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The "Age to Come" and the Eternal State

by

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The gospels are full of parables and instruction about the "end of the world" or "age" and the world or age "to come." Futurists mistake this "end" as referring uniformly to the end of the *physical cosmos*, and the world "to come" as *heaven*. Preterists often go to the opposite extreme and interpret the "end" exclusively in reference to the end of the *Mosaic age*, and the age or world "to come" in reference to the *Christian age*. Both of these extremes are wrong. In this article, we examine texts referring to the "end" and the age and world "to come" and conclude that the definition must be guided by the context.

End of the Age - "This Generation shall Pass Away"

After his Great Denunciation upon Jerusalem and his announcement that all the righteous blood shed upon

earth would be required of his generation (Matt. 23:34-39), Jesus walked with his disciples to the Mount of Olives. There, his disciples exclaimed upon the beauty of the temple buildings, which could be seen across the way. Jesus responded

"See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24:2).

The disciples then asked him about fulfillment of this prediction. In the account reported by Mark and Luke, the disciples asked only two things: 1) When these things would be and 2) what signs would precede their fulfillment. However, Matthew's account adds two things more: 1) The coming of Christ and 2) end of the "world."

Matt. 24:3	Mark 13:3, 4	Luke 21:7
"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"	"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?"	"And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things and what sign will there be when these things shall be come to pass?"

To read the accounts that follow the disciples' questions, there is no suggestion anything more than the destruction of Jerusalem and similar world-shaking events were in view: The context of all that is reported is almost entirely set in a Judean context and Jesus expressly states that these things would be fulfilled in his own generation.

Matthew 24:24	Mark 13:30	Luke 21:32
"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."	"Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done."	"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."

The fact that the things described would be fulfilled in the disciples' generation shows that the Olivet Discourse is really just an expansion upon the Great Denunciation recorded in Matt. 23, which also expressly limited its dire predictions to that generation. The only reasonable conclusion that follows is that the "end" described was not of the natural world or physical cosmos, but an "age," an "era," or an "epoch" of which Jerusalem's destruction was a part and sign: A world *order* was passing away and would be replaced by another, not the world itself. This is uniformly borne witness to by newer translations, which substitute "age" for "world" in [Matt. 24:3](#):

"What shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the age?"

With this premise in mind, Preterists largely interpret the word rendered "world" or "age" as the *Mosaic age*. Not all Preterists agree that the age should be defined by the Mosaic law and covenant. This writer sees the term in reference to the larger world order and epoch that had endured from the time of man's fall, particularly as this was marked by Gentile dominion and the oppression of God's people. It was the peculiar office of the Messiah to deliver the saints from sin *and* their enemies amongst the world's civil powers. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, thus said:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us...that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Lk. 1:68-75

"Saved from the hand of our enemies." Clearly, deliverance of God's little flock from their oppressors among the world's civil powers was the expectation of every Jew. Unfortunately, many misinterpreted this to mean that the Messiah would be political figure, exercising dominion from an earthly throne. This was not to be: Jesus rules from the right hand of the Majesty in heaven; his kingdom is not of this world.

End of the Age - Kingdom Coming in Power - Wrath upon the Nations

Christ's salvation from sin was fulfilled at the cross; putting his enemies beneath his feet occurred in the coming of his kingdom "in power" within the generation of those then living (Matt. 16:27, 28; II Tim. 4:1), and it was *this* that would mark the end of the age. Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, which had become enemies of Christ and his people, persecuting the church and opposing the gospel, were thus swept away in a larger time of *world-wrath* that put Christ's enemies - Jews and Romans - beneath his feet. This is what Jesus alluded to when he told the Sanhedrin they would see him coming in clouds of wrath against the nation:

"I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Mk. 14:62

This is also the point of John the Baptist's warning that the ax was already laid to the root of the trees and that Christ would thoroughly cleanse his floor:

"And now already the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose far is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but we will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Matt. 3:10-12

As suggested by John's statement that Christ would "gather the wheat into the garner," simultaneous with this harvest of wrath, there was also a harvest of God's people into the eternal kingdom (spiritual realm). There are different views how this harvest or gathering was accomplished; some suppose an actual "rapture" or "translation" occurred. Against this view is the fact that many of the disciples outlived the end of the age, particularly the apostle John, so that the notion of the mass translation of saints lacks historical support. Others spiritualize this gathering, imagining there was some sort of a figurative translation out of the "body of Moses" or "grave of Judaism" into the resurrected body of Christ. This view is contradicted by the fact that the Gentiles were never in the so-called "body of Moses" or "grave of Judaism" but were plainly included in the harvest or gathering (II Thess. 2:1). It is also contradicted by the fact that, by this view the translation out of the "grave of Judaism" equals justification from sin, but justification occurred at the cross, not AD 70, and the epistles make abundantly clear that resurrection from the guilt of sin occurs at conversion (Eph. 2:1-6; Rom. 6:3-6). This writer has thus settled upon the view that the harvest of the righteous at the end of the age refers to the gathering of the saints into the eternal kingdom by martyrdom. Let's look at a couple parables to see if this is not so.

