



The Sword & The Plow

Newsletter of the Bimillennial Preterist Association

Vol. XIX, No. 6 – June 2016

Commentary on Matthew

Chapter Five

(vv.1-11)

Kurt Simmons

(Editor's note: I get a lot of questions about when my commentary on Matthew will be published. Unfortunately, several other projects have caused me to put it on the back burner temporarily. Lord willing, I will be able to turn attention to it again soon. Meanwhile, I will try to publish parts of it here from time to time.)

1 – And seeing the multitudes,

Viz., those mentioned in Matt. 4:24, 25, who had heard his fame and came from the surrounding region bringing their sick and lame to be healed, and followed him about.

he went up into

We are not told why the presence of the multitudes prompted the Lord to ascend a mountain, but are left to infer the reason from the surrounding circumstances. Taken in isolation, Matthew's account suggests that the Lord sought an advantageous place to teach, perhaps where there was an empty place or natural amphitheater that would facilitate the audience hearing him. However, read in conjunction with Mark and Luke, we find that the Lord repaired to the mountain with some of his disciples where he spent night in prayer, and the following morning "ordained twelve to be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mk. 3:13, 14; Luke 6:12-49). Hence, it appears

that Jesus ascended the mountain in preparation for choosing the twelve. However, not being able to hide, the multitude found him the next day, when he then delivered the Sermon on the Mount (*cf.* Matt. 15:29).

a mountain:

The translators have rendered this “a mountain,” *viz.*, no special mountain, just one near the place they were at. However, the Greek uses the definite article to opoj “the mountain,” seeming to signify a distinct mountain; *viz.*, one that was familiar to the disciples (*cf.* Matt. 15:29-39). Tradition assigns this to *Karn Hattin* (the “Horns of Hattin”), the only height rising above the hills surrounding the shores of Lake Gennesaret, about five miles to the west. This mountain is named for the village now at its base and for the two horns that crown its summit, separated by a level place in between, which could have accommodated the multitudes that followed Christ. It also corresponds with Luke’s description of a level place or plain (τοπουπεδινου) where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered (Lk. 6:17).



Karn Hattin, traditional location of the Sermon on the Mount

and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.

Luke says that when he had chosen the twelve, “he came down with them, and stood in the plain” where there was a company of his disciples and a great multitude, and thus proceeded to teach them (Lk. 6:17). Sitting was the traditional posture assumed for teaching, and was therefore a sign for the disciples to gather around to receive instruction.

2 – And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest single lesson ever delivered. It consists of only about 2,600 words and was delivered extemporaneously. Yet, its depth and profundity can scarcely be fathomed, or its treasure exhausted. The sermon stands in testimony to the Lord’s divinity and the inspiration of the scriptures, for such words could not otherwise have issued from the mouth of man.

The Beatitudes

Verses three through twelve contain what are commonly called the “beatitudes,” from the Latin *beatus* (happy, blessed) and *tudo* (a suffix indicating a state or condition). The word rendered “blessed” is not ευλογημενιοι (blessed by God, Matt. 25:34), but μακαριοι (happy, blessed) – “If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them” (Jn. 13:17).

3 - Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This verse is the first of several pronouncing conditions or circumstances “happy” that are normally deemed undesirable or bad. The world measures happiness by the external conditions of this life; the spiritual man gauges happiness by the inward condition of the soul. The present life is but fleeting and external circumstances are subject to alteration. True happiness can only be realized inwardly, in the spirit, where man meets with God, and humble subjection to his will carries the joy of a clear conscience and the promise of eternal reward. However, the poor are not inherently virtuous, nor does poverty recommend us to God. But, when mixed with faith, poverty fosters humble dependence upon God, which is advantageous to man’s salvation. “*Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth*” (1 Tim. 5:5, 6). Indeed, the gospel’s appeal is such that the poor are more apt to respond than the rich: “*Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*” (Jm. 2:5; *cf.* Rev. 2:9). This is not to say material wealth is inherently evil. It is to say, however, that wealth tends to foster worldliness, to blunt spiritual zeal, and to distract us from pursuit of heaven, and is therefore generally disadvantageous. “*But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*” (1 Tim. 6:9). The care of the world and deceitfulness of riches are among the things Jesus said “choke the word,” rendering it unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). Thus, where the world loathes poverty, scripture teaches us to view it favorably, as helping to cast us upon God and to place our treasure in things

above. Even so, in the final analysis it is not to external circumstances or worldly poverty that the Lord here refers when he mentions the poor, but to the poor *in spirit*; to those who feel inwardly the desolation of the soul apart from God; to those impressed with their mortality and their utter lack of self-sufficiency; to those who see themselves as so completely devoid of spiritual merit that they can do no more than smite upon their breasts and say “God be merciful to me the sinner” (Lk. 18:13). This sort of poverty can be felt even by the rich. Solomon, at life’s end, having surveyed the greatness of his wealth and possessions, declaimed the poverty of riches, saying, “*All was vanity and vexation of spirit*” (Eccl. 2:11), and there was nothing better than to “*fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man*” (Eccl. 12:13). For the poor of this description, Christ promises the kingdom of heaven as their abiding possession. Cf. Matt. 11:5 – “*The poor have the gospel preached to them.*”

4 - Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Those that mourn must necessarily include the poor in spirit (v. 3). To feel the soul’s desolation; to understand man’s inherent fallenness and moral depravity; to suffer the pangs of conscience, and shame and mortification for sin is to mourn one’s hopeless estate. However, it was the Messiah’s special mission to “comfort all that mourn” by proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, and that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself:

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.” Isa. 61:1-3

The historical context of these verses and those that follow (Isa. 61:6-9) looked to the return from the Assyrio-Babylonian captivity (“*they shall build the old wastes, and they shall raise up the former desolations*” – v.4). The return of the captives from the Assyrio-Babylonian captivity, like the exodus from Egypt before it, was but a prophetic type anticipating the salvation of the Messiah. The captives languishing under bondage to sin would be saved by the cross of Christ. Christ comforts those that mourn by

proclaiming remission of their sins and sending the Comforter into their hearts, the Spirit of adoption, testifying that they are sons of God and heirs of eternal life.

