



# The Sword & The Plow

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## Exposition of I Corinthians 15 and The Resurrection of the Dead

*Kurt Simmons*

I Cor. 15 is among the chief eschatological passages of the New Testament; any discussion of Christ's second coming sooner or later will end up here. Not surprisingly, there is a fair amount of disagreement about its meaning among Preterists. This article will attempt to help clear things up.

I Cor. 15 is divided into three parts: Verses 1-34 deal with the *fact* of the resurrection and consequences of its denial. Verses 35-50 deal with the *nature* of the resurrection body – natural and corruptible vs. spiritual and incorruptible. Verses 50-57 deal with the “*mystery*” of the eschatological change. Let's look briefly at each of these.

### **Fact of the Resurrection**

*I Cor. 15:1, 2 - Moreover brethren I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved.*

We think of I Cor. 15 as being predominantly eschatological, but we see here that soteriology and eschatology are inexorably bound together up. Last things grow out of first things, and first things are completed in last things. The gospel that begins with the birth of the Savior, culminates in his resurrection from the dead. This resurrection – its authenticity, its

historicity, its gospel verity – is the message by which God has chosen to save man.

*Rom. 1:16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.*

God chose the “foolishness” of preaching, the silliness, the absurdity of a message scorned by proud and worldly-minded men, to save those that believe. Faith is tied to man’s moral faculty. It is not as if men cannot believe, as if the evidence were wanting, were weak, or insubstantial; it is not that men cannot believe, but that they *will not* believe! Unregenerate man does not like the reality of God; the pride of the human heart rebels against God’s lordship over his life; man wants to be self-determinative, to choose what to do, when to do it, and if to do it at all. Unregenerate man despises his “creatureliness.” He rages against God; God is a reality he is unprepared to live with or submit to, and so he thrusts the very knowledge and consciousness of God from his heart.

*Rom. 1:19-21 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed [it] unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

Thus, God has chosen the moral faculty of faith as the measure by which to sift the hearts of men. Those that receive a love of the truth – who own to their “creatureliness,” who own to their sinfulness, who own to their utter helplessness in the face and inevitability of death – will find salvation in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But those that are contentious and do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil – to the Jew first and also the Greek (Rom. 2:8, 9).

The point for purposes of Paul’s argument is that man’s salvation culminates in and is realized by his resurrection. What would the forgiveness of sins mean if there was no resurrection? What advantage, what profit, what point in Christ dying at all if it was only so that man could molder in his grave...forgiven? Resurrection is the essence of our salvation—the very

thing that sustains us through our trials, our temptations, and the long and weary days of our vain existence beneath the sun. And since it is the very essence of our faith, we must define the nature of this resurrection, for in understanding the nature of this resurrection we see and understand our salvation.

### **Definition of the Resurrection**

*I Cor. 15:19 – If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

This verse is central to our purpose. In fact, I wonder if the whole exposition of the chapter does not turn upon this one verse: *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* Resurrection is the hope and assurance of the *next life*—the life that awaits man *in heaven*. We do not receive, we do not experience, and we do not partake of that resurrection here, but here after. As we will see, this is the major weakness of that view which holds that the resurrection is justification and restored fellowship with God; which places the resurrection on the *wrong side* of eternity, making it something men enjoy in this life, rather than the next as taught by Paul and Christ. Jesus is very plain that resurrection belongs to the next world, not this world:

*Lk. 20:35, 36 – They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*

*Matt. 22:30 adds the variation that those who attain to that world will be “as the angels of God in heaven.”*

Thus, we plainly see that the promise of resurrection is the promise of eternal life *in heaven*. *This* world is set over against *that* world, *this* life against *that* life. Unless and until we attain unto that world, we have not attained unto the resurrection from the dead. It is really just that simple.

Where and what is “that world?” Matthew says “in heaven” – children of the resurrection are as angels of God *in heaven*. “Resurrection now” (as some Preterists claim) therefore means “heaven now.” The notion that believers are in “heaven now” was circulating a few years ago. This is the basis of that error: if you believe we have resurrection now, you must affirm we are in

heaven now, for the children of the resurrection are as angels in heaven. Therefore to be raised is to be in heaven; but if we are not in heaven, we have not yet been raised. This pretty much disposes of the “corporate body” view; it simply cannot get over the hurdle that Paul and Christ place the resurrection in the next life in heaven, not here on earth. This is why we say that v. 19 may be the most important verse in the passage, to wit: because it sets this earthly life over against the resurrection life in heaven. I Cor. 15:19 – *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

*Heb. 11:15, 16 - And truly, if they had been mindful of that [country] from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better [country], that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

If this is correct, if the resurrection Paul is here proclaiming is realized in the next life, then the resurrection he is discussing is chiefly Hadean. Jesus said “*I have the keys of Hades and of death*” – *the gates of Hades shall not prevail against my church!*” (Matt. 16:18). Paul even states as much in v. 55, saying “*O Hades, where is thy victory?*”

As I look at redemptive history, I see Hades as standing last in line of enemies to be destroyed. In Revelation, the harlot, dragon, beast, and false prophet all suffer defeat before the resurrection of the last day. In that resurrection we have the souls of the deceased coming forth from death and Hades.

*Rev. 20:13, 14 – And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them...and death and hades were cast into the last of fire.*

Here is the resurrection of the last day: the resurrection of the accumulated souls from Abel onward who had waited long millennia in Hades for salvation. Clearly, Hades is the last named enemy. All the enemies in Revelation find their fate in the lake of fire. And the last to be cast in is Hades, or Hadean death. Hence, *Hades is the last enemy.*

*I Cor. 15:19 - “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”*

Based upon this one statement of Paul, I think we have to say that the resurrection he has in view is not received in this life. Otherwise this statement has no meaning; for the whole of his argument turns upon a hinge that resurrection belongs to the next life.

### **Nature of the Resurrection Body**

What we have said is confirmed by Paul’s discussion of the nature of the resurrection body. The whole discussion moves between the body suited to this life, versus the sort of body suited to the next life.

*I Cor. 15:35 – But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?*

You would not think that this section was as difficult as it is for some. The dominate view among the Jews was that the resurrection would be physical. The hypothetical question propounded by the Sadducees about the woman who had seven husbands assumes the resurrection of the flesh. The Greeks and Romans believed in reincarnation, not resurrection. They believed that souls were born again into earthly life after 1000 years in Hades. To speak to them of resurrection must therefore also have conveyed the idea of physical bodies. Certainly, this was what had happened in the case of Jesus. Was not he the pattern for us all? Much of Christendom has traditionally thought, and even today thinks, in terms of the resurrection of physical bodies. Many graveyards are laid out so the bodies have their heads to the west, so that when they stand up on resurrection morning they are facing east, supposing this is the direction the Lord would descend from.

Numerous creeds affirm the resurrection of the flesh and of the self-same body the deceased had in life. The interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus (circa 215 A.D.) asks, “Do you believe...in the resurrection of the body?” Similarly, the Creed of Marcellus (340 A.D.) declares: “I believe in...the resurrection of the body.” The Creed of Rufinus (circa 404 A.D.) is more explicit and declares “I believe in the resurrection of the flesh.” The Apostles’ Creed proclaims belief in the resurrection of the body, but the Nicene Creed states only a belief in the resurrection of the “dead.” Other creeds and confessions holding to the resurrection of the flesh include the Athanasian Creed and the second London Confession of 1689 (Baptist) which affirms

that the “selfsame” body would be raised. Another example is the Westminster Confession:

*XXXII of the Westminster Confession - Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead:*

*1. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. [stop] And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.*

*2. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls for ever.*

This is about as confused a statement concerning the state of the dead and the resurrection as you could hope to find. First, it affirms that the dead go to heaven, having been made perfect in holiness, where they behold the face of God, but are later forced to return to the earthly bodies. If they are in perfect holiness in heaven, what conceivable purpose could there be for returning to their earthly bodies? Having begun in the spirit are they to be made perfect in the flesh? Second, it affirms that the dead are raised with the “self-same” bodies they had in earthly life! But Paul disallows this completely, expressly affirming instead: “*the body that thou sowest, thou sowest NOT the body that shall be*” (I Cor. 15:37). Could it be more plain? If you wanted to tell men that it was not the self-same body that was to be raised, what language would you use if not this? “*The body that thou sowest, thou sowest NOT the body that shall be.*” Paul likens the resurrection to sowing a seed.