End of the Age - Harvest of the Wicked by Death - Harvest of the Righteous by Martyrdom

The parable of the "tares" provides a good example of Christ's end of age/world instruction. This parable tells the story of a man whose enemy sowed tares (a weed similar in appearance to wheat) in his field. When the workers discovered the tares growing among the wheat, they asked the owner if he wanted them to go and gather them up. The owner answered, no, that both should grow together until the harvest, then they would be sorted: The wheat would be gathered into the garner, but the tares would be gathered up and burned (Matt. 13:24-30). Jesus explained this parable, saying, field was the world; the good seed or wheat were the children of the kingdom; but the tares the children of

the devil; the harvest was the end of the age; the reapers were angels.

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Matt. 13:40-43

This parable, commonly misapplied by futurists to the end of physical cosmos, actually spoke to events Jesus' own generation would witness. The term translated "world" in verse 40, in the Greek, is "aion." This is the root of our word "eon", and signifies a period time, rather than place, an era in history rather than the earth itself. This should be compared with the word "world" in v. 38, which is the Greek term "kosmos," which signifies the physical earth. The "age" extant when Jesus spoke was the pre-Messianic age. The field where the seed was sown is the kingdom or world (cosmos), showing Jesus' dominion over all earth. Wheat requires only a short time to germinate, put on heads, and become dry enough to harvest. The rapidity with which the harvest would follow the sowing of the word by Christ and the apostles is shown the parable in Mark 4:26-29:

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

The Thessalonians thought the time of "gathering" was at hand, but Paul told them that the time was not ripe: that the "man of sin" (Nero Caesar) had not yet appeared on the world scene (II Thess. 2:1-12). However, by the time James wrote, the world scene had changed, and the harvest was close at hand:

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Jm. 5:6-8

Finally, Rev. 14 depicts the harvest at the end of the age. Two groups are portrayed: the wheat is harvested

by Christ and his angels in martyrdom under the beast (Neronean persecution), but the wicked are trodden the winepress of wrath "outside the city" (Jerusalem), the blood and gore running as high as the horses bridles.

Harvest of Righteous - Rev. 14:9-16	Harvest of Wicked - Rev. 14:17-20
"Wheat"	"Grapes of Wrath"
⁹ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,	And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:	¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.
¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.	¹⁹ And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
¹² Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.	²⁰ And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.
¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.	
¹⁴ And I looked, and	

behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

¹⁶And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

These are first century events, fulfilled by AD 70. The persecution under the Nero and the Jews lasted from AD 64-68, represented by the harvest of the "wheat." The Jews' war with Rome lasted from AD 67-70, represented by the harvest or vintage of the wicked. We note that in all these harvest scenarios, both the wicked and just are gathered by physical death. Those who argue that the righteous were actually "raptured" or "translated" concede that the wicked in these parables, and in their actual, historical fulfillment, experienced physical death, and were not "translated" to hell fires without seeing death. How then can it be argued that the righteous departed this life without physical death, but were translated? Both were "gathered" at the same time, in the same harvest. Clearly, the harvest that gathered the one by death equally gathered the other, so that both the wicked and just were harvested by physical death, the one by famine, pestilence, and sword, the other by martyrdom under Nero and the Jews. (For a good example of God's wrath upon Israel in terminology of "harvest," see Isa. 17:4-11; for examples of "gathering" used for God's harvest of the righteous in death, see Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:29, 33.)

No Marriage in the "Age" to Come?

Having established that the pre-Messianic age and its attendant world passed away in the earth-shaking judgments and events of the first century, we can now look at the phrases "this world" (or "age") as distinct from the "world (or "age") to come." An error that Preterists sometimes fall into is the assumption that every occurrence of "this world/age" refers to the pre-

Messianic age, and that the "world/age to come" always refers to the Christian age that replaced it. However, this is clearly wrong and can produce some ridiculous and astonishing results. For example, in Luke 20:3436, in response to the Sadducee's question whose wife the woman who had seven brothers as husband would be in the resurrection, Jesus said:

"The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of 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."

Does this passage refer to the Christian age? A surprising number of Preterists say, Yes. A question recently posted on line, asked:

"Do preterists still believe in marriage? If they do, why, since we are in the eternal kingdom, NOW, where we are neither married or given in marriage, but are like the angels? So, why bother to involve yourselves in trivial earthly matters as marriage?"

This is not the first time I have encountered Preterists struggling with the concept of the eternal state or kingdom and fulfilled eschatology. Don Preston is on record interpreting the "age" in question in reference to the Christian age:

"So, Jesus addressed the heart of the issue, the nature of the kingdom. He said that in the age to come-- the age of the resurrection-- that Torah and Temple would not rule the kingdom, because there would be no marrying and giving in marriage."¹

Others rehearsing this error include William Bell² and Ward Fenely.³ If there is a source for this error it is Max King, who wrote back in 1971:

¹ Don Preston at <http://www.eschatology.org/all-articles-articles-211/37-responding-to-the-critics/895-objection-to-preterism-they-neither-marry-or-are-given-in-marriage>

