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Three Views on the Resurrection

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In this article, we examine three views on the general (eschatological) resurrection: 1) the Individual/Physical Body View, 2) the Collective/Metaphoric Body View, and 3) the Individual/Spiritual Body View. We will conclude that the Individual/Spiritual Body View is the only scripturally defensible view and the one taught by Christ and the apostles and prophets.

Sin, Death, and Atonement

God told our first ancestors that in the day they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they would surely die (Gen. 2:17). However, after their fall, God spared the couple and instituted instead a law of substitutes, by which the blood of another could ransom the soul from the debt of sin. We know that God also clothed the man and the woman with skins to cover their nakedness (Gen. 3:21). Since skins require a death, the implication is that God ordained that sheep

or goats be slain in atonement for the couple's sin.¹ Thus, the death they should have died that day, was avoided by the death of a lamb or goat sacrificed in their place.

"For the life of the flesh is the blood: and I have given it to you upon the alter to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Lev. 17:11

¹ We believe this is why Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's was not: By faith, Abel offered the blood sacrifice commanded by God, but Cain, disobeying, offered grain instead (Gen. 4:3-5; Heb. 11:4).

However, blood of animals cannot purge away sins (Heb. 10:1-4). Hence, the sacrifices ordained by God stood as prophetic types and foreshadows, looking ahead to the cross of Christ. God thus promised a Seed who would save the man and woman from their helpless estate.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Gen. 3:15

The woman in this passage stands for the people of God, the bride of heaven. The promised Seed is Christ. The serpent stands for the power of sin and death. The serpent's seed are unregenerate men and the children of unbelief. Sin and death personified in the serpent would "bruise" (bite) Christ's heel in his crucifixion. Christ would "bruise" (crush) the serpent's head by the power of his substitutionary death and atoning sacrifice, and the resurrection from the dead. Hence, when Paul wrote "the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law" (I Cor. 15:56), it is to the venom of the serpent that his simile alludes. But God gives us the victory in Christ, who paid the debt of the law, robbing sin of its power (Col. 2:14, 15).

Place and State of the Dead prior to Resurrection

Physical death was not the full penalty for sin. The body merely houses the spirit of man. Sin's poison meant that the spirit, too, must die. Eternal death in the lake of fire awaits every soul of man who dies outside of the saving grace of Christ (Rev. 20:15; Matt. 25:41-46). God thus reserved the souls of the wicked unto the day of judgment, when they would suffer eternal death.

"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them to chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment, and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of eh ungodly" etc. II Pet. 2:4, 5

The English word "angel" is misleading here. When we hear the word "angels," we think of supernatural beings. However, the Greek word "angelos" simply signifies a "messenger" and is used many times in scripture for men (Matt. 11:10, John the Baptist; Lk. 7:24, messengers of John; Lk. 9:52, messengers of Christ; Jam. 2:25, spies received by Rahab). Angels cannot sin; the seed of all sin is the flesh (Rom. 7:18;

Gal. 5:19-21; Jam. 1:14-15). Since angels are spirit and not flesh, they cannot be tempted with sin.² Hence, the "angels" in this passage are best understood, not as supernatural beings, but men. Specifically, they are the "sons of God" (descendants of Seth), who married and made affinity with the daughters of unbelieving men (descendants of Cain) before the flood (Gen. 6:1-4). This is clear from Josephus, who first refers to the descendants of Seth, saying they obeyed God for seven generations, but then calls them "angels" and says they apostatized from God by marrying (unbelieving) women.³

Peter thus says that, for their apostasy, these "angels" were judged as sinners and imprisoned in "hell" until judgment day. The word "hell" in this passage is the Greek term "Tartarus." Tartarus was a place in Sheol or Hades reserved for the souls of the wicked pending final judgment. There was also a place for the righteous, which the Greeks and Romans called "Elysium," but the scriptures call "Paradise." Jesus told the thief on the cross "this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Lk. 24:43). Yet, we read elsewhere that Jesus' spirit went to Sheol/Hades at death (Acts 2:27; Ps. 16:8-11; cf. Jn. 20:17; II Cor. 12:3). These two places in Hades are depicted in Lk. 16:19-31, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, where Paradise is called "Abraham's bosom" (v.22). Why the Bible uses the Greek term Tartarus, but not the term Elysium, is unclear. Perhaps it was to avoid any appearance of complete equivalence between pagan notions of the afterlife, and the true estate and fate of the dead. Greeks and Romans believed in reincarnation, in which the souls of the dead were born anew into earthly life, with new bodies and new identities, following a sojourn of 1,000 years in Hades.⁴ However, the Bible

² The impossibility of heavenly angels sinning bears directly upon the nature and quality of the resurrection body. Jesus said that, in the resurrection, we shall be as angels (Matt. 22:30). If angels are subject to sin and temptation, we too will be subject to sin and temptation, and liable to fall from heaven. But if the source of all sin and temptation is the flesh, then angels are not subject to temptation or sin. And inasmuch as we will be like angels, we will be beyond temptation and risk of sin, and our salvation will be eternally secure once we reach the other side. Since the Bible teaches that once we reach the other we will in fact be eternally secure, it follows that our resurrection bodies will not be composed of flesh.

³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, I ,iii, 1.

⁴ "Yes, not even when the last flicker of life has left us, does evil, or the ills that the flesh is heir to, quite relinquish our souls; it must be that many a taint grows deeply, mysteriously grained in their being from long contact with the body. Therefore the dead are disciplined in purgatory, and pay the penalty of old evil: some hang, stretched to the blast of

teaches resurrection, in which the identity of the dead is preserved unto its final reward.

