

# Full Preterism Refuted

## Chapter 4: The New Testament Evidence for a Bodily Resurrection

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The New Testament, as is to be expected, gives us a much fuller picture of the resurrection. It gives the following usages of the term. (1) Like the Old Testament there are examples of resurrections back to mortal life. There are three examples of Jesus raising people from the dead (Jairus' daughter, Mk. 5:35-42; Mt. 9:23-26, Lk. 8:49-56; the widow's son, Lk. 7:11-17; and Lazarus, Jn. 11:1-44). In the book of Acts the resurrections of Tabitha (9:37-41) and Eutychus (20:9-12) are recorded. No one disputes the fact that these are real resurrections of dead physical bodies.

(2) There also is the example of the saints who came out of their tombs the moment Jesus died on the cross (Mt. 27:51-53).<sup>1</sup> Regarding the specific nature of this resurrection Matthew is silent. Therefore, commentators are divided as to whether they received glorified immortal bodies which were eventually received up into heaven. Given the fact that these saints were resurrected as a sign of the victory of the Redeemer's sacrificial death and as a token of all believers, it is likely that they were resurrected with glorified physical (yet spiritual) bodies that could not die.

This passage is problematic for full preterists for two reasons. First, the whole purpose of this resurrection was to testify regarding the efficacy of the Savior's suffering and death. It was

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<sup>1</sup> Because the Greek in this verse is somewhat ambiguous, commentators are divided over whether the saints arose the *moment* Jesus died or immediately after His resurrection. The phrase "after His [Christ's] resurrection" (v. 53) can be taken with the preceding participial clause and thus could mean that these saints were raised and came out of their tombs *after* the resurrection of Jesus. Those who favor this interpretation point out that 1 Corinthians 15:20 refers to our Lord as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." Further, Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5 identify the Redeemer as "the firstborn from the dead." Therefore, according to this view, it would be theologically inappropriate for these saints to arise *before* the resurrection of Christ.

The phrase "after his resurrection" could also go with the verb that follows. This would mean that the saints were raised the moment Jesus died, but did not enter the holy city until after the resurrection of the Savior. Those who object to this interpretation usually raise a question regarding the whereabouts of these saints from 3:00 pm on Friday to Sunday morning. What did they do before they went into Jerusalem? (Some commentators argue that after the saints were raised they remained concealed in their tombs until after the resurrection of Christ).

Although both views are possible and acceptable interpretations, the second interpretation is to be preferred for the following reasons. a) Matthew is setting forth signs that are clearly associated with the death of the Redeemer. His account leaves the impression that all these signs occurred virtually simultaneously. The saints showing themselves to believers in Jerusalem was not itself a miracle but rather the exhibition of a miracle. b) The objection that these saints could not rise until after our Lord's resurrection is not tenable. Even if these saints arose before Christ's resurrection, they did so because of the efficacy of His death. "Jesus remains 'the Firstborn from the dead' (Col. 1:18) because he alone conquered death, and even these saints arose only through the blessed power of Jesus" (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 1131). We must remember that the Savior's own resurrection is not an event unrelated to the cross but was achieved and guaranteed by it. The Redeemer's sacrificial death is the cause, while the resurrection is the effect. "[T]he triumphant death and resurrection of Jesus remain the legal basis for the glorious resurrection even of the saints. Besides, the comparison in 1 Cor. 15:20, taking its point of departure in Christ's resurrection, looks to the future, the second coming: in relation to all believers who will *then* arise, Jesus is the firstfruits." [William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 975, footnote 894.] Further, Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (2 Ki. 2:11) both escaped death and ascended directly to heaven. This proves that the efficacy of the Mediator's death and resurrection was not bound by time. These Old Testament saints escaped the jaws of death because of the Savior's merits and not their own "good works."

designed to give the people of God an *example of the new life* which they ought to expect. “[I]n order that the minds of believers might be more quickly raised to hope, it was advantageous that the resurrection, which was common to all of them, should be tasted by a few.”<sup>2</sup> As these saints came out of their tombs literally and bodily, we should expect to come forth literally and bodily. What else could anyone conclude from reading this passage unless he was unwilling to accept the plain teaching of God’s Word? Second, no one disputes the fact that Matthew describes a real bodily resurrection. The evangelist describes solid rocky cliffs being rent and *tombs* or *graves* being opened. He uses the expression, “many bodies” (*polla somata*), which refutes all those who view the resurrection in a purely spiritual or complete replacement manner (e.g., Gnostics, Docetists, neo-Platonists, modernists, full preterists, etc). The victory of the cross resulted in physical bodily resurrections and empty sepulchers that all the people of Jerusalem could examine. Moreover, after Jesus rose, these glorified believers went into town and showed themselves to the saints (Mt. 27:53). The Christians in Jerusalem obviously would have concluded that what Christ did for these Old Testament believers, who a few days before were only dust and bones, He can and will do for all the saints who have died. The cross has defeated physical death as well as spiritual death.

(3) There is the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:2-8; Mk. 16:2-8; Lk. 24:1-8; Jn. 20:1-10). That this was a real bodily resurrection is proven by the following observations. a) An angel rolled away the stone (Mt. 28:2) so that the women (Mk. 16:5; Mt. 28:5) and the disciples (Jn. 20:4-9) could see that the tomb was empty and the grave clothes were lying in place. Moreover, so that no one would come to a wrong conclusion about what happened the angel told the women what had happened: “He is not here for He is risen” (Mt. 28:6; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:6). (It is noteworthy that the spices and ointments used to anoint our Lord’s body would have essentially been glued to each layer of cloth and the Redeemer’s body. It seems that when Jesus arose He passed right through the grave clothes). The exact same body that was crucified arose from the dead.

b) Christ set forth the proof of His bodily resurrection to His doubting disciples. “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet” (Lk. 24:39-40). In John’s account He also showed them the scar on His side (20:20). The disciples could touch and squeeze the Mediator’s arms. They could feel the bones in His fingers and in His wrist. Thus, they could not deny that their crucified Lord stood before them in the same (albeit glorified) body in which He was buried. To add further indisputable evidence, our Lord even eats a piece of broiled fish and some honey in their presence (Lk. 24:41-43). A week later Jesus ordered doubting Thomas to touch the imprints on His hands and side (Jn. 20:27), once again proving that He was not a disembodied spirit or a completely new creation that had nothing to do with His body which had been crucified and buried. From these accounts, it is obvious that Christ not only wanted the apostles to believe in the historical reality of His bodily resurrection and be important eye witnesses of it (e.g., Ac. 2:32; 3:15; etc); but also, *He wanted them to know what a resurrected glorified body is like*. It is the exact same body that was dead and then was raised up again. However, the resurrected person’s body exists in a new glorified wonderful state.

Our Lord’s resurrection is unique in that His resurrection was a victory over death itself which ushered in a new creation. He arose as the complete victor over sin who is exalted to the right hand of power (Mt. 28:18; Rom. 1:4). He is now “a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor.

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<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke*, 3:325.

3:18) who ever lives to intercede for His people. When Jesus rose, He did so as a covenantal representative of His people. Because of the Savior's resurrection, His people receive a spiritual resurrection from the dead (Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 6:4) and progressive sanctification in history (Rom. 6:4 ff.). Moreover, the saints will receive new glorified, resurrected bodies at the second coming because He is the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20). By His sacrificial death and resurrection, the Redeemer has become the source of all true spiritual and physical *everlasting life*. His redemptive work even completely overturns the effects of the fall and results in a literal new heavens and earth (Rom. 8:20-22; Rev. 21:1-6). The resurrection of Christ which flows from the cross is the most important event in history. It is the turning point of all the ages and the centerpiece of all history.

The resurrection of Christ also is a great problem for the full preterist system. If (as we noted in our discussion of the fall) Adam's sin only resulted in sin-death or spiritual death and has nothing to do with physical death, then why did our Lord have to die and then rise again in His physical body? If mankind's only problem was spiritual death and physical death was normal or natural, then there was no reason whatsoever for Jesus to retain His physical body after death and rise out of the tomb. If full preterism is true and believers do not rise with the same body that was in the grave, then why did the Savior rise with His same body? Was the resurrection of the Messiah purely arbitrary? Was it solely for dramatic or apologetic effect? Paul certainly did not think so. He said, "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.... And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.... But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:14, 17, 20, 21). It was necessary for Jesus to die and then be raised out of the grave so that believers who are dead physically and buried could be raised unto eternal glorified life. "While Paul is here concerned with the eschatological resurrection of saints at the parousia, the eschatological resurrection is inseparable from the resurrection of Jesus because he describes these two resurrections as two parts of a single event. The resurrection of Jesus is the firstfruits of the eschatological resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). All who are in Christ stand in solidarity with him as all men in Adam stand in solidarity with Adam. All in Adam share Adam's death, so all who are in Christ will share Christ's life.... The resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of those who belong to Christ constitute two parts of a single entity, two acts in a single drama, two stages of a single process."<sup>3</sup> Given this fact, the full preterist rejection of the literal bodily resurrection of the saints in favor of the idea that they receive completely new and different bodies that are created out of nothing makes no sense whatsoever. (Their attempts to support this doctrine with their seed analogy [see section on 1 Cor. 15 below] is desperate and a mockery of sound exegesis.) Full preterists believe that even though Jesus rose bodily so that we could arise, our bodies never do rise but remain dust in the earth forever. They must teach this heretical nonsense because it is obvious that graveyards were not emptied in A.D. 70.

Thus once again we see that full preterism is not simply a heresy related to eschatology. It also perverts, distorts and changes the doctrine of the fall and the whole meaning and purpose of the cross and empty tomb. For a full preterist to adhere to the traditional, orthodox conception of the cross and empty tomb he essentially must *contradict* his own system. In addition, the doctrine of the incarnation itself is called into question because the literalness and sameness of glorified bodies is rejected by their paradigm. Consequently, a number of full preterists believe

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<sup>3</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 326.

that at some point after the resurrected Jesus discarded His genuine human nature. Such thinking is totally heretical.

Moreover, would not the fact that Christ came out of the tomb *with His same physical body* (although glorified) and the many saints came out of their tombs (when our Lord died on the cross) *with their same physical bodies* lead the saints to expect a literal, bodily (i.e. the same bodies that were buried) resurrection at the second coming of Christ? Of course it would! This is certainly the explicit, inspired teaching of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:49 and of John in 1 John 3:2 and Revelation 20:11-15. As Schep writes, “The resurrection of the dead in a body of flesh is guaranteed by Jesus’ resurrection in a body of ‘flesh and bones,’ with the scars of His wounds visible, and capable of being touched and of eating food (Luke 24:38-43; Acts 10:41). At His ascension Jesus did not discard this flesh body, as is clear from Acts 1:11; Philippians 3:21; Revelation 1:17. Since the resurrected believers will be like the risen Christ (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2), they too will be raised in their bodies of flesh (cf. 1 Cor. 15:32-42). Only in this way is man saved in his totality, and able to live on a new earth (Isa. 65:17 ff.; 66:22; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-3).”<sup>4</sup>

(4) The New Testament speaks of a spiritual resurrection of believers to new life in Christ. In other words a Christian’s past spiritual resurrection is a metaphor for regeneration or the new birth. “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Eph. 2:1-5). “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:11-13; cf. 3:1-5). “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection...Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:4, 5, 11).

These passages which speak of a spiritual resurrection are clearly teaching something very different than the passages which elaborate on a bodily or physical resurrection. Let us note the differences so that we will not confuse the two or be deceived by the full preterist’s equivocations on this matter. First, note that this resurrection is *past tense* for true believers. Paul says, “we were buried” (aorist passive indicative) with Christ in order that “we should walk (aorist active subjunctive) in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). The apostle says that at one time Christians were spiritually dead in their sins, but God made us alive (*sunezoopoiesen*, aorist active indicative) with Christ (the exact same verb is used in Ephesians 2:5 and Colossians 2:13). In all of these examples Paul refers to a definite event in the past. “Our resurrection here is not the future resurrection of the body, but the past resurrection of our soul, a resurrection not from a

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<sup>4</sup> J. A. Schep, “Resurrection” in General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, 76), 5:74.

literal grave, but from the deadness of sin.”<sup>5</sup> In Romans 6 the death to sin and spiritual life is used to discuss the impartation of new life and sanctification (i.e. deliverance from the pollution of sin). In Colossians 2:13 he speaks of regeneration and conversion. Unlike the passages which speak of the resurrection of the body which are always looking to the future, these passages always look back to the past when we were born again and saved from our sins.

Second, the spiritual resurrection of believers is something that occurs progressively throughout history as Christ imparts His vivifying Spirit to regenerate and save individuals in each successive generation until the consummation. Speaking of spiritual resurrection our Lord said, “The hour is coming and now is” (Jn. 5:25). When Jesus walked the earth He had the power to speak to dead hearts and cause them to live; this power continues throughout history. The resurrected Savior is “a life giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). Both Ephesians 2:1-5 and Colossians 2:11-13 assume that at one time in our lives we were dead in trespasses and sins and then, at a certain time, each individual was spiritually quickened and made a Christian.

But when Scripture speaks about the general resurrection of the body (and the final judgment), it always describes it as a singular event in history that is *not repeated or progressive*. Jesus will raise His own “at the last day” (Jn. 6:39, 40, 44, 54). The last day is preceded by “the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:52). The “last day” cannot refer to the last day of the Jewish age or Old Covenant administration, for the context makes it clear that Jesus is speaking about the preservation in grace and bodily resurrection of all those that the Father has given to the Son (i.e. the elect). The complete body of saints throughout all human history will rise out of their graves “at the last day.” Consequently, the second coming must come at the end of history and not in the middle of history in A.D. 70. (See the section on Jn. 6:39 for a more detailed discussion of this point.)

Some full preterists attempt to circumvent the meaning of this expression by arguing that “the last day” refers to the day of each believer’s death. This view is easily refuted by examining how this expression is used in John’s gospel. After Jesus and Martha learn that Lazarus is already dead (i.e. his final day, so to speak) Christ tells Martha that Lazarus will rise again, then “Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day’” (Jn. 11:24). Martha distinguished between a personal event and the general resurrection of the saints on the last day of history. Our Lord also used this expression to describe the day of judgment (Jn. 12:48). The day of the general resurrection is also the day of the final judgment .

Third, the references to spiritual resurrection speak of a deliverance from sin as guilt and pollution but do not mention physical death or graves at all. Paul said, “You...were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 1:1, 5); “You being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh” [this phrase is a metaphor for being unregenerate]; “the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, but alive to God” (Rom. 6:6, 11). Likewise Jesus said, “He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and...has passed [perfect active indicative: they were raised spiritually in the past and this new spiritual life has a continued effect upon their spiritual state and life] from death into life” (Jn. 5:24).

The passages which speak of the resurrection of the body use language that makes it perfectly clear that this resurrection involves the emptying of real graves and the resurrection of real physical bodies. Jesus said, “All who are in their graves will hear His voice and come forth” (Jn. 5:28). Paul said, “We shall not all sleep [physical death], but we shall all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51); “He...will...give life to your mortal bodies” (Rom. 8:11). “If our earthly house, this

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon Clark, *Ephesians*, 67.

tent [i.e. our physical bodies] is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands...For we who are in this tent groan being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:1, 4); “the Savior ...who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:21); “...concerning those who have fallen asleep...we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (1 Thess. 4:13, 14); John said, “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works” (Rev. 20:13). These passages are obviously not referring only to deliverance from “sin-death” or spiritual death, but to physical death as well. Moreover, since all these promises are given to believers who have already been delivered from the guilt and pollution of sin, they can only refer to a future bodily resurrection.

Given the fact that in A.D. 70 tombs were not emptied of their bodies and no physical bodily resurrections took place, full preterists have only three explanations for these passages all of which are completely untenable. a) Some argue that all the references to graves being emptied and bodies coming forth are merely metaphors for the regeneration or salvation of souls. This view does not work because the promises of a future bodily resurrection are given to people who are *already saved*. Believers are not regenerated twice. If they argue that it is a subjective spiritual experience subsequent to salvation, then they need to explain what it is and why regeneration and baptism in the Holy Spirit needs an additional work of grace. Moreover, they need to explain why our Lord discriminates between two types of death and life in John 5 when He was really only saying the same thing twice. In addition, this view does not explain why unbelievers are said to rise bodily also. b) Other full preterists argue for a secret partial resurrection. The dead bodies of Christians did not come out of their graves, but rather they were simply given new bodies in A.D. 70 while their old bodies remain in the earth as dust. This view not only completely ignores the fact that Scripture teaches that the graves will be emptied (Dan. 12:1, 2; Jn. 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 5:42, 52; 1 Thess. 4:14, 17; Rev. 20:11-15; Ac. 24:15), but also the fact that Scripture teaches that the final resurrection is universal (Rev. 20:13; Mt. 25:32 ff.) and occurs on the final day of history (Jn. 6:39, 40, 44, 45, 54; 11:24; 12:48; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). They also teach that all believers after A.D. 70 receive their resurrected bodies at death. Both of these views are totally arbitrary and are not supported by any sound biblical exegesis. It is simply a theory made up to attempt to harmonize the many clear resurrection passages with their erroneous teaching that the second coming of Christ occurred in A.D. 70. Would any rational expositor come to these same conclusions when interpreting the resurrection of the body passages unless he was attempting to harmonize them with the full preterist paradigm? This is a dishonest, dangerous and heretical way to treat God’s Word. c) There are others who view the resurrection of the body passages as teaching the restoration and salvation of Israel. This view (as noted above) explicitly contradicts Scripture and is totally absurd. Israel was not delivered in A.D. 70, but rather judged and destroyed.

## Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

This passage does not reference the resurrection directly, but assumes that a literal bodily resurrection must take place. There are a number of things in this verse that refute the full

preterist conception of the resurrection. First, there can be no denying that our Lord is discussing what happens to the soul or spirit (the invisible, immaterial aspect of a person) of man as well as his *physical body* (his body of flesh and bones). The term body (*soma*) is contrasted with the soul (*psyche*); it is something that can be killed. Consequently, “body” cannot be a metaphor for the spirit or a non-material experience. Unbelievers can cause *temporary* pain and suffering to a Christian’s physical *body*, but they cannot touch our relationship to Christ. God, however, is able to afflict suffering on the *physical bodies* of unbelievers *forever* in hell (*Gehenna*, the abode of the wicked body and soul, after the day of judgment).<sup>6</sup> The clear contrast between the *temporary* suffering of the physical bodies of Christians in this life and the *eternal* bodily suffering of unbelievers in hell make this verse impossible for full preterists to circumvent. Their attempts to apply this verse to spiritual suffering alone or some national experience are totally absurd. Second, Jesus says that eternal destruction, *both body and soul*, awaits all those who reject Him. The point is not simply that believers should be willing to suffer persecution and die for the faith because their soul is safe and secure even if they are tortured, mutilated and killed; but also that their whole person both body and soul will be safe and secure at the final judgment. Third, if the full preterist teaching on the resurrection were true, our Lord’s statement would make no sense at all. The full preterist teaches that the bodies of Christians and unbelievers rot in their graves forever. If the same bodies that lived and died will not be resurrected to be turned over to eternal destruction and suffering, then Christ’s teaching is *wrong*. What He says is totally incompatible with full preterism.

## Matthew 22:23-32

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: “Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.” Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, *‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’*? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

In this section of Scripture the Sadducees (who rejected the resurrection of the body) ask Jesus a question on one of the most important theological questions which divided the Jews at that time. A main purpose of this question was to ridicule the Pharisees’ understanding of the resurrection by making it look absurd in the eyes of the people. By asking this question, they

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<sup>6</sup> J. A. Alexander notes that, “Besides this careful guarding against natural and common errors, there is a great precision in the choice of terms, the term *kill* being only used in reference to the body as distinguished from the soul, while that employed in reference to the soul, even when reunited to the body, is *destroy*” (*The Gospel According to Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Baker, (1860) 1980], 295). The term *destroy* does not mean annihilate in this context, but ruin, perdition or the destruction of all that makes existence desirable. Paul speaks “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” in 2 Thessalonians 1:9. The smoke of their torment ascends upward forever and ever (Rev. 14:11).

intended to make Christ look incompetent as a teacher before the people and also wanted to alienate Jesus from many in the ruling classes who were Sadducees. This portion of Scripture refutes the full preterist understanding of the resurrection in the following ways.

First, note that the question presupposes that Jesus Himself held to a position on the resurrection that to one degree or another was similar to the Pharisees. If Jesus did not believe in the resurrection of the body at all or merely held to some spiritual view as many full preterists do, this question would never have been asked. Remember, they were trying to make our Lord's own position foolish. This was not a sincere inquiry to learn more about doctrine, but an attack.

Second, the Savior never denies a literal resurrection of the body in His answer. Christ rather attacks their assumption that married life continues in the hereafter. If our Lord rejected the Pharisees' notion of the actual dead physical bodies of the saints being raised to life out of their graves, then He would have refuted this aspect of their question in His answer. But He has no problem with the Jewish view of a literal resurrection. Our Lord's statement, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven," does not mean that after the resurrection the saints are disembodied spirit beings. It simply means that the resurrected saints will be like the angels who do not get married, have conjugal relations or bear children. The glorified saints will be like the angels *in this one respect*. The Sadducees had based their whole argument on a false premise, one that has absolutely no support from Scripture at all, that in the consummate kingdom the exact same social and familial conditions exist that are present in this age. Luke's account adds the fact that, in the resurrection, the saints will be equal to the angels because they will be unable to die (Lk. 20:36). Consequently, the necessity of bearing children to propagate a living heritage is unnecessary. As "sons of the resurrection" our glorified bodies will never grow old or die. Such comments would be completely unnecessary and out of place if our Lord did not believe in a literal bodily resurrection.

Third, because the Sadducees only accepted the authority of the Pentateuch, Jesus proves the resurrection of the body from Exodus 3:6: "I am the God of Abraham...Isaac, and Jacob...God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Although these saints are dead physically they are alive spiritually in God's presence; consequently, their bodies will be raised because they are saved and have a covenant relationship with God. "'Dead men' are men whose bodies are lifeless, who are lying in their graves. If there is no resurrection, then the bodies of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would remain dead forever, and that would make God 'the God of dead men'—an impossible thought. That would mean that death was not conquered; that death was holding its prey and was stronger than God; that redemption had failed, leaving death still triumphant. But no; the resurrection proves that God is 'the God of living men.' Death has suffered its deathblow."<sup>7</sup>

Fourth, the Sadducees' question assumes that the resurrection of the righteous is a singular event, "therefore in the resurrection." The full preterist idea of progressive resurrections throughout history resulting in literally millions of different resurrection days is obviously an invention to make the resurrection that supposedly occurred in A.D. 70 apply to believers who die after that date. The only problem with that view is that it is totally arbitrary and explicitly contradicts Scripture.

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<sup>7</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 875.

## Luke 14:12-14

Then He also said to him who invited Him, “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite *the* poor, *the* maimed, *the* lame, *the* blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

In this passage we learn that the believer who extends mercy and compassion toward the poor and disadvantaged outcasts of society will receive a reward at the resurrection of the righteous. This passage assumes that all those who believe in Jesus and are declared righteous will be raised up together: “the resurrection [singular] of the righteous [plural].” It also connects the general resurrection to the final judgment where men are rewarded according to their works (Mt. 25:31-46; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:6-10; Rev. 20:11-15; etc). Once again we see an explicit contradiction between Scripture and the full preterist concept of progressive resurrections.

## John 5:28-29

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

Here we have a very plain statement of a general bodily resurrection, both of the good and the bad. As we noted in our discussion of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, it is clear that this verse is speaking of a literal bodily resurrection out of tombs and not regeneration or a spiritual resurrection out of a state of spiritual death. Even the full preterist J. Stuart Russell admits this obvious truth. He writes, “There can be no doubt that the passage just quoted (ver. 28, 29) refers to a literal resurrection of the dead. It may also be admitted that the preceding verses (25, 26) refer to the communication of spiritual life to the spiritually dead.”<sup>8</sup> This is a startling, but scholarly and honest admission (He even uses the expression “the buried dead,” “the dead from their graves,” and “the corporeally [i.e. pertaining to matter, material, physical, bodily] dead” in his discussion of this text on the same and the following page. But being a dedicated full preterist he ignores the fact that a literal general resurrection of the dead did not take place in A.D. 70 and proceeds with a discussion of time indicators. Our Lord makes a distinction between the spiritual resurrections that were already taking place as He went about preaching the gospel by using the expression “and now is” in verse 25. The resurrection from the graves is in the indeterminate future—“the hour is coming.” Russell argues that since the expression “the hour is coming” is used with the Samaritan woman about the inauguration of the New Covenant which took place very soon (when Jesus died and rose again) it must imply imminence in this passage also. The problem with such an argument is that one usage of an individual’s unique use of a phrase is not enough to find a consistent pattern to fix an *assigned* consistent meaning. Moreover, there is the insurmountable difficulty of the tens of thousands of graveyards that are still full of dead bodies.

The full preterist only has three options with this verse, none of which work at all. First, he can argue that verses 28 and 29 are discussing regeneration and not a literal bodily

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<sup>8</sup> J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia*, 124.

resurrection. The problem with this view is that regeneration only applies to the elect or Christ's sheep, while this verse discusses a general resurrection of *both* the saved and the lost. Moreover, obviously people who are saved do not need to be born again. In addition, the expression "will come out [of] the tombs" is never used as a metaphor for regeneration in the Bible. Further, the fact that verse 25 discusses regeneration and verse 28 uses a different time indicator which is wholly future proves that two different topics are under discussion (v. 25, regeneration from spiritual death; vs. 28-29, resurrection from physical death). Also, if this is a spiritual resurrection, how does it apply to those who are raised unto condemnation? The Bible unequivocally teaches that unbelievers are *already* spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13) and under the condemnation of God from birth (Jn. 3:18-19). What does this resurrection *add* spiritually to the state of the wicked that is different from where they are at present spiritually? The full preterist cannot answer this question using Scripture. This question is not a problem for the traditional orthodox view because after the general resurrection they will suffer in *both* body and soul. If the full preterist argues that the bad are regenerated also then: a) he has become a universalist; and b) he must explain how a raising unto spiritual life is called a "condemnation" by our Lord. Both options are obviously unscriptural.

Second, the full preterist can argue that Jesus is discussing a release of the *souls* of saints and unbelievers from Hades in A.D. 70. But, this doesn't work because: a) Our Lord does not use the word *Hades* which can refer to the place where the souls of the dead are. Instead He uses the very specific word *mnemeiois* which means grave, tomb or sepulcher. A tomb or sepulcher refers to a safe place for keeping a *dead physical body*.<sup>9</sup> Jewish tombs were usually caves carved

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<sup>9</sup> Full preterists attempt to circumvent the clear teaching of John 5: 28-29 and the use of the word "graves" (*mnemeiois*) by appealing to Ezekiel 37 which speaks of dry bones as "the whole house of Israel" (v. 11) and of God's people coming up from their graves (vs. 12-13). Thus, we are told that John 5:28-29 speaks of a great restoration of Israel; and, must not be taken literally. This full preterist attempt to avoid the plain teaching of Jesus in John 5:28-19 must be rejected for the following reasons. First, it is very clear in the immediate context of Ezekiel that God is using a *metaphor* for the restoration of Israel. The "slain" (v. 9) are those in exile. That death is the state of exile is proved from verse 12 where they are brought out of their graves to return to the land of Israel. The bones represent the whole house of Israel living in exile at the time of the restoration. The graves represent being under the power of their enemy, living under judgment and perhaps even being in a state of gross declension. Although Ezekiel makes it perfectly clear that he is using metaphors that are not to be taken literally at all, Jesus speaks plainly. The coming out of the tombs is connected not to a restoration of Israel, but to the final judgment.

Second, there is nothing in the immediate or mediate context of John 5:28-29 which would lead an objective interpreter to conclude that our Lord was appealing to Ezekiel 37 in His comments. The context has nothing to do with national Israel. Christ is discussing how *individuals* can have everlasting life (Jn. 5:24) and is emphasizing how He is sovereign over salvation. The Savior imparts spiritual life (vs. 25-26) and is the One in charge of the final judgment (v. 27). The comment on judgment leads to a statement about the resurrection which leads to the judgment (vs. 28-29). This has nothing to do with a national restoration of Israel. The full preterist arbitrarily applies Ezekiel 37 to this passage because it explicitly contradicts their paradigm.

Third, the Roman war against the Jews and the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 66-70) clearly cannot be connected to Ezekiel 37 and its prophecy of the restoration of Israel. The events of A.D. 70 were not a restoration but the exact opposite. The Jews rejected their Messiah and persecuted the church and thus were vomited out of the land. They were excluded from the land because of their own guilt and apostasy. They were not gathered together but rather were dispersed among many nations. They were not protected from hostile powers but instead began a lengthy period of hardship and suffering. (Note the context of Ezekiel 37: "Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers... I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you [Under the Roman siege there was widespread starvation in Jerusalem]... And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields [The Roman soldiers cut down all the trees within a wide radius around Jerusalem for firewood and siege works; see Josephus *Wars* vi; 1:1]... This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities *are now* fortified *and* inhabited.' [The Romans not only cut down thousands of

into limestone cliffs or rocky areas. The word “grave” is a more general word that can refer to a tomb and also undesirable places where dead bodies can end up (e.g., “the sea was his grave”). Clearly, Christ is discussing dead physical bodies coming out of graves and not simply souls being released from Hades. b) The purpose of raising the dead bodies of unbelievers on the day of judgment is so that their suffering in hell will be increased because they will suffer in the same bodies in which they sinned and rejected God. If only their souls are removed then this so-called resurrection would serve no purpose. Souls would simply move out of Hades and then go right back to Hades. c) If they argue that the souls go from Hades to the lake of fire which is a worse punishment, then they have an even greater problem, for according to their system Hades is emptied and destroyed in A.D. 70 when it is cast into the lake of fire. This would mean that unbelievers who die after A.D. 70 cannot experience a soul resurrection from Hades. This would mean that the general resurrection has absolutely nothing to do with people throughout post-A.D. 70 history. Under such a system believers could only experience a resurrection if they first spent time in the lake of fire. Such a view is patently absurd. d) As we have previously noted, the New Testament explicitly teaches that the souls of believers at death *immediately* go to be with Jesus in heaven (Lk. 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23; Rev. 20:4). Consequently, a release of souls in A.D. 70 according to Scripture is impossible and superfluous. e) The resurrection of believers is frequently described as a coming to life from the dead or of a rising from sleep (i.e. death). The souls of believers in Hades are not dead and they certainly are not asleep. Therefore, the coming out of Hades theory explicitly contradicts the Bible’s own language of resurrection. A soul moving from one place to another without the physical body is never called a resurrection in Scripture. Moreover, why would the word resurrection mean one thing for Jesus (His physical body coming out of the tomb) and something completely different for Christians (a release of souls from Hades)? The Hades viewpoint leaves one with a maze of contradictions and absurdities.

Third, some full preterists, because of the explicit nature of this passage and others, argue that a “literal” bodily resurrection did take place in A.D. 70. However, they argue that the same bodies that died and were buried were not raised, rather God created *completely new bodies* for the final judgment. They use the seed analogy in 1 Corinthians 15:35 ff to argue that the bodies of saints that arise are new different bodies. The whole purpose of the seed analogy (which we will deal with under 1 Cor. 15) is to come up with an explanation as to why the resurrection occurred in A.D. 70, but all the physical bodies of the saints and the wicked are still in their graves. This view suffers from a number of insurmountable exegetical difficulties. a) They arbitrarily apply the seed analogy to the saints and not to Christ even though Paul specifically applies it to Jesus. Our Lord rose in the exact same body in which He died and left behind an

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trees, but also destroyed crops and sowed salt in the fields. Moreover, the land was depopulated and *all the Jews* were kicked out of the land in A.D. 12]...I will increase their men like a flock [Over 2 million Jews were slaughtered in the siege and defeat of Jerusalem alone], Ezek. 36:28, 29, 30, 35, 37.) The only possible way that Ezekiel 37 can be applied beyond its fulfillment in the restoration after the Babylonian captivity is to argue that either it is being fulfilled in the gathering of elect Jews into the church throughout history or to argue as dispensationalists do that its fulfillment is still future even to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Modern secular *unbelieving* Israel cannot be regarded as a fulfillment of this passage [see Ezek. 36:25-27].)

Fourth, the connection to Ezekiel 37 does not at all explain or fit with the statement about a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation. In Ezekiel 37 we see nothing about condemnation. In addition, full preterists who argue that Ezekiel 37 proves that verses 28 and 29 are speaking about regeneration and not a literal bodily resurrection cannot explain the resurrection unto condemnation. Either both resurrections are literal or both must be figurative.

empty tomb and empty grave clothes. Although, the Savior's body was obviously transformed (it was now spiritual, incorruptible, glorified and powerful), nevertheless it was the *same body* and still was *physical* (flesh and bones). He was not a disembodied spirit. b) The seed analogy cannot be applied to unbelievers, yet unbelievers are also said to rise out of their tombs. How do full preterists deal with this inconsistency? Moreover, what about unbelievers who die after A.D. 70? Does God have a storage room of resurrection bodies created in A.D. 70 awaiting the death of each unsaved person also? This makes no sense whatsoever when we consider that the seed analogy can only be applied to Christians. Unsaved persons were not united to Jesus in His death and resurrection. Our Lord is not the firstfruits of pagans and reprobates. Therefore, the full preterist who uses the seed analogy must argue that either unbelievers do not rise physically at all (e.g., the souls are transferred from Hades to the lake of fire) or that, *unlike* believers, unbelievers do arise with their same physical bodies. Both of these views are completely arbitrary and cannot be proven from Scripture. c) Most importantly, why does Christ teach in John 5:29 that the physically dead and buried, both good (Christians) and bad (unbelievers), will come out of their tombs when according to full preterism no such thing will ever really happen? Was Jesus mistaken? Was He simply using a metaphor for dramatic effect? No! It is obvious that when the Savior said "tombs" He meant "tombs." The full preterist system explicitly contradicts Scripture. There is absolutely nothing in the immediate context to lead us to conclude that our Lord was speaking metaphorically. If the tombs still contain dead bodies, then the general resurrection has not yet occurred. Once we accept the plain teaching of Scripture without imposing a preconceived theological paradigm upon it, the general resurrection passages are quite simple and contain no absurdities, contradictions or strange, hidden meanings.

