repentance **overrides** such expressions as “the kingdom of God is at hand.” However, even with this expression, the more basic idea is that the coming of the kingdom of God **is certain to come someday.**”¹⁸

Mr. Mal Couch in the quote above seeks to make an unscriptural dichotomy between repentance and the kingdom of God being “at hand” and then tries to even get rid of “at hand.” Mr. Couch refuses to see the context of judgment in John the Baptist’s “at hand” kingdom promise thus establishing the context for those who would not repent! Nor does he or any dispensationalists see that the rejection that brought about the cross as God’s means of establishing the kingdom in the pages of the NT -- hardly postponing it!

John MacArthur claims to believe in the sovereignty of God and likewise states that he believes that (Ps.89:27-37) teaches a yet future literal kingdom on earth through the Davidic covenant.¹⁹ Yet (vss.33-34) discuss how nothing will deter God from His great love for His people and He states, "I will not **break nor alter** the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David..." But if God predicted that the kingdom would be established during the time of the Roman Empire, and Jesus said that the time of it's arrival had been fulfilled, **to postpone the kingdom is to "alter" the promise.** The rejection of the Jews would hardly postpone Israel's "at hand" kingdom promises, their attempts only hastened their judgment and God "laughed" at their attempts to thwart His kingdom plans (Isa.2 – 4). The cross and resurrection did not postpone or alter His kingdom plans they established them according to the book of Hebrews and Peter. The rejection of Jesus the son of David and the Son of God was "foreordained" within the Davidic covenant and the prophets to be **evidence** that Israel was in her "last days" and that Christ was already sitting enthroned in His kingdom reigning over His enemies after the ascension (Hebs.1-2/Act 2-4).

Again, the **Scriptural position** of the rejection of the Jews that resulted in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ within the time period of "this generation" was that it **established Israel's kingdom promises of both salvation and judgment** (Lk.17:25/Acts2:40/Mrk.8:38-9:1/Lk.21:32). **The kingdoms "at hand" salvation, inheritance, resurrection, and judgment at Chris'ts second coming would likewise take place within that same "this generation" and "at hand" time period** (Lk.17:20-21ff.; Lk.21:30-32; 1Pet.1:4-12/2Pet.1:11/2:19=1Pet.4:5, 7, 17). I find it extremely disturbing that dispensationalist John MacArthur can say that "this generation" in (Lk.17:25) means the contemporary generation of Christ when it comes to the cross establishing *some kind or "sense" of kingdom* for the Church separated and distinct from Israel; but when "this generation" is used to demonstrate the kingdoms arrival with the second coming MacArthur arbitrarily changes the meaning of "this generation" and accuses preterists of insisting "on a too-literal interpretation of Matthew 24:34" and thus (Lk.21:30-32).²⁰

I think we should take some time to examine (Lk.17; Lk.21; and Peter's epistles) for a common thread of both the nature and time frame of the kingdom arriving at the second coming. The first exegetical observation is that the Pharisees were always hearing Jesus and John the Baptist teach an "at hand" kingdom and judgment and thus challenged Jesus on *when* the kingdom of God would come. Jesus answers the Pharisees question by stating that when the kingdom comes it will be spiritual, unseen by the physical eyes, and will reside in the hearts of men (Lk.17:20-21). He goes on to further identify the kingdoms coming with His return (Lk.17:22ff.). Peter likewise teaching on the prophetic sure word of Jesus' return describes the event as "light that shines in a dark place, until the mourning star rises in your hearts;" (2Pet.1:9; see also Jn.14:3, 23; Col.1:27). Obviously Jesus is the "Light" and "Mourning Star" that rises in the hearts of His people at His "at hand" return (1Pet.4:7; Jms.5:7-9) and thus consummates Israel's Kingdom promises which are the Churches as well! MacArthur has a hard time dealing with what Jesus is teaching in (Lk.17). John has to invent two separate Kingdoms to try and reconcile the clear teachings of Jesus here.

“So He stressed repeatedly that the aspect of His kingdom in operation since His first coming until now is spiritual and invisible (Luke 17:20-21), **whereas the visible, earthly aspect of His kingdom pertained to His Second Coming.**”²¹

And in MacArthur’s Study Bible he mentions of this text,

“They were looking for Him to come, overthrow Rome, and set up the millennial kingdom. Christ’s program was altogether different. **He was inaugurating an era** in which the kingdom would be manifest in the rule of God in men’s hearts through faith in the Saviour (v.21; cf. Rom.14:17). The kingdom was neither confined to a particular geographical location nor visible to human eyes. It would come quietly, invisibly, and without the normal pomp and splendor associated with the arrival of a king. **Jesus did not suggest that the OT promises of an earthly kingdom were hereby nullified. Rather, that earthly, visible manifestation of the kingdom is yet to come** (Rev.20:1-6).”²²

The first problem with MacArthur’s statements is that Jesus **does not say** that the coming of the kingdom of God in (vss.20-21) is a “new era” in His kingdom plans but what follows (vss.22ff.) in regard to the second coming, is His physical return to earth whereby He establishes *another era or phase of an earthly kingdom*. Where is this stated anywhere in the text?!? MacArthur has to READ THIS INTO THE PASSAGE AND IS NOT DERIVING IT FROM THE PASSAGE ITSELF. The passage is clear, **when** the kingdom comes it will be **spiritual** - non-physical (vss.20-21) in nature and it’s arrival is at His second coming in judgment (vss.22ff.). MacArthur admits that (Lk.17) is teaching the same second coming as (Lk.21) and therefore Lk.21 further demonstrates that Jesus was teaching that the kingdom the Pharisees were asking about (and the one the disciples were asking about as well!) would come in their generation (Lk.21:20-32). How in the name of reason and exegesis does MacArthur justify Jesus allegedly teaching two different “era’s” or kingdoms one spiritual and one physical separated by 2000 + years apart between (v.21) and (v.22ff.)?!?

Not only is MacArthur making an artificial distinction between a spiritual kingdom era in (Lk.17:20-21) for the church and then a physical kingdom era allegedly arriving someday in the future at the second coming (vss.22ff.), but the hermeneutical argument of Scripture interprets Scripture disproves MacArthur’s eisegesis as well here. Jesus as He does in (Lk.17:20-21ff.) elsewhere taught this concept of making His home in the hearts of His people at the second coming and not just some interim period during the Church kingdom/age (Jn.14:3; 23). And to bring the hermeneutical argument a step further – this is how both Peter and Paul saw Jesus teaching His second coming and followed it to the tee. According to them the second coming would usher in their entrance and inheritance into the kingdom and this was described as the “Light,” “Mourning Star,” and “Glory” of the spiritual NC kingdom (Christ) within the hearts of His people (2Pet.2:19; Col.1:27). So the distinctions that MacArthur is trying to make in regards to Christ being in the hearts of His people during the spiritual kingdom/Church age but one day at His second coming He will reign literally on the earth – and everyone’s eyes will physically see His kingdom on earth - is not Scriptural.

In prepping for his “exegesis” of (Mt.24:3) we are told that the disciples were “faithful Jews” like their contemporaries and modern day dispensationalists and thus were expecting a physical, military, nationalistic, and earthly millennium/kingdom coming of Christ. MacArthur NEVER proves or does any exegesis to demonstrate that the

kingdom Jesus was offering was the same earthly or nationalistic “kingdom” he ASSUMES the OT prophets predicted. Nor does he attempt to prove that any of the inspired NT writers defended a postponed and future physical coming kingdom “some day.” In fact MacArthur’s purpose in his book is simply a mantra cry of dispensationalism to rally their troops and serves as nothing else. Exegesis or refutation of the preterist view is nowhere to be found in any of its pages. According to MacArthur, the physical, earthly, nationalistic, kingdom is what Jesus was offering and was His for the asking:

“To the disciples, it must have seemed that the kingdom was virtually His for the asking.”²³

Well, what MacArthur doesn’t tell his readers here is that this allegedly correct physical OT predicted “earthly kingdom” that every “faithful Jew” was expecting and the one He was allegedly offering in the beginning of His ministry was indeed His for the asking and THAT HE FLAT OUT REJECTED IT in (Jn.6:14-15)! Not only did He deny their offer to make Him king of a literal kingdom on earth, but the next day He went on rebuking them for their fundamental error of thinking the kingdom was physical and went on to teach the spiritual nature of His kingdom. Please compare what Jesus says about physical bread and water with spiritual bread and water in (Jn.4 and Jn.6) in His kingdom offer with the text MacArthur quotes of Paul in (Rms.14:17). Please note the similarities between the kingdom not being physical or manifested through physical nourishment but spiritual. I would agree with MacArthur that in (Rms.14:17) Paul is teaching the spiritual nature of the kingdom, but he is teaching it because Jesus taught it in (Jn.6) which is a passage that MacArthur can’t have Jesus offering a spiritual kingdom, because (Jn.6) is a time in Jesus earthly ministry where per dispensational theology Jesus was still offering a physical earthly kingdom to Israel! (Jn.6) also disproves the dispensational notion that Jesus postponed the literal kingdom offer to Israel based upon their rejection of Him. This is not true, for Jesus rejected the physical nature of the kingdom they were offering Him **before** (Mt.12) is entered into the picture.

According to dispensationalism, shouldn’t Christ have taken the offer of the physical and earthly kingdom and why was He teaching on the spiritual nature of the kingdom when that “era” hadn’t come because the Jews hadn’t rejected Him yet? He shouldn’t have been telling the woman at the well about the spiritual nature of the kingdom in His teaching of the spiritual living waters that would flow from worshipping God “in spirit and in truth” and thus an “at hand” kingdom or soon approaching spiritual Mt. Zion (Jn.4/Hebs.12). Jesus in (Jn.4 & 6) in discussing the spiritual living waters, bread from heaven, and a day coming where His worshippers would worship Him “in spirit,” (from a spiritual Jerusalem or Mount Zion is implied Heb.12), He is unfolding the “true” spiritual nature of the kingdom as foretold by the prophets (Isa.44:3f., Isa.55:1-3f.).

The plain, straightforward, and exegetical reasons why we find Jesus teaching a spiritual kingdom and even associating it with His return in the hearts of His people, when He was supposed to be teaching and offering a physical “earthly” kingdom (per the dispy’s), is because NONE of the OT prophets, Jesus, or the NT writers EVER taught that the Messiah’s kingdom would be physical in nature! This is likewise the reason why we find Him rejecting an offer of a physical kingdom when He was supposed to be offering a physical kingdom to the Jews (again per dispy’s). The NC kingdom of Messiah that was predicted by the OT prophets was to be different than

their previous nationalistic “salvations” under the OC. Messiah’s kingdom would be eternal and included the Gentiles – the Church. The OT writers and the NT writers never predicted two kingdoms – a spiritual one for the Gentile church and another literal one for Israel in the alleged future. The same reasons why the Jews rejected Jesus in the first century are the same reasons why dispensationalists and *all futurists* reject preterism or gospel eschatology today. They have set their hearts and minds on a physical kingdom that won’t be ushered in until they physically see Christ and He establishes a physical kingdom on earth in which their physical eyes can behold. Christ not only refutes this notion in (Lk.17), but Paul and the writer to the Hebrews states that the Christian’s faith and hope were not on things which could be seen but on those things which could not be seen (Rms.8:24-25; Hebs.11:1/Heb.12). As I will argue later, the Christian today is residing in a heavenly Mt. Zion that rests on a NC creation – the New Heavens and New Earth. Both spiritual Mt. Zion and the New Heavens and New Earth are synonymous for the SPIRITUAL NC Kingdom of God that was LITERALLY “at hand” in the first century.

Let’s make it clear what MacArthur and other dispensationalists such as Thomas Ice are saying in regards to Christ preaching an “at hand kingdom.” Most (not all – see Couch’s quote above on “at hand”) take “at hand” literally when it comes to Jesus offering an alleged physical kingdom to Israel, but since the Jews rejected Jesus’s offer of this “physical” kingdom/“age to come”, we have to settle for the Church (which the OT prophets didn’t predict – per their view) until the “literal real deal kingdom” for Israel swings back around again. The cross is at odds with the kingdom promises and apparently is a “sad reality” in God’s sovereign redemptive plan,

“I believe the Scriptures teach that Israel could have obtained her much-sought-after messianic kingdom by recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. We all know the— **sad reality the Jews rejected Jesus. As a result, the kingdom is no longer near but postponed**, awaiting Jewish belief, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation. However, during the intervening church age, which currently occupies history, **there is the overhanging possibility that at any moment God will bring that last believer into His spiritual body, the rapture of the church, and resume Israel’s final week...**”²⁴

According to most dispensationalists (who are Arminian) and believe that God’s will is to save everyone and that His will is constantly being thwarted by the “free will” of man – the question begging to be answered here is “How can Ice and all dispensationalists in their interpretation of Scripture ever guarantee that God will save that “last believer” since part of the “sad reality” was He couldn’t change the hearts of the Jews to accept Jesus the first time around! Even a Preterist and *Arminian* Don Preston doesn’t understand this logic,

“That which was rejected at the time of his first coming will now be accepted and fully realized as he reigns on earth for a 1000 years.” (Prophecy, 260). *And just why should we believe this?* If man’s unbelief thwarted God the first time, what prevents that same unbelief from preventing His success the second time? It is responded that this time, it is God’s sovereignty, His Will and majesty, that will succeed. Well, was God not sovereign at Jesus’ first coming? Was it not truly His will to establish the kingdom the first time around? If the sovereignty of God ensures success the second time, why did it not ensure success the first?”²⁵

Preston goes on to point out,

“Now if Jehovah knew, before He ever sent Jesus, that the Jews were going to reject him, but, in full knowledge of that coming rejection, sent him to establish the kingdom anyway, does it not follow that He was going to use that rejection as part of His plan to establish the kingdom? If God knew in advance, that the Jews were going to reject Jesus’ kingdom offer, but He sent him anyway, and said it was “just the right time,” then does it not follow that God knew precisely what He was doing, and that Jesus’ rejection was in fact a part of the kingdom plan?

The only way for the modern postponement theory to be true is if God did not know that the Jews would reject His Son, so that, when they did, He had to alter His plan. But remember, the prophecies said He did know they were going to reject him, and He said he was not going to alter His plans. His Son would not fail! IF YOUR THEOLOGY SAYS THAT GOD FAILED, YOU NEED TO CHANGE YOUR THEOLOGY!”²⁶

Preston’s points are right on target except I find it odd that a Church of Christ Arminian seems to adhere more to the sovereignty of God than even MacArthur or Thomas Ice in establishing the kingdom! I would disagree with Don a little here and modify the argument to make it **more Biblical by stating it is more** than God’s divine omniscience or Him seeing what will happen in advance that guarantees any prophecy’s fulfillment. It is God “determining” and “ordaining” these prophecies by way of individual men rejecting and accepting Christ that would bring the kingdom prophecies to pass. God had ordained Judas to reject Him in order for the prophecies of the cross to occur, and “*when it pleased God*” to reveal His Son in Paul, He sovereignly ordained and saved him to function as an abassabor of light to the Gentiles and thus bring the Great Commission to it’s time of fulfillment before Christ’s return in A.D.70. Although these are good comments by Don, Preston’s Arminianism cannot **consistently** be brought into preterism or Gospel Eschatology in explaining God’s sovereign will for His new creation – during the transition period, A.D. 70, or in the NC age today. Consistent Arminianism within Preston’s Church of Christ denominations or even outside of it in mainstream “evangelicalism” denies God’s complete omniscience because they know to believe this is to deny man’s “free will.” Please pay close attention to one of Arminianisms leading “theologians” (I use the term in gest):

“Having created human beings with relative autonomy alongside himself, God voluntarily limits his power to enable them to exist and to share in the divine creativity. **God invites humans to share in deciding what the future will be.** God does not take it upon his shoulders.”²⁷

“Finally I had to rethink the divine omniscience and reluctantly ask whether we ought to think of it as an exhaustive foreknowledge of everything that will ever happen, as even most Arminians do. I found I could not shake off the intuition that such a total omniscience would necessarily mean that everything we will ever choose in the future will have been already spelled out in the divine knowledge register, and consequently the belief that we have truly significant choices to make would seem to be mistaken. **I knew the Calvinist argument that exhaustive foreknowledge was tantamount to predestination because it implies the fixity of all things from “eternity past,” and I could not shake off its logical force.** I feared that, if we view God as timeless and omniscient, we

will land back in the camp of theological determinism where these notions naturally belong. I makes no sense to espouse conditionality and then threaten it by other assumptions that we make."²⁸

At least Pinnock is honestly making the proper connections here in that if God knows everything that will happen it means that He has predestined and foreordained the choices of men beforehand and this would mean that man's will cannot truly be "free" and autonomously independent of Him. To have man's will autonomously "free" of God is the aim and foundation of Arminianism. God wants to save everyone but can't because of man's "free will" and thus God's will is frustrated. And once a man trusts in Christ, His will can be frustrated again because this "saint" can now choose to be a "lost sinner" again. To give the reader an example of the force of the "Calvinistic argument" that Pinnock could not shake off, I have listed a few good quotes:

"The Arminian doctrine, in rejecting foreordination, rejects the theistic basis for foreknowledge. Common sense tells us that no event can be foreknown unless by some means, either physical or mental, it has been predetermined. Our choice as to what determines the certainty of future events narrows down to two alternatives - the foreordination of the wise and merciful heavenly Father, or the working of blind, physical fate."²⁹

"Some [Arminians] have gone so far as to tell us plainly that men had better reject foreknowledge than admit Predestination. Others have suggested that God may voluntarily neglect to know some of the acts of men in order to leave them free; but his of course destroys the omniscience of God. Still others have suggested that God's omniscience may imply only that He can know all things, if He chooses, - just as His omnipotence implies that He can do all things, if He chooses. But the comparison will not hold, for these certain acts are not merely possibilities but realities, although yet future; and to ascribe ignorance to God concerning these is to deny Him the attribute of omniscience. This explanation would give us the absurdity of an omniscience that is not omniscient."³⁰

"Since God's foreknowledge is complete, He knows the destiny of every person, not merely before the person has made his choice in this life, but from eternity. And since He knows their destiny before they are created, and then proceeds to create, it is plain that the saved and the lost alike fulfill His plan for them; for if He did not plan that any particular ones should be lost, He could at least refrain from creating them. We conclude, then, that the Christian doctrine of the Foreknowledge of God proves also His Predestination. Since these events are foreknown, they are fixed and settled things; and nothing can have fixed and settled them except the good pleasure of God, - the great first cause, - freely and unchangeably foreordaining whatever comes to pass. The whole difficulty lies in the acts of free agents being certain; yet certainty is required for foreknowledge as well as for foreordination. The Arminian arguments, if valid, would disprove both foreknowledge and foreordination. And since they prove too much we conclude that they prove nothing at all."³¹

Gordon Clark wrote of the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and A.D.70:

"The fulfillment of any one prophecy requires control of the whole universe, lest something prevent its occurrence. When then God says, My counsel shall stand, he asserts omniscient control. This is his pleasure. He has arranged things so. He did not merely look ahead and see what would happen independently of him. Nothing is independent of him. He created all things. Thus the course of history from the past on to the things that are not yet done are parts of God's plan; and God, declaring the end from the beginning, says, my counsel, my plan, my decree shall stand, and I shall do all my pleasure. Nothing that God wants done is left undone. If God had not wanted Jerusalem destroyed, he would have prevented it. Clearly he wanted it destroyed."³²

Gordon Clark was accurate to state that "nothing is independent of him" and that if man's will is autonomously free of God then that would mean that there is something in the universe that could prevent any given prophecy – and thus destroy not only the miraculous nature of prophecy, but destroy the nature of God as well! Loraine Boetner correctly pointed out that the universe is run by an all controlling God or is run by blind chance – the teaching of humanism!

Clark Pinnock is not only a consistent Arminian but he is likewise a consistent futurist and points out the alleged failed "at hand" predictions of John the Baptist and Paul's inspired statements of a near second coming because of man's will overriding God's imminent prophetic plans:

"The future is not stored up on heavenly video tape, but is the realm of possibilities, many of which have yet to be actualized. Peter gives us a nice illustration of this when he explains the delay of Christ's return as being due to God's desire to see more sinners saved - **God actually postponing the near return of Christ for their sakes** (2 Peter 3:9)."³³

"...dispite the Baptist, Jesus did not cast the wicked into the fire; **contrary to Paul, the second coming was not just around the corner** (1Thess. 4:17)³⁴

I was attending the Evangelical Theological Society in 2003 when they voted 67% to keep Pinnock in the society and thus leave these statements as "evangelical." Because most evangelicals are Arminian and futurists, they haven't a clue how to answer Pinnock and are forced based upon mutual doctrinal presuppositions to accept Pinnock's statements. Pinnock's humanistic thinking in the areas of Arminianism and futurism have caused him to deny the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures – things he at one time thought he knew how to defend. We gladly welcome Pinnock into a public debate!

Don Preston has done some good research on dispensationalists Thomas Ice and Mark Hitchcock and points out a major problem in the lack of consistency in their postponement theory of the kingdom and their alleged views of not only God's sovereignty but their view of prophecy in general:

"There is another important issue here. Ice and LaHaye tell us: "prophecy is history written in advance" (*Charting*, 11), and that "God's plan for the future is

definite, well planned, and exciting. We do not live in a world of chance. Prophecy means that certain things will definitely happen, while other possibilities are eliminated.” (*Prophecy*, 75). Mark Hitchcock says “One of the great comforts of studying Bible prophecy is that we see the mighty, sovereign hand of God in control of all things. He controls *what will happen* and *when it will happen*, while “eliminating other possibilities,” with the claim that the Jewish rejection of Jesus made it *impossible* for Jesus to accomplish what he came to do! Now, if prophecy is history written in advance, and Jesus came to establish the kingdom, how in the world did he fail to accomplish what was predicted? If God is in control of what happens, and when it happens, then why could Jesus not do what he came to do, when he came to do it? You just can’t say that God controls what will happen, and when it will happen, and then say that Jesus could not do what was predicted, when it was predicted to happen! If Jesus could not do what was prophesied, when it was predicted he would do it, then assuredly God did not control what would happen and when it would happen. It is just that simple. Let’s be candid about what this means. A postponed kingdom means, without doubt, that God failed, Jesus failed, and the Bible is not the word of God!³⁵

That the Bible is not the infallible word of God, is the very conclusion that many “evangelicals” like Clark Pinnock are coming to!

My audience is a little mixed at this point. Dispensationalists like MacArthur and Ice know they have been exposed and a more reformed audience has agreed with me that Jesus’ and John’s declaration of an “at hand” kingdom was not postponed but rather arrived during the time of the Roman empire - at the cross and Pentecost. And they would agree with me that the kingdom is spiritual now but believe at the parousia in the future, it will *revert back* to the *physical* when God comes on a literal cloud and “all eyes” literally see him, and He destroys the literal planet by fire and creates a new one, and raises our literal bodies, etc. I have already addressed the time frame of “the end of the age” and therefore demonstrated that these events cannot be future and thus physical in nature and I will demonstrate that more as I continue my exegesis through the OD. However, there is an objection at this point by the reformed amillennialist and dispensationalist as well that says, “John’s “at hand” (Mt.3:2; 10-12) kingdom judgment was a literal time statement, but Peters in (1Pet.4:5,7, 17) was not to be taken literally. And they would appeal to (2Pet.3:8) where Peter is allegedly stating here that his “at hand” statement written in his previous letter apparently means really nothing at all! Let’s take a brief look at this text and what dispensationalists and reformed theologians have stated of it.

Traditional futurism tries to twist the obvious N.T. imminency passages concerning the second coming of Christ (1Pet.4:7, Jms. 5:8-9; Heb. 10:25,37; 1Jn. 2:17-18; Rev. 1:1, Rev. 3:2-3,11, Rev. 22:6-7, Rev. 10-12,20;) **by funneling them all through (2 Pet. 3:8)**. We are told that such words as "at hand", "near", "quickly", "shortly", "a little while", "soon", DON'T really mean what they say because of this *one verse*:

“There is no doubt that in the New Testament the nearness of the end is limited to one generation. But this error of perspective (“*Perspektivenirrtum*”), which is corrected in only **one place** of the New Testament (2Pet. 3:8)...”³⁶

One of my former Pastor's and College Presidents, John MacArthur tries to counter liberal skeptics who use the imminent time statements in Scripture to prove Jesus failed by appealing to (2Pet.3:8-9):

"What shall we make of this charge against the truthfulness of Scripture? Does the passing of 2,000 years indeed prove that Christ's coming was not imminent in the early church era and that the apostles were mistaken?" "...the passing of 2,000 years is no reproach whatsoever against the faithfulness of God or the trustworthiness of His Word. This is precisely the point Peter made when he anticipated the scoffers who would arise, mocking the promise of Christ's return (2Pet.3:3-4). Peter's reply to those scoffers? "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (v.8). The amount of earthly time that passes is of no consequence." "The passing of 2,000 years is no reproach whatsoever against the faithfulness of God or the trustworthiness of His Word." It is like many aeons in His mind, and aeons pass like moments. He is not bound by time as we are, and no amount of time can ever nullify His faithfulness. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (v.9)

In other words, the real reason for the Lord's delay is not that He is negligent or careless in fulfilling His promises, but simply because He is longsuffering and kind, delaying Christ's coming and the wrath that will accompany it while He calls people unto salvation. And Christ will not return before the merciful purposes of God are complete." "And therefore the fact that 2,000 years have elapsed is utterly irrelevant to the doctrine of Christ's imminent return. Christ's coming is still imminent."

And again,

"The day is **still at hand**. There are no other events that must occur on the prophetic calendar before Christ comes to meet us in the air. He could come at any moment. And it is in *that* sense that Christ's coming is imminent. In the very same sense, His coming was imminent even in the days of the early church. I suppose it is *also* possible that Christ **could delay** His coming **another 2,000 years or longer**."³⁷

First, concerning the signs and the second coming, we need to note that MacArthur and many other futurists have **invented** their own self inherit contradictory definition of "imminency" that isn't really imminent and can't be defined by using the Scriptures themselves! MacArthur throughout his book cites texts such as (Heb.10:37; Jms.5:7-9; 1Pet.4:7) where the coming of the Lord is said to be in a "very little while," "is near," "at the door," "at hand," and states in a bold but ignoramous way,

"There is **no ambiguity** about this language..." "...something that might be expected at **any time**."³⁸

Hmmm, the writer to the Hebrews says of the second coming of Christ, "For yet a **very little while**, And He who is coming will come and **will not tarry**" (Heb.10:37) and MacArthur tells us that Christ **has delayed** ("tarry") His coming 2000 years and that, "it is possible that Christ **could delay** ("tarry") His coming another 2,000 years or

longer.” Of course the reader is to believe MacArthur over the writer to the Hebrews and understand that there is no “ambiguity” with MacArthur’s interpretation of imminency?!?

Richard Pratt is one of the “Reformed” writers who have sought to refute the preterist position and makes a similar argument for an “indefinite delay” of Christ’s return in his understanding of (2Pet.3:8-9):

"(1) The initial eschatological perspective was that the blessings of the eschaton had been realized to some measure, and the imminent return of Christ was offered as a benefit of repentance. (2) The **lack of repentance** within the covenant community caused an **indefinite delay of Christ's return**. (3) Nevertheless, the hope and prayer of every true believer is that through their repentance and faithful living the return of Christ may be hastened."³⁹

Apparently one of Preterists "flaws" according to Pratt is that we believe God will do what He says when He says it it will be done :

"...**that biblical predictions must be fulfilled as they are stated** *runs counter to the overwhelming evidence of Scripture*. Even though hyper-preterists may rightly point to some passages that predict an imminent return of Christ, the development of eschatology in the Bible strongly suggests that this does not mean that Christ did in fact return in the first century."⁴⁰

Pratt’s reasoning above fits nicely into the open theism or open free-willism of men like Clark Pinnock and most assuredly offers no antidote to Pinnock’s diseased doctrine infecting the church today. Apparently the solution according to men like Pratt is not to teach that the predictions must be fulfilled as they are stated and when they are stated to take place, but rather it is to adopt a liberal understanding of God’s way of communicating with man. I sincerely cringe when I hear conservative theologians try and use this text to describe the imminent return of Christ in the NT as,

“... in a sense *always near*”⁴¹

These kind of statements belong in the liberal, Karl Barthian, Neo-orthodoxy, dialectic *language of contradiction* and are not founded in the exegesis of God’s holy Word!!! God is not so “holy other” from his creation that He cannot communicate to us in language we can understand. I thought I was the only one that was seeing this “always near” concept as originating out of liberalism, but after recently reading R.C. Sproul Sr.’s book I found someone who agreed with me:

“When F.F. Bruce speaks of faith making the time be “at hand,” this sounds all too much like Rudolf Bultmann’s famous theology of timelessness, which

removes the object of faith from the realm of real history and consigns it to a supernatural realm of the always present *hic et nunc*.”⁴²

In both the statements made by Dispensationalist John MacArthur and Reformed theologian Richard Pratt the idea is that Christ is justified in an indefinite delay of His return because *His return is contingent upon the belief or will of sinners*. As long as men like MacArthur, Thomas Ice, and Pratt can point to a sinner somewhere on earth that alone justifies Christ’s “delayed return.” One just never knows who the “last saint” is going to be because God is “longsuffering” it is reasoned. MacArthur spends a great deal of time trying to emphasize one attribute of God – His longsuffering and fails to address how his dispensational postponement of an earthly kingdom theory is supposed to harmonize with God’s sovereignty and foreordination. Well, I do not deny that God’s longsuffering was a major issue preceding the parousia, but the issue “at hand,” is to Biblically teach it in such a way that it does not contradict the genuine “at hand,” “this generation,” “some standing here shall not taste death,” time frame references of the N.T.’s teaching of the second coming! In other words the longsuffering of God in the salvation of men that Peter is addressing in (2Pet.3:8-9) is inseparably tied too the success of the Great Commission before His return and the end of the OC age could occur (Mt.24:3, 14, 34/Mt.28:18-20). Therefore, if I can prove that the Great Commission (GC) was fulfilled before the end of the OC age in A.D.70, I can CONFINE MacArthur’s “longsuffering of God” argument and Pratt’s “contingency upon man’s will” arguments to a specific “this generation” – the first century church. Can this be done?