² "Paul plainly demonstrated that as sons of God in Christ, "...there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," ([Gal.3:27-28](#)). Hence, there is absolutely no possible manner in view of this spiritual "oneness" to get a "twain" of anything to become one flesh as demanded by physical marriages." From an article posted at:

The statement that those in the world to come would neither marry nor be given in marriage is not, as it would appear on the surface, a denial of marriage or physical life in the Christian age. Rather, it has the meaning of Paul's statement that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17). Jesus was not teaching that the citizens of the world to come 'do not marry' anymore than Paul taught that citizens of the kingdom do not eat or drink. The point being debated is the nature of the world that was to come. The 'children of this world' (Jewish) were constituted as such by physical birth, being the fleshly seed of Abraham. Thus, the citizens of 'this world' were propagated by marriage or fleshly procreation. But such would not be true in the world to come (the Christian age). Jesus said those who would be worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, would not do so by physical means or methods. It was not the kind of world that could be entered by flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15:50) . . . 'Neither can they die any more' because they are 'the children of the resurrection,' refers to the spiritual state of redeemed man, and not his physical state."⁴

The error underlying all of these is the assumption that "this age" refers to the pre-Messianic age (or "Mosaic" age by the King/Preston/Bell/Fenely view), and "that age" to the present Christian age on earth. However, the dichotomy is not between the age extant when Jesus spoke versus that which was yet to come. The dichotomy is between *this life* versus the *next life*; *this world* versus *heaven above*. This is clearly seen by the reference to the resurrection.

http://www.preteristarchive.com/Hyper/0000_bell_dea-d-raise.html

³ *"There is neither male nor female, for they are all one in Christ. This corresponds perfectly with Christ's statement that there is no marriage in the kingdom of heaven. We are all one in Christ and there is neither male nor female. His kingdom has nothing to do with this world, for His kingdom is not of this world. Therefore, the fact that there is still marriage in this physical life does not negate the fact that there is not marriage in the kingdom anymore than the fact that there are males and females in this physical life does not negate the fact that there are not males or females in the kingdom."* Ward Fenely at <http://www.eschatology.com/whymarriage.html>

⁴ Max King, Spirit of Prophecy (Warren, OH 1971), pp. 237, 238.

The resurrection under discussion is the eschatological resurrection from Hades. The Sadducees were not quizzing Jesus about some spiritualized "resurrection" equal to justification from sin. They were questioning him about the *actual* resurrection of those that had died *physically* and gone to Hades. The Pharisees' concept of the resurrection was of physical bodies to earthly life, raising the prospect of physical marriage. Hence, the question "whose wife will she be?" Jesus' responded showing that in the resurrection from Hades, men do not return to earthly life, but have spiritual bodies like heavenly angels and, therefore, do not marry. Hence, the resurrection is not out of the "pre-Messianic age" into the Messianic age, but from Hades to heaven above. Thus, the translation of the Authorized (King James) Version is correct in rendering "aion" "world." Strong's agrees, and says that "world" is a correct rendering as determined by the context:

(#165) **Aἰών** "an age; by exens. *perpetuity* (also past); by impl. the *world*; spec. (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future)."

Another example where "aion" is correctly translated "world" is Matt. 13:22, where the seed of the word is choked by the deceitfulness of riches and the "*care of this world (Gk. aion)*." Is the word choked only by the care of the pre-Messianic age? Is that Jesus' meaning? Of course it is not. Clearly, "aion" in this context can only mean *this life and world*. A parallel verse is Tit. 2:12:

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world (aion)".

Were the saints to live righteously only in the pre-Messianic age and not the duration of their whole sojourn beneath the sun? Their whole sojourn, of course! In Mark 10:28-31, Peter asked Jesus what their reward would be, saying, "we have left all, and followed thee." Jesus responded:

"Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world (aion) to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."

Is it Jesus' intention to say that those who sacrifice "in this time" (the pre-Messianic age) will receive everlasting life in the Christian age that was to come?

Of course it is not. His purpose is to say that those who sacrifice during *earthly life*, will be recompensed in the *life to come* in the resurrection of the just *in heaven* above. Clearly, these passages show that the term "aion" sometimes means "world" as distinguished from heaven and the life to come.

Survey of Passages Containing "aion"

Here follows a table of passages containing the word "aion." We have sorted the passages by whether the term is best understood as pointing to the "pre-Messianic age" versus the Christian age, or this "world" versus the "next world (heaven)." Admittedly, some passages are debatable and can be argued both ways.

