Theology – Soteriology – Eschatology

Overcoming Sproul's Resurrection Obstacles

The First-Century Fulfillment of the Parousia of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead

Is it time to wake up yet? Does anyone hear me? HELLO!
Overcoming Sproul's Resurrection Obstacles

The First-Century Fulfillment of the Parousia of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead

By Daniel E. Harden

A Response to R. C. Sproul's Investigation of the Resurrection of the Dead in "The Last Days According to Jesus" and a Look at the Condition of the Believer in the Heavenly Realm from the Full Preterist View

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In addition, I wish to acknowledge the help of Edward E. Stevens, whose help and suggestions have been invaluable. Special credit goes to him for the research into the variants of 1st Cor. 15:51 as put forth by Bruce Metzger.

Finally, long overdue thanks to Rev. P. Wayne Townsend, who sent me travelling down this road in the first place.

Foreword

This work is a direct and deliberate response to the book written by R.C. Sproul, titled The Last Days According to Jesus. His work is acknowledged as a fine piece of doctrinal study regarding the Olivet Discourse and its first-century fulfillment in A.D. 70 as predicted by Christ.

Sproul's book is written from a partial preterist standpoint. This work is written from a full preterist standpoint, in response to the major area of doctrinal difference as set forth by Sproul—the resurrection of the dead, as set forth in his book in chapter 7, appropriately titled "When is the Resurrection?"

This work assumes a familiarity with the two views. In addition, it asserts the Reformed view and the sovereignty of God.

Any italicized emphases contained within the quoted texts of Sproul and Stevens are maintained from the original. I have left their text in its original form. Any italicized emphases of Biblical passages, on the other hand, are mine.

Thanks to Sproul for the work he has done, and the work he is doing, in battling the inconsistencies of the modern premillennial movement. I sincerely hope he considers the arguments that I have attempted to set forth.

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2nd Corinthians 4:1-2)

Daniel E. Harden
January, 1999
“The great weakness of full preterism — and what I regard to be its fatal flaw — is its treatment of the final resurrection. If full preterism is to gain wide credibility in our time, it must overcome this obstacle.”

R.C. Sproul,
The Last Days According to Jesus, p. 203

“And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there is about to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”

Paul, Acts 24:15

1. Defining the Obstacle

It is interesting that in the conclusion to his book, Sproul gives the impression that full Preterism can be acceptable in Christian circles, and certainly to his reckoning, if it "fixes" its treatment of the final resurrection.

The intent of this writing, therefore, is to show that within full preterist circles there does indeed exist a clear and straightforward treatment of the resurrection that is consistent not only within the framework of preterism, but with Reformed thought as well, adhering to the sovereignty of God. My sincere hope is that R.C. Sproul, Gary DeMar, and other partial preterists will carefully and systematically consider this and other writings and see how and where the resurrection fits in to the entire first-century eschatological framework. I highly respect these men, and loudly applaud the work they have done in showing the proper fulfillment in history of such passages as the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation. Sproul's book, The Last Days According to Jesus, is a terrific book, with clearly thought out and detailed explanations of the Olivet Discourse in its proper setting. This much needs to be clear. It is only in his chapter on resurrection that I feel his reasoning has broken down.

A clear analysis of chapter 7 — "When is the Resurrection" — will show that he does not give it the same logical scrutinization as he does the rest of the eschatological events he presents in the New Testament, which includes the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation.

2. Gentry and Stevens

Sproul opens his chapter titled "When is the resurrection" with the debate over labels, and cites the works of Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.—"A Brief Theological Analysis of Hyper-Preterism", and Edward E. Stevens—"Stevens' Response to Gentry: A Detailed Response
to Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.'s Critique of the Full Preterist View, ‘A Brief Theological Analysis of Hyper-Preterism’.

Stevens objects to the term “hyper-preterism” as referred to by Gentry for any full preterist position. Here I must concur. There are no less than four full preterist positions, and the one that Stevens espouses does not, in my opinion, deserve the extreme label of “hyper-preterism”. Hyper-preterism does exist, but Stevens clearly does not fall in this category. To find an accurate example of hyper-preterism, one needs to look at the movement spearheaded by John Humphrey Noyes in the mid-nineteenth century. His movement supported the idea that marriage was no longer valid among believers, and as a result set up the Oneida Community, an experiment in community marriage limited by those in power. This was a clear misuse and misinterpretation of Luke 20:27-40, applying to the physical realm a property of the heavenly realm. Like the error of the Gnostics, Noyes permitted all types of physical liberties, because of his belief that what was done in the physical body had no spiritual significance.

(It should be noted, however, that prior to his abuse and misinterpretation of Scripture, which earns him the label of a “hyper-preterist”, his preterist views were accepted as acceptable Christianity by his collegiate colleagues, falling within the realm of orthodoxy! He received his Congregational minister’s license to preach from Yale in 1833, despite having proclaimed that the Second Coming of Christ had already occurred, at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.)