Revelation Twenty & the 1st Resurrection

Since the topic of Sheol/Hades has come up, it is appropriate to pause momentarily to discuss the "first resurrection." In Revelation twenty, the dragon is bound in the bottomless pit (Tartarus) for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3). The beast is also depicted as being in the bottomless pit, whence it follows the two were confined and released together (Rev. 11:7; 17:8). A group of saints, who have been beheaded for their testimony of Christ, are also depicted as living and reigning with Christ for 1000 years (Rev. 20:4). This 1000 year reign of the saints is called the "1st resurrection" (vv. 4, 5). We have written extensively about this symbolism elsewhere, so we will not go into that here. However, it seems beyond dispute that the dragon, beast, and martyrs are portrayed by John as being in Hades. Indeed, there is no other possibility, as no one entered heaven until the resurrection of the last day, which does not occur until the 1000 year periods are over (vv.11-15). Hence, there is no place else the martyrs can be than Hades Paradise. This is in keeping with Jesus' teaching in Matt. 22:31-32:

"But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

This passage makes clear that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not dead, but were *already* participating in a resurrection of some sort or fashion. Since the resurrection Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob experienced was not the general resurrection of the last day, it can

vacuum winds; for others, the stain of sin is washed away in a vast whirlpool or cauterized with fire. Each of us finds in the next world his own level: a few of us are later released to wander at will through broad Elysium, the Happy Fields; until, in the fulness of time, the ages have purged that ingrown stain, and nothing is left but pure ethereal sentience and the spirit's essential flame. All these souls, when they have finished their thousand-year cycle, God sends for, and they come in crowds to the river Lethe, so, you see, with memory washed out, they may revisit the earth above and begin to wish to be born again." Virgil, Aeneid, lines 735-51; C. Day Lewis ed; cf. Plato, Republic, X, 614.

only have been the "1st resurrection," which John describes in Revelation. Moreover, since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also were clearly in Sheol/Hades, it follows that the 1st resurrection describes the life of the righteous dead in Paradise. Add to this the fact that Greco-Roman notions of Hades says that the dead sojourned there 1000 years, and the above conclusion becomes irresistible. The connection of the passage with Greco-Roman notions of Hades was noted by the famous French skeptic, Voltaire:

"The belief in this reign of a thousand years was long prevalent among the Christians. This period was also in great credit among the Gentiles. The souls of the Egyptians returned to their bodies at the end of a thousand years; and, according to Virgil, the souls in purgatory were exorcised for the same space of time—et mille per annos."⁵

That the 1st resurrection was of the soul in the spiritual realms says something about the nature of the general resurrection. If the 1st resurrection occurred beyond the realm of time and space unobserved by eye of man, is there reason to believe the general resurrection would be different? The soul goes from Hades to heaven, not back to earth. This leads to our examination of the individual/physical body view.

The Individual/Physical Body View

The individual/physical body view holds that the resurrection consists in the reunion of the spirit with the self -same physical body inhabited before death. This was the view of many Jews in Jesus' day. We learn this from the question poised by the Sadducees to Christ. The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, put a hypothetical question to Jesus about the resurrection, in which a woman was widowed seven times by seven brothers, asking whose wife she would in the resurrection, since all seven had her? (Matt. 22:23-33). Since the Sadducees denied the resurrection and the question was contrived to make the resurrection appear ridiculousness, it is clear that the facts assumed in the question reflect the views of their contemporaries, probably the Pharisees. Specifically, the hypothetical assumes that the resurrection involves restoring to life physical bodies upon earth, thus raising the prospect of marriage. We saw part of Jesus' answer, above. Here is his response in whole:

⁵ *The Works of Voltaire*, Vol. III, sec. 1 (1764, Philosophical Dictionary, Part I).

"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Matt. 22:30-32

Jesus' teaching in this passage is that the resurrection occurs, not in the physical, but in the spiritual realm, where angels dwell, thus obviating the possibility of marriage. Angels, by definition, are immortal, intangible, and immaterial. They are spirit, not flesh. This is seen in Heb. 2:14-16, where man's flesh and blood body is contrasted with that of angels:

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

The writer here distinguishes the children of earth and the angels in heaven by their *bodies*, the one being flesh and blood, the other not. Since in the resurrection we will be as angels, it is plain that it is not the physical body of flesh that is raised, but the spirit, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who had been raised and dwelt in Hadean Paradise.

Those who argue for a resurrection of the flesh argue that Jesus' resurrection is the type and pattern of our resurrection and that to deny the resurrection of our flesh is to deny the resurrection of Christ. An example of this argument is made by Kenneth Gentry Jr. "If Christ was physically raised from the dead, then so shall we, for He is the "first-fruits" of our resurrection. The only way around our physical resurrection is to deny Christ's physical resurrection."⁶ Does it follow from Christ's resurrection being physical, that ours necessarily must be physical? The resurrection of Jesus' flesh had been predicted by the Psalmist: *"For*

thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." (Ps. 16:8; Acts 2:25, 26). Isaiah made similar predictions: *"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." Isa. 26:19.* During his earthly ministry, Jesus, too, made repeated predictions about his resurrection with specific reference to his physical body (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Jn. 2:21). None of this is true of us. Not one verse exists that states the resurrection consists in raising dead bodies. A review of verses relied upon by proponents of the physical body view will show that this is true.

Verses Relied upon by the Physical Body View

Job 19:25, 26: *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."*

This is the *only* verse in the Bible that makes reference to the flesh in apparent connection with the resurrection. However, the Hebrew of this verse is so obscure and ambiguous that scholars cannot decide how it is to be translated. The marginal reading gives the rendering, "After I shall awake, though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh..." *etc.* In other words, two renderings, exactly opposite in meaning, can be sustained by the original tongue. Thus, it cannot be determined with certainty what Job actually stated or said. Given that this is the only place in scripture referring to the flesh in the context of the supposed resurrection, we would be well advised to opt for the alternate rendering. At the very least, standing as it does alone, and more especially in view of the poetic nature of the book, no essential doctrine of scripture can be built upon it.

Isa. 26:19: *"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."*

This passage does not teach the physical resurrection of believers. Jesus' "dead body" is the only one mentioned in the passage. Those that "dwell in dust" refer to the spirits of the dead in Sheol/Hades, which was portrayed as a cavernous realm beneath earth's surface. The earth casting out its dead therefore does not speak to the bodies of the dead, but their spirits in Hades.