*I Cor. 15:36-38 - Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other*

*grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.*

I was a city kid and grew up outside of Chicago; I knew nothing about wheat. But we lived for some years in Kansas, and they know a lot about wheat. And the seed you sow is not the body that is raised. You sow a dry, hard, grain of wheat, and a living green plant springs forth, having no likeness at all to what you planted. Paul declares that this is how it is in the resurrection; he analogizes the cycle of seed/plant to the human body and spirit. As the seed holds the germ of something greater, so the human body holds the germ of something greater. The hull of the seed is left behind and new life emerges from the old. Or as Shakespeare has Hamlet say, we “shuffle off this mortal coil,” leaving behind the tokens of earthly life, like a snake shedding its skin.

*II Cor. 4:16 – For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

It is the inward man of the spirit that is the object of the resurrection, not the outward man of dissolution, corruption, and decay.

*I Cor. 15:42-45 - So also [is] the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit.*

Here the case is plainly stated: natural bodies are tangible, material, visible, and corruptible; the spiritual body is intangible, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible. Adam was made a living being with a physical body peculiarly suited to earthly life; but in his glorified state Jesus, the second Adam, became a quickening spirit. What is a spirit? Jesus said “*a spirit hath not flesh and bones*” (Lk. 24:39).

*I Cor. 15:46-50 - Howbeit that [was] not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man [is] of the earth, earthy: the second man [is] the Lord from heaven. As [is] the earthy, such [are] they also that are earthy:*

*and as [is] the heavenly, such [are] they also that are heavenly. As [is] the earthy, such [are] they also that are earthy: and as [is] the heavenly, such [are] they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

The word "inherit" is very important here. Inherit points to the ultimate object of man's salvation. A testament determines a man's inheritance. A testament is a legal instrument or device; the inheritance is the actual thing bequeathed or bestowed.

*I Pet. 1:3, 4 - Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*

God has given living men a lively and living hope of an inheritance incorruptible, in heaven. Notice the word 'incorruptible' – an incorruptible inheritance requires an incorruptible body. So, when Paul says flesh and blood – the tangible, corporeal, material, visible, and corruptible body of this earthly existence - cannot inherit the spiritual realm above, he speaks to man's ultimate home *in heaven*. Material bodies, by definition, are bounded by time and space; but spirit is not bound this way. Therefore, in order to even enter the realms above, man must shed his mortal body. This is the resurrection promised believers and the one discussed in I Corinthians 15. It is the resurrection that occurred in A.D. 70; the whole transaction took place on the other side of eternity, unseen by eye of man. As believers on this side of the eschaton die, they are "caught up together" with saints that have gone before where they meet the Lord in the air and so are ever with the Lord.

### **Mystery of the Last-Trumpet-Change**

*I Cor. 15:51-55 – Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible*

*shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting: O Hades where is thy victory?*

We have already seen the Westminster Confession's approach: physical bodies of the dead *raised*; physical bodies of living *changed*. But if they are not physical bodies that are raised, then might we suggest it is *not* the physical bodies of the living that were to be changed? The resurrection of souls from Hades is fairly apparent and requires no elaboration, and is to our view the eschatological resurrection. It is the "last-trumpet-change" that requires attention.

In the past, I took the view that the change mentioned by Paul in these verses was "legal and covenantal;" that the change spoke to Christ's consummation of the marriage covenant with the bride, the church. The marriage was, after all, eschatological; its symbolism occurs in several second coming passages (Matt. 22:8; 25:10; Eph. 5:22-32; Rev. 19:7). Yet, in the Old Testament, the symbolism of marriage portrayed God's *covenant* with Israel and was *not* eschatological (cf. Jer. 2:1; Ezk. 16:8). But, as in the New Testament the marriage is eschatological, it seemed as if the benefit of the gospel was in some form or manner held in abeyance until Christ's second coming, and that it is to this that the "eschatological change" looked. I was prompted to this view by the fact that Paul seems to indicate that the change would be experienced simultaneous to the trumpet that would mark the resurrection of the dead from Hades. However, I no longer believe this to be the case, and now see the "change" as speaking to the one-by-one gathering of the saints at the time of death to inherit eternal life in heaven. It is now my view that there is a "last trumpet" for each of us that calls us home to eternity. Although lost to our translations, this is borne out by the Greek:

*"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For a trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

The almost universal assumption here is that the "last trumpet" and the trumpet that would mark the resurrection of the dead are the *same trumpet*. Hence,

our English translations substitute the indefinite article ("a trumpet") with the definite article ("the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, *etc.*"). This is interpretational, not translational; the Greek says that our change, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, will occur at the "last trumpet." The Greek does not identify the last trumpet with the trumpet that would mark the resurrection of the dead. The translators assume they are the same and so ***change the text***. But the Greek distinguishes them by the difference in the definite versus indefinite article. I feel the translators' alteration of the Greek is mistaken and the source of confusion and error.

If anything is clear, Daniel placed the resurrection of the dead at the destruction of the Jewish state (Dan. 12:2, 7). Jesus quotes Daniel in John's gospel, and indicates that the time for fulfillment of that prophecy was near (Jn. 5:25-29). John also ties the resurrection to the fall of Jerusalem in Rev. 11:2, 15-18. You and I obviously were not alive then. Does that mean we will not be changed in a moment in a twinkling of an eye? Not at all! II Cor. 4:16-5:10 makes plain that when our outer man of this physical body dies, we receive a new body, a house from heaven, suitable for inhabiting eternity with Christ above. Thus, the "change" occurs *as we die*. But if the change occurs when we die, and there is to be a last trumpet heralding our change, then the last trumpet necessarily occurs for each of us at the time of physical death.

Moreover, we note that, although the dead are shown being raised in Revelation (Rev. 20:11-15), there is no

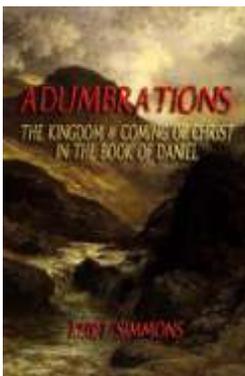
wondrous rapture of the living saints to heaven. In fact, John repudiates the notion that the saints living at Christ's return would "never die." Jesus had said John would live until he returned; hence the saying went abroad that John would not die; *viz.*, it was assumed he would experience translation to heaven with the rest of the living saints like Enoch and Elijah. However, John rejects this idea entirely (Jn. 21:22, 23). Jesus said some of his disciples would not taste of death until his coming; he did not say they would not die at all (Matt. 16:27, 28). Rather, they would live to see his return, *and then die*. The saying that John would not die therefore reflected the same misunderstanding prevalent today, that the change would occur simultaneously with the resurrection, and that those alive when Christ came would thus be translated to heaven. But as John dispelled this error in his day, we ought not perpetuate it in our own. A trumpet would sound, marking the resurrection of the dead (Rev. 11:15, 18). But there is a last trumpet for each of us, marking the time when God calls us from this life and we receive our "house from heaven, not made with hands" (II Cor. 5:1-4); or so at least this seems to us to be Paul's meaning.