Matthew

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
Matt. 13:40 - "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world."	Matt. 12:32 - "And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Cf. Mk. 3:28-30; Lk. 12:10)
This verse points to the end of age then passing; not the cosmos or world of men.	The terror of this verse supposes "world to come" points to the eternal doom in the resurrection of damnation. Hence, we judge that "aion" is correctly translated "world" in this verse and points to the next life.
Matt. 13:49 - "So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just."	Matt. 13:22 - "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he
Like the preceding verse, this passage describes the time of wrath that would mark the end of the pre-Messianic age when the existing course of the world was irrevocably changed.	
Matt. 24:3 - "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when	

<p>shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?"</p> <p>The course of the world that had obtained from the time of mankind's fall passed in the world-events that witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and wrath upon the Roman Empire, as Jesus put his enemies beneath his feet and began ruling the nations in righteousness.</p> <p>Matt. 28:20 - "Teaching them to observe all thing whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."</p> <p>This verse can be debated both ways. Given the context and the fact Jesus is speaking to the apostles, the better view probably is that his is affirming he will be with them and carry them through the tribulation and persecutions that attended the end of the pre-Messianic age.</p>	<p>becometh unfruitful." (Cf. Mk. 4:19)</p> <p>We have already discussed this verse, above. The "care of this world" points to the cares of this life, not the pre-Messianic age.</p>	
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Mark

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	<p>Mk. 4:19 -"And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."</p> <p>See comment at Matt.</p>

	<p>13:22</p> <p>Mk. 10:30 - "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."</p> <p>The contrast here is between the sacrifices made during our earthly sojourn and the recompense we will receive in the resurrection of the just in heaven above.</p>
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Luke

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	<p>Lk. 1:70 - "As he spake by the mouth of his prophets, which have been since the world began."</p> <p>The prophetic gift has been with men from the very beginning of the creation, and not just from the time of Moses. Jude 14 says that even Enoch, who lived before the flood, prophesied of Christ. There is simply no basis to limit <i>aion</i> here to any period less than the beginning of creation.</p> <p>Lk. 16:8 - "And the lord commanded the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of</p>

	<p>light."</p> <p>The contrast here is between "children of light" and "children of the world," the latter of which does not seem properly limited to children of the pre-Messianic age, and therefore must be taken in the general sense of natural, unregenerate men of this world.</p> <p>Lk. 18:30 - "Who shall receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come life everlasting."</p> <p>See comment at Mk. 10:30</p> <p>Lk. 20:34, 35 - "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage."</p> <p>This passage involves a discussion of those that are raised from physical death, and goes on to explain that the children of the resurrection are equal to angels. This clearly signifies that the "world to come" is not the Christian age, but heaven itself. For it is then, and not before, that we enter the eternal state and are clothed upon with immortality.</p>
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John	
"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	<p>Jn. 9:32 - "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind."</p> <p>It cannot reasonably be maintained that the speaker has less in view than the whole period from the beginning of creation. Hence, <i>aion</i> here is properly rendered "world."</p>

Acts	
"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	<p>Acts 3:21 - "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."</p> <p>"Since the world began" can have no other meaning than "from the beginning of creation." Aion is therefore properly rendered "world" in this context.</p>
	<p>Acts 15:18 - "Known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world."</p> <p>Does God know all his works from the beginning of creation, or only some lesser period beginning with Moses? From the beginning of creation, of course.</p>

Romans

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	<p>Rom. 12:2 - "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."</p> <p>Although <i>aion</i> here is susceptible of meaning "this era or time" in which the speaker lived, his intention is not merely to condemn the manners of his own age, but the world as disconnected from Christ without regard to the time in which men live. Hence, "world" gives the proper sense and meaning, where "age" would not.</p> <p>Rom. 16:25 - "...according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept secret since the world began."</p> <p>See comments at Jn. 9:32 and Acts 3:21.</p>

longer each day, we must understand "aion" in relation, not to the cosmos, but the pre-Messianic world-course or age that was then passing away as Christ took up his rule from the right hand of God.

it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

"Aion" occurs three times in this passage. In each case world gives the better sense, for the things Paul describes belong to the world and not to any particular age.

I Cor. 2:6-8 - "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Specific reference to the rulers who crucified Christ tempts us to interpret "aion" in reference to the pre-Messianic age.

However, the hidden wisdom (the gospel), which God ordained before the "aion," has the meaning of "before creation." Hence the prevailing thought is the absence of wisdom in the natural man of this world, which is alienated from God and at enmity with him, and therefore did not recognize Christ, but slew him; qualities that belong to the world in

I Corinthians

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
I Cor. 10:11 - "Now all these things happened unto them for ensample: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."	I Cor. 1:20 - "Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God,

	<p>general and not to any particular age.</p> <p>I Cor. 3:18 - "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."</p> <p>Here again the prevailing thought is worldly wisdom versus spiritual wisdom, not the wisdom of any particular age.</p> <p>I Cor. 8:13 - "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, let I mane my brother to offend."</p> <p>Would Paul begin eating meat after the pre-Messianic age passed, or is the meaning that he would not eat while the world exists? The latter to be sure.</p>
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II Corinthians

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	<p>II Cor. 4:4 - "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."</p> <p>The "god of this world" is not a supernatural demonic being, but the spirit of those that are carnally minded, who</p>

	<p>follow the things of the flesh and are at enmity with the things of the Spirit and of God. This spirit (the "spirit of the power of the air" - Eph. 2:2) is the prevailing mindset of unregenerate men and, hence, keeps all men who seek not God under its thrall. Since this spirit exists in every age and generation, it will not do to translate "aion" "age," for it is the spirit of the world, and not any particular age.</p>
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Galatians