## John 6:39

This is the will of Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. (cf. vs. 40, 44, 54)

This passage is important for two reasons. First, it explicitly teaches that *all* of the saints throughout *all* of human history will be raised on the same day. In this context it is clear that the word "it" (singular) denotes the elect or the whole company of believers in Christ. The context defines this group as "he who comes to Me" (v. 35); "all that the Father gives Me" (v. 37); "all He has given Me" (v. 39); "everyone who...believes in Him" (v. 40); everyone who the Father draws to Christ (v. 44); "He who believes in Me" (v. 47). Every single individual purchased by the blood of Christ throughout all of human history to the consummation will arise at the same time and appear together with Jesus at His coming (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18). The all inclusiveness of the resurrection disproves the two or three separate bodily resurrections of premillennialists and dispensationalists as well as the idea of progressive resurrections throughout history after A.D. 70. All believers must wait until "the last day" before they are raised out of their tombs to a life of glory. The whole purpose of the unity of the eschatological complex where the second coming, the general resurrection and the final judgment occur on "the final day" is to *publicly* vindicate, glorify and exalt Jesus Christ *before the whole human race* and angelic hosts. Obviously, a local, non-bodily, secret coming before the vast majority of human beings are even born does not fulfill that objective.

The full preterist argument that every single believer did receive a new, glorified body in A.D. 70, but that these bodies are placed in storage by God until believers who exist in the future

die is a ridiculous, pitiful attempt to circumvent the passages which teach that all the saints rise together. It is disproved by the following arguments.

(1) It essentially redefines the whole meaning of the resurrection because: a) Resurrection presupposes the rising up of a body that has already lived and died. What they posit is a *creation*, not a resurrection. b) It posits the absurdity of a resurrected body existing prior to a person's real physical body. Moreover while the person is alive they possess *two bodies simultaneously*, a real human body and a resurrected body in storage. This idea is completely absurd. c) A resurrection in Scripture involves the reuniting of a person's soul or spirit with his body. The creation of an inanimate shell in heaven is not a resurrection.

(2) They offer no biblical argumentation or Scriptural support for their idea of preexistent resurrection bodies. Fabricating concepts out of thin air is not a credible way to form theology. If full preterists want to write a novel about a fantasy world, that's fine; but they should keep their fantasies out of the sphere of eschatology.

(3) The resurrection at the last day is presented as the *completion* of the salvation that Jesus has imparted to His own. It is the capstone to all His promises connected with trust in Him and perseverance in the faith. In fact, our Lord repeats this great assurance four times, in verses 39, 40, 44, 54 to drive this point home. The promise is extended to people who are the elect (God's love gift to the Son) who then "believe in Him" or "come to Him." If the full preterist interpretation were true, the resurrection, at least for the vast majority of believers, would *precede* their regeneration, effectual calling, faith, justification and sanctification. Consequently, the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) is turned upside down and the saints are glorified before they are saved or even exist! It the full preterist counters by saying that the Christian is not actually resurrected until the moment he dies, then he must deny that a resurrection of all the saints took place in A.D. 70 and thus he must reject our Lord's explicit "final day" teaching in John 6:39, 40, 44, 54 and many other passages; or, he must teach that all Christians who die after A.D. 70 experience two separate resurrections, one in the past in A.D. 70 and one in the future at death. This position also explicitly contradicts John 6:39.

The full preterist attempts to ignore or circumvent many of the very clear passages of Scripture on Christ's second coming, make a mockery of Greek exegesis and Christian theology. One must study their writings to learn that: grave does not mean grave; body does not mean body; air or atmosphere does not mean air or atmosphere; being snatched away does not mean being snatched away; final judgment does not mean final judgment; last trumpet does not mean last trumpet; and, last day does not mean last day.

Second, as noted, the expression "the last day" which is only found in John's gospel (7:37, 9:39, 40, 44, 54, 11:24) refers to the final day of human history, the day when Christ returns, the final judgment takes place and death and hell are cast into the lake of fire. As noted above, if Jesus returned in A.D. 70, then the vast majority of mankind has no part in the general resurrection or final judgment whatsoever.

Full preterists object to this interpretation by pointing out that John uses a similar expression "last hour" to describe his own day in 1 John 2:18: "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour." This would be a problem if John was discussing the second coming of Christ, the general resurrection and the final judgment, but none of these things appear in the context at all. What then is John talking about? Some scholars point out that 1 John 2:18 does not have the definite article before hour and believe he is simply pointing out "a critical time" (e.g., Stafford North). Others take the expression as an equivalent to "the last days"

or “these last times” (cf. Ac. 2:17; Heb. 1:2; Jas. 5:3; 1 Pet. 1:20) and point out that the last days run from the first to the second coming of Christ (e.g., Simon J. Kistemaker). Still others think that John believed that Jesus was about to return, but was mistaken (e.g., Alfred Plummer). This view is unacceptable to those who take biblical inerrancy seriously. Given the fact that the immediate context is “even now many antichrists have come,” John may have in mind the destruction of Jerusalem which may have happened only a few years after this epistle was written. Jesus warned in the Olivet discourse that many false Christ’s would arise (Mt. 24:5, 23). But, as we have previously noted, the literal bodily coming of Jesus must not be confused with a local coming in judgment upon Jerusalem. These are two completely different events. We do not deny that there are passages in the New Testament that have the destruction of the Jewish nation in mind. We simply reject the full preterist’s vain attempt to put everything into an A.D. 70 framework. Each passage must be carefully interpreted without attempting to fit everything into a preconceived paradigm. If full preterists would do this they would avoid butchering the Greek language and would abandon their heresy.

## John 11:21-27

Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

This portion of Scripture is devastating to the full preterist position. Martha acknowledges that Jesus could have easily healed her brother if He had been present before he died. She also confesses her faith that whatever Jesus asks of God, God will certainly answer His prayers. This confession, which pours out of a grieving heart, leads to an amazing statement by Christ: “Your brother will rise again” (v. 23). Martha misunderstands the Savior to be speaking about a distant comfort, that her brother would rise from the dead on the last day: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (v. 24). This statement disproves many aspects of full preterism. Note the following observations.

First, there can be no question from the context that Martha believed in a literal, bodily resurrection at the end of history. She was speaking of Lazarus who had been physically dead for four days and was already beginning to decay. Obviously, Martha did not believe that the resurrection was only a spiritual event. She also certainly did not believe in the replacement theory of the resurrection.

Second, note that Jesus accepts what she says as true without any sort of correction for holding to what full preterists consider to be a major error in doctrine. This section of Scripture makes it very clear that Martha’s concept of the resurrection as a literal bodily (i.e. the same body that was buried) resurrection was the same as Christ’s understanding. In fact her use of the identical terminology (“the resurrection at the last day”) that we find of the lips of the Redeemer in John 6:39-54 indicates that she was a faithful student of her Master. As F. F. Bruce notes, “The resurrection on the last day has been mentioned repeatedly by Jesus in earlier discourses in this Gospel, with this addition: he himself is the one who will raise the dead then, for the Father has authorized him to do so (John 5:21, 25-29; 6:39f.). Matthew’s answer was one of intelligence

and faith, and it called forth from Jesus a further assurance, which went beyond the accepted belief [among the Jews] in the resurrection of the dead.”<sup>10</sup>

Third, the Savior’s response to Martha contains an amazing revelation about the resurrection to come which clearly is intended to strengthen Martha’s faith and place it squarely on a solid foundation. In other words, instead of rejecting what Martha has just said, Christ takes the opportunity to elaborate on it and flesh it out. “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die’” (Jn. 11:25-26). Our Lord begins by saying not simply that He is the One who bestows resurrection and life, but also that, in His person and ministry, He is the very source and foundation of resurrection and life. “Jesus is the resurrection and the life *in person...*, the full, blessed life of God, all his glorious attributes: omniscience, wisdom, omnipresence, love, holiness, etc. As such he is also the cause, source, or fountain of the believer’s glorious resurrection and of their everlasting life. Because he lives we too shall live.... The Prince of life is ever the conqueror of death.”<sup>11</sup>

Following this amazing statement our Lord makes a glorious inference based on who He is and what His salvation has and will accomplish. He does this with an exceptionally brilliant and poetic parallelism where each statement is similar, but not synonymous (i.e. a synthetic parallelism). In fact each statement is laid out in reverse order of the other: “he may die...he will live...whoever lives...shall never die.”

There are a number of things to note about these verses. (1) Both contain the statement, “he who believes” [present participle—“believes abidingly”]. There can be no question but that Christ is stating truths that can only be applied to genuine believers. (2) A careful reading of these verses reveals immediately that the main terms used “shall die” (*apothane*, vs. 25, 26) and “will live” (*zesetai*, v. 25) or “living” (*zon*, v. 26) are used in different senses. In verse 25 the person who believes will die but will live again. But in verse 26 the believer who lives will *never* die (the Greek, *ou me apothane* is emphatic: “in no way shall he die”; or to paraphrase, “he most certainly will never ever die”). If we apply the same meaning to the main terms used, then we have an explicit contradiction. Obviously, our Lord is not speaking nonsense. What then is Jesus saying? In response to the physical death of Lazarus (a believer) and Martha’s statement about the future general resurrection of believers on the final day, our Lord first speaks about physical or temporal death. Like Lazarus all Christians will die, but they will come to life again in the resurrection. Then in verse 26, the Savior says that all who possess spiritual life can never experience a spiritual or everlasting death. (If one interprets “whoever lives” [*ho zon*] as simply a person who happens to be alive physically who believes in Jesus, then: a) he only has stated what is superfluous [Corpses don’t believe and go to church]; and b) the emphatic statement about never experiencing death does not fit or make sense with this clause). Given all these considerations, we could paraphrase these verses as follows: “He that believes in Me even if he dies [physically], he will come to life [again at the resurrection]. And every one who lives [i.e. who possesses the spiritual life that I give to him] and believes in Me most certainly will never ever die [i.e. experience everlasting death both body and soul in the lake of fire].”

The only other interpretation of this passage of Scripture that makes sense also disproves full preterism. This interpretation views “the one who lives” in verse 26 as the one brought to glorified life in the resurrection. To paraphrase: “...he will come to life again at the resurrection. And everyone who now possesses this glorified life...can never ever experience death.”

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<sup>10</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 244.

<sup>11</sup> William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 2:150.

If, as the full preterist asserts, physical death is natural and is not a result of the fall, then our Lord's statement of comfort and hope to Martha makes no sense at all. Moreover, if believers are only delivered from spiritual death these verses are incomprehensible and contradictory. Full preterism has been disproved by the impossibility of the contrary.

## Acts 17:31-32

...He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this *matter*."

In this section of Paul's sermon at the Aeropagus in Athens (the center of the Greek philosophy) the apostle begins the climax of his sermon by discussing the bodily resurrection of Christ and its relationship to His exaltation. It is proof positive that He will be the judge of the entire world (*oikoumenen*). Then in verse 32 we hear the reaction of some of these Greek philosophers. They mocked and rejected Paul's message because he spoke of the resurrection of the dead (plural). Translated literally it would be "a resurrection of dead men," or "a resurrection of dead people (corpses)." This statement indicates either that Luke's account is an accurate *summary* of what Paul preached and that he must also have discussed with the general resurrection of the just and unjust in association with the judgment. Or perhaps, they inferred a general resurrection based on the resurrection of Christ and Paul's discussion of the final judgment. In either case it is clear that they rejected a literal bodily resurrection of men out of their tombs. The Greek philosophers (except perhaps the Epicureans) had no problem with the concept of the immortality of the soul. That idea was taught by their greatest philosophers. But Greek philosophy emphatically rejected the idea of a resurrection of the body. They regarded the corporeal (flesh and bones) aspect of man as intrinsically inferior and lower on a scale of being than man's spirit. These observations raise the following questions. If all men who become Christians experience *only* a spiritual resurrection (as many full preterists assert), would the Greek philosophers have objected to such a doctrine? No, of course not! If the resurrection were only a metaphor for the restoration of Israel in A.D. 70, as other hyperpreterists teach, would it be offensive to Greeks living far away from Israel in Athens? No, that would be unlikely since the Romans and not the Greeks held the reins of power.

If the definite article was intentionally omitted before the expression *anastasin nekron* (a resurrection of dead men) because only Jesus is meant as a sample, then why did not Paul simply explain that Christ's resurrection was only a one of kind, temporary affair, to get the souls of Christians out of Hades as many full preterists assert. Moreover, they teach that once Jesus accomplished His mission, His human body dissolved or was put into storage as a monument. Such teaching would be far less offensive to Greeks than the traditional orthodox view.

## Paul's Statement of Solidarity with the Jews

Another insurmountable exegetical difficulty for full preterists is found in Paul's explicit statements where he implies that his understanding of the resurrection of the dead is virtually the same as the non-Hellenized Jews and Pharisees. Note the following passages:

## Acts 23:6

But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!”

Here Paul sought to divide the council by first appealing to his affiliation; and, then to a major doctrine that he held in common with the Pharisees. Disagreement over this doctrine greatly contributed to division and contempt between these two parties. Paul presents himself as a faithful defender of Pharisees’ doctrine of the resurrection. The Sadducees were the modernists of their day and rejected the biblical teaching on the resurrection, angels and spirits (v. 8). What did the Pharisees believe regarding the resurrection that Paul could heartily agree with? According to Josephus, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the body (see Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2.8.11, 14; *Jewish Antiquities* 18.1.3-5). They believed that the soul would return to the dead body which would be raised and the saints would rule in a kingdom of righteousness with the Messiah. The ultimate triumph of the Pharisaic understanding of the resurrection of the body within Judaism can be seen in the strong teaching of the Mishnah that “he that says there is no resurrection of the dead...has no share in the world to come” (Sanhedrin, 10:1).

Acts 23:6 raises an obvious question. If Paul were a full preterist and rejected the resurrection of the body in favor of only a spiritual resurrection, or a national revival of the Jewish nation, or the setting free of spirits from Hades so they could float up to the third heaven, could he have honestly appealed to his concurrence with the Pharisaical teaching on the resurrection? Of course not! The Pharisees’ doctrine had nothing in common with full preterism. The full preterist must either admit that Paul believed in a literal resurrection of dead bodies or he must affirm that Paul deliberately lied in a public court of law after swearing to tell the truth before God. Given the fact that Paul was defending an aspect of the gospel and there is no disapprobation in Scripture regarding Paul’s defense, the latter alternative is impossible. Paul, the greatest of apostles and defender of the faith, believed in the traditional, orthodox conception of the resurrection.

Full preterists attempt to circumvent the obvious implications of the apostle’s statement of agreement with the Pharisees on the resurrection by arguing that, at first, the Pharisees misunderstood Paul on this doctrine. They assert that later, when the Pharisees finally figured out what the apostle’s teaching on this subject *really* was, they became very angry, opposed Paul and wanted to kill him. Consequently, full preterists argue, these Acts passages cannot be used as proof texts for the resurrection of the body.

This argument (which may sound good to a person who is ignorant of Scripture) must be rejected for two reasons. First, as noted, it presents the holy apostle as a person who *deliberately deceived* the council while under oath to tell the truth before God. Paul was raised a devout Pharisee (cf. Phil. 3:5-6). He knew exactly what the Pharisees believed regarding the resurrection of the dead. Therefore, if his beliefs were radically different than their teaching (as full preterists assert) it would have been totally dishonest for Paul to appeal to a concurrence with their views.