5 - Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Isaiah’s prophecy that Christ would comfort those who mourn for their sins, also says that Christ was anointed to preach “good tidings to the meek” (Isa. 61:1). The meek are the little flock of God; the gentle and lowly people who wait upon the Lord; the people of faith who down through the centuries had been crushed and oppressed by the world powers and civil authorities over and around them. As previously noted (v. 4, *supra*), the historical context of Isaiah’s prophecy was the return from the Assyrio-Babylonian captivity. Two verses earlier (Isa. 60:21), the prophet said God’s people “would inherit the land;” again almost certainly in reference to the return from captivity (cf. Isa. 61:3). The complete phrase used by Jesus here “*the meek shall inherit the earth*” (or land) occurs in Ps. 37:11. The meaning in both places is that, although the wicked were then in power, God’s people would receive dominion and so possess the earth. This was the essence of the promise to Abraham that his seed would “possess the gate” of its enemies (Gen. 22:17; cf. Lk. 1:73, 74); it was also the subject of various Psalms (Ps. 72) and prophecies, particularly the kingdom prophecies of Daniel chapters two and seven, both of which unmistakably place the coming of the kingdom in the days of the Roman Empire.

“And the kingdom and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” Dan. 7:27

Jesus told the disciples that the kingdom would come in power during their lifetimes (Matt. 16:27, 28; Mk. 8:38; 9:1). He repeated this assertion at his trial before the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62). It began to be fulfilled in the events of A.D. 66-70, the Year-of-Four-Emperors and the destruction of Jerusalem when Christ put his enemies and the persecutors of the church beneath his feet. By A.D. 313 Christianity was the religion of Emperor Constantine and received official endorsement; by A.D. 380 it was the official religion of the Roman Empire.

6 - Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

The use of hunger and thirst to describe the soul's craving for God and his salvation is common in scripture. Mary's "song" describes the Lord's provision for the poor in spirit who hunger for salvation, saying: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away" (Lk. 1:53). The Psalmist wrote "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1, 2) The Greek word rendered "righteousness" here is δικαιοσύνη and bespeaks moral rectitude and the condition of being right with God. However, since all men are subject to human fallenness and moral corruption, the righteousness craved for can never properly be our own, but must be imputed by God.

"For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4:2-5

Righteousness is imputed by God in a judicial act of justification and acquittal from sin, based upon the substitutionary death and atoning sacrifice of Christ "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

7 - Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

The mercy contemplated here is not confined so much to forgiveness or leniency, though certainly these are included, as it is the overall disposition to show acts of kindness to those destitute of help. The Good Samaritan showed mercy to the man who fell among the robbers (Lk. 10:37); the two blind men besought Jesus' help, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us" (Matt. 9:27; cf. 15:22; 17:15). Those who show mercy shall thus receive mercy from the Lord:

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25:37-40

8 - Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

The heart is the seat of the affections ("For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also - Matt. 6:21), and understanding ("For this people's heart is waxed gross...lest they should understand with the heart" etc. - Matt. 13:15), and serves as that which prompts human word and action ("For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" - Matt. 15:19). To be pure is to be free from contaminates, dilution, or admixture. A pure heart is sincere, and free of duplicity, striving for holiness and complete submission to the will of God. Yet, the prophet Jeremiah says "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: Who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). How can the heart of unregenerate man be pure or holy except it first be converted by the word and Spirit of God? Therefore, the pure in heart are those who sense their sinfulness and yield to the gospel of Christ, which urges men to faith and repentance; whose affections are set on things above, not on earth; who weary themselves striving against the flesh, and who yearn to see God. The saying in this verse seems to be derived from Ps. 24:3, 4: "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place: He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." The "hill of the Lord" is not Zion, but heaven itself, of which Zion was but a type. Thus, when Psalm two says of Jesus "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. 2:6), it refers to Christ's resurrection and ascension (Acts 13:33). However, Jesus is not merely repeating the promise of eternal life; he is announcing that it is *near* to being fulfilled. With several other Beatitudes, this saying is essentially eschatological; it anticipates the work of Christ upon the cross, salvation from the power of sin and death, and the resurrection of the just that would come at the end of the pre-Messianic age.

9 - Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

It is the nature of fallen man to quarrel, strive, and fight ("For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" I Cor. 3:3; cf. Jm. 4:1, 2). Peace follows the gospel of Christ and obedience to the will of God. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (Jm. 3:18). The coming of Christ thus promised to bring the world theretofore unprecedented peace:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of

Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Isa. 2:2-4; cf. Isa. 11

This passage does not promise universal peace among the nations. Christ rules the nations with a rod of iron, and this invariably entails wrath upon those that refuse the gospel (cf. Ps. 2:8, 9; 110). Indeed, Isaiah's prophecy indicates as much when it says Christ would "judge among the nations and rebuke many peoples." War is a rebuke and visitation from God. God had promised the Jews *rest from war* as a reward of their obedience (Josh. 21:44, 45). However, for their disobedience in failing to drive out the heathen, God left some of the nations to *teach* the children of Israel war; viz., to chasten them for being slack to obey his will (Judges 2:1-5; 3:1, 2). Hence "not learning war" signifies the rest that follows his blessing upon those that obey his will. The "law" and "word of the Lord" that went out of Zion and Jerusalem refer to the gospel of Christ (Lk. 24:46, 47). In suffering Christ's rebuke, the nations are chastened and submit to the gospel and thus find peace. Those who labor to spread the gospel, God acknowledges as sons (υιοι).