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	<p>Gal. 1:4 - "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."</p> <p>This one can be argued both ways. Most Preterists would argue that the "Mosaic" age is here in view, and would point to the context of the letter, which argues against keeping the law, as evidence supporting this interpretation. But where the phrase "this present world" occurs elsewhere, the context clearly shows that this world is in view, and not merely a particular age (II Tim. 4:10; Tit. 2:12). Jesus died to open the way to heaven for us and deliver us from the bondage of sin and death that rules this world (Rom. 5:14, 21).</p>

Ephesians

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
Eph. 3:21 - "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus through out all ages, world without end. Amen."	Eph. 1:21 - "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."
The literal Greek here is "throughout all generations of the age of the ages." The Christian age is the age of the ages; the age to which all others were tending and which will last so long as earth endures.	The contrast appears to be between the powers and authorities of this world over against the next world, and not merely Christ's exalted status in the pre-Messianic and Christian ages on earth.
	Eph. 2:7 - "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."
	This verse seems to speak in anticipation of the resurrection, and the ages to come in heaven where we will live as sons of the living God.
	Eph. 3:9 - "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."
	"Beginning of the world" can only mean beginning of creation, not the Mosaic age.

I Timothy

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	I Tim. 6:17 - "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

II Timothy

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	II Tim. 1:9 - "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his won purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."
	I Tim. 4:10 - "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."

Here "present world" looks to earthly life, not the pre-Messianic age.

II Timothy

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World
	Tit. 1:2 - "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

The promise of man's salvation was purposed in the mind of God

	<p>before the creation.</p> <p>Tit. 2:12 - "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and world lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."</p>	
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Hebrews

"aion" as pre-Messianic or Christian Age	"aion" as this World or the next World		
<p>Heb. 9:26 - "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world ("kosmos"): but now once in the end of the world ("aion") hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."</p> <p>The literal Greek here is "now once in the consummation of the ages." The meaning is not the end or terminus of the ages, but their fulfillment and completion in Christ. Christ appeared at the very apex of history to consummate God's salvific purpose by death upon the cross. His second appearing (v. 28) would be to put his enemies beneath his feet and thus bring salvation to his persecuted flock (see comments under Heb. 6:5).</p> <p>Heb. 11:3 - "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen, were not made of things</p>	<p>Heb. 1:2 - "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."</p> <p>Unlike Heb. 11:3 where "worlds" is better understood as redemptive "ages," "worlds" here seems to point to the creation, which God accomplished in Christ through the Spirit before he was clothed upon with flesh (Jn. 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Gen. 1:1).</p> <p>Heb. 6:4, 5 - "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open</p>	<p>which do appear."</p> <p>"Worlds" here is probably best interpreted "ages" and points to the various ages of God's redemptive purpose, which were framed (ordained) by the word and decree of God, the fullness of their purpose being Christ.</p>	<p>shame."</p> <p>"Powers of the world to come" seems to look to powers possessed by angels, which were foretasted by those who were "partakers of the Holy Ghost." Most Preterists (and Christians in general) are agreed that the <i>charismata</i> belonged only to the era of the prophets and the closing days of the pre-Messianic age, and have today ceased. Hence, the powers of the age to come cannot have in view the Christian age, since the gifts of the Holy Ghost do not belong to the present time.</p> <p>Another passage worth considering, but which uses a different word, is Heb. 2:5: "For he has not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." The word here is "oikumene," which means the "inhabitable earth" or "world." The idea behind this verse is that the government of the world has not been committed to angels, but to Christ, under whose feet God has placed all things. The writer says in verse 8, "But now we see not yet all things put under him," signifying the fact that the kingdom had not yet come in power, crushing Jesus' enemies among the Jews and Romans. But his imminent return in judgment and wrath to deliver his persecuted</p>

	<p>people is the promise of the epistle. "For yet it is a very little while and he that is coming will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). Thus, although the "oikumene to come" is co-terminus with the Messianic age in which Jesus rules the nations with a rod of iron, and in some ways thus belongs to the other column, "oikumene" looks to the <i>place</i> or <i>thing</i> under Christ's subjection, rather the age or time when it accrued, and must therefore be translated "world" and placed here.</p>
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Summary & Conclusion

The "end of the age" announced in the gospels refers to the "pre-Messianic age." The world-events that marked its conclusion, and the beginning of the reign of Christ from the right hand of God, included the destruction of Jerusalem, wrath upon the Roman Empire, and harvest of the saints by martyrdom. However, not all occurrences of the word "aion" refer to this end; in fact, the majority do not, but refer instead to the world and time of life beneath the sun.

Lunar Dates the Annual Commemoration of Christ's Death, Burial, and Resurrection

Good Friday marks the annual commemoration of Christ's crucifixion. The following Sunday marks the annual celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead, originally called the "Pascha" but now commonly known as "Easter." Last year celebration of the "Easter" fell on April 8th. This year it is March 31st. Why the change?

Unlike today when we use a solar calendar, ancient peoples utilized a lunar calendar (no need for paper

calendars, just watch the moon). A solar year is measured by the annual circuit of the earth around the sun, with months 30 and 31 days long (except February, which normally has 28). The months in a solar calendar occur regardless of the phases of the moon.