Jno. 5:28, 29: *"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have*

⁶ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *Christ's Resurrection and Ours*, (Chalcedon, April 2003). For the full text of this article go to www.preteristarchive.com/PartialPreterism/gentry-ken_03_ca_01.html

done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

As with Isa. 26:19, no physical bodies are mentioned in this text. All Jesus says is that those in the graves will come forth. Jesus did not say they would come forth on *this* side of eternity. Daniel made the like statement, saying, "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). This language is obviously poetic: The dead do not "sleep" in the earth; their spirits go to Hades (Lk. 24:43; *cf.* 16:19-31). Hence, the idea of "waking" from the dust is merely accommodative; it points to a coming day of salvation when the death would be vanquished and man go to his long home with God and Christ in heaven.

Rom. 8:11: *"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."*

"Quickening" our mortal bodies does *not* refer to the resurrection of the body, but the regenerative effects of God's spirit in man by the mortification of the flesh. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. 8:13; *cf.* Gal. 5:24) This is the more apparent in that in the immediately preceding verse Paul says "the body is dead because of sin." (Rom. 8:10) The saints at Rome were not dead and their bodies were not dead either; the apostle is merely using a figure of speech. As the source of fleshly lusts, the body is spiritually "dead." But by being brought into subjection to the Spirit, the body is figuratively quickened and made an instrument of righteousness. Peter says substantially the same thing: "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." (I Pet. 4:1) In other words, just as man's spirit is quickened and made alive by the new birth (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13), so the body is "quickened" as it is brought into subjection to God's spirit and its lusts mortified.

Rom. 8:23: *"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."*

The "redemption of our body" refers to receipt of our immortal body in heaven. The passage may be likened to Jeremiah's purchase (redemption) of his uncle's field just before the nation went into captivity. The ownership of the land was witnessed and sealed unto

Jeremiah, but its possession and enjoyment were postponed until the nation returned out of captivity (Jer. 32:10-44). In the same way, our inheritance has been purchased for us by Christ, and we have the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, whereby we cry "Abba, Father," showing that we are putative heirs of eternal life (Rom. 8:15-17). The "redemption of our body" is the point at which we come into possession of eternal life and receive our immortal bodies. There is no mention of physical bodies in the passage.

Phil. 3:20, 21: *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."*

This verse shows that, in the resurrection, we will receive glorified bodies like that received by Christ at his ascension. Although raised in his mortal body, Jesus received a glorified body when he "ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10). To gain a sense of that glorified body, we may look to Revelation, where Jesus appeared to John (Rev. 1:12, 17). The corruptible body is put off in death and replaced by a glorious body in the resurrection of life. The glorified body is not physical, but spiritual, unbounded by time and space.

I Thess. 4:16: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."*

We need only note that physical bodies are not mentioned. The dead resided in Hades and it is from thence that they are called forth to join the Lord in heaven. The idea that they must first return to earth and physicality before going on to heaven is absurd. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50).

These are all the verses relied upon by those advocating the physical body of the resurrection. As we have seen, none of the verses actually teaches that the dead return to their physical bodies in the resurrection.

The Collective/Mystical Body View

This view has traces going back as early as 1845, when Robert Townley wrote his book *The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ a Past Event* (London, 1845).⁷

⁷ "Now we are of the opinion that *the expression, 'there is a natural body,' may be predicated most justly of the Jewish*

The modern proponent of this view is Max King, who made it popular during the 1970-80's, whence it still boasts a significant following stemming from this source. It is worth noting that both Townley and King were led into Universalism by this view. Essentially, proponents of this view hold that all men were concluded under sin by the Mosaic Law. Hence, by removal of the Mosaic Law it follows that all men are justified. In the words of Tim King, Max King's son:

“Simply stated, man is changed because his world changed. Man is reconciled to God because he no longer lives under the rule of sin and death as determined by the Mosaic world. Through the gift of Christ he dwells in a world of righteousness and life. The issue is

*body of worship, which body was then in existence in all its primitive force, when the apostle indited I Cor. XV., as much as when Moses indited the book of Leviticus....We know that the apostle was a Hebrew of Hebrews: and we apprehend, therefore, that when he expresses his soul's desire, “O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the **body of death,**” he is speaking in reference to the Jewish worship, which was the ministration of condemnation and death...we apprehend, moreover, that when he speaks of an **earthly house of this tabernacle being dissolved,** of a groaning, being burdened, and such like, **his mind is still upon the worship under the law;** for it may well be asked, how can he speak of human bodies of clay as houses builded with hands?” Robert Townley, *The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ a Past Event* (London, 1845), 119*

*“The mystical body of Christ, say we, was a natural body, at that time, as far as its ordinances, its officers, its gifts, prophesying, tongues, healing, helps, and governments were concerned. All these were, if the expression may be allowed, borrowed from the Jewish body of worship...That body was to give way to a spiritual body...the old covenant administration of death, which in Paul's day was shaken and ready to vanish, should entirely disappear – then should be brought to pass the saying that was written, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Robert Townley, *The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ a Past Event* (London, 1845), 120*

*“The Apostle, when he writes, 'we all,' is discoursing of the one body which Christ had reconciled, of which he has many things to say to these Corinthian believers. The change which he intimates is not any remodeling, any alteration, any glorifying of the natural bodies of these believers, but it is a change from the ministration of condemnation and death, of which he speaks in the former verses of the chapter, to the ministration of righteousness and life; or, in other words, from the first inferior and temporal covenant, which was added because of the Adam transgression, to the second superior and spiritual covenant.” Robert Townley, *The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ a Past Event* (London, 1845), p. 91*

cosmic and corporate, not individual and limited.”⁸

There are several passages in the New Testament, which use the singular "body" in the context of the resurrection, which proponents of this view interpret in reference to the collective body of the church. The church is the mystical "body of Christ" (Eph. 1:22, 23). Thus, "redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23) and "will change our vile body" (Phil. 3:21) are supposed to refer to the *collective body of believers*. The "redemption" and "change" is thought to be *justification from sin*. Proponents of the Collective Body View believe that the Mosaic Law was the power of death and man was in the "grave of Judaism" while the law prevailed. They hold that the resurrection of the dead refers primarily to the change from the Jewish system to the gospel, which they believe occurred in AD 70. Thus, by this view, the Old Testament is thought to have remained in force from the cross until the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, when the law was finally taken out of the way, and the church finally justified. Hence, this view "spiritualizes" the resurrection, treating it as a thing legal and covenantal, not actual or personal. The eschatological resurrection was not individual spirits being freed from Hades, but the collective body of the church being justified from sin.