10 - Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The peacemakers who labor in the gospel face resistance from wicked and unbelieving men, who persecute God's little flock. In every generation, good is opposed by evil. The enemy is overcome only by the willingness of the faithful to suffer for Christ. Belief that temporal loss is compensated by eternal bliss allows the faithful to persevere among their persecutions, knowing they have a reward in heaven. They shrink not from confrontation, but engage the enemy, which flees like darkness before light. And if they suffer wrath, it is but for a moment, and is more than rewarded by God, who receives them into eternal habitations.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." II Cor. 4:17, 18

11 - Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Jesus now adds to suffering for righteousness' sake, suffering for *his sake*. Even while the Lord was alive, the rulers of the Jews decided to punish those who confessed Jesus by casting them out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22, 34; 12:42; 16:2). To be cast out of the synagogue meant the complete loss of many civil rights and complete social and economic isolation. In Ezra, we read that excommunication was also accompanied by forfeiture of all one's substance, presumably meaning his paternal lands and chattels (Ezra 10:8). The epistle to the Hebrews describes the suffering heaped upon believers by the Jews, calling them to perseverance in the knowledge that they have a reward in heaven, and that Christ would shortly appear in vengeance upon the Jewish nation. Believers could persevere not only because of the reward, but because if they renounced Christ or yielded to their persecutors, they, too, would become objects of wrath:

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Heb. 10:32-39

12 - Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:

The phrase, "rejoice and be exceeding glad" (χαίρετε και αγαλλιασθε), is used to describe the joy of the saints at the marriage of the Lamb after the time of eschatological persecution had passed (Rev. 19:7). Marriage is a figure used to describe God's covenant relationship with his people (Rom. 7:1-4). In the Old Testament, the people were betrothed to God at Sinai (Jer. 2:2); the consummation of the nuptials occurred when the glory of God filled the tabernacle, and he was seen to dwell among the people (Ex. 40:34). In the New Testament, the betrothal occurred beginning at Pentecost (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 2:21, 22; 5:25-27), and was consummated when the church and canon of the

New Testament were complete, and Christ returned to avenge his saints and to cohabit with his bride at the end of the pre-messianic age (Matt. 24:3; Rev. 21:3, 9). The phrase describes the completion of their joy, first, by salvation from their enemies, then by receipt of eternal life.

for great is your reward

Although in principle the words of Jesus are applicable for all time, yet they had especial relevance for the first generation of believers. The early church passed through great tribulation and persecution, first at the hands of the Jews, and then Nero and the Romans. But their suffering was not unnoticed by the Savior: Christ was revealed from heaven in the world-events marked by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Roman civil wars, redeeming the saints from the hands of their enemies. The saints could take joy in their sufferings knowing that these were small compared to the reward of the inheritance at life's end.

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” II Thess. 1:4-10

in heaven:

Various writers, both ancient and modern, have supposed that there is to be a wondrous regeneration of the earth and cosmos, which will be inhabited by the saints in the resurrection. Some assign this to the millennium; others to the end and consummation. The notion of a regenerated earth as a habitation of man in the resurrection is based on a misreading of the Apocalypse and various Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah and Ezekiel. For example, Isaiah describes the nations of men under the gospel, which leave off their barbarous, piratical, and war-like demeanors, under the figure of wild animals becoming gentle and tame (Isa. 11:1-9). Yet, mistaking the figurative and poetic nature of the language, men have

supposed the very creation itself is to be marvelously reordered. Lactantius (A.D. 260-330) could thus write:

“But He, when He shall have destroyed unrighteousness, and executed His great judgment, and shall have recalled to life the righteous, who have lived from the beginning, will be engaged among men a thousand years, and will rule them with most just command...Then they who shall be alive in their bodies shall not die, but during those thousand years shall produce an infinite multitude, and their offspring shall be holy, and beloved by God; but they who shall be raised from the dead shall preside over the living as judges...About the same time also the prince of the devils, who is the contriver of all evils, shall be bound with chains, and shall be imprisoned during the thousand years of the heavenly rule in which righteousness shall reign in the world, so that he may contrive no evil against the people of God...Throughout this time beasts shall not be nourished by blood, nor birds by prey; but all things shall be peaceful and tranquil. Lions and calves shall stand together at the manger, the wolf shall not carry off the sheep, the hound shall not hunt for prey; hawks and eagles shall not injure; the infant shall play with serpents.”¹

However, Jesus makes it very clear that the reward of the inheritance is *in heaven*, not upon a new earth. The new heavens and new earth prophesied by Isaiah and John (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21, 22) describe the present world under the reigning Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God and governs the nations.

for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

The prophets came under persecution because they denounced the sins and crimes of the people and rulers. The church is called to follow their example that it may share in their reward. If the world does not oppose us, then surely our message and witness have been compromised.

13 - Ye are the salt of the earth:

The properties of salt are such that it serves both as a seasoning and preservative. The saints make the world palatable to God and lend it savor in his mouth. Though proportionately few, they serve to preserve the world similar to Sodom and Gomorrah, which God would have spared if but ten righteous had been found in them (Gen. 18:32).

¹ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, XXIV; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII, p. 219

but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

Salt is a mineral and will retain its savor indefinitely unless exposed to contamination or impurities. In Palestine at the time of our Lord, salt was not mined or obtained by evaporating clean salt water, but from marshes (Ezk. 47:11), and from salt lakes that dried up in summer, and from the south end of the Dead Sea. The manner of gathering salt meant that it sometimes contained impurities, which caused it to lose its savor. Once its savor is lost, there was no process by which it could be restored.

it is thenceforth good for nothing,

This is similar to the warning to the church of Laodicea, in which the Lord said he would that they were hot or cold, but because they were lukewarm, would spew them from his mouth (Rev. 3:15, 16). Hot water has therapeutic value; cold water will quench thirst. But tepid water is suitable for nothing and men spew it from their mouths. So with salt: Salt that has lost its savor is useless. However, it is not entirely inert, but will render sterile any land that it is cast upon. Hence, Luke reports the Lord's saying with the addition "It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill" (Lk. 14:35).

but to be cast out,

Although not spoken as a prophecy or prediction of the destruction of the Jewish nation in A.D. 70, yet, it is impossible to ignore this aspect of Christ's speech. At a time when the leaders of the Jews were lying in wait for his words to accuse him, the centurion showed great faith, causing Jesus to remark

"Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 8:10-12

Unbelieving Jews (ethnic Israel) would be cast out, but believing Gentiles would be grafted in among God's people, and so "all Israel" (true Israel) would be saved (Rom. 11:13-26). Similarly, in his allegory of Abraham's two wives, Paul equated Sarah and Hagar with the two covenants; believers born after the Spirit he equated with Isaac; unbelieving Jews born after the flesh he equated with Ishmael: As Ishmael had

persecuted Isaac, so unbelieving Jews were persecuting Christians. However, Paul concluded with the words of Sarah, saying, "cast out the bond woman and her son" (Gal. 4:21-31; cf. Gen. 2:10). The Jews' possession of the land was conditional and provisional: it was conditioned upon obedience to the law and the word of the Lord; it was provisional as a measure to preserve a righteous seed in the earth until Christ could come into the world and the gospel go forth to all nations. The Jews rejected Christ and were thus rejected themselves and suffered divine vengeance and wrath.

and to be trodden under foot of men.