A lunar calendar, however, is based upon phases of the moon. The moon's cycles are approximately 29 1/2 days long, with the full moon occurring the evening of the 14th day of the lunar month. (Because of the half day, months in a lunar calendar are alternated between 29 and 30 days long).

The 14th day of the lunar month following the vernal equinox was the date of the Jewish Passover (Greek "Pascha"). This date commemorated the Jews' liberation from Egyptian slavery. As it happens, in AD 33 Passover fell on a Thursday; this is the day Jesus was arrested; he was crucified the following day (Friday), the 15th day of the lunar month, and rose from the dead the third day following (Sunday morning). Easter/Pascha is therefore celebrated the first Sunday following the full moon on or after the vernal equinox. Thus, the phase of the moon is the operative factor.

Because the lunar month is only 29 1/2 days long, twelve lunar months equal only 354 days; but the solar year is 365 days - 11 days difference. Because of the 11 day difference, dates marked on a lunar calendar have no fixed relation to the solar year. The full moon following the vernal equinox occurred Tuesday evening, March 26th this year, but the full moon following the vernal equinox will occur the week of April 20th next year.

Thus, the date of Easter (and Good Friday) changes from year to year because they are based upon the synchronization of three events: 1) the vernal equinox, 2) the full moon and 3) the first day of the week following.



Questions from our Readers

Q: What scripture(s) do you use to show that Satan is no longer active – that Christ triumphed over Satan. Satan is still active when Paul wrote to the Ephesians (Eph. 4:27, and 6:11) Thanks.

A: That depends upon your definition of "Satan." Satan means "an adversary."

The first time the word occurs it is actually used of the angel of the Lord opposing Balaam (Num. 22:22). A word study on "adversary" and will show that the word Satan is translated "adversary" many times and is often applied to mere men or nations.

In Rom. 16:20, "Satan" refers to the persecutors, probably the Jews opposing the gospel and making life miserable for believers. Col. 2:14, 15 says Jesus triumphed over "principalities and powers" in his cross, but it is difficult to say with any certainty what those principalities and powers were (sin and death, a supernatural demonic being, what?).

I personally do not believe in a supernatural demonic being, and generally understand Satan in reference to persecutors, or to the temptation that arises in our flesh and our own fallen nature. I believe that the "adversary" is still active today, since we are still subject to temptation and persecution can and does sometimes break out. Also, when governments set themselves up as enemies of the gospel and basic biblical morality, they become an adversary ("Satan") vis-a-vis Christ and the church.

Hope that helps.

Q: Hello Kurt,

I am very pleased to advise your monthly Sword & Plow editions are now received every month without exception! Thank you.

This message is to seek your explanation for clarity about Paul's words in 1 Thess. 4: 16,17, where he says in verse 17, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them..." Understanding that Greek is without punctuation, the passage would appear to suggest that the "Then" of this passage meant that Paul and the population of believers alive on earth would be translated to heaven immediately after the resurrection of the righteous dead from Hades.

Although I do not believe this to be the meaning, where is the proof that Paul is informing his readers that "we who are alive and remain" refers to those who would be "caught up" individually upon physical death over time. Then how should we understand "caught up together with them."

A: Thanks for the question; it is an important one.

As you note, the word "then" seems to indicate an essentially simultaneous rapture/translation of the living to heaven at the resurrection of the dead. However, the word "then" merely shows *sequence of events*, not proximity of time. For example, "I was born and grew up in such-and-such a city, then went to college." Here we have a sequence of events, but they span a long period of time.

The assumption most people make is that the two events (resurrection and translation) are simultaneous, but this assumption is not required or supported by the text. The assumption that the two are simultaneous is necessitated to some degree by the also incorrect idea that the earth would be burned up and destroyed at Christ's return. However, as we know from many Old Testament examples (Isa. 13, 34, etc.), apocalyptic language of conflagration and a collapsing universe at times of national or world judgment ("Days of the Lord"), are poetic and metaphoric, not literal. Hence, people would survive the return of Christ in AD 68-70 (we are living proof), and the idea of a simultaneous rapture/translation is not logically required.

Parenthetically, the assumption of a simultaneous rapture/translation of the living at Christ's return was current in John's day, but the apostle totally disallowed the belief he would be translated and thus not die (Jn. 21:19-213). Jesus himself said some would not taste of death UNTIL they had seen the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Matt. 16:27, 28). UNTIL shows that they would survive the event and experience natural deaths.

Since all Preterists (and many futurists) believe we now go directly to heaven at death, it seems clear that the "then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up" would have to include person like you and I (how else are we going to get to heaven?). This is confirmed by Paul in II Cor. 5:6-9, where he says that to be "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." In sum, the word "then" shows only *sequence of events*, not proximity in time; the idea of a simultaneous translation is nowhere supported by scripture.

That leaves the question about the meaning of being "caught up together with them." The assumption here again is simultaneous translation. But this is not required by the language. If we say that "So-and-so got caught up in a political movement together with various other persons" we say NOTHING about space of time embraced between the events. Some people joined the Tea Party movement at its inception in 2008; others are just coming on board now. Both are "caught up together" in the movement, even though separated by many years. In other words, "together" signifies the *place of destination*, not the time of catching up.