PROPHECY

FULLILLMENT

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world (Greek *oikumene*) for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14)

"And the gospel must first be published among all nations (Greek *ethnos*)"

(Mark 13:10)

"And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world (Greek *kosmos*) and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)

And he said unto them ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Greek *kitisis*) " (Mark 16:15)

"But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

‘Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world (Greek *oikumene*)" (Romans 10:18)

"...My gospel... has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations (Greek *ethnos*)..." (Romans 16:25-26)

"...of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world (Greek *kosmos*), as is bringing forth fruit..." (Colossians 1:5-6).

"...from the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature (Greek *kitisis*) under heaven, of which I, Paul became a minister" (Colossians 1:23)

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the *end of the earth* (Greek *gē*)" (Acts 1:8).

"But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to *all the earth* (Greek *gē*), and their words to the ends of the world" (Romans 10:18)

I would agree with my friend Don Preston when he writes,

"Every word used by the Spirit to describe the scope of the Great Commission is also used by the Spirit to describe the fulfillment of Jesus' mandate! Yet, some still maintain the Great Commission of Matthew 24:14 has never been fulfilled! Is it not presumptuous to say a prophecy has not been fulfilled even though every term, every word employed in the command and prediction of that event is used by the inspired writers to say the prediction has been fulfilled? To maintain therefore that the Great Commission has never been fulfilled one must deny the emphatic statements of scripture. He must insist that the "world" in Matthew meant something for our modern world, but that the word "world" in Romas, Colossians, etc. meant something totally different!"⁴³

To further illustrate what "world" and "every nation" in the above texts are referring to, let's cite some other related texts. Paul said to the Romans that "your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." (Romans 1:8) Had the faith of the Roman church made its way to the Indians in modern day America? What "world" was taxed in Luke 2:1, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world (Greek "oikumene") should be taxed"? Were ancient lands known modernly today as Russia, China, Africa, the United States, and Mexico taxed at this time? No, it was referring to the Roman known world or Roman Empire. What "every nation under heaven" is being discussed in Acts 2:5, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven"? Were there Jews from Australia and Mexico who journeyed to Jerusalem from "every nation under heaven"? This is the same "world" and "every nation" that Jesus and Paul were referring to in Matt. 24:14, Cols. 1:5-6 and Roms. 16:25-26 as the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy. This world had been preached to and they heard the gospel before Christ came in AD 70 to bring an end to the Old Covenant age/kingdom. To merely **assume** Jesus meant the entire globe had to be preached to before His second coming would occur, **is to take the passage out of its context**. We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture using solid hermeneutical principals and not attempt to "exegete" God's holy Word based on traditional and erroneous presuppositions.

To merely assume Jesus meant the entire globe (as futurists do) had to be preached to before His second coming and "end of the age" could occur is to take the passage out of its context. We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture using solid hermeneutical principals and not attempt to "exegete" God's holy Word based on traditional assumptions and 20th century linguistic presuppositions.

I heard a lecture one time by Don Preston where he pointed out the divine "must" in the sovereign necessity of the GC being fulfilled within a "this generation" time frame,

"...And the gospel **must** first be preached to all the nations." "...and then the end will come." (Mrk.13:10/Mt.24:14). Strong's Concordance defines "must" or *dei*, this way,

"Necessity established by the counsel and decree of God, especially by that purpose of his which relates to the salvation of men by the intervention of Christ and which is disclosed in the Old Testament prophecies."

As foretold in the O.T. Scriptures, God would accomplish the GC command within a specific generation (Mt.24:34). The will of man could not override, "frustrate," or cause God's sovereign decree to "fail" or to not be accomplished during this specific and "appointed" (or "cut out") time period! God had not only predestined or sovereignly established the specific time period of "this generation," to bring about His parousia, kingdom, NC creation, and judgment, but in doing so He predestined the individuals who would respond and enter that NC kingdom/Creation and likewise predetermined those who would not respond in faith during "this generation"! There is a direct and theological parallel of God not failing to accomplish the GC when He decreed it to come to pass, and Him being longsuffering and not "**willing**" the "any" and "all" of the NC creation to perish (2Pet.3:8-9ff.). This Greek word for "not **willing** (*boulomai*) that any should perish" when used of God willing in the N.T. is for Him to "take counsel," "to resolve," or "to purpose."

"...used of God seven times in the NT—always with the meaning: "to purpose [Mat. 11:27; Luke 10:22; 1Cor.12:11; Heb.6:17; Jas.1:18]. POINT: Boulomai, when used in reference to God, always has the idea of purpose, hence, "purposive will" or "sovereign will," and it is never hypothetical or thwarted (unless Luke 22:42 and 2Pet.3:9 are exceptions...). "POINT: When God wills (*boulomai*), it is not a hypothetical wish, but an actual willing or purposing of the Divine will; that is, the sovereign or decretive purpose, decree." "...POINT: The "any" and "all" are not all mankind without exception, but the beloved of Christ without exception; that is, the elect, His sheep, who have believed or are yet to believe before Christ returns again in judgment as promised."⁴⁴

I would agree with Gary Long's statement above, but being a futurist, he is forced to deny the sovereignty of both God the Father and God the Son in their time frame of purposing and establishing the OT and NT eschatological kingdom/new creation promises. Likewise I would disagree with Arminian preterists who claim to subscribe to the sovereignty of God in bringing about the eschatological time frame of the kingdom and that God could not fail to do otherwise, but then claim that God willed to save some before A.D. 70 in the GC but couldn't because of their "free wills." So I must take issue

with Arminian preterists and Calvinistic futurists for both groups deny the sovereignty of God and promote a God that goes “oops” - *selah*. God has never nor ever will loose any of His NC creation/kingdom pre-AD 70 or post!

But at this point one will say, “There is no need to preach the gospel today if the GC has been fulfilled, and if the GC has been fulfilled wouldn’t it stand to reason that there are no more “elect” to be saved!” These questions fail to understand the difference between fulfilled prophecy and the application of it’s fulfillment within the age without end. How men come to such conclusions is beyond me. It is like preaching on predestination and someone will say, “then who has resisted his will?” and there must be “injustice with God!” or “Why preach the gospel today if God has predestined those to be saved?” Of course God has likewise predestined the means of the gospel proclamation for which those predestined would and will be saved, prior and post A.D. 70! The gospel is described as the “everlasting gospel” and the Church as the New Jerusalem still declares that the gates of the City are open to the lost (Rev.21-22). Christ through His death and parousia **within** time and history (not at it’s end) has established salvation and thus the Churches mission to continue it’s radiant message among the nations of the world. We as adhering to sovereign gospel eschatology, declare a true and free forgiveness of sins to the lost today apart from works. ***Christ has sovereignly accomplished all He came out to accomplish when He said He would accomplish it! Selah***

Therefore, I believe I have sufficiently answered John MacArthur’s “God is longsuffering” eisegetical excuse for a 2,000+year “delay” of Christ’s return along with Richard Pratt’s “contingency” arguments for a justification of a delayed return. In the process of demonstrating that the GC had it’s fulfillment before the “end of the age,” I have offered but yet another argument as to why the “end of the age” in (Mt.24:3/14/Mt.28:18-20) has been fulfilled. And by way of a primer to a future chapter on the gifts, I would likewise state that it is error for MacArthur to posit the charismata and tongues ending in the “apostolic age” when there isn’t a single verse in the Bible that discusses the ending of the “apostolic age.” The gifts of tongues and prophecy would cease at Christ’s return which was the end of the OC age in A.D.70.

But I still since a struggle with the reader – in that he may still be asking, “I can see that ‘at hand’ in (Mt.3) was a literal time frame reference even though I don’t know how to explain how the resurrection/harvest was “at hand,” but doesn’t (2Pet.3:8) still teach that “at hand” in relation to the second coming, judgment, and resurrection (1Pet.4:5,7, 17; Jam.5:7-9) should be taken non-literally? I suppose we should deal then with this distracting objection before going any further in identifying the “end of the age” in (Mt.24:3) as the OC age ending in A.D.70.

1) As I have covered, there are no exegetical grounds to separate the “at hand” kingdom offer of inheriting salvation and its attendant judgment that John the Baptist is teaching early in Matthew with that of the “at hand” kingdom and judgment declarations made by the N.T. writers in regard to the second coming. They are one and the same “at hand” kingdom, judgment, salvation, and resurrection/harvest.

2) In the laws and rules of hermeneutics one is NEVER allowed to let one verse override the overwhelming evidence of Scripture elsewhere – and yet Ridderbos and others feel this “one verse” “corrects” how these imminent words are used everywhere else in the Bible?!? This in and of itself should raise a red flag to any student of hermeneutics!

3) God clearly condemns this denial or over spiritualizing his imminent time statements of him coming in judgment elsewhere in Scripture and we likewise condemn that approach here! In the book of Ezekiel, God was about to pour out His covenant wrath on Israel, "SHORTLY" for their rebellion (Ezk. 7:8). God's message through the prophet Ezekiel to the people of his day was that there was an "END" coming, and that "the day" was "NEAR" (Ezk. 7:2; 7; 8). In chapter 12, Ezekiel was commanded by God to be "a sign" of Israel's imminent captivity by packing his belongings, covering his face, and digging through the wall. This was a prophetic portrayal of what would shortly be the actions and fate of King Zedekiah and the Jews as they tried to escape but were caught by the Chaldean army and taken into exile to Babylon.

Our points of interest here are: 1) the time frame language used of God – “near,” “shortly,” and “at hand” 2) the reaction of apostate Israel toward the prophecy and the time language used by God, and 3) God's reaction to their denial of his time statements:

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; An evil, an only evil, behold, **is come**. An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come. The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, **the day of trouble is near**, and not the sounding again of the mountains. Now will I **shortly** pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations *that* are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD that smiteth. Behold the day, behold, **it is come**: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.” (Ezk. 7:5-10).

“Son of man, what *is* that proverb *that* ye have in the land of Israel, saying, **The days are prolonged**, and every **vision faileth**? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as

a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, **The days are at hand**, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I *am* the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD. Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of man, behold, *they* of the house of Israel say, **The vision that he seeth is for many days to come**, and he prophesieth of the times **that are far off**. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but **the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.**" (Ezk. 12:22-28).

Don Preston was the first person I read on this text that made any sense and he deserves to be quoted here at length:

In Ezekiel 7, God through Ezekiel said the Day of the Lord was at hand. The Day of the Lord in this context was when God used Babylon to punish Israel for her sin. This is the concept of the Day of the Lord, it is not an "end of time" idea. It is when God used a nation to punish another as it related to his chosen people.

In chapter 11 Israel responded to the threat of coming judgment. They insisted that although Ezekiel said it was at hand it was really not. It was time to build houses, not worry about judgment. One can almost hear some of those people: "Well, yes, Ezekiel has said the Day of the Lord is at hand, but after all, 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day,' Psalm 90:4"

When Israel "elasticized" God's words of imminence into relativity, ambiguity and meaning-less-ness, God responded. In Ezekiel 12:21ff, [Please, take the time to get your Bible and read it for yourself!] Adonai told Ezekiel to tell Israel that her days of changing the time for his predictions were over. He had said judgment was at hand; Israel said it was not at hand. Jehovah would not tolerate it.

"... What we have then, is an example of man saying that while God has said something was imminent it really was not; it was for a long time off. We have God's response; when God said "at hand" he meant "at hand"! He did not mean hundreds or thousands of years; he meant "soon!"

Another example of man changing the meaning of God's time words is in Amos 6:3. God warned Israel the time had come for her to be judged, 8:2, Hosea 1:4. In spite of the warnings Israel "put far off the evil day." Isaiah 56:12 shows they were saying "tomorrow shall be as today." In spite of God's warning that judgment was at hand they insisted, "All things continue as they were," cf. 2Pet 3:3-4! They refused to believe God said "Woe" to them!" ⁴⁵

Even futurists commentaries acknowledge that one of the sins of the false prophets and apostates of Ezekiel's day was that they sought to change the meaning of "at hand" to "far off."

"—their twofold argument: (1) The predictions shall not come to pass till long after our time. (2) They shall fail and prove vain shadows. God answers both in

#Eze 12:23, 25. Not a mere repetition of the scoff (#Eze 12:22); there the *scoffers* asserted that the evil was so often threatened and postponed, it must have no reality; **here formalists do not go so far as to deny that a day of evil is coming, but assert it is still far off (Am 6:3)**. The transition is easy from this carnal security to the gross infidelity of the former class."⁴⁶

"The prophecies of their ruin were confirmed by visions, and illustrated by signs, and all with such evidence and power that one would think they must needs be wrought upon; but here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and guarded against it, namely, by telling themselves, and one another, **that though these judgments threatened should come at last yet they would not come of a long time**. This suggestion, with which they bolstered themselves up in their security, is here answered, and shown to be vain and groundless, in two separate messages which God sent to them by the prophet at different times, both to the same purport; such care, such pains, must the prophet take to undeceive them,"⁴⁷

The application of God's Word here is firm and clear to the futurist who twists the imminence passages in the NT. God says that the word which He speaks ("shortly", "near", and "at hand") will come to pass WHEN HE SAYS IT WILL. God does not consider the futurists' misinterpretations of His promises of coming "soon", "quickly", and in "a little while" in the NT a light thing? For they strike at the very core of His nature - "faithfulness." In the book of Hebrews, speaking of the promise of Christ's second coming, we are told, "He who promised is FAITHFUL" (Heb. 10:23-25). This is not just a generic promise of Christ to come in some indefinite period of time, but rather, "**For yet a little while**, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry." (Heb. 10:37). The futuristic interpretation of an imminent (which really isn't imminent) second coming of Christ makes Him unfaithful to His promise!

When God who is not bound by time promises that something will happen "shortly" to man, who is bound by time, the event prophesied indeed takes place "shortly" because "the Word which He speaks WILL COME TO PASS." **God speaks to man in language that man can understand**, thus when something happens "soon" in man's time He is recognized as "faithful and true" to His promise. Although it is true that God is eternal and outside of time, He is communicating to man who is in time and therefore speaks to man in language He can understand. One is left with interpreting the time statements as liberals do – in a way they mean NOTHING AT ALL, or accepting the weight of the Scriptural evidence that supports that when God says something will take place "soon" He meant it!

4) The original context of (Ps.90) where Peter is alluding to needs to be brought out.

A) The entire Psalm was understood by many of the Rabbis to be teaching a future 40 year millennium (Ps.90:15) whereby Messiah would come and rule over His enemies in

the “this age” before the “age to come” would fully be ushered in. This is the exact time frame Jesus gives of the millennium or time frame before His second coming “this generation” (Mt.24:34), and the one Peter is alluding to as well.

B) In it’s original context it is discussing how God was destroying those rebels who had not heeded His word (cf.Hebs. 3-4) over that 40 time frame period. So by quoting this passage the “mockers” Peter is addressing are reminded of the consequences of not heeding God’s Word and that the wrath of God was abiding upon them and that they too would return to the dust without experiencing the “rest” God promised. C) On that note, remember as we discussed in (Mt.24 – 25; Lk.19) that “a long time” in relation to the “end of the age” or “kingdom” was in relation to man’s lifespan and in the original context of the 1,000 years quote I believe this is discussing Adam living to 930 years of age returning to the dust outside of fellowship with Him. Therefore, a number that would symbolically represent God’s eternality in contrast to man’s temporal ness would be a 1,000 years. But by the time we reach the N.T. in redemptive history, man’s lifespan has diminished and the trial period under discussion and the doctrinal typology that is brought to the readers minds is that of the 40 year “generation” of the wilderness wandering and the current “this generation” Jesus predicted would see His return. Therefore, all the text is really saying is that God is eternal and man is temporal and although the mockers may want to think God is “slow” in keeping His promise to return in some of their lifetimes, it wasn’t a long time to God and He was on time in keeping His “at hand” (1Pet.4:7, Jms.5:7-9) “this generation” promise to bring salvation to the remnant and destroy and judge the wicked at His parousia! Because God was eternal and they were temporal, they needed to heed the imminent cry’s and warnings of the Church to repent!

I have devoted an entire chapter on this text whereby I go over these points in much more detail, but for now I hope this eliminates the “but what about (2Pet.3:8) distraction to the “end of the age” occurring in an “at hand” time frame?

5) Let me leave you with a chart and allow me to ask you a couple of questions on God’s method of communicating the time frame of His Kingdom and the “time of the end” as it pertains to (2Pet.3:8).

Did God change His method of telling time
--

between Daniel & John concerning the same subject matter?	
<u>DANIEL WAS TOLD:</u>	<u>JOHN WAS TOLD:</u>
1· “Seal up the vision”	1· “Don’t seal up...”
2· Why? “the appointed time was <u>long...</u>” and	2· Why? “...for the time is <u>at hand.</u>”
3· “...the vision refers to <u>many days</u> yet to come.”	3· “...for the time is <u>near</u>
(Dan. 10:1;14)	(Rev. 22:10 & 1:3)
4· Daniel was told that he would not live to see this prophecy fulfilled.	4· John was told that he could live to see the prophecy fulfilled.
(Dan. 12:13)	(Mat. 16:27-28, Mat. 10:22-23; Mat. 24:34; Jn. 21:18-22)

God, who is outside of time and not bound by it was able to successfully communicate to Daniel who was bound by time, that he needed to "seal up" the prophetic vision because it would take place within the "latter days", which would culminate in "the time of the end" and that its fulfillment would not come to pass until "**a long time**" and "**many days to come**" (Dan. 10:1; 14, cf. Chp. 12). God who is outside of time apparently had no problem communicating to man (Daniel) who is bound by time this prophecy as a "long time", because it's time of fulfillment didn't come until some 300+ years from the time Daniel received the visions. God's time phrase of a "long time" was related to Daniel in the terms of his physical life span. Since some 300+ years was well beyond his life span, it was a "long time" away. In Revelation, **John is told the opposite of Daniel**, "Do **NOT** seal up the the words of the prophecy of this book, **for the time is near**" (Rev. 22:10). God's time phrases of "near", "shortly", "quickly", "at hand", to John and the seven churches which were in Asia was in relation to their life spans as well. John and the other disciples were promised that some of them would live to see these things come in their generation (Matt. 16:28; 24:34, Jn. 21:18-22).

Both visions of Daniel and John dealt with the kingdom, the second coming of Christ in judgment, the tribulation, and the resurrection of the dead. According to the futurist, the

time is still "near" for John's vision to take place even though it has been some 2000+ years since John had his vision. ***Why would God now change His way of communicating the time of the fulfillment of Daniel's and John's visions concerning the same subject matter? The answer is that He didn't. At the time when Daniel had his visions which included the second coming of Christ and His kingdom, the time of its designated fulfillment, AD 70, really was a long way away. When John had His vision concerning the second coming of Christ and His kingdom, it was only seven or fewer years away. Therefore, "a long time" meant a long time and "near" really did mean NEAR!***

But moving on. Let's continue with the unscriptural and hypothetical views of dispensationalism in God postponing a literal "at hand" kingdom or "age to come" to a spiritual non-literal "at hand" kingdom and "age to come" to occur "someday." According to dispensationalism, had the Jews accepted Jesus offer of a physical kingdom (which they have no verse for), the "sad reality" (Thomas Ice) of cross would never have taken place and "salvation" in the millennial earthly kingdom and literal New Heavens and New Earth would have commenced. Some dispensationalists admit that had the Jews accepted Jesus as their Messiah everyone would have been saved apart from the shed blood of Christ. But hey in dispensational theology the shed blood of Christ doesn't really matter anyway because in the alleged future physical millennial temple there will be animal sacrifices taking place once again. It is extremely painful to watch such "prophecy experts" as Thomas Ice explain how there will be animal sacrifices in the literal millennium temple. Thomas Ice writes,

"It will be a wondrous time indeed—a time in which the glory of the Lord will return to the Temple (Ezk.43:1-5), God will dwell in the midst of His people (**37:26-28**), and Israel will fulfill her national calling."⁴⁸

Hopefully Christians are more concerned with how the inspired Apostle Paul interpreted (Ezk.37:26-28) for he claimed that Ezekiel's prophecy of the millennial temple was fulfilled in the church by quoting this text and (Jer.32) in (2Cor.6:16f.). Some dispensationalists such as Scofield, have made the admission that Ezekiel's temple can be interpreted spiritually and by doing so unravel their "literal" hermeneutic.

"The reference to sacrifices [in Ezekiel's temple prophecy] is not to be taken literally, in view of the putting away of such offerings [according to Hebrews], but is rather to be regarded as a presentation of the worship of redeemed Israel, in her own land and in the millennial temple, using the terms with which the Jews were familiar in Ezekiel's day."⁴⁹

Obviously if the sacrifices of the temple are "not to be taken literally," then neither should the temple itself! And thus the corner stone and entire construct of the dispensational "literal" hermeneutic of interpreting Israel's promises literally comes crashing down.

But ignoring how the Apostle Paul interprets the Ezekiel temple, another dispensationalist Thomas Ice, claims it is a literal future temple with literal sacrifices while all the while wanting to assure his readers that,

"...**the sacrifices of the Millennial Temple will not be a return to the Mosaic Law**, since the law has forever been fulfilled and discontinued through Christ

(Romans 6:14-15; 7:1-6; 1Corinthians 9:20-21; 2Corinthians 3:7-11; Galatians 4:1-7; 5:18; Hebrews 8:13; 10:1-14).”⁵⁰

Of course two of these texts LaHaye and Ice cite (2Cor.3:7-11) and (Hebs.8:13) state very clearly that the Mosaic Law **had not passed at the cross but were still in effect during the time Paul was writing and were in the process of “passing away” and would “soon disappear.”** These texts fit the Preterist frame work of the Mosaic Law passing in A.D.70 but they sure don’t fit the statement of Ice that the Mosaic Law can’t be enforced today or will not be binding in his imagined literal 1,000 year temple. Ice also avoids (Mt.5:17-19) as does MacArthur in his “refutation” of preterism where according to Jesus every jot and tittle of the law would be binding “until heaven and earth passes away,” or “all is fulfilled.” According to Ice’s colorfull charts, the “literal” heaven and earth doesn’t pass away until after the “literal” 1,000 year millennium, so yes, in dispensationalism the climax of redemption is most definitely “a return to the Mosaic Law.” As I will prove later the “heaven and earth” Jesus is speaking of here in (Mt.5:17-18) and in the OD (Mt.24:35) is refering to the heaven and earth of the Mosaic Law (Isa.51:15-16) and it’s temple and has nothing to do with the planet earth as even many reformed futurists admit and we shall critique the consistency of their admissions and hermeneutics in little further on.

But to further demonstrate that John’s “at hand” message of a coming kingdom and judgment wasn’t “postponed” but carried through to the N.T. we need to examine some of his statements. We are still on the theme of identifying what age/kingdom was predicted to come to an end and the one the disciples understood or did not understand would take it’s place.

1) Were the Diciples Still “Confused” in (Acts 1:6) About The Nature of the Kingdom Age? 2) John the Baptist’s Time Statements, 3) “He will baptise you with the HOLY SPIRIT and FIRE” 4) Paul’s Ressurrection “about to” Take Place

As we have seen, in dispensational theology the cross is played against Jesus’ and John the Baptist’s “at hand” kingdom declarations. But were the disciples confused over Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom in relation to the cross? Jesus had to “open their eyes” (as He does with dispensationalists and as He did with mine) on the road to Emmaus to the OT Scriptures by explaining that these things were necessary to establish the messianic kingdom promises. He had to likewise further teach the disciples 40 days before ascending. After hearing of the Spirits coming (a sign of the “last days” and it’s association with the baptism of fire – judgment) they naturally based on the OT and Jesus’ and John the Babtists teaching asked, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Their question in NO WAY is evidence that the disciples were confused over the spiritual nature of the kingdom, they just wanted to know *when* it was coming as they did in (Mt.24:3).

Remember they had been taught that the kingdom was “at hand” not postponed and that Jesus would baptise “with the **Holy Spirit and FIRE**” and that these events would be associated with “the wrath to come” and the great eschatological harvest/resurrection (Mt.3:11ff.; Lk.3:2-17). The out pouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was a sign of the coming “at hand” kingdom, salvation, **and judgement that the prophet Joel predicted – “the great and notable day of the Lord” (Acts 2 – 4).** John the Baptist was preaching and preparing the way of an “at hand” “great and dreadful day of the Lord” as predicted by Malachi and Joel. Peter and the rest of the NT

writers do not see John the Baptist's preaching of an "at hand" kingdom, judgment, harvest/resurrection (Mt.3:2, 10-12) to have stopped at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but rather sees it's fulfillment to occur within their contemporary generation at the "at hand" coming of the Lord and judgment (Acts 2:40; 1Pet.4:5, 7, 17; Jms.5:7-9).

There are three interesting words associated with the concepts of the kingdom, judgment, and harvest/resurrection that John the Baptist uses in (Mt.3). These concepts are followed throughout the NT to teach an at hand second coming of Christ.

1) "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is **NEAR**."

2) "And **even now** the ax is **laid** at the root of the trees..."

The first place where a combination of these words of imminence are used is found of course in the OD. Luke tells us that Jesus taught the disciples that when the armies surround Jerusalem is when they would know to flee and that Jerusalem's judgment or "desolation is **near**." (Lk.21:20). He then proceeds to tell them that this is likewise the time when **redemption, summer, and the kingdom is near** (Lk.21:28, 30, 31). And verse 30 includes, "When they are **already** budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is **now near**." Summer in context here is synonymous with the coming of Christ or the kingdom. John the Baptist taught that when the kingdom of God was "at hand" is when the judgment and harvest/resurrection would be "at hand" as well. There would be no postponement of these kingdom promises or a 2,000 + years and counting to their "at hand" fulfillments. Here in the OD Jesus seals the meaning of John's "at hand" with a promise to the disciples that His return and the kingdom would come within their generation (Lk.21:30-32). The notion of futuristic partial preterists that in Jesus' teaching leading up to the phrase "this generation" there is no mention of the resurrection is simply not true! In the analogy of Scripture the "redemption," "gathering together," "salvation," and living to experience the coming of Christ and His kingdom ALL signal the time for the great and final judgment and eschatological harvest/resurrection to occur!

Another tie to the fact that John as the Elijah to come was predicting the "at hand" "great and notable day of the Lord" as predicted by Malichai and Joel is found in the OD as well under the de-creation language of the stars falling from the heavens and signs in the heavens. Jesus tells His first century disciples that their generation will witness this coming associated with de-creation and signs in the heavens (Joel 2:30-31/Mt.24:29, 34; Lk.21:25; 32).

To further demonstrate this let's go to the second place where the same combination of these imminent words are used in the same context. The second place where a combination of these imminent words are used is found in (Roms.13:11-12) and I believe I will let a futurist and partial preterist introduce the passage for me:

"...you are treasuring up for yourselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds"... (Rom.2:4-6)

...in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." (Rom.2:16)

Paul refers to “the day of wrath” and “the day when God will judge the secrets of men.” Presumably both references are to the same “day.” Traditionalists see them as references to the yet future last judgment. Preterists like Russell interpret these references as they do all other references to the day of the Lord: this is the dark day of judgment that befell Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Though the above texts lack time-frame references, **they may reasonably be linked to later references Paul makes in the same epistle:** “And do this, knowing the time, that **now** it is high time to **awake out of sleep**; for **now** our **salvation is nearer** than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the **day is at hand...**” (Rom.13:11-12)⁵¹

Therefore, according to a futurist and partial preterist, R.C. Sproul, it is “not unreasonable” to see how Paul’s teaching throughout Romans on the crucial eschatological topics can be interpreted within the time texts stated elsewhere in the epistle. For a futurist like Sproul to admit this **is in effect to admit too much** in hopes to likewise defend the futurist or creedal position. Yes, I couldn’t agree more with Sproul’s statement for the judgment (Rms.2), coming of Christ (Rms.11:26-27), the new creation (Rms.8), and the firstfruits/harvest resurrection or redemption of the body (Rms.5-6; Rms.7:11, 23; Rms.11:15-16; Rms.13:11-12) are all “**reasonably**” tied to the same “at hand” A.D.70 event! The same coming judgment and harvest/resurrection that John declared to be “at hand” was the same judgment and resurrection for Israel declared by Paul in the book of Romans. The “firstfruits” of the harvest/esurrection had already begun and looked to a “near” and “at hand” harvest consumation in which the “redemption” and “salvation” described in Romans and found “In Christ” would be perfected. Sproul can’t have his “near” “salvation” and “judgment” in the book of Romans in A.D. 70 cake and eat a futurist creedal physical resurrection at the same time! Not only can these statements not be reconciled exegetically in the book of Romans, but Sproul’s own statements unravel the partial preterist position that he takes.