Unfit for any other use, salt that has lost its savor was cast into the street where it was trodden under foot by man. This was the predicted end of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation:

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof nigh...and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Lk. 21:20, 24; cf. Rev. 11:2

The Shadow Ends where the Body Begins

Shadow	The Shadow Ended at the Cross	Body & Substance
First covenant Worldly sanctuary Priestly service Appointed days and feasts Animal sacrifices Diverse washings Dietary restrictions Miscellaneous carnal ordinances		New Covenant Heavenly Sanctuary High Priesthood of Christ His own Blood Atonement Eternal Redemption Perfected Forever

Col. 2:6, 17: Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Christ's Coming: Jewish or Universal?

Kurt Simmons

In the 30 years I have been a Preterist, my understanding of the eschaton has grown and changed. In the early years, it was natural to view Christ's eschatological coming almost exclusively in terms of God's judgment upon the Jews and the end of the temple service and Mosaic law. With time, I began to widen my study to take account of troublesome passages that seemed outside the scope of Jerusalem's fall – for example, passages that spoke of a time of judgment upon the whole world and epistles to Gentile churches admonishing them to “watch” and “wait.” Although difficult to fit into the picture as I then saw it, I felt sure such passages could not contradict the basic premise that Christ's coming occurred in the events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem. I am happy to report that that conviction remains firm and is now more certain than ever. However, bringing those passages within the scope of my understanding *has* forced me to broaden my view of the eschaton so that while I still see it as being fulfilled by A.D. 70, I now see it as world-wide, and not merely Jewish in scope.

The Latter Days of What?

The term “eschaton” means “last things” and speaks to the time when God would bring to completion his great work of redemption. In the Holy Scriptures, this period is often designated by the phrase “last” or “latter” days. Because of their place in the divine economy as God's chosen people through whom to bring the Savior into the world, the Jewish nation figures prominently in prophetic passages concerning the latter days. However, the national election of the Jews was merely provisional – a temporary arrangement to accomplish a particular purpose. When that purpose was fulfilled, the Jews' special place in the plan of redemption terminated. Moreover, because they were the murderers of Christ, and obstinately rejected the gospel and persecuted the church, their nation was destroyed. As might therefore be expected, this destruction figures prominently in the prophets' writing about the latter days, and has caused many to see the eschaton exclusively in terms of its Jewish aspect: For example, Eusebius explained Jacob's prophecy (Gen. 49:1ff) of what would befall the tribes of the Jews in the last days thus:

“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.’”²

In defining the latter days exclusively in terms of the destruction of the Jewish polity, Eusebius makes a mistake common among Preterists, one that until recently I made myself. The error in this approach is that it fails to see that more lines intersected in the eschaton than the fall of Jerusalem; other enemies had to be put beneath Christ's feet than merely the Jews. Paul makes this clear when he says, “For he must reign, till he hath put *all enemies* under his feet” (I Cor. 15: 25; *emphasis added*). The universal nature of Christ's rule is also affirmed by the Psalmist when he says “thou hast put *all things* under his feet” (Ps. 8:6, *emphasis added*; cf. Heb. 2:8). In another place, the Psalmist extends Christ's rule to *all nations*:

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

These passages are essentially eschatological and speak to Christ's kingdom coming in power against his enemies. Psalm two in particular is about the murder of Christ, his ascension, and vengeance upon both Jews and Romans. Psalm one hundred ten is to the same effect:

“The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall *judge among the heathen*, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall would the heads over *many countries*.” Ps. 110:5, 6

These passages clearly contemplate more than the fall of Jerusalem; *all nations* are spoken of as coming within the sweep of Christ's eschatological judgment. These are not the only verses that affirm Christ's universal coming. There should be added to

² Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, VIII, ccclxxv; Ferrar ed.

these Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the latter days, in which the Stone smote the *inhabited world* embodied in the Roman empire, reducing to shivers the world of man. (Dan. 2:28-45) I challenge anyone to make Daniel two fit within the compass of the destruction of Jerusalem. And what of Daniel chapter seven? The Jews are not so much as even mentioned. Yet, Christ is depicted as coming in vengeance upon the fourth world empire (Rome), symbolized by the beast, and upon Nero, the little horn that made war upon the saints. (Dan. 7:22-27) These and other verses, by their express terms, bring within Christ's eschatological judgment nations far removed from Jerusalem.

These are just a few of the Old Testament passages showing that the eschaton was world-wide. The New Testament also abounds with passages showing the universal nature of Christ's eschatological coming. For example, in Acts 17:3 Paul addressed the Athenians, saying, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which, he is about to **judge the world** in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." The term rendered "world" here is *oikoumenen*, and is defined as *the inhabitable world, or Roman empire*. Clearly, Paul was warning the Athenians about something more than the destruction of Jerusalem. Another example is seen II Thessalonians 2:8 - the companion text to Daniel 7:22-27 and the destruction of the little horn - which plainly states that Jesus would destroy the man of sin (Nero) with the breath of his mouth and the "*brightness of his coming*." Hence, Nero's death in A.D. 68 is attributed by Paul to Christ's eschatological coming in vengeance upon the persecutors of his church. Need it be pointed out that Nero did not live in Jerusalem?