However, the issue between Gentry and Stevens isn’t really over names. That is a very minor point in the two writings. Of larger concern is the issue of creeds versus Sola Scriptura. Sproul clearly recognizes this. He even goes so far as giving Stevens credit for correctly quoting him in the well-worded statement: "...people have attacked the credibility of Jesus. Maybe some church fathers made a mistake. I can abide with that. I can’t abide with Jesus’ being a false prophet.” Stevens even gives credit where it is due, by stating that Sproul is not a full preterist. Sproul then continues:

Sproul:
It is comforting to be quoted accurately. I did say what Stevens said I did. I agree with all preterists that what is at stake here is the authority of Jesus, and we must be consumed with maintaining His authority. To be completely candid, I must confess that I am still unsettled on some crucial matters.

It is my intention here to lay out for Sproul exactly what the full preterist position of Stevens and others is regarding the resurrection. In this chapter Sproul seems to express some doubt as to exactly what Stevens is espousing, although I found Stevens’ work to be relatively clear and easy to follow. It is my hope that Sproul and other partial preterists seriously consider what that position is before “settling in” one way or the other.
3. The Consistency of Full Preterism

Sproul [continued]:
I am convinced that the substance of the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in A.D. 70 and that the bulk of Revelation was likewise fulfilled in that time-frame. I share Gentry’s concerns about full preterism, particularly on such issues as the consummation of the kingdom and the resurrection of the dead. In the final analysis I am confident that both Stevens and Gentry agree that these matters must be settled on the basis of biblical exegesis. Let us turn our attention then to the biblical questions that remain unresolved between partial and full preterists.

The central issue is this: What events prophesied in the Bible are as yet unfulfilled. Full preterists refer to themselves as “consistent” preterists, implying that partial preterists are “in-consistent.” Full preterists apply a strict view of the meaning of parousia, end of the age, and the day of the Lord.

Actually, full preterists consider themselves “consistent” because of the way they handle phrases like parousia, the end of the age, and the day of the Lord. When Sproul, earlier in his book, talks about how the New Testament writers meant consistently the same thing by such phrases as close at hand, near, and at the door, part of what strengthens his argument is the fact that these phrases don't need to be constantly qualified. There was only one event that was considered paramount to these writers, so that when they gave these time statements, they knew just what was in close proximity.

The full preterist view on the phrases parousia, the end of the age, and the day of the Lord follow the very same guidelines. If there were more than one parousia, the New Testament would have been much clearer in detailing just which parousia was intended. No such qualifications are given. The lack of qualifications naturally lead to either (1) an intentional (or unintentional) confusion for the readers, or (2) the fact that no such qualification was needed, for there was only one parousia, end of the age, and day of the Lord that was being discussed throughout the New Testament. The full preterist simply dismisses the first possibility as unacceptable and works from the second, that only one parousia was ever taught. If that qualifies as “strict”, then so be it.

Sproul [continued]:
While partial preterists acknowledge that in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 there was a parousia or coming of Christ, they maintain that it was not the parousia. That is, the coming of Christ in A.D. 70 was a coming in judgment on the Jewish nation, indicating the end of the Jewish age and the fulfillment of a day of the Lord. Jesus really did come in judgment at this time, fulfilling his prophecy in the Olivet Discourse. But this was not the final or ultimate coming of Christ. The parousia, in its fullness, will extend
far beyond the Jewish nation and will be universal in its scope and significance. It will come, not at the end of the Jewish age, but at the end of human history as we know it. It will be, not merely a day of the Lord, but the final and ultimate day of the Lord.

Quite bold statements, but made utterly without Scriptural backing. And in light of the thorough treatment that Sproul makes of the first part of the Olivet Discourse in this book, rather surprising. If Sproul takes the typical partial preterist position of separating the Matt. 25 judgment from the Matt. 24 parousia, then we must ask, where does the Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24-25 change from judgment on Jerusalem to end-of-humanity judgment? The simple reading of this passage indicates that the judgment scene depicted in Matt. 25 is a direct and immediate result of the judgment in chapter 24. When Sproul says that he is convinced that the substance of the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in A.D. 70, is he including Matt. 25:31-46?

What’s more, Sproul states that the “final” coming will be universal in its scope and significance. Full preterists contend, as does Sproul elsewhere, that the parousia at A.D. 70 was indeed universal in significance, once and for all dispensing with the Old Covenant and consummating the New Covenant, thereby once and for all doing away with the distinction of “Jew” and “Gentile”. So the question must be asked of Sproul—is there a distinction anywhere in the Bible between the “universality” of the parousia at A.D. 70 and the “universality” of the “final” coming? How can such a distinction be made? For above all else, nowhere in the New Testament is there any distinction made about which coming is referred to. Not once do we find any clarification, by Christ, Paul, Peter, or anybody else, of “this is not the final coming, but only the imminent parousia. The word “final”, for example, never appears in conjunction with a coming of Christ. Indeed, if there were any clarification made in Scripture to distinguish different “comings”, it seems highly unlikely that dispensationalism would have evolved at all! But no, such a distinction made by Sproul in this paragraph is no-where to be found in the New Testament. In fact, in the Olivet discourse, where Sproul clearly applies Matt. 24:1-34 to the parousia, I would expect to see such a distinction made by Christ, if the latter part of Matt. 25 refers to the “final” coming that is different than the coming just mentioned. But no distinction is made. The discourse flows straight through without any perceivable change in topic.

Sproul does not indicate anywhere in his book whether he follows this typical partial preterist view. But his statement begs the question as to why he feels the parousia in A.D. 70 wasn’t a “parousia in fullness”, and where Scripture distinguishes the A.D. 70 parousia from the “ultimate” parousia.

