

The Sword & The Plow

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Simmons' Response to Preston's Argument from Romans 11:26, 27

In this article I interact with Don Preston's arguments based upon Romans Eleven, as appeared in the Summer edition of *"Fulfilled Magazine"* (Vol. 4, Issue 2).

Don's a great guy and good friend. He is also a top notch debater. However, I sometimes find I disagree with the arguments he puts together. That is certainly the case with his arguments built on Romans Eleven, which strike me as incorrect.

In the Summer edition of *Fulfilled Magazine*, Don responded to a common objection against the AD 70 second coming of Christ that Romans 11:26 teaches "all Israel" (ethnic Jews) would be saved at Christ's second coming; but all Israel was not saved in AD 70, therefore, AD 70 was not Christ's second coming.

There are several ways to refute this argument. First, the notion that "Israel" refers to *ethnic Jews* is assumed but never proved. Don proceeds upon the assumption this is correct and argues accordingly. However, I believe this is questionable, if not doubtful. In Romans 9:6-8, Paul states

"they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

Here, Paul defines "Israel" spiritually as children of faith under the New Testament. Since Gentiles together with ethnic Jews are equally counted for the seed in Christ (Gal. 3:28, 29), they too are "Israel" (Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22). Given this definition provided by the apostle of "Israel" in chapter nine, when we arrive at Paul's argument in chapter eleven regarding God's salvation of "all Israel" by the coming in of the Gentiles, it seems clear that he means us to understand, *not* that all ethnic Israelites, but that all *spiritual* Israel would be saved by the gospel.

Don seems to miss this entirely and proceeds upon the assumption that "Israel" is national or ethnic Jewry. He then attempts to defeat the argument by qualifying "all" to consist of only the "elect" from the Jews, or 144,000.

Thus, “all” doesn’t mean “all,” only the “elect.” But if the elect is a spiritual seed (which Don concedes), then “all spiritual Israel” *must* include the Gentiles. This is the point of the illustration of the Olive tree (Rom. 11:16-26). The tree symbolizes God’s spiritual people (Israel), who are the branches; Christ is the root that supports the whole. The unbelieving Jews were broken off and believing Gentiles were grafted in. In saving the tree, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, all Israel would be saved. Paul hoped that the grafting in of the Gentiles would provoke his countrymen to jealousy and repentance that they too might be grafted back in, but this would merely add back them into “all Israel” not define its limits. In a word, “all Israel” (the olive tree) is not ethnic Jews, but men of every race and language that come to Christ in faith.

Second, the argument Don attempts to refute assumes that “all Israel will be saved” signifies an *en masse* conversion of ethnic Jews *living at a particular point in history* (viz., the time of Christ’s second coming). Don rejects the idea of an *en masse* conversion, arguing instead (as shown above) that only the elect from ethnic Jewry are in view. But he accepts as *valid* the assumption that the salvation in view speaks to a particular point in history. In other words, Don and his opponents both agree that the saving of “all Israel” is limited to a particular window in history, then the passage will cease to have further application. This is the inevitable view of all who see “all Israel” in ethnic terms. For once the whole body of ethnic persons indicated is saved, the prophecy will be fulfilled. And this is true regardless of who we think is identified, whether all the Jews or only the elect, first generation Jews. Either way, once that ethnic group has been “saved” the passage is fulfilled and ceases to be applicable.

However, we believe the notion that the prophecy is limited to a particular historical referent is wrong. The tree of God’s people (Israel) has not ceased to exist. Hence, the salvation of “all Israel” has not been accomplished but will continue as long as time endures. This is what the prophets meant when they said “of the increase of his government there shall be no end” (Isa. 9:7). Because spiritual Israel will continue to expand and grow as men convert to Christ, the government of Christ will forever grow and increase. “All Israel” will be saved by the grafting in of believers as long as God is pleased for the earth to endure. It is true, course, that our salvation was accomplished by the once-for-all act of the cross, but that is not Paul’s point. Paul is not speaking about a particular act in history that would accomplish men’s salvation, but the *process* by which men are added into spiritual Israel and so are saved.