This understanding of I Thess. 4:16, 17 means that we MUST also understand that the "change" of I Cor. 15:51-53 is not simultaneous, and that MORE THAN ONE TRUMPET is contemplated by the text. The passage says that "we shall be changed in a twinkling of an eye AT THE LAST TRUMPET. But this change/translation seems to be simultaneous with the resurrection of the dead, also marked by a trumpet sound. *But they are not the same trumpet.* The translators ASSUME that they are the same trumpet, and so mistranslate the Greek. But a close reading of the Greek will show that they are NOT the same trumpet. As literally written, the text says:

"We shall be changed at THE (definite article) last trumpet. For A (indefinite article) trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed."

Thus, the same sequence we find in I Thess. 4:16, 17 occurs here: The dead are raised, then (later) we are changed. But the translators, assuming the same trumpet is meant and that the change is simultaneous with the resurrection from Hades, mistranslate the passage and use the DEFINITE ARTICLE for the second trumpet, even though the text has no article at all! This makes the passage seem to teach that the change is simultaneous to the resurrection and that only one trumpet is contemplated by the text. But the indefinite article in reference to the trumpet that marks the resurrection shows that it is NOT the same as the last trumpet that calls each of us out of this world at death. Thus, we are changed (one by one) as we are called out of this world by the last trumpet marking our natural death, but the dead were raised by the trumpeting of the Archangel (Christ) when he descended at his return in AD 70. These were/are not the same trumpet.

Hope that helps.

Q: Kurt, Would you consider the following statement to be accurate?

"The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 HAD to take place. Jesus prophesied it would take place during that then-living generation's lifetime (Matthew 24:34). It was a moral necessity because of their sins. But more than that, it MUST have come to pass, because if it didn't, it would make Jesus a false prophet, and our salvation would have been void. In this way the redemption in Christ, though effective at the cross, became 'official' or 'completed' in AD 70."

Thanks in advance.

A: I don't think I would be able to endorse that statement entirely. I don't believe AD 70 added anything to the cross, or can fairly be said to have "completed" or made our redemption "official".

The events of AD 68-70 represented Jesus' taking up his reign - his world dominion - from the right hand of God in heaven, and putting his enemies beneath his feet. Jesus' coming saved his people and redeemed them out of the hand of their persecutors (Lk. 21:28; Heb. 9:27, 28; I Pet. 1:5-7). These events had been prophesied and their fulfillment authenticated Jesus' claim that he was the Messiah. More than this, because Jesus was God, they could not fail to be fulfilled. Even so, they added nothing to the cross or to our redemption from sin. These things were complete in their totality at the cross (the veil of separation was rent in twain at Jesus' death - Matt. 27:51); they were witnessed to by the apostles, miracles (Holy Ghost), and the historical events of AD 68-70, but these added nothing to them or in any way completed them.

Hope that helps.

Q: Hi Kurt, can you help me please, about this - "salvation was accomplished on the cross, but the end of age was consummated on 70 with the destruction of the temple, am I right Kurt?

A: Salvation, redemption, atonement - everything - to do with conquering sin occurred at the cross. See Col. 2:14 - "triumphing over them (sin, death, etc) in it (the cross)." AD 70 had nothing to do with salvation from sin, redemption or atonement. The OT law also ended at the cross ("the priesthood being changed, there is of necessity a change also in the law" Heb. 7:12; cf. Eph. 2:15). The legal termination of the mosaic age occurred at the cross, though the outward forms of Judaism lingered for a while, finally being taken away in AD 70. So, yes, the end was concluded in AD 70.

Fulfilled Eschatology and Christianity Today

"Preterism seems to apply everything to AD 70 - does anything apply to us today? How should Preterists be living out a fulfilled eschatology?"

What Applies?

People coming to preterism sometimes find the idea of an unknown or unwritten future troubling. Perhaps they come from a church background that teaches members to live in a state of heightened expectation of the imminent, cataclysmic end of the cosmos. Perhaps they have been taught, like so many today, to live in anticipation of a coming world "antichrist," time of "great tribulation" and "rapture." Perhaps they have been taught that the second coming is the one great hope the Christian lives for. Now, learning that these are all past events, the lack of prophetic expectation leaves them feeling strangely awkward and empty, as if without these things to look forward to their Christianity is somehow anti-climatic.

This sort of experience is not unusual. Whenever we have a shift of paradigms there is a period of adjustment. We feel a certain discomfort as we experience change. But as we learn to correct our hopes and expectations to match our new understanding, we quickly find ourselves at home with the truth. Also, it is important to remember that Christianity is not about the "end of the world," but about changed lives, obedience to God, and loving our fellow man. The day to day stuff of Christianity is of a much more mundane and practical nature than the stuff of "Left Behind" and televangelism, but it is also much more meaningful and rewarding. The change may take a little getting used, but it is worth it.

Still, the question remains: What applies to us today, and what does not, and how are Christians to live in light of fulfilled eschatology?