Sproul [continued]:

Partial preterists understand that there are nuances to biblical terminology regarding the coming of Christ and the day of the Lord, nuances that make
it possible and necessary to speak of more than one event that encompasses all these things at once.

I have a major problem with this statement. In essence, it is the same argument made by all branches of eschatology in support of their views. But the plain and simple fact is that the Bible isn't about nuances at all, but clear and straightforward teaching. For example, in chapter 2, Sproul clearly and correctly distinguishes biblical interpretation based on style or genre, whether it is poetic, didactic, historic, or prophetic. Each style is to be handled differently when determining interpretation. But above all, in his argument for the literal, straightforward interpretation of Matt. 24:34, Sproul correctly argues for passages to be taken at face value, when there is no other overriding style.

I totally agree. But here Sproul seems to double back and allow for “nuance”, which hints at hidden meanings. Yet where do these supposed nuances exist?

In Sproul's defense here, however, he is only stating a distinction of partial preterists as opposed to full preterists. He does not come out and say here that he agrees with this statement, he only offers it as a definition. However, as we shall see, he does come down squarely in defense of this position.

Sproul [continued]:
Full preterists, on the other hand, argue that this approach is inconsistent and arbitrary, resulting in multiple comings of Christ and days of the Lord. They insist that time-frame references in the Olivet Discourse supply the supreme key to New Testament prophecy and that this key applies to all references to eschatological events. Stevens objects to Gentry’s charge that, according to consistent preterists, “all prophecy is fulfilled in the A.D. 70 destruction of the Temple, including the Second Advent, the resurrection of the dead, the great Judgment, and so forth.”

Stevens says that it is not “exactly correct” because full preterists believe in an ongoing fulfillment of prophecy in the present kingdom of God. This ongoing fulfillment, however, does not include specific events predicted in the New Testament. This seems to be a bit of a quibble. Gentry is clearly speaking about the fulfillment of certain predicted events. What can easily get lost in the quibble is the clear position taken by full preterists: the specific eschatological events predicted in the New Testament, such as the second advent, the resurrection of the dead, the rapture, and the last judgment, have already taken place.

This position is greeted by partial preterists with the charge of heresy and heterodoxy. Full preterists agree that their views depart from creedal orthodoxy, but insist they do not depart from biblical orthodoxy. Both sides
agree that in the final analysis the test for orthodoxy must be the Bible, not the creeds.

*Sola scriptura!* Stevens’ whole point in the first portion of his work is that Gentry is arguing from a creedal standpoint, and that to effectively argue his case, Gentry must use biblical, not creedal arguments.

### 4. The Resurrection of the Body?

Sproul [continued]:
One point of creedal orthodoxy is the Apostle’s Creed’s affirmation of the resurrection of the body (*resurrection is carnis*). This affirmation refers to the resurrection not of Christ’s body (which is affirmed earlier in the creed), but of our bodies. It declares that Christians will participate in the bodily resurrection of Christ when our bodies are raised and glorified on the last day. This view is categorically rejected by full preterists and constitutes a major difference between the two views.

Here we get to the heart of the problem of resurrection! Again, however, it should be stressed that a rejection of a creed is not the same as the rejection of Scripture. In our study here of 1st Cor. 15, we shall see whether the rejection of the Apostle’s Creed on this point is tantamount to the rejection of Scripture, or whether it is the rejection of the creed as unscriptural. In other words, a creed must stand up to Scripture, or it should indeed be rejected!

Sproul labels the next section “The Resurrection of the Body”. It should be noted, however, that while such a phrase “resurrection of the body”, which implies a physical resurrection of a physical body, appears in various creeds, it does not appear in Scripture. Nor does the phrase “bodily resurrection”, which Sproul uses. The point of 1st Cor. 15 isn't that a *body* is resurrected, but that a *spirit* is resurrected into a body, one that is distinctly different than the original body. The chapter speaks of *two* bodies, not one, and therefore the terms “resurrection of the body” and “bodily resurrection” are inappropriate.

Sproul [continued]:
The chief text focusing on the resurrection of the body is found in 1st Corinthians 15.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must
put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

"0 Death, where is your sting?
0 Hades, where is your victory?

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord..

(1st Cor. 15:50-58)

Full preterists make two strong assertions about this text: It refers to a spiritual resurrection, not a bodily resurrection; and this resurrection has already taken place. Again the time-frame is crucial to the discussion. Russell stresses the apostle’s words in verse 51: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed…. “To whom does the apostle refer when he says, ‘We shall not all sleep,’ etc.?” Russell asks. “Is it to some hypothetical persons living in some distant age of time, or is it of the Corinthians and himself that he is thinking? Why should he think of the distant future when it is certain that he considered the Parousia to be imminent?”

According to Russell most of those who received Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians could have lived, and would have expected to live, long enough to see the events Paul described. To maintain that these events were indeed fulfilled in the first century, one must interpret the relevant passages in a way that makes early fulfillment possible. The most severe obstacle is the absence of any historical record that the rapture of the living and the resurrection of the dead occurred.