These and other passages all prove that the eschaton was worldwide and not merely Jewish or covenantal. This leads to an important point. When Preterists encounter phrases such as "the end of the *aenon*" (world or age) (Matt. 24:3) or this "evil *aenon*" (Gal. 1:4), we typically have interpreted this to mean the end of the *Mosaic age*. We do this same thing with the phrase "last" or "latter" days, which we interpret to mean latter days of the Mosaic age or national Israel. But, just as the latter days spoke to more than the fall of Jerusalem, so the world that passed at the eschaton was more than merely Mosaic. Paul told the Corinthians "the fashion of this world (*Gk. kosmos*) passeth away." (I Cor. 7:31). The world of the Corinthians - like the rest of ancient man, including the Jews - was not fashioned or defined by the Mosaic law. The temple ritual and Mosaic law were indicative of a larger, all-pervading reality - a reality the law and temple ritual were created in response to but did not themselves make. Rather, the one thing that defined the

world condition more than anything else was *the universal reign of sin and death*. This was the enemy Christ ultimately came to destroy, not the Jews or Romans. The Jews and Romans came under wrath only because they took the part of sin and death by opposing the gospel. Otherwise, Christ had no inherent account to settle with them. Thus, when Paul said that the fashion of the world was passing away, it was to a world languishing under the dominion of sin and death that he alluded to, not the Mosaic age. The latter days described, not the end of the Mosaic age, but the end of the universal epoch marked by the reign of sin and death, the world order that had obtained from the time of mankind's fall. The destruction of Jerusalem coincided with this event, but did not define it.

The Law of Sin and Death

In any discussion of this kind, it is important to take account of the universal nature of the law of sin and death and that mankind's salvation lay in redemption from it, and not from the Mosaic law, as some Preterists have supposed. The law of sin and death was in force from the time God made man and placed him in the garden. God's instruction to Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil carried with it the sanction of death for its transgression: "For in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17) There are no fewer than *five* types of death that may be identified in the scriptures: 1) moral and spiritual, 2) legal and juridical, 3) physical, 4) hadean, and 5) eternal death. Moral and spiritual death speaks to mankind's inherent fallenness: the moral depravity that besets the whole race due to Adam's transgression. Juridical death speaks to the legal censor and sentence of death pronounced upon all who transgress God's law. Paul alludes to juridical death when he says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1) That is, God had acquitted them of their sins and the penalty of death, and made them heirs of life.

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Rom. 14:23) This means that sin is tied to man's moral faculties of faith and conscience, exculpating infants and idiots from guilt. From the time he arrives at the age of accountability, man lives under the sentence of juridical death for his sins. Unless he is saved from his sins and receives pardon by obedience to the gospel, at the time of physical death man's fate is fixed and the sentence of eternal death awaits him. However, prior to the eschaton, man's spirit was kept in hades; thus, the origin of hadean death. This was necessary so that the souls of the righteous might be kept in safety until Christ could accomplish the work of his cross, making redemption for their sins. It is to the souls of the just in hades paradise that John refers in Revelation when he

says he saw the souls of them beheaded for the gospel, living and reigning with Christ. (Rev. 20:3-6) The wicked were also kept in hades tartarus until the judgment of the last day, when they were cast into the lake of fire, which is called the “second death” (eternal death). (Rev. 20:11-15; cf. I Pet. 3:19; II Pet. 4:2)

The point that needs to be made here is that death came into the world independent of Mosaic law. The reign of sin and death was universal; all men were under its power, both Jew and Gentile. Bringing in the Mosaic law did not create mankind’s bondage, nor would taking away the Mosaic law deliver him from it. The Mosaic law was superimposed upon the law of sin and death; its ordinances merely served to demonstrate man’s condition, which obtained from the time of the race’s fall in the garden. Paul said “The law entered that the offence might abound.” (Rom. 5:20) That is, the Mosaic law did not create the offence, it merely magnified it; it served to teach man about his bondage to the law of sin and death, and the hopelessness of his condition apart from the substitutionary death and atoning sacrifice of Christ. Proof of this is seen in the fact that the Mosaic law is no longer in force today, yet all who are not in Christ are under bondage to the law of sin and death. Moreover, the Gentiles were never under the law of Moses, but they *were* under bondage to sin and death, and every bit as much in need of salvation as the Jews. It was to Gentiles Paul wrote when he said “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1) - juridically dead in sin, even though not under the law of Moses. Paul makes express mention of the law of sin and death in his letter to the Romans:

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from ***the law of sin and death***. For what the [Mosaic] law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Rom. 8:2, 3; *emphasis and bracketed matter added.*

Notice that *two* laws occur in this passage: 1) the law of sin and death and 2) the law of Moses. The Jews thought that perfection came by the Mosaic law, but Paul shows that it could not deliver from the law of sin and death. This is because man can never rise completely above his flesh, but lives under condemnation of the moral and spiritual law he is bound to transgress. Moreover, the law of Moses made no provision for redemption (the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins, Heb. 10:4): “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh to God.” (Heb. 7:19) A little earlier, Paul identified the

law of sin and death with the law of man’s inherent fallenness in this passage:

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see ***another law*** in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the ***law of sin*** which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. 7:22-24; *emphasis added.*

In this passage, the “law of God” that delights the inward man is the *moral and spiritual law*. Violation of the moral and spiritual law brings man under the law of sin and death. Like the law of sin and death, the moral and spiritual law exists independent of the Mosaic law. Although much of the moral law was codified by the law of Moses, it did not derive its force from it, and it continues to exist today even though the Mosaic law has passed away. The “law of sin in my members” refers to the elemental forces of man’s inherent fallenness. The Spirit and Inspiration that God breathed into our first ancestor that enabled him to live above his flesh, was lost to Adam and his descendants through sin. Man is now “carnal, sold under sin.” (Rom. 7:14) It is impossible that he ever live completely above his flesh, even though he aspires to do so. Hence, Paul’s lament “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.” Paul is not seeking physical death in this verse, for physical death without redemption is eternal damnation. Rather, Paul is expressing the impossibility of ever achieving salvation under the moral and spiritual law. No matter how much man might aspire to the moral and spiritual law, the law of sin in his members brought him into captivity to the law of sin and death. However, Paul expresses his thankfulness for the redemption in Jesus when he says “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Since man’s problem laid in the universal law of sin and death, it should be clear that an exclusively “Jewish” eschaton would avail man nothing; something more had to be taken out of the way than the Mosaic law.