Second, there is not a shred of evidence in the book of Acts to support the full preterist contention that the Pharisees discovered Paul’s doctrine was different and as a consequence turned against him. In fact, a careful reading of the events completely disproves such a theory. The apostle’s troubles begin in Jerusalem when Paul is seized in the temple. As he is seized by Jews from Asia, these men make the following accusations: “This is the man who teaches all

men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple” (Ac. 2:28). Then, as Paul stands before the crowd and makes his defense, note what he says that turns the mob decisively against him: “Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles’” (Ac. 22:21). The mob cried out, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!” (Ac. 22:32). After this, the apostle is taken into custody and appears before the Sanhedrin, where he appeals to belief in the resurrection in order to divide the council (Ac. 23:6-10). At this first appearance, Paul is mistreated and beaten by the temple police at the direct orders of Ananias, the high priest and leader of the Sanhedrin (Ac. 23:2-3). Then, only a day later, we are told of a conspiracy by some of the Jews to murder Paul (Ac. 23:12). This conspiracy had the full approval of the chief priests and elders (Ac. 23:14), including the high priest (Ac. 25:2-3). The whole point of these facts is that there were Jews who hated Paul and wanted him dead from the beginning to the end of the historical account. While it is true that there were Pharisees on the council who came to Paul’s defense on account of his comments about the resurrection, the high priest (Ananias) and those who had the highest authority were Sadducees. Moreover, we do not even know whether the Pharisees in the council turned against Paul because he was forced by the conspiracy to place himself under the jurisdiction and control of the Roman government (Ac. 23:22-35). In addition, when the high priest and his cronies came before Felix and made their case against Paul, they made no mention of the resurrection: “We have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the Temple and we seized him” (Ac. 24:5-6). Note that these charges reflect the original accusations made when Paul was seized (Ac. 21:28). Given all these historical details, if the full preterist theory of a radical change in the Pharisees’ attitude were true, it would mean that they would have had to meet privately with Paul *in prison* before the conspiracy (which was formalized the next day); ask Paul various details about his doctrine of the resurrection; and, then decide that his doctrine was wrong and heretical. Not only is no such meeting recorded, but it would be highly unlikely that the high priest (a leading Sadducee), who controlled the temple police and the jail, who hated the Pharisees, would allow such a meeting. The full preterist contention is a contrived fantasy to avoid the plain teaching of Scripture that Paul agreed with the Pharisees on the resurrection of the body.

Full preterists, however, simply ignore the historical circumstances and hang their theory upon Paul’s statement to Felix in Acts 24:21, “Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.” This is viewed as an admission by Paul that the Jews were now going after him because they disagreed with his understanding of the resurrection. The problem with this interpretation is that Paul first challenges Ananias and his cronies to name actual crimes he committed (v. 20); then in verse 21 Paul refers to what had already been brought up at the original hearing before the Sanhedrin. “Paul states when he was before the Sanhedrin he uttered only one critical sentence, and it pertained not to the political concerns of the Romans but to the theological concerns of the Jews and Christians. This means that the point of conflict between Ananias and Paul is a theological issue that ought to be discussed in a Jewish ecclesiastical court. In brief, Paul expects the judge to dismiss the case, which had no place in a Roman civil court, and to set him free.”<sup>12</sup> This is not evidence of a change of attitude on the part of the Pharisees, but is simply an excellent argument as to why Paul has not committed any violation of Jewish or Roman law. If the Pharisees were angry with Paul over his view of the resurrection and were out to get him, then his appeal to his statement at the original hearing makes no sense whatsoever as

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<sup>12</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 847.

a tactic. If anything, it demonstrates that Paul was still confident that the Pharisees were on his side on this issue. If Felix sent the matter back to the Sanhedrin, then the Pharisees and Sadducees, once again, would be at each other's throats and Paul could not be convicted under such circumstances. Consequently, the argument for the resurrection of the body from the book of Acts cannot be avoided.

#### *Acts 24:14-15*

But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

In these verses we find more statements by Paul that contradict the full preterist paradigm. In his answer to Felix, Paul openly admits that he is a Christian but in doing so he implies that Christianity is founded upon and logically flows from the Law and the Prophets. In other words, Christians are the true Jews who have faith in the holy Scriptures. Then Paul says he has the same hope in God that the Jews also have (here he is obviously speaking of the vast majority of Jews who followed the Pharisees on the doctrine of the resurrection). Then the apostle identifies this hope: "there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." Christians and the vast majority of Jews in the first century had the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead in common.

Full preterists attempt to circumvent this passage with a number of desperate unsound arguments. Some seize on the phrase "hope of Israel" and argue that Paul was talking about a great deliverance or revival of national Israel. Then they will immediately appeal to passages which speak of both judgment and deliverance (e.g., Isa. 65, 66) and apply such passages to A.D. 70. Israel, they argue, hoped for national deliverance and revival. This national deliverance is tied to judgment; Israel was judged in A.D. 66-70. Therefore, the resurrection of the dead must be a metaphor for Israel's deliverance. There are a number of serious problems with such argumentation.

First, full preterists completely ignore the immediate context and the usage of the same expressions within the book of Acts to look for remote and unrelated passages that support their paradigm. Note the immediate context: Paul defines *hope* as "the resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust." Would anyone present in the room with Paul connect this statement to a national deliverance of Israel? Felix the governor, who was a pagan obviously would have taken it literally. The Pharisees who were present certainly would have taken Paul's statement literally. In the chapter immediately prior to this statement, there can be no question but that Paul was appealing to a literal resurrection. In fact, a careful examination of the whole book of Acts demonstrates that resurrections from the dead are always used either literally of Jesus' bodily resurrection, bodily resurrections back to mortal life, or the literal bodily resurrection on the final day (Ac. 1:22; 2:31; 4:2, 33; 9:40; 17:18, 32; 20:9-10; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21). Regarding this passage, full preterists are offering nothing more than unsupportable speculations. Obviously, people can hope for different things. It is exegetically illegitimate, however, to substitute a hope from a very remote context for the hope defined in the *immediate* context.

Second, how can the destruction of the Jewish nation and the slaughter of over 2 million Jews be equated with a national deliverance from sin or a massive revival of the true religion among the Jewish people? The only historical event between the resurrection of Christ and the

present day that even remotely resembles a revival among the Jews was the great conversion of Jews at Pentecost and the days which followed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But even these great conversions involved only small fraction of the Jews then alive.

Moreover, (and this point is decisive) the New Testament passage which gives us the most information about a great redemption or revival for ethnic Israel—Romans 11:25-27—makes it perfectly clear that the salvation of Israel must be *commensurate* with their rebellion, hardening and consequent breaking and casting away as described in chapter eleven. As the great mass of Israel rejected Christ and the gospel, a great mass (i.e. the vast majority) of ethnic Israel must receive hearts of flesh, turn from their wicked unbelief to faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, Son of God, Lord and Savior. The hardening of Israel must terminate on a *massive scale* before this prophecy is fulfilled. To view the salvation of Israel in terms of the destruction of Jerusalem where no conversions were recorded is ludicrous. Paul, obviously, never speaks of the great reclamation and ingrafting back into the church of ethnic Israel as a slaughter of Christ-hating idolaters. The mass conversions predicted in Romans 11 are still future.

Third, the expression “resurrection from the dead” applies to both believers and unbelievers. The fact that it is a resurrection that both the saved and lost *have in common* rules out a national revival unless one is a complete antinomian or a universalist. Also, it cannot be regeneration or a spiritual resurrection because the saved are already born again. Moreover, if both the saved and the lost are regenerated, then once again we have universalism. This passage cannot refer to a release of spirits from Hades, for why are unbelievers released? The only resurrection that believers and unbelievers have in common is a resurrection of dead bodies. The universal testimony of Christian orthodoxy on the matter of the resurrection stands firm.

## Excursus on Time Indicators

When full preterists are backed into a corner in debates with orthodox Christians, they almost always fall back on their core argument and theme—the time indicators. Indeed, even in private when they are willing to admit that their exegesis of certain passages is somewhat forced and strange, they will say that they have no other choice because they must take seriously the time indicators. Believers who are unfamiliar with the intricacies of the Greek language who hear discussions between orthodox Christians and scholarly full preterists will often ask about the time indicator argument. They may not agree with the full preterist interpretations of specific passages, but they are baffled by the use of certain verbs which they have been told *always* teach imminence. They are told that certain passages cannot refer to events thousands of years in the future because they say these events are “about to come to pass.” Consequently, they must be interpreted within the A.D. 66-70 framework. Since Acts 24:15 is one of those passages, this is an appropriate time to refute this main pillar of full preterism.

In this passage the Greek of the Received Text reads, “*anastasin mellein esesthai nekron.*” The full preterist will argue that *mellein* (from *mello*) *esesthai* should literally be translated “being *about to be.*” Thus, the resurrection of the dead is something which is *about to* take place. It is an event that is historically close to the apostolic period and not far away. The verb *mello*, which they say always teaches imminence, is found in other passages which speak of events connected with the second coming of Christ such as Romans 8:18 (*ten mellousan dozen apokalupth-enai*, “the coming glory to be revealed in us”). Note also 2 Timothy 4:1, “Jesus Christ who will (*mellontos*) judge the living and the dead at His appearing.” In 1 Peter 5:1 the apostle says, “I...am...also a partaker of the glory that will be (*mellouses*) revealed.” A possible

allusion to the end of the world is found in Hebrews 13:14, “For we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (*mellousan*) (cf. Ac. 17:31, *mellei* “He is going” *krinein* “to judge”).

If it were indeed true that *mello* always taught imminence, then the full preterist could argue that Luke, Paul, Peter and the author of Hebrews genuinely believed and taught *under divine inspiration* that the second coming of Christ, general resurrection and final judgment *were about to take place*. They were events about to come to pass. After looking at the clumsy, sloppy manner in which full preterists twist the second coming passages we could say that the time indicators are the *foundation* of their system and serve as the axis of all their main argumentation. Consequently, we need to ask a crucial question. Is it indeed true that *mello* always teaches or implies imminence? The simple fact of the matter is that their core argument is completely untrue.

The verb *mello* in both classical and *koine* Greek can have different meanings depending on the context and syntax. In Liddell and Scott’s massive study of classical Greek they give the following usages: “I. *to be destined* or *likely to*, indicating an estimated certainty or strong probability in the present, past or future... fut. inf., of a destiny or probability in the future...II. *to be about to*, in [a] purely temporal sense...III. *to be always going to do* without ever doing: hence, *delay*, *put off*...IV. part. *mellon* is used quasi-adjectivally...the *future time*...*things to come*, *the future*...V. Pass. *mellomai*, *hos me melloito ta deonta* that the necessary steps *might not be delayed*...”<sup>13</sup>

In Walter Bauer’s (revised by William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Fredrick Danker [sec. ed.]) exhaustive study he gives a number of different meanings: “1. ...with the future inf. *u* denotes certainty that an event will occur in the future...*will certainly take place* or *be* Ac. 11:28; 24:15; 27:10...*be on the point of*, *be about to* b. *be destined*, *inevitable* (acc. to God’s will)...*be about to*, *be on the point of* he was at the point of death (Aristot. In Apollon. Paradox 27...)...in a weakened sense it serves simply as a paraphrase for the fut....Of Christ *ho mellon krinein* 2 Tim. 4:1...denoting an action that necessarily follows a divine decree *is destined*, *must*, *will certainly*...2. the ptc. is used abs. in the mng. *future*, *to come* Mt. 12:32; Eph. 1:21...the judgment to come Ac. 24:25...3. *delay ti melleis*; why are you delaying?...Ac. 22:16.”<sup>14</sup>

Walter Radl in the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* writes,

*Mello* has (1) meaning *be about to*, *be present*, even *begin*, thus Luke 7:2: “he was *near death/at the point* of dying”; Acts 16:27; Rev. 10:4: “I *wanted to begin* to write”; 10:7: “he *began* to blow the trumpet/he *sounded* the trumpet.” (2) *Mello* is often used periphrastically for the simple fut. esp. the disappearing inf. and partc. forms: the inf. only in Acts 28:6 and 19:27 (cf. BDF 356), while the partc. is frequent, as in 2 Tim 4:1 (“Christ Jesus, who *will judge/the future judge*” or—as a substitute for the fut. pass. partc.—Rom 8:18 (“the glory that *will be* [is intended to be] revealed”); likewise Gal 3:23; 1 Pet 5:1; cf. 1:5 (with *etoimos*)....

In Acts *mello* contains no suggestions of a *near future* [i.e. when discussing the eschaton not ordinary every day actions; e.g., Ac. 3:3; 5:35; 11:38; 12:6; 16:27] (3) *Mello* also designates the intended action, as in Matt 2:13: “*he intended* to search for the child”; Acts 20:3, 7, 13, with reference to travel *plans* of Paul. (4) Finally, *mello* can express the necessity of an event that is based on the divine will and thus is certain to occur, e.g., Matt 17:12: “he *must* suffer” (cf. Matt 16:21 par. Luke 9:22 with *dei*); John 12:4: Judas..., who was *later* to betray him” (or “who *intended* to betray him”—then the passage is to be arranged under 3; cf. BAGD s.v.). The latter example indicates clearly that *mello* does not always have a fixed meaning.

<sup>13</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1099.

<sup>14</sup> William F. Arndt and F. William Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 500, 501.

b) Besides the combination with an inf. *mello* appears in the NT 18 times as an absolute partic. (1) Used as an adj., it appears always in the attributive position and means *coming, future* (Matt 3:7 par. Luke 3:7; Matt 12:32; Acts 24:25; Rom 5:14; Eph 1:21; 1 Tim 4:8; Heb 2:5; 6:5; 10:1; 13:14). (2) As a substantive it designates *the future (to mellon)*, 1 Tim 6:19), once *the coming year (eis to mellon)*, Luke 13:9; so BAGD s.v. with reference to Pap. London 123.4), or *that which is to come (ta mellonta)*, Col 2:17; 1 Tim 1:16; Heb 11:20; with *enestota*, the present situation, Rom 8:38; 1 Cor. 3:22).

c) *Mello* appears as an independent vb. only in Acts 22:16” “What is *still delaying* you?” .... In the NT letter *mello* is used with reference to the suffering (of Christians; 1 Thess 3:4) and for the anticipated future, the judgment, the new aeon, the future life, and other “blessings” that are objects of hope (Rom 4:24; 5:14; 8:13, 18; Eph 1:21; Col 2:17; 1 Tim 4:8; 6:19; 2 Tim 4:1; Jas 2:12; 1Pet5:1; Heb 1:14; 2:5 6:5; 10:1, 27; 13:14, with the wordplay *menousan [polin]—mellousan*).<sup>15</sup>

The excellent Greek scholar Joseph Henry Thayer essentially agrees with everything we have seen thus far. He says that *mello* has the following meanings: “...1 Tim. vi.19; *ta mellonta*, things future, things to come, i.e., acc. to the context, the more perfect state of things which will exist in the *aion mellon*, Col. 2:17. 2....a. *to be on the point of doing or suffering something*...b. to intend, have in mind, think to...c. of those things which will come to pass...by fixed necessity or divine appointment...d. in general, of what is *sure* to happen...e. to be always on the point of doing without ever doing, i.e. *to delay*.”<sup>16</sup> G. Abbott-Smith notes that in the Septuagint *mello* is used for the future tense. He adds, “(a) of intending or being about to do [something]...(b) of compulsion, necessity or certainty...”<sup>17</sup>

W. E. Vine also notes multiple meanings. He says that *mello* signifies: “of intention, to be about to do something...of certainty, compulsion<sup>18</sup>...[It] is used of purpose, certainty, compulsion or necessity. It is rendered by ‘shall’ or ‘should’ (which frequently represent elsewhere part of the future tense of the verb)...Notes: (1) The use of shall, shalt, is frequently part of the future tense of a verb. (2) The phrase ‘it shall come to pass’ is the rendering of the future tense of *eimi*, to be, in Acts 2:17, 21; 3:23; Rom. 9:26.”<sup>19</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker notes that when two infinitives are used that both express the future such as in Acts 24:15, one is redundant.<sup>20</sup> This construction explains why virtually all English translations such as the KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, NEB, NIV, RSV, JB, Moffet, Wuest, Berkeley, Amplified, translate *mullein esesthai* in Acts 24:25 as “there will be.” The reason that Luke uses the infinitive *mellein* in Acts 24:15 is not because he believes that the second bodily coming is about to occur, but because he is emphasizing the *certainty* of a future resurrection of the righteous and the wicked: “there certainly will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”

If one is going to accept what the full preterists have been teaching about the time indicator *mello*, then one must accept the patently absurd and fantastic claim that there has been a massive conspiracy over the last two thousand years by Greek scholars, translators, writers of lexicons and expositors to hide the true meaning of this word. This conspiracy would have to encompass scholars that are atheists, Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Eastern Orthodox,

<sup>15</sup> W. Radl. “*mello*,” in Horst Balz and Gerhard Scheider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1981] 1991), 2:404.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 396-397.

<sup>17</sup> G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 282-283.

<sup>18</sup> W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 1:15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 4:15.

<sup>20</sup> See Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Acts of the Apostles*, 845.

Protestants, as well as rank modernists. It would have to include all the classical Greek scholars as well as all those who specialize in *koine* Greek (i.e. New Testament Greek). One would also have to conclude that the Greek church fathers who spoke, wrote and studied in Greek had a much poorer understanding of the Greek language than modern full preterists. The bottom line on this matter is simple. Full preterists have perpetuated a myth about the main time indicator and have been either ignorant or have deliberately misused the Greek language to prove their heretical theory. It is time for orthodox Christian to obliterate the main argument that upholds this foolish, false and dangerous teaching.