Several points here need to be stressed. First, as Sproul himself goes out of his way to point out, there needs to be a clarification of terminology. Sproul has contrasted a “spiritual resurrection” as opposed to a “bodily resurrection”, but that is really an inappropriate contrast. The two terms aren’t opposites. This should be especially clear in 1st Cor. 15:44, where the phrase “spiritual body” appears:

1st Cor. 15:44—It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body; there is a spiritual body and there is a natural body.
In this sense, the term *body* merely denotes *form*. What is really in opposition in these verses is the natural (or physical) and the spiritual. Therefore, just as we have a body or form while here in the physical world, so too will we have a body or form in the spiritual realm. This needs to be clear. The afterlife existence is not bodiless. The term “body” (or “bodily”) should not be used interchangeably with the term “physical”.

The second distinction that needs to be clarified is that when the word *spiritual* is used, it is not in opposition to *literal*. So as we proceed, note that what is literal is a fact of existence or history. For example, the destruction of Jerusalem was a literal event. The opposite of this is not *spiritual* but *symbolic* or *metaphorical*. This, too, needs to be clear, for it is possible to be literal and spiritual — for example, King David no longer exists in the physical realm, but he does live on eternally in the spiritual realm in a very real, literal sense. Angels are real and literal creatures, but are spiritual creatures, not physical creatures.

Sproul also questions the lack of historical “proofs” that would substantiate the full preterist stance, calling it a “severe obstacle”. Yet in fact, isn’t this the same type of obstacle that stands before all of Christianity? Is there any “proof” that Christ, when He ascended, went to heaven? Indeed, because of the very separation of the physical and the spiritual, and the very fact that the physical man cannot normally see into the spiritual realm or spiritual beings (see 2nd Kings 6:16-17 for a classic example), man of necessity must use faith in what was said and promised in the Word to ascertain what has and is happening in the spiritual realm.

There is certainly no more “proof” that the body here is meant in strictly a physical sense. In fact, in light of the distinction between the physical and the spiritual in 1st Cor. 15:44, there is sufficient cause to understand that this is indeed not the case.

This should become clearer as we go along.

Sproul [continued]:

So Russell and other full preterists conceive of the resurrection of the dead in spiritual terms. Russell anticipates this objection:

But the objection will recur. How could all this take place without notice or record? First, as regards the resurrection of the dead, it is to be considered how little we know of its conditions and characteristics. Must it come with observation? Must it be cognizable by material organs? “It is raised a spiritual body.” Is a spiritual body one which can be seen, touched, handled? We are not certain that the eye can see the spiritual, or the hand grasp the immaterial. On the contrary, the presumption and the probability are that they cannot. All this resurrection of the dead and transmutation of the living take place in the region of the spiritual,
into which earthly spectators and reporters do not enter, and could see nothing if they did.

Here we see a marked change in Russell’s exegetical approach from the one he applied to the time-frame references in the Olivet Discourse. In the Olivet Discourse the interpreter faces the problem of dealing with both time-frame references and references to the parousia. As we have seen, some commentators “spiritualize” the time-frame language and see it as being somewhat figurative, while interpreting images that describe the parousia more literally. Russell treats the time-frame references literally and the parousia images figuratively. In this respect he has the precedent of Old Testament—judgment prophecy on his side.

Yes, and no. Actually, a case can still be made for a literal parousia. Doesn’t Josephus record hosts of heavenly chariots in the skies over Jerusalem? Doesn’t he also record the sound of a great voice from the temple saying “Let us remove hence!”? (Josephus, War of the Jews, 6,5,3) The point is that just because the actual parousia of Christ wasn't physical doesn't mean that it was restricted to being figurative. The angel that appeared to Mary wasn’t a physical being with a physical body, but it was literal and real nonetheless. Spiritual beings can interact with the physical in special cases, even to the extent of being perceived for a limited time by our physical senses. This does not make them physical beings.

Such could well have been the case with the parousia. Russell’s arguments don’t depend on this, however, as it is well recognized that the parousia of A.D. 70 was indeed one of a coming of judgment on the Jewish system. So what “proof” we have is that the city was destroyed. We cannot ascertain for certain whether this was a literal coming or a figurative coming, but we can certainly see that it was a coming!

However what cannot be denied is the Old Testament judgment-comings of the Lord. And these comings did not refer to or demand a literal, personal coming, but rather action by God in judgment against various nations. Russell and Stevens are both adamant about this fact, and it is important when noting the nature of the parousia at A.D. 70, since similar language is used.

5. Who Did Paul Mean by “We”?

Sproul [continued]:
When we get to the Corinthian correspondence, we notice two things immediately. The first is that the time-frame adopted by Russell is based not on an explicit chronological reference, but on an inference drawn from Paul’s words “we shall not all sleep.” If we conclude that Paul, by divine inspiration, is predicting that the resurrection will occur while he is still...
alive, then the resurrection occurred at least five years prior to the
destruction of Jerusalem (Paul was martyred under Nero in A.D. 65).

The full preterist might argue that the “we” does not include Paul himself,
but simply some who received his teaching. But if this is the case, then it is
likewise possible that the “we who are alive” can be even more inclusive
and refers to any reader of the Corinthian text in the future.