However, this view is completely untenable. The singular "body" is merely an anomaly or peculiarity of speech and does not signify the collective body of the church is in view. If someone said "when we all get to heaven we'll get a new body" would that mean one body? Of course it wouldn't; use of the collective merely points to the common *nature* of the body inhabited on earth, and the common *nature* of the body we each will receive in heaven. The mystical body of Christ, the church, is *never* represented as being in a condition of death or the grave at any time in scripture. Where the metaphor of Christ's mystical body is used to describe the church, it is always represented as being raised up and in a glorified condition (Eph. 1:20-23; 2:6; 4:10-12). How could Christ be in heaven at the right hand of God, but his mystical body be in the grave of Judaism or under the power of sin? Obviously, this makes no sense. What legal and covenantal "resurrection" from sin does occur is received at conversion and baptism, not AD 70.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the

⁸Tim King, *Comprehensive Grace*, 2005

handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Col. 2:13, 14; cf. Rom. 6:3-6

Hence, the basic assumption of the Collective Body View that men continued under the Old Law and debt of sin until AD 70, and that the atonement was not complete until the second coming, is hopelessly at odds with scripture. There are dozens and dozens of verses, which show that the atonement was complete and believers were fully justified from and after the cross.

- *"But we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom. 4:11).*
- *"For ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).*
- *"But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 6:11).*
- *"For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).*

Not one verse exists that shows the saints remained under the debt of sin until AD 70, or that they were only then justified. Moreover, the idea that the law was still valid after the cross is contradicted by innumerable passages of scripture and not one verse showing it was still valid can be produced.

The Spiritual/Individual Body View

This view is the one we feel alone is scripturally defensible. Prior to the general resurrection, the spirits or souls of the dead went to the Hadean realm. John mentions the "second death." This is set over against the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5, 6). There is a first and second death, and a first and second resurrection. The first death is the death of the body, physical death. The second death is the eternal destruction of the soul or spirit in Gehenna (*cf.* II Thess. 1:9, 10 - "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"). The first resurrection is the spirit in Hades Paradise; the second resurrection is receipt of eternal life in heaven. The second coming would mark the time when Hades was destroyed and the soul received its eternal reward. John depicts this in Revelation by the following imagery (Rev. 20:11-15):

¹¹And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small

and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Here is the resurrection associated with Christ's second coming. The whole transaction occurs on the other side of eternity, in the realm of the spirit before the throne of Christ (*cf.* II Cor. 5:10). The resurrection is portrayed as consisting in the spirits of the dead raised from Hades and the "the sea." In the symbolism of Revelation, the "sea" points to *heathendom*, the realm of the Greeks and assorted peoples inhabiting the Mediterranean world beyond the land of Israel. It thus symbolizes *geographically* what the bottomless pit portrays *spiritually*; *viz.*, those that die out of covenant relationship with God. Hence, the "sea" equals "Tartarus." Notice that, in the conception of the passage, "death and Hades" are a union. Hades cannot exist without death, nor could death exist without Hades. The last enemy to be destroyed was death (I Cor. 15:26). Not physical death, but death as it has existed from the time of man's fall as a place of separation from God; *i.e.*, Hadean death. In speaking of the resurrection, Paul thus says "O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?" (I Cor. 15:55). In other words, the resurrection marked the time when Hadean death was destroyed and the soul was admitted into the presence of God in heaven.

Verses Supporting the Individual/Spiritual Body View

Jno. 3:5-7: "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

This verse shows that there are two natures: one belonging to the kingdom of *heaven*, one belonging to the *earth*. The earthly nature and body do not enter the kingdom of God, the inner man of the spirit does.

Jno. 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

This verse is dispositive of the idea that physical bodies have any part of the heavenly kingdom. In Lk. 24:38, Jesus said "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Since God is a Spirit, and spirits do not have flesh and bones, it is axiomatic that God does not have flesh and bone. Christ is now a Spirit. (I Cor. 15:45; II Cor. 3:17) In the resurrection, Christians are to be made like unto Christ and God. (Ps. 17:15; Rom. 8:29; I Cor. 15:49) Hence, we will be spirit-beings without flesh and bone.

Jno. 6:63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

The flesh profits nothing in terms of man's redemption, sanctification, and salvation. It is suitable only for dwelling upon earth, where life is bounded by time and space and consigned to corruption. It is the spirit that is quickened and receives eternal life, not the flesh.

I Cor. 5:5: "Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

"Destruction" of the flesh here is best understood in terms of its mortification by denying its affections and lusts. By excommunicating unrepentant members overtaken in sin, they may be brought to shame and repentance, leading to the denial and destruction of the flesh. By thus "crucifying the flesh" (Gal. 5:24), the spirit is restored to purity, suitable unto salvation. The flesh is expressly excluded from the spirit's salvation.

I Cor. 15:35-37: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain."

Here is Paul's most direct teaching on the topic of the resurrection body: That which thou sowest thou sowest *not* that body that shall be." When we plant a seed, it is not the body that is raised. A bare grain of wheat is planted, but another body, bearing no resemblance to the other, is raised up. The seed bears the germ of the new life. In the same way, the physical body bears the germ (spirit) of man, which is the subject of the resurrection. The hull of the seed is left behind; the tender green plant comes forth. So with us, the hull of flesh is left behind, and the spirit emerges wafted away to ethereal realms above.