The absurdity of the full preterist hermeneutic can also be demonstrated by applying their interpretive methodology to other sections of Scripture. In Isaiah 7 we have Isaiah's interaction and prophecy to King Ahaz (his life is discussed in 2 Kgs. 16:1-20 and 2 Chr. 27:9-28:27). Ahaz came to the throne around 735 B.C. and reigned sixteen years (or, perhaps twenty one years if there was a short co-regency with his father, Jotham). The problems with Syria and Israel described in Isaiah 7 (i.e. Ephraim) were already taking place when he began his reign. When Isaiah comes to Ahaz in Isaiah 7 (cf. 2 Kgs. 16:5) Ahaz was appealing to Assyria (Tiglath-pileser) for an alliance against Syria and Israel. God does not want Ahaz to ally himself (and Judah) with heathen Assyria,, but rather to trust in Him for deliverance. God tells Ahaz that the evil plans of Syria and Israel (Ephraim) will not be accomplished. In order to strengthen the faith of Ahaz in what He has promised, God orders Ahaz to ask for a sign. This sign was obviously intended to convince unbelieving Ahaz that Jehovah would carry out His prophecy. Rebellious Ahaz, however, refuses to obey God and does not ask. This act of rebellion demonstrated the king's unbelief and resulted in a promise of a sign not just for the king, but for the whole nation: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (v. 14). The promise to Ahaz and the covenant people was made around 725 years before its fulfillment in the birth of Christ. If one follows the full preterist method of interpretation he would have to argue that this prophecy could *only* be fulfilled in the generation to which it was given. This, of course, did not happen unless one believes in some kind of double fulfillment of this passage, which is problematic to say the least.

In the book of Isaiah we have imminence passages along with prophecies that discuss the distant future. When God discusses the destruction of Assyria, Judah and Babylon he uses near time indicators: "yet a very little while" (10:25); "the day of the LORD is at hand" (13:6); "her time is near" (13:22). Yet, in this book, we also have prophecies regarding John the Baptist (40:3-5); the suffering, death and burial of Christ (53); the virgin birth (7:14; 9:6) and the exaltation of the Messiah (9:7). Interestingly, right after the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity, the prophecy with no explanation jumps many hundreds of years into the future to discuss John the Baptist. The full preterist contention that an imminency passage means that *everything* in the immediate and mediate context must also be viewed as about to occur would make Old Testament prophecy incomprehensible. If the prophets could seamlessly move from events that are about to occur to events in the distant future without explicit demarcations, then Jesus and the apostles could also discuss the destruction of Israel (which was near) and then also teach about the second bodily coming of Christ (which was in the distant future).

Given these considerations we would do well to heed the wisdom of Patrick Fairbairn on this matter. He writes,

This aversion of prophecy to clearly defined historical periods—its tendency to exhibit coming events under relations in space or time, or, as successive only, without being on either hand definitely bounded—appears also in New Testament predictions. It appears in the

discourses of Christ himself, in whom the Spirit resided above measure, and who received no revelations in dream or vision. He gives certain signs of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and of His own personal return to the world, by the careful consideration of which His followers might not be taken unawares by either event; but the precise period in both cases is altogether indeterminate. Nay, so essential did He deem it to the spiritual interests of His church to have the time so left, as regards the great object now of the church's expectation, His own second coming, that He refrained from knowing it Himself when on earth. He *voluntarily* refrained from doing so; for, beyond doubt, He might have had the knowledge of that also, if He had so willed it, since, as the Son in the highest sense, He knew the Father (Matt. xi. 27); nay, had all things of the Father's delivered into His hand (John xvi. 15). But He did not will it; He purposely restrained the intercommunion between divine and human natures, that He might exhibit Himself an example to His people, as not seeking to know what were not proper to be known, even by the most perfect, in a state of humiliation and trial. Therefore, he said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven; neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). Not only so, but when the disciples showed, at their last interview with the Master, that they had failed to profit aright by this declaration, and came to Him with the question whether He was then going to restore the kingdom to Israel, He rebuked their curiosity by the answer, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." This specific announcement, delivered in a face to face communication, we may be sure, from the fundamental laws of prophetic revelation, could not be annulled by any subsequent information on the subject, communicated in vision. *It fixed, from the first, the abiding condition of the church as regards the knowledge of coming epochs in her history.* It did so, more especially in regard to the great epoch of her Lord's personal return.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Acts 26:6-8*

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?

This passage defines the resurrection of the dead (plural, v. 8) in terms of the resurrection of Christ in verse 23 (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:20 ff.). Note that Paul defines Israel's hope in terms of the Savior's resurrection. The Old Testament Scriptures taught the Messiah's victory over death (e.g., Isa. 25:8) and the resurrection of the saints to everlasting life (Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19). If this is the hope of Israel, and Paul defines this hope in terms of a bodily resurrection, then a supposed national deliverance of Israel in A.D. 70 or a release of souls from Hades cannot be the resurrection of the dead. Paul was trying to convince Agrippa of a literal physical resurrection. He was not bringing up metaphors that would have been incomprehensible to the governor.

#### *Romans 8:10-11*

And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

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<sup>21</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, *Prophecy Viewed in Respect to Its Distinctive Nature, Its Special Function and Proper Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Guardian, [1865] 1976), 172-173.

In verse 10 Paul describes the present state of a believer. Although this verse has its difficulties, it along with 11 could be paraphrased as: “But if Christ is living in you, then, though because of sin the body must die, nevertheless, because you have been justified, the Spirit, himself Life, is alive within you. And if that Spirit, namely the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is dwelling in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will, on the day of the resurrection, impart life also to your mortal bodies. He will do it through the agency of the Spirit who is dwelling within you.”<sup>22</sup>

These verses (especially verse 11) completely refute the full preterist’s attempts at redefining the resurrection. Therefore, the only thing they can do here is to argue that the term body (*soma*) is a metaphor for the sinful nature. There are a very small number of expositors (Calvin included) who view the term “body” metaphorically, as another way of identifying the sinful nature (or flesh, *sarx*) that remains within all believers. This view is rejected by the vast majority of expositors and is easy to disprove. That a literal body is what Paul had in mind is proved by the following observations.

(1) If one holds to the view that is common among older commentators that “Spirit” in verse 10 should not be capitalized because it refers to man’s spirit, then one has a clear antithesis between the physical and immaterial aspects of man in this verse. Even if we take the view that spirit refers to the Holy Spirit, which in this context makes more sense, the term “body” (*soma*) still refers to the physical body.<sup>23</sup>

(2) The immediate context points to a physical human body. The resurrection of Christ was a literal bodily resurrection and the phrase “mortal bodies” in verse 11 clearly is not intended to be taken figuratively.

(3) The only other possibility does not make any sense. Paul uses “body” literally throughout the book of Romans (e.g., 1:24; 4:19; 6:12; 7:4; 8:10, 11, 13, 23; 12:1) with only a few exceptions. In chapter 12 he speaks of the church as “one body” (vs. 4, 5); and, in chapter 6 he speaks of the body of sin (6:6), the body in which sin reigns (6:12) and the body of death from which we want to be delivered (7:24). Here Paul is discussing the body as a metaphor for the old man, or our depraved nature. If we interpret “body” in verse ten as “the sinful nature” then Paul would be saying that our sinful nature is dead because of sin which is nonsense. “We are delivered from sin, not because of it. We should accordingly take death to be physical death. Because we have sinned we will die...”<sup>24</sup>

(4) The grammar would also be quite different if Paul were revisiting the same theme as Romans chapter 6. “One would expect a dative as in 6:2, 10, 11 rather than an accusative if the thought was the same in Rom. 6. Even more decisive, the reference to the resurrection of the body in the very next verse (8:11) suggests that the death of the physical body is

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<sup>22</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 251.

<sup>23</sup> The arguments for Holy Spirit here are strong: a) In all preceding eight instances (vs. 1-9) as well as twice in verse 11 *pneuma* refers to the Holy Spirit. b) Paul uses *zoe* which literally means life. In verse 2 of this same chapter the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit [*pneuma*] of life” (cf. 2 Cor. 8:6). Saying the human spirit is life is strange and doesn’t make much sense. But, the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of life” is soteriologically significant. Jesus called Himself “the life” in John 14:6 and “the resurrection and the life” in John 11:25. c) “The Spirit of life” (*zoe*) in verse 10 corresponds perfectly with the Holy Spirit as the one who imparts glorified resurrection life in verse 11. The verb used is *zoopoiēsei*, which means “will make alive.”

<sup>24</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 309.

contemplated...”<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the expression “the body is dead because of sin refers to the fact that our physical bodies have the seeds of literal death in them. A time is coming in which every Christian must die physically. “The moment we enter into this world and begin to live, we also begin to die. Your first breath is one of the last you will ever take! ...the principle of decay, leading to death, is in every one of us.”<sup>26</sup>

In verse 11 Paul turns his attention to the believer’s future. Although there are some differences of opinion among scholars regarding the interpretation of certain terms in verse 10, expositors and orthodox theologians are almost unanimous regarding the interpretation of verse 11. The apostle is speaking about the future resurrection of believers from the dead. This interpretation is proven by the following considerations. a) All true believers have already experienced a spiritual resurrection the moment they were regenerated and turned to Christ. Although our sanctification is founded upon our union with the Redeemer in His death and resurrection, it is a life long process and not a one time future event. Paul always speaks of the new birth as a past event in the life of the Christian (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:11-14). b) The comparison of the resurrection of Jesus to our own future resurrection means that God will raise us, just as He raised Jesus. This teaching is common in Paul’s writings (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 4:14). c) In this passage Paul is not focusing on the mystical union of believers with the Savior as a source of new life, but rather on the Holy Spirit’s presence as the guarantee and agent of our future bodily resurrection. The life that we have *already obtained* through Christ will ultimately result in a complete triumph over death. Even though we will die physically, our bodies will not continue under death’s power. “These mortal bodies shall be made alive by Him who raised up Christ’s body, shall be glorified like Christ’s body (v. 17; Phil. 3:21). We are wholly redeemed, body as well as soul. Having been created as embodied spirits, God will complete his work in us and will bring it to perfection also in our bodies.”<sup>27</sup> We must not neglect the fact “that man was a physical whole at his creation. Man was not created to be an angel or to exist as a spiritual entity. Thus the resurrection of the body is necessary in order to reconstitute man to live once again as he did originally in the paradise of God.”<sup>28</sup> One major difference between believers and Adam before the fall is that, as glorified beings, the saints will not be able to fall into sin. Our souls and bodies will be *spiritual*.

(4) The use of the word “mortal” (*thnetos*) clearly refers to weakness, corruptibility and mortality of our physical bodies as a result of sin. The adjective “mortal” means “*subject to death*.” Once a person truly believes in Jesus he is no longer subject to death spiritually because the Holy Spirit seals him and preserves him spiritually throughout his whole life (see Ps. 37:28; 121:3, 7-8; Jer. 32:40; Jn. 6:39; 10:27-29; 17:11; Rom. 14:4; 16:25; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 5:25; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18; Heb. 12:12; 1 Pet. 1:4-5; Jude 1, 24; etc.). Moreover, this word (or one of its forms) occurs six times in the New Testament (Rom. 6:12; 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:53, 54; 2 Cor. 4:11; 5:4). In every single example it is speaking of our physical bodies. Since believers already possess everlasting life (Jn. 3:15, 16, 36;

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 414.

<sup>26</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 8:5-17, The Sons of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 69. John Murray writes, “The ruling thought of this verse is that although believers die and this fact is conspicuously exhibited in the dissolution of the body, yet, since Christ dwells in believers, life-giving forces are brought to bear upon death and this life is placed in sharp contrast with the disintegrating power which is exemplified in the return to dust on the part of the body” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:290).

<sup>27</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, [1936] 1945), 514.

<sup>28</sup> Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984), 96.

5:24; 6:47; 10:28; 1 Jn. 5:13, 14; etc.) and are already raised from the dead metaphorically or spiritually, the only thing mortal about us is our physical bodies. Because of sin our bodies grow old, wear out, get sick and die. Then they rot and turn to dust. But, because of the redemptive work of Christ (who died and rose) and our possession of the Holy Spirit, our bodies will be raised immortal and incorruptible (cf. 1 Cor. 15:53-54).

This verse teaches that the same substance which made up the physical bodies of believers will be made alive by God and come out of their tombs. The soul of each believer will be reunited with his own body that arises glorified, spiritual, incorruptible and immortal. Yes, the victory achieved by the death and resurrection of Jesus extends even to our mortal bodies. As Moule notes, “In Christ, the body is seen to be something far different from the mere clog, or prison, or chrysalis, of the soul. It is its destined implement, may we not say its mighty wings in prospect, for the life of glory.”<sup>29</sup> That Paul is speaking of a literal bodily resurrection of believers in Romans 8:11 is taught by Matthew Poole (3:504), Matthew Henry (6:417), Robert Haldane (346-347), John Gill (2:484-485), Charles Hodge (260), William G. T. Shedd (240-241) H. C. G. Moule (215), E. H. Gifford (151), David Brown (3:240); F. F. Bruce (155-156), Frederic Louis Godet (305-306), J. P. Lange and F. R. Fay (10:258); John Stott (226), John Murray (1:291), Leon Morris (310), William Hendriksen (251), D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (7:69), William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam (198), James Montgomery Boice (2:818), C. E. B. Cranfield (1:390-391), Chrysostom and Augustine (see Cranfield 1:391), C. H. Dodd (125-126), Thomas R. Schriener (415-416), James Stifler (112), Ernst Kaseman (224-225), R. C. H. Lenski (513-514), Everett F. Harrison (10:90), James Denney (2:647), Ralph Earle (177), John Wesley (vol. 2, no pagination), Paul E. Kretzman (2:41), R. J. Rushdoony (132-133) and Henry Alford (2:906).

### *Romans 8:22-23*

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

In Romans 8:19-22 Paul personifies the whole sub-personal creation and discusses its subjection to futility as a consequence of the fall, as well as its longing to be set free from its bondage to decay. Nature was subjected to the fall because of Adam’s sin, but nature will be delivered from this bondage and will participate in the glorious liberty of God’s children. Then in verse 23 Paul, with a strong emphasis (“we ourselves”), adds Christians to the creation that is groaning. Because believers have the firstfruits of the spirit, they long for their full redemption to come.

The expression “firstfruits” refers to the Old Testament practice of God’s people bringing the first fruits of their harvest to the temple in order to offer it to God (cf. Lev. 23:10-11). The purpose of the Old Testament ordinance was to consecrate the whole harvest to come. First fruits presuppose later fruits. God was praised for these first fruits because they contained the proof of God’s blessing and the assurance of even greater blessing—the whole harvest to come. In the New Testament Jesus is called “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20) because, by His death and resurrection, He secured the resurrection of His people. His resurrection is a pledge and proof of the resurrection unto glorified life to come.

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<sup>29</sup> Handley C. G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1982), 215.

Here, however, Paul applies this expression to the Holy Spirit who regenerates, sanctifies and preserves believers. The gift of the Holy Spirit to believers is a pledge of subsequent salvation in all its fullness for believers at the second coming of Christ. All Christians have the Holy Spirit and are regenerated and declared righteous by God. But there is a sense in which their salvation is incomplete in this life. There is the struggle that we have every day of our lives with our flesh, or sinful natures. Also, our physical bodies are still subject to infirmities, suffering and death. Consequently, we groan within ourselves and long for the redemption of our bodies. We find a very similar statement about the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14: “In whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Although we are regenerated and saved right now our mortal bodies have not yet been delivered. But the fact that we are a purchased possession and have been sealed we are guaranteed our full redemption, even “the redemption of our body.”

The expression “the redemption of our body”<sup>30</sup> refers to our body’s deliverance from death, corruption and the grave. The word “redemption” is used instead of “resurrection” because Paul is emphasizing *the deliverance* of our physical bodies from the effects of sin and death. Unbelievers will experience a resurrection, but their physical bodies will not be redeemed. Our bodies which are fallen, weak, corruptible and which are the seat of our sinful natures are going to be transformed into glorified, spiritual, incorruptible bodies that cannot be tempted, cannot sin and cannot die. Only when this occurs will our redemption in the broad sense of that term be completed. “The consummation of the redemption process is waiting for the transformation by which the body of our humiliation will be conformed to the likeness of the body of Christ’s glory (*cf.* Phil. 3:21) and it is for that consummation that the sons of God wait.”<sup>31</sup>

The only question that may arise regarding this verse is the meaning of the clause immediately prior to the statement about the resurrection of our bodies. How can believers eagerly wait for the adoption when they have already been adopted into God’s family at the beginning of their Christian life? Obviously, Paul is using the term in two different senses. In one sense believers are already adopted into God’s family and are sons of the Father in Christ. Everyone who is a Christian has a special relationship to God and this relationship of love, fellowship and communion can never be broken. But, at the resurrection of the body and the consummation, believers receive their *full inheritance* as sons. Moreover, at the second coming, believers will be *publicly* and fully recognized as the children of God. Boice notes that Paul is probably thinking of a special Roman custom relating to adoption. He writes, “The Romans (as well as the Greeks) had adoption in our sense, that is, when a child is taken out of one family and

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<sup>30</sup> Some full preterists argue that since the singular “body” (*soma*) is used that Paul is not speaking about individual Christians being resurrected, but merely about the redemption of the church as a corporate body. This view should be rejected because Paul is using a common Hebrew idiom where the singular (*soma*) applies to each member of a group (see Leon Morris, 324, footnote 103). Moreover, what Paul says must apply to individual believers or it is meaningless. Note that when Paul is discussing the need for individual *Christian men* in Corinth to stop fornicating with prostitutes he writes, “your (plural) body (singular) is the temple of the Holy Spirit.” Clearly Paul is not saying that the whole church at Corinth as an organic body (including women and children) is having sexual intercourse with prostitutes; but rather that it is wicked for individuals who have the Holy Spirit within them to unite their bodies with a whore. In addition, when the *corporate* nature of the church is being discussed in the New Testament the inspired authors always say “one body” (e.g., Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12, 13), the “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27) or “the body” (1 Cor. 12:15ff) and *never say* “your body” or “our body.”