Sproul’s logic breaks down in this section, revealing his inconsistency. He is very clear
about applying the Olivet Discourse to the first-century hearers, especially in light of the
various “you” statements. For example, on pages 35-36, where he is talking about Matt.
24:4-9, he states:

Sproul [pages 35-36]:
We must keep in mind that Jesus was answering questions posed by his
disciples, questions about when his previous utterances would be fulfilled.
His words were directed to them. “Take heed,” he said, “that no one
deceives you.” He told his disciples that they would hear of wars and
rumors of wars, and so forth. … Immediately following this he said that the
disciples (you) would be delivered up to affliction. (Emphasis in the
original)

And regarding the abomination of desolation, Matt. 24:15-24, on page 39:

Sproul [page 39]:
The preterist view includes the tribulation and the abomination of
desolation with signs that take place prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.
“No argument is required to prove the strict and exclusive reference of this
section to Jerusalem and Judea,” Russell contends. “Here we can detect no
trace of a double meaning, of primary and ulterior fulfilments, of underlying
and typical senses. Everything is national, local, and near: ‘the land’ is the
land of Judea—‘this people’ is the people of Israel — and the ‘time’ the
lifetime of the disciples — ‘when YE therefore shall see.’”

To which I say, “amen!” and “well done!” He accurately recognizes the audience and the
thrust of what Christ is saying to them.

Does the usage of the word “you” throughout the Olivet Discourse necessitate that all the
apostles would be alive at the parousia in this passage, since they all were present? Not at
all. It only demands that some of those alive when Christ was speaking would live to see
it.

So then why does he deviate from that in 1st Cor. 15? Why does he not hold to this
consistency? His logic here is faulty. When Paul tells the Corinthians, “we who are
alive”, does this insure, as Sproul indicates, that he and all his audience would be alive? Not at all, but like in Matt. 16:27-28, it only tells us that some there would be alive.

Paul was indeed including himself in the statement “we” and yet the usage of the pronoun “we” doesn’t insure that every member of that group, Paul included, would still be alive. The phrases “we who are alive” and “we shall not all sleep” merely means “those of us that survive”. It does necessitate that some members of the immediate group indicated by the word “we” would survive, but not that each and every member of the group would survive. Sproul is implying more than Paul is actually saying, deviating from the normal usage and understanding of the phrase “we shall not all sleep”, in order to insist that Paul himself would then have had to survive. But Paul is not saying “none of us will die”, he is saying “not all of us will die.”

In fact, the whole chapter is predicated on the Corinthian concern for those in their congregation that had died. So when Paul makes the distinction of “those that are dead” and “we who are alive” in a near-future setting, the most that can be said is that Paul was assuming most of his audience would be alive, or at least some, else he would have said “those that are alive”.

Nonetheless, the “we” and “we who are alive” and “we shall not all sleep” in 1st Cor. 15 are indeed time statements, for the “we” must be seen as the collective group of Paul and his audience. And indeed, Sproul's statement that if Paul meant he and his audience when he said “we shall not all sleep”, then the resurrection necessarily had to occur before Paul’s death, is quite ludicrous. The very statement “we shall not all sleep” indicates (by the inclusion of the word “all”) that some of them would die before the resurrection, but that some would remain alive! Sproul’s argument falls completely flat here.

Milton S. Terry, in his work Biblical Hermeneutics published in 1898 answered the same objections that Sproul raises. He wrote:

Terry [pages 456-457]:
Putting aside all special pleading and dogmatic bias, it seems hardly doubtful that the language of the apostle implies an expectation that many of his generation would remain alive until the coming of the Lord. No one can fairly claim that Paul’s language implies that both himself and all those to whom he wrote would be living at that hour, for what he says about them that “are falling asleep” (ver 13) implies the contrary. So also his words in 1st Cor. 15:51, “we all shall not sleep,” are virtually equivalent to “some of us will sleep.” He intimates that he himself rather expected to die (1st Cor. 15:31-32), and, later on, this expectation became a positive conviction (Phil 3:7-11; 2nd Tim. 4:6-8). But these facts and considerations do not militate against the opinion that his language in the passage in question clearly implies the doctrine of the speedy coming of the Lord, and that many, if not most, of his contemporaries would live until that glorious event. … It is
unnecessary and uncalled for to maintain that Paul here expresses any "definite expectations" about himself, personally (or of any other individual), as if he might not fall asleep before the parousia.

What needs to be remembered is that both 1st Corinthians and 1st Thessalonians were not simply general Christian documents, they were personal letters from Paul to the congregations of those churches. In that light, the genre is entirely wrong for the usage of "we" as Sproul suggests. In fact, nowhere in Scripture do we find the usage of the words "we" and "you" without meaning a direct reference to the writer and audience.

Perhaps a couple modern day examples would serve to clarify this point:

During the two World Wars in which America was involved during the first half of the century, men in the trenches often formed a bond with each other. It was not unusual for these men to make a tontine, or pact, during this duress. This tontine often included a promise to meet at a given place either at a given time in the distant future or in a given number of years. It was often specified similarly to the wording we read in 1st Cor. 15 and 1st Thes. 4. “At the end of the war, those of us who are still alive shall meet in New York.”, or something similar. In this way, the “we” or “us” does not guarantee that all the members would survive, it merely indicates that some members of the group could survive. This effectively limits the time scope.