I Cor. 15:44, 49, 50: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and

there is a spiritual body...As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

Here are several plain statements that set the earthly and fleshly body over against the spiritual and heavenly body. The image of the earthy consists in a natural, fleshly body and carnal mind. The image of the heavenly consists in a regenerated mind and an immaterial body. The natural and material body of earth is corruptible; the heavenly and immaterial body of the spirit is incorruptible. The promise of the resurrection is of an immaterial body, like unto Christ and the angels of God in heaven (Matt. 22:25; Heb. 2:14-16).

II Cor. 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 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."

The material is visible and temporal; the immaterial is invisible and eternal. Although the outward and material man perishes, the inward, immaterial man is renewed day by day. The body will perish, but the spirit will inherit eternal life.

II Cor. 5:1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Our "earthly house" refers to our mortal bodies of flesh; "this tabernacle" also refers to our physical bodies (II Pet. 1:14). Dissolution of our earthly house speaks to putting off the body in death. The "building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" speaks to our immortal, immaterial, and spiritual bodies. These are received and enjoyed *in heaven*.

II Cor. 5:2, 3: "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked."

In the resurrection, we are clothed with our immaterial and immortal house *from* heaven, not our fleshly, mortal bodies of earth. "Naked" speaks to putting off the body of flesh in death; "clothed" speaks to putting on the spiritual body in the resurrection of life.

II Cor. 5:6-8: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Could the apostle have made it plainer? We would be absent from the body of flesh that we might be at home with the Lord. If, in the resurrection we are reunited with the body, we will be at home in the body and absent from the Lord! Clearly, that is no part of the Christian's hope.

II Cor. 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

This verse, following hard upon the heels of those going before, which so clearly proclaim that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, makes clear that in the judgment men will not be clothed with houses of clay. That they are to receive the things done *while in the body* clearly implies that at the judgment they would be in the body *no more*. They have passed from this life and put off their bodies of clay and gone to be judged for the things done while still in the flesh.

Gal. 3:3: "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

Those who hold that the "spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23) must be reunited with the flesh to be complete and inherit eternal life, fall under the like condemnation Paul reproaches the Galatians with. The completion of man's salvation is the union of spirit with God in heaven, not being newly clothed upon with bodies of clay.



Heb. 12:23: "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

The spirits of the righteous who died before Christ were not wanting bodies, but *atonement*. With the "blood of sprinkling" (v. 22) they were made wholly perfect and the way into heaven opened to them. What need have they of fleshly bodies seeing they are already perfect?

I Pet. 4:6: "For for this cause was the gospel preached also unto them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

This verse seems to speak to the saints of prior ages who had the gospel preached to them in the types and similitudes of the Old Law. Although condemned by law according to men in the flesh, they were justified by the atoning blood of Christ that they might live according to God *in the spirit*. To be reunited with bodies of clay is no part of the divine purpose.

Conclusion

The resurrection is not of the flesh, but the spirit. The general resurrection consisted in the release of souls from Hades at Christ's second coming. For those on this side of the eschaton, the spirit is given an immortal body from heaven at death, like that of the angels, suited to ethereal realms of heaven above.

(Note: Copies of excellent talks recently presented by Ed Stevens on the resurrection are available by contacting Ed at the International Preterist Association)

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"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" Matt. 18:3

Questions from our Readers

Q: I'm grappling with this and wonder if you see it this way.

1. Romans 5 seems to say that Adam was born in fellowship with God but was given a choice to obey or disobey God. Because Adam disobeyed, God severed His relationship with Adam (Adam died spiritually), cast him out of the Garden (depriving him of the tree of life). Because of this, God destined every member of the human race to be born out of fellowship with God and to have a desire to sin. God's solution was that man could get in fellowship with Him by belief in Christ's atoning sacrifice.

A. *I do not believe children/babies are born "out of fellowship" with God. I believe that when Adam fell, he lost the direct indwelling of God's Spirit ("inspiration" Heb. neshamah) that allowed him to partake of the divine image and likeness; viz., display the moral attributes of God, love, joy, peace, patience, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, etc. Adam's children inherit his fallen nature, which predisposes them to sin/carnality. Their nature is to follow the flesh, not Spirit of God. Hence, all children who arrive at an age of moral accountability will become guilty of sin. The penalty for sin was death. This death included both the body and spirit/soul. However, God suspended the sentence of death and instituted a law of substitutes by which the blood of another could secure one's pardon. A lamb/goat was slain in the garden as evidenced by the skins God clothed the couple with. This lamb/goat was an offering for sin and prefigured the death of Christ upon the cross. Thus, the couple did not die that day because the goat/lamb died in their stead.*

Q. 2. A person is not a sinner until he sins, but all do (other than the newborn who dies at birth).

A. *Correct. God does not impute Adam's or any other man's transgression to any other. We are sinners by our own sin or not at all. See. Ezek. 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." We inherit a fallen nature; we are carnal, sold under sin. It is our nature to follow the flesh. But, sin presupposes moral choice and accountability. Children and babies are not charged with sin until they are capable of understanding right from wrong. Even human criminal law acknowledges this and conclusively presumes that children under seven are incapable of formulating criminal intent; viz., are not morally culpable or answerable for otherwise criminal acts.*

Q: 3. Christ was both God and man (He had the human desire to sin but never did.)

A: *Christ had a human nature, but he did not have a human father and therefore did not inherit Adam's fallen condition. He was the "second Adam" (I Cor. 15:5) created in the same state of "original justification" (to borrow Catholic terminology). His predisposition was to follow the Spirit, not flesh. But, yes, possessing a fleshly lusts, he could be and was tempted (Heb.4:15).*

4. I'd also like to know the exact meaning of "day" in Gen 2:17. Does it mean "today", or "this instant", or something else?

"Day" means an "evening and morning" (Gen. 1:5,8). The death sentence was avoided by the substitutionary sacrifice of blood, offered that very day. Thus, the literal day of "death" appears correct. However, the passage can be read "in the day you eat" with the emphasis upon the day of eating, not "ye shall surely die". That is, the day they ate, death would surely come to them, but not necessarily that very day. See Ezek. 33:12 and I Kng. 2:37 where similar terminology is used but does not necessarily mean that death would follow that very day. The emphasis is upon the day of the doing, not the day of the dying. For example, If I said "the day you obey the gospel you will inherit eternal life," it is understood that we must wait until we put off the body in death. The emphasis is on the day of obeying, not inheriting. Genesis 2:17 can be read the same way.