Let’s take a look at Sproul’s “reasonable” admission that he makes in Romans and apply it to what he says in 1Corinthians. “Though the above texts lack time-frame references, **they may reasonably be linked to later references Paul makes in the same epistle.**” In 1Corinthians R.C. Sproul admits the following passages apply to the coming of the Lord in A.D.70 because of their time statements or contextual flow (1Cor.1:7-8; 1Cor.3:13-15; 1Cor.7:29-31; 1Cor.10:11), but then what happen to his “reasoning” that just because Paul doesn’t say the coming of the Lord is at hand later in an epistle ie. (1Cor.15) “they may reasonably be linked to a later reference Paul makes in the same epistle”?!? How does the coming of the Lord and “end” mentioned in (1Cor.1:7-8 & 1Cor.10:11) get mystically changed in (1Cor.15) to a different coming of Christ with a different “end”? Where is the exegetical evidence that he changes subjects from “a” coming of Christ in judgment in A.D. 70 early in the epistle to “the” coming of Christ later in the epistle? Futurists such as Sproul, Gentry, and DeMar link the “at hand” judgments and comings of Christ throughout the N.T. with what John had declared early in the gospels, but when it comes to the resurrection and harvest associated with that judgment (Mt.3:10-12), this is never addressed in any exegetical way allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

One more final example of how futurists violate their own hermeneutics when it comes to the “at hand” kingdom “end of the age” harvest/resurrection that John and Jesus

preached was coming and would occur at the end of their “this age.” R.C. Sproul agrees with futurist Kenneth Gentry about the traid of imminent statements in Revelation refering to a soon coming of Christ in A.D. 70. They are as follows:

- 1) *taxos* word group - “shortly” or “quickly” (Rev.1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 22:6, 7, 12, 20).
- 2) *engus* word group - “near” or “at hand” (Rev.1:3; 22:10).
- 3) *mello* word group – “about to” or “on the point of” (Rev.1:19; 3:10).

Sproul summarizes Gentry’s case on these time frame references as clearly A.D.70 events and states:

“Gentry argues that commentators would render the term differently from the lexiographical consensus only if *influenced by an interpretive controlling a priori.*”⁵²

Our point of interest here is the third word group listed above – *mello* “about to” or “on the point of.” Sproul quoting Gentry says of this word,

“Certainly it is true that the verb *mello* can indicate simply ‘destined,’ or it can be emplyed in a weakened sense as a periphrasis for the futre tense,” Gentry says. “Nevertheless, when used with the aorist infinitive –as in Revelation 1:19---the words **predominant usage** and preferred meaning is: ‘be on the point of, be about to.’ The same is true when the word is used with the present infinitive, as in Rev.3:10. **The basic meaning** in both Thayer and Abbott-Smith is: ‘to be about to.’”⁵³

Well, just as Sproul and Gentry accuse other futurists as having a *a priori* reasons for not taking the time texts throughout Revelations to be speaking to A.D.70 events they likewise bring their creedal presuppositions to the book and pick and choose what texts they want to be A.D.70 events and which ones are allegedly 2000+ years removed. Nowhere does John say that “*some or most* of the things I am writing to you will shortly come to pass,” he states, “I am writing to you about things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev.1:1). It is only the judgment associated with the resurrection that apparently the time texts throughout the book does not address! And when the same Greek construction that renders *mello* to have the “predominant usage” and “basic meaning” of “be on the point of, be about to” in the book of Acts concerning the resurrection preached by Paul -- we don’t find any comment from Gentry, Sproul, or any partial preterist futurist on these texts:

1) "because He has appointed a day on which He ***mello is about to judge the world in righteousness*** by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

2) "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there ***mello - is about to be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust***" (Acts.24:15)

You don’t think that they themselves have any “*a priori*” creedal biases on the resurrection that cause them to contradict their previous statements about *mello* or that cause them to flat out avoid these passages do you?!? Clearly the “kind” of resurrection/harvest associated with the kingdom and judgment John the Baptist was

preaching to be “at hand” in (Mt.3:3, 10-12) and Jesus discussed to take place in his “this age” (Mt.13:49) is what Paul under inspiration understood to be “on the point of being fulfilled” in his day! Clearly when we don’t approach the Scripture with futuristic (no matter what brand it is packaged in) “a priori” presuppositions, Scripture interprets itself.

The NT writers unanimously see John’s declaration of an “at hand” kingdom, judgment, coming of Christ, and harvest/resurrection to be within their lifetimes and their generation (Hebs.9:26-28/10:25, 37; 1Pet.4:5, 7, 17; Jms.5:7-9; Rev.1:1/Rev.14, Rev.20-22). In the case of James 5 James uses the same exact gramatical and Greek construction as does John in (Mt.3): 1) “For the kingdom of heaven **is at hand**” (Mt.3:2)- “For the coming of the Lord **is at hand**” (Jms.5:8). And James also sees the signs Jesus gave coming to their fulfillment in his terminal generation and equates the coming of Christ in judgment with the kingdom being “at the door”: 2) “And when you see all these things, know that **it is at the doors**” (Mt.24:33)--“Behold the judge is standing **at the door**” (Jms.5:9).

The Bible Predicts The “Last Days” of What Age?

In Scripture the “last days” of “this age” is to give way to the “age about to come,” which is referring to the “last days” of the old covenant age giving way to the Church age or NC age. Jesus was born under and into the OC age of the law (Gals. 4:4; Hebs.1:1; 9:26) – it should be clear that Jesus’ appearing in the end of the age or “ages” (1Cor.10:11) cannot mean that He was born at the end of time or the planet! Peter specifically tells us that Jesus appeared in the “last times” or “last days” during His earthly ministry (1Pet. 1:20). Some would insist that the “last days” did not start until Pentecost but obviously Scripture disagrees.

How Do Partial Preterists Understand the “Last Days” Of The “End Of The Age?”

Since most partial preterists find their doctrinal lineage to Puritan theologian John Owen we shall spend a little time on his observations about the “last days” leading to the “end of the age.” Owen stated of (Hebs.1:2):

“Most expositors suppose that this expression, “The last days,” is a periphrasis for the times of the gospel. But it doth not appear that they are anywhere so called; nor were they ever known by that name among the Jews, upon whose principles the apostle proceeds.” “...It is the last days of the Judaical church and state, which were then drawing to their period and abolition, that are here and elsewhere called “The last days,” or “The latter days,” or “The last hour,” 2 Peter 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 1:18. For,...” “...This phrase of speech is **signally** used in the Old Testament to denote the last days of the Judaical church.”⁵⁴

Owen goes on to examine some OT texts where this phrase is used and notes that in all those cases it was used exclusively to describe the end of the Mosaic covenant and the time in which Messiah would come. He cites: Genesis 49:1; Numbers 24:14; Micah 4:1; Isaiah 2:2; Deuteronomy 31:29; Hosea 3:5; and concludes, “From these places is the expression here used taken, denoting the last times of the Judaical church, the times immediately preceding its rejection and final ruin.” And “The days of the Messiah and the days of the end of the Judaical church are the same.”

Genesis 49:1, 10

I would agree with Dr. Owen that the “last days” is depicting the last days of Israel’s old covenant age and not the end of the Christian or new covenant age. Owen begins with (Gen.49:1) in discussing Israel’s “last days” and we should note of what is said of Judah in the “last days”:

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*” (Gen.49:10).

The sovereign rule of a law giver under the OC law of Moses was given to Judah but that rule ceased in A.D.70 when Christ the Messiah came and put an end to it and “gathered” both Jew and Gentile into the NC kingdom at His return. That gathering began with the preaching of the gospel that extended to the Gentiles but was fulfilled at His return in “this generation” (Isa.11:10-12/Rms.15:12; Mt.24:30-34). John Gill of (Gen.49:10) notes that the Rabbi’s understood Messiah’s reign to be a short time “...that the Messiah, when he comes, shall not reign for ever, but for a certain time, and even a small time; some say **forty years**, some seventy,...” Christ ruled over His enemies who had pierced Him and in A.D.70 He took the sovereignty of that OC kingdom and gave it to the Church (Mt.21:33-45).

Numbers 24:14-17

Owen also cites the prophecy of Balaam concerning the Messiah coming in judgment on the last day of Israel’s “last days” (Num.24:14-17). What is interesting here is that in the context of this “last days” (v.14) prophecy is that God does consider time language to be taken literally for Balaam saw Christ’s coming in judgment as “...not now; I behold Him, **but not near**,” (v.17).

Deuteronomy 31 - 32

Another text Owen goes to support that the “last days” is speaking of Israel and not the last days of the NC age is (Deut.31:29) where God foretells that Israel will be “utterly corrupted” in her “last days.” The “last days” prediction here goes into the Song of Moses in the next chapter (Deut.32). Here we learn that there will be a “last days” “crooked and perverse generation” in which will be guilty of shedding the blood of God’s servants (Deut.32:5; 20; 43). Jesus and Peter clearly point out that the fulfillment of this “last days” “generation” that would see God “vindicate” the blood of His servants – was the one they were living in (Mt.23:31-36; Mt.24:34; Acts 2:40).

Hosea 2-3

The contextual settings of Hosea’s prophesy is the exile of the ten Northern tribes of Israel into the Assyrian captivity. God divorces Israel and she is put out of the land (or put outside His house) and becomes swallowed up and sown in the field of the Gentiles - but there is a promise of “in that day” He will marry her again (Hos.2; Hos.8:8). God remains married to Israel’s adulterous sister Judah until her harlotries and divorce by fire and stoning take place in A.D.70 (Rev.17). God’s remarriage of the remnant of the ten Northern tribes of Israel, the remnant of Judah, and the Gentiles who become grafted into Israel’s promises can be found in (Mt.22:1-14; Mt.25; Rev.19-22). The wedding takes place when the city is burned up (Mt.22:7). This “Great City” is described

in Revelation as “Sodom” and “Babylon” and is the city where the Lord was crucified (Rev.11:8). Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem!

God tells Israel that she will go without a king until Messiah (“David their king”) comes in the “last days” (Hos.3:4-5). In the book of Acts Peter makes it clear that they were in the “last days” and that Jesus was the King of the Davidic covenant promised by God through the prophets and that He was ruling and reigning at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2 – 4).

Isaiah 2 - 4

Owen also cites (Micah 4:1) and (Isa.2:2-4) as “last days” prophecies concerning Israel which are almost identical. They speak of a time in which Messiah will come and establish His “temple,” “mountain,” and “Jerusalem,” among both Jews and Gentiles and that they will “beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” Jesus made it clear that His kingdom was “not of this world” and the N.T. writers clearly confirmed His teaching by stating that the “kingdom,” “Mount Zion,” “Temple,” and “Jerusalem” that they were receiving which was the fulfillment of all the OT prophets was not physical but spiritual (2Cor.6:16/Ezk.37:27; Gal.4, Heb.9:24-27; Heb.12:18ff.; 1Pet.1:4-13). This was the NC kingdom in which Jesus said He gave a peace that the world could not give and that it would brake down the walls of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. We see the fruit of this peace in the book of Acts where the Gentile Church gives monetarily to the Jerusalem Church that was affected by famine.

Old Covenant Israel and Jerusalem are described as “Sodom” in the “last days” both in (Deut.32:32) and (Isa.1:9-10; Isa.3:9). And as we have briefly noted she is likewise described as “Sodom,” “Egypt,” and “Babylon” in the book of Revelation.

I would like to draw attention to the context of the judgment “in that day” that is to occur in this “last days” prediction found in (Isa.2). Jesus quotes (Isa.2:10; 19) in (Lk.23:30) as the fulfillment of the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. Every futurist commentator sees the Luke passage as referring to A.D.70 and I believe John Gill makes the accurate connections when he states of (Lk.23:30):

“The Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions read, "then shall ye begin to say"; the tribulation being so great, as never was the like since the creation of the world, nor never will be to the end of it; and being so sore pressed with the sword and famine; with the enemy without, and divisions, robberies, and murders within; and their miseries being inexpressible, and intolerable, they will seek to go into the holes of the rocks, and caves of the earth, as is prophesied of them, Isa.2:19 and as Josephus says, many of them did, when the city was taken; and, like those in Ho 10:8 will say, "to the mountains fall on us, and to the hills cover us"; will choose rather that the mountains and hills round about Jerusalem, should fall upon them, and they be buried under the ruins of them, than live in such terrible distress, or fall into the hands of their enemies! Compare with this Re 6:15, 16.”⁵⁵

Both Jesus and John in the book of Revelation see Isaiah’s prophecy of the Lord coming in judgment in the “last days” and “In that day” to be speaking of Him coming in judgment in A.D.70 and not at the end of time or history. Both Jesus and John place the fulfillment of this passage in Isaiah 2 to be speaking of the judgment upon Jerusalem in her “last days” which would reach a climax in A.D.70 and should be evidence enough

for a pre-A.D.70 date for the book of Revelation. John foretold “things that would shortly take place” (Rev.1:1). What most futurists fail to realize or acknowledge is that the “last days” judgment that Jesus and John see Isaiah fulfilling in A.D.70 is carried throughout Isaiah and is fulfilled with the coming of the New Heavens and New Earth (compare Jew and Gentile coming together to Jerusalem or Mnt. Zion in Isa.2 with Isa.65:25; Isa.66:20 and note contexts). Isaiah like (Deut.32:43) predicts that Israel will be judged of the Lord for her blood shed of the righteous among Israel in His vineyard (Isa.1:15, 21; Isa.3:14-15; Isa.5:7; Isa.59:3). This is just one aspect of Israel breaking their “everlasting covenant” which results in the destruction of her heaven and earth (Isa.24:4-6, 18-21).

On this theme we should note that John Owen also correctly identified that the new heavens and earth in (2Pet.3) and the “world or age to come” in Hebrews was referring not to the changing in the elements of the planet, but rather a changing of the covenants whereby we are now in the “age to come.” Owen described the “world to come,” as “the new state of the church under the Messiah.”

As brilliant of a man as John Owen was I find his and partial preterists in general, treatment of Hebrews and views of prophecy in general a bit puzzling. Partial preterist Milton Terry in seeking to refute the notion that there is “No Double Sense In Prophecy” quotes Owen,

“But the moment we admit the principle that portions of Scripture contain as occult or double sense we introduce an element of uncertainty in the sacred volume, and unsettle all scientific interpretation. “If the Scripture has more than one meaning,” says Dr. Owen, “it has no meaning at all.”⁵⁶

Owen taught that Christ’s coming in (Hebs.9:28) was an end of time coming but when we get to the next chapter and read of this same coming in (Heb.10:37) it would appear that ***this coming with an imminent time frame reference has at least 3 “multiple meanings”***:

“1st. Of the first sort were the Jews, who slew him, who murdered him, and

cast him out of the vineyard, and thereon continued their hatred against the

gospel and all that made profession thereof. He was to come to “destroy

those murderers, and to burn their city;” which fell out not long after the

writing of this epistle, and is properly intended in this place. See

Matthew 24:3, 27, 30; 2 Peter 3:4; Jude 1:14; Revelation 1:7; Mark 14:62;

James 5:7, 8. For hereon ensued the deliverance of the church from the rage and persecution of the Jews, with the illustrious propagation of the gospel throughout the world.

2dly. The Pagan Roman Empire was the second sort of his adversaries, who were immediate enemies unto his gospel, and consequently to his person. These, after the destruction of the former sort, raged with all blood and cruelty against the church for sundry ages. These, therefore, he promised he would come and destroy; and the faith of the church concerning this his coming was, that “he that should come would come, and would not tarry.” The description of this coming of Christ is given us, Revelation 6:7-10.

3dly. After this arose a third sort of enemies, who in words owning his person and gospel, opposed all his offices, and persecuted all that would yield obedience unto him in the exercise of them, and were thereby consequentially enemies both to his person and gospel. This was the apostate Christian Church of Rome, or the New Testament Babylon. And in respect of these enemies of his, Christ is still “he that is to come;” and as such is believed in, and his coming prayed for by all the saints. For he is to destroy the man of sin, the head of that apostasy, “by the brightness of his coming.” For as the opposition made unto him did not arise suddenly and at once, as those forementioned did, especially that of the Jews, whose destruction was therefore speedy and at once, but in a long tract of time grew up gradually unto its height; so he will destroy it in like manner. And therefore, although he hath set his hand unto that work, and begun the execution of his judgments on the antichristian state in some degree, yet as

to the utter destruction of it by those plagues which shall befall it “in one day;’ he is still he that is looked for, “he that is to come.”⁵⁷

Hmm, let’s think about this for a moment. In many ways the main founder of the partial preterist movement had sought to take the time frame references literally and stated that “if prophecy has more than one meaning it has no meaning at all” but when he gets to (Heb.10:37) “For in just a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay,” he not only claims the text has more than one coming or meaning in mind, but in doing so he destroys his hermeneutic of taking the time statements in there literal meaning!

I find it “curious” exposition and logic indeed, when you read partial preterists like John Owen or say James Jordan who wants to explain how the promise of the NC new heavens and new earth arrived in A.D.70 in a spiritual way in there interpretation of (2Pet.3) but assure their readers that we await a “final stage” of the literal one. And they argue against the double fulfillment theory of dispensationalists in the Olivet Discourse, but when we debate them as Don Preston has done, James Jordan wants to tell us that A.D. 70 was a “type of world history” and “A.D.30 to A.D.70 was a kind of millennium.” Well, if that is the case, then postmillennial partial preterism can’t be too much of an “eschatology of victory” since according to this logic and multiple meanings of prophecy, we should be experiencing a future substance of those “types” in the alleged post A.D.70 great commission in (Mt.28:18-20) climaxing in another great apostasy, another tribulation period, with abominations and desolations of another temple, ect. How in the world can partial preterism refute dispensationalists claims such as MacArthur who state that the A.D.70 judgment was only a “preview” of something “more ultimate to come” when in fact when we press partial preterism to be consistent futurists, they admit the very same things?!? - salah

Russell was much more consistent and **exegetical** than John Owen of not only (Hebs.9:26-28) but of the entire epistle. He was the first to point out the lack of reasoning in taking the “end of the age” along with the “last days” as a period from the birth of Christ to an alleged future end time coming spanning 2000+ years and counting. After quoting some commentaries that agreed that (1Cor.10:11) is addressing the same “end of the age” as described 5 times in Matthews gospel and in Hebrews in which the parousia of Christ brings an “end,” Russell stated,

“It is sometimes said that the whole period between the incarnation and the end of the world is regarded in the New Testament as ‘the end of the age.’ But this bears a manifest incongruity in its very front. **How could the end of a period be a long protracted duration? Especially how could it be longer than the period of which it is the end? More time has already elapsed since the incarnation than from the giving of the law to the first coming of Christ: so that, on this hypothesis, the end of the age is a great deal longer than the age itself. Into such paradoxes interpreters are led by a false theory.** But as in a true theory in science every fact fits easily into its place, and lends support to all the rest, so in a true theory of interpretation every passage finds an easy solution, and contributes its quota to support the correctness of the general principal.”⁵⁸

In discussing the “end of the age” and the “last days” associated with the second appearing of Christ even partial preterist (futurist) R.C. Sproul admits and makes some very useful comments of (Hebs.1:2; and Hebs.9 – 10),

“The author of Hebrews says God has spoken by his Son “in these last days” (1:2). Clearly the passage assigns Jesus’ earthly ministry to the “last days.” Might the qualifier *these* hint at a distinction between the last days that included the incarnation and some other still-future last days? Regardless such as inference, one thing is certain: Jesus’ earthly ministry belonged to some aspect or category of the last days.”⁵⁹

And critiquing Simon J. Kistemaker’s comments on “the end of the ages” and the second appearing (coming) of Christ here in (Heb.9:23-28) Sproul states,

“This exposition is a bit curious. Kistemaker draws the conclusion that the expression “end of the ages” need not refer to the end of time. This seems to be more than a mild understatement. If Christ’s first coming at “the end of the ages” has already occurred and if considerable time has elapsed since that coming, then it is impossible to identify “the end of the ages” with the end of time. **If the second appearing of Christ here refers to his judgment on Jerusalem, it would still fit in the framework of “the end of the ages” that is not the end of all time. If the second coming refers to Jesus’ coming at the end of time, then we must distinguish between two different “last times.”**”⁶⁰

I would agree with R.C. Sproul’s statement of Kistemaker’s “curious exposition” but Sproul’s futurism forces him to just as much of a “curious exposition” when he ultimately is forced to “distinguish between two different “last times”” and in doing so invents two “end’s” or “end of the age(s)” associated with two second comings – one to end the age in A.D.70 with “a” return of Christ and then another one allegedly at the end of time in (Mt.13), (Mt.28), and (1Cor.15). **Mr. Sproul, How is this any less of a “curious exposition” than Kistemaker’s?** In Sproul and Gentry’s partial postmillennial preterism, how does the judgment, harvest, and resurrection linked with the “end of this age” in (Mt.13:40) get mystically changed to be interpreted as the end of the Christian or church age instead of it’s meaning elsewhere - the end to the OC age? Sproul and his eisegetical partner in crime Kenneth Gentry are then FORCED to invent TWO “ends of the ages,” TWO parousia’s of Christ, which must have therefore TWO “last days” time periods - the NT writers knowing nothing of, nor making any such “distinctions”!

In reading Sproul here you can tell he *is reluctant* to make this “*distinction*” of TWO “last days” periods but he is forced to because he feels more comfortable with the creeds and traditions of men instead of being **consistently exegetical** and following the hermeneutical principal of interpreting Scripture with Scripture (*analogia fide*) – the reformation proclamation! These writers are likewise not interested in the reformation cry, “the Scriptures alone” and “Reformed and always reforming.” I will point this out more as we go through the OD and make our way into the resurrection texts. It appears that Sproul’s conscious is bothering him throughout the book – therefore he makes sure to quote Russell quite a bit who for the *most part* does a good job in not making these unbiblical distinctions between the one parousia of Christ and the “end of the age.” This is why I left partial preterism behind after leaving Dispensationalism behind – both make distinctions and see double where the Scriptures see 20/20 and thus have a single purpose. In the NT there is only one second coming discussed which would result in

one “end” or “goal” being reached in order to fulfill all of the OT’s ages and prophets predictions encapsulated within the Mosaic age of “The Law.” The “Last Days” spoke of the in breaking of the Messiah’s reign and “at hand” kingdom which would bring about the promise of the one new heavens and new earth.

How Do Dispensationalists Understand The “Last Days” Leading Up To “The End of The Age?”

And how do Dispensationalists handle the “last days” in reference to their connection to the NT’s teaching of the “end of the age”? Joel 2 and Acts 2 pose very much of an “interpretive challenge” for them not only in the areas of when the gifts of Spirit would cease but in their overall view of Bible prophecy. Dispensationalists claim that the OT prophets never predicted or were in the dark when it came to the church age or kingdom and that all of the OT prophecies in the OT predicted Israel’s kingdom. The church is a “plan b” and parenthesis in God’s kingdom predictions for national Israel. Therefore, anytime a NT writer claims that one of Israel’s promises is fulfilled in the church – it poses a threat to their system. So much so that when Peter quotes Joel 2 in (Acts 2:16) and says that Joel’s prophecy of the Holy Spirit being poured out in the “last days” is being fulfilled,- **“This is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel” - they claim that Peter’s “this is that” **really isn’t** “this is that”! John MacArthur states,

“Joel’s prophecy **will not be completely fulfilled** until the millennial kingdom. But Peter, by using it, shows that Pentecost was a **pre-fulfillment, taste of what will happen** in the millennial kingdom when the Spirit is poured out on all flesh”⁶¹

Even more clear or should I say nonsensical is F. Unger’s statement:

“Peter’s phraseology **“this is that” means nothing more than “this is [an illustration of that]** which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). In the reference **there is not the slightest hint at a continued fulfillment during the church age.** The reference is solely in an illustrative sense to the Jewish listeners at Pentecost. **Fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy is still future** and awaits Christ’s second coming in glory and a copious spiritual outpouring ushering in kingdom blessings (cf.Zech. 12:10-13:1; Acts 1:6, 7).

And another dispensational writer tries to explain away the clear meaning of Peter’s words:

“Peter says that the events of Acts 2 are what Joel spoke of but not necessarily the fulfillment of what Joel spoke of!”

“...Dispensationalists interpret Peter’s words “this is that” in a less than literal manner so they can interpret Joel’s prophecy with a dispensationally strict literality.”⁶²

There appears to be divisions within Dispensationalism at this point. MacArthur claims that the term “last days” is a period from the first coming of Christ to His allegedly future one.⁶³ This would necessitate that one of Israel’s promises “the last days” is being fulfilled within the church age – and that is a Dispensational “no no.” And another “no no” for MacArthur is that if we are in the “last days” then this would also necessitate that the gifts of tongues and prophecy are still for today. And that is why Unger is a bit more consistent dispensationalist in stating, of Peter quoting Joel’s “last days” - “In the

reference **there is not the slightest hint at a continued fulfillment during the church age.**"

Remember according to Dispensational theology, Jesus offered the nationalistic literal kingdom but because the Jews rejected Him Israel's "last days" prophecies concerning her kingdom got postponed until the tribulation and millennial period. At that time it is taught by them that God will pour out His Spirit upon Israel in the "last days." The "last days" cannot be fulfilled in the church age because those were promises made exclusively to Israel and not the church- per dispensational theology. Obviously Peter was not a Dispensationalist and was claiming that Israel's "last days" promises were being fulfilled during the growth of the church age - "THIS IS THAT." Not only was the "last days" of Joel's kingdom prophecy already being fulfilled during the "church age" in Acts but as we noted earlier in (Isa.2) that the "last days" would be in motion when the Lord would establish Mount Zion and Hebrews 12 makes it clear that the Church was receiving the kingdom and Mount Zion. The long predicted restored NC Israel, creation, and temple that the OT prophets had predicted had begun its maturation and transformation process through the redemptive work of Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (2Cor.3 - 6). Where in the language of Paul or Peter do dispensationalists get the idea that they taught that the fulfillment of Israel's OT Scriptures concerning the kingdom were "postponed," "pre-fulfilled," or "kind of sort of fulfilled" as the NC church/kingdom began to grow?!? Likewise where do they get the notion that the NT writers saw the OT prophets not predicting the Church? Peter and Paul couldn't be clearer in that the "end" or "goal" of the OT prophets predicted the days in which they lived – the church (1Cor.10:11; 1Pet.1:5-13)!

Jesus lived in the "last days" of the old covenant "world" or "age" and that was the age that was in the process of passing away during the times of the NT writers and that did pass in AD 70. The "age to come" is the new covenant world or age that was completed and perfected after the old passed in AD 70. The dark old law covenant kingdom was in the process of fading away and would "soon disappear" while the bright new's resurrection life was in the process of being received and breaking in upon the old only to be realized at the second coming (Heb. 8:13/9:26/10:37/12:28; 1Cor.3 – 4; Gals. 1:4, 1Jn. 2:8; 2Pet.1:11; 19/Lk.17:20-21ff.).

How can the "this age" of the NT be speaking of the NC kingdom or Christian age when this age and the kingdom is described as being eternal and having no end (Dan.2; Dan10; Ephs. 3:20-21; Hebs.12)? If "this age" is what we are in now and the "age to come" is heaven or the afterlife, then how is it possible to sin there since futurists interpretations of (Mat.12:32) would necessitate this? "And whoever shall speak against the Son of Man may obtain forgiveness; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, neither in **this** nor in the **coming** (Greek mello) **age** shall he obtain forgiveness." (Matthew 12:32 WEY). A better translation would read, "...nor in the age **about to come.**" All Christ is saying here is that whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit in the old or new covenant age, he shall not obtain forgiveness. If the "age to come" is referring to heaven will Christians be speaking against the Holy Spirit in that age? Will Christians have the ability to blaspheme God in heaven? If that is the case, wouldn't we be better off down here For "he who is born of God cannot sin, nor will he, for His seed remains in him." (1Jn. 3:9)? No, this is speaking of the Christian age where the everlasting gospel is still being preached and thus the speaking against the Holy Spirit is a possibility. But

those who are outside the city in Revelation are wicked and liars and they no doubt do speak against the Holy Spirit even today in the “age to come.”

Israel’s Temple and Old Covenant System As The Destruction of “Heaven and Earth”

I shall cover one more distracting objection the reader may have at this point – “In the Olivet Discourse (Mt.24:35) and the teaching of other passages such as (2Pet.3), the literal “elements” of “heaven and earth” pass away at Christ’s coming at the “end of the age.” This obviously did not happen in A.D.70!” Perhaps it would be best if I address this before concluding our section on the “end of the age.”