The Veil Spread Over all Nations

Although the main thrust of Paul’s letter to the Romans is to show Jews the futility of the Mosaic law for soteriological perfection, Gentiles were equally under bondage to the law of sin and death. Paul speaks to this in chapter eight, as follows:

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For ***the creature*** was made ***subject to vanity***, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from

the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the *whole creation* groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And *not only they*, but *ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit*, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” [Rom. 8:19-23](#)

The “creature” is the *whole of humanity*, which was subjected to vanity by its inherent fallenness and the impossibility of obtaining salvation by any means it could devise. “Not only they” refers to the Gentiles; “ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit” refers to the Jews. The Jews were the firstfruits to God and the Lamb. ([Rev. 14:4](#); *cf.* [Jm. 1:18](#); [Eph. 1:12, 13](#)) Sin and death reigned from Adam to Moses ([Rom. 5:14](#)); the whole creation - both Jew and Gentile - groaned and travailed in pain together under the bondage of corruption (our mortal frame), looking for the glorious liberty of the sons of God (resurrection) promised our first ancestor in the garden - the promised Kinsman Redeemer that would bruise the head of sin and death through the power of his cross and resurrection and bring the adoption of sonship (resurrection) to those who obey his gospel.

What this means in terms of the eschaton is that mankind’s deliverance from bondage to sin and death could never be accomplished by merely removing the Mosaic law. Hence, the age that concluded at the eschaton was not the Mosaic age - a phrase that never occurs in the Bible, but which Preterists have imposed upon it due largely to [Matt. 24:3](#) and the apparent connection between the end of the “*aenon*” and the destruction of Jerusalem - *not* the end of the Mosaic age, I say, but the *world-age* (*ton aiona tou kosmoutoutou*, [Eph. 2:1](#)) marked by the reign of sin and death. Isaiah speaks to this when he says

“And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over *all people*, and the veil that is spread over *all nations*. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off *all the earth*: for the Lord hath spoken it.” [Isa. 25:6-8](#); *emphasis added*

The “veil spread over all nations” was not the Mosaic law, but the sentence of death that transgression of the moral law brings. This was the veil that separated man from God. The time for the promised deliverance was the cross - when the veil of the temple was rent in twain - but finally accrued to the saints’ benefit at the resurrection when the last enemy was destroyed. We might ask at this point if the fall of Jerusalem could accomplish all this? Not at all. The temple and veil stood in testimony to mankind’s universal banishment

from the presence of God (Gentiles worshipped there too) and the need of an Intercessor to make peace through the sprinkling of blood. In terms of God’s promise to bring salvation to all mankind, its destruction did not mark the end of anything uniquely Jewish. Rather, it spoke to the end of the veil cast over all nations from the time of Adam’s fall.

The Little Apocalypse and Elements of the World

In the *usus loquendi* of the prophets, cataclysmic language in which the elements of nature are dissolved spoke to God’s judgment upon nations, not the dissolution of the earth and its elements. The language is hyperbolic and poetically exaggerated to emphasize the universal destruction coming upon the nations of the earth, but not the earth itself. Isaiah’s prophecy of Edom’s fall to the Babylonians makes the point:

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

Identical language to this occurs in the New Testament regarding the eschaton. ([Matt. 24:29](#); [Lk. 21:25](#); [24: II Pet. 3:7-12](#)) Hence, there is much we can learn from it. Foremost for present purposes, this passage is not confined to Idumea as Preterists sometimes assert. Although obviously the elements that would be dissolved were *not* the chemical or atomic elements of the earth, it is equally clear that more than Idumea was involved. *All nations* would come within the sweep of judgment that God was bringing upon the world through the Assyrians and Babylonians; the Idumeans were merely one nation involved in a time of *universal wrath* upon the world of man. The “little apocalypse” of Isa. 24-29, which Preterists are sometimes guilty of applying only to Judah and Israel, describes this same judgment. It is often overlooked that in the nine preceding chapters, the prophet describes God’s judgment upon Moab (Isa. 15, 16), Syria and Israel (Isa. 17), Ethiopia (Isa. 18), Egypt (Isa. 19, 20), Babylon, Dumah and Arabia (Isa. 21), Judah (Isa. 22), and Tyre. (Isa. 23) Thus, the judgment spoken of in the little apocalypse was *world-wide*; chapter twenty-four merely summarizes the judgments that overtook the ancient world in the preceding chapters.

God's judgment in carrying the Jewish nation into captivity under the Assyrians and Babylonians was typical of the eschatological judgment under Rome when the nation would suffer ultimate and irrevocable destruction. Hence, prophecies of the coming salvation and wrath under the Messiah are interwoven throughout the little apocalypse, showing it has a secondary meaning or fuller sense (*plenior sensus* in the terminology of theologians), which looked to the days of Christ. (Cf. Isa. 25:8; 26:19; 28:16-22) Like Isaiah, the apostle Peter wrote of the coming eschatological judgment under the Messiah. II Pet. 3:7-13 speaks of the dissolution of the heavens and earth, but, as we have seen, this language *never* contemplates the chemical components of the universe. The hermeneutic established by the prophets governs our interpretation; we cannot depart from it without clear evidence of God's intent that we are so to do. Indeed, Peter's reference to Isaiah's promise of a "new heavens and earth" makes *certain* that the physical elements are not view. (See discussion, below.) However, just as more was involved in the little apocalypse than the Jews, so more is involved in II Peter than Jerusalem. As the judgment of the little apocalypse by Assyria brought within its sweep the *whole world* of ancient man, so Christ's eschatological judgment would not be limited to Jerusalem and Palestine. All men would feel the rod of Christ's correction as he meted out judgment and prepared to remake the world in greater conformity with his kingdom and gospel.

The New Heavens and Earth: Not the New Testament

After the desolations of the world by the Assyrians and Babylonians, God promised a time of renewal. The cities that lay waste would be rebuilt and the desert blossom like the rose as men again filled the earth and Israel returned to their land and brought it under cultivation. (Cf. Amos 9:9-15) The return from captivity was a type of the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21) that would be accomplished in Christ. The new heavens and earth promised by Isaiah (Isa. 65:17; 66:22) and mentioned by Peter and John (II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21, 22) however, are *not* the New Testament as Preterists have sometimes supposed. The new Jerusalem is the covenantal habitation of the saints, not the new heavens and earth. Foy E. Wallace Jr., who, perhaps more than any other man, deserves the title as the "father" of modern Preterism for his work in the early twentieth century, refuting Premillennialism in the churches of Christ, says this about the new heavens and earth:

"The new heaven and earth, and trouble[d] sea, having passed away and represented as being no more, indicated the changed conditions within the existing

governments and society to make them favorable for the prosperity of the cause of Christ and his church throughout the empire...the vision represented the new conditions to surround the church in the changed world."³