5. Did Adam ever get back in fellowship with God? He couldn't have believed in Christ who wouldn't come on the scene for millennia.

I believe that Adam was restored to covenant fellowship with God by the law of blood sacrifices which prefigured Christ. How much he was told about the mystery of the gospel we do not know, but we do know that the promise of a Kinsman redeemer who would ransom them from sin and death was made to the couple and that all the righteous from Adam onward looked forward to that day. As Jesus told the Jews "Abraham saw my day and rejoiced" (Jn. 8:56), meaning Abraham looked ahead by faith to the birth/coming of Christ and rejoiced.

Hope that helps!

Moses Stuart

(1836)

Miscellaneous comments from a great Preterist commentator

(On [Luke 21:24](#) ;[Rev. 11:1](#)) "In [Rev. 11:2](#), the time during which the Romans are to tread down the holy city, (in this case the capital is, as usual in the Jewish Scripture, the representation of the country), is said to be forty-two months = three and a half years. The active invasion of Judea continued almost exactly this length of time, being at the most only a few days more; so few that they need not, and would not, enter into symbolic computation of time." (Stuart, p. 279)

"*Forty and two months.* After all the investigation which I have been able to make I feel compelled to believe that the writer refers to a literal and definite period, although not so exact that a singly day, or even a few days, or variation from it would interfere with the object he has in view. It is certain that the invasion of the Romans lasted just about the length of the period named, until Jerusalem was taken. And although the city was not besieged so long, yet the metropolis in this case, as in innumerable others in both Testaments, appears to stand for the country of Judea. During the invasion of Judea by the Romans the faithful testimony of the persecuted witnesses for Christianity is continued, while at last they are slain. The patience of God in deferring so long the destruction of the persecutors is displayed by this, and especially His mercy in continuing to warn and reprove them. This is a natural, simple, and easy method of interpretation, to say the least, and one which, although it is not difficult to raise objections against it, I feel constrained to adopt."

(On [Hebrews 9:26](#)) "But now, at the close of the [Jewish] dispensation, He has once for all made His appearance." (On [Hebrews 10:37](#)) "The Messiah will speedily come, and, by destroying the Jewish power, put an end to the suffering which your persecutors inflict upon you." (*Commentary on Hebrews, in loc.*)

(On [Hebrews 12:25-29](#), and the **New Heavens and Earth**) "That the passage has respect to the changes which would be introduced by the coming of the Messiah, and the new dispensation which he would commence, is evident from Haggai ii. 7-9. Such figurative language is frequent in the Scriptures, and denotes great changes which are to take place. So the apostle explains it here, in the very next verse. (Comp. [Isa. 13:13](#); [Haggai 2:21,22](#); [Joel 3:16](#); [Matt. 24:29-37](#)). (*Hebrews, in loc.*)

(On the **Early Date of Revelation**) "If now the number of the witnesses were the only thing which should control our judgment in relation to the question proposed, we must, so far as external evidence is concerned, yield the palm to those who fix upon the time of Domitian. But a careful examination of this matter shows, that the whole concatenation of witnesses in favour of this position hangs upon the testimony of Irenaeus, and their evidence is little more than a mere repetition of what he has said. Eusebius and Jerome most plainly depend on him; and others seem to have had in view his authority, or else that of Eusebius." (Ibid. 2:269..)

"I say this, with full recognition of the weight and value of Irenaeus's testimony, as to any matters of fact with which he was acquainted, or as to the common tradition of the churches. But in view of what Origen has said. . . , how can we well suppose, that the opinion of Irenaeus, as recorded in Cont. Haeres, V. 30 was formed in any other way, than by his own interpretation of [Rev. 1:9](#). (1:281)

"If there be anything certain in the principles of hermeneutics, it is certain that they decide in favour of a reference to Judea and its capital in Rev. vi – xi. The very fact, moreover, that the destruction of Jerusalem (chap. xi) is depicted in such outlines and mere sketches, shows that it was then sure, when the book was written. It is out of all question, except by mere violence, to give a different interpretation to this part of the Apocalypse." (1:276)

"Here then, on the very front of the book, is exhibited a title-page, as it were, indicative of a conspicuous part of the contents of the work. The punishment of the unbelieving and persecuting Jew must follow the coming of the Lord; and this it is one leading object of the book to illustrate and confirm. If so, then the prediction must have preceded the event predicted." (1:273)

"A majority of the older critics have been inclined to adopt the opinion of Irenaeus, viz., that it was written during the reign of Domitian, i.e., during the last part of the first century, or in A.D.95 or 96. Most of the recent commentators and critics have called this opinion in question, and placed the composition of the

book at an earlier period, viz., before the destruction of Jerusalem." (*A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 2 vols; Andover, MD: Allen, Morrill, and Wardwell, 1845; p. 1:263)

"The manner of the declaration here seems to decide, beyond all reasonable appeal, against a later period than about A.D.67 or 68, for the composition of the Apocalypse." (*A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 2 vols; Andover, MD: Allen, Morrill, and Wardwell, 1845; p. 2:326)

(On the **timing of John's Banishment**) "Now it strikes me, that Tertullian plainly means to class Peter, Paul, and John together, as having suffered at nearly the same time and under the same emperor. I concede that this is not a construction absolutely necessary; but I submit it to the candid, whether it is not the most probable." (1 :284n.)

(On **Nero, 'The Beast'**) "The idea that Nero was *the man of sin* mentioned by Paul, and the *Antichrist* spoken of so often in the epistles of St. John, prevailed extensively and for a long time in the early church.."

"Augustine says: What means the declaration, that the mystery of iniquity already works?... Some suppose this to be spoken of the Roman emperor, and therefore Paul did not speak in plain words, because he would not incur the charge of calumny for having spoken evil of the Roman emperor: although he always expected that what he had said would be understood as applying to Nero." (Excurs. iii.)