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mt.24:35)

Most commentaries quickly have a cross reference to (2Pet.3) when this verse is discussed and equate the passing of heaven and earth here with the end of the Christian age. However, this verse follows Jesus’ statement that His generation would witness the fulfillment of “all these things” which included the “end” or “end of the age” associated with the signs preceding His return. I have already argued previously, there is nothing in the context of the OD to suggest the second coming of Jesus has anything to do with the physical planet ending or time it self ending; so is there a way of understanding “heaven and earth” here that fits the time constraint of the second coming in “this generation” and that is related to the end of the OC age and destruction of the temple? Remember, if heaven and earth has not passed away, then we today are under the jots and tittles of the OC law (Mt.5:17-19).

All Jesus is saying here is that the TEMPORAL state of the OC law “heaven and earth” would pass away by Him fulfilling it, and that His Words - the Words of the NC creation would last forever, or as Paul would state “world or age without end” (Ephs.3:20-21). To further demonstrate that this is the meaning of the phrase, “heaven and earth” in relation to the OC age and in particular to the destruction of the temple (Mt.24:1-3), note what Josephus, a Jewish historian during the times of the N.T. and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 said of the temple as a type of creation:

"However, this proportion of the measures of the tabernacle proved to be an *imitation of the system of the world*: for that third part thereof which was within the four pillars, to which the priests were not admitted, is, as it were, a **Heaven** peculiar to God..."⁶⁴

"When Moses distinguished the tabernacle into three parts, and allowed two of them to the priests as a place accessible to the common, **he denoted the land and the sea**,

*these being of general access to all; but he set apart the third division for God, because **heaven is inaccessible to men***"⁶⁵

Even futurist amillennialist G.K. Beale notes that within the OT and Judaism that the literal tabernacle and temple was sectioned out to represent the heavens and earth:

"...the three parts of Israel's temple represented the three parts of the cosmos:

the outer court symbolized the visible earth (both land and sea, the place where humans lived); the holy place primarily represented the visible heavens (though there was also garden symbolism); the holy of holies stood for the invisible heavenly dimension of the cosmos where God dwelt."⁶⁶

"...Josephus understood the tripartite structure of the tabernacle to signify 'the earth [=outer court] and the sea [=inner court], since these...are accessible to all; but the third portion [=holy of holies] he reserved for God alone, because heaven also is inaccessible to men' (Ant. 3.181; cf. 3.123)"⁶⁷

What I find extremely puzzling is how Mr. G.K. Beale asserts the thesis that the physical temple is a microcosm of "heaven and earth" in such a massive work but avoids the issue in (Mt.24:35) all the while kind of sort of admitting that (Mt.24:29 and Rev.6:12-14) is figurative language parallel with Joel 2 and Acts 2 in discussing the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70:

"The kingdom ending is, of course, Israel, but this time it is her definitive end. Rome would destroy Jerusalem and her temple in AD 70. Joel's language of the earth's destruction in Acts 2 is also appropriate as a figurative portrayal of the temple's destruction, since, as we have seen so often earlier, **the temple itself and its parts symbolized the cosmos.**"⁶⁸

On pages 212 – 215 of this work Mr. Beale takes the following texts describing the judgment on Jerusalem, the coming of the Lord, and de-creation language and applies them to AD 70: (Isa. 2, Joel 2, Acts 2, Rev.6, Mt.23, and Mt.24:29). He admits that the language is figurative but then attempts (with no exegetical support) to *infer* that it can have a double or typological fulfillment at the end of history/planet earth. However, Jesus clearly states that Isaiah 2's "last days" "Day of the Lord" judgment applied to AD 70 and not the end of the planet (Lk.23:30). And since most commentators take Isa. 2 – 4 as a unit or "block" like Isaiah's "little apocalypse" of (Isa.24 – 28), Jesus likewise sees Israel's "last days" blood guilt to be fulfilled in His generation (Isa.4:4/5:7; Mt.23:29-36). Jesus once again reiterates the time frame of His last days, judgment, de-creation, "Day

of the Lord” of (Isa.2) in giving the Revelation to John in (Rev.1:1; Rev.6) to further support His earlier predictions and thus a fulfillment that will “shortly” take place. Even the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 quotes (Isa.2) verbatim from the Septuagint to support that Christ would come to give the Thessalonians “relief” and render the same tribulation to their Jewish (1Thess.2:14-17) persecutors.⁶⁹ Paul was NOT saying that they would get this relief 2,000 plus years in the future or that relief when they died. It would be at Christ’s return when He would be revealed from heaven! G.K. Beale’s attempts to defend a future coming of Christ to end the planet in his comments of (Mt.24) and his commentaries on Revelation and the Thessalonian Epistles are exegetically groundless along with his comments to me and other preterists that we are “heretical.”

Beale likewise sees the equation of the temple with the New Jerusalem and New Heavens and Earth:

“Another observation points to the equation of the new cosmos with the city-temple. Revelation 21:1 commences, as we have seen, with John’s vision of ‘a new heaven and a new earth’, followed by his vision of the ‘new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven’ (v.2), after which he hears a ‘loud great voice’ proclaiming that ‘the tabernacle of God is among men, and he shall dwell among them’. It is likely that the second vision in verse 2 interprets the first vision of the new cosmos, and that what is heard about the tabernacle in verse 3 interprets both verses 1 and 2. If so, the new creation of verse 1 is identical to the ‘new Jerusalem’ of verse 1 and both represent the same reality as the ‘tabernacle’ of verse 3.”⁷⁰

We would likewise argue that the Temple, New Heavens and New Earth, and New Jerusalem are *equivalents* in Scripture but when the OC ones pass in AD 70 the NC ones are fulfilled and stand matured not just “inaugurated” awaiting a physical fulfillment at the end of history as Beale and N.T. Wright have sought to teach by slight of hand in their writings. Beale and other futurists who maintain that these promises were merely “inaugurated” in AD 70 in a spiritual way but await a physical manifestation – has no exegetical support. Redemption goes from physical types to spiritual realities “in Christ.” They do not go from physical to spiritual back to physical. If amillennialists and postmillennialists want to adopt this later view of redemption going back to the physical, then they should be consistent with dispensationalists in their literalism of a physical future Messianic temple. My point is that the OC physical temple was described as “heaven and earth” and the destruction of “heaven and earth” is synchronous with the coming of the Lord and the time when the new heavens and earth would be established.

The passing of heaven and earth in relation to the end of the OC age has everything to do with the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 (Mt.24:3; 34-35). Therefore, we shouldn't read Scripture in the light of our 21st century lenses but seek to read Scripture in the context of its historical setting. Now we have an interpretation that not only fits in with the **context of the O.T.** in predicting that the destruction of the Temple would be the appointed time for all the eschatological prophecies to be fulfilled (Dan.9:24-27; Dan.12:1-7, Lk.21:22), but that also **fits the context of the OD it self** in regard to the destruction of the Temple.

This leads us to answer an obvious question in relation to (2Pet. 3) and the burning of the elements therein:

“What about the end of the world? Isn't it supposed to burn up when Christ comes? Does it just continue forever?” A response to the reformed, sovereign grace, fundamental, evangelical, cultist, & liberal denominations of our day.

Many people object to the teaching that Christ's second coming happened within the lifetime and generation of the disciples ie. AD 70 before hearing the evidence because they assume that since the world's physical "elements" did not burn up at that time Christ could not have returned then. The destruction of the planet at the return of Christ is something that is assumed by many in religious circles without considering the Noahic covenant that God made with the earth and many other passages. We must ask those who assume this some questions of our own before we answer the question “What world and “elements” was destroyed by fire in AD 70?”

Didn't God Promise To Never Destroy The World Again & Didn't He Say It Would Continue Forever?

- “And God said: ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you for **perpetual generations**: “I set My set my rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant **between Me and the earth**. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; **the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh**” (Gen. 9:11-15).
- “One generation passes away, and another generation comes; **But the earth abides forever**” (Ecl. 1:4).

Friend how do you see God in making His promise to never destroy the earth again. As a futurist who believes the physical earth will be burned up one day you portray Him as saying in effect, “I promise to never destroy all flesh with water. BUT HA, HA, I didn't say anything about fire – gotcha!” We must be careful in how we represent God and to distort His mercy and the covenant He made with Noah, perpetual generations, the earth, and all living things on it, is no light matter.

“Does the earth just continue forever?!” I don’t know friend Ecl. 1:4, Ps. 78:69, Ps. 104:5, Isa. 45:17, and Ephs. 3:21 sure seems to be teaching us this. So many philosophize about the worlds end, but as Christians we are called to not go beyond what the Scriptures teach.”

We must now labor to give sufficient exegetical proof to the futurist as to what world and elements were burned up in AD 70 that will be consistent with the time frame Christ promised to return in. We hold the position that the "elements" and "world" in 2 Peter 3 is referring to the old covenant law system embodied within the temple. This may sound strange at first, but let’s examine the exegetical evidence for this position before prejudging it.

The "elements" and "world" that were to be burned up at His coming in 2 Peter 3 are the same "elements" and "world" found in:

- 1) "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the **elements of the world**" (Gals. 4:3).
- 2) "But now, after that ye have known 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?" (Gals. 4:9).

The entire context of the Galatian letter is to exhort the Galatian Christians to not be swayed by the Judizers to go back to the law for justification. In the past they were in bondage to the law, but were now set free by the sacrifice of Christ and His grace. The “elements of the world” is not speaking of the dirt and rocks, but the law. Everywhere this Greek word for elements is used in the NT it is referring to the old covenant law and not the planet earth. Most interpreters fail to even bother doing a Greek word study on the word "elements" and simply assume that it is referring to the physical planet. As David Chilton pointed out in his commentary on Revelation,

"What are these elements? So called "literalists" will have it that the apostle is speaking about physics, referring the term to atoms (or perhaps subatomic particles), the actual physical components of the universe. What these "literalists" fail to recognize is that although the word elements is used several times in the New Testament, it is never used in connection with the physical universe! The term is always used in connection with the Old Covenant order (see Gals. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20) [emphasis MJS] (Chilton, David, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 542).

The New Treasury Of Scripture Knowledge On Isaiah 51:15-16

"**The heavens.** ‘Heaven’ and ‘earth’ are here put by symbolic language for a political universe. That is, that I might make those who were but scattered persons and slaves in Egypt before, a kingdom and polity, to be governed by their own laws and magistrates" (*The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge Revised and Expanded*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, p. 802).

2 Peter 3:10 & Isaiah 51:15-16 and Reformed Theologians John Owen and John Lightfoot

Although Puritan theologian John Owen was *inconsistent in his hermeneutics and arbitrary in his exegesis, at times concerning the second coming of Christ*, he took the

time to really exegete passages where metaphorical language was used by God to describe the establishment and judgment of the nations. Owen had this to say about the heavens and earth in 2 Pet. 3:10

"the heavens and earth whereof he (Peter) speaks were to be destroyed and consumed by fire in that generation. We must, then, for the clearing our foundation a little consider what the apostle intends by 'heavens and the earth' in these two places." To establish that Peter has in mind the heaven and earth of the old covenant, Owen examines the creation of this heavens and earth found in Isa. 51:15-16, "...the time when the work here mentioned, of planting the heavens, and laying the foundation of the earth, was performed by God when he 'divided the sea' (v. 15), and gave the law (16), and said to Zion, 'Thou art my people'- that is, when he took the children of Israel out of Egypt, and formed them in the wilderness into a church and state. Then he planted the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth-made a new world; that is brought forth order, and government, and beauty, from the confusion wherein before they were. This is the planting of the heavens, and laying the foundation of the earth in the world. And hence it is, that when mention is made of the destruction of a state and government, it is in that language that seems to set forth the end of the world. So, Isa. 34:4; which is yet but the destruction of the state of Edom. And our Savior Christ's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, Matthew 24, he sets it out by expressions of the same importance. It is evident then, that, in the prophetic idiom and manner of speech, by 'heavens' and 'earth,' the civil and religious state and combination of men in the world, and the men of them, are often understood." (John Owen, Works Vol. 9, p.134). "Peter tells them, that, after the destruction and judgment that he speaks of, verse 13, 'We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,' etc. 'They had this expectation. But what is that promise? Where may we find it? Why, we have it in the very words and letter, Isa. lxxv. 17. Now, when shall this be that God will create these 'new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness?' Saith Peter, 'It shall be after the coming of the Lord, after that judgment and destruction of ungodly men, who obey not the gospel, that I foretell.' But now it is evident, from this place of Isaiah, with chap. lxxvi., 21, 22 that this is a prophecy of gospel times only; and that the planting of these new heavens is nothing but the creation of gospel ordinances, to endure for ever. The same thing is so expressed, Heb. xii. 26-28. Let others mock at the threats of Christ's coming. - he will come, he will not tarry; and then the heavens and earth that God himself planted, - the sun, moon, stars of the Judaical polity and church, - the whole old world of worship and worshippers, that stand out in their obstinacy against the Lord Christ, - shall be sensibly dissolved and destroyed. This, we know, shall be the end of these things, and that shortly.'" (ibid, pp. 134-135).

And John Lightfoot had this to say,

"The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,' &c. Compare with this Deut. 32:22, Heb. 12:26: and observe that by **elements** are understood the Mosaic elements, Gal. 4:9, Col. 2:20: and you will not doubt that Peter speaks only of the conflagration of Jerusalem, the

destruction of the nation, and the abolishing the dispensation of Moses" (John Lightfoot, Vol. 3, p. 452).

Being a 5 point Calvinist myself, I have always found it humorous in talking to reformed pastors or those holding to reformed theology about the above quotes from two of their leading theologians. Some are so quick to condemn me to hell and point out that my view of (2Pet.3) is heretical and goes against the creeds. But when I point out that Puritan John Owen and theologian John Lightfoot (who was one of the main formers of the reformed creeds) took the same position I do, then they back down and are willing to listen. But when I have met reformed theologians who have wanted to impress me with their knowledge of the preterist view (not knowing I am a full preterist), they often times quote John Owen on (2Pet.3). But then when I use their admission of this as **common ground** and make the connections to (Isa.65-66→ 2Pet.3→ Rev.21-22) to prove without a doubt that the Bible only teaches ONE second coming to usher in a non literal new heavens and earth (not creedal position), those who once took 2Pet.3 as fulfilled in A.D. 70 **change their interpretation and run to "Mother" or the creeds for a refuge instead of the Scriptures**. This was the case when I briefly attended presbyterian pastor Jim West's church in Sacramento. When I began connecting the dots allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture - he stated, "well then my interpretation of (2Pet.3) may be wrong." West's conscience so bothered him and still does today because he is a very vocal critic of the preterist view.

Isaiah 24-25, Isa. 65- 66, Rev.21-22

Peter claims that his prediction of the coming of the Lord to usher in the new heavens and earth is "according to His promise" by the "holy prophets" (2Pet.3:3; 13). Virtually all eschatological views admit that the "promise" Peter is referring to is found in (Isa.65-66) and that Peter's N.T. parallel of the "new heaven and earth" is found in (Rev.21). Therefore it is imperative that we examine the nature of the old heavens and earth and the new as predicted by Isaiah so that we can understand it's fulfillment as penned by the N.T. writers.

Before jumping into (Isa.65-66) we need to back up a bit and examine what has been called by theologians as Isaiah's "little apocalypse" (Isa.24-28). For the purpose of our study here we will examine (Isa.24-25) before going to (Isa.65-66). In (Isa. 24:1-6) we have de-creation language and it was due to the earth (or land) having defiled it's self by murdering the innocent, disobeyed the laws, and violating the everlasting covenant (v.5).

"5. earth—rather, "the land." Defiled under...inhabitants—namely, with innocent blood (#Ge 4:11 Nu 35:33 Ps 106:38). Laws...ordinance...everlasting covenant—The *moral* laws, *positive* statutes, and *national* covenant designed to be for ever between God and them.²¹

Israel had become wicked like the other nations and defiled herself with the shedding of innocent blood and breaking the "laws" and "everlasting covenant" given to her through

Abraham and Moses (Gen. 17:13-14; Ps.105:10-11; Deut.28; Deut. 32:15, 20; 2Kings 17:3, etc.). This de-creation language was metaphoric language describing the judgment of her city (vs.10-12). People survived this destroying of heaven and earth even after it is burned up - the "earth's (the land's) inhabitants are burned up, and **very few are left**" (v.6). Further in the chapter we read that, "The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, **the earth is thoroughly shaken.**" (v.19). Therefore, the passing burning, and shaking of this earth in (Isa.24) has to do with being unfaithful to the old covenant law of Moses – specifically the shedding of the blood of God's remnant among Israel. But we are told by futurists that the OC law of Moses was fulfilled and done away with by Jesus on the cross and that the destruction of the planet earth has to do with the globes sins.

Many futurists have seen this prediction in (Isa.24) not as the destruction of the planet at the end of time, but rather simply the judgment of Israel by means of the Assyrian's whereby God and the prophets used *metaphoric language* to describe this **in time** not at the end of time, historical judgment. So then if (Isa.24-25) is to be seen as a fulfillment of (Mt.24; 2Pet.3 and Rev.21) it is so seen in an "anti-type" form. But the admissions that the destruction and passing of heaven and earth in (Isa.24-25; 65-66) is metaphoric language and not speaking to the literal planet earth, and that Peter and John are claiming the fulfillments of these prophecies in direct fulfillment or in "anti-typical" fashion destroys the futuristic paradigm. Why? Because Jesus in the Olivet Discourse and Peter and John are claiming that their predictions are the very ones that the law and the prophets foretold (Lk.21:20ff.; 1Pet.1:4-13), and therefore they like the OT prophets use the same symbolic and metaphorical language they used to describe there fulfillment.

The OC "heavens and earth" kingdom had been burned up and "shaken" throughout her history, but we know according to the book of Hebrews that the NC kingdom established in Christ that the first century church was in the process of receiving could "**not** be shaken" (Hebs. 12:26-28). This is what is meant by Jesus' words "heaven and earth shall pass away (cf.Heb.8:13), but My words shall never pass away."

We now come to (Isa.25) which in context, is once again a judgment upon a particular city (OC Jerusalem/heaven and earth) which will never arise again (Isa.25:2/Isa.24:20). In (v.6) following the destruction of Jerusalem, we have the wedding supper of the lamb taking place on Mount Zion in which the Gentile nations partake of. In (Mt.22:1-14) Jesus explains how the citizens of this city (Jerusalem & the Jews) have rejected and killed the servants (prophets) sent to her. Therefore, God would send His armies (the Idumeans, Zealots, and or the Romans) to destroy her city. Practically all futurists admit that (Mt.22:1-14) is dealing with the burning of the city and temple in A.D.70. But since the Scriptures only know of one end times Messianic wedding banquet for Israel/Church

Revelations further describes this city as the “great city,” “Babylon,” or “Sodom and Egypt.” These are various names describing the apostate condition of OC Jerusalem for she is the city described as “where also our Lord was crucified” (Rev.11:8). She is a harlot who was drunk with the blood of the martyrs, holy apostles, and prophets of Jesus (Rev.17:6, Rev.18:20, 24). We are told of only one city who bears the guilt of the blood shed of the Messiah and His prophets and that is Jerusalem and that her judgment would take place in Jesus’ generation (Mt.23:31-36). All futurist eschatologies seek to put us into the betrothed state awaiting the wedding at Christ’s return. However, the wedding takes place when OC Jerusalem is destroyed in the contemporary generation of Jesus and the first century Church. As that generation was ending John was told by Jesus that the destruction of this “great city” or “Babylon” would “shortly take place” (Rev.1:1, cf. 22:6-7, 10-12, 20). We are not in the betrothed state but rather in the banquet celebration stage and producing sons and daughters in the kingdom!

In the next two verses (Isa. 25:7-8) we are told:

“And He will destroy on this mountain (Mount Zion/Jerusalem) The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the **veil** that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.”

Through the creation of Adam spiritual death/separation was passed onto all men of all nations. Through God’s covenant creation of Israel (Isa.51:15-16 - “heaven and earth”), He would further explain and define what this death was through the giving of THE LAW. The law could only cover sin but did not have the power to take it away. In the temple the veil between the Holy of Holies and the holy place was but another reminder of what sin/death produced and that was separation between God and man. Through the cross the veil was torn (Mt.27:51) symbolizing that atonement had been made for the NC people of God. However, salvation, redemption, and the atonement process had not been completed because Christ, the High Priest had not come out of the heavenly temple to appear “a **second time** apart from sin.” Jesus had predicted that His appearing would be in their generation and through inspiration the author of Hebrews reiterates this **same promise** by exclaiming He would come “in a **very little while and would not tarry** (Heb.9:24-28; 10:37). This veil or OC law that defined spiritual death and blindness is described in (2Cor. 3 & 4) whereby the **glory** of the **two covenants** (or two Jerusalem’s Gals. 4) are contrasted.

In the first two physical creations - in Adam and then in Israel's OC "heaven and earth" sin and death reigned. There needed to be a **new creation** a **new heavens and earth**, a **last Adam** (Christ) and a **new covenant Israel/Jerusalem** of God whereby life and righteousness would reign. Since Paul in (1Cor.15:54) quotes (Isa. 25:8) and equated the "end" and second coming of Christ to the "swallowing up death" we need to see that the focus here is on taking away the veil or destroying THE DEATH THAT CAME FROM "THE LAW" (1Cor.15:56-57) brought about by Adam and defined and carried through with OC Israel. To destroy "THE law" was to destroy "THE death" and thus bring victory in Christ. The death that Christ came to destroy and that had brought separation from God and man was **spiritual death** brought about the day Adam had disobeyed. In (1Cor.15), Paul contrasts the two Adam's and he does this by pointing out that:

"And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." **The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.** However, the **spiritual** is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. **The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.** And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.** Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." (1Cor.15:45-50).

When Adam sinned he died and not only did he lose fellowship, but he lost the image of God. The image of God in man has nothing to do with his physical make up. It has everything to do with God's **glory** and **righteousness** abiding upon and in him. The day that death entered the world was the day Adam knew he was naked (Gen.3:7). In the context of (2Cor. 3) that image of God, glory, and NC righteousness is put this way:

"But if the **ministry of death**, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, how will the **ministry of the Spirit** not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, **the ministry of righteousness** exceeds much more **in glory**. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what **is passing away** (Hebs. 8:13) was glorious, **what remains is much more glorious.**" (2Cor.3:7-11)

And,

“Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. **But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**” (2Cor.3:16-18)

The first century Christians were living in the “last days” in which Christ through His death and resurrection was bringing about the passing of the OC law heavens and earth and bringing in the new. In order for one to be a citizen of the heavenly/spiritual country of which Abraham was promised by God (Heb.11:13-16) and thus enter the new NC heavens and new earth in which that city sets, he needs to know Christ no longer after the flesh and become a new creation in Christ:

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. **Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2Cor.5:16-17)**

“For behold, **I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.** But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.” (Isa.65:17-19).

The no more tears here are dealing primarily with the struggle under the OC law in which a man or woman could never receive the righteousness of Christ. It is only in the NC in which the image of God and complete forgiveness for sins can be realized through the work of Christ. It is in the NC that sins are not just covered over but actually forgotten of God (Jer.31:34) and climaxed at His return (Rms.11:26-27). Christ has been our propitiation through the cross and returned a second time to declare and apply that efficacious cleansing work.

In studying the new heavens and earth in (Isaiah 24, 25, 65, & 66) we come across various concepts of long life, physical death, but then no death. How are we to explain this? Better yet, how do the futurists understand these concepts? After all in the futurist’s view, everything is perfect - no one cries over anything.

1) Long life passages (Isa.65:20, 22). This is describing the blessings of long life found in the blessings and cursings of Israel (ex. Deut.28). When God's people under the OC obeyed God they usually saw long life. An example of long life would be found in Moses (120 years) and Joshua's (100 years) long lives. Long life in relation to trees could be speaking of the long life that man enjoyed in early history such as Adam (930 years). Or the rendering I take is that it is speaking to the tree of life - Christ and our eternal life found in Him. These descriptions of long life in the O.T. are probably describing in type form - abundant and eternal life in Christ under the NC. Jesus said,

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (Jn.11:25-26)

Although not Biblical Preterists, John Gill and Matthew Henry had some concepts here on eternal life as found in Christ on (Isa.65:22):

"The allusion may be to the tree of life in paradise, and may be expressive of the long life of good men in this state; and as the *tree of life was typical of Christ, who is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon him, it may denote **that eternal life his people have by him***" (John Gill, Isa. 65:22, Online Bible Millennium Edition, 2003, emphasis MJS).

"...as the days of the *tree of life*; so the LXX. **Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings or disturb them in the enjoyment of them**" Matthew Henry, Isa. 65:22, Online Bible Millennium Edition, 2003, emphasis MJS).

2. Physical birth and death (Isa.65:20). I want to point out to the futurist that his concept of a physical utopia is not taught here in that there is physical birth, death, sinners, agriculture, and house building, etc. Are people going to cry over the physical death of their loved ones in the new heavens and new earth? But in our view of the new heavens and earth we can both explain why there is physical death and no death.

Is There Marriage in The Resurrection Or In The Futurists literal New Heavens and Earth?

Some have tried to refute the Preterist view by claiming that since we marry today in the Church age we can't be considered being in the "resurrection" or "age to come." They appeal to the woman who had 7 husbands and the questions the Sadducees posed to the Pharisees and then to Jesus as to whose wife she would be in the resurrection or "age to come" (Mt.22)? Actually the Sadducees "argument" worked very well with the Pharisees carnal views of the resurrection, "age to come," and the law. Since the Pharisees understood the new heavens and earth in (Isa.65) the same way futurists do - physical and literalistic with CHILDREN BEING BORN and that the Mosaic law would still be in effect, the Sadducees had an excellent argument against them. They were in effect asking the Pharisees how after a physical resurrection in the new heavens and earth (Isa.65), how in the world could the law be applied? In other words if the Levirate law was still in effect (man had to marry his brothers wife if he died without children) and after all parties were raised, "whose wife would she be for they all had her?" Since there is child birth going on in (Isa.65) then is this woman going to be sleeping with all 7 men?!? They were mocking the Pharisees view of a physical resurrection and the use of the law during that time because that forced them to believe in polyandry (a woman who has more than one husband) which was an "abomination" as far as the law was concerned. The law did not forbid polygamy - a man having more than one wife but it did forbid a woman having more than one husband.

This "argument" worked with the Pharisees so now it was time to try it on Jesus. Jesus and Paul taught that there would be two groups affected at the second coming - those who had physically died and would be raised out of Hades, and those who were alive were to be changed. I don't take Jesus' answer here as primarily dealing with those who are physically alive today in the "age to come" or NC age. So for futurists to say my view isn't true because I have been married is hardly an argument. Jesus taught that in the resurrection those who had died and believed in Him (Jn.11:25) would be raised and would never die again. Therefore, Jesus is teaching that those who had died physically and were to be raised in the "age to come" would be like the angels and not producing children. And if there is an application for those who were alive in the "age to come" on earth, it was that the OC law of marrying your brothers wife and inheritance rights in the land of Israel wouldn't be an issue. Why? For Christians in the NC produce children in the NC kingdom through preaching the gospel. Children born under the OC were born into that covenant from physical birth. But those born into the NC kingdom are born not of the will of man or of family descent but born spiritually and through the power of God.

It amazes me that when our critics try and use this passage they read into it a "physical" resurrection:

“One must have much help to misunderstand this clear passage, dear reader! What Christ was saying is this: The God who was, is, and shall be (“I am”), the God of the living, can certainly raise from the tomb the **physical** bodies of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all others who have departed this life. (Curtis A. Cates, THE A.D. 70 THEOLOGY, Cates Pub. 1995, p.49, emphasis MJS)

The theology that the physically dead were going to be raised back in their “physical” bodies at the second coming is not substantiated anywhere in the Bible! Since this text is not teaching it they need to **literally INSERT** or read it into the text. Paul uses “spiritual” and “heavenly” to describe the resurrection body and I didn’t read “flesh” or “physical” there either (1Cor.15).

But now I have a challenge for Mr. Cates and all futurists and I would like them to explain to me how there is **birth** and **death** in the literal new heavens and earth paradise of (Isa.65) which is their “hope” but yet speaking out of the other side of their mouth they claim that there is no marriage there as well (Mt.22)?!? Are these illegitimate relations going on? According to the futurist, after one is raised and your placed in the new heavens and earth, will physical “death” only apply to your offspring of which by the way, who will be your mate if your not married? If your offspring dies physically does that mean that you will die again as well? But I thought you were going to be like the angels who don’t marry and produce children??? I mean after all that is the “argument” that the futurist seeks to use against me so why can’t I ask the same questions? I have answered theirs but I never get answers from them.

3) No death (Isa.25:7-8/1Cor.15). Once the OC law/sin/death was judged there was and is no more condemnation for those who have become a NC creation "In Christ." Eternal life has come and in this way there is no more death in the NC heavens and earth. And there are no more tears in the fact that the is now no more condemnation for us for our sins have been taken away. Do we still cry and experience trials? Of course we do but at the same time we know we are citizens in a heavenly country or NC heavens and earth whereby we experience joy and peace that surpasses all understanding. This joy and peace comes from what we know our Lord has done redemptively. If that isn’t exciting enough for you, go buy a Hal Lindsey book and stop reading this one. This book is about setting your minds on things above and not on the earth. This book is about teaching that the kingdom of God is within you and does not come about with outward show (Lk.17:20-21). Not only that but this book is about “casting down” the “vain imaginations” of the “prophecy experts” and their carnal views of God’s spiritual kingdom. Many turned away from Christ when He began teaching the sovereignty of God and the spiritual nature of His kingdom (Jn.6). It wasn’t that “exciting” to those who

had placed their hopes outside of Christ and were conditioned and indoctrinated by the traditions of the Pharisee's.