<sup>31</sup>John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:308.

is placed into another. But the Romans also had an important ceremony in which the son of a leading Roman family would be acknowledged publicly as the son and heir.”<sup>32</sup> When Christ returns, believers receive their new glorified bodies; they are publicly acknowledged by Jesus and vindicated before all at the judgment; and they receive their full inheritance as well as the rewards of grace. Once again, salvation in the broadest sense of that term is brought to completion.

This passage of Scripture is very clear and is exceptionally difficult to twist and pervert into the full preterist paradigm. It poses a number of insurmountable exegetical difficulties for their system.

(1) Since believers are already regenerated (and made holy), justified and sanctified definitively (i.e. delivered from the dominion of sin; Rom. 6:2-22) what are believers “groaning” about or looking forward to with hope (cf. Rom. 8:24)? It must be something they do not already have. Consequently, the redemption of the body (*soma*) must refer to a deliverance from our *physical* mortality and corruption.

(2) If one argues that they are looking forward to having their souls released from *Hades*, then one must explain why Paul uses the term *body* (*soma*). The body does not refer to man’s spirit and in this context certainly is not a metaphor for the church (see footnote 59).

(3) The full preterist must deny the clear teaching of Scripture on “the unity of the eschatological complex” (i.e. the teaching that the second coming of Christ results immediately in the resurrection of the body, the rapture, the final judgment, the complete elimination of death and the beginning of the final state), in order to make this section of Scripture relevant to Christians living after A.D. 70. If the adoption, the redemption of our body” took place in A.D. 70, then one must argue that either: a) Believers after A.D. 70 have no reason to groan about their condition or look forward to the redemption of their bodies because these things are accomplished historical events in the distant past (This of course is complete nonsense. Christians after A.D. 70 are still mortal and corruptible); or, b) The passages that speak of the resurrection, judgment, rapture, etc are intended to be taken progressively throughout history after A.D. 70. In other words, each individual believer will experience a resurrection and judgment at death. This view is not only completely arbitrary (i.e. full preterists simply made it up), it also contradicts the explicit teaching of Scripture.

Full preterists appeal to a few passages in a feeble attempt to justify the progressive fulfillment view. One passage is Hebrews 9:27: “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” The idea is that at death each person will experience a separate judgment. This interpretation should be rejected for the following reasons. First, Hebrews was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. Consequently, what it says here applies to believers *before*, as well as *after* A.D. 70. It is ignorant and even dishonest to only arbitrarily apply it to saints who die after the destruction of Jerusalem. Second, the author is simply pointing out that judgment follows death in *logical* sequence. “The exact time of the judgment the writer of the epistle purposely omits. He calls attention not to judgment as such but to Christ who ‘will appear a second time.’”<sup>33</sup> Third, it is exegetically irresponsible to ignore the many clear passages that speak of the final judgment as occurring on “the final day” or “that day.” The judgment is inseparably connected with the second coming of Christ, with that day when “He will appear a second time” (Heb. 9:28). If one holds that the resurrection of believers and the final judgment is progressive, then, if he were consistent, he also would argue that the second coming is

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<sup>32</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 2:881.

<sup>33</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 265.

progressive, for these events are bound together in Scripture. As usual, full preterists are both arbitrary and inconsistent in their interpretation of Scripture.

Another common full preterist argument is based on a misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:20, which says that Christ “has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” The idea is that Jesus is the firstfruits and then the saints are progressively harvested throughout history. This interpretation ignores the context which says that the full harvest comes at the second coming of Christ: “But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (15:23). “The ‘order’ of resurrection is only two: Christ the firstfruits: the full harvest of those who are his at his Parousia.”<sup>34</sup> “First Christ, then those who are Christ’s. There is no intimation of any further division or separation in time in the process of the resurrection.”<sup>35</sup> “In brief, because Christ has been raised, all his people who are dead or alive at this coming will be raised and glorified.”<sup>36</sup>

### *1 Corinthians 6:13-15*

Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not!

These verses are particularly devastating to the full preterist position because it is very clear that Paul is speaking about *the human body* and not regeneration or ethnic Israel. The first statement, “foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods,” is likely a Corinthian slogan. Paul acknowledges this fact, but points out that a time is coming when food and stomachs will no longer be necessary. Then Paul makes a statement that is probably intended as a refutation of another unstated Corinthian slogan which was used to excuse sexual immorality. The apostle has no problem acknowledging that food and stomachs are needed in this present age, but he strongly refutes the unsaid saying (or what had been implied from the food saying to sexual activity) that some Corinthians were using as a justification for sexual relations with prostitutes. Paul’s construction of the propositions implies that some Corinthians had developed the following line of reasoning: ““since everything is permitted, and since food is for the stomach and the stomach for food (after all God will destroy them both in the end), and since all bodily appetites are pretty much alike, that means that the body is for sex and sex for the body—because God will destroy them both in the end as well.””<sup>37</sup>

Paul refutes this antinomian false reasoning with two closely related arguments. First, Paul points out that our physical bodies were not created to be used for sexual immorality but in order to serve and glorify God. (The eating of food is a matter of adiaphora and is necessary in the present age to sustain life; but, sexual immorality is a violation of God’s law. We exist to serve God by obeying His Word.) Moreover, the Lord Jesus came for the body. The body is not to be discarded but is to be saved. Our bodies were purchased by Christ’s blood (1 Cor. 6:20); are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19) and are mystically united to the Savior (1 Cor. 6:15).

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<sup>34</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 752.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Hodge, *I & II Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 265.

<sup>36</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 551.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 255.

“Christ is *for the body*, to inhabit and glorify it.”<sup>38</sup> This statement about Jesus being for the bodies of Christians leads directly to Paul’s next argument. Second, the Lord is for our bodies and will demonstrate this by raising them from the dead, just like He raised Jesus from the dead. Christ’s work of redemption includes the whole person—body and soul. The fact that our earthly bodies will be resurrected in this context is obviously intended to cause us to treat our bodies with reverence and respect as the future organ of our glorified personality. Because of our union with Jesus in His resurrection, our body is destined for a resurrection of life into eternity. Paul obliterates the idea that we can do what we like with our bodies (as some Corinthians wrongly supposed) because they will be destroyed and will not be part of the consummate kingdom. Our bodies will indeed be changed and transformed, but there is a true, vital, genuine connection to our bodies of flesh that lived on the earth and were placed in the grave. “The body cannot be disregarded as unimportant. The body *is for the Lord*... That the Father raised the Son from the dead, and did not simply cause His soul to persist through bodily dissolution, indicates something of the dignity of the body. Bodily life enshrines permanent values. The resurrection forbids us to take the body lightly.”<sup>39</sup> Note once again that Paul’s whole argument is dependent on a literal understanding of the resurrection of the body. With the case of food God will “destroy” or “abolish” (*katargesei*) it; but, regarding the physical bodies of Christians: “He will raise [them] up” (*exegerei*) and save and glorify them forever. If we remove the resurrection of physical bodies from this passage, then we completely destroy Paul’s main argument.

Full preterist views of the resurrection make a complete mockery of Paul’s argument because none of them have a true, lasting significance or place for the human body in relation to the resurrection. Would Paul order the men at Corinth to stop using their physical bodies to fornicate with prostitutes because some day the Jews will have a revival? Would he tell them to respect their physical bodies and use them in a holy manner because some day their physical bodies will rot, turn to dust forever and be replaced with a *completely different body* that has no connection whatsoever to the body in the tomb? The full preterist teaching places the physical bodies of the saints in the same category as food and stomachs, which will be done away as unnecessary in the eschaton. Consequently, the parallel argumentation that Paul uses completely breaks down. Would Paul teach these men to treat their physical bodies with holy respect and dignity because in A.D. 70 the souls of the saints trapped in Hades will be released to go to heaven? Of course not! Paul gives the Corinthians the assurance that God will raise their physical bodies by His power so they understand that not just their souls but also their bodies are precious in God’s sight and will take part in their eternal salvation. Only this biblical truth will cause the men at Corinth (who were apparently influenced by Greek thinking about the physical body) to sanctify their bodies unto Christ.

The apostle continues to argue against using the physical body to fornicate in verses 15-20. Note, that each argument clearly deals with *the physical bodies* of the saints: (1) We must not take our physical body which was joined to Christ and join it to a prostitute (v. 15). (2) It is immoral, inappropriate and disgusting to take what is spiritually joined to Christ and then join it together in one flesh with a prostitute (vs. 16-17). These verses are an elaboration on verse 15.

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<sup>38</sup> Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, [1989] 1977), 307.

<sup>39</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1983), 100. “In the case of *soma* [body] and the *Kurios* [Lord] to which it is related, God has raised the *Kurios*, and will raise up the *soma* of every one who is a member of Him. The contrast between the two cases is complete. On the other hand, the close relationship between the Lord and all true Christians, is shown by the double conjunction; *kai ton Kurion...kai emas*” (Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* [Edinburgh: T and T Clark], 124).

(2) The man who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body (v. 18). (3) Our physical bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (v. 19). (4) Our physical bodies do not belong to us because they were redeemed by Christ (vs. 19-20). (5) Therefore, we are obligated to glorify God with our physical bodies. This obvious fact makes it possible for the full preterist to circumvent the meaning of this passage.

### *1 Corinthians 15*

In 1 Corinthians we have Paul's most extensive teaching on the resurrection of the saints. A careful examination of the portions of this chapter which are relevant to the debate on the resurrection between orthodox Christians and full preterists will solidify and strengthen our faith in the historic creedal teaching on this all important doctrine. Paul's purpose in writing this chapter was to defend and define the doctrine of the future, literal bodily resurrection of believers from the dead. Paul's statement in verse 12, "How do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" indicates that the reason Paul wrote this chapter was to deal with people in the church who were denying the future, bodily resurrection of Christians. Verses 35-58 indicate that the false teachers at Corinth apparently objected to the corporeal aspect of the resurrection. Although we do not know what specifically caused their rejection of a bodily resurrection, it is likely the influence of Greek philosophy, perhaps coupled with their perverted concept of spirituality. In light of 1 Corinthians 6:13 it is probable that they regarded the salvation of the body as unnecessary; that the physical body would eventually be destroyed. Because they viewed the physical body as inferior and unnecessary, they redefined the future resurrection in a purely spiritual manner. It is for this reason that 1 Corinthians 15 is so well suited to refute the full preterist heresy.

This chapter contains three divisions in subject matter. In *the first part* of the chapter (vs. 1-11), the apostle appeals to the commonly held belief among the Corinthians that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Paul emphasizes the historical factual nature of our Lord's resurrection by appealing to a number of important points. First, he appeals at the beginning (vs. 1-2) and the end (v. 11) of this section to the fact that the Corinthians had accepted the true gospel from Paul. In other words, given the fact that Paul had preached the full content of the gospel and the Corinthians had believed it and owe their very salvation to this teaching, then how could they now accept a doctrine that implies it is not true? "If they do not hold fast to the gospel, that is, if their current position as to 'no resurrection' is correct, then Christ did not rise, which in turn means that they did indeed believe in vain. If they are right, everything is a lie, and they cease to exist as believers altogether."<sup>40</sup>

Second, Paul explains the gospel by setting forth two fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith: the sacrificial substitutionary death of Christ on the cross and the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead (vs. 3-4). Paul mentions the fact that our Lord was buried and then rose to emphasize the historical fact that the Savior's dead physical body was placed in a tomb and, consequently, His corpse was raised and came out of the tomb. The resurrection of Christ's body is an objective historical reality. It is not metaphorical or simply some spiritual phenomenon.

Third, Paul gives a list of appearances of Christ which includes Cephas, the twelve, five hundred brethren at once, James, all the apostles and Paul. "This muster of witnesses indicates the importance Paul attaches to the resurrection of the Lord. He is about to show its

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<sup>40</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 721.

consequences for Christian faith, and he lays the foundation by showing how well based is belief in it. He does not give a complete list of witnesses, but gives enough to show that the fact is extremely well attested. So reliable is the evidence that it must be accepted...<sup>41</sup>

## Paul's Refutation of the "No Bodily Resurrection" Position

In the second part of this chapter (vs. 12-34), Paul builds his argumentation upon the teaching of the first section and sets forth an air-tight, logical refutation of the Corinthians' "no bodily resurrection" position. This section is devastating to the full preterist concepts of the resurrection of the saints because the apostle's arguments could be applied to full preterists. This section contains three arguments designed to prove the absurdity and impossibility of the "no bodily resurrection" position.

(1) Paul argues that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then our Lord did not rise from the dead (vs. 13-15b). The Greek literally reads, "But if a resurrection of dead men [*anastasis nekron*] is not, neither Christ has been raised." Then the apostle lays out the shocking implications of such a statement. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith in Christ is worthless, the apostolic message is untrue and no one is saved (vs. 12-17). Moreover, everyone who has believed in Christ and then died has perished forever (v. 18). Their bodies will never come out of the grave. "Paul sees at once what others at first apparently failed to see: the resurrection in general cannot be denied without ultimately advancing to a denial also of Christ's resurrection. Both stand and fall together."<sup>42</sup>

Paul's argument in verse 13 (which is repeated in verse 15) disproves the full preterist position because his statement, "if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen," clearly assumes a literal resurrection of dead bodies. The apostle's argument would be invalid if the resurrection of the saints was defined *in a completely different manner* than the Redeemer's resurrection. Paul is saying if there is no plural *A*, then there can be no singular *A*. If we define the saints' resurrection as merely a spiritual experience or a metaphor for a revival in ethnic Israel, then Paul is comparing apples to oranges. He would be saying if there is no plural *B*, then there can be no singular *A*. The fact that full preterists can find references to spiritual resurrections in Scripture does not enable them to circumvent the clear meaning of Paul's

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<sup>41</sup> Leon Morris, *I Corinthians*, 207.

<sup>42</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *I and II Corinthians*, 649-650. Charles Hodge's comments on verses 12-13 are excellent. He writes, "The admission of the resurrection of Christ is inconsistent with the denial of the resurrection of the dead. What has happened, may happen. The actual is surely possible. This mode of arguing shows that the objections urged in Corinth bore equally against the resurrection of Christ, and against the general doctrine of the resurrection. They, therefore, could not have been founded on the peculiar difficulties attending the latter doctrine. They must have been derived from the assumption that the restoration to life of a body once dead is either an impossibility, or an absurdity. Most probably, these objectors thought, that to reunite the soul with the body was to shut it up again in prison...His design is to show that their objections to the resurrection proved too much. If they proved any thing, they proved what no Christian could admit, viz., that Christ did not rise from the dead. The denial of the resurrection of the dead involves the denial of the resurrection of Christ. The question discussed throughout this chapter is not the continued existence of the soul after death, but the restoration of the body to life. This is the constant meaning of the expression "resurrection of the dead," for which the more definite expression "resurrection of the body" is often substituted. Whether the false teachers in Corinth, who denied the doctrine of the resurrection, also denied the immortality of the soul is uncertain. The probability is that they did not. For how could any one pretend to be a Christian, and yet not believe in an hereafter? All that is certain is, that they objected to the doctrine of the [general] resurrection on grounds which logically involved the denial of the resurrection of Christ" (*I and II Corinthians*, 319).

argument. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit beyond measure (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:22; Jn. 3:34), but He was never regenerated or born again. His resurrection was a bodily, physical, literal resurrection out of a tomb. The clarity of Paul's argument cannot be denied.<sup>43</sup> Full preterists have a heretical, unbiblical understanding of the resurrection of dead believers. They will, of course, vehemently object to what has just been said by insisting that they do indeed believe in the resurrection. But if their definition of the resurrection of the saints on the final day is completely different than Christ and the apostles, then what they teach is no better than the doctrine of modernists, Bartians or the cults. *They deny the resurrection by redefinition.*

(2) In verses 20 to 28 Paul argues from the opposite direction and points out that since Jesus has been raised from the dead the bodily resurrection of believers must also take place. (The apostle uses the perfect tense [*egegetai*, v. 20] which means that Christ rose from the dead in the past and He continues permanently in His character as the risen and glorified Savior.) The covenantal union of believers with the Redeemer in His death and resurrection established a necessary connection between Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of all those who are redeemed. Paul speaks of our Lord's resurrection as "the firstfruits of those [Christians] who have fallen asleep [died physically]" (v. 20). The Savior's resurrection is the pledge and guarantee that there will be a full harvest of all Christians out of their graves unto glorified immortal life. "Paul is asserting by way of metaphor that the resurrection of the believing dead is absolutely inevitable; it has been guaranteed by God himself."<sup>44</sup> As Adam is the covenant head of all those who die (i.e. death is inevitable because of the imputation of Adam's sin and our own sins), Jesus is the covenant head of all those who will be made alive. Although it is indeed true that union with Christ results in regeneration and spiritual life (Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:11-13), the main thought of Paul in this context is on the physical resurrection of believers at the Parousia. This resurrection is in the future and Paul is writing to Christians who have already been raised spiritually in the past.