This leads to the next issue. The third assumption underlying the argument about “all Israel” is that Romans eleven is a “second coming” passage. Although Don places it in the past, Don agrees with the basic assumption that the second coming is in view. Rom. 11:26, 27 states:

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this [is] my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

For Don, the “Deliverer coming out of Zion” refers to the *second coming*. However, the passage is ambiguous. Certainly, there is nothing about “coming out of Zion” that requires we understand it in reference to the second coming as distinguished from his first coming to die upon the cross. In fact, I believe the latter is intended and is the more defensible (more on this later). For Don, proof that the second coming is in view lies in the source of the passage from the prophet Isaiah. The first is Isa. 26:21:

For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

The first part of the above (Isa. 26:21) Don ties to the vengeance of the martyrs announced by Christ in Matt. 23:34-39. He justifies this on the basis that Isaiah says the earth will no longer disclose its blood. In other words, the Lord is coming forth to avenge blood; blood signifies martyrs; Jesus said Rome would destroy Jerusalem in vengeance of earth’s martyrs, therefore, Isaiah is talking about the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem. However, this argument fails to account for the fact that there have been *many* comings of the Lord, many days of the Lord, and that to avenge innocent blood. Specifically, the opening chapters of Ezekiel describe the prophet’s vision of the Lord’s coming in vengeance and judgment upon Judah in the days of the Babylonian captivity. The vision describes the Almighty coming in a cloud, a fire enfolding itself, seated upon a throne, borne by cherubim. The prophet was shown visions of things in the heavens, but on earth what men would have seen is the armies of Nebuchadnezzar invading Judah and besieging Jerusalem. This is clear from Jeremiah who describes the same coming of the Lord, saying, “Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots [shall be] as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled” (Jer. 4:13; cf. 1:14, 15) And that this coming and judgment under Nebuchadnezzar was to avenge innocent blood is expressly declared by II Kings 24:1-4; Isa. 59:7.¹

The second verse Don relies on is Isa. 27:9:

¹ We do not disallow entirely the possibility that there is a *plenior sensus* to Isa. 26:21 that may look beyond its historical setting to Christ’s second coming. We merely point out that Don’s argument has not proven that this is so.

By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this [is] all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.

Paul loosely quotes or alludes to the first half of this verse in Romans 11:27, when he says “*For this [is] my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*” Paul makes no reference to the altar stones being pulverized to dust, but Don imports it into Romans 11:27 just the same, taking it in reference to AD 70. However, a close reading of Isa. 27:9 shows that this passage is *not* talking about AD 70 at all. Rather, like much of the material in the surrounding chapters, it is talking, at least in the first instance, about the coming judgment against Israel and Judea by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

Proof is seen in the fact that in AD 70 Israel *did not have groves and images*. This was a sin peculiar to the *pre-Babylonian captivity nation*. After their return from captivity, the nation never fell into idolatry again. Reference to groves and images by Isaiah signifies that the judgment under Assyria and Babylon is in view, not AD 70. Therefore, application of Isa. 27:9 to AD 70 must be rejected upon its face. Further proof appears from the fact that Israel’s *national sin* was purged by her *captivity* under Assyria and Babylon. That is the meaning of Isaiah’s statement that her sin would be purged by the destruction of her altar, idols and groves. Isaiah therefore clearly has *national Israel* in view, but Paul cites the verse in reference to *spiritual Israel*, the church. The nation would have its sin purged by exile and captivity in Babylon, the church by the coming of the Deliverer. Paul therefore makes the loosest, most general use of the passage to show God’s forgiveness of his people. And Paul does not attach that forgiveness to the destruction of Jerusalem as Don suggests, but to the coming of the Deliverer to die upon the cross. The historical context shows that the passage in its first instance addressed the Assyrio-Babylonian captivity, not AD 70. Once she had paid “double for all her sins” (Isa. 40:1, 2), God would bring Israel again into the land, and complete her spiritual salvation by the birth of Christ (his coming out of Zion – Isa. 59:7) and his death upon the cross to redeem his people from sin. The idea that Israel’s sin was purged in AD 70 by destruction of the city and temple is, in our estimation, a dangerous doctrine that has its source in Max King.

The idea that Rom. 11:26, 27 (and hence Isa. 27:9 and 59:7) is an AD 70 “second coming” text first originated with Max King (at least in preterist circles).² King teaches a bi-furcated redemption which holds that Israel was in the “grave of Judaism” under the law of Moses, but was

figuratively “resurrected” in AD 70 when the law was taken away.