The Coming of the Lord and the New Heavens and New Earth” (Isaiah 63-66)

Since it is agreed that Peter's prediction of the coming of the Lord and the destruction of an old "heavens and earth" and the establishment of a new "heavens and earth" is that which was foretold by Isaiah the prophet then how did Isaiah identify the time frame of fulfillment and the nature of that fulfillment?

Don Preston notes that in Isaiah 63 and 64 God had just finished judging Edom by use of the Babylonians and Israel was longing for God to come and deliver them in the same manner He had done in the past (Isa.64:2) – and that this coming of the Lord is the one bringing in the new creation of (Isa.65) and the one Peter predicts.⁷² The obvious exegetical or interpretive question that arises is "**how** did God "rend the heavens" and "come down" in the past in delivering Israel so that we can identify the kind of coming of the Lord that Isaiah and Peter predict in (2Pet.3)? Had God come down on a literal cloud in delivering Israel from Egypt? How did God come in the destruction of Edom as is apart of the immediate context of (Isa.63)? In (Isa.34) we have the destruction of Edom described prior to God coming to judge Israel with the Babylonians. In this passage God comes by means of the armies of the Babylonians and the stars of the heavens are "dissolved" and the sky is "rolled back like a scroll" and the starry hosts of heaven fall to the earth (Isa.34:4-5). Clearly this is figurative language describing the downfall of the political powers of Edom. The time language of Edom's judgment was literal as well and described as "near" in (Ob.1:15). So how did God come in delivering Israel and come in judgment upon Israel throughout her history? Clearly when God came in judgment upon the 10 northern tribes of Israel or upon Judah He came means of the armies of Assyria and Babylon. The de-creation apocalyptic language was symbolic and metaphorical and so too was His coming. Thus we have established the "day of the Lord" that both Isaiah and Peter predict in (2Pet.3/Isa.64-66) as a metaphorical coming of Christ on the clouds in judgment upon OC Jerusalem in A.D.70. But this is further demonstrated as we go further through into (Isa.65).

In (Isa.65) Israel is once again guilty of partaking in the idolatry of the gentile nations and there was coming a day in which their sins and the sins of their fathers would reach to the "full payment of their deeds" (vss.1-7). Jesus said the day of vengeance in which Israel and her fathers would fill up the measure of their father's guilt would come in His generation (Mt.23:31-36/Mt.24). Paul bearing witness to the same time frame of Jesus' predictions states of **the OC Israel in his day** (not some future day) that Isaiah's

prediction here was being fulfilled and was “about to be” and would “soon” take place along with Satan’s demise (Rms.10:20-21/Rms.11:26-27/Rms.8:17f/Rms.13:10-12/Rms.13:11-12/Rms.16:20). God would judge OC Israel but would save a remnant who would possess and inherit Mount Zion (Isa.65:8-12). The remnant here are NC Jews and Gentiles composing the Church who had come to Mount Zion (Heb.12) and this remnant or “elect” would not be deceived but rather escape the coming wrath upon Jerusalem (Mt.24). Next are a series of contrasts between OC rebellious people Jerusalem and God’s NC creation/people whereby God would give His people spiritual and enduring living water, food, and joy while OC Israel would experience judgment - they would go thirsty, starve, weep, and be finally be put to death (vss.13-15). At this time a new name would be given the NC people or creation of God (v.15) – (“the way,” Christians, “The New Jerusalem”). Once we get to (vs.17) which describes the creation of the new heavens and new earth the old one is described as “will not be remembered.” In context the old heavens and earth is rebellious Israel who would not be remembered any more as far as covenant relationship was concerned and the new – the new Israel of God – the Church would take that special place in God’s eye. God was faithful in keeping all of His promises to OC Israel by judging her at the end of her “last days” and creating/transforming her into a spiritual and eternal people – the Church.

We have already discussed the concepts of death and no death associated with the new heavens and new earth, so let’s go on to (Isa.65:25). Here it is stated that the “wolf and the lamb will feed together.” This is parallel imagery to (Isa.11:6-9) and we understand this language metaphorically as even some futurists understand it. John Gill stated,

“the creatures shall be restored to that state of innocency in which they were before the fall of man. ***But this is not to be understood literally, which is a gross and vain conceit of some Jews; but spiritually and metaphorically, as is evident.*** And the sense of the metaphor is this, Men of fierce, and cruel, and ungovernable dispositions, shall be so transformed by the preaching of the gospel, and by the grace of Christ, that they shall become most humble, and gentle, and tractable, and shall no more vex and persecute those meek and poor ones mentioned Isa.11:4, but shall become such as they; of which we have instances in Saul being made a Paul, and in the rugged jailer, Acts 16, and in innumerable others.”⁷³

Therefore, the same language should not be interpreted literally as a restoration of the physical animals, rocks, and trees when it comes to God creating a new heavens and earth here in (Isa.65/2Pet.3).

Matthew 5:17-19 & Reformed Theologian John Brown

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. **"For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.**" "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt.5:17-19).

Reformed theologian John Brown took the same interpretation of "heavens and earth" in his exegesis of (Mt. 5:18) that full or Biblical preterists do,

"But a person at all familiar with the phraseology of the Old Testament Scriptures, knows that the dissolution of the Mosaic economy, and the establishment of the Christian, is often spoken of as the removing of the old earth and heavens, and the creation of a new earth and new heavens" (John Brown, Vol. 1, Banner of Truth Publications, p. 170).

It amazes me how I never really took the time to study this very important passage of Scripture and how so many today simply assume that all the law passed away at the cross when Jesus here explicitly states that the ENTIRETY of the law would not pass TILL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASSES(ED) AWAY and thus until ALL of it was FULFILLED. This text and the way we have argued from it has been so powerful that in a multi-authored book from the Reformed community *When Shall These Things Be?* the text goes unmentioned throughout the book! Likewise John MacArthur in his "refutation" of preterism doesn't mention it as well in *The Second Coming Signs of Christ's Return and the End of the Age*. Here are the points and arguments formulated by preterists, gospel eschatology, or covenant eschatology adherents of (Mt.5:17-19) that no futuristic eschatological school has sought to refute or successfully refute:

1. Jesus did not come to destroy the law and prophets but to "fulfill them."
2. Not one "jot or tittle" of the law would pass until it all was fulfilled. All the OC law being fulfilled is = to "heaven and earth passing away."
3. The "end of the age" of the old covenant or Mosaic Law and prophets foretold the following:
 1. The **sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension** of Christ (Ps.22; Ps.16:10; Ps.132:11; Isa.53; Dan.9:26;...)
 2. **Pentecost** (Joel 2; Isa.44)
 3. The **Great Commission** - The GC associated with a specific "last days" generation would see it's fulfillment and was foretold in the law (Deut.32:20-21/Rms.10:19-11). The prophets also spoke of the GC (Isa. 11:9, Isa. 49:6, Isa. 60:1-5; Isa.65:1-2/Rms.10:20-21; Hab.2:14; Zec.14:9) as did the Psalms (Ps.22:27-31, Ps.98:2-3).

4. The **second coming** of Christ at which time salvation and the forgiveness of sins would be completed and thus inheritance and entrance into the kingdom would be granted (Gen.49:10; Dan.7:13/22; Dan.9:24-27; Ps.14:7/Isa.59:19-21/Isa.27:9/Rms.11:26-27; Zech.14:5-7; Joel 2:31; Isa.40:10/Isa.62:11/Mt.16:27-28/Rev.22:12;
 5. The **resurrection** (Isa.25:6-9/Hos.13:14/1Cor.15:54-55; Dan.9:24-27/Dan.12:1-7; Ezk.37:12- completely fulfilled 14)
 6. The **judgment** (Joel 2/Acts 2; Isa.66; cf. “d” texts for second coming)
4. NONE of the OC Mosaic Law would pass until ALL a, b, c, d, e, and f above would be COMPLETELY FULFILLED.

Futuristic paradigms of eschatology have the OC law of Moses passing at (“a”) the cross, or God fulfilling all of Israel’s Old Covenant promises by (“b”) Pentecost and thus it is said that God is only dealing with the “last days” of the Church age from here on out. However, Jesus clearly says that none of the law would pass until it was ALL FULFILLED – not some or most of it! If the passing of “heaven and earth” is addressing the dirt, rocks, oceans, and trees, then we – according to Jesus are still under “every jot and tittle” of the OC law and it has not been completely fulfilled.

I did find a Church of Christ theologian who wanted to step up to the plate on this text but Curtis A. Cates apparently didn’t read the text before he cited it:

“But the Old Testament was fulfilled and nailed to the cross (Mat. 5:17-18; Col. 2:14-17).”^{z4}

Jesus in our text here in Matthew 5 is not nailing the law to the cross as it’s termination point, but is rather nailing it to the passing of “heaven and earth” as the time when it would all be fulfilled. That is pretty straight forward so let’s deal with the (Col.2) passage and see if we can bring some harmony it and (Mt.5).

Cates writes of this text:

“Christ did indeed fulfill the law of Moses, accomplished its prophecies concerning Him. In the process, He nailed it to His cross (Col.2:14). Therefore, no one was to allow anyone to condemn him or her for not keeping the regulations in the law of Moses regarding meats, feast days, new moon, or sabbaths. Why? Because the substance had **already come**; the shadow was fulfilled and done away (vv.15-17)”^{z5}

As usual the Judiazers sought to make disciples among the churches that Paul planted by imposing the works of the law upon Gentile converts. This is the context of the Colossian letter and Paul reminds them that they (Gentile believers) have already been circumcised because they had believed on the Lord Jesus (vs.11-12) and God was not requiring them to be circumcised, or be judged Jewish meat, drink, festival days, New Moon celebrations, or Sabbaths (vs.16-17).

The Church in Jerusalem made it clear that the “jots and tittles” (Mt.5:17-19) of the law did not apply to the Gentiles (Acts 15) while the Judiazers obviously opposed the Apostles inspired ruling in the matter. Just because the Gentiles did not have to keep the “jots and tittles” of the law, the Jews did and continued to be circumcised and participated in the laws of the land that included participation in the temple. Paul was

falsely accused of teaching the Jews to forsake the law of Moses so the church at Jerusalem had him take a vow with four men which involved purification rites in the temple to demonstrate that Paul was upholding Jesus' words in (Mt.5:17-19) → (Acts 21:21f.). Since so many think that the entire law passed at the cross, some commentators have been so bold as to accuse Paul and thus the entire church at Jerusalem for being in sin for advising Paul to do this and him following through with it. But again the adhering to the jots and tittles of the law "until heaven and earth passed" for the Jew (even Christian Jews) was critical in the early Churches understanding and in Paul's theology as well. Paul would have never been guilty of what his critics were accusing him of, "They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs." (Acts 21:21). Why? Was it because he wanted to get along and "be all things to all men" or was it because Paul was being faithful to Jesus words, **"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."** (Mt.5:19). All futurists don't address these issues and fail to explain that the law had not passed at the cross but was rather in the PROCESS of PASSING away:

1. "For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if **what is passing away** was glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious" (2Cor. 3:10-11).
2. "In speaking of a new covenant he treats **the first as obsolete**. And what is becoming **obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away**" (Hebs. 8:13).

We call this the "already and not yet" or as Ward Fenley describes it "the already and becoming" of Bible prophecy in which God was fulfilling all of the prophecies contained in the law and prophets. The cross was the power behind the "already" aspect of the laws beginning process of passing but until Jesus fulfilled ALL of the salvation promises at His second coming - predicted by the law and the prophets, the OC system would remain and even Christian Jews would obey the OC law with circumcision, Temple worship, and purification rites. Futurist Michael Green admits that the early Christians did observe Temple worship:

"We notice in the early days of the church (e.g. Acts 2 and 3) the disciples worshiped in the Temple. After that there was not much sign of it, apart from an occasion during Paul's return to Jerusalem with the collection when he engaged in a purification rite in the Temple (21:26)..." "...but there is every reason to suppose that the Jewish Christians like James, and the many priests and

Pharisees converted to the faith, continued to worship in the Temple as Jews who recognized Jesus as Messiah.”^{z6}

Green goes on to give some qualifying statements,

“So although there was Christian worship in the Temple early on, and doubtless it continued among many Jewish Christians, there is, in mainstream Christianity, an early and significant shift away from the Temple, its priesthood and sacrifices. These were only a shadow (sometimes a very dangerous and misleading shadow) of the reality to be found in Christ. Believers had the reality: what use did the shadow serve any more?”^z

All of the law with its “shadows” had not been completely fulfilled at the cross but would be at the second coming in A.D. 70 which was when the Temple (the law) or “power of the holy people would be destroyed” (Dan.12:7). Cates and futurists like him have the shadows of the law being ALL fulfilled at the cross and yet the text reads, “which are a **shadow of things to come**, but the substance is of Christ.” Michael Green sees the evidence for Jewish Christians observing Temple worship but can’t exegetically explain why this was taking place. There were still “shadows” of the OC law that hadn’t been fulfilled and until they did, Christ said there *was* “use” for them. There were many more “shadows of things to come” in order to fulfill “the law” or the old covenant prophecies. The book of Hebrews is all about describing how Christ had fulfilled, was still in the process of fulfilling, and would be fulfill all the OC law in “a very little while” at Christ’s return. According to Hebrews the process of the law being fulfilled was described as “a shadow of the good things **that are coming...**” Many want all of the old covenant promises (the law) to end at the cross and claim that Christ’s work was completely finished at that time in order to bring about the new covenant forgiveness of sins and salvation. But yet Scripture does not stop at the cross in regard to fulfilling all the law nor in bringing about the remission of sins “the restoration of all things,” but posits the fulfillment of salvation and the forgiveness of sins at the second coming (Hebs.9:8, 26-28; Hebs.10:37; Rms.11:26-27/Rms.13:11-12).

On page 35 after taking (Mt.24:35) out of its context (which is the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem not the destruction of the planet!) Cates makes but yet another fundamentally unsound statement of (Mt.5:17-18) and then tries to use (Lk.24) to further his error,

“However, in Matthew 5:17-18, Christ was speaking of His fulfilling all of the old covenant, the law of Moses and its prophecies concerning Him. Jesus elsewhere spoke of His fulfillment of the law,”

“Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself... And Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures” (Lk. 24:25-27, 44-45)”⁷⁸

Well, let's make some points here in the **context** of Lk.24 where Cates is quoting from that he obviously avoids and does not address:

First, unlike the comprehensive statement given by Jesus in (Mt.5:17-18) He is **not** saying in (Lk.24) that it's *only His passion* that was necessary to fulfill ALL the law in order for it to pass. That was only one aspect of Messiah fulfilling what Moses and the prophets foretold of Him. But yet this is the meaning Cates and others give it, and the text says nothing to that effect. The context here is Jesus restoring the disciples who thought that the cross brought an end to the old covenant promises to usher in the the new covenant kingdom or at best postponed them (like the premillennial dispensationalists of our day). Jesus teaches them that the cross had not frustrated the kingdom promises made to Israel, but was part of the means God was using to fulfill them.

Second, although Jesus addresses one aspect of Him fulfilling prophecy (His passion); the context addresses more - “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things **and then enter his glory?**” Jesus didn't claim that the entire law ceased at that cross, for Moses and the Prophets foretold the resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost promises as well. Not to mention that, but Jesus clearly said, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures **concerning himself.**” He clearly goes on to explain that it's not just the cross but His resurrection, ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the great commission are essential elements in fulfilling 1) the Law of Moses, 2) the Prophets, and 3) the Psalms (vs.46-49). Of course Cates and others fail to quote the rest of the passage! As I have already demonstrated the great commission was fulfilled by A.D. 70 ending the OC age. So

what we have here in the entire context of this passage is Jesus teaching the disciples the importance of the cross as **part** of God's plan to fulfill Israel's kingdom promises but those promises include the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the fulfilling of the great commission before the "end." Let's see if the rest of Scripture confirms our exegesis of (Lk.24). I want to go to (Acts 3) to support what I have said here of (Lk.24) but I need to lay some context in the first two chapters in identifying the "last days" and God not being finished with Israel at the cross.

The book of Acts picks up where (Lk.24) left the disciples as far as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel as found in the law and the prophets. In chapter one we are told that Jesus spent an additional 40 days teaching the disciples about Israel's OT prophecies concerning the kingdom. They are told that they are about to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit that John foretold. And since that baptism entailed an "at hand" kingdom and judgment (Mt.3:2; 10-12) and since Jesus told them that all that the prophets foretold of this judgment would take place in their generation (Lk.21:22, 31-32), the disciples were not mistaken (as is assumed by many) in asking if it was at that time that He would restore the kingdom to Israel - and thus fulfill All of Israel's promises. And Jesus in essence gives the same answer He did in (Mt.24:36) about not knowing the day or hour but phrases it, "it is not for you to know the appointed times or dates the Father has set by His own authority" (Acts 1:7). Contrary to what many futurists say in that God was finished with Israel at the cross or Pentecost, the book of Acts and Paul's theology teach that the Church is not the replacement of Israel, she is the fulfillment of all of God's promises to her! But the Church would not reach its mature state until God had dealt with and had fulfilled His OC promises to National Israel (Rms.9-11).

We need to ask Mr. Cates and all futurist eschatologies - At what time was all of God's promises made to Israel (old covenant promises made in the "law & the prophets") and His dealings with her finished or fulfilled? The dispensationalists are a bit divided over this - some like MacArthur say that we are "kind of sorta" in the "last days" while other more consistent dispensationalists tell us that we are in no way in the "last days" and that period has been postponed until Israel's time clock begins ticking again at the rapture and millennium period. Amillennialists on the other hand try and make the case that all the law and prophets were fulfilled at the cross and thus the Church replaced Israel at that time or definitely by Pentecost. Apparently in the amillennial scheme God was finished with Israel at the cross and He started with a new set of "last days" promises for the Church to be fulfilled in the future. But how can this be in light of the fact that **every N.T. eschatological reference in the NT** has as its basis and foundation **old covenant promises made to Israel** (Dan.7, 9, 12; Isa.2 - 4; Isa. 24-27; Isa. 65-66 - to name just a few)? Jesus was quite clear that **none** of the old covenant law and prophets would pass until heaven and earth (which most futurists take as literal) passes or until all of it was fulfilled (Mt.5:17-18). Was not the "new heavens and earth," "the judgment," and "general resurrection" prophecies apart of Israel's promises found in

the very "law and the prophets" the amillennialist claims were already fulfilled at the cross or Pentecost?

Some futuristic schools within amillennialism or postmillennial partial preterism have identified that "heaven and earth" in (Mt.5:17-18) is not the literal heaven and earth but figurative language describing the creation of Israel and the OC law. However, they state that only "a" coming of Christ occurred in AD 70 to destroy Israel's heaven and earth and that the OC Mosaic law passed at that time. We would agree that the OC law did pass in AD 70 with Israel's old "heaven and earth," but it was hardly "a" coming of Christ, because the second coming, the judgment, and the resurrection were likewise foretold to take place before heaven and earth would pass! It was a good try though.

The book of Acts is about God being faithful in fulfilling Israel's promises to her and this notion that God was finished with Israel at the cross and replaced her with the church or that God postponed Israel's physical kingdom hopes are nothing more than mere myths and the vain traditions of men. In (Lk.24) Jesus taught the disciples that the law and the Prophets not only foretold His death and resurrection, but foretold the great commission and the forgiveness of sins. Now let's see how Peter understood this:

"Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers.

"But those things which God foretold by the mouth of **all His prophets**, that the **Christ would suffer** (part of it), He has thus fulfilled. "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, **so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, "and that He may send Jesus Christ (the second coming), who was preached to you before, "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things (the second coming), which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.** "For **Moses** truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 'And it shall be *that* every soul who will not hear that Prophet **shall be utterly destroyed from among the people** (second coming).' "**Yes, and all the prophets,** from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, **have also foretold these days**" (Acts3:17-24).

God was faithful in keeping all of Israel's promises before her "heaven and earth" passed away in A.D. 70. Therefore, when we read John under inspiration utter, "it is the last hour" and "the **world** is passing away" (1 Jn. 2:17-18), we understand that it was the world of the law or the old covenant (Heb. 8:13; 2Cor.3:10-11) that was passing away and not the physical planet. And Paul was very clear that he preached "no other things except that which was found in the law and prophets." On this note we shall turn our attention in identifying the "creation" that was "groaning" for redemption in (Rms.8).

Romans 8 – “What About The “Creation” Groaning and the “Redemption of the Body?”

The traditional understanding of the “creation” in Romans 8 has been to take this chapter out of the context and flow of the previous chapters 5-7 and following chapters especially 9-11, where Paul is dealing primarily with Israel and deliverance from Israel’s “the law.” We are told that in this chapter, Paul begins speaking about the literal rocks and trees “groaning” for redemption and that this will take place when the Lord returns to oddly burn it all up with fire (2Pet.3). However, this is far from Paul’s point!

One of the meanings Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance gives *ktisiv ktisis ktis’-is* “creation” or “creature” is

“after a rabbinical usage (by which a man converted from idolatry to Judaism was called).”

Paul uses the new creation or new creature language the same way when he echoes that the in breaking and fulfilling of Isaiah’s new creation prophecy had:

“For, behold, ***I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.*** But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, ***I create Jerusalem*** a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” (Isa.65:17-18)

“Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is a new creation* (Greek *ktisis*); ***old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.***” (2Cor.5:17, see also Isa.43:18-19 for not considering the things of “old” because God is doing a “NEW thing”)²⁹

Paul explicitly states that those who had placed their faith in Christ had become a new covenant creation/creature and that they were the New Jerusalem or “Jerusalem from above” (Gal.4:24-27, Gal.6:15; Col.1:15; Col.1:23).

We cannot really get into a discussion of identifying the creation that is groaning in Romans 8 without getting into a discussion of the resurrection – “the redemption of the body” which is the end result of the groanings (vs.23). It is erroneously reasoned by

futurists that the “redemption of the body” involves a resurrection in which our individual decomposed physical corpses unite with our spirits. Without this unity, man remains “un-glorified” and redemption incomplete. Likewise it is argued that since our physical bodies need to be “glorified” in this way, so too does the planet earth need to go through a physical change or glorification process. In order to address this, we will need to lay the context of Paul’s understanding of the nature of resurrection – is it biological and physical in nature or spiritual, and is Paul’s understanding more with individual corpses raising and being united with our spirits “some day” or corporate body “about to be” redeemed and glorified. I will begin by going back to chapters 5 – 7 of Romans and allow a futurist Pauline theologian Tom Holland to introduce some of my convictions on these texts.

Tom Holland countering other N.T. scholars who see in Paul’s writings a kind of random spontaneous “*ad hoc*” arbitrary development of his terms and concepts instead of a better developed systematic approach, identifies some fundamental problems that cause them to miss Paul’s unity of phrases, terms, and concepts throughout his letters. The main problem Holland addresses is that many have claimed that Paul is adapting his message to the Gentiles using a Greek world view or mindset instead of a Hebraic world view and mindset. Holland explains that just because the N.T. was developed and written in a Greek culture does not mean that it’s writings shared the Greek world view. Rather Holland and preterists theologians argue with him that the N.T. writers develop the N.T. from a Hebraic world view and from the O.T. Scriptures themselves. To approach Pauline terms as “body of sin” and “flesh” or “body of flesh” with the Greek mindset is to limit “body” (Gk. *soma*) to the individual corpse of man when in fact the more Hebraic thinking was not as much analytical but rather was used in speaking of the whole of man, including his personality or self, a mode of existence, and primarily should be understood in a corporate sense. When the Greek and individual line of reasoning is used to define Paul’s terms, error is introduced as with men like Gundry who claims that Paul in Romans is only dealing with an individual’s physical fleshly body of sin needing individual biological resurrection from the “flesh.” Holland and many other NT scholars are beginning to differ with this understanding of Paul’s terminology. I shall try and summarize Tom Holland’s chapter 5 entitled “The Paschal Community and the Body of Sin” and then we shall return to our discussion of the “redemption of the body” which is what the Roman Christians and the “creation” were groaning for.

Individual Decaying Corpses or Spiritual Corporate Body Resurrection?

Holland scans some of the NT scholars that have defined these terms differently than a mere corpse of an individual body to demonstrate that his exegesis isn’t completely new and that many have been thinking in the right direction. I shall quote some of them beginning with Herman Ridderbos,

“the concrete mode of existence of sinful man, can sometimes be identified with sin as the ‘body of sin’ (Rom.6:6), the ‘body of flesh’ (Col.2:11), the ‘body of death’ (Rom.7:24). Accordingly, the life from Christ by the Holy Spirit can be typified as a ‘doing away with the body of sin’, ‘putting off of the body of the flesh, ‘putting to death the earthly members’, ‘deliverance from the body of this death’ (Rom.6:6; Col.2:11; 3:5; Rom.7:24)... *All these expressions are obviously not intended of the body itself, but of the sinful mode of existence of man.* (Holland, *ibid*, p.90 emphasis MJS).

Quoting T.F. Torrance,

“in his death, the many who inhered in him died too, and indeed the whole body of sin, the whole company of sinners into which he incorporated himself to make their guilt and their judgment his own, that through his death he might destroy the body of sin, redeem them from the power of guilt and death, and through his resurrection raise them up as the new Israel” (Holland, *ibid*, p.91)

This corporate view of the “body of sin” is also shared by F.F. Bruce,

“This ‘body of sin’ is more than an individual affair, it is rather that old solidarity of sin and death which all share ‘in Adam’, but which has been broken by the death of Christ with a view to the creation of the new solidarity of righteousness and life of which believers are made part ‘in Christ.’” (Holland, *ibid*, p.91, emphasis MJS)

Holland feels that T.W. Manson has come the closest to the truth,

“He questioned the traditional assumption that in the phrase ‘body of Sin’ the term ‘of Sin’ is a genitive of quality; he argued that it ‘does not yield a very good sense’. He took it to be a possessive genitive, and said, ‘It is perhaps better to regard “the body of sin” as the opposite of “the body of Christ”. It is the mass of unredeemed humanity in bondage to the evil power. Every conversion means that the body of sin loses a member and the body of Christ gains one” (Holland, *ibid*, p.91, emphasis MJS)

Futurist Tom Holland from here goes on to make the point and ours as well - that Paul is being consistent in Romans 6 by following the corporate argument in Romans 5 where he addresses a corporate solidarity under the federal headship of either being “in Adam” or “in Christ” and thus lays the framework to understanding the corporate solidarity of Paul’s “body of sin” in chapter 6 and “body of death” in chapters 7 and 8 as describing two covenant communities or “bodies” one outside of Christ “in Adam,” (“body of Sin,” and “body of Death”) or being “in Christ” which is the Church the corporate “body of Christ.”

Commenting on (Roms.6:6),

“Also, in 6:6 Paul refers to ‘putting off the old man’. Once again this has traditionally been seen as a reference to the sinful self that dominated the life of the believer in the pre-converted state. However, the same terminology is used in the Ephesians 2:15 where Paul says ‘to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace’. He then goes on to say in 4:22-23, ‘put off your old self (*anthropos* - man), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.’

The exhortation is parallel to that in Romans 6:6ff. Thus, the new man, which Paul exhorts the Romans to put on, is corporate, for ‘the new man’ in Ephesians is the church, and the two who have been united to form this new man are the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles. This corporate understanding is further supported by Colossians 3:9-15:...”

The realm where distinctions are abolished (here there is no Greek or Jew, v.11) is clearly corporate. This is indicated by two considerations. First, ‘here’ is clearly the realm where all distinctions are abolished, and this is the new man. Second, the meaning of the one body into which they were called (v. 15) is obviously corporate. These descriptions of corporateness are in the context of the description of the old and new self (vv.9, 10). The rendering of *anthropos* as *self* by the NIV and *sarx* as *flesh* in the AV has inevitably promoted the individualistic understanding and confused the mind of the English reader. Furthermore, that Paul’s exhortation is corporate is shown in that he appeals to them, “as God’s chosen people clothe yourselves’ (v.12).

Thus, identifying the imagery of the old and new man as being corporate, and appreciating that it is part of the description of the ‘body of Sin’ in Romans 6:6, along with the other considerations we have presented, establishes a corporate meaning for the term the ‘body of Sin’.” (Holland, *ibid*, pp.95-96).

Holland I believe is correct in seeing a corporate understanding of these Pauline terms and phrases and I would agree with him that Paul has a “system of theology” that he draws on when he uses certain words, terms, and phrases throughout his various writings:

“Also, it seems quite inconceivable that a man of Paul’s intellectual caliber should be so haphazard as to be indifferent to these alleged inconsistencies. At Paul’s instruction, his letters were being passed around the churches (Col. 4:16). *Was he not concerned with consistency?*” (Holland, *ibid*, p.107, emphasis MJS)

“Consistency” and “Scripture interpreting Scripture” is what I am seeking to do here in identifying the “creation” and the “redemption of the body.” Paul’s theme’s of being in a corporate body, whether in “Adam” or “Christ” in (Roms.5-6) and (1Cor.15) and being raised in the likeness of

Christ or experiencing deliverance from “law” (Adam in the garden) or “THE law” (Israel groaning under the Mosaic law) in (Roms.5 - 8 & 1Cor.15) has nothing to do with a casket resurrection from biological death for believers. This is a soteriological resurrection from the spiritual death we inherited from Adam and this spiritual death was magnified by the administration of death – the giving of “THE law” to Israel. This was the “death” that Christ came to deliver and resurrect His people from.