Thus, according to Wallace, the new heavens and earth simply spoke to the world after the eschatological judgments and persecutions had ceased, in which the church emerged victorious with Christ. There can be no clearer proof that this is so, and that the new heavens and earth are *not* the New Testament, than the fact that the wicked inhabit them outside *the city*:

"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Rev. 22:15

The new heavens and earth speak to the world after the eschatological judgments of the last days were past when the saints reign with Christ through the gospel. Like leaven folded within dough, the gospel message would breed and grow until it filled the world and every institution of man bore its imprint. However, the point we want to make at present is that, as the new heavens and earth are not the new covenant, so *the old heavens and earth that passed at the eschaton spoke to more than Jerusalem and Jewry*. The elements that would burn with fervent heat were not the furniture of the temple cultus or the law of Moses, but the elements of the social and political environment making up the pre-parousia world. The picture of Revelation twenty-one and twenty-two is the church in the world victorious, not the church in the world minus merely the Jews or the law of Moses. The elements consumed at the eschaton included the Jewish polity and nation, yes; but were by no means limited to them.

Conclusion

The early days of the modern Preterist movement confronted us with themes that were unfamiliar. We correctly assessed that the eschaton was an event of the past, which occurred within the lives of the apostles. However, we tended to interpret it in overly narrow, purely Judaistic terms. Hopefully, we are beginning to see that its judgments were worldwide and not at all limited to Palestine.

³ Foy E. Wallace, *The Book of Revelation* (1963, Wallace Publications, Ft. Worth), p., 426.

Questions from our Readers

Q: What does Matt.5:17-19 mean if the law was not to be kept? It appears to mean it was to be kept until heaven and earth passed away. I don't believe that is to a literal H/E but must mean the Jewish way of life. I believe you are right but Paul was still keeping the Law as well as others in Acts 21. Please explain what they were doing in the transition period and why they felt it necessary to keep the law. I feel Matt. 5:17-19 must be in their minds. Thanks for your great work.

A: The thrust of Matt. 5:17-19 is *fulfillment* of the law and prophets. Jesus said "*I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*" The phrase "*I am come to fulfill*" clearly contemplates Jesus' *first coming* to die on Calvary, not his second coming to put his enemies beneath his feet. Thus, "heaven and earth" are *not* used as enigmatic references to the Jewish law and economy, but are parabolic; they stand for something firm and immutable. But if the heavens and earth are firm and immutable, the word of God and his promised redemption in Christ are even more certain and unailing. That this is the meaning is seen in the parallel passage in Luke 16:17 where Jesus said "*it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one jot or tittle of the law to fail.*" In other words, it is easier that the whole physical creation should vanish away than the prophetic types and shadows of the law should fail to be fulfilled in Jesus' death on Calvary.

The blood sacrifices, national feasts, priesthood, and temple ritual were a grand object lesson showing man his sin, the need for atonement, and a priestly intercessor. Paul said that the law was a "shadow" of good things to come, "but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:17). A shadow ENDS where the body BEGINS. Thus, the law ends where the gospel and New Testament start. The question thus becomes, "When did the gospel and New Testament become of force and effect? At Calvary or AD 70?" Here there can be no question: the gospel and New Testament began at Calvary. Jesus said "*the law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it*" (Lk. 16:16). "Kingdom of God" here is equal to the gospel. The law and Moses were preached until John, but the New Testament was already begun to be announced. Hebrews says "*a testament is of force after men are dead*" (Heb. 9:14). The New Testament therefore came into force and effect at Calvary, at Jesus' death.

No man can have two wills at one time; the Old Testament ceased to be legally effective when the New Testament came into force. That the atonement was then and there effective and the way into God's presence opened is shown by the fact the veil of the temple was "rent in twain" at Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51), showing the whole temple service was now obsolete. Pointing to the removal of the law and its segregation of Jews and Gentiles in the temple worship, where a physical wall actually separated them, Paul says "*For his is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*" (Eph. 2:14, 15). Thus, the whole law of the temple service was done away in Christ's flesh. "*For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*" (Heb. 7:12).

The disciples continued to keep the law, yes, but ONLY lest they be an offense to the Jews. This is why Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts:16:1-3), not because circumcision was valid anymore, but lest Timothy's lack of circumcision become an obstacle to Jews receiving the gospel message. This is also true of Acts 21, where Paul offered sacrifices and took a vow and underwent ritual purification. He was merely trying to alleviate Jewish prejudice that he was an apostate from God by showing that he still had a conscience toward God and worshipped the same God as they did. Peter did the same thing. When among the Gentiles he ate with them, showing the law that had forbidden Jews to keep company with Gentiles was done away (Acts 10). But when some Judaizing men came from Jerusalem, he drew back and separated himself from the Gentiles. Peter did this because the law had forbidden casual table fellowship with Gentiles and he did not want to offend, but Paul rebuked Peter for his duplicity (Gal. 2:11-14). What Peter was required to do while at Jerusalem while living and preaching among the Jews there, he had no excuse for doing while away, living and preaching among the Gentiles, so Paul rebuked him.

Finally, note that the argument of some about Matt. 5:17-19 is that ALL the law was valid until NONE of it was valid. A friend of mine says this dozens of times in his books. He sets this argument up against futurists, so he can say that if Jesus' second coming has not occurred, then we are still under the law. He says Matt. 5:17-19 teaches that the law all stood or fell

together. "Not one jot would pass until it *all* passed." The other side of this argument is that if even one law can be shown to have passed, then all of it had passed.

Well, what does the New Testament show? Does it show that *all* the law was still binding, or does it show that at least portions of it were invalid? Here there can be no doubt: We have numerous direct statements by Peter and Paul saying that portions of the law (dietary restrictions, association with Gentiles, circumcision, etc.) were *not valid* or binding any more. Therefore, if all the law was valid until none of it was valid, then it is clear none of it was valid during the period of Acts and the Gentile mission. The argument from Matt. 5:17-19 proves too much and that the law ended at the cross.

Q: What is the Coming for Salvation of Hebrews 9:28? "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27, 28).

A: Some believe the second appearance of Christ in this passage is to save from sin; viz., that justification was somehow held in abeyance until the second coming. But this is clearly wrong.