“Resurrection has reference many time to the change from the Jewish system to the Christian system, where the material body of Judaism is put off in death and the spiritual body of Christianity is resurrected in life...Paul wanted to attain unto the resurrection of the dead (ek nekron, out of the dead) or from among the dead as represented in the Jewish system.”³

This is King’s highly imaginative “corporate body” view of the resurrection. It is closely tied to his view about the vicarious salvation through the “first fruit Jews.” The “firstfruits” hold special place in King’s eschatology. According to King, there is an “organic bond” between members of the first generation Jews and the “rest of the dead” that serves to sanctify the latter, thereby *vicariously* conferring upon them the benefits of Christ’s redemptive work.

The “formation of the body of Christ from Pentecost till the end of the age (through dying and rising with Christ) answers to the first resurrection. This represented resurrection ‘out from among the dead,’ for the purpose of bringing about the covenantal change that would have the effect of bringing to life “the rest of the dead” (i.e., the faithful members of the Old Covenant community).”

King believes that “baptism for the dead” (I Cor. 15:29) by firstfruit Jews provides the vicarious justification of the Old Testament dead:

“The destiny of historical Israel was bound up in the remnant and their response to the Christ-event...Were it not for the response of the baptized remnant or firstfruit Jews to the power of God through Christ, Israel would have been left to perish.”⁴

Thus, King teaches that apart from the baptism of the “firstfruit Jews” Old Testament Jews could not be saved! In King’s words, except for the vicarious benefits of the New Testament Jews, Old Testament Israel would have been **left to perish!** King has since expanded this idea of vicarious, corporate body justification (resurrection) to include the *whole body of mankind*. In a word, King has

² Spirit of Prophecy (Warren, OH, 1971), pp.215; McGuiggan – King Debate (Warren, OH), pp. 250-253; 268.

³ Spirit of Prophecy (Warren, OH, 1971), pp.191, 194.

⁴ Max R. King, *The Cross and the Parousia of Christ*, pp. 489, 490

apostatized from the gospel and now teaches Universalism.⁵

“In the new world people are reconciled to God without any say in the matter. God loves all those that He has made in His image equally... Today we are people within a reconciled humanity”⁶

This is a logical corollary of King’s teaching that the Mosaic law was the universal source of mankind’s condemnation, so that by its removal, all men are saved.

“One must look to the Jewish system as the state and power of death to be destroyed by the reign of Christ.”⁷

Judaism is the *state and power* of death?!⁸ The connection between the belief that the law had to be removed before men could be saved (justified) shows up for King in the statement by Isaiah that in crushing the altar stones man’s sin would be purged and the remnant saved. In other words, salvation required more than Christ’s cross; the law had to be removed before man could be fully justified. This is a dangerous error.

The cross triumphed over the law (Col. 2:14, 15). The law of Moses merely codified the *moral commandments* that existed from the garden, adding certain ceremonial rites to them for purposes of showing the need of blood to atone for sin and to point to the coming of Christ. Codification of the moral law by Moses added *nothing* in terms of condemning mankind for sin that did not already exist. Adultery, murder, and theft were sins before Moses, and they are sins now. Removal of the ceremonial law of Moses bound up in the temple ritual did not take away the moral law or justify man from sin. The moral law still condemns man of sin today. Outside of Christ, all men are under the power of sin and death; each man is condemned for violation of the moral law written in his own heart and conscience (“the just shall live by faith”). Since men are under the power of death by virtue of the moral law, it is clear that that power did not begin or end with Mosaic law. Hence, the law’s removal did not justify man or bring about a resurrection of any sort.

⁵ We should be very clear that Don is a faithful gospel minister, and does NOT believe in Universalism.

⁶ From an article posted on King’s site. David Timm, *Grace Upon All*, October 2006.

⁷ Max R. King, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, p. 144.

⁸ Some Calvinists substitute imputed Adamic sin as the universal source and power of death. Both systems lead to Universalism. (Timm quote)

To summarize, the long and short of King’s system, if accepted, is that mankind was universally condemned by the Mosaic law, and universally justified by its removal, and this is the eschatological resurrection.

However, as it is the moral law that condemns mankind, not the Mosaic law, and inasmuch as the moral law still exists, removal of the Mosaic law was no part of man’s justification, and did not accomplish his eschatological resurrection. Therefore, destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is irrelevant to man’s soteriological perfection. The cross is complete standing alone.