(On **Revelation 1:7**) "Here then, on the very front of the book, is exhibited a title-page, as it were, indicative of a conspicuous part of the contents of the work. The punishment of the unbelieving and persecuting Jew must follow the coming of the Lord; and this it is one leading object of the book to illustrate and confirm. If so, then the prediction must have preceded the event predicted.' (1:273)

(On **Revelation 13:5-7**) "The persecution of Nero began about the middle or latter part of Nov. A.D. 64, at Rome. It ended with the death of Nero, which was on the ninth of June, A.D. 68, for on that day Galba entered Rome and was proclaimed emperor. Here again is 3 + years or 1260 days with sufficient exactness; for the precise time of forty-two months expires about the middle or end of May, and Nero died in the first part of June. . . (2:469)

"After all the investigation which I have been able to make, I feel compelled to believe that the writer refers to a literal and definite period, although not so exact

that a single day, or even a few days, of variation from it would interfere with the object he has in view. It is certain that the invasion of the Romans lasted just about the length of the period named, until Jerusalem was taken. " (2:218)

(On **Revelation 17:10**) "It seems indisputably clear that the book of Revelation must be dated in the reign of Nero Caesar, and consequently before his death in June, A.D. 68. He is the sixth king; the short-lived rule of the seventh king (Galba) "has not yet come." (2:324)

"But why only seven kings? First because the number seven is the reigning symbolic number of the book; then, secondly, because this covers the ground which the writer means specially to occupy, viz., it goes down to the period when the persecution then raging would cease. (2:325,326)

(On **Origins of Praeterist View**) "Near the commencement of the seventeenth century (1614), the Spanish Jesuit Ludovicus ab Alcasar published his *Vestigatio arcani Sensus in Apocalypsi*, a performance distinguished by one remarkable feature, which was then new. He declared the Apocalypse to be a continuous and connected work, making regular advancement from beginning to end, as parts of one general plan in the mind of the writer. In conformity with this he brought out a result which has been of great importance to succeeding commentators. Rev. v-vi, he thinks, applies to the Jewish enemies of the Christian Church; xi-xix to heathen Rome and carnal and worldly powers, xx-xxii to the final conquests to be made by the church, and also to its rest, and its ultimate glorification. This view of the contents of the book had been merely hinted at before, by Hentenius, in the Preface to his Latin version of Arethas, Par. 1547. 8vo; and by Salmeron in his *Preludia in Apoc.* But no one had ever developed this idea fully, and endeavoured to illustrate and enforce it, in such a way as Alcasar ... Although he puts the time of composing the Apocalypse down to the exile of John under Domitian, yet he still applies ch. v-xi to the Jews, and of course regards the book as partly embracing the past.

"It might be expected, that a commentary that thus freed the Romish church from the assaults of the Protestants, would be popular among the advocates of the papacy. Alcasar met, of course, with general approbation and reception among the Romish community. "(Stuart, Moses, "Commentary on the Apocalypse", Allen, Morrill and Wardell, Andover, 1845, Volume 1, p. 464.)

On the Symbolism of Prophecy - Russell

with special reference to the Predictions of the Parousia

by

J. Stuart Russell

1887

The slightest attention to the language of Old Testament prophecy must convince any sober-minded man that it is not to be understood according to the letter. First of all, the utterances of the prophets are poetry; and, secondly, they are Oriental poetry. They may be called the hieroglyphic pictures representing historical events in highly metaphorical imagery. It is inevitable, therefore, that hyperbole, or that which to us appears such, should enter largely into the descriptions of the prophets. To the cold prosaic imagination of the West, the glowing and vivid style of the prophets of the East may seem turgid and extravagant; but there is always a substratum of reality underlying the figures and symbols, which, the more they are studied, commend themselves the more to the judgment of the reader. Social and political revolutions, moral and spiritual changes, are shadowed forth by physical convulsions and catastrophes; and if these natural phenomena affect the imagination more powerfully still, they are not inappropriate figures when the real importance of the events which they represent is apprehended. The earth convulsed with earthquakes, burning mountains cast into the sea, the stars falling like leaves, the heavens on fire, the sun clothed in sackcloth, the moon turned into blood, representations of great civil commotions, - the overturning of thrones and dynasties, the desolations of war, the abolition of ancient systems, and great moral and spiritual revolutions. In prophecy, as in poetry, the material is regarded as the type of the spiritual, the passions and emotions of humanity find expression in corresponding signs and symptoms in the inanimate creation. Does the prophet come with glad tidings? He calls the forest to clap their hands. Is his message one of lamentation and woe? The heavens are draped in mourning, and the sun is darkened in his going down. No one, however anxious to keep by the bare letter of the word, would think of insisting that such metaphors should be literally interpreted, or must have literal fulfillment. The utmost that we are entitled to require is, that there should be such historical events specified as may worthily correspond with such phenomena; great moral and social movements capable of producing such emotions as these physical phenomena seem to imply.

It may be useful to select some of the most remarkable of these prophetic symbols as found in the Old Testament, that we may note the occasions on which they were employed, and discover the sense in which they are to be understood.

In Isaiah xiii we have a very remarkable prediction of the destruction of ancient Babylon. It is conceived in the highest style of poetry. The Lord of hosts mustereth host of the battle; the tumultuous rush of the nations is heard; the day of the Lord is proclaimed to be at hand; the stars of heaven and the constellations withhold their light; the sun is darkened in his going forth; the moon ceases to shine; the heavens are shaken, and the earth removed out of its place. All this imagery, it will be observed, which if literally fulfilled would involve the wreck of the whole material creation, is employed to set forth the destruction of Babylon by the Medes.

Again, in Isaiah xxiv, we have a prediction of judgments about to come upon the land of Israel; and among other representations of the woes which are impending we find the following: "The windows from on high are open; the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down; the earth is clean dissolved; the earth shall fall, and not rise again," etc. All this is symbolical of the civil and social convulsion about to take place in the land of Israel.