### Conclusion

The change that marks our putting off incorruption and mortality looks to the time when we put off our physical bodies in death. There is a last trumpet for each of us, marking that occasion.

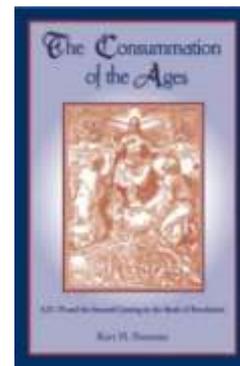
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# Questions from our Readers

**Q:** Could you please provide an exegesis of I Thess. 4:13-18 to explain how these words have already been fulfilled?

**A:** I Thess. 4:17 says "after that" - that is, after the dead are raised from Hades - "we which are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" etc.

The phrase "after that" shows that the "catching up" follows the resurrection of the souls in Hades. The question is *how long* after that? Most people assume that the two events are simultaneous. But this is merely an assumption.

Revelation 20:11-15 shows that the resurrection from Hades was a first century event, tied closely to the destruction of Jerusalem (the whore) and the defeat of the Roman persecution (dragon/beast). Daniel 12:2 ties the resurrection to the persecution under Nero (Dan. 12:1). John ties the resurrection to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Rev. 11:1, 2, 15-18). Jesus said he would come and the judgment commence while the disciples were yet alive (Matt. 16:27, 28). Obviously, our being "caught up" must then point to our being taken to heaven one-by-one as we die, for we had not yet been born when these events took place.

The phrase "together with them" is what causes people to assume the resurrection and our being caught up or "changed" (I Cor. 15:51, 52) are essentially simultaneous. Let's examine that: If you joined a religious movement today. And I joined it a year from now, people might speak of this, saying "Benny and Kurt were caught up together in a religious movement." Yet, there was a year between your joining it and mine! The "together" in I Thess. 4:17 refers to the PLACE not the time where we are caught up to. We are caught up to heaven together with our loved ones that go before us. That is all Paul is saying.

And there are two trumpets in I Cor. 15:51, 52 in the Greek (most English translations miss this). There is a trumpet that raises the dead (the voice of the archangel mentioned in I Thess. 4:16). There is another trumpet - the "last trumpet" - that calls each of us one-by-one out of this life. You will have to look closely at the Greek to recognize this, but I assure you it is there. Here is an article that addresses it: (this month's lead article on I Cor. 15).

Hope that helps.

**Q:** I have a couple questions that perhaps you can help me with, one is pertaining to resurrection, and the other is related to OT prophecy.

1) What part do you believe the physical body played/plays in resurrection? Based on 1 Cor. 15:44, I understand the result of resurrection is a spiritual body, but is it the physical body that transforms into the spiritual body? If so, wouldn't that mean that physical bodies should be missing from the ground? If not, why do you think Paul speaks of resurrection while speaking of the physical body in 1 Cor. 6:14?

2) Dan. 7:11 speaks of the destruction of the beast. Currently I understand the beast to be Rome, so was wondering how you think that fits in with Matt. 5:17 and all OT prophecy being fulfilled in the first century, seeing how the fall of Rome (Western Empire at least) did not occur until 476 AD?

**A:** Thanks for writing. These are good questions and I am glad to answer them.

1) The physical body is no part of the resurrection. Paul is very clear about this in I Cor. 15:37 when he says the "body that thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be." That is, we plant a physical body, but a spiritual, intangible, immaterial body is raised/provided for the soul or spirit. Think of a seed. We plant a hard kernel but a soft, green plant immerses totally unlike the seed that housed it. So in the resurrection the spirit of man within him will immerse to be clothed with a house from heaven. Paul said, Christ became a "quickening/life giving spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). God is spirit (Jn. 4:24). In the resurrection we will be spirits, like the angels in heaven (Matt. 22:30).

2) The Little Horn (Nero) in Daniel was destroyed at Christ's coming after the persecution of 3 1/2 years. In Revelation the beast and dragon were cast into the lake of fire at the coming of Christ (Rev. 19 & 20). Thus, when Daniel speaks about the body of the beast being given to burning, he probably does not mean the total end of Rome as a political entity, but the defeat that marked the transfer of dominion to Christ at the eschaton. Jesus began to rule from the time of his ascension, but his dominion and kingdom "came in

power" by the destruction of his enemies in the Roman civil wars that broke out upon the death of Nero (AD 68-70) and the Jews' war with Rome (AD 67-70). The "Rome" that went into the eschaton was not the "Rome" that came out. The city was destroyed and its temple Jupiter Capitolanus burned; the line of the Caesars ended and a great part of its nobility was slain by Nero. Italy was a ruin. So, just because a form of government still existed and there was a certain continuity there, the reality is that Christ came out with his enemies firmly beneath his feet, and began ruling the nations (including Rome) with an iron rod. Thus, although the imagery in Daniel 7 looks like it might be pointing to the fall of Rome in 476 AD, I think that Revelation requires we see Daniel as merely pointing to the defeat that marked the dominion turning to Christ. It is not the end of the political entity that is in view, but its dominion. Hope that helps. Write any time!

**Q:** Thanks again Kurt. Based on 1 Cor. 15, I think it makes total sense that the nature of the resurrection is a spiritual (and therefore physically invisible) body. But 1 Cor. 6:14 is somewhat bothersome to me that Paul would say "raise us up" in the middle of speaking about things pertaining to the physical body.

I've been doing some reading and I've come across an argument from critics of full preterism that the first century Jewish understanding of resurrection had to do with the physical body, and since no attempt was made by Jesus or the apostles to clarify what was meant when they mentioned "resurrection" then that means they had the same understanding. One verse quoted was Acts 24:15 where Paul speaks of the common belief between himself and the Pharisees of the coming resurrection. How would you respond to this argument, that the Pharisees understood the resurrection to involve the physical body and since Paul said he agreed with them, then the resurrection must involve the physical body?

**A:** Paul did agree with the Pharisees that the resurrection was central to their hope of salvation, but he did not share their view of what the resurrection entailed, at least not after he converted to Christ. The Jews conception of the resurrection was that physical bodies would live upon a material new earth, where they would marry, bear children, etc. Jesus expressly rejected this concept, saying instead that in the resurrection we would be "as angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30). In other words, we will be immortal, intangible, immaterial, invisible, etc. Thus, the charge that Jesus did not refute the Jews' misconception is incorrect. He most certainly did refute it, and established that the resurrection is on the other

side of eternity, into realms above, not upon the earth here below. Hope that helps!

**Q:** Hi Kurt, hope this finds you well. When you find the time, could you explain Ro.5:14 to me? Thanks,

**A:** Thanks for writing. As I see it at present, "**death reigned from Adam to Moses**" means that the penalty of sin was without remedy from the time of the fall and onward. The law of Moses could provide no remedy. The remedy - the only remedy - was Christ. "Death" was the "prince of this world" that was coming for Jesus, but had no power over him (because he had no sin) (Jn. 14:30). When Jesus said "now shall the prince of this world be cast out" and "now is the prince of this world judged" (Jn. 12:31; 16:11), he meant that the power of sin/death would be annulled in his cross for those that believe and obey. See Col. 2:15 where Paul says Christ triumphed over the principalities and powers (of sin and death) in his cross by fulfilling the sentence of death in himself, relinquishing its hold upon us.