This section of chapter 15 refutes a number of full preterist errors. First, to deny that here Paul is speaking about a future bodily resurrection of believers, one must completely ignore the context, which is the bodily resurrection of physically dead believers. This is what Paul is setting out to prove. To ignore this fact and pretend that the apostle is discussing regeneration, or a release of souls from Hades or a revival of ethnic Israel is complete nonsense. Full preterists must do great violence to the plain meaning of Scripture to maintain their paradigm.

Second, verse 23 ("But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming") completely disproves the full preterist concept of progressive resurrections throughout history for believers living after A.D. 70. The word *tagmati* (*tagma*) translated "order" is a military metaphor which refers to a company troop, band or body of troops. The point of this passage is that when Jesus returns the *whole body of believers* from throughout human history will come forth in the resurrection like troops coming out together to assume a proper position and order around their leader. The expression "those who are Christ's"

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<sup>43</sup> On verses 13 and 14 Gordon Clark writes, "One is almost ashamed to write a commentary on these verses. No other language could make the meaning plainer" (*First Corinthians*, 258). Clark then adds this germane comment, "The Confession is right when it says, 'Those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned [and perverse Corinthians] in the due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them' (Westminster Confession, I.7)" (*Ibid*, 259). The resurrection of the dead is a crucial aspect of the gospel which is one of the most perspicuous doctrines in Scripture. But, if full preterism is true, then *all professing Christians for over 1,800 years* have had a completely unbiblical view of this foundational doctrine.

<sup>44</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 749.

(*hoi tou Kristou*) is *comprehensive*. It refers to the *whole body of the elect*. As Paul had just said in verse 22, “in Christ all shall be made alive.” This resurrection of the saints is said to occur “at His coming.” “*At his coming* makes it clear that Paul is referring to the second advent. The word he uses is *parousia*, which basically means no more than ‘coming’ or ‘presence’.... But it came to be used among Christians as the technical term for the Lord’s return.”<sup>45</sup> “‘Each in his own order’ means exactly two and not three [or three million]. First fruits are followed by the harvest, and that is all.”<sup>46</sup> There are not five, six or millions of separate harvests. David Brown’s comments on this section of Scripture are right on the mark:

Anyone who even glances at this sublime chapter will see, that the burden of it is the resurrection of believers *in general*—of “them that are Christ’s,” considered as the second Adam. As their death is deduced from their federal relation to the first Adam, so their resurrection is argued from their federal connection with the second. “As in Adam (they) all die, even so in Christ shall (they) all be made alive.” And it is immediately after this that the apostle says, “But each (party) in his own order”—that is, the federal Head and those federally related to him—“Christ the *first-fruits*; afterward they that are Christ’s (the *full harvest*) at his coming.”

Can anything be more decisive than this? What commentator explains it otherwise? What unbiased reader ever understood it otherwise? Is it not, then, a very bold liberty with the Word of God to say, that only a *fractional part* of “them that are Christ’s” are here spoken of?—that it means only such of them as shall have lived before the millennium?—that there will be millions of “them that are Christ’s,” that will not be “made alive at his coming,” but remain in their mortal and unglorified state upon earth for at least a thousand years thereafter? Here, on the contrary, we find *the whole federal offspring of the second Adam* made alive together at his coming. As surely as “Christ, the first-fruits” of *espoused* them “to one Husband, that he might *present* them (*paratesai*) as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. xi.2), there can be no doubt, I think, that they are right. Well, when is this to be? Clearly, “at his coming.”<sup>47</sup>

This verse completely concurs with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where we are told that Christ will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then believers who are still alive when Jesus returns will be transformed and glorified and all the saints will meet the Savior in the earth’s atmosphere. Our Lord is the first fruits because His victorious resurrection results in and guarantees the full harvest at the second coming. Paul mentions only two categories: Jesus and everyone purchased by His blood. Jesus alone, who is the Captain of our salvation, is in the first category and *all* believers are in the second category. This means that if the resurrection of the dead saints and the rapture of living saints occurred in A.D. 70, then there will be no resurrection for people living after A.D. 70. Obviously, the second coming can only occur at the end of human history and not at the end of covenant Israel’s history.

Note also that if we accept the full preterist contention that all believers after A.D. 70 simply receive their resurrected bodies at death and the general resurrection is a progressive instead of puncticular event, then 1 Thessalonians 4:17 doesn’t make any sense whatsoever. If the resurrection is what normally happens at death (as many full preterists assert), then why would believers who were alive at Christ’s coming need to have their bodies transformed into glorified, spiritual bodies which are raptured into the air to meet Jesus as He descends? The saints who were alive at that time could simply wait their turn and die a natural death just like

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<sup>45</sup> Leon Morris, *I Corinthians*, 215.

<sup>46</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians*, 669.

<sup>47</sup> David Brown, *Christ’s Second Coming: Will It Be Premillennial?*, 53-54.

everyone else after A.D. 70. The only explanation of 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and many other passages<sup>48</sup> that does not contradict that plain meaning of Scripture is that there is one resurrection of all the saints at the end of history, and not an endless series of separate resurrections throughout history.

Most of the New Testament passages on the second coming of Christ and the resurrection are not difficult passages. They are not what expositors call “problem passages.” The comments of Greek scholars and exegetes on these passages are virtually in complete harmony. They only become exceptionally difficult when a person attempts to fit them into an A.D. 70 framework. When confronted with such clear passages full preterists can only fall back on their time indicators and ignore what these passages actually say or they can equivocate and twist the obvious meaning of the text of Scripture or both.

Third, verses 24-28 connect the resurrection of the saints, not with the destruction of Jerusalem, but with Christ’s complete and final victory over all powers or forces that are against His throne. This section is very important because Paul is elaborating on the extent of the victory of Jesus’ resurrection. Because of Adam’s fall, sin and death (in the most comprehensive sense of the word) spread to all men. (In fact the whole creation was affected by sin and the fall.) But by dying on the cross and rising from the dead, Jesus has conquered death. Yet, even though our Lord has achieved a complete victory over death, believers still die physically and their bodies decay. Consequently, for salvation in the most comprehensive sense of the term to be complete, all those who were united to the Savior in His resurrection must arise because His victory was their victory. Only then will the last enemy, which is death, be finally and completely subdued. There are a number of important things to note about this section of Scripture that refute the full preterist system.

(1) The context of this passage is the resurrection of Christ and the bodily resurrection of believers. Paul is still setting forth reasons as to why a bodily resurrection of Christians must take place. To argue that Paul is discussing regeneration, deliverance from spiritual death or a deliverance of Israel in A.D. 70 is purely arbitrary. There is nothing at all in the context to support such a claim. People who make such arguments are simply imposing their own preconceived ideas onto the text. Moreover, since believers have already been regenerated and justified before God, Paul’s use of the word “death” must refer to a type of death that believers still experience—physical death.

(2) Paul very clearly connects the bodily resurrection of the saints with the end of the world. After Paul sets forth the order of the resurrections—Christ the firstfruits then the full harvest of the saints at the second coming—he says, “then [comes] the end” (*eita to telos*). Although the word *eita* (“then”) does not necessarily mean “immediately after”; in this context, it almost certainly connects the final resurrection with Christ’s total victory and the consummation of all things. Because the word *eita* can either mean what is subsequent or what is immediately consequent, premillennialists see a thousand year gap between the resurrection of the saints at the Parousia and the end of the millennium 1,000 years later. The problem with the premillennial view and the full preterist view, which is far worse (no final victory; death,

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<sup>48</sup> That the whole church universal is presented to Christ on the final day is taught or implied by the following passages. “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself to her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church” (Eph. 5:26, 27). “...that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (1 Thess. 3:13) “...when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe” (2 Thess. 1:10; cf. Col. 1:21, 22; Jude 24; 2 Cor. 11:2). Christ will only return when His church or bride is complete. This can only happen at the end of history. The A.D. 70 date chosen by full preterists is unbiblical and impossible.

suffering and sin continue on forever; all the prophecies and promises of Scripture have already been fulfilled), is that Scripture clearly places the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked on the final day (Dan. 12:1-2; Jn. 5:28-29; Ac. 24:15). This happens on the same day as the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked (Mt. 13:30-50; 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-10) and the end of all opposition to God together at the coming day of the LORD (2 Pet. 3:10-13; 1 Cor. 15:24-27; Rev. 20:11-15). Consequently, “unless it can be proved from other sources that events which are foretold as contemporaneous, or as following the one the other in immediate time, no such separation can properly be assumed.”<sup>49</sup>

All of this raises the question: Does the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 comport well with Paul’s description of the events at the end or that must come to pass before the end? Paul says that Christ’s reign as the theanthropic Mediator continues until every authority or power that opposes Him is subdued. The last enemy that is destroyed is death itself. The Messianic rule that began at our Lord’s resurrection must continue until He has put all His enemies under His feet including physical death. “By subjecting death to himself through the resurrection of the dead [saints], which is causally related to his being the firstfruits, Christ will thus have brought Satan’s tyranny to its conclusion.”<sup>50</sup> As Christians we should view death as a power that is contrary to God’s original intention for the human race. It became a triumphant enemy over man when Adam ate the forbidden fruit. “Adam’s disobedience resulted in the death of himself, his wife, and all his descendants. But Jesus conquered death through his resurrection and will abolish it in the consummation.”<sup>51</sup>

It should be obvious by now that Paul is not describing the end of Israel as a covenant nation or the end of the Jewish age, but the end of the redemptive process itself. Jesus brings the work of redemption to completion at the second coming and then hands the kingdom over to the Father. As long as there are enemies of Christ in this world, people still sin and Christians still die, the salvation process has not yet been fully realized. The resurrection of the saints cannot be restricted to regeneration, coming out of spiritual death or a revival of the Jews; for physical death will be done away in the removal of every power that opposes the will of God. The verb translated “destroy,” “abolish” or “put down” (*katargeo*) means to render null and void, make inoperative, render ineffective. At the resurrection of the saints all unbelievers are judged and cast into the lake of fire with the devil and all his angels. From the resurrection to the second coming Satan was on a leash, but after the Parousia he is in the lake of fire with absolutely no influence over this world. In the completely renewed heavens and earth, “there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4). According to the full preterist concept of the ultimate results of Christ’s work, the world was much better off before the fall than *it will ever be* for according to their system sin and the enemies of Christ will always be with us. There is no ultimate victory.

## Paul’s Discussion of the Nature of the Resurrection Body

After proving that believers are to arise bodily at the second coming of Christ, Paul turns his attention to the nature of the saints’ resurrected bodies. There is a sense in which this section is still dealing with objections to a literal bodily resurrection, for the apostle sets out to answer a common objection to this doctrine. “How can a literal bodily resurrection take place when bodies

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<sup>49</sup> Charles Hodge, *I & II Corinthians*, 328.

<sup>50</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 756.

<sup>51</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, 553.

have been consumed by insects, bacteria, plants and/or animals and have completely disintegrated into the earth?” A modern scientific person would want to know how all the scattered atoms and molecules that once composed our bodies are put back together again. Many full preterists actually think that this is an excellent argument against the traditional Christian view of the resurrection of the body. One such author quotes M. C. Tenney:

When the body of Roger Williams, founder of the Rhode Island colony, was exhumed for reburial, it was found that the root of an apple tree had penetrated the head of the coffin and had followed down Williams’ spine, dividing into a fork at the legs. The tree had absorbed the chemicals of the decaying body and had transmuted them into its wood and fruit. The apples, in turn, had been eaten by people, quite unconscious of the fact that they were indirectly taking into their systems part of the long dead Williams. The objection may therefore be raised: How, out of the complex sequence of decay, absorption, and new formation, will it be possible to resurrect believers of past ages, and to reconstitute them as separate entities?<sup>52</sup>

Paul deals with this objection, not with a discourse on the power or sovereignty of God or a scientific dissertation on our DNA molecules, but with a strong rebuke for even considering such an argument. Paul’s response begins with the word “fool” [*aphron*] translated as “foolish one” or “thou fool.” The word literally means “mindless,” “senseless,” “ignorant,” or “foolish.” The point of this word is not to insult the Corinthians who held to such a ridiculous idea, but to tell them they are not thinking correctly, logically or biblically. They are fools in the Old Testament sense for not taking God or His power into account on this crucial doctrine. After this one word rebuke, he appeals to the analogy of sowing seed to gather a harvest. The seed is buried in the earth, but is then raised up with a new more glorious body. “Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but

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<sup>52</sup> M. C. Tenney, *The Reality of the Resurrection*, as quoted by David B. Curtis, internet article. The great Reformed theologian Francis Turretin does an excellent job of refuting such unbelieving, foolish and heretical arguments: “To the objections drawn from the scattering of the corporeal dust, the devouring of human flesh by brutes and cannibals, the words of our Savior furnish and abundantly satisfactory reply: ‘Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.’ For these human reasonings arise from an ignorance of the Scriptures and of the absolute and infinite power of God. For whoever is firmly persuaded of both can easily beat back such cavils. Truly if the thing was to be measured by human strength, this would end the matter. But since it is a work of God, whose knowledge nothing can escape, whose power nothing can hinder, who can suppose this to be impossible? It is as easy for God to restore to the dead their own bodies and to separate them from all other bodies (even of cannibals themselves who may have devoured others) as it was easy to form the body of the first Adam out of the dust or to bring all things out of nothing. If a careful and attentive head of a family knows well where each thing is to be found in his house however large, why should God, whose wisdom and power are infinite, not know where the matter of our bodies lies concealed, since the whole world is far smaller to him than the most contracted chest or case to any man? Therefore, he can by his almighty nod alone recall these who at any time may have either been devoured by beasts, or turned into ashes and dissolved into moisture, or sunk in the waters, or exhaled into air; nor is there any hiding place, or cave, or recess, which is either concealed from the knowledge of the Creator, or can escape his power. For as nothing vanishes into nothing and always at least a minute particle containing the seed of a new body remains; and which, wherever scattered and thrown, nature holds at least in her bosom and care—so she restores it to God asking it back. Here belongs the passage of Tertullian: ‘Not the soul alone is separated; the flesh also has its place of concealment, in the waters, in fires, in birds, in beasts, since it seems to be dissolved into these as if poured into vessels, if also the vessels themselves have ceased, since it has flowed out of them also, it will be absorbed as if in a roundabout way into its mother earth, that it may again be recovered from her’ (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 63 [ANF 3:594; PL 2.885-86]). Besides, neither is it necessary for the essence of the same body that all its particles of dust be reckoned up and be united together in its new formation. It is sufficient that the principal and more solid parts remain. For every day some particles perish from the body, some are added to it, and still we see that the same man remains” (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3:569-570).

mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:36-44). This section of Scripture contains a number of excellent arguments against full preterism.

First, note that Paul’s argument only makes sense if what is sown into the earth are the dead bodies of believers. Seeds are buried in the earth and Christians’ dead physical bodies are buried in the ground. This analogy cannot apply to the souls of believers because they are not buried. They go immediately at death to be with Christ (Phil. 1:21-23; Lk. 23:43). Moreover, once a Christian is regenerated and saved, his soul cannot die again spiritually. Paul is writing to Christians. Therefore, he cannot be telling them that their regeneration and deliverance from sin-death is in *the future*. Also, any idea that Paul is dealing with ethnic Israel’s death and resurrection is complete nonsense. The context shows that the Corinthians were not discussing ethnic Israel at all. Rather, they were denying a literal, bodily resurrection of the saints (1 Cor. 15:12).

Second, that Paul is talking about a real resurrection of physical bodies is proved by verses 38 and 39 where the apostle is talking about bodies made of “flesh.” The use of the term “flesh” in this context cannot refer to our corrupt nature or unregenerate state for Paul is talking about the different kind of bodies that animals, birds and reptiles have in comparison to human bodies. Animals are not unregenerate. They do not have sinful hearts or souls that are under sin-death. Remember, Paul is answering the question, what kinds of bodies do Christians have when they are resurrected (v. 35)? This observation also completely rules out the idea that Paul is discussing a release of souls from Hades. Souls are not made of flesh and are never referred to as bodies in Scripture. Paul is establishing the point that God has made many different kinds of bodies and therefore He has the ability to raise up our dead bodies to a new form of existence that is different and superior from that which was placed in the grave.