A second example may be found in modern sports tournaments, the winner is usually determined by a process of elimination. In college basketball, for example, the field starts with 64 teams. One coach could legitimately address his team thus: “There are 64 teams in this tournament. We shall not all lose. We who remain after the regionals and districts will go to the finals.” Not every member of the “we” will survive. In fact, only four teams survive clear to the finals. The usage of “we” does not guarantee survival of every team in the tournament. But it does guarantee the survival of some teams, as well as setting a clear limit to the pronoun “we” to those 64 teams that participated in the tournament. The “we” refers to the 64 teams, while the “not all lose” and the “who remain” are qualifiers within that scope of 64 that narrows it down to the four survivors, or winners.

This is true in 1st Cor. 15 and 1st Thes. 4 as well. The scope of the audience must be maintained. Paul did not say “we shall all not die” but “we shall not all die”. Note carefully the word order. He states that of the immediate “we”, not that they would all live, but rather that they wouldn’t all die. That doesn’t mean some of them wouldn’t die. He didn’t say “those who are alive” but “we who are alive”. That infers not that all the “we” had to live, but that of those “we”, there would be some that lived, and they would be the “we who are alive”. The “who are alive” is a qualifier to the “we”, indicating a part of the “we” that survive. Sproul ignores these common meanings and nuances to these phrases. He totally ignores the qualifiers “not all die” and “who are alive” with respect to the “we”, and demands that Paul would have had to survive. This is just not so. Some of the “we” would die, and not be alive. But most would survive. So it must be stressed that
the phrases do maintain the audience of the letter without guaranteeing that any individual would survive.

6. Metzger and the Variants of 1st Cor. 15:51

It should be noted that the editorial committee which reviewed the variants in 1st Cor. 15:51 and formed the textual apparatus known as The Greek New Testament (UBS, third edition), which is used by translators worldwide as the original text from which they work, gave this variant in 1st Cor. 15:51 a rating of [A]. This is the highest level of certainty they give to any variant. Evidently all on the committee were confident that this was the original. The other variants were found in a few early manuscripts including the Chester Beatty papyrus (p46) and others (Ac, Origen, Ggr, Sinaiticus, C, D, and several later mss.). But the textual evidence for the reading we find in all the standard translations is based on a wide base of both early and later manuscripts.

There were at least four significant variant readings involved in 1st Cor. 15:51:

1. …we shall NOT all sleep, but we shall all be changed.
2. …we shall NOT all sleep, but we shall NOT all be changed.
3. …we shall all sleep, but we shall NOT all be changed.
4. …we shall all arise, but we shall NOT all be changed.

The first is the one considered by the committee to be the original. Here is the reasoning Bruce Metzger gave for their choice of this variant and their classification of it as [A] in certainty.

Metzger [page 569]:
The reading which best explains the origin of the others is that preserved in (B, Dc, K, P, Psi, 81, 614, Byz Lect, syr-p, h, cop-sa, bo, toght, eth, and others). Because Paul and his correspondents had died, the statement “we shall not all sleep” seemed to call for correction. The simplest alteration was to transfer the negative to the following clause (Sinaiticus, A*, C, 33, 1739, it-g, arm, eth, and others). That this was an early modification is shown by the artificial conflation of both readings in p46, Ac, and Origen; “oun” in G-gr may have arisen from a transcriptional blunder, “ou” [short diphthong] being read as “ou” [long diphthong]. The most radical alteration, preserved in several Western witnesses (D*, it-d, 61, vg, Marcion, Tertullian, and others), replaces “sleep’ with “arise”, a reading which apparently arose to counteract (gnostic?) denials of the general resurrection.”

There are two important points in Metzger's statements above that need emphasis:

First, according to Metzger the whole reason for the other variations was the fact that Paul and all of his contemporaries had died apparently without seeing the general resurrection event occur. The late-second-century scribes and copyists evidently wanted to help Paul out of a jam. Paul had stated that not all the folks then alive in his day would die—some of them would live until the general resurrection. Since all of Paul’s generation and everyone who had known them had died by the middle of the second century, the late-second-century scribes and copyists were faced with a problem. They did not realize the general resurrection had occurred in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, so they believed Paul had made a mistake. Therefore, they felt the need to tamper with the text to disguise the failure of the time implications.

Second, Metzger shows that at least one of these variants dates as early as the late second century. If it was a copy of an earlier manuscript, then the change could have been made as early as mid-second century. This shows that the mid- and late-second-century church leaders were already aware of and struggling with a delay or non-fulfillment problem. It is not surprising that they chose to tamper with the time indicators rather than reinterpret their mistaken understanding of the nature of fulfillment of the general resurrection event.

This is the same approach Justin Martyr, Shepherd of Hermas and 2nd Clement took in the middle of the second century when they noticed that all of the apostolic and sub-apostolic generations had died without the arrival of the parousia and its associated general resurrection and judgment. Instead of reinterpreting their understanding of the nature of fulfillment, they chose instead to mess with the time statements. These three writers in the middle of the second century suggested that the time statements were somewhat elastic and that the fulfillment had merely been temporarily delayed until all the right conditions were in place, and that it would surely happen very soon. They still believed Christ’s parousia was very imminent—any moment now—but “obviously” (?) not as imminent as the NT writers had thought. Their suggestion of a short delay took on a life of its own, and gradually developed into a longer and longer “postponement” idea, until at this late date modern Christianity can conceive of nothing else but an indefinite postponement. The Church has never recovered from that early and fundamental error of first “mildly elasticizing” the time of fulfillment, and then gradually “indefinitely postponing” it longer and longer, rather than reexamining and correcting their understanding of the nature of the resurrection. This is reflected in the early creeds.