**"Even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."** Adam's transgression was qualitatively unique in that Adam was created with a moral disposition to good through the indwelling of the Spirit/inspiration breathed into him at creation. We, too, have free will, but our moral disposition is toward our carnal nature and sinful appetites. The idea that men today do not have free will is contradicted by many scriptures Rom. 7:18 says "for me to will is present". Thus, we can will to do right, but the performance of it is beyond our reach due to our fallen nature. We can never live completely above the flesh. Thus, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

**"who is the figure of him that was to come"** - Adam was a type or figure of the second Adam (Christ). As "in Adam all die" so in Christ all are made alive (e.g., all those that obey the gospel). Adam was the first man of the earth; Christ is the second man, the Lord from heaven. Adam stands at the head of creation as the source of physical birth; Christ stands at the head of the re-creation as the source of our second birth (forgiveness of sins/adoption as sons). We contract the contagion of sin from physical descent from Adam, we receive the gift of eternal life and atonement from Christ.

Hope that helps. Write again if you have further questions. - Blessings, Kurt

# The Prophecy of Daniel Two

*Kurt Simmons*

The image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is among the most important prophecies of the Bible. In it we see the hand of God carefully guiding the progress of history to accomplish his purpose to bring Christ into the world, establish his kingdom, and save mankind. The dream's primary purpose was to serve as a timeline unto the kingdom and coming of the Messiah. The specificity of the vision and the facility with which it enables us to pinpoint the coming of Christ's kingdom makes it unique among the visions of the Old Testament. However, it was remarkable in more ways than this: the vision occurred while the Jews were in captivity and their political institutions and government were non-existent; it was given to the very Gentile king who had carried the Jews into captivity and burned God's own temple, but who later became a worshipper of the one true God; the dream foretold events until an appointed consummation that would mark the transfer of world dominion from Gentile powers unto the Messiah and his people.

## **Historical Antecedents**

The Babylonians rose as an independent power when Nabopolassar ascended the throne of Babylon circa 625 B.C. upon the fall of the Assyrians of Nineveh. Taking advantage of the event, Egypt, which had been subjugated by Assyria, asserted itself and rebelled from Assyrio-Babylonian rule. All Syria came under Egyptian control under Pharaoh Necho II. During a campaign by Egypt against the king of Assyria (viz., the Medes and Babylonians), Josiah went forth to engage Necho and was slain (II Kng. 23:29-30; Josephus, *Ant.* X, v, 1). Returning from battle, Necho deposed Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, whom the people had crowned, and set his brother Eliakim on the throne instead, changing his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim reigned eleven years in Jerusalem (II Kng. 23:36; II Chron. 36:5). In or about the fourth year of his reign (605 B.C.), which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 25:1), Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho at Carchemish (Jer. 46:2) and proceeded to conquer Syria and Palestine. By the eighth year of Jehoiakim (601 B.C.), the holy land fell to Babylonian rule and was set under tribute. In the third year of this servitude (598 B.C.), Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar,

prompting the latter to return and besiege Jerusalem (II Kng. 24:1). Nebuchadnezzar took the city, slew Jehoiakim, and carried Daniel and his fellows, including Ezekiel, into captivity (Dan. 1:1-6; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* X, vi, 3 ). After the siege, word reached Nebuchadnezzar that his father, Nabopolassar, had died. Nebuchadnezzar thus hurried back to Babylon where he acceded to the sole principate as absolute monarch of the realm (Josephus, *Contra Apion*, I, ix). In the second year of his sole principate, God visited Nebuchadnezzar with a dream (Dan. 2:1).

## **The Dream and its Interpretation**

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw an image in human form, whose head was gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, and its legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay. He saw until a Stone cut out without hands smote the image upon its feet, reducing the whole to shards. The Stone that smote the image thus grew into a great mountain, filling all the earth. Daniel interpreted the vision, saying that the image's four divisions were four world empires that would obtain until the kingdom of God and Christ, whose dominion would supplant all other kingdoms and endure forever. The main issues presented by the vision are:

- 1) The Last Days and Coming of Christ
- 2) The identity of the four empires and their duration
- 3) The symbolism of the metals and materials comprising the image's body
- 4) The nature and timing of the kingdom

## **The Last Days and Coming of Christ**

Daniel is a book of time-lines. Chapter seven provides a time-line in the form of four beasts, which depict four world empires to the persecution under Nero (the "little horn") and the second coming of Christ and the kingdom of heaven; chapter nine provides a time-line in the form of 490 prophetic years until the death of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem; chapters 10-12 provides a time line from the kingdom of Persia until the rise of

the Roman power, the fall of Jerusalem, and the resurrection of the dead. The present chapter is a time-line in the form of four world empires that would appear until the coming of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom. The kingdom and resurrection are joined many times in the New Testament (Matt. 16:27, 28; II Tim. 4:1) so that the mention of the kingdom here should be understood to embrace also the resurrection. And because the resurrection was tied to Christ's second coming, we may know that that Nebuchadnezzar's dream also includes this.

The idea that Nebuchadnezzar's dream reaches to the second coming is not new, but has been current in the church from at least as early as Jerome (AD 347-420), whose commentary on Daniel is one of the earliest in our possession, and the first to attempt an expository interpretation (versus a homiletic or allegorical). Jerome believed that Daniel's assignment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to the "latter days" implied that the vision entailed the "end of the world":

*"Now either these 'last days' are to be reckoned from the time when the dream was revealed to Daniel until the end of the world, or else at least this inference is to be drawn, that the over-all interpretation of the dream applies to that final end when the image and statue beheld is to be ground to powder."*

*"We would refute those who think the world will never be destroyed. For never would any days be called 'the last days' if the world were everlasting." Comments at vv. 28, 29.*

The assumption that the end of the world implies the end of the cosmos has created immense confusion in the church down through the centuries. But the end of the world and end of the universe are not the same thing. We agree with Jerome that the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream portrays the end of the world. We disagree that this implied an end of the cosmos. Rather, the point of the imagery is that the world that was under dominion of the Gentile powers would come under the dominion of Christ, as indeed it has. The correct view is that the "latter days" signified the closing days of the era preceding the kingdom of Christ, and was marked the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

*"The Old Testament prophets contemplated the appearance of the Messiah and the going forth of the new word of Jehovah as occurring 'in the end of the days' – that is, the last days of the eon or dispensation under which they were living...This 'end*

*of the times' belongs, not to the era of the new dispensation, but to the concluding days of the old...It is a serious error, therefore, when learned exegetes persist in assuming that the phrase 'the last days,' as employed in the Scriptures, means the period of the new Christian dispensation."*<sup>1</sup>

This is not new. Several church fathers saw distinctly that the "latter days" were tied to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Eusebius of Caesarea is probably the most famous:

*"For we must understand by 'the end of the days' [viz., 'the last days,' LXX] the end of the national existence of the Jews. What, then, did he say they must look for? The cessation of the rule of Judah, the destruction of their whole race, the failing and ceasing of their governors, and the abolition of the dominant kingly position of the tribe of Judah, and the rule and kingdom of Christ, not over Israel but over all nations, according to the word, 'This is the expectation of the nations.'"*<sup>2</sup>

### **The Identity of the Four Empires and their Duration**

The identity of the Four Empires is not greatly in dispute. Liberals try to impugn the authenticity of Daniel by charging that it is a pseudo-epigraphical forgery, written during the period of the Greeks shortly after the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, and describes the valor and victory of the brothers Maccabee. This view has been completely discredited long, long ago, so we will not stop to address it here.<sup>3</sup> Daniel provided the starting point