In Isaiah xxxiv, the prophet denounces judgments on the enemies of Israel, particularly Edom, or Idumea. The imagery which he employs is of the most sublime and awful description: "The mountains shall be dissolved; 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." "The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall be waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever."

It is not necessary to ask, Have these predictions been fulfilled? We know they have been; and the accomplishment of them stands in history as a perpetual monument of the truth of Revelation. Babylon, Edom, Tyre, the oppressors or enemies of the

people of God, have been made to drink the cup of the Lord's indignation. The Lord has let none of the words of His servants the prophets fall to the ground. But on one will pretend to say that the symbols and figures which depicted their overthrow were literally verified. These emblems are the drapery of the picture, and are used simply to heighten the effect and to give vividness and grandeur to the scene.

In like manner the prophet Ezekiel uses imagery of a very similar kind in predicting the calamities which were coming upon Egypt: "And when I shall put them out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark. I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over them, and set darkness upon the land, saith the Lord God": (Ezek. xxxii.7,8)

Similarly the prophets Micah, Nahum, Joel, and Habakkuk describe the presence and interposition of the Most High in the affairs of nations as accompanied by stupendous natural phenomena: "Behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth, and the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place" (Micah i.3,4).

"The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers. The mountains quake at him and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence: yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him" (Nahum i.3-6).

These example may suffice to show, what indeed is self-evident, that in prophetic language the most sublime and terrible natural phenomena are employed to represent national and social convulsions and revolutions. Imagery, which if literally verified would involve the total dissolution of the fabric of the globe and the destruction of the material universe, really may mean no more than the downfall of a dynasty, the capture of a city, of the overthrow of a nation.

The following are the views expressed by Sir Isaac Newton on this subject, which are substantially just, though perhaps carried somewhat too far in supposing an equivalent in fact for every figure employed in the prophecy: -

"The figurative language of the prophets is taken from the analogy between the world natural and an empire or kingdom considered as world politic. accordingly, the

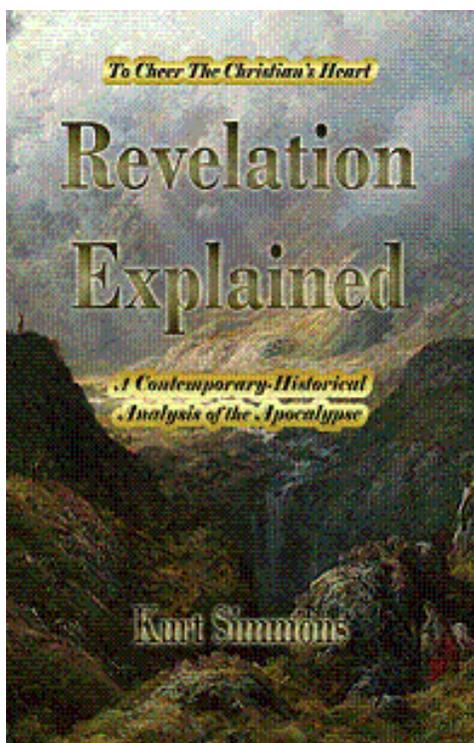
world natural, consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, distract and overthrow them; the creating of a new heaven and earth, and the passing of an old one; or the beginning and end of a world, for the rise and ruin of a body politic signified thereby. The sun, for the whole species and race of kings, in the kingdoms of the world politic; the moon, for the body of the common people considered as the king's wife; the stars, for subordinate princes and great men; or for bishops and rulers of the people of God, when the sun is Christ. Setting of the sun, moon, and stars; darkening the sun, turning the moon into blood, and falling of the stars, - for the ceasing of a kingdom." (Sir Isaac Newton, Observations on the Prophets, Part I, Chpt. 2)

We will only quote in addition the excellent remarks of a judicious expositor - Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh: -

"'Heaven and earth passing away,' understood literally, is the dissolution of the present system of the universe; and the period when that is to take place is called 'the end of the world.' But a person at all familiar with the phraseology of the Old Testament scriptures knows that the dissolution of the Mosaic economy and the establishment of the Christian, is often spoken of as the removing of the old earth and heavens, and the creation of a new earth and new heavens. For example, 'Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.' 'For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain' (Isa. lxv.17; lxvi.22) The period of the close of the one dispensation and the commencement of the other is spoken of as 'last days,' and 'the end of the world,' and is described as such a shaking of the earth and heavens as should lead to the removal of the things which were shaken. (Hagg. ii.6; Heb. xiv.26,27)" (Discourses and Sayings of our Lord, Vol. I, pp.199,200)

It appears, then, that if Scripture be the best interpreter of Scripture, we have in the Old Testament a key to the interpretation of the prophecies in the New. The same symbolism is found in both, and the imagery of Isaiah, Ezekiel and the other prophets helps us to understand the imagery of St. Matthew, St. Peter, and St. John. AS the dissolution of the material world is not necessary to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, neither is it necessary to the accomplishment of the predictions of the New Testament. But though symbols are metaphorical expressions, they are not unmeaning. It is not necessary to allegorize them, and find a corresponding equivalent for every trope; it is sufficient to regard the imagery as employed to heighten the sublimity of the prediction and to clothe it

with impressiveness and grandeur. There are, at the same time, as true propriety and an underlying reality in the symbols of prophecy. The moral and spiritual facts which they represent, the social and ecumenical changes which they typify, could not be adequately set forth by language less majestic and sublime. There is reason for believing that an inadequate apprehension of the real grandeur and significance of such events as the destruction of Jerusalem and the abrogation of the Jewish economy lies at the root of that system of interpretation which maintains that nothing answering to the symbols of New testament prophecy has ever taken place. Hence the uncritical and unscriptural figments of double senses and double, triple, and multiple fulfillments of prophecy. That physical disturbances in nature and extraordinary phenomena in the heavens and in the earth may have accompanied the expiring throes of the Jewish dispensation we are not prepared to deny. It seems to us highly probable that such things were. But the literal fulfillment of the symbols is not essential to the verification of the prophecy, which is abundantly proved to be true by the recorded facts of history.



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