The salvation of Heb. 9:28, by its own terms, is not for sin. The writer says this explicitly. Jesus accomplished this salvation at his first coming to die on Calvary: "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Thus, we must search for other possibilities.

The Hebrew Christians were under a time of persecution, being pressured by unbelieving Jews to abandon Christ and return to the ritual of the law. This is clear from the whole context of the letter and is why the writer states, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (12:4). Heb. 10:32-35 makes specific reference to the persecutions believers had formerly endured (probably the persecution over Stephen), urging them to persevere the present persecution, assuring them that Christ's coming was in a "very, very little while" (v. 37). Thus, the coming in Heb. 10:37 by its express terms was to save the church from persecution. But if the coming in Heb. 10:37 is to save out of persecution, so is that of Heb. 9:27, for they are the same coming.

The coming for salvation in Heb. 9:28 would save the saints from the persecution of the Jews who were

pressuring Christian Hebrews to abandon Christ and return to the old law.

Q: What is the "creation" of Rom. 8:19-23. We answer that question: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

A: The "creation" of Romans 8:19-23 refers to humankind. The creation/humankind was subjected to the futility and vanity of physical and, ultimately, eternal death. God did not subject man to this vanity willingly, but in hope that man would search out God and repent from sin, and so attain to immortality through Jesus Christ.

There are two groups in the text: "they" and "ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit". "They" refers to the Gentiles. "Ourselves which have the first fruits of the Spirit" refers to the Jews. The Jews were the firstfruits of the Spirit by the gospel. (Eph. 1:12; Jam. 1:18; Rev. 7:1-8; 15:4). Alternatively, "they" can refer to those outside of Christ, who have not obeyed the gospel, and "we" to the first generation of believers. The "whole creation" equals "every nation" of the great commission (Mk. 16:15, 16) or all mankind. All nations of men groaned and travailed in pain, waiting for "manifestation of the sons of God" or resurrection from the dead. Not "they" (the Gentiles) only, but "we ourselves which have the first fruits of the Spirit" (the Jews). Both groups groaned in travail for salvation from the bondage to sin and death.

The "redemption" and "adoption" of "our body" (v. 23) refers to the receipt of the individual's immortal body in heaven above. We are adopted sons now through faith, repentance, and baptism (Gal. 4:5, 5; Rom. 8:15), but the fullness of our sonship will not be realized until receipt of our eternal inheritance in heaven above.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified,; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29, 30).

"Being conformed to the image of Christ" looks to our glorification in heaven at our resurrection. The eschatological resurrection occurred in AD 70 (Dan. 12:2, 7; Rev. 20:11-15). This was announced by a trumpet (I Cor. 15:52). This trumpet was inaudible to mortal man on earth, being directed only to the spirits in Hades, and is best understood as the voice of Christ, the Archangel of God (I Thess.4:16). However, it is my opinion that there is another trumpet mentioned by Paul: "the last trumpet" that calls each of us from this world to the next, which also marks the "change" of our body from physical to spiritual and mortal to immortal. "For we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet" (I Cor. 15:52). That the trumpet which raises the dead and the "last trumpet" are not the same trumpet is seen in the absence of the definite article in the Greek. Paul says "the last trumpet" will mark each of our change, but "a trumpet" would raise the dead. And since the dead are already raised, but you and I have not been changed, then there must be a last trumpet that will call each of us out of this world and will mark the time when we put on immortality.

Q: Thanks for adding me to your mailing list. My question is, from the understanding that I've gleaned about the New World Order and their take over of society and the way they've shaped our culture through media and the school system, do you think there might be a conspiracy for political/economical gain through pushing the pre-trib view and that they might have set the pre-trib idea in motion?

A: Thanks for writing. I can't speak authoritatively about a conspiracy vis-a-vis Dispensationalism and the Pre-tribulation Rapture view, but it does seem very plausible. The Scofield Study Bible is largely responsible for disseminating Dispensationalism and was published by Oxford. Why Oxford should publish this Bible is something of a mystery. I have read that if you trace the moving personalities behind publication of the Scofield Bible by Oxford, you will find Jewish money. An internet search of "Jewish money behind the Scofield Bible" will produce many sources confirming Jews had a hand in this book, which has been so instrumental in propagating the errors of

Dispensationalism. The Jews were able to resettle modern Israel through the *Balfour Declaration* obtained by Lord Rothschild following WWI, about the same time the Scofield Bible was produced. Support for Jewish control of Palestine is greatly augmented by Dispensationalism, which falsely teaches the Jews are still God's chosen people. There is no question that the modern State of Israel plays the prophecy populizers and televangelists like a fiddle to keep the U.S. firmly in Israel's pocket. See the book "*One Nation Under Israel*" by Andrew J. Hurley for the full story of Israel lobby's control of the U.S. government. So, yes! There is does appear to be a conspiracy of sorts by the Jews to advance Dispensationalism among Christians.

Q: Thanks for the latest issue of the "Sword..." Not only do I get good theology, I get a good history lesson from the Biblical era. What is taking place in Acts 21:26-27? It appears that Paul is obeying the Law and entering the temple. If the Law was annulled at the cross, what's he doing?

A: Great to hear from you. In Acts 21:26, 27, Paul is *appeasing the Jews*, showing that he is not teaching out-and-out apostasy from Moses and the God of the Jews. His message that circumcision was unnecessary and even wrong (Gal. 5:2; 6:15), was misunderstood by the Jews, who took this as apostasy from Moses, going over to the Greeks, etc. What the Jews did not understand is that the law of Moses was *provisional and temporary*, and was to be replaced by the gospel and New Testament when the Messiah appeared. Thus, Paul was not apostatizing from God by forsaking the law of Moses; he was obeying God and, by implication, Moses, who foretold Christ's coming and enjoined the Jews to receive and obey Christ in all he commanded (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22, 3). It was the Jews who were in darkness, clinging to the law and rejecting the gospel of Christ which justifies men by the obedience of faith. Paul's appeasing the Jews this way was a kind of *missionary concession*, lest by offending them, they would be unwilling to listen to his explanation of the gospel of Christ. He did something similar to this when he circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), so that the Jews would receive them and they could preach to them, Timothy being Greek.