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<sup>1</sup> Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, (1898, reprinted Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR, 1999), p. 361. "Daniel's prophecies of the latter days concern the future history of Israel down to AD 70, and do not directly deal with the gospel era (except as general principles). The same is true of Zechariah 9-14. Arguably every instance of 'last days' and 'last hour' in the New Testament also refers to the end of Israel's history down to AD 70." (James B. Jordan, *The Handwriting on the Wall* (American Vision, Powder Springs, GA, 2007), p. 20) Jordan makes the common mistake of interpreting the latter days in overly narrow terms, applying them exclusively to Israel. The vision here and in chapter seven concern the succession of *world empires* from Babylon to Rome and make no mention of Israel at all; likewise, Balaam's prophecy of the last days also involved Rome, Moab, and Asshur (Num. 24:14, 24), and Jeremiah speaks of God's gathering the captivity of Elam, Moab, and Ammon in the last days through the gospel (Jer. 48:47; 49:6, 39). Hence, although the last days would mark the end of the Jewish nation and it is to this that the phrase often refers, the latter days were not Israel-specific.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, VIII, ccclxxv; Ferrar ed.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Chandler, Lord Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, *A Vindication of the Defense of Christianity from Prophecies of the Old Testament* (1728). For a free on-line edition [www.danielstudies.info](http://www.danielstudies.info).

for identifying the succession of empires when he stated that the image's head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. With this information in hand, it is a simple matter to identify the succession of world empires. The four world empires preceding the kingdom and coming of Christ were:

Babylonian	598-539 BC
Mede-Persian	539-330 BC
Greco-Macedonia	330-188 BC
Roman	188 BC – AD 70
Total =	668 years

Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 BC during a siege of the capital city led by Cyrus the Great, who diverted the city's water courses, allowing his soldiers to gain access and take the city by surprise while it was feasting and carrying on as if it were impervious to defeat. Taken from the sole accession of Nebuchadnezzar, the period assigned to Babylon would represent 59 years, a length proportioned to the size of the head as against the rest of the body.

The Mede-Persian Empire suffered defeat to Alexander the Great. Alexander crossed the Hellespont in 334 BC and in 330 BC took the Persian capital of Persepolis, which he burned to the ground. The chest and arms would thus represent a period of 209 years.

The Greco-Macedonia Empire yielded to the power of Rome about 188 BC, at the treaty of Ampanea, following the defeat of Antiochus III the Great at Thermopylae (191 BC) and Magnesia (190 BC). This would assign a period of about 142 years to Greek domination.

The Roman Empire did not fall until 476 AD, but the vision is unconcerned with events beyond AD 70. The point of the imagery is not when the empires ceased totally to exist, but when their dominion was surrendered to a greater power. Babylon did not cease to exist when conquered by Cyrus in 539 BC. Indeed, it continued until Alexander's time and beyond. So with the rest of the empires mentioned. It is dominion that is at issue, and after AD 70 world dominion belonged firmly to Christ. Thus, the period represented by the legs and feet would be from approximately 188 BC to AD 70, or about 258 years.

With AD 70 as our terminus and the monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar as the beginning, the whole period of the image would be 598 BC – AD 70, or 668

years. We feel that the overall proportion of the images members to the length of the empires they represent bear an overall and important correlation that corroborates this interpretation. Those who attempt to extend the toes down to our modern era find themselves with toes which represent a period approximately four times that of the rest of the body combined. As this would destroy all proportion in the image, it argues against attempts to extend the vision beyond AD 70.

### The Symbolism of the Metals

In his book *The Prophecies of Daniel 2*, my friend John Evans argues that the materials in the image bear an actual, historical relation to the kingdoms they represent. Thus, Babylon was known as the golden city; Persian, he asserts, was known for the silver coinage with which it paid its army; Greece for the bronze prow of its war ships used to ram enemy vessels, and Rome for its use of iron. The clay in the feet and toes, he argues represents the Jews from the time of Roman dominion in Palestine. However, we do not feel John has made his case for historical identity of the materials with the kingdoms they represent. This is particularly true of his assignment of clay for the Jews, for here there is no historical association at all. Rather, he builds his case upon an asserted *Biblical* association.

Jeremiah 18:1-10 contains a parable in which God sent the prophet to the potter. When the pot he was making was marred in the potter's hands, he made it into a new vessel as seemed best to the potter. The incident became an object lesson for Judah that the nation was an earthen vessel in God's hands. Having become marred or ruined by their rebellion and sin, God would remake or destroy Judah as seemed best to him. On this basis, John concludes that the Jews represent the clay in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Obviously, this is not an historical association, but a Biblical one, and therefore incongruent with the hypothesis. More importantly, however, is the fact that the clay in the parable did not represent the Jews to the exclusion of earth's other people and nations. Jeremiah is very clear that the clay in the parable stood for all humanity and the nations of the world in God's hands:

*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them" (Jer. 18:7, 8)*

Thus, the parable is applicable with equal force to all nations, not just the Jews; there is no historical or Biblical association to support the idea that the clay in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents the Jews. But if there is no historical association of clay with any particular nation, then we feel the argument as to the metals is equally invalid. For the rule by which we interpret one we must interpret all. If the historical association does not explain one, it does not explain any. To our mind, the better view is that the metals were chosen for the universal symbolism associated with their glory and value, and that these in turn reflect the nature and quality of the kingdoms these represent.

Gold is the most precious metal. It is a universal symbol of prosperity and wealth. Gold is incorruptible; it does not rust or tarnish. It is used in ornamentation of buildings, art, and the body. Gold is universally sought and accepted as a store of value and a medium of exchange. Silver is more common than gold and is next in value. It too is a symbol of wealth, and is universally employed as a store of value and medium of exchange. Brass has some of the beauty of gold and silver and has been used in coinage, but is of vastly lesser value. Its qualities and appearance are such that it is employed in common instruments and usages where men want to combine both beauty with utility and strength. Iron is the most common metal. It possesses strength and utility, but lacks beauty and other qualities normally associated with glory and splendor. Because iron easily corrupted an overly abundant, it is a poor store of value and is therefore unsuitable as a medium of exchange. Clay is the stuff of common utensils. It is easily molded and formed, and just as easily broken. It possesses the least strength and is the least stable and enduring material, being the most susceptible to spoilage and breakage.

Thus, the image is composed of metals that decline in value and glory even as they descend from the head to the feet. They also decline in permanence and incorruptibility as they increase in abundance and grow more common. Gold is the most esteemed and desired, iron and clay the least of all.

In construction of the tabernacle and temple, this same declension is seen. The nearer to God and the Holy of Holies, the more precious metal was employed. The further from God, the more common metals were used. Thus, gold adorned the ark of the covenant and overlaid the cherubim of glory. A golden censor was used for the golden altar of incense just outside the Holy of Holies (Ex. 37:1-9; II Chron 3:3-11; Heb. 9:4). Silver was used for the lamp stands and tables (I Chron. 28:15-17); brass was used

for the altar of burnt offering and the brazen sea in the courtyard (II Chron. 4:1-5); but the doors and joinings of the outer gates were of iron (I Chron. 22:3). Obviously, this arrangement was based upon the symbolic associations of the metals, so that what was best was placed nearest to God.

Applied to the image, we would suggest that metals and corresponding body parts portray the character and political constitutions of the kingdoms and that they were 1) precious and valued as they gave glory to God, but base and disesteemed as they resisted and opposed him; and 2) glorious and noble the nearer they approximated the absolute monarchy of God and Christ, but inglorious and ignoble as they declined there from.