What this has to do with the subject before us is that for King, man’s salvation is tied to *removal of the law* at the destruction of Jerusalem at Christ’s second coming. This is why he views Rom. 11:26 as a second coming text: Israel’s salvation (justification/resurrection) was not in Jesus’ coming to die on Calvary, but the destruction of the temple and abolition of the Mosaic law. However, inasmuch as this is clearly a false notion, the view that Rom. 11:26, 27 is a second coming passage should be rejected too.

The Deliverer’s coming out of Zion to purge sin from Jacob was when Jesus was born to the virgin, and died upon the cross under Pontius Pilate. This is Paul’s meaning. Romans eleven is NOT a second coming text.

OUR NEW KING GEORGE



Destroyer of American Freedom

Our 4th of July Tea Party Float & Parade



Questions & Answers

I wonder if you could give me some pointers on two issues that I am currently thinking about.

1. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred in the last days. With the coming of the 'perfect' or 'complete', the gifts were done away. The 'perfect' or 'complete' referred to the fulfillment of all things written. With the fulfillment of all things written, the Messianic was ushered in. Question: What is the role of the Holy Spirit, if any in the Messianic age? IOW, what does the Holy Spirit do today?

2. Romans 8:11 states the role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Christians. However the phrase is 'give life to your mortal bodies'. While this suggests the resurrection of individuals, does it also not suggest 'bodily' resurrections?

I understand you may be rather busy, so if you can point me to some articles that deal adequately with the questions, that will do as well.

Answer:

1) The work of the Holy Ghost today is to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:7-11). The Spirit began this work with miracles to testify to the truth of the apostles' message, but today he uses just the word. One way to understand the work of the Spirit is to think in terms of electricity. The Spirit is the electric current; the word is the copper wire through which it runs and works. I Thess. 2:13 says the word works effectually in those that believe. That is, the Spirit uses the word to change our hearts and lives; it moves us. I believe that God also acts providentially in our lives to show us our sin and to draw us to Christ, but ultimately the word is the *sine qua non* of coming to salvation.

2) I do not believe that Romans 8:11 is talking about resurrection. I believe it is talking about mortifying the sins of the flesh through suppressing the impulse to sin. He says if the Spirit of Christ is in us (through the word grafted upon our hearts - Jm. 1:21; I Thess. 2:13), he will "quicken your mortal bodies" (Rom. 8:11). But quickening is defined in verse 13 as "mortifying the deeds of the body." In other words, the body that was an instrument of sin and death, is "mortified" through obedience to the word/Spirit and thus "quicken" and made into an instrument of life. Verse 10 makes this clear: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10).

Follow up Question:

Thanks Kurt for the quick reply. However some other questions arise

Romans 8:11 does not say 'give life to you while in your mortal bodies' but 'will ... give life to your mortal bodies.' From Acts 8:11, we know that the Spirit already dwelt in the Roman Christians (at least those who had received the Spirit).

It seems that the promise is that this same Spirit who now helps to put to death the deeds of the body, will also (future tense) give life to their mortal bodies. That sounds like resurrection to me. Am I reading it wrong?

Appreciate your input.

Answer Round #2

I agree that it "sounds" like resurrection and many confuse it as such. But I think a closer reading will show that he is talking about putting to death the deeds of the body and making the body, which was dead because of sin, alive to deeds of righteousness because of Christ.

"And if Christ be in you, the **body is dead** (now present tense) because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. 8:10

Notice that Paul says the "body is dead." That is, the body is dead to the law of life; it is dead to the things of the Spirit. But if Christ/the Spirit dwell in you (through the word), then the body will be quickened. (v. 11).

How is the body dead? Our fallen nature makes us at enmity with God (Rom. 8:7). The body and carnally minded man are dead to the things of God/Christ/the Spirit. But by the indwelling Spirit through the engrafted word **quickens the body** to the things of God, even while it mortifies the deeds of the flesh.

Anyway, that is how I understand it. Give it some time and thought and I think you will see I am correct.



Jesus Nazaret Rex Iudaeorum

What would Jesus do when told he cannot pray at school graduation?

The Christian's Destiny and the New Creation

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Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version ®.

What is our ultimate hope and destiny as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? Where do we go when we die? Do we spend eternity in heaven? What does St John's vision of the New Jerusalem represent? With what sort of bodies will we be raised?