It could very well be that the scribes and copyists of the late second century who produced the textual variation in 1st Cor. 15:51 had read Justin Martyr, Shepherd of Hermas and 2nd Clement. In fact, there is reason to suggest they had not only read those works, but might have even made copies of them. They were probably keenly aware of the time problem that those three writers wrestled with. Their changes to the text made the idea of a delay or postponement even more palatable. But what must be realized is
that the original text of 1st Cor. 15:51 was clearly understood by the early church to have pointed to a general resurrection before all the people of Paul’s generation had died. Otherwise, there would have been no reason to change it, and especially change it to something that neutered or erased entirely the time problem.

So Sproul’s suggestion that Paul had more than just his contemporaries in mind when he said “we shall NOT all sleep” is a stretch. The second-century church fathers and scribes understood Paul to mean his contemporaries. It is not legitimate to include all future generations in the “we” of 1st Cor. 15:51, as Sproul suggests. There is nothing in the language here to prove that Paul necessarily included himself in the group who would “not sleep.” He wasn’t sure he would live till the parousia or not. Christ had not revealed that to him. There was a possibility that he might be among that number who lived until that time, so he included himself in that group as a possibility, but not as a certainty. The certain thing is that some of those standing there in that generation would live to see it, and some would not. It is just as legitimate to include Paul in the “we” that would “fall asleep” as it is to include him in the group of those who would not. He simply says that “we shall not all sleep.” Some of the “we” would die before the parousia and resurrection (including Paul) and some of the “we” wouldn’t. That is all Paul says. He does not necessarily include himself in either group, since he was not sure that he would live and remain until that parousia and resurrection (see Philippians 2:20-26; 2:15-17; 2:23; and 4:5). Paul wasn’t absolutely sure whether he would remain until the parousia or not. But he certainly believed the parousia was near, and that some of his contemporaries, possibly even including himself, would live to see it.

1st Cor. 15:51 is a time text located in the middle of THE most significant resurrection passage in our New Testament. And it is not the only imminency text and A.D. 70 connection in this chapter (1st Cor. 15) or the whole book (1st Corinthians). In this very context, in 1st Cor. 15:23 we see the Greek word "parousia" mentioned in direct connection with this general resurrection event. Nowhere does Jesus or any of the apostles or New Testament writers distinguish between two different "parousias" separated by thousands of years. Jesus only used this term in reference to the “coming” in A.D. 70 (Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39), and had time statements directly attached to it. The other New Testament writers often attach time statements to their mention of the “parousia” (e.g. 2nd Thess. 2:8; James 5:7-9; 1st John 2:18, 28). And elsewhere in the extended context of 1st Corinthians we see imminency indicators that place the time of fulfillment near at hand (1st Cor. 1:7, 8; 2:6-8; 4:5; 7:26-31; 10:11; 16:22). And this doesn’t even consider the numerous other time texts in Paul’s other books that he attaches to the parousia and general resurrection events (e.g. see the whole book of 1st Thessalonians in context with 2nd Thessalonians).

These imminency indicators, not only in 1st Cor. 15 but also throughout the entire book of 1st Cor., underscores the consistency problem Gentry and Sproul have here. Gentry especially has made the assertion that the way to tell if an eschatological text applies to A.D. 70 is to determine if the passage includes a time text. 1st Cor. 15 certainly has time
indicators! Will he honor them? And what’s more, how can he be sure that an eschatological passage without a time indicator refers to some other event, when the clear understanding and expectation of the first-century Christians was focused on the imminent parousia at A.D. 70 and its surrounding events?

There is a lot more, but this is more than sufficient to see the problem of time we have in 1st Cor. 15 if the general resurrection event has not occurred. And time determines and defines nature of fulfillment. The second- and third-century church fathers assumed that the nature of the general resurrection would be totally physical and visible. Therefore since to their knowledge nothing like that had happened, they assumed the resurrection had not happened at all. They let their presuppositions about the nature of its fulfillment determine their interpretation of the time of its fulfillment. What if they had taken the time statements seriously? Then they would have been forced to reinterpret their presuppositions about the nature of its fulfillment. That is the very thing we full preterists are suggesting. Instead of repeating the mistake of the second-century church fathers, why not correct it? It is just as valid—nay, more so!—for us to let time statements define the nature of its fulfillment as it was for them to let their preconceived nature of its fulfillment define and determine the time of its fulfillment.

7. Imminence and the Problem of Multiple Parousias

Sproul [continued]:
The “we” passage of 1st Corinthians is far less specific concerning the time of the resurrection than are Jesus’ words in the Olivet Discourse.

How can the usage of the word “we” in a personal letter be less specific in reference to time?

Sproul [continued]:
The more serious problem however, is the full preterists’ treatment of the character of the resurrection. They view the resurrection as a hidden, “spiritual” resurrection, and they must view it this way for full preterism to work.