### **Monarchy, Aristocracy, Republics, & Democracies: The Political Constitutions of the Four World Kingdoms**

In our commentary on Daniel, we take the view that Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon served as something of a foreshadow and type of the sole monarchy of Christ, in the manner Solomon's golden reign did before him. Daniel calls Nebuchadnezzar "king of kings" even as John calls Christ "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Dan. 2:37; Rev. 19:16). God gave Nebuchadnezzar "a kingdom, power, strength, and glory" even as Christ was given a kingdom "power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12; 11:15). Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold (Dan. 2:38) even as Christ is head over his body, the church, and head over all mankind (I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22-23). The sole, absolute monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar is therefore most like the absolute monarchy of the reigning Christ in terms of the glory and power attached to his government. However, as we descend through the image's body, the monarchial power grows more and more attenuated. The Mede-Persian monarchy was not absolute, but offset by its nobles, as seen in their designs against Daniel under Darius the Mede, and the resistance Cyrus, Darius, and Ahasuerus experienced in allowing the Jews to return and rebuild the temple (Dan. 6; 11:1; Ezra 4:5).

The Greeks are known for their devotion to democratic government, which they identified with political liberty. However, history shows that democracy is the most unstable form of government of all, bounded only by the fickle will of the masses. The golden glory of Nebuchadnezzar's sole monarchy was further diminished by the division of the Greco-Macedonian Empire at Alexander's death between the four warring monarchies of Macedonia, Thrace, Syria, and Egypt. Rome is represented by

iron, the most *common* and *corruptible* metal. Rome was a republic, which differs in theory from a democracy in that it is governed by a written law (the “twelve tables”) or constitution. The Roman people trace their descent from the Greeks and therefore abhorred monarchy, and viewed their political liberty as existing in direct administration of the government by the “senate and people.” However, as with the Greeks, Roman history was marred by class antagonisms, parties, and continuous upheaval and civil war. Even during the period of the empire, Rome was still in form, if not in fact, a republic in which the emperor shared power with the senate. Our view is that the legs of iron point to the period of the republic, and that the feet of iron mingled with clay point to the period of the empire and Rome’s direct administration of subject peoples through proconsuls of senatorial rank. The clay is the common mass of humanity and nations of the empire; the iron, Roman rule. The iron and clay do not mix, signifying that the sovereign and subjects exist in mutual antagonism and do not adhere to one another.

The kingdoms of the image thus represent a scale ranging from absolute monarchy (Nebuchadnezzar), to mixed monarchy-aristocracy (Mede-Persian), the divided empire of Alexander (Greece) to democratic and republican governments (Greece and Rome). The glory of sole monarchy, most approximates that of Christ, and is portrayed as the most resplendent by the head of gold, whereas republican government is represented by the common and corruptible metal of iron.

### **The Character and Quality of the Kingdoms**

As it happens, the form of government was also mirrored by the glory they returned to God. Nebuchadnezzar converted and became a worshipper of the Most High God (Dan. 4:37). Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes acknowledged God, released the captives, and gave an order to rebuild the temple, even financing its construction and sacrifices. However, the Greeks and Romans only bruised and crushed God’s people and opposed his worship (not unlike the condition into which America is declining). Ptolemy Philopater entered the temple and attempted to compel the Jews in Alexandria to abandon the worship of God, and to annihilate the race from among his people. Antiochus Epiphanes carried the outrage still further, setting an idol in the Jerusalem temple and defiling the altar with swine’s blood, and persecuting to death the people of God. And Nero carried the outrage to its very height and pitch as the great eschatological persecutor of the church and gospel, whose name was synonymous with the beast. Thus, if the metals reflect the glory

associated with the kingdom’s respective political constitutions, they seem also to bear some relation to the moral condition of their leaders as they embraced or resisted the religion of God.

This is not to say that republics and democracies are invariably bad or opposed to true religion, and that monarchies are invariably good and friends of the gospel. The Greek monarchies that grew up after the death of Alexander were great persecutors of God’s people and cannot be characterized as republics or democracies. Even so, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that governments and cultures that pander to popular will and the universal suffrage of unenlightened masses tend to undo a nation’s morals and institutions, resulting in lawlessness and rebellion to the government of heaven and the gospel of Christ, and that monarchies, because they do not depend upon popular will to rule, can restrain the licentious will of the masses, assuming the rulers so minded. In ancient Israel, the hereditary priesthood of Aaron may have been intended to serve this purpose. However, this philosophical inquiry is beyond the pale of the present discussion and we must hasten ahead.

### **Nature and Timing of the Kingdom**

Many futurist paradigms assume that the kingdom and coming of Christ would be physical and political, ruling over earth’s people’s from Jerusalem. For this paradigm to be valid, the kingdom must be future, for thing anticipated or expected has yet to manifest. Against this view, however, is the immutability of God’s prophetic word, which placed the coming of the kingdom in the days of the Roman Caesars. Jacob’s prophecy to his sons placed the coming of “Shiloh” and the kingly sceptre in Messiah’s hand in the “latter days” (Gen. 49:1,10). Balaam placed the coming of the “Star and Sceptre of Jacob” in the time when Chittim (the Romans) afflicted Eber (the Hebrews) (Num. 24:17, 24). Isaiah tied the coming of the kingdom to the birth of Christ, saying, “unto us a child is born...of the increase of his government there shall be no end” (Isa. 9:6, 7) At his conception, the angel told Mary that God would give him the throne of his father David, and that he would reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Lk. 1:32, 33). Jesus began his ministry with the announcement that the “time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mk. 1:15). He told his disciples “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. 16:26, 27). At the conclusion of his ministry before his ascension, Jesus said “all power in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). He was

given a kingdom, power, and glory (Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 5:12), and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven as co-regent in the government of the world, and now rules the nations with a rod of iron (Acts 2:33; Rev. 2:27). Unless all of this scripture, which cannot be broken, is to be ignored, then we must accept that the kingdom came in the days of the apostles and the rule of the Roman Caesars.

The timing of the kingdom is further corroborated by the ten toes of the feet for these clearly mark the time of the kingdom's coming. We believe the toes are best understood as the ten senatorial provinces created by Augustus Caesar in 27 BC. These provinces were in a settled condition, without legions to defend them. The provinces retained by Augustus were on the borders and required military force to govern. Dio Cassius explains: "His professed motive in this was that the senate might fearlessly enjoy the finest portion of the empire, while he himself had the hardships and the dangers; but his real purpose was that by this arrangement the senators will be unarmed and unprepared for battle, while he alone had arms and maintained soldiers."<sup>4</sup> These ten provinces became a permanent, identifying feature of the empire, weak but distinct among the body's members:

*"In 27 B.C. the provinces had been divided into two classes, Imperial and Senatorial, 'provinciae Caesaris,' and 'provinciae Senatus' or 'populi.'" The latter were ten in number, Africa, Asia, Bithynia, Achaea, Illyricum, Macedonia, Crete and Cyrene, Sicily, Sardinia, and Hispania Baetica...The Imperial provinces in 27 B.C. were Gaul, Syria, Cyprus and Cilicia, and Hispania Citerior. The number was increased subsequently by the division of single provinces into two or more, and by the inclusion of all provinces constituted after 27 B.C., e.g. Moesia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia."*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dio Cassius, LIII, ii-xii; Loeb ed.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Marris Taylor, *A Constitutional and Political History of Rome* (Methuen & Co., London, 1889), 464. "Africa, Numidia, Asia, Greece with Epirus, the Dalmatian and Macedonian districts, Crete and the Cyrenaic portion of Libya, Bithynia with Pontus which adjoined it, Sardinia and Baetica were held to belong to the people and the senate; while to Caesar belonged the remainder of Spain,— that is, the district of Tarraco and Lusitania,— and all the Gauls,— that is, Gallia Narbonensis, Gallia Lugdunensis, Aquitania, and Belgica, both the natives themselves and the aliens among them." Dio Cassius, LIII, xii; Loeb ed.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, use of an image reminds us of an *idol*, which points, first, to the Gentiles and signifies the allotted time of their government and dominion over the world vis-à-vis the people of God; a dominion that would end with the kingdom and coming of Christ; second, use of an idol suggests a specific era in world history. Paul said God "winked at" Gentile worship of idols in other eras, but with the gospel call commands all men everywhere *to repent*, showing that the worship of idols was marked by Christ to be rooted out of the nations and all men called to worship of the true God (Acts 17:22-31). Hence, as idolatry is now largely extinct in the civilized world and few men fall down before images or worship them as gods, the image is plainly seen *not* to reach unto the modern era. Since the kingdom would root these evils out, the kingdom is necessarily come.