St John's vision of the New Jerusalem

John's vision in Revelation 21–22 has led some to suppose that our ultimate destiny is to inhabit a renewed material creation. But this seriously misconstrues John's vision! Our present aim is to examine carefully his vision, both its context and its symbolism. A correct perspective will show that the New Jerusalem cannot possibly represent our final abode.

In the first instance, note carefully John's time-indicators: The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants WHAT MUST SOON TAKE PLACE... blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because THE TIME IS NEAR. (Revelation 1:1, 3)

“The Lord... sent his angel to show his servants THE THINGS THAT MUST SOON TAKE PLACE... Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because THE TIME IS NEAR.” (Revelation 22:6, 10)

John is absolutely clear: His vision concerned events that would ‘soon take place’. In other words, events of the first century!

Consider the context. Written probably in 63 AD, the book of Revelation was given to comfort and strengthen Christians in the province of Asia who would soon face brutal persecution from the Roman authorities. Opposition had already come from the ‘synagogue of Satan’ (Rev 2:9; 3:9) — unbelieving Jews in Asia — but soon, the emperor Nero would cause vast numbers to be martyred. The book is a prophecy of Christ's judgments on their persecutors and especially on the ‘Harlot’. It's not about nuclear war, and it's not primarily addressed to 21st century believers!

Who is this Harlot? John calls her ‘Babylon’ and ‘the great city’ (Rev 17:5; 18:21). This same city is earlier

called ‘Sodom and Egypt’ and identified by John as Jerusalem:

The street of THE GREAT CITY, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, WHERE ALSO THEIR LORD WAS CRUCIFIED. (Revelation 11:8)

So you see, Revelation speaks of two women who are two cities and both are Jerusalem! But they differ radically: One is the old earthly city, the other a new spiritual ‘city’. One is an unfaithful and persecuting ‘Harlot’ (Rev 17:5-6; 18:24; cf. Mt 23:35-37); the other is Christ's faithful ‘Bride’ (Rev 21:2, 9).

Now what's all this about? Simply this: The Jews, in crucifying Christ and persecuting His followers, had demonstrated their rejection of God Himself and of their covenant partnership (their ‘marriage’) with Him. So God would punish these ‘adulterers’. Hadn't Jesus earlier foretold Jerusalem's ruin (Lk 21:20-24; Mt 22:7)? John's visions of judgment would soon be fulfilled in the 70 AD Roman siege and destruction of the city.

Believing Jews and Gentiles, on the other hand, were citizens of the ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ (Heb 12:22; Gal 4:26). But note this: John sees the city ‘coming down out of heaven from God’ (Rev 21:2, 10). The New Jerusalem is on earth! How so? First, the city is the Church — Christ's ‘holy and blameless’ new bride (Eph 5:27). And second, the city pictures our spiritual privileges in Christ. It's where we ‘live’ under the New Covenant. Though on earth, the justified believer is legally as much a citizen of heaven as are the angels and perfected saints (Heb 12:22-23).

John's vision of the two ‘Jeruselems’ portrays God's expulsion of national Israel (the Harlot) from His covenant and His taking for Himself a new covenant partner — the Church. That the New Jerusalem depicts present, spiritual realities seems obvious from John's description.

First, ‘Nations’ are present in the New Creation:

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. (Revelation 21:24)
Furthermore:

The leaves of the tree [of life] are for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:2)

Is there ‘healing’ in eternity? Isn’t this rather a picture of the effects of the gospel, with the nations being progressively healed as they are won for Christ?

Second, the wicked, also, are present in the New Creation. They dwell outside the city’s walls, excluded from its privileges:

Outside [the city] are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (Revelation 22:15)

Though excluded, an invitation extends to them. Together, Church and Spirit continually invite the wicked to repent and to enter the city’s gates to partake of the water of life. These gates are never shut (Rev 21:25). What a marvellous picture of the gospel invitation to sinners!