The Moral Law

The moral laws of God are timeless; they applied in the garden; they applied under the patriarchs; they were codified under the mosaic law, and they apply now under the gospel era. Fornication, adultery, murder, covetousness, hate, greed, theft, over-reaching, these have always been and always will be against the law of God. The passing of the mosaic law and temple ritual had no affect on these whatever. Christians must live within the bounds and mandate of the moral law if they would be saved: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap

corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7, 8).

The Law of Sin and Death

We are not saved by the subtraction of law, but the addition of grace. The law of sin and death was present in the garden ("in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" Gen. 2:17), it was present under the patriarchs, it was present under Moses, and it is present today. Sin is transgression of God's law; every commandment of God has the law of sin and death annexed. Christians have grace as long as they attempt to live obedience to the law of Christ. John says there are "sins unto death" and there are "sins not unto death" (I Jn. 5:16). Presumptuous sin, sin that is willful and deliberate, hating our brother, sexual immorality, abandoning the faith, denying Christ, neglecting our own salvation, these are sins unto death. We find grace for these only as we repent of them and turn again to Christ. Lesser sins, unavoidable sins of our fallen nature, are covered by the blood of Jesus as we live in obedience to his gospel. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I Jn. 1:7).

Christian Ordinances and Sacraments

Some have supposed that the New Testament ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper terminated at the eschaton. We believe this sort of teaching is dangerously mistaken.

Baptism is an essential teaching of the gospel. Jesus' last commandment before his ascension was that the disciples continue the work of preaching baptism and remission of sins in his name. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:15, 16). Paul was told to wash away his sins by evoking the Lord's name in baptism: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Peter said "baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet. 3:21). Paul called baptism the "circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11, 12). We are "buried by baptism into Christ's death" (Rom. 6:3-6). In baptism, we are made the seed of Abraham and heirs of eternal life: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in

Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).

These and other verses show that baptism is an ordinance or sacrament by which we enter a covenant relationship with God. As the New Testament is still in force, so is the ordinance of baptism.

Similarly, the Lord's Supper is a permanent feature of the New Testament economy. Jesus said "This do in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19). Paul characterized the Lord's Supper as a "participation" in the body and blood of Christ: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (I Cor. 10:16, 17). Therefore, communion is a participation in the body and blood of Christ; it renews the blood of the covenant we first encountered in repentance and baptism. This makes communion serious stuff! Of course, communion is not a participation in the actual body and blood of Christ; we do not believe in the doctrine of "transubstantiation." However, the bread and fruit of the vine are deemed Christ's body and blood in *contemplation of law*, and therefore to be approached only by believers, with appropriate reverence and discernment. It was for lack of sufficient reverence and discernment that Paul said that many of the Corinthians were sick and fallen asleep (died).

Promised Inheritance

Preterism teaches that the redemption of man is complete; that the world is firmly beneath the government of Christ, who rules the nations with a rod of iron. The last enemy, Hadean death, has been destroyed; our loved ones who have gone before us are now in heaven, not waiting in Hades for resurrection day. Preterism teaches that Christians today live in present glory of divine adoption as sons and daughters of God; we are citizens of heaven, and enjoy the hope and assurance of eternal inheritance at physical death.

Heaven has always been the ultimate hope and purpose of the saints. Unlike Jehovah's Witnesses and Postmillennialists, like Kenneth Gentry and Keith Mathison who believe that our eternal state is on a "material new creation," the Bible teaches that our inheritance is in heaven above. Abraham and the patriarchs looked to the heavenly reward: "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 from them a city" (Heb. 11:16). Peter says we have been called "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Pet. 1:4). Jesus said that

in the resurrection we will be "as angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 2:30).

The Last Trump?

I have come recently to see I Cor. 15:51, 52 in a new light.

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

I have given the verse here as it occurs in the Greek, substituting "the trumpet shall sound" (definite article) with "a trumpet shall sound" (indefinite article). The translators apparently assumed that "the last trump" is identical with the trumpet that would call forth the dead from Hades and substituted the definite article for the indefinite. But the assumption is not necessarily sound; the Greek distinguishes between the last trump that marks the change of the living, and the trumpet that would mark the resurrection of the dead. In the past, I have always assumed they were the same trumpet, which meant that the "change" occurred simultaneously with the resurrection. However, the fact or possibility that the trumpets are not the same means that the "change" need not have occurred in AD 70, but happens as a process over time as individual saints one by one are called from this life. This is my understanding of I Thess. 4:17, where Paul says that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air." That is, the saints were not caught up simultaneously at the trump of God marking the resurrection of the dead, but in a process over time as individual saints pass from this life. Adjusting our thinking about the trumpets to allow for more than one allows for the harmonization of these two texts.

If this is correct, then there is a last trump for *each of us* that will call us from this world to the next, and each of us should be so living as to be acceptable to the Lord when called before him.

Conclusion

Fulfilled eschatology does not change how we live or the essence of the Christian hope. Rather than being distracted with sensational ideas of a coming "antichrist" and "great tribulation" or "rapture," we can live daily life and plan for tomorrow in consciousness of our heavenly hope and goal.