The kingdom is the time when world dominion would become Christ's, as depicted by the Stone smiting the image and growing up into a mountain, filling all the earth. We believe that the Stone smote the image in the first century events marked by the destruction of Jerusalem and Roman civil wars. Bishop Lightfoot is put it like this:

*"Whereas the Jews would not own Christ before, for the Son of man, or for the Messiah, then, by the vengeance that he should execute upon them, they and all the world should see an evident sign, that he was so. This, therefore, is called 'his coming,' and 'his coming in his kingdom;' because this did first declare his power, glory, and victory, on that nation that had despised him...not only in the horrid civil wars among the Jews, but also in the great concussions in the Roman empire, in the wars betwixt Otho and Vitellius, and betwixt Vitellius and Vespasian (of which the Roman historians, especially Tacitus, are very large); the like to which, there had not been before, even to the sacking of Rome itself, and the burning of the Capitol."*<sup>6</sup>

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Roman civil wars, the church went on to dominate the world. In the Byzantine empire of the east, Christianity became the very heart of its culture for over 1,000 years. In the west, and more especially England, Christianity was the dominate force in the development of civilization almost from the start.

### Conclusion

The dominion of Christ is firmly established over the earth and he rules the nations with a rod of iron.

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<sup>6</sup> John Lightfoot, *Harmony of the New Testament, The Complete Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 141, 142.

A.D. 1684

THE  
REVELATION of JOHN  
Bishop John Lightfoot

As it will be easily admitted, to place this book last of all the New Testament, because it stands so in all Bibles, so on the other hand it will be caviled at, that I have brought in the writing of hit so soon [viz, AD 66], as before the fall of Jerusalem; since it hath been of old and commonly held, that it was penned in the reign of Domitian, far after these times that we are upon. But the reasons, by which I have been induced thereunto, will appear out of some passage in the book itself, as we go through it.

As God revealed to “Daniel, the man greatly beloved,” the state of his people, and the monarchies that afflicted them, from his own time, till the coming of Christ; so doth Christ to “John, the beloved disciple,” the state of the church, and story in brief, of her chief afflictors, from thence to the end of the world. So that where Daniel ends, the Revelation begins; and John hath nothing to do with any of the four monarchies that he speaketh of, but deals with a fifth, the Roman, that rose, as it were, out of the ashes of those four, and swallowed them all up. [Editor’s note: Lightfoot erroneously believed that Daniel’s four kingdoms reached only to Antiochus Epiphanes and the Greco-Syrian dynasty of the Seleucids, and not to the earthly ministry of Christ or the Romans. This error comes from confounding the little horn in Daniel seven under the fourth empire with the little horn (Antiochus Epiphanes) of Daniel eight, which appeared in the time of the third empire. It also comes from mistakenly identifying the “abomination of desolation” in Daniel 12:13 with that of Daniel 11:35. But as Christ applied the former of these to the fall of Jerusalem, it plainly cannot have reference to Antiochus Epiphanes.]

The composure of the book is much like Daniel’s in this, that it repeats one story over and over again, in varied and enlarged expressions; and exceeding like Ezekiel’s, in method and things spoken. The style is very prophetic, as to the things spoken; and very Hebraizing, as to the speaking of them. Exceeding much of the old prophet’s language, and matter adduced to intimate new stories: and exceeding much of the Jew’s language, and allusion to their customs and opinions, thereby to speak the things more

familiarly to be understood. And as Ezekiel wrote concerning the ruin of Jerusalem, when the ruining of it was now begun, so, I suppose, doth John of the final destruction of it; when the wars and miseries were now begun, which bred its destructions.

REVELATION I, II, III

The three first chapters refer to that present time, when John wrote: and they contain the story of his obtaining this Revelation, and of the condition of the seven churches of Asia at that time, declared in the Epistles directed to them.

John, travelling in the ministry of the gospel up and down from Asia, westward, cometh into the isle Patmos, in the Icarian sea, an Island about thirty miles’ compass: and there, on the Lord’s day, he hath these visions; and an angel interprets to him all he saw.

He seeth Christ, clothed like a priest, podere (see the LXXX in Exod. 28:4), and girded over the paps, as the priests used to be, with the curious girdle. His appearance, full of majesty hand gloriousness, described in the terms of Daniel. Amongst other his divine titles, he is called, “Alpha and Omega,” terms ordinarily used by the Jews (only uttered in their Hebrew tongue) to signify “the beginning and the end, or the first and the last.” “Abraham and Sarah performed all the law from Aleph to Tau.”<sup>7</sup> “He walks in integrity is as if he performed all the law, from Aleph to Tau.”<sup>8</sup>

He directs epistles to be sent to “the seven churches of Asia;” who are “golden candlesticks,” though very full of corruptions (it is not a small thing that unchurches a church); and inscribed to “the angels of the churches.” This phrase translates **שליח צבור** “Sheliach Tsibbor,” the title of the minister in every synagogue, who took care for the public reading and expounding of the law and prophets: and these epistles are sent, accordingly, to the ministers of the

<sup>7</sup> Midr. Tillim, fol. 47. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Marg. Tripl. Targ. In Deut. 28:13.

several churches, that they might be read openly in their congregations.

| There are seven several epistles, to the several churches, dictated immediately and sent by Christ; and another general one from John, to them all, in which he shows that warrant and way of writing those seven.

He terms the Holy Ghost, “the seven spirits,” according to the Jews’ common speech, who, from Isa. 11:2, speak much of “the seven spirits of Messiah.” And, speaking of Christ’s “coming with clouds,”<sup>9</sup> from Dan. 7:13, and from the words of Christ himself,<sup>10</sup> he at once teacheth that he takes at Daniel, and speaks of Christ’s coming and reigning, when the four monarchies were destroyed; and especially referreth to the first most visible evidence of his power and dominion, in coming to destroy his enemies, the Jewish nation, and their city. And here is one reason that induceth me to suppose this book written, before that city was destroyed.

Coming to read the present condition of these Asian churches, in the epistles written to them, we may pertinently think of that saying of Paul, “This thou knowest, that all they that are in Asia, are turned from me;” a great apostasy, of which there is too much evidence in these churches, as also mention of some sad fruits of it, and means and instruments inducing to it. As, 1. Unbelieving Jews, which the Holy Ghost, all along, calls, “a synagogue of Satan;” with these, the church of Smyrna was pestered, and, more especially, Pergamus, where their mischievousness is styled, the very throne, or “seat of Satan;” and where they had murdered Antipas, a faithful martyr already. 2. False apostles and seducers; some that pretended apostolic power and commission, and, it may be, coloured their pretences with magical wonders, that they might act more apostle-like. These the church of Ephesus was trouble with, but had discovered their delusions and found them liars. 3. Other seducers, that, it may be, came not in the demonstration of such devilish power; but answered that, by their horrid devilish doctrines, “the doctrines of the Nicolaitans,” which taught to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. In Thyatira, a woman-seducer cried up this doctrine, a whore and witch, a Jezebel; wherefore, she and her children, that is, her disciples, are threatened to be destroyed by the plague; the vengeance upon the fornicators with Baal-Peor.