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city... The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”... Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (Revelation 22:14, 17)

Third, the shape of the New Jerusalem is significant: The city is a perfect cube (Rev 21:16). What does this signify? Simply this: The New Jerusalem is modelled on the Most Holy Place of the Temple. For that inner sanctuary, where God dwelt behind the curtain, was likewise a cube (1Ki 6:20; Eze 41:4). Under the Old Covenant, access to God was restricted to the high priest once a year — ordinary priests ministering in the outer room were excluded (Heb 9:6-8). But all of this changes under the New Covenant. The curtain is removed, and all believers are priests who have full, unrestricted access to the Father (Mt 27:51; Rev 1:6; 5:10; Heb 10:19-22). They constantly serve before God’s throne; they ‘see His face’ (Rev 7:15; 22:3-4). He dwells with them in fulfilment of His covenant promise (Rev 21:3; cf. 2Co 6:16; Lev 26:11-12; Eze 37:27).

Fourth, John’s vision shows creation restored: No more curse or death or crying or pain (Rev 21:4; 22:3); no more banishment from God’s presence (Rev 22:4); access to the tree of life restored (Rev 22:14). All these are symbols of our spiritual blessings in Christ. The ‘river of the water of life, as clear as crystal’ that proceeds from God’s throne is a picture of the pure gospel that cleanses from sin and supports the life of the city (Rev 22:1; cf. Jn 4:10-14; 6:35; Rev 7:16-17; 21:6; 22:17).

Fifth, the New Creation pictures the kingdom of Christ on earth. Christ’s kingdom — His universal and eternal reign of peace and justice — was imminent (Rev 11:15; cf. Ps 2:8-9; Da 7:14; Lk 1:33; Isa 9:7; 11:3-9). Hadn’t Jesus spoken of the kingdom as ‘near’ (Mt 4:17) and as something that would come ‘with power’ in that

generation (Mk 9:1; Lk 21:31-32; Mt 16:28)? Moreover the saints themselves, who would endure and live through the coming trial, would share in their Lord’s rule (Rev 22:5; cf. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; Da 7:17-27). How do the saints now reign? What is their royal task? Answer: To mould and shape the world through proclaiming the gospel; to be salt and light (Mt 5:13-16; Rev 21:24).

Sixth, the prophet Isaiah foretold the New Creation, along with a restored Jerusalem whose citizens would enjoy procreation and longevity, building and planting, and edenic tranquility (Isa 65:17-25). When would this happen? Answer: During the righteous reign of the Messiah (compare Isaiah 65:25 with 11:6-9).

Finally, the apostle Peter foretold the New Creation and viewed it as imminent. His readers were suffering various trials (1Pe 1:6-7; 4:12) — proof that the Judgment had started and ‘the end of all things’ was ‘near’ (1Pe 4:5, 7, 17). Accordingly, Peter could urge his first century readers to holiness as they waited for the ‘day of God’ and the New Creation; they could even ‘speed its coming’ (2Pe 3:11-13).

The Christian’s ultimate destiny: Heaven

Since the New Jerusalem symbolises our spiritual privileges this side of eternity, it’s obvious that our final destiny must lie elsewhere. The New Testament is actually quite clear: Our ultimate hope is to dwell eternally with Christ in heaven. Listen to what the apostle Paul says:

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an ETERNAL HOUSE IN HEAVEN, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life... Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord... We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord... So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:1-10)

Though Paul’s earthly body (his ‘tent’) would be destroyed, in heaven he would be clothed with his final resurrection body — his ‘eternal house’ (vs. 1). He would be ‘at home’ with the Lord.

Note that Paul seems to be anticipating receiving his new body immediately at death. He longs not to be found

‘naked’ or ‘unclothed’ but to be directly clothed with his new body. But that raises an intriguing question: How could Paul receive his resurrection body prior to the Resurrection itself?

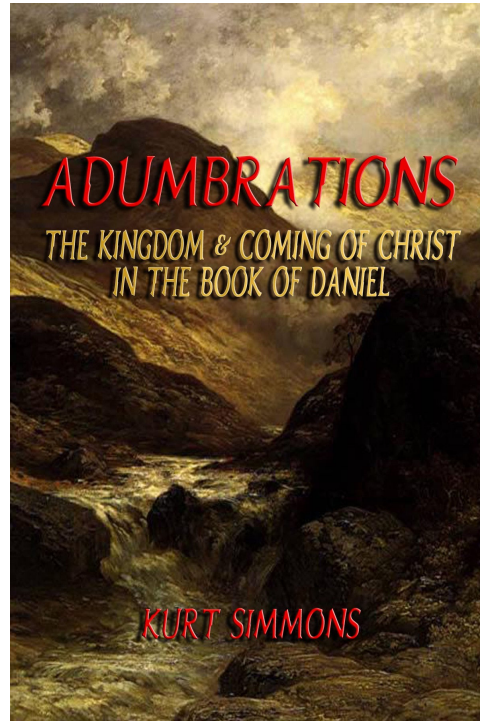
John’s vision in Revelation 20 clarifies both the timing and the nature of the Resurrection. As noted earlier, his vision concerned events that were imminent. The Resurrection itself was one of those ‘things that must soon take place’ (Rev 22:6). As to its nature, John shows all the dead leaving Hades to appear before God’s judgment throne in heaven (Rev 20:11-15). Therefore, in the Resurrection souls were released from Hades, not bodies from graves (Rev 1:18; cf. Jesus’ figurative description in John 5:28-29). The resurrected saints received not again their former earthly bodies, but new, spiritual bodies suited to the heavenly realm (1Co 15:44-50).