Tom Holland wants to discuss the “consistency” of Paul’s use of terms and language in regard to a corporate body of Sin, Death, and the Flesh as equivalents to being in the covenant body of Adam versus being in the covenant body of Christ in (Rms.5-7). He likewise wants us to understand that what Paul means by “old man” and “new man” are corporate and mean the same thing in the context of the different letters of Paul. Okay, I of course agree with Holland on his corporate covenant communities that are contrasted in (Rms.5-7). I just see this corporate concept being carried through into chapter 8 with the “redemption of the body” as both corporate Israel groaning for this redemption/resurrection and the corporate body of Christ – the Church groaning to be further delivered from Israel’s OC “body of death” under the law.

As we saw in our study on (Mt.5:17-18) the OC law had not been completely fulfilled and her “heaven and earth” creation had not yet passed. While the OC law creation co-existed with the in-breaking of the NC creation “in Christ,” there was a groaning process for both the Jew under the law apart from Christ, and a groaning process for the Christian to experience their full redemption/resurrection/salvation. Christians had experienced deliverance from the bondage of the law of sin and death to a degree through Christ’s death and resurrection but their deliverance, redemption, and salvation would not be fully completed until Christ return out of Zion to take away their sins (Rms.11:26-27; Rms.13:11-12). Their salvation was nearer than when they had first believed but they were groaning for its completion.

A Physical Casket Resurrection or Spiritual Resurrection For Believers?

We have covered the corporate aspect to the resurrection “body” in Romans but what of the physical or spiritual nature of Paul’s resurrection teaching here within the book of Romans? Paul’s doctrine of resurrection is a far cry from the casket resurrections that futurists see at the end of time. Please read and study Paul’s doctrine of the continuity of Jesus’ resurrection with the believer:

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” (Rms.5:3-6)

The identity of the believer who had died in the “likeness” of Christ’s death was that of a spiritual continuity and not physical – for obviously they hadn’t been crucified “like” Christ and experienced physical death. As well, the “likeness” and continuity of sharing in Christ’s resurrection was spiritual and resulted in a “newness of life” “no longer being slaves of sin.” At this point the reader objects – “Well of course there is a spiritual resurrection for the believer now but there will one day be a casket resurrection for us.” Well, it’s one thing to say that and it’s quite another thing to prove that there are two different kinds of resurrections for the believer one spiritual and the other physical. It is merely assumed that the “redemption of the body” in (Rms.8:23) is a biological casket resurrection for believers, when in fact the context leading up to Romans 8 Paul has

done nothing but teach a spiritual resurrection for believers and it primarily being a corporate resurrection for the Church – the Body of Christ.

So I would agree with futurist Tom Holland on there being a consistent use of Paul's terminology not only in the corporate aspects of resurrection, but on the spiritual nature of it.

“Also, it seems quite inconceivable that a man of Paul's intellectual caliber should be so haphazard as to be indifferent to these alleged inconsistencies. At Paul's instruction, his letters were being passed around the churches (Col. 4:16). Was he not concerned with consistency?”⁸⁰

Holland himself seeks to be consistent in interpreting Paul using the valid hermeneutical principal that the reformers called “The analogy of Scripture” or simply put - Scripture interprets Scripture, when he seeks to interpret Paul's use of words, phrases, and terminology in (Rms.5-7) by interpreting Paul through his other writings in Ephesians, Colossians, and Galatians. However, Holland then fails to do so when he gets to Romans 8 when it comes to explaining or identifying what Paul's “creation” is that is groaning in relation to it wanting and eagerly waiting for what the Christians at Rome had and were in the process of receiving “freedom from bondage and corruption,” “adoption” and “redemption of the body.” Likewise Holland sees that in (Rms.6-7) that the “body of sin” and “body of death” is a corporate covenant community body contrasted with the corporate covenant community found in the “Body of Christ” – the Church that is groaning for salvation. I of course agree with these observations but there is no need to break from the context of chapters 6 and 7 in relation to a corporate body struggling under “the law” looking for salvation when we approach chapter 8. Paul in chapter 8 is simply describing this “corporate covenant community body” differently here as Israel being the OC “creation” groaning for the salvation that the Roman Christians were in the process of receiving and experiencing. We shall now turn our attention to some of these terms and themes that Paul uses to further clarify that the “creation” here is the intelligible creation of OC Israel longing for what the Christians were experiencing and were “shortly” to receive.

“Present Sufferings”

It is important to note that the “present sufferings” (vs.18) that the Christians in Rome were experiencing before receiving a particular “glory” and “redemption” to be “revealed IN” them has reference to the persecutions preceding the second coming of Christ that was predicted to occur in **their generation** (persecutions and sufferings - Mt.24:9, 12, parousia - Mt.24:27-34; redemption - Lk.21:28-32; “in you” - Lk.17:20-21ff./Lk.21:30-32; Jn.14:3; 23). In regard to this “glory” that would be revealed “in” them and this “present suffering” Paul explains elsewhere in his writings in (2Cor.3-4) that this suffering was only for a “moment” and this transformation process of receiving the NC “glory” and it's “life” being worked out in the believers would be reached and realized when the OC glory of the law would fully pass in A.D. 70. This transformation process of becoming in the likeness of Christ would be reached when “His life would be revealed IN their mortal body.” Once again this text of a resurrection, glorification, transformation process into Christ's likeness was not biological or literal in the believers at Corinth during the time

Paul was writing this letter and the end fulfillment of that process would likewise not be literal or biological. It is only assumed to have a literal end of history casket coming out of the ground “transformation”/resurrection of the “mortal body” when the text states no such thing!

Holland notes the O.T. predictive background to this suffering in (Rms.8), and correlates other N.T. Pauline texts such as (2Cor.5 - 6), (Cols.1:24-27), (1Thess.2:14-15), with Isaiah the prophet and the New Creation:

“That this Corinthian passage also reflects that same prophetic passage is borne out in that Paul proceeds to speak of the new creation (5:17), which is brought about by this representative death (5:21). This is the very theme of Isaiah, for he too goes on to speak of all things being made new in the context of the New Covenant that the Servant’s death establishes (Isa.65:17). Thus Paul sees his ministry as being to proclaim the fulfillment of all that Isaiah had predicted. He is elevated above the evangelical prophet in that he proclaims the fulfillment, and not just the expectation.

Perhaps the most significant passages of 2 Corinthians is chapter 6. Paul starts the section, which describes the sufferings into which his work brings him, by quoting from the Servant Songs, and concludes it with a further quotation from the Songs (Isa.49:8; 52:11).

“...It is evident that Paul saw his own ministry as a servant of the New Covenant, as Moses and Israel herself were the servants of the Old Covenant. As the prophets addressed Israel and appealed to fidelity, so Paul appeals to the church at Corinth. The credentials of Paul’s ministry is that he is fulfilling all that the sufferings servant(s) suffered in their ministry to Israel. The question is, does Paul see himself in line as a suffering servant because he is an apostle, or because he is a Christian?”

“...Paul never saw his sufferings as being unique, this is beyond doubt. They were part of the sufferings to which the corporate servant, i.e. the Church, was called:

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, (1Thess.2:14-15).

Paul warned those whom he visited during his tour of encouraging the churches that they must through much suffering enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Clearly he presupposed the inevitability, if not the necessity, of suffering.

This suffering was not something to be merely endured, for it actually formed part of the will of God (2Thess.1:4-5). This suffering is in no way vicarious, as was Christ's passion, but it is essentially the same as the sufferings Christ experienced during his ministry of proclamation. Because of this, Paul frequently links his own suffering, and that of other believers, with Christ's. To be God's servants means being rejected by those who insist on walking in darkness.

“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col.1:24-27).

Such suffering is not endured in isolation, for the believer is part of Christ's body, and Christ is the head. ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting’ (Acts 9:5). Again Paul says: ‘Its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it’ (1Cor.12:25-26).

For Paul, suffering is not merely a sign of being part of the kingdom of God. It is a means of spiritual maturing and preparation for the glory and splendour of Christ's appearing. This parallels the theme of Isaiah who saw Israel's suffering as necessary for the bringing in of the Messianic Kingdom (Isa.40:1-10; 54:11-14).⁸¹

I believe Tom Holland has done a good job here of not only demonstrating the parallels with Paul's ministry of suffering in relation to Isaiah's prediction of the coming of Christ, the new creation, and judgment, but he also does a fair job in correlating Paul's teaching of suffering throughout his letters as well as their corporate fidelity. However, Holland fails to identify the consistency between Isaiah, Paul, and Jesus as far as the time of fulfillment of this suffering in relation to the parousia, judgment, and new creation. It is true that "Paul sees his ministry as being to proclaim the fulfillment of all that Isaiah had predicted. He is elevated above the evangelical prophet *in that he proclaims the fulfillment, and not just the expectation...*" BUT Holland fails to note the imminent expectation of Paul in his various letters with that of Christ's teachings on the parousia, persecution, judgment, and new creation.

In our lengthy quote above of Tom Holland he mentions (2Cor.5 – 6) in relation to the sufferings of the church and the new creation but neglects the "groanings" of (2Cor.5:2ff.) in relation to the corporate church or covenant community groaning to be "clothed" with their "eternal" house or "heavenly dwelling." Paul is not finished in his covenant contrasts that he started in chapter 3 of contrasting the two glories of the old and new covenants. Here in chapter 5 he continues with that theme but it is now described as a contrast of temples or houses. The Corinthian's covenantally speaking were still apart of the OC dwelling/system groaning to be clothed upon by their glorious promised house from heaven. Being clothed with garments of righteousness/praise/wedding garments, a House/New Temple/New Jerusalem/New Creation, ect. Are eschatological equivalents in Scripture. So when in chapter 6 Paul quotes Ezekiel 37 and states that the church is the NC millennial temple predicted by the prophets, we are to understand here in the previous chapter that this is what the Corinthians were groaning for the completion of. Revelation states that "shortly" the NC New Jerusalem/Bride/Temple would come out of heaven to earth thus clothing the Church with the righteous wedding garments and house from heaven (Isa.52:1ff.; Isa.61:10; Mt.22:1-14; Rev.21).

Although Paul did unite his sufferings with the corporate body of the Church, Paul played a very important role in the "restoration of Israel" (Isa.49; Isa.52) as he was an ambassador of light to the Gentiles. Paul was fulfilling Isaiah's, Hosea's, Ezekiel's, and Jeremiah's restoration promises by "gathering" the two houses of Israel back together again. He did this by preaching to the Gentiles and fulfilling the Great Commission predicted by the prophet's and Jesus. Holland quotes (Col.1:24-27) but misses (v.23) which is clearly a text stating that Paul had been used to fulfill the great commission – "if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from ***the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.***" This lays the basis for Paul's imminent expectation of the restoration of Israel of which he was being used to

accomplish within the first century. Paul's first century sufferings along with the Church were filling up the cup of God's wrath that would be poured out upon Jerusalem in Paul's "this generation" (Mt.23:31-36).

It is here once again that Holland misses the significance of quoting (1Thess.2:14-15) and the fact that this suffering is coming from the hands of the Jews "countrymen." This is in perfect harmony with Christ's teaching in Mt.23 and 24. Holland likewise fails to address that this suffering was promised a retribution to those very Jews who were persecuting them (2Thess.1:4-7) in their day! Did not Christ promise that the sufferings and martyrdom of His people suffered at the hands of the Jews would be vindicated in His generation at His second coming (Mt.23:36/24:27, 30-31; 34)? To this John bears witness when he describes OC Jerusalem in Revelation as the "Great City" where the Lord was crucified (Rev.11:8). She alone was the city guilty of shedding the blood of the prophets and apostles of Jesus Christ (Rev.6; 12; 16; 17 – 18; 20). The martyrs cries would be vindicated in a "little while" not 2000 + years away.

Holland also quotes the persecutions of the book of Acts but again fails to acknowledge or address Paul's teaching an imminent judgment and resurrection theologically tied to those persecutions and inseparably tied to "the hope of Israel" and the "restoration of all things."

Holland misses the correlation to John the Baptist (as the Elijah to come) stating that the "way" he was preparing for here in (Isa.40:1-10) was an "at hand" kingdom, that would necessitate an at hand persecution preceding the imminent harvest/resurrection, judgment (Mt.3:2; 10-12). Nor does Holland make the connection that Jesus promised that some of His disciples would not taste of death before they saw Christ coming in His kingdom to reward each man (Isa.40:10/Mt.16:27-28).

I enjoyed Holland's book *Contours In Pauline Theology* in his emphasis on understanding Paul's theology as that of the theology of the O.T. Scriptures with a Hebraic world view and not a Greek one. His emphasis on a corporate body motif in Paul's theology and Paul having a well developed systematic understanding of words, terms, and phrases is also helpful in understanding Paul's writings. However, we believe Holland has not gone far enough in understanding Paul in corporate terms when it comes to the resurrection and we also feel Tom Holland needs to address the "consistency" of Paul's imminent expectation of the parousia in light of Paul being used to fulfill the Great Commission as Isaiah's servant/ambassador restoring and transforming her in the first century. Let's now turn our attention to a reformed theologian that does want to attempt to deal with the consistency of Paul's imminent expectation throughout his writings but fails to do so in the 8th chapter of Romans.

The “Glory” and “Redemption of The Body” “about to be” Revealed “In” Them

We find partial preterism once again imploring an arbitrary hermeneutic when it comes to the time texts in Scripture. I shall quote two translations that point out the imminent expectation involved in the “glory” and “redemption of the body” and thus the redemption of “creation” here in our text:

“For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory **about to be** revealed in us;” (Rms.8:18 YLT)

“Why, what we now suffer I count as nothing in comparison with the glory **which is soon to be** manifested in us.” (Rms.8:18 WEY)

Remember the admission that partial preterists such as R.C. Sproul, Kenneth Gentry, and Gary DeMar make concerning the imminent Greek word *mello* *mel'-lo* in (Rev.1:19; Rev. 3:10). In these texts where *mello* is being used we are told by partial preterists that it's only a faulty preconceived eschatology that would not translate *mello* as “about to be” in the book of Revelation. I have already pointed out that in Acts when the same Greek word and or construction is use in relation to the resurrection and judgment being “about to be” fulfilled in Paul's day that men like Gentry and R.C. Sproul have no comment! Well, here is but yet another example of a time text proving that the resurrection “redemption of the body,” was something that Paul taught as “about to be” fulfilled, and not only the resurrection, but the restoration of the creation. Paul teaching elsewhere confirms that this “eager expectation” for “redemption” or “salvation” was that of an imminent one (Rms.13:11-12; 16:20). When Christ's second coming as described in Romans as coming out of Zion (Rms.11:26-27) would occur is when He would “take away their sin,” “salvation,” the “crushing and defeat of Satan,” and “the redemption of the body” for the Christians and “creation” would take place! And of course let's not forget futurists R.C. Sproul's statement that was specifically applied to the epistle of Romans when he conceded that it is “not unreasonable” to apply a time statement to a passage in an epistle later or early on when in the same book there are time statements presented. If R.C. Sproul wants to apply the time statements of (Rms.13 & 16) to the judgment in chapter 2 of Romans, then why can't I apply them to (Rms.8) and the resurrection – “the redemption of the body”? If he and partial preterists can claim that *mello* in Revelation means imminence then why can't it mean the same in Acts and here in Romans 8 in relation to the resurrection? If it is admitted by futuristic partial preterists that an OC creation of “heaven and earth” existed for Israel then why not see that

creation here in Romans 8? The answers to these questions have not come in any contextual or exegetical fashion. We tend to get the following answers when we ask these kind of textual questions or expose their arbitrary hermeneutic - "I'm still studying that," or creedal mantra cries and name calling smokescreen methodology "heretic" or "hyper-preterists"! Kenneth Gentry continues ducking a debate with a full preterist and when this position did attempt to do so with James Jordan – well Jordan just concede to our arguments and gave hugs in the halls hoping that his opponent wouldn't continue exposing their arbitrary position - the debate speaks for itself.⁸²

In context the "revealing of the sons of God" (vs.19) is equivalent to the time frame of being "glorified together" or having that "glory revealed in them" of (vs.17, 18) and "eagerly awaiting the adoption" and "redemption of the body" (vs.23) – all of which the creation was "also" eagerly groaning to attain. Folks this is not the rocks, trees, oceans, fish, and animals groaning for the things that the Roman Christians were "about to" receive! The text and context is addressing an intelligible creation of men under the OC law or creation of men "in Adam" longing and looking for this redemption and adoption to be consummated. In context, Paul has dealt with this groaning from bondage and death that "law" brought through Adam and then magnified through Israel's "the law" which also produced "the death."

But one will ask, "What about (vs.20) isn't that describing Adam causing the physical creation to be subject to "futility" through his sin and the physical creation wasn't willing for this to happen?" It is true that being "In Adam" and the spiritual death and that passed upon all men (Gen.3) is a subject that Paul has been developing in the previous chapters. However, along with this theme has been the development by Paul of the creation of Israel and her bondage and groanings under "the law."

It is generally taught that a consequence of Adam's sin was that he would physically die and that the physical earth was likewise cursed and subject to the same physical "decay" as that of Adam post fall. However, the only "death" God threatened Adam with was spiritual – "The day you eat of the fruit you shall surely die." The literal "day" in which Adam sinned his eyes were opened to his shame and he died a spiritual death. Physical death is not the issue here. Futurists tend to think that not only was it God's intention that Adam never experience physical death, but all of the insects and animals would have never died had Adam not sinned. So apparently everything was to be fruitful and multiply and at the same time no creature would physically die? Obviously there would have been an overpopulation issue of just the insects alone not even considering all of the animals and humans! I believe it was always God's plan for Adam and the animals to die physically. What made physical death so bad for Adam and his descendants was the spiritual death that would now be passed down from him. To die physically under the curse of spiritual death was what makes physical death so bad.

There is not exegetical evidence to support the idea that had Adam not ate of the fruit he would have never died physically. And there is exegetical evidence that supports that the “death” God threatened Adam with the “day” he ate was purely spiritual in nature.

So the next question centers on the ground being cursed (Gen.3:17-19). It is once again assumed that the entire earth was similar to the garden of Eden environment. However, this is not the case. Adam was formed from the dirt and dust outside of Eden and then placed into the garden by God. This is similar to God calling and placing Israel into the promised land – a land of agricultural abundance flowing with milk and honey. But Adam disobeyed and broke the “law” set forth in the garden and experienced a spiritual covenant death and was banished back outside the garden and the dust and dirt outside the garden was cursed so that it was not as abundant and even more difficult for Adam to cultivate. In similar fashion when Israel disobeyed “the law” she was banished in exile back outside the fruitful land thus experiencing a covenantal spiritual death and God would often bring the covenant cursings and brought famine (Deut.28:22-24; Ezk.37; Hos.13:1, 14).

Therefore, as we examine Romans 8 and note that the previous context has dealt with Adam and Israel under “law” and “the law” and the groaning under that struggle apart from the work of Christ, we need to see *Israel as a corporate Adam or type of Adam*. Another aspect of the similarities would be in the commission given to each of them in the form of a “great commission” for both Adam and Israel and their failure to accomplish that mission. Again let me let a futurist lay the foundation here with G.K. Beale:

“After the restoration from Babylon, God commands Israel to be a ‘witness’ to their ‘knowledge’ and ‘belief’ that God was the only true God, and that he will epress his divine omnipotence by again delivering Israel out of a second bondage and performing a second exodus to the promised land (Is.43:10-12; 44:6-8).

That Israel was to be a ‘witness’ to the nations is implied at various points (Is.43:9) but made explicit in Isaiah 55:4, where God says that he had made David ‘a witness to the peoples’, a commission that Israel should share. Israel’s kings were to be leaders in bearing this ‘testimony.’ This commission was Israel’s task to ‘call’ the nations to God (Is.55:5).

However, just as Adam 'hid... from the presence of the Lord' (Gen.3:8), thus ensuring failure to accomplish his mission, Israel, as representative of God's true humanity, also separated themselves from the divine presence and failed to carry out the commission. **Thus, it is not an overstatement to say that Israel was conceived of as a 'corporate Adam.'**" The nation's task was to do what Adam had first been commissioned to do. Israel failed even as had Adam. And like Adam, Israel was also cast out of their 'garden land' into exile. Though a remnant of Israel returned from exile, her failure to carry out the Adamic task continued until the beginning of the first century AD."⁸³

It was God's will to both subject Adam and man "in Adam" along with Israel to "futility" or "vanity" in order that He might ultimately elevate man to a better place "in Christ." It was no surprise to God that Adam would not keep the law nor Israel the law He gave her, but was rather ordained in the sovereign counsels of God to rebel in order to serve in God's overall plan to give man something far better than Adam or even Israel had. No doubt it was not Adam's will to be cast out of the garden and had there not been an angel sent to guard him from coming back in he surely would have tried. So too with Israel, when she disobeyed and was sent out of the land into exile, she did not go willingly but "unwillingly." God would instruct man through giving Adam and Israel "law" and "the law" that no matter how hard he tried, he would only break God's law and needed one to stand in his stead that could obey it perfectly. So although God subjected Adam and Israel to be exiled from His presence because of his sin, it was not done in vain, but done "**in hope**; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The creation being subject to "bondage of corruption or decay" is not talking about the rocks and trees decaying. Paul has already eloquently described this "bondage" and struggle in chapter 7 and in chapter 8 it is Christ Jesus through the law of the Spirit of life that sets men free from **the law** of sin and death (v.2). "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to **God's law**, nor can it do so" (v.7). And again, "For you did not receive the spirit of **bondage** again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father" (v.15). The "bondage" is bondage under spiritual death that makes it impossible to please God that was brought through Satan and magnified through the giving of the law at Sinai (Gal.4:24; 5:1; Heb.2:15). And concerning the "decay" or "corruption" Strong's gives a good definition: "in the NT, in an ethical sense, corruption i.e. moral decay." This is the moral "corruption" of man brought through spiritual sin/death that is to be liberated in our text, and not rocks and trees from the so called laws of thermal dynamics!

The "creation" groaning" in "birth pains" is Israel who in and of herself could only bring forth "wind" and no salvation to the world (Isa.26:18). However, the remnant of Israel within the Church does deliver forth salvation without much pain and practically effortlessly (Isa.66:7-8). The other term here that indicates that this is the creation of Israel, is the groaning for the "adoption" promise. In the very next chapter Paul

specifically identifies his race as pertaining the promises of “adoption” – “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, *my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption*, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;” (Rms.9:3-4). So two groups are “groaning” for the fulfillment of the “adoption” promises to have God reveal who are His true children and thus would inherit His Kingdom. The “birth pains” of Israel or time of testing and trial would only be for a “moment” and bring forth the “glory” of the NC promises while the testing, groaning, and labor of the wicked among Israel would lead to intense suffering and judgment (Mt.24:8f.; 1Thess.5:3; 1Pet.4:17-18; 2Cor.4:17-5:5/Rev.12/Rev.21).

Then present OC Jerusalem from below were producing children, but apart from Christ, they were not of the promise and left in bondage; while the NC Jerusalem from above was producing children through the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal.4). The OC creation was groaning out of pure bondage to the law, while the NC creation had been set free by the work of Christ on the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit. But in order to fulfill the Day of Atonement law and typology, they still needed Christ to appear out of the heavenly Temple “a second time apart from sin” to complete their salvation and freedom process.

The creation groaning for what the Christians were experiencing has nothing to do with the creation of dirt, rocks, trees, ants, and the like, groaning for what the Christians were experiencing, but has everything to do with the OC creation of Israel groaning for her redemption promises to be realized but apart from Christ they would not. Again, when Jesus said that “the gospel must first be preached to every creature under heaven” and Paul said that every creature under heaven had heard it in his day (Cols.1:23); Jesus and Paul are not discussing the literal rocks and trees experiencing redemption through faith in Christ! In other words this is an ***intelligible creation or class of people*** that is being discussed and likewise is the case in Romans 8. There are two covenant worlds and creations of people under discussion here in Romans 8 as there is elsewhere whether it is described as being “in Adam” or “in Christ” or “the Jerusalem from below” verses the “Jerusalem from above.”

Why should it be considered odd to have the Bible teach the new covenant in terms of a SPIRITUAL NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH when it teaches this in relation to a SPIRITUAL TABERNACLE (Heb. 8:1-3; Heb. 9:23-24), SPIRITUAL TEMPLE (Ephs. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5), SPIRITUAL PRIESTHOOD AND SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES (1 Pet. 2:5-9; Heb. 7:11,12; Heb. 13:15-16), SPIRITUAL SEED (Gal. 3:16-29), SPIRITUAL ISRAEL (Gal. 6:16; Rom. 9:6-8), SPIRITUAL LAND (Mt. 5:5; Heb. 12:22-28), SPIRITUAL COUNTRY, CITY, & JERUSALEM (Heb. 11:16; Heb. 12:22; Heb. 13:14). I guess I’m just too simple-minded to believe that the new covenant, Spiritual Israel,

country, city, Jerusalem, has some spiritual real-estate and is not wordless but rather RESIDES in the spiritual new covenant, new heavens and new earth.

Liberal theologians and the end of the world

A liberal, Dale C. Allison, Jr. feels that,

"conservative critics" need to "acknowledge the **humiliating discovery** that Jesus proclaimed the divinely wrought **near end of the world**" [emphasis MJS] (Allison Dale, Jr. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 113? p. 651).

He believes that "the eschatological Jesus is theologically **troubling**" and states,

"The truth, however, is like God: we can run from it, but it is always there. I myself do not know what to make of the eschatological Jesus. I am, for theological reasons, unedified by the thought that, in a matter so seemingly crucial, *a lie has been walking around for two thousand years* while the truth has only recently put on its shoes. **But there it is.**" (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. ?, p. 668).

I gather from Mr. Allison that the "truth" he is referring to is the *alleged discovery* that this mistaken and purely

"...human Jesus, is **just like one of us**, one who holds values that are very close to our ideological commitments, a Jesus who is a social reformer and who attacks patriarchal orders. A Jesus who, as a real human person, can stand as an example and inspiration for worthy causes" [emphasis MJS] (*Ibid.* Allison quoting Koester in footnote 82 on p. 668).

In other words, Jesus was a good moral teacher and "inspiration" to us all, *but he wasn't God like he claimed, because He was "mistaken" and failed to usher in the kingdom when he promised.* This purely "human Jesus" these men claim to trust in, then, can't save them from their sins, and they won't find any "comforting implications" in him in this life or in the next!

The error in view here is the *conclusion* that: 1) Christ **did not come** within the time frame He promised - the apostolic generation, and 2) thus Jesus was just a good moral teacher and **not God like He claimed to be.**

In response to Allison, I would say there is NO "**humiliating discovery**" that Jesus proclaimed the divinely wrought **near end of the world**" that needs to be made. It is only "humiliating" if the "near end of the world" Christ referred to was the *physical planet*. But Christ and the inspired Apostles taught no such thing! **The common error** among liberal, cult, reformed, sovereign grace, fundamental, and evangelical theologians is their associating the physical planet's or world's dissolving at the return of Christ and His establishing an alleged *physica*/spiritual new heavens and earth. This is the common error of both "critical scholars" and "evangelicals". The liberal theologian believes that Christ promised to return in the lifetime and generation of the apostles and at that time the world would end. Since the physical world did not end, the liberal reasons Christ was "mistaken" and did not come when He promised. Reformed, cult, and evangelical theologians reason that since the physical world did not end in AD 70, Christ just couldn't have come in spite of the exegetical evidence. Therefore, they explain away and twist the Scriptures where Christ and the inspired apostles taught that Christ would come in some of the apostles' lifetimes and in their generation to destroy the world and create the new heavens and new earth.

All of these religious views error on the nature of the world that was to be destroyed at Christ's second coming and the new heavens and new earth that would be ushered in at this event. The Bible is not about the end of time, but rather "the time of the end."

Summary

There is no exegetical evidence that supports the notion that the disciples were "confused" and asked questions that had false assumptions. They correctly heard their master predict on previous occasions that He would come in some of their lifetimes to bring an "end" and thus judgment upon Jerusalem (Mt.3:1-12/Mrk.1:14-15; Mt.10:22-34; Mt.16:27-28). Therefore, His statement in regard to the destruction of the temple only served to further their curiosity as to when this would occur in relation to their lifetimes, and they wanted some signs that would mark the nearness of this event. They made the common sense relationship to the end of the OC or Mosaic age with the destruction of the temple they were looking at, whereas futurists somehow associate the destruction of the temple that Jesus and the disciples were looking at with the end of the Christian age! There simply is no **contextual** support immediate or prior to (Mt.24) that supports that the OD has anything to do with the end of the Christian age – this is read into the text. The "evidence" and "proof texts" that Gentry has provided to demonstrate that the disciples were confused in thinking that the destruction of the temple would mark the end of the planet coming of Christ ends up proving too much and our case not his. If the disciples were confused and Jesus corrected them, then Matthew would tell us this as he has everywhere else in his gospel.