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<sup>9</sup> Rev. 1:7

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 24:30

## REVELATION IV, V

Now cometh a second vision. That before, was of “things then being,” but this, and -forward, of “things to come.”<sup>11</sup> “A door opens in heaven, and the voice of a trumpet talking with John,” out of it. The scene of John’s visions, said to be “in heaven,” is according to the scheme of the temple and the divine glory there. And hence you have mention of the altar, candlesticks, sea of glass (the brazen laver made of the women’s looking-glasses), the ark of the covenant, and the like. And as, at the opening of the temple-doors, a trumpet sounded, so is the allusion here. The door in heaven opened, and a trumpet calls John to come in and see what was there. “And immediately he was in the spirit.”<sup>12</sup> Why, was he not in the spirit before?<sup>13</sup> And was he not in the spirit, in seeing the door in heaven opened? &c. But we may observe a double degree in rapture; as inspired men may be considered under a double notion; viz. those that were inspired with prophecy, or to be prophets and to preach, and those that were inspired to be penmen of divine writ, which was higher. John hath both inspirations for revelations to both ends, both in the vision before, and this: then he was in the spirit, and saw the vision; and was in the spirit, and inspired to pen what he saw, and what to be sent to the churches. And, in the first verse of this chapter, he is in the spirit, or hath a revelation; and, in ver. 2, he is in the spirit; and is inspired so as to take impression and remembrance of these things, to write them also. He seeth Christ enthroned in the middle of his church, in the same prophetic and visionary emblem that Ezekiel had seen;<sup>14</sup> and this is a commentary and fulfilling of that scene that Daniel speaketh of.<sup>15</sup> In Ezekiel, the Lord, when Jerusalem was now to be destroyed, and the glory of the Lord that used to be three, and the people were to flit into another land, appeareth so enthroned, as sitting in judgment, and flitting away, by degrees, to another place: as, compare Ezek. I and X, well together. So Christ here; when the destruction of Jerusalem was now near at hand, and his glory and presence to remove from that nation, now given up to unbelief and obduration, to reside among the Gentiles, he is seated upon his throne, as judge and king, with glorious attendance, to judge that nation, for their sins and unbelief, and stating the affair of his church, whither his glory was now removing.

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<sup>11</sup> Chap. iv. 1

<sup>12</sup> Chap. iv. 2

<sup>13</sup> Chap. i. 10

<sup>14</sup> Ezek. 1, and x

<sup>15</sup> Dan. vii, 9, 10, 22

The scheme is platformed according to the model of Israel's camp: 1. The tabernacle was in the middle there; so is the throne here. 2. There, the four squadrons of the camp of Levi next the tabernacle; so here the four living creatures. 3. Then the whole camp of Israel; so here, twenty-four elders, representatives of the whole church, built from twelve tribes, and twelve apostles.

In the hand of him that sat on the throne, was a book, sealed, which no creature could open. This justly calls us back to Dan. Xii ver. 4, where "words are shut up, and a book sealed unto the time of the end," and now, that that is near drawing on, the book is here opened.

## REVELATION VI

The opening of the six seals in this chapter, speaks the ruin and rejection of the Jewish nation, and the desolation of their city; which is now very near at hand.

The first seal, opened,<sup>16</sup> shows Christ setting forth in battle array and avengement against them, as Psalm xliv. 4, 5. And this the New Testament speaketh very much and very highly of; one while calling it, "his coming in clouds;" another while, his "coming in his kingdom;" and sometime, his "coming in power and great glory," and the like. Because his plaguing and destroying of the nation that crucified him, that so much opposed and wrought mischief against the gospel, was the first evidence, that he gave in sight of all the world, of his being Christ; for till then, he, and his gospel, has been in humility, as I may say, as to the eyes of me, he persecuted whilst he was on earth, and they persecuted after him; and no course taken with them, that so sued both; but now he awakes, shows himself, and makes himself known by the judgment that he executeth.

The three next seals, opening, show the means by which he did destroy, namely, those three sad plagues, that had been threatened so oft, and so sore, by the prophets, "sword, famine, and pestilence." For,

The second seal, opened, sends out one upon a red horse, to take peace from the earth, and that men should destroy one another; he carried a "great sword."<sup>17</sup>

The third seal, opening, speaks of famine, when corn for scarcity should be weighed, like spicery, in a pair of balances.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth seal sends out one, on a pale horse, whose name was Death (the Chaldee very often expressth the 'plague,' or "pestilence," by that word מוֹתָא and so it is to be taken, (Rev. ii, 23); and hell, or hades, comes after him.<sup>19</sup>

The opening of the fifth seal, reveals a main cause of the vengeance, namely, the blood of the saints which had been shed, crying, and which was to be required of that generation.<sup>20</sup> These souls are said to cry from under the altar, either in allusion to the blood of creatures sacrificed, poured at the foot of the altars, or according to the Jews' tenet, That "all just souls, departed, are under the throne of glory." Answer to their cry is given, that the number of their brethren, that were to be slain, was not yet fulfilled; and they must rest till that should be; and then avengement in their behalf should come. This speaks suitable to that which we observed lately, that now times were begun of bitter persecution, "an hour of temptation,"<sup>21</sup> the Jews and devil raging, till the Lord should something cool that fury by the ruin of that people. The opening of the sixth seal (ver. 12, 13), shows the destruction itself, in those borrowed terms, that the Scripture useth to express it by; namely, as if it were the destruction of the whole world:<sup>22</sup> the sun darkened, the stars falling, the heaven departing, and the earth dissolved; and that conclusion (ver. 16), "They shall say to the rocks, Fall on us," &c. doth not only warrant, but even enforce, us to understand and construe these things in the sense that we do; for Christ applies these very words to the very same thing, Luke xxiii, 30. And here is another, and, to me, a satisfactory reason, why to place the showing of these visions to John, and his writing of this book, before the destruction of Jerusalem.



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<sup>16</sup> Rev. vi. 2

<sup>17</sup> Ver. 4

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<sup>18</sup> Ver. 5, 6

<sup>19</sup> Ver. 8

<sup>20</sup> Matt. xxiii, 35, 36

<sup>21</sup> Rev. ii, 10, and iii, 10

<sup>22</sup> Matt. xxiv, 29, 30

# How Men Were Saved in the New Testament

“Baptism Doth Also Now Save Us” I Pet. 3:21

	Hear	Believe	Repent	Confess	Baptized
Pentecostians- Acts 2:38	X	X	X		X
Samaritans – Acts 8:12	X	X			X
Simon Magi - Acts 8:13	X	X			X
Eunuch – Acts 8:36, 37	X	X		X	X
Cornelius – Acts 10:47, 48	X	X			X
Lydia – Acts 16:15	X				X
Philippian Jailer – Acts 16:30-33	X				X
Corinthians – Acts 18:8	X	X			X
Ephesians – Acts 19:5	X				X
Saul (Paul) – Acts 22:16	X		X		X

Any attempt to conform the church and gospel to the pattern of teaching we find in the New Testament must place a high premium on baptism as an integral part of the gospel message and means by which men attain salvation in Christ. John was not called the “faith-only-izer” but the “Baptist” or “baptizer.” John came preaching baptism and repentance for remission of sins (Mk. 1:4). During his earthly ministry, Jesus’ disciples overtook John in the numbers they baptized (Jn. 4:1). The Lord’s final instructions to his disciples before he ascended to heaven were that they continue the work of teaching repentance and baptism for remission of sins in his name (Mk. 16:15, 16).

As Preterists, we are attempting to restore to the 21<sup>st</sup> century church the *primitive* faith and teaching of the Lord about eschatology. But what is restored eschatology if we fail to understand the very plan of salvation itself, and how men come to salvation in Christ?



THE TOWER OF HIPPICUS, A FORTIFICATION OF JERUSALEM.