Because under the Old Covenant sin was not effectively dealt with, no one who died could enter heaven. Instead, the souls of the righteous entered Hades-Paradise (Lk 16:22; 20:38; 23:43). Then finally in 70 AD the temple was destroyed and the Old Covenant rendered ‘obsolete’ (Heb 8:13) — access to God had been restored! Those in Paradise were raised to heaven with their new bodies. The wicked in Hades-Tartarus (Lk 16:23; 2Pe 2:4) were condemned to the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:15).

Paul, along with other New Testament authors, knew that this ‘Last Day’ Resurrection was imminent (Php 4:5; Heb 10:25; 1Pe 4:7; 1Jn 2:18; cf. Jn 6:39-40). In just a few short years, the saints in Paradise would rise. Thereafter, those on earth would enter heaven directly when they died. Paul lived on the threshold of the new age and spoke as if it were already present. He assumed that some at least to whom he wrote would remain alive until the Resurrection (1Co 15:51; 1Th 4:15-17).

In summary, with the Resurrection of 70 AD long past, believers put on their resurrection bodies individually when they die. Heaven itself is our final home. There, in our spiritual bodies, we live in the presence of the Lord Jesus forever.

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Romans 13 Revisited

Chuck Baldwin

It seems that every time someone such as myself attempts to encourage our Christian brothers and sisters to resist an unconstitutional or otherwise reprehensible government policy, we hear the retort, "What about Romans Chapter 13? We Christians must submit to government. Any government. Read your Bible, and leave me alone." Or words to that effect.

No doubt, some who use this argument are sincere. They are only repeating what they have heard their pastor and other religious leaders say. On the other hand, let's be honest enough to admit that some who use this argument are just plain lazy, apathetic, and indifferent. And Romans 13 is their escape from responsibility. I suspect this is the much larger group, by the way.

Nevertheless, for the benefit of those who are sincere (but obviously misinformed), let's briefly examine Romans Chapter 13. I quote Romans Chapter 13, verses 1 through 7, from the Authorized King James text:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Do our Christian friends who use these verses to teach that we should not oppose America's political leaders really believe that civil magistrates have unlimited authority to do anything they want without opposition? I doubt whether they truly believe that.

For example, what if our President decided to resurrect the old monarchical custom of *Jus Primae Noctis* (Law of First Night)? That was the old medieval custom when the king claimed the right to sleep with a subject's bride on the first night of their marriage. Would our sincere

Christian brethren sheepishly say, "Romans Chapter 13 says we must submit to the government"? I think not. And would any of us respect any man who would submit to such a law?

So, there are limits to authority. A father has authority in his home, but does this give him power to abuse his wife and children? Of course not. An employer has authority on the job, but does this give him power to control the private lives of his employees? No. A pastor has overseer authority in the church, but does this give him power to tell employers in his church how to run their businesses? Of course not. All human authority is limited in nature. No man has unlimited authority over the lives of other men. (Lordship and Sovereignty is the exclusive domain of Jesus Christ.)

By the same token, a civil magistrate has authority in civil matters, but his authority is limited and defined. Observe that Romans Chapter 13 clearly limits the authority of civil government by strictly defining its purpose: "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil . . . For he is the minister of God to thee for good . . . for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Notice that civil government must not be a "terror to good works." It has no power or authority to terrorize good works or good people. God never gave it that authority. And any government that oversteps that divine boundary has no divine authority or protection. This is a basic principle of Natural Law (and all of America's legal documents--including the U.S. Constitution--are founded upon the God-ordained principles of Natural Law).