The "Last Days" were a period of time marking the end to that OC age and have nothing to do with the "newspaper prophecy experts" claims that WE are living in the "last days!"

We shall now turn to the facts that: 1) All of the signs Jesus gives the disciples were all fulfilled before A.D. 70 and would thus mark a **genuine** nearness to His return and kingdom and 2) Jesus coming on the clouds in judgment upon Jerusalem to put an end to her OC age is consistent with the OT teaching that – when God judged nations in the OT, He used de-creation language that was metaphoric, symbolic, and **apocalyptic in nature and had nothing to do with the destruction of the planet.**

2) The "Signs of The End" ALL Fulfilled By AD 70 & Letting the Bible Interpret Itself On the Prophetic Language Used By Jesus

GENERAL SIGNS OF THE END FULFILLED BEFORE THE SECOND COMING IN A.D. 70:

- "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he

is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” (Mt.24:24-28)

- “And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He*,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them.

"But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end *will not come* immediately." (Lk.21:8-9)

"False Messiahs" - Jesus predicted that false messiahs would come in the generation of the first century disciples and they did: Theudas (Acts 5:36; 13:6), Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:37), and Simon (Acts 8:9-11) to name a few.

Russell captured the flow and context of this sign as addressed to the disciples and quotes Josephus to demonstrate how it was fulfilled:

“The same is equally true with respect to the section now before us. The very first word is indicative of continuity—‘Then’ [tote] and every succeeding word is plainly addressed to the disciples themselves, for their personal warning and guidance. It is clear that our Lord gives them intimation of what would shortly come to pass, or at least what they might live to witness with their own eyes. It is a vivid representation of what actually occurred in the last days of the Jewish commonwealth. The unhappy Jews, and especially the people of Jerusalem, were buoyed up with false hopes by the specious impostors who infested the land and brought ruin upon their miserable dupes. Such was the infatuation produced by the boasting pretensions of these impostors, that, as we learn from Josephus, when the temple was actually in flames a vast multitude of the deluded people fell victims to their credulity. The Jewish historian states:

‘Of so great a multitude, not one escaped. Their destruction Was caused by a false prophet, who had on that day proclaimed to those remaining in the city, that "God commanded them to go up to the temple, there to receive the signs of their deliverance." There were at this time many prophets suborned by the tyrants to delude the people, by bidding them wait for help from God, in order that there might be less desertion, and that those who were above fear and control might be encouraged by hope. Under calamities man readily yields to persuasion but when the deceiver pictures to him deliverance from pressing evils, then the sufferer is wholly influenced by hope. Thus it was that the impostors and pretended messengers of heaven at that time beguiled the wretched people.’ {1}

Our Lord forewarns His disciples that His coming to that judgment-scene would be conspicuous and sudden as the lightning-flash, which reveals itself and seems to be everywhere at the, same moment. 'For,' He adds, 'wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together;' that is, wherever the guilty and devoted children of Israel were found, there the destroying ministers of wrath, the Roman legions, —would overwhelm them."⁸⁴

I believe Don Preston has done an excellent job addressing the (Lk.21:8) parallel passage in making the observation that the time statements ("near") associated with the second coming must be taken literally,

"This time line (of the signs), when related to the later epistles, after the fulfillment of the first (the sign of the Great Commission) of the two major signs given by Jesus, in which the inspired writers emphatically stated, "The end of all things has drawn near" (1Pet.4:7), proves that their time statements must be taken literally. Jesus had told them they could tell when the end had not drawn near, and he had told them when they could tell it had drawn near, and when they saw the signs occurring they said "the end has drawn near!"

Here is the power of Jesus' warning in Luke 21:8. Where ever you place his warning chronologically, all those before that time who proclaimed the nearness of the end are declared by Jesus himself to be false prophets. Was Jesus speaking to the modern church when he said, "Do not be deceived, many will come saying, 'The end has drawn near'"? If he was, then all previous generations of believers who have declared so confidently that the end was near in their generation are judged as false teachers by Jesus. Do you realize what this means? It means that Jesus' own apostles are false prophets because they said, unambiguously, "in a very, very little while, (Greek, hosan, hosan micron), and he who is coming will come, and will not tarry" (Heb.10:37).

Let me reiterate this, according to Luke 21:8 not generation was to declare the nearness of the end except the one that saw the signs. All "prophecy experts" that declared, or declare, the nearness of the end before (or after!), it is actually near, were to be, or are to be rejected. If therefore, Luke 21:8 applies to the current generation, there is no escaping the fact that Jesus' own apostles are adjudged as false prophets. We either accept their declarations of the nearness of the end as the definitive, truthful, final word on the issue, or else call them liars.

Thus, when the Biblical writers, writing in light of Jesus' warnings, said that what he had foretold was fulfilled, and that the end had drawn near, we cannot stretch those statements two thousand years into the future. We cannot ignore their statements of "at hand." All statements that the end was near, made before the inspired writers said it was near, were false. All statements that the end is near, written or stated after the Biblical writers said it was near, are false statements. The only preachers, prophets or teachers who were ever given insight into the time of Jesus' return were Jesus' first century inspired disciples, and they said that the end had drawn near 2000 years ago! If their statements that the end was near were as wrong as those before them, then they too were false teachers."⁸⁵

I remember sitting under two of my former pastors one considered a "prophecy expert" on the "signs of the times" and the other an alleged "exegete" of Scripture - Pastors

Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel and John MacArthur of Grace Community Church in S. CA.; and being constantly told that all of the signs in the OD had come to pass and were unfolding before our eyes in the Newspapers. Based on current events allegedly fulfilling the signs in the OD Pastor's Chuck Smith and John MacArthur could say that the end was really "near." I always found it odd that they would spiritualize the time statements to mean nothing based on their false interpretation of (2Pet.3:8) or that all the time statements in the NT of "at hand," "soon," "shortly," "quickly," etc. meant that Christ's coming was "certain" to take place or that when Jesus decides to come (whenever that may be) that at that time it would happen or unfold "quickly." But then out the other side of their mouth whenever Chuck Smith used the phrase "Jesus is coming quickly" after a "prophecy update" lecture, he always used the phrase, and all of us understood the statement to mean, that Christ was coming in our lifetime based upon the rapid unfolding of the signs - in particular the "super sign" of what was happening in Israel since 1948 and this linked to "this generation" which was ours (1948 + 40 years = 1988 - 7 years pretrib rapture = 1981). So what we have is the "prophecy experts" using imminent statements literally to their contemporary audiences to muster up attendance or book sales ect. but when their predictions never come to pass they fall back on false definitions of imminence and or begin stretching out a generation to mean 40, 50, 70, or 100 years as do the J.W.'s when their false predictions never come to pass. Some such as Chuck Smith have adopted a "plan B" approach to "this generation" that we will address when we get to (Mt.24:34).

John MacArthur "argues" Christ has always wanted every generation in the church throughout all ages to be on the "tiptoe of expectation" and since the NT writers believed that Jesus' coming would occur "soon" and throughout church history many Christians believed the same, therefore this somehow proves(?) some kind of "imminent" coming in our day. Of Romans chapter 13 MacArthur states,

"Wake Up! "Awake out of sleep," he pleads (v.11), and he underscores both the urgency of this command and the imminency of Christ's return with four phrases: "now it is high time"; "our salvation is nearer" (v.11); "The night is far spent"; and "the day is at hand" (v.12). Time is short; opportunity is fleeting. The Lord is coming soon, and the event draws nearer every moment. The time to obey is now. The only time we can take for granted is now. And since there is no guarantee of more time, it is unconscionable to defer our obedience.

Consider this: the apostle Paul was stressing the urgency of this commandment in his day, 2,000 years ago. He believed the coming of Christ was near and getting nearer by the moment. How much more urgent are these things for our time?⁸⁶

And elsewhere the "argument(?)" is,

"The Judge is still at the door. The day is still at hand. There are no other events that must occur on the prophetic calendar before Christ comes to meet us in the air. He could come at any moment."

"...the fact that 2,000 years have elapsed is utterly irrelevant to the doctrine of Christ's imminent return. Christ's coming is *still* imminent."⁸⁷

In chapter two of MacArthur's book in which he attempts to refute partial and full preterists, he sites all of the NT time texts that taught that the first century church

expected a “soon,” “near,” and “at hand” coming of Christ and makes the circular argument of saying – “see, if the NT writers taught and thought His return would be soon, then His return is still imminent for us.” MacArthur is assuming what he needs to prove and does not prove his case on the meaning of Greek words and there most assuredly is no logic or reason behind his words. MacArthur is making nonsensical such statements as “at hand” to simply mean “any time” or certain to happen. And if “there are no other events that must occur (signs) on the prophetic calendar before Christ comes to meet us in the air” that proves “Christ’s coming is *still* imminent,” as it was in the first century, then what of the “super sign of Israel becoming a nation again in 1948” that we are always hearing Dispensationalists talk about? They claim that it was prophetically necessary to occur before the rapture or second coming could occur. According to Hal Lindsey and men like Chuck Smith, that “generation” (beginning in 1948) marked a genuine or literal imminence. How in the world could the Apostle Paul’s statement of “at hand” mean the same thing as Lindsey’s or MacArthur’s when Israel hadn’t even been scattered by the Romans in A.D. 70 let alone “gathered” back in the land in 1948 to start Israel’s and thus our eschatological time clock up again? Didn’t Jesus warn the disciples NOT to say the end was “near” when it wasn’t and thus teaching that “near” has some objective and comprehensible meaning to it?!?

Preston addresses this faulty premise and contradictory approach when he sarcastically points out the irony of placing hope in a history of failed predictions throughout church history and equating those false hopes and predictions with those of inspired NT writers. He states of men like MacArthur who feel:

“...the modern church is justified in believing in the soon coming end because the apostles believed the end was near, and those who followed them believed the end was near. In other words, believers today are to look back upon *this history of failed predictions*, and be confirmed in the faith that the end is coming, and soon! However, Luke 21 refutes such an idea.

If the apostles’ declarations were no more true than those who pontificated before them, or no more true than Ephraem, than Luther, than William Miller, etc., then their inspiration means nothing at all. According to Jeffry, MacArthur, et. Al, those before the apostles, and all prophecy pundits after the apostles stand together. But, if they all stand together, then they all fall together, for the predictions of those before the apostles, the apostles, and all those after the apostles have failed, if taken to refer to a literal physical return of Christ!

We must ask, did the inspiration of the apostles not set their predictions apart from those before or after them? Were the apostles not better qualified as discerners of the signs than those before, or after them? If not, in what way did the apostles differ from those whom Jesus told them to avoid, those proclaiming the end was near?

“...In other words, *the church throughout countless generations is not to have the continual message that the end is near!* The *only generation* that was to proclaim the message of the soon coming end was to be the generation that would see the signs. Believers were to reject any message of the imminent end that was not the inspired word of the apostles. To suggest that God gave all of the NT statements that the end was near to create a sense of urgency, when in fact the end was not near, flies in the face of Luke 21:8. Jesus *clearly* did not want

believers to say the end was near until it was near. This means that when He inspired them to say it was near, then, *it was truly near.*"⁸⁸

One cannot maintain that the false prophets or those proclaiming that the end was "near" when it wasn't, was an actual time statement of imminence and then claim that when the apostle Paul said the end was "near" that his statement could mean thousands and thousands of years. In Jesus making a *distinction* between *when* the false teachers would say the end was "near" and Him teaching the disciples when to understand and *teach the end would be "near"* He clearly is teaching that "near" is to be taken in it's normal literal sense and not to be taken as some elastic vague meaningless statement which is supposed to generate faith and hope for the church.

2. "Wars and Rumors of Wars"

"In AD 40 there was a disturbance at Mesopotamia which (Josephus says) caused the deaths of more than 50,000 people. In AD 49, a tumult at Jerusalem at the time of the Passover resulted in 10,000 to 20,000 deaths. At Caesarea, contentions between Jewish people and other inhabitants resulted in over 20,000 Jews being killed. As Jews moved elsewhere, over 20,000 were destroyed by Syrians. At Scythopolis, over 13,000 Jews were killed. Thousands were killed in other places, and at Alexandria 50,000 were killed. At Damascus, 10,000 were killed in an hour's time." (John L. Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*, p. 28)

"The Annals of Tacitus, covering the period from AD 14 to the death of Nero in AD 68, describes the tumult of the period with phrases such as "disturbances in Germany", "commotions in Africa", commotions in Thrace", "insurrections in Gaul", "intrigues among the Parthians", "the war in Britain", and "the war in Armenia". Wars were fought from one end of the empire to the other. With this description we can see further fulfillment: "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." (Matthew 24:7) [emphasis MJS] (DeMar, Gary, *Last Days Madness Obsession of the Modern Day Church*, pp. 62-63, American Vision pub. 1994,)

When Jesus was referring to wars and rumors of wars, He was not referring to what is going on in modern day Russia, China, Israel, Iraq, United States, or Europe today. To reach into Matthew 24 and back into the O.T. and twist these passages and prophecies by asserting that they are referring to these modern day countries and to us today is irresponsible exegesis to say the least.

As we noted in sign #1 of the false messiahs and teachers that would come claiming that the end was near when in fact it was not, seems to have been fulfilled in some aspect within the church during Paul's day when he was dealing with those who had taught that the day of the Lord and or the resurrection had already occurred. It is only reasonable that if these false teachers (Judiazers most likely) were teaching that the day of the Lord had already come and that was premature, then before this they were teaching throughout the churches that his coming was "near" when it wasn't. This error has to do with two issues: 1) the Judiazers hopes that the law would continue within the NC age of Christ, and 2) a premature date setting on the grounds of the general signs of wars and rumor of wars that Jesus said would NOT be an immediate sign of the end. As noted above, there were wars and blood shed in the AD 40's in the temple area that was most likely construed as a judgment upon Jerusalem when in fact it was not what Jesus was describing to take place in A.D.70.

Paul did not address the spiritual nature of fulfillment in the false teachers claiming that the Lord had already come and thus the resurrection as well, but rather appealed to certain signs having not taken place yet - such as the apostasy and the man of sin being revealed whom was alive in Paul's day and not ours (2Thess.2). These along with the more specific signs of the great commission and abomination that makes desolate where to mark the genuine nearness of His return.

3) "Famines" Again, the Bible and history record famine and pestilences during "the last days" (AD 30 - AD 70) of the Apostolic generation (Acts 11:27-29). In AD 40 and AD 60 there were pestilences in Babylon and Rome where Jews and gentiles suffered.

4) "Earthquakes" Acts records for us an earthquake occurring in the Apostolic generation (Acts 16:26). "... just previous to 70 AD there were earthquakes in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colosse, Campania, Rome, and Judea." (DeMar, Gary, *ibid* p. 64)

5. "Tribulation", "Prisons", "Beat you", "kill you", "Brought Before Kings and Rulers For My Name's Sake" Please read Acts 4:3,17; Acts 5:40; Acts 7:54-60; Acts 8:1; Acts 9:1; Acts 12:1-3; Acts 14:19 to see the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Luke 21:12. In fulfillment of our Lord's words, Paul and Silas were beaten (Acts 26:23) and Paul was brought before rulers and kings - Gallio, (Acts 28:12), Felix (Acts 24), Festus and Agrippa (Acts 25). Peter and Paul were put to death in the persecution of Nero.

6) "Love of Many Will Grow Cold" "Betray and Hate One Another" Please read 2 Tim. 1:15; 2 Tim. 4:10, 16. "False Prophets" Please read Acts 13:6-8; 2 Cor. 11:13; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 1 Jn. 4:1. As evidence that it was "the last hour" in John's day, he writes, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us." (1Jn. 2:18-19)

SPECIFIC SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE FULFILLED BEFORE THE SECOND COMING IN A.D.70:

8) "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mt.24:14). I hear someone say, "well now you're really in trouble. You can't prove that the gospel was preached in "all the world" and to "all nations" during the Apostolic generation prior to AD 70!"

Please allow Scripture to determine this:

PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the <u>world</u> (Greek <u><i>oikumene</i></u>) for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14)	"But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to <i>all the earth</i> , and their words to the ends of the <u>world</u> (Greek <u><i>oikumene</i></u>)" (Romans 10:18)
"And the gospel must first be published among <i>all nations</i> (Greek <u><i>ethnos</i></u>)" (Mark 13:10)	"...My gospel... has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures <i>has been made known to all nations</i> (Greek <u><i>ethnos</i></u>)..." (Romans 16:25-26)

"And He said to them, 'Go into *all the world* (Greek *kosmos*) and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)

And he said unto them 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to *every creature* (Greek *kitisis*)" (Mark 16:15)

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the *end of the earth* (Greek *ge*)" (Acts 1:8).

"...of the gospel, which *has come to you*, as it has also in *all the world* (Greek *kosmos*), as is bringing forth fruit..." (Colossians 1:5-6).

"...from the gospel which you heard, which *was preached to every creature* (Greek *kitisis*) under heaven, of which I, Paul became a minister" (Colossians 1:23)

"But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to *all the earth* (Greek *ge*), and their words to the ends of the world" (Romans 10:18)

I would agree with my friend Don Preston when he writes,

"Every word used by the Spirit to describe the scope of the Great Commission is also used by the Spirit to describe the fulfillment of Jesus' mandate! Yet, some still maintain the Great Commission of Matthew 24:14 has never been fulfilled! Is it not presumptuous to say a prophecy has not been fulfilled even though every term, every word employed in the command and prediction of that event is used by the inspired writers to say the prediction has been fulfilled? To maintain therefore that the Great Commission has never been fulfilled one must deny the emphatic statements of scripture. He must insist that the "world" in Matthew meant something for our modern world, but that the word "world" in Romas, Colossians, etc. meant something totally different!" (Don K. Preston, *Into All The World Then Comes The End*, p. 4-5).

To further illustrate what "world" and "every nation" in the above texts are referring to, let's cite some other related texts. Paul said to the Romans that "your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." (Romans 1:8) Had the faith of the Roman church made its way to the Indians in modern day America? What "world" was taxed in Luke 2:1, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world (Greek "oikumene") should be taxed"? Were ancient lands known today as such as Russia, China, and Mexico taxed at this time? No, it was referring to the Roman known world or Roman empire. What "every nation under heaven" is being discussed in Acts 2:5, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven"? Were there Jews from Australia and Mexico who journeyed to Jerusalem from "every nation under heaven"? This is the same "world" and "every nation" that Jesus and Paul were referring to in Matt. 24:14, Cols. 1:5-6 and Roms. 16:25-26 as the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy. This world had been preached to and they heard the gospel before Christ came in AD 70 to bring an end to the Old Covenant age/kingdom. To merely **assume** Jesus meant the entire globe had to be preached to before His second coming would occur, **is to take the passage out of its context**. We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture using solid hermeneutical principals and not attempt to "exegete" God's holy Word based on traditional assumptions and erroneous presuppositions.

To merely assume Jesus meant the entire globe (as Thomas Ice does below) had to be preached to before His second coming would occur is to take the passage out of its context. We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture using solid hermeneutical principals and not attempt to "exegete" God's holy Word based on traditional assumptions and 20th century linguistic presuppositions.

A lot of premillennialist see the connection between the great commission as a sign of the world mission marking the near return of Christ to end the Christian age (Mt.24:14, Mt. 28:18-20). However, they do not hold to a biblical definition of "world" in Mt. 24:14 nor recognize that the "age" involved is the OC age and not the Christian age so therefore they cannot see it's NT fulfillment prior to A.D. 70 (see chart above). The amillennial or postmillennial partial preterist position is forced to invent **two** great commissions because in essence they have **invented two second comings** - "a coming" of Christ in A.D. 70 in the fall of Jerusalem (Mt.24:14, 27, 30-31/34) and another great commission and second coming after A.D. 70 to end another "age" - the Christian age (Mt.28:18-20, Mt. 24:36ff.) that is allegedly not imminent and is not preceded by signs.

Some dispensationalists seem divided over whether the GC is a sign of the end marking the "near" return of Christ. Thomas Ice and other dispensationalists claim that (Cols. 1:5-6, 23) is not a fulfillment of (Mt. 24:14) marking a near return of Christ, but that this text and others like it only describe that the gospel has been *introduced* into all the world.

"DeMar (a postmillennial partial preterist) uses Colossians 1:6,23 to teach that the New Testament itself supports a first-century fulfillment of Matthew 24:14. "Paul, without inching and need of further explanation," claims DeMar, "declares that the gospel had been preached in his day to 'every creature under heaven' (Col.1:23). This is probably hyperbole, but it certainly fulfills what Jesus said would happen within a generation." But is that really what Jesus was saying?" "...Paul is saying that the gospel has come, or been introduced to the Colossian believers, just as it has come, or been introduced, in all the world. So this is not a statement about whether the gospel has been preached to a certain area per se; rather it is a statement about the arrival of the gospel as a global message." (Ice, Controversy, p.174).

And quoting James R. Gray, Ice writes,

"Paul's claim is to the universal appeal and scope of the gospel. **That it is bearing fruit in the world—not that the gospel has been preached in all the world...**Paul is talking about the sphere of preaching, not that every creature was preached unto." (Ice Controversy, p.175)

Open your Bible and read the passage again in light of the statement above. In (Cols 1:5-6, 23) Paul says just the **opposite** of what Ice and Gray are claiming. It doesn't take a logic course to figure out that there could be no "fruit in all the world" unless the gospel had been preached **IN ALL THE WORLD FIRST, IN ORDER TO BRING FORTH THE FRUIT THERE!** And no, Paul did say that every creature was preached to - "...**that has been** (past tense) proclaimed (past tense) **to every creature under heaven...**"

The (Mt. 24:14, 34 & Mt. 28:18-20) Connection

However, the only time Ice ever makes any kind of real argument against the partial preterist view is when he uses ours (the Biblical Preterist View). Therefore we would agree with Ice when he makes the connection of Mt. 24:14 with that of Mt. 28:10-20 and would see a lack of reasoning and charge of an arbitrary hermeneutic from Gary DeMar:

“If DeMar’s view of Matthew 24:14 is true, then one could legitimately assign a similar first-century fulfillment to the phrase “all the nations” in Matthew 28:19. If DeMar’s logic is followed, it would have required the total fulfillment of the Great Commission by A.D. 70. Why? Our Lord says in the Great Commission that He will be with us “always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). This is very similar to the phrase “end of the age” in Matthew 24:3. DeMar teaches that the end of the age occurred in A.D. 70,(79) and since he applies almost all other uses of the phrase to the first century, then why not apply it to Matthew 28:20? In fact, fellow preterist Don Preston has written a whole book using just such preterist logic, saying that the Great Commission was in fact fulfilled by A.D. 70.(80) Apparently DeMar does not like the implications of his preterist position when it is consistently applied to the whole New Testament.” (Ice, Controversy, p.176).”

Gary DeMar in defending his exegesis of Mt. 24:14 as fulfilled in A.D. 70 cites other places in the NT where the Greek word “oikoumene” or world is used. One such place Gary goes to is Rev. 12 which corresponds to our argument that Rev. 6, 12, 20 are parallel scenes of one judgment. So we take up Gary’s comments at this point :

“Satan is said to be one "who deceives the whole world" (12:9). Once again, Revelation describes those things which must "shortly take place" (1:1) "for the time is near" (1:3). The world (*oikoumene*) that is being deceived is the one to which the seven churches are written (2–3). Certainly the devil deceives more than this area, but the point of Revelation is to describe what's about to happen to within a shortened time frame.

We know from history that Jerusalem was surrounded and destroyed by the heathen armies of Rome in A.D. 70, therefore, the use of *oikoumene* is appropriate in this context. The world of Old Covenant Judaism was about to come to an end when John wrote. Philip Carrington's comments on **Revelation 16:14** are helpful in this regard:

The name Armageddon is significant because it is at Megiddo that the Jewish King Josiah was defeated and killed by an Egyptian army under the Pharaoh; and Titus had just returned from Egypt. Armageddon means Mountain of Megiddo; but Megiddo is a valley. It is the Mountain of Sion which has become Mountain of Megiddo or Mountain of defeat. The name, anyhow, shows that the field of battle is in Palestine. . . .²¹

The way *oikoumene* is used in Revelation goes with the larger debate over the dating of the book. Based on the time texts (1:1, 3; 22:10), the local geography of the seven churches (2–3), and the fact that the temple is still standing (11:1–2) when John wrote, demonstrates that only the *oikoumene* is in view.” (Gary DeMar, *The Gospel Preached to All the World, Part 3 of 4 Oikoumene as "Inhabited World"*)

And again,

“With Jerusalem no longer the redemptive focus, the gospel is to go worldwide: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem the gospel was to go into the “inhabited world” of the first century as a “witness to all the nations” (Matt. 24:14). Later in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus describes a more universal spreading of the gospel “from one end of the sky to the other” (24:31). Prior to Jesus’ ascension, Jesus tells His disciples to “make disciples of all the nations” (28:19). Notice that there is no time reference as there is in Matthew 24:14 (“*this* generation”).

But there is another interpretive possibility. Like Revelation 12 which seems to look back to earlier New Testament history, John may be doing the same thing in Revelation 12:6. Arthur M. Ogden suggests:

The Lamb is standing on Mount Sion with the 144,000 ready for the beginning of the New Testament order. John watches as an angel flies through the midst of heaven with the everlasting gospel to preach to all nations. The scene is Pentecost, 30 A.D. (cf. Heb. 12:22–24). This is when the gospel began to be preached under the authority of the great commission (cf. Matt. 28:18–20; Mr. 16:15–16; Lk. 24:46–49) and the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, 2:1–4, 33; 1 Pet. 1:12). From here the gospel was preached to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mk. 13:10; Rom. 1:16; 10:18; Col. 1:23).¹⁵

While we can't be definite, Acts 2:5 may be the key to understanding the significance of Revelation 14:6 since there were “Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven.” They heard the gospel “in his own language” (Acts 2:6). Within a period of forty years, the gospel had made its way beyond the borders of Israel to every place a caravan or ship could take a person.” (DeMar, *ibid.* part 4 of 4).

Of course Gary's “other interpretive possibility” is the correct one. Gary correctly points out that Satan deceiving the “whole world” (oikoumene) in (Rev. 12:9) is an A.D. 70 fulfillment. According to Gary oikoumene in the NT is clearly speaking of the known world at that time (the Roman world) or the Jewish Old Covenant world in Revelation because the time references define it. I couldn't agree more, but how *in the world* is it that Satan deceiving the “whole world” is not synonymous with Satan deceiving the “nations” in (Rev. 20)? If oikoumene is defined by the time restrictions in the book of Revelation and tied to the time statements in (Mt.24:14/34) “this generation”, then why isn't the same applied to “all nations” or “nations” in (Mt.24:14/34 & Rev. 20:3)?! According to Gary's own argumentation and system of “Scripture interprets Scripture” he is incorrect and that there is a time reference to (Mt. 28:19) if we truly allow Scripture to interpret itself. Don Preston has correctly noted,

“Where is the evidence for delineating between Matthew 24:14 and 28:19? The same word for nations is used by Jesus in Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:18. In Matthew 24 he predicted what would be done; in Matthew 28 he commanded it to be done. In Romans 16:25-26 Paul, using the same words, said it had been done! There are not two different Commissions of two gospels, or two different Commissions of the one gospel!

Are we to believe that Jesus had the end of two different ages in mind? Were there to be two different gospels preached into all the world for a sign of the impending end of two ages? Or was there to be one gospel and two ends of two ages? Was the end of one age the end of a Covenant Age but the end of the other to be the end of material

creation? No, there was one gospel, one Mission, one end of the age. And that gospel was preached into all the world in the first century.

What more emphatic proof is needed to accept the fact that Jesus' mandate of world evangelism was fulfilled? As Kik succinctly comments 'Those who would deny this must quarrel with the statements of Scriptures. All nations of the world heard the Gospel proclaimed before the year 70 AD.'"(8) (Don K. Preston, *Into All The World Then Comes The End*, p. 7-8)

Gary claims that the "gathering the elect from one end of heaven to the other" in Mt. 24:31 is speaking of a post A.D. 70 "more universal" great commission and parallels it with Mt.28:19 where Gary feels he is on safe ground because there is no time statement in Mt. 28:18-20. However, because Gary is mistaken on Mt. 24:31 as understanding this as a post A.D. 70 preaching or "gathering" commission instead of allowing the "parousia," "gathering" and "catching away" in the Thessalonian epistles 1Thess. 4 to define Mt. 24:31 he errors in his interpretation of Mt.24:31. The "gathering" of Mt. 24:31 is consummative end **result** and fulfillment of the work done through the preaching of the great commission in Mt.24:14 which Gary claims was fulfilled by A.D. 70 and therefore falls under the umbrella of "this generation"! Let's not make any mistake about it partial preterists such as Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, R.C. Sproul, and the like invent out of thin air two great commissions to bring and "end" to two eschatological ages - one in A.D.70 and another at the end of time or the end of the Christian age. Jesus in interpreting Daniel in (Dan.9 & 12:1-7) knew of only one "end" of the age and not two separated by thousands of years! Jesus unlike the partial preterists NEVER taught two great commissions to bring about two eschatological ages!