Third, the major point of Paul’s seed analogy is to establish a genuine resurrection as well as a radical transformation. The dead body which is placed in the tomb (the seed) will be raised and transformed into a spiritual glorified body (what the seed becomes). The seed that is placed in the ground doesn’t simply rot into nothing while God creates a completely new and different plant somewhere else. No, the seed becomes the plant. This analogy assumes *continuity* or it is simply false. Farmers don’t plant wheat so that God can create a bushel of grain out of thin air. The planted seed becomes a beautiful field of wheat. Paul is telling us that the resurrection of believers is not simply the resuscitation of a corpse (as happened with Lazarus). It rather involves a transformation of dead bodies into something that is spiritual, incorruptible, immortal and glorious. As Paul says in another place, “Jesus...will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Phil. 3:20, 21).

The seed analogy assumes that God starts with something (a dead body) and not nothing (full preterist’s creation of a resurrected body out of nothing). The amazing transformation of the dead body is described using the passive “quickenened.” “The seed does not come to life of itself, but God gives it life.... A dead-looking, bare, dry seed is put into the ground, but what comes up

is a green plant, vigorous and beautiful.”<sup>53</sup> The passive indicates that the seed is acted upon. The full preterist believes the seed is not acted upon, but rather is ignored. While we must be careful not to make too much out of a simple analogy, the full preterist teaching ignores a central feature of this analogy.

Full preterists turn the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians upside down by using the seed analogy as a basis for their idea that believers receive a completely new and totally different body at death. This interpretation should be rejected for the following reasons.

(1) As noted the seed analogy assumes both *continuity* and radical *change*. If (as full preterists teach) our physical bodies are left in the earth forever and there is no connection between our resurrected body and what is left in the tomb, then the seed has nothing to do with the plant. There is no real connection at all and Paul’s analogy does not fit the resurrection of the saints at all. What full preterists teach is not a resurrection, but instead an *ex nihilo* creation. They do not really regard the dead bodies of Christians as seeds, but rather as garbage. Instead of being redeemed, the bodies of believers are abandoned to the grave forever.

(2) The analogy with Jesus as the firstfruits is also destroyed. The Redeemer is the firstfruits precisely because He first rose from the dead bodily. He rose as the captain of our salvation; because He conquered death and the grave, we rise also. If we do not conquer death and the grave in Christ but are left to rot in the grave forever, then the firstfruit analogy breaks down. Full preterists do not believe in a real resurrection of the saints. They believe that Christians receive completely new bodies at death that have no organic connection to their physical bodies that lived and died. They also believe that Christ’s resurrection was solely for dramatic apologetic effect. They must believe this because they view physical death as a natural part of God’s pre-fall world. They teach that Jesus rose literally and bodily, but Christians *never* rise literally and bodily. Therefore, the most they could say about our Lord’s resurrection is that it was a *sign* that at some point in the future God would create new spiritual bodies for Christian out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). But the firstfruits of a barley or wheat harvest is some barley or wheat not a cow or a sheep. The firstfruit is an indication of what is to come or it is not firstfruits. It is a sample of what is to come in the future and not a metaphor for a completely different kind of event or thing (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Rom. 16:15; 1 Cor. 16:15). Gill writes,

Christ is the first, and rose in the first in dignity, as well as in time; he rose as the head of the body, as the first-born, the beginning, that in all things he might have...the pre-eminence. The first-fruits sanctified the rest of the harvest, representing the whole, gave right to an in-gathering of it, and ensured it; Christ by lying in the grave, and rising out of it, sanctified it for his people, and in his resurrection represented them; they rose with him, and in him; and their resurrection is secured by his; because he lives, they shall live also. The first-fruits were only such, and all this to the fruits of the earth, that were of the same kind with them, not to tares and chaff, to briars and thorns; so Christ, in rising from the dead, is only the first-fruits of the saints.<sup>54</sup>

Fourth, a proper interpretation of the transformed bodies of Christians rules out the full preterist interpretation. Paul gives a detailed contrast between our bodies which are sown in corruption and the resurrected body that we are to receive. “The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body,

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<sup>53</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 224.

<sup>54</sup> John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, 2:730.

and there is a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:42-44). Using the figure of a seed once again, Paul says that the bodies of believers are placed in the grave and at the appointed time they are to arise into a state that is radically different and superior to what it was before. The expression *speiretai*, “it is sown,” is out of place and completely irrelevant if it does *not* refer to the human body. Likewise, “it is raised” (*egeiretai*) refers to the *same body* that was sown or Paul is speaking nonsense. Paul notes four differences between the body before and after the resurrection.

The body before the resurrection is a corruptible body. In this mortal life our physical bodies wear out, get sick, grow old, die and rot because we are fallen and polluted creatures. The death and putrefaction of the body is a great humiliation for man who was created to rule over God’s creation. The Greek word “corruption” (*phthora*) means that something is “destructible” or “perishable.” Paul is obviously discussing the human body which is liable to decay. Consequently, the Christian physical body that was committed to the tomb to rot and turn to dust will arise without the ability to die or decay. It cannot be destroyed. Incorruption is the opposite of corruption or decay. As Grudem writes,

The fact that our new bodies will be “imperishable” means that they will not wear out or grow old or ever be subject to any kind of sickness or disease. They will be completely healthy and strong forever. Moreover, since the gradual process of aging is part of the process by which our bodies now are subject to “corruption,” it is appropriate to think that our resurrection bodies will have no sign of aging, but will have the characteristics of youthful but mature manhood or womanhood forever. There will be no evidence of disease or injury, for all will be made perfect. Our resurrection bodies will show the fulfillment of God’s perfect wisdom in creating us as human beings who are the pinnacle of his creation and the appropriate bearers of his likeness and image. In these resurrection bodies we will clearly see humanity as God intended it to be.<sup>55</sup>

In fact, in our new state we will be superior to Adam in that we will be unable to fall and we will not be dependant on food for nourishment (1 Cor. 6:13). It is the only state that is truly the opposite of corruption or decay; our bodies will be immortal. A body free of all moral and physical corruption awaits all those who trust in Jesus. One of the central features of the human body (its corruptibility) that caused Greeks to view it as defective and lesser on a scale of being will not be a characteristic of the saints’ resurrected bodies.

Before the resurrection believer’s bodies are sown in dishonor; that is, subject to humiliation. The moment our bodies die they begin to rot and degrade. The funeral home can pump in embalming fluid to slow the process and put make up on the corpse to mask the effect of death, but soon the body becomes discolored, bloated and begins to stink. The body is enveloped in dishonor and must be removed from sight and entombed to remove its stench from the community. It must be buried deep because its putrefying mass is a danger to public health. The sight of a decomposing body causes people to recoil in horror. But the resurrected body comes forth in glory; it comes out of the grave perfect, without blemish or defect. Our bodies will be changed into a thing of great beauty and radiance, transformed and fashioned like the glorious body of Christ. “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1 Cor. 15:49). Jesus “will transform our body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21).

The body before the resurrection is weak. Man’s whole existence because of the fall is one of weakness. The body has a natural inclination toward sin; it is frail and easily struck by

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<sup>55</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, 2000), 831.

disease and death. When the body dies and is laid in the earth, it is a poor helpless thing, wholly in the power of death and corruption. It is deprived of all its vital capacities and powers and comes under the domination of insects, bacteria and viruses. Without life and strength it cannot move or defend itself from the degradation of decay and putrefaction. But when Christ raises this body out of the grave it is powerful; a heavenly, glorified life will be infused into it. No more can the body get sick or die; it will be made with the ability to endure forever.

The body is sown a physical or natural body, but it is raised a spiritual body. The expression natural body (*soma psuchikon*) has engendered much discussion because the adjective *psychikos* can have a variety of meanings. The word can mean “pertaining to the soul or life.” “The adjective *psuchikos* occurs six times in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 2:14, three times in the present passage, James 3:15, and Jude 19, where it is translated *sensual*.”<sup>56</sup> The general consensus of commentators is that *psuchikon* refers to a body subject to the laws and conditions of physical life. Before the transformation our bodies are earthly and function in the same manner as brute beasts. “Paul intends to describe only the present natural state of the body and not the spiritual condition of the person to whom the body belongs.”<sup>57</sup> “A natural body consists of flesh and blood; is susceptible of pain and decay; and needs air, food, and rest. It is a mere animal body, adapted to the conditions of an earthly existence.”<sup>58</sup>

At the resurrection all believers receive a “spiritual body” (*soma pneumatikon*). The expression “spiritual body” does *not* mean a disembodied spirit. Rather Paul describes our new bodies as being completely Spirit-filled and Spirit-governed. “[T]he spiritual body is a body such as the Holy Spirit designs to be suitable and competent for the functions of the future life.”<sup>59</sup> This point is explained in verses 45-49: “And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a living-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”

Adam by creation was a *psyche* being. He was of this earth. But Christ, by His resurrection, is a *pneumatikos* being. The first Adam was given a body that had the possibility of death and decay. As the federal head of humanity Adam fell and brought death into this world. He is the representative man for all who bear his *psychikos* likeness. But Christ, the second Adam and federal head of the elect, gained a “spiritual (glorified) body” through His redemptive work. He is not only the covenant head and representative Man for everyone who will bear His *pneumatikos* likeness, He also is the source of our spiritual life and our future spiritual (glorified) bodies. Everyone who is in Christ will share in the likeness of the heavenly man.<sup>60</sup> His

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<sup>56</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians*, 298.

<sup>57</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians*, 714.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Hodge, *I & II Corinthians*, 348.

<sup>59</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians*, 300.

<sup>60</sup> The full preterist Kurt Simmons writes, “The term ‘spiritual’ in 1 Cor. 15:44 is substantive, not qualitative, and that the body of the resurrection will be intangible [incorporeal, immaterial, having no physical existence], immaterial, and eternal. The spiritual man has a physical body only because he has not yet put it off in death. Upon the death of the body, the inner man lives on, clothed upon with a spiritual body of life.... The ‘earthly house’ [2 Cor. 5:1] is the fleshly body of this material realm. Upon death, it is replaced by a spiritual and immaterial house from heaven. Since it is from heaven, it clearly is not the ‘self same’ body put off in death. In the resurrection we will be spirit beings with spiritual bodies. (Heb. 12:23; 1 Cor. 5:5) (*The Resurrection of the Flesh*, internet article). There are a number of serious problems with Simmons’ view. (1) Why would Christ or Paul describe what Simmons describes as a resurrection? It obviously has nothing to do with a resurrection. The old body remains in the grave

resurrection will result in us receiving a heavenly body like the glorified Savior. Just as Jesus was literally resurrected with His same body that was radically transformed we shall be resurrected with a transformed spiritual body. “The resurrection body of Christ shows us something of what life will be like for believers in that new world which their resurrection will usher in.”<sup>61</sup>

Many full preterists appeal to 1 Corinthians 15:45 as a proof text against the doctrine of a literal bodily resurrection because it says, “the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” They argue from Luke 24:39 where Jesus said, “a spirit does not have flesh and bones.” This interpretation reveals how going to Scripture with a preconceived theological paradigm results in unbiblical exegesis. We can say this for two reasons. First, the full preterist view completely ignores the broad context of Scripture. When did Jesus become “a life-giving spirit?” The Bible teaches that it happened at the resurrection when our Lord received all power and authority to send the Holy Spirit and grant the gift of immortality to His people. When Jesus paid the full penalty for sin and defeated death and the grave through His resurrection from the dead, He obtained a transformed, glorified human body that is spiritual. When He rose from the dead, the Holy Spirit became the Spirit of Christ (the theanthropic Mediator) in a special redemptive sense. Jesus now has the authority to send the Holy Spirit to His people to raise them up spiritually (regeneration), sanctify and preserve them and also transform their physical bodies like unto His own glorified body (Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). When Jesus received all this authority was He only a disembodied Spirit being? No. He had a real (albeit glorified) physical body that could be touched and handled. Moreover, all four gospel accounts go out of their way to prove that He rose in the exact same body in which He died. Full preterists simply ignore all this strong biblical proof and, *with no biblical evidence whatsoever, arbitrarily* argue that at a point subsequent to the resurrection Jesus shed his resurrected physical body and became a pure

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forever and a spiritual shell is created of nothing to house the person’s spirit. (2) The Corinthians who denied the resurrection of the body would also have no problem with Simmons’ view. It was precisely the idea of the raising up of the old dead body of flesh that was rejected by Neo-Platonists and Gnostics. (3) If there is nothing physical or material about the resurrection body, then we have the rather absurd notion of a spirit created to house men’s disembodied spirit. As Turretin writes, “It is said that our bodies will be heavenly (1 Cor. 15:48), not in origin and essence, but in abode and seat; spiritual, not in substance and nature (because it implies a contradiction for a body to be made a spirit, and for a body to be granted which is not material), but in qualities and gifts. The flesh will perish as to its moral and qualitative being, but will remain as to its physical being essentially. All defects will be removed from the bodies to which they have been exposed in this mortality, but their essence will not be destroyed; while they will be blessed with immortality, glory, splendor, activity and similar gifts, which will be to them for an ornament and garments, they will always remain as to substance, material, quantity, visible, extended, standing together with its own dimensions, commensurate with place, as he who will give it glory will not take away its nature. Augustine says, ‘The bodies of the just will be spiritual after the resurrection, not because they will cease to be bodies but because they will subsist by the vivifying Spirit’ (CG 13.22 [FC 14:333; PL 41.395])” (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3:573). (4) Simmons’ view presupposes a Neo-Platonic concept of the human body. Man is saved only when he gets rid of his physical body and becomes a pure spirit being. For Paul, man’s problem was the nature of his physical body *due to sin*; its weakness, perishability, and so on. The resurrection of the physical body will eliminate these bad things without eliminating man’s body. (5) As we have noted in our study of 1 Corinthians 15 above, it is very clear that Paul is discussing a real bodily resurrection and not a creation of a spiritual shell *ex nihilo*. (6) Simmons’ appeal to 2 Cor. 5:1 as a proof text for a completely new spiritual body that has nothing to do with our current body is fallacious. Paul uses the verb *ependysathai* (to be covered over) which conveys the idea of covering over what already exists. The apostle is talking about the transformation of our earthly mortal bodies into heavenly spiritual bodies. This point is proved by verse two which says our present tent (i.e. our earthly physical bodies) shall be clothed over with the additional clothing of our heavenly glorified bodies. Simmons chooses an interpretation which explicitly contradicts 1 Cor. 15:51; Phil. 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:17 and Rom. 8:11, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 230.

spirit being. This argument not only suffers from being an arbitrary idea without proof, but also contradicts Scripture. The Word of God teaches that, as the *divine-human Mediator*, our Lord's high priestly work must continue until the final person is saved, all the saints are resurrected and glorified and the eternal state (the consummate kingdom) begins. This most certainly has not yet occurred. (Even the full preterist would have to argue that it did not happen until A.D. 70.)

Second, it also completely ignores the context in 1 Corinthians 15 itself. That Paul is discussing the dead physical bodies of believers is proved by the following considerations. (1) Paul argues that if dead men (plural) do not rise, then Jesus did not rise (vs. 13, 16). He must be comparing the same type of events or his argument is invalid and fallacious. (2) He turns the argument around and says if Jesus did not rise then we will not rise either (v. 15). (3) Paul is discussing Christians who have fallen asleep (i.e. died physically) (vs. 18, 20). If he is not discussing dead bodies, then he can only be discussing a spiritual experience (e.g., the new birth) or a release of souls from Hades. But the Bible explicitly teaches that all Christians are already regenerated, baptized and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, all believers go to be with Jesus the moment they die (Phil. 1:21-23; Lk. 23:43). (4) Paul's discussion of Christ rising from the dead as the firstfruits would not be true if he was not discussing a real bodily resurrection of the saints. Firstfruits indicate a *full harvest of the same kind*. Firstfruits of wheat do not indicate a successful pumpkin harvest. (5) The last enemy that is destroyed is death (vs. 26, 54-55). If this only refers to spiritual death and things will continue as they are forever, then the full preterist must teach that the last person was converted in A.D. 70 and the world ever since has been left to the heathen. They have only one other alternative which is to simply ignore what Paul says and pretend there is no end of death. This is actually what they do. What Paul is actually teaching is a complete total victory of Christ's kingdom where even physical death and suffering are conquered. (6) When describing the nature of the resurrection Paul asks, "with what body do they come?" (v. 35). He is discussing a bodily resurrection (cf. v. 38). (7) The seed analogy presupposes a body is sown and the same, albeit transformed and glorified body, comes forth (vs. 37-38). (8) Paul discusses different types of flesh and material objects to inform us about the nature of our resurrected bodies (vs. 39-41). This would be out of place if our bodies never rose and we became pure spirit beings. (9) Paul says explicitly that our dead bodies are sown and these dead bodies are raised incorruptible (vs. 42-44). Before the resurrection the body is natural (i.e. fallen, corruptible, weak, etc). After the resurrection it (i.e. the same body that was sown or buried) is spiritual, incorruptible, powerful and glorified. (10) Paul explicitly says that the bodies of the dead saints and the saints alive at the Parousia are not disregarded, or completely replaced, but rather transformed or changed (v. 52). If the full preterist system is correct, then this whole chapter is incomprehensible and false. But God is true and full preterists are liars and heretics.

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