The apostle clearly states that civil government is a "minister of God to thee for good." It is not a minister of God for evil. Civil magistrates have a divine duty to "execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." They have no authority to execute wrath upon him that doeth good. None. Zilch. Zero. And anyone who says they do is lying. So, even in the midst of telling Christians to submit to civil authority, Romans Chapter 13 limits the power and reach of civil authority.

Did Moses violate God's principle of submission to authority when he killed the Egyptian taskmaster in defense of his fellow Hebrew? Did Elijah violate God's principle of submission to authority when he openly challenged Ahab and Jezebel? Did David violate God's principle of submission to authority when he refused to

surrender to Saul's troops? Did Daniel violate God's principle of submission to authority when he disobeyed the king's command to not pray audibly to God? Did the three Hebrew children violate God's principle of submission to authority when they refused to bow to the image of the state? Did John the Baptist violate God's principle of submission to authority when he publicly scolded King Herod for his infidelity? Did Simon Peter and the other Apostles violate God's principle of submission to authority when they refused to stop preaching on the streets of Jerusalem? Did Paul violate God's principle of submission to authority when he refused to obey those authorities who demanded that he abandon his missionary work? In fact, Paul spent almost as much time in jail as he did out of jail.

Remember that every apostle of Christ (except John) was killed by hostile civil authorities opposed to their endeavors. Christians throughout church history were imprisoned, tortured, or killed by civil authorities of all stripes for refusing to submit to their various laws and prohibitions. Did all of these Christian martyrs violate God's principle of submission to authority?

So, even the great prophets, apostles, and writers of the Bible (including the writer of Romans Chapter 13) understood that human authority--even civil authority--is limited.

Plus, Paul makes it clear that our submission to civil authority must be predicated on more than fear of governmental retaliation. Notice, he said, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." Meaning, our obedience to civil authority is more than just "because they said so." It is also a matter of conscience. This means we must think and reason for ourselves regarding the justness and rightness of our government's laws. Obedience is not automatic or robotic. It is a result of both rational deliberation and moral approbation.

Therefore, there are times when civil authority may need to be resisted. Either governmental abuse of power or the violation of conscience (or both) could precipitate civil disobedience. Of course, how and when we decide to resist civil authority is an entirely separate issue. And I will reserve that discussion for another time.

Beyond that, we in the United States of America do not live under a monarchy. We have no king. There is no single governing official in this country. America's "supreme Law" does not rest with any man or any group of men. America's "supreme Law" does not rest with the President, the Congress, or even the Supreme Court. In America, the U.S. Constitution is the "supreme Law of the Land." Under our laws, every governing official publicly promises to submit to the Constitution of the United States. Do readers understand the significance of this distinction? I hope so.

This means that, in America, the "higher powers" are not the men who occupy elected office; they are the tenets and principles set forth in the U.S. Constitution. Under our laws and form of government, it is the duty of every citizen, including our elected officials, to obey the U.S. Constitution. Therefore, this is how Romans Chapter 13 reads to Americans:

"Let every soul be subject unto the [U.S. Constitution.] For there is no [Constitution] but of God: the [Constitution] that be [is] ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the [Constitution], resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For [the Constitution is] not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the [Constitution]? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For [the Constitution] is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for [the Constitution] beareth not the sword in vain: for [the Constitution] is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for [the Constitution is] God's minister, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Dear Christian friend, the above is exactly the proper understanding of our responsibility to civil authority in these United States, according to the teaching of Romans Chapter 13.

Furthermore, Christians, above all people, should desire that their elected representatives submit to the Constitution, because it is constitutional government that has done more to protect Christian liberty than any other governing document ever devised by man. As I have noted before in this column, Biblical principles and Natural Law form the foundation of all three of America's founding documents: the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

As a result, Christians in America (for the most part) have not had to face the painful decision to "obey God rather than men" and defy their civil authorities.

The problem in America today is that we have allowed our political leaders to violate their oaths of office and to ignore--and blatantly disobey--the "supreme Law of the Land," the U.S. Constitution. Therefore, if we truly believe Romans Chapter 13, we will insist and demand that our civil magistrates submit to the U.S. Constitution.

Now, how many of us Christians are going to truly obey Romans Chapter 13?