Unlike Dispensationalist Thomas Ice, John MacArthur in a strange way does see the GC marking an imminent return of Christ that isn't really imminent. In attempts to refute postmillennial partial preterism and of my view of (full or exegetical preterism), he contradicts dispensationalist Thomas Ice and states,

"It has often been objected by postmillennialists that in view of our Lord's declaration, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14), it was impossible for the apostles to be expecting Christ to *return in their own lifetime*. But this objection is disposed of by several passages recorded in the New Testament itself. In Acts 19:10 we read, And this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." And again, in Colossians 1:5-6 we are told, "for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, *as it is in all the world,*" and in verse 23 of the same chapter, "be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which *was preached to every creature which is under heaven;* whereof I Paul am made a minister." From these passages then it is abundantly clear that no such formidable hindrance as imagined by postmillennialists interposed between the apostles and the hope of the imminent return of the Redeemer. Scripture thus affords positive evidences that the Gospel *had been* so widely diffused by the apostles themselves that nothing further *necessarily* and *inevitably* intervened between them and the realization of their hope.

Having thus, we trust, satisfactorily disposed of the most plausible and forcible objection which can be brought against the premillennial and imminent return of our Lord..." (MacArthur, John, *The Second Coming Signs of Christ's Return and the End of the Age*, pp. 201-202, Crossway Books pub. 1999)

This is actually a bit humorous I think. It is usually the postmillennial partial preterist who is going to (Cols. 1:5-6, 23) to prove that “a” coming of Christ was genuinely imminent in A.D.70 because the gospel had been preached throughout the Roman “world.” Or the full preterist going to (Cols.1:5-6, 23) to substantiate that this fulfillment marked the genuine nearness of the one and second coming to end the OC age. But here we have MacArthur trying to use one of our texts to prove to postmillennialists that the GC was in deed a sign of the parousia and that was *in some way fulfilled* in the first century to “prove” an “imminence” **that really isn’t imminent** (in MacArthur’s confused theology anyway)! Let’s point out where we agree and disagree with MacArthur and say R.C. Sproul, Gary DeMar, or Kenneth Gentry on the GC:

1. John MacArthur (premillennialist) - Yes, you are correct in noting that the second coming in the OD is preceded by signs one of which is the Great Commission. Yes, you are correct that there is only one GC and that Christ comes at the end of that “eschatological age.” However, you are in error in INVENTING a view of imminence that in reality is not imminent and has no Scriptural foundation!
2. Kenneth Gentry, R.C. Sproul, & Gary DeMar (partial preterist postmillennialists) - Yes, you are correct in that Cols. 1:5-6, 23 speaks of the same “world” and “every creature” Jesus claimed needed to be preached to before He returned. You are correct in some of your writings to equate the “end of the age” as the end of the OC age that happened at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. You are also correct in noting that the fulfillment of the GC in Mt. 24:14 in the NT marks the genuine imminence found in the NT concerning the return of the Son of Man on the clouds in judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70. You however are wrong in inventing two comings of Christ in the OD (primarily Gentry and Sproul). You are also incorrect in claiming that there would be no signs to happen before the second coming - one of which is the GC.
3. Author: Mike Sullivan (Biblical Preterist View) - After sifting through the error of the two views above and when we take truth from both sides we get the Biblical Preterist Position: 1) There is only one second coming in the OD. 2) It was preceded by some general covenantal signs (Deut.28 - 30) that didn’t mark the nearness of His return while some other specific ones such as the GC did mark the near end. 3) The Bible only teaches one GC in relation to the one “end of the age” and that was the OC age that was destroyed with it’s temple in A.D. 70. 4) The sign of the GC being fulfilled in the N.T. marked the genuine imminence of the writers and their hopes were realized when they experienced relief and Christ was glorified in them.

The Great Commission Is Easily Seen As Fulfilled When We Understanding What “End of the Age” Would See It’s Fulfillment:

Matthew 13	Matthew 24
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end of the age, vs. 39 [suntelias ton aionion]	end of the age, vs. 39 [suntelias ton aionion]
Preaching of the gospel into all the world before the end	Preaching of the gospel into all the world before the end
The coming of the Son of Man, vs. 39-41	The coming of the Son of Man, vs. 29-31
The sending of the angels to gather, vs. 41	The sending of the angels to gather, vs. 31
The time for separation	The time for separation
Harvest is at the end of “this age” vs.40	This generation shall not pass till all be fulfilled, vs.34

(Chart taken from: Preston, Don, *Into All The World Then Comes The End*, p.33, 1996)

We are also told by partial preterists that the “age” and the gospel commission in (Mt.13 & Mt. 28:18-20) is allegedly a different “end of the age” and gospel commission found in (Mt. 24:14). The (Mt. 24:14) text is fulfilled in AD 70 and yet apparently there is another gospel going forth in all the world before another “end of the age,” at a different coming of the Son of Man, with another group of angels involved in, with two separations taking place. And yet Jesus quotes Dan. 12 in Matt. 13:39-43 in reference to the “end of the age” and the resurrection. In Dan. 12 the tribulation, resurrection, and time of the end would be “when the power of the holy people were completely shattered” (vs. 7). The destruction of Jerusalem and her temple was the end of the old covenant age. Jesus refers to Dan. 12 several times in Matt. 24 & Lk. 21 and unquestionably states that Daniel’s prophecy would be fulfilled in the generation of the disciples. The partial “preterist” amillennialist and postmillennialist dig their own grave by acknowledging that Matt. 24:1-34 was fulfilled in AD 70 because their exegesis can’t stand up with other parallels to Matt. 24 in the Gospels and the rest of the NT and crumbles when viewed under Daniel’s prophecy.

Having already established that the “end of the age” in the NT is referring to the OC age and not the NC or Church age, we can now better understand how the the great commission was fulfilled in (Mt 24, Mt. 13, and Mt. 28:18-20).

We shall now briefly note that the commission as laid forth in the millennium is the same as in (Mt.24 & 28). In commenting on the millennium found in Rev. 20 and the great commission in general (Mt. 28:18-20) Kenneth Gentry states,

“Fifth, postmillennialism confidently anticipates a time in earth history (continuous with the present) in which the very gospel already operative in the world will have won the

victory throughout the earth **in fulfillment of the Great Commission.**" (Ken Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, ICE pub. 1992, p. 71, emphasis MJS)

And,

"The role of Revelation 20 in the debate, which is absolutely essential to premillennialism, is surprising for at least two major reasons. First the *only* place in all of Scripture that associates "one thousand years" with the reign of Christ is in the first six verses of this one chapter! Against such a complaint, premillennialist Ladd comments: "the fact that the New Testament in only **one** place teaches an interim kingdom, **between this age and the Age to Come** is no reason for rejecting it." Yet the postmillennial complaint is well-justified. If a literal earthly millennium is so prominent in Scripture and such an important era in redemptive history (as premillennialists and dispensationalists argue), then why should we not expect that a reference to the thousand years should appear in more than *one* passage? (Gentry, *Dominion*, p.333-334, Bold emphasis MJS)

Gentry is quite correct in the quotes above in associating the great commission with the millennium and because the term 1,000 years is not to be taken literally, there is definitely more passages in the N.T. that describe the millennium which Ladd correctly sees as a reign of Christ from "this age to the Age to Come."

In Revelation 20 Satan is bound so that he can no longer deceive the nations (Rev.20:2-3). Satan is to be seen bound in the personal ministry of Jesus and then definitely bound at the cross. In the past God had used Satan to deceive Israel and the nations. Israel thought that the way God would bring her salvation was through another nationalistic restoration and the defeating of their Gentile captors - the Romans. However, after the cross and in the book of Acts, Jesus through the out pouring of His Spirit began the restoration and salvation of Israel through unveiling the mystery of God by gathering Jew and Gentile alike into the kingdom. God would use the Gentiles to bring about the resurrection and salvation of Israel through the great commission (Acts 1:8/Rms.10:18-21, Mk.13:10/Rms. 16:25-26, Mt. 24:14, 30-31/Rms.11:15, 25-27). Therefore, to further prove that John is standing at the near end of the millennium and that the millennium closes with the "at hand" return of Christ in the A.D. 70 time frame, all one has to do is show that the great commission was fulfilled prior to A.D. 70 which I believe I have. But to further prove this let us now turn to some other great commission texts and see how they were a fulfillment of "the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms."

The (Lk. 24:45-47, Mt. 5:17-19) Connection

1. "And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, **that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.** Then opened he their understanding, that they **might understand the scriptures,** And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: **And that repentance and remission of sins**

should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Lk. 24:44-47)

- 2) "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, **Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.** Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 5:17-19)

We generally have understood the words of Jesus in (Lk.24:45-47) as only dealing with His death and resurrection as fulfilling the law. However, the text speaks of the Great Commission as well as something associated with fulfilling the "law of Moses and the prophets." The GC and the "last days" generation that would see it's fulfillment was foretold in the law (Deut.32:20-21/Rms.10:19 & chpt. 11). The prophets also spoke of the GC (Isa. 11:9, Isa. 49:6, Isa. 60:1-5; Hab.2:14; Zec.14:9) as did the Psalms (Ps.22:27-31, Ps.98:2-3). The GC had to be accomplished before the second coming, kingdom, redemption, salvation, resurrection, and forgiveness of sins as found in the NT or NC could be received (Mt.24:14, 34/Lk.21:28-33; Mk.13:10/Rms.16:25-26/Rms.11:15,25-27). Paul in (Rms.16:25-26) understanding that the sign of the GC had been accomplished in His ministry, was accurately claiming that Jesus would come out of Zion to bring salvation and judge Satan shortly:

"And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for **now is our salvation nearer** than when we believed." (Rms.13:11)

"And the God of peace shall **bruise Satan** under your feet **shortly**. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen." (Rms. 16:20)

For partial preterists such as Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, and R.C. Sproul to claim that the imminent time texts in Scripture point to "a" parousia/coming of Christ in A.D.70 and that Satan was crushed at that time **but** it's not the same judgment of Satan as pictured in (Rev.20) isn't a theologically, hermeneutically, or logically, sound argument. The "at hand" coming of Christ **to end the millennium in A.D. 70** brought about the new heavens and new earth (which they claimed took place in A.D.70)! Not only is Gary DeMar's hermeneutic Creedally and traditionally arbitrary, but it isn't even logical or reasonable! Paul understood: 1) that the GC being fulfilled within his personal ministry

as the Apostle to the Gentiles was revealing the “mystery of God” in “all the world” and 2) for him and the early church “filling up what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ” through his martyrdom would 3) bring about the second coming and kingdom within the hearts of the first century church in their generation (Cols.1:5-6, 23/Mt.24:14; Cols.1:23-24/Mt.23:30-36; Cols.1:27/Lk.17:20-21/Lk.21:31-32).

The Apostle Paul once again fulfilling the words of Jesus in (Lk.24:44-47) stated very clearly that he taught no other things except that were taught in the law and the prophets:

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, **saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:** That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, **and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles**” (Acts 26:22-23).

If the GC has not been fulfilled which was inseparably tied to the OC law, and “heaven and earth” passing, then the believer today is under the “jots and tittles” of the law (Mt.5:17-19)! However, it is the conviction of this Christian that the Bible clearly states that the GC was fulfilled prior to A.D.70 and that the “heavens and earth” of the OC law passed away and the NC heavens and earth took it’s place. We shall cover the meaning of “heavens and earth” later on.

9. "And when YOU SHALL SEE JERUSALEM SURROUNDED WITH ARMIES, THEN KNOW THAT THE DESOLATION THEREOF IS NEAR." And, "Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains..." **"For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled"** (Luke 21:20-22).

According to the parallel account in Luke, the pagan armies surrounding Jerusalem were "the abomination of desolation." The "you" of "when you shall see..." is contextually referring to the disciples who asked the question, "Tell **us**, when will these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming...?"

History tells us that just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the Romans surrounded Jerusalem and then retreated. This was God’s providence and signal for the Christians to flee to the mountains as Christ had told them to do and that’s what they did. John Gill correctly pointed out, "It is remarked by several interpreters, and which Josephus takes notice of with surprise, that Cestius Gallus having advanced with his army to Jerusalem, and besieged it, on a sudden without any cause, raised the siege, and withdrew his army, when the city might have been easily taken; by which

means a signal was made, and an opportunity given to the Christians, to make their escape: which they accordingly did, and went over to Jordan, as Eusebius says, to a place called Pella; so that when Titus came a few months after, there was not a Christian in the city..." (John Gill, On Matthew 24:16). If you would like the historical documentation of the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy here, John Bray recommends reading: *The Works of Flavius Josephus* by Flavius Josephus, Volume 1 Baker Book House, Grand Rapids Michigan. 7th printing October 1980 p. 206, see also footnote on p. 204, Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, p.111, and perhaps the best historical account and commentary on this flight of the Christians along with a brief commentary on its related text, Revelation 12:15-17, can be found in *Renan's Antichrist* by Joseph Ernest Renan, Walter Scott, Ltd, Paternoster Square, London 1899, pp. 150-152.

Thomas Ice in seeking to refute partial and Biblical Preterism claims that the flight from Judea and desolation in Luke's account is a 2,000 + year different flight and deals with a different desolation than that of Matthew and Mark's accounts is one of the most *deplorable attempts at exegesis I have ever seen! It is amazing that he finds publishers that are willing to print his none-sense*. Various descriptions of the same event may vary due to **audience relevance**. Also, his and other futurist claims that Matthew's use of "and the end of the age" interjects a new subject and or prophetic event is likewise **unwarranted**. Kenneth Gentry corrects Thomas Ice on the differences found in Matthew and Luke on the abomination of desolation by appealing to audience relevancy but doesn't do so in regard to "and the end of the age?"

"Ice and Bock's fourth distinction between Matthew's (alleged) future-oriented and Luke's past-oriented A.D. 70 accounts is: Luke "does not discuss the 'abomination of desolation.'" But as I note above, **Luke appears to be simply rephrasing the Old Testament language for his Gentile audience**."⁹⁰

And again on the differences concerning "tribulation" and "distress,"

"Ice makes much of the different terms Matthew and Luke employ regarding their respective catastrophes: Matthew speaks of "tribulation" (Gk., thlipsis); Luke of "distress" (Gk., ananke). Ice observes: "Interestingly the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is not called 'tribulation' but rather 'distress' in Luke. On the other hand, those passages in Matthew and Mark which futurists argue refer to the future tribulation are characterized as 'tribulation'"⁹⁰

"This may be "interesting," but it is neither significant to the debate nor helpful to Ice's case. As I note in the present chapter, Luke's term for "distress" (anake) appears in the Septuagint translation of Zephaniah 1:15. According to Ice's chart, this is a "tribulation"

passage (p.82). And why? The Abbott-Smith lexicon lists the terms *ananke* and *thlipsis* as synonyms.

What is more, both “great distress” (Luke 21:23) and “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21) appear in contexts dealing with the dismantling of the first century temple (Matt. 24:1-2; Luke 21:5-6) and confined to “this generation” (Matt. 24:34; Luke 21:32). In addition, Luke nowhere refers to the (alleged) future time as a “tribulation,” even though Ice says most of his material speaks of the future “tribulation.” Obviously, Luke can relate the concept of tribulation without the term *thlipsis*. In fact, nowhere in Luke’s gospel does he even use the word *thlipsis*, “tribulation.” Remarkably, the phrase *thlipsis megale* (“great distress”) appears in Acts 7:11 where it refers to the famine in Egypt: “Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction with it; and our fathers could find no food.” Even the phrase “great tribulation” can refer to something other than the eschatological “Great Tribulation.”⁵¹

I couldn’t agree more with Dr. Gentry here but I only wish he would be consistent on Matthew’s Jewish phraseology “and the end of the age?” with Mark and Luke’s Gentile

audience in harmonizing them to see only an A.D. 70 fulfillment in the disciples questions and Jesus’ answer.

What Did Jesus Mean By “All things” written would Be Fulfilled?

"For these be the days of vengeance, that **all things** which are written may be fulfilled." (Luke 21:20-22)

Thus we are told that up to this point all of the signs or “birth pains” leading up to the tribulation and thus encompassing the abomination and desolation of Jerusalem and her temple were foretold by the prophets, “that **all things** which are written may be fulfilled.” But how are we to understand “all things” here? Are they just prophecies *limited* to Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70 while the discourse goes on to speak of alleged future “these **things**” for our day? Is Luke’s “all things” encompassing all of Bible prophecy? As I have noted before there is no evidence within the text that suggests that the disciples were confused in associating the temple’s destruction with the end of their OC age. They no doubt were familiar with Daniel’s prophecy (Mt.24:15) of the abominations and desolation of the temple and how at THAT TIME AND EVENT would all of the 70 weeks prophetic events be fulfilled. According to chapters 9 and 12 of Daniel, which were prophetic events concerning Daniel’s “your people” (the Jews) and their “holy city” and had nothing to do with the destruction of the planet; but rather these prophecies surrounding the city of Jerusalem and the temple’s abominations and desolation would be when all of the redemptive aspects of prophecy would be fulfilled - including the great judgment and resurrection. According to (Dan.9 and 12) the time of the abomination and desolation of the temple or “when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered,” is when: 1) transgressions would be finished, 2) there

would be an end to sins, 3) reconciliation for iniquity would be accomplished, 4) everlasting righteousness would come, 5) vision and prophecy would be sealed, 6) the great judgment of those written in the book would take place, and thus 7) the resurrection to everlasting life or everlasting contempt would occur.

“Vision and prophecy” would be “sealed up” (“fulfilled”) at the “time of the end” or when the abominations and desolation of the temple and city had been poured out. So Jesus’ statement, “For **these be the days** of vengeance, that **all things which are written may be fulfilled**” is most assuredly a statement about the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.70; but all of the prophets just like Daniel associated the “last days” of Israel’s OC age and the destruction of her temple ***to be the time when final salvation and redemption would occur***. To further support my claim here, we should note that not only was Peter not confused as to Daniel’s prophecy of the destruction of the temple being the time of all redemptive events being accomplished, but Jesus spent 40 days after His resurrection explaining these things to him and the others (Lk.24). Not only that, Peter was given the Holy Spirit to instruct the Church in regard to “things to come” (Jn.16). Under **inspiration**, Peter clearly understood and taught that “the end of **all things** is at hand” (1Pet.4:7). Clearly whatever Jesus meant by “all things” in (Lk.21:22) is what Daniel in (Dan.12) meant. Peter correctly understanding Daniel and Jesus taught that THE judgment and resurrection associated with the temple and Jerusalem’s desolation in A.D. 70 was “at hand” (1Pet.4:5, 7, 17). The immediate context defines what Peter means by “all things” and includes the judgment and thus resurrection of the living and the dead. If this is not enough evidence, it becomes clearer what Peter means by “all things” when we look at his opening chapter. Peter defines not only Jesus’ statement of “all things which are written may be fulfilled” but also his “all things is at hand” as referring to every OT prophet predicting Messiah’s salvation to occur in HIS day:

“who are kept by the power of God through faith ***for salvation*** ready to be revealed *in the last time*. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and ***glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ***, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving ***the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls***. **Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.** Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (1Pet.1:5-13).

How can Peter be any clearer? The “glory” and “salvation” associated not with just the first coming of Christ but in this context the second coming of Christ was said to be foretold by all of the prophets to be prophesying of Peter’s day and time and no other!

Paul likewise taught that the goal of all previous OT ages had come upon them (1Cor.10:11). Once again not only does futurism fall flat on its face when confronted with Scripture, but partial preterism is proven to be the man fearing compromising position at this point as well. It simply cannot be argued from the statements of Daniel, Jesus, and Peter that **only** “a” coming of Christ, “a” judgment, associated with the tribulation and abomination of desolation was predicted to be “at hand” in A.D.70. These prophets are united with the rest of Scripture that **all the salvation promises** of the prophets were “at hand” and inseparably linked with the tribulation and abomination of desolation that brought about their flight from Judea.

Jesus’s statement as further clarified by Peter’s (1Pet.1:5-13; 4:5, 7, 17) - that all of the OT prophets foretold of Peter’s day and contemporary “perverse and crooked generation” (Acts 2 - 4) rules out seeing God’s judgment upon A.D. 70 as a “type” or “picture” of an imagined more universal coming of Christ someday to end the planet. Those who propagate these vain and empty notions fancy themselves as “expositors” but in reality they “go beyond what is written”! I don’t have a problem if Jesus (who is God) says the abomination of desolation that Daniel predicted was something that really was to be fulfilled in His generation and did not reach its full fulfillment during the time of the Maccabees. Nor do I have a problem if Peter under inspiration wants to tell his audience and us by way of extension, that all of the OT prophets foretold a fulfillment that was to occur in his day and not theirs. Jesus and Peter are obviously telling us that all that the OT prophets foretold directly or indirectly by way of types and shadows would all come to pass at Christ’s parousia in their contemporary generation. According to Jesus and Peter and the rest of the NT authors, the fulfillment’s of types, shadows, and pictures all stop in the fulfillment of Christ’s return in A.D.70. If any “prophecy expert” or alleged “exegete” tells the church today otherwise, he is building upon sand and has no authority to make such claims. Only Christ and His inspired writers of the NT could make such claims and they most definitely NEVER saw Christ’s “at hand” return in the fall of Jerusalem as “a” coming or “type” of something greater to come!

1 James Stuart Russel, *The Parousia The New Testament Doctrine of Christ's Second Coming*, pp. 57 - 59, IPA pub. 1996 - this book has been published by Baker Books 3 times 1983, 85, 99. By IPA 2 times 1996 & 2003, emphasis MJS. Also being used is the *Online Bible's* software where Russell's book is available electronically. This is an extremely helpful addition to Russell's influence on future generations and I public ally express my appreciation to the *Online Bible's* ministry.

2 Tim Lahaye & Thomas Ice, *The End Times Controversy*, Harvest pub. 2003, pp. 155, 156, & 159, emphasis MJS.

3 Lahaye & Ice, *ibid.*, p. 155-156, emphasis MJS

4 Lahaye & Ice, *ibid.*, p.155-56, emphasis MJS.

[5](#) MacArthur, John, *The Second Coming Signs of Christ's Return and the End of the Age*, p.77, Crossway Books pub. 1999

[6](#) MacArthur, *ibid*, p.80

[7](#) Ice, Thomas, & Gentry Jr., Kenneth, *The Great Tribulation Past or Future?* p. 26, Kregel pub. 1999, emphasis MJS

[8](#) Bahnsen, Greg, & Gentry, Kenneth, *House Divided The Break-up of Dispensational Theology*, p. 267, ICE pub. 1989, emphasis MJS

[9](#) Sproul, R.C., *The Last Days According To Jesus*, p. 32, Baker Books pub., 1998, emphasis MJS.

[10](#) Sproul, *ibid.*, pp. 73-74

[11](#) Wright, N.T., *JESUS AND THE VICTORY OF GOD*, pp. 345-346, Fortress Press, 1996

[12](#) Wright, N.T. *THE RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD*, p.645, Fortress Press, 2003

[13](#) DeMar, Gary, *Last Days Madness Obsession of the Modern Church*, p.41, American Vision pub. 1994, bold emphasis MJS

[14](#) Ice & Gentry, *ibid.*, p. 58, emphasis MJS

[15](#)

Ice & Gentry, *ibid.* p.63

[16](#) Ice & Gentry, *ibid.* p.18

[17](#) Bahnsen and Gentry, *House Divided The Break-up of Dispensational Theology*, p. 222, p.230, ICE pub. 1989

[18](#) Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, *The End Times Controversy*, p.304, Harvest House pub. 2003. Quote taken from Mal Couch contributing author.

[19](#) MacArthur, *ibid.*, p.72

[20](#) MacArthur *ibid.*, p.80

[21](#) MacArthur, *ibid.*, p.35, emphasis MJS

[22](#) MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, p.1550, Thomas Nelson pub. 1997, emphasis MJS

[23](#) MacArthur, *The Second Coming*, see pp.69-75

[24](#) Ice and Gentry, *ibid.*, p.115, emphasis MJS

[25](#) Preston, Don, *The Last Days Identified*, pp. 102-103, JaDon Productions 89 Magnolia St. Ardmore, OK. 73401, web site: eschatology.org

[26](#) Preston, *ibid*, p. 104

[27](#) Pinnock, Clark, *A Case for Arminianism The Grace of God, The will of Man*, p. 21, Zondervan pub. 1989

[28](#) Pinnock, *ibid*, p.25 emphasis MJS

[29](#) Boettner, Loraine, "*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, P&R Publications, p. 42.

[30](#) Boettner, *ibid*, p. 43

[31](#) Boettner, *ibid*. p. 46

[32](#) Clark, Gordon, *Predestination*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., pp.50-51

[33](#) Pinnock, *ibid*. p.20 emphasis MJS

[34](#) Pinnock, Clark, *Most Moved Mover*, p. 51, emphasis MJS

[35](#) Preston, *ibid*, p.83

[36](#) Ridderbos, Herman, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, p. 453, P&R pub. 1962, emphasis MJS

[37](#) MacArthur, *ibid*, pp.57-58 emphasis MJS

[38](#) MacArthur, *ibid*, p.204 emphasis MJS

[39](#) Matthison, Kieth Editor, quote taken from contributing author - Richard Pratt, *WHEN SHALL THESE THINGS BE? A REFORMED RESPONSE TO HYPER-PRETERISM*, p.149, P&R pub., 204

[40](#) Matthison, *ibid*, p.154

[41](#) Hoekema, Anthony, *THE BIBLE AND THE FUTURE*, p. 126, Eerdmans pub., 1979, emphasis MJS

[42](#) Sproul, *ibid*, p.109

[43](#) Preston, Don , *Into All The World Then Comes The End*, p. 4-5. For other books written by this author go to Don's web site: eschatology.org - Although I agree with Don in most areas of eschatology, I do not adhere to Don's Arminianism or his view that water baptism is "essential" for salvation.

[44](#) Long, Gary, *THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION PART 3 THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD THE SON IN SALVATION*, pp.63-64, Sovereign Grace Ministries, VA., 1979

[45](#) Preston, Don, booklet, *Can God Tell Time*, pp. 10-11, Ardmore, OK, 1992.

[46](#) (JFB, Online Bible, emphasis MJS).

[47](#) Matthew Henry, Online Bible, emphasis MJS

[48](#) Tim LaHaye, and Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times: A visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001), p.94, emphasis MJS

[49](#) G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission A biblical theology of the dwelling place of God*, p.344, IVP pub, 2004

[50](#) LaHaye and Ice, *ibid.* p.95

[51](#) Sproul, *ibid.*, p.99, emphasis MJS

[52](#) Sproul, *ibid.*, p.188

[53](#) Sproul, *ibid.*, p.139-140 emphasis MJS

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Russell, *ibid.*, p.198-199

[59](#) Sproul, *ibid.*, p.105

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62 Crenshaw, Curtis, and Gunn, Grover, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow*, p.153, Footstool Pub., 1985 emphasis MJS

63 MacArthur, *ibid.*, p.1635

64 Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, *The Works of Josephus*, p.87, Book 3, Chapter 6, Par. 4, Section 123, Hendrickson pub. 1987.

65 Josephus, *ibid.*, p.90, Book 3, Chapter 7, Par.7, Section 181

66 G.K. Beale, *ibid.*, p.48

67 G.K. Beale, *ibid.*, p.45

68 G.K. Beale, *ibid.*, p.214 see also p.215, emphasis MJS

69 Don K. Preston, *In Flaming Fire*, p.6f., JaDon Productions, www.eschatology.org

70 G.K. Beale, *ibid.* see pp.24-25 for thesis.

71 Jamieson Fausset and Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 538, Zondervan pub. 1961

72 Don Preston, *Is The World Going To End? 2nd Peter 3*, 4th Annual Preterist Pilgrim Weekend Conference lecture, CD #7, July 7, 2005 www.eschatology.org

[73](#) Gill, John, Online Bible Software, Isaiah 11:6

[74](#) Cates, Curtis, THE A.D. 70 THEOLOGY, p.21, Cates Publications, 1995

[75](#) Cates, ibid, p.35

[76](#) Green, Micahel, THIRTY YEARS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD, p.172, Eerdmans pub., 2002

[77](#) Green, ibid. p.174

[78](#) Cates, ibid, p.35

[79](#) Hays, Richard, The Conversion of the Imagination Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture, p.35, Eerdmans pub.2005. Although a futurist, Hays sees Paul's references to these texts in Isaiah not only in the language he uses, but in Paul's thematic use of Isaiah here.

[80](#) Holland, Tom, CONTOURS IN PAULINE THEOLOGY, p.107 Mentor Imprint Christian Focus Pub., 2004, emphasis MJS

[81](#) Holland, ibid. pp.76-78

[82](#) I am referring to the Don Preston (full preterist) vs. James Jordan (postmillennial partial 'preterist') debate that took place at Sam Frosts church in FL. You can order off of Sam's web site: www.christcovenantchurch.com or off of Don Preston's site: www.eschatology.org I don't think this exchange will be offered by any partial preterist sites ☺

[83](#) Beale, ibid, 120-121

[84](#) Russell, *ibid.* pp.75-76

[85](#) Preston, *ibid.*, pp.76-77, 2004, parenthesis MJS.

[86](#) MacArthur, *ibid.*, p. 60,

[87](#) MacArthur, *ibid.* pp.57-58

[88](#) Preston, *ibid.* p.80-81.

[89](#) Ice & Gentry, *ibid.* p.192, emphasis MJS

[90](#) Ice & Gentry, *ibid.*, p.99

[91](#) Ice & Gentry, *ibid.*, p. 192-