Hidden? Just because it didn’t come with observation doesn’t mean there was no verification of its occurrence. For example, didn’t Christ Himself equate the “coming age” and the resurrection, when explaining the human in the afterlife?

Luke 20:34-35—And answering Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those counted worthy to obtain that age and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.”
And doesn’t Paul speak of the imminence of the resurrection?

Acts 24:15—And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there is *about to be* a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Paul here uses the imminent Greek word *mello*, which Sproul correctly identifies on pages 139-140 as referring to nearness, literally translated as “about to be”. Sproul cannot maintain the proper imminency of the Greek in this verse—as he properly does in other verses that contain the word *mello*—by distancing the resurrection thousands of years from Paul. And in 1st Cor. 15:22-23 Paul clearly links the resurrection with the first-century parousia:

1st Cor. 15:22-23—For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: the firstfruit Christ, afterward those of Christ in His coming [parousia].

In order to apply this to the end of history, Sproul is forced to argue for *multiple* parousias—one at A.D. 70 and another at the end of history. But this is something that is foreign to the New Testament. Never is a qualification given as to *which* parousia is indicated. Indeed, the whole first half of Sproul’s book is spent showing that the parousia of Christ did indeed happen at the destruction of Jerusalem. If a different parousia is meant here, Paul doesn’t indicate it. In fact, since his teaching has by and large been concerned with the parousia at A.D. 70, his words here would be quite confusing to the Corinthians, for when they hear of His parousia or coming, they would naturally think of the coming judgment on Jerusalem. To mean otherwise without clarification is confusing and duplicitous, especially in light of the “we” statements.

Consider, for example, if a mother told her children that they would eat dinner when their father got home. Later she told them they would pay their allowance when their father got home. And then she told them they’d go see a movie when their father got home. Finally, the father comes home. The mother puts dinner on the table. After dinner, she pays the kids their allowance. All excited, they ask, “Are we going to the movies now?” but her response is “I didn’t mean we’d go when he got home tonight, but maybe next week when he gets home.” The mother would be guilty of duplicity and confusion, for the “coming home” that was in the children's minds would be the one right in front of them, the imminent arrival of their father.

When a primary, imminent coming is being constantly taught, to give promises about any other coming without any clarification or indication of a “different” coming is simply misleading. It is very unlikely that Paul would refer to “Christ’s parousia” and mean anything other than what he has taught all along, without some indication that he didn’t mean the imminent coming, but some final, far off coming. Such clarification does not appear in the New Testament!
In addition, notice how the chapter is concluded, after Paul explains about the resurrection.

1st Cor. 15:57-58—But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor to the Lord is not in vain.

Paul is exhorting them to stand firm because what he has just told them is near at hand. The victory is very near. ("We shall not all die") Doesn’t this exhortation to stand firm sound familiar?

Rev. 3:11—“I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.”

Sproul is very clear in chapters 3 and 6 that the exhortation to stand firm in Rev. 3:11 is for the original audience, the first-century saints. So, too, is 1st Cor. 15:57-58! In both cases, the audience is told to “stand firm” and “hold fast” in light of what is about to happen.

And so the question is, where else in Scripture is a “parousia” of Christ indicated that is clearly NOT referring to the same coming as indicated by Christ in the Olivet Discourse? Sproul gives no examples of Paul specifying which parousia is indicated, because no such distinction is ever made. To the first-century mind, then, any teaching regarding a parousia of Christ would of necessity be regarding the imminent coming of which Paul and the apostles constantly speak.

8. The Resurrection—Physical or Spiritual?

Sproul [continued]:
We encounter two more-serious problems with this view. The first is logical, the second theological. The logical difficulty is that it involves the propositions and assertions that can be neither verified nor falsified empirically. To be sure, purely rational arguments that rest solely on deduction do not require empirical verification. But if one announces or predicts things that will take place in the arena of real history involving physical reality, then empirical verification becomes relevant and crucial.

The fact that we cannot point to anything physical with regards to a resurrection of the dead at A.D. 70 does not dispel what Paul is saying. Indeed, in light of what he says, one should clearly NOT expect to see any kind of physical evidence, other than the Kingdom itself, and the destruction of Jerusalem. Sproul argues against empirical verification with regards to Christ’s parousia in A.D. 70. Why would the resurrection, which is squarely
linked to the parousia, be any different? Was the parousia *physical* in nature? No. Why expect the resurrection, linked with the parousia in 1st Thess. 4:15-16, to be physical in nature? But rather:

1st Cor. 15:44-50—It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

The whole point of this passage is that of the superiority of the spiritual form over the natural form. In fact, verse 50 is clear that the physical is NOT the issue here at all. So of course this wouldn’t be provable by normal, physical means. Can we “prove” the existence of the Kingdom of God today by physical means? No, we can only point to physical manifestations as a result of being a part of the Kingdom. The Kingdom itself is not a physical kingdom. That does not mean that it doesn’t exist, either logically or theologically. The same is true here.

But let me carry this one step further. What is the comfort given at modern, traditional Christian funeral services? That the deceased is in heaven with the Lord. And yet this goes against the theological thought that the resurrection is an end-time, end-history event. Perhaps tradition knows something that modern theologians don’t? To quote Stevens, from his booklet, page 25:

Stevens:
And what about Gentry’s funeral eschatology? Does he teach at the graveside that the dear departed believer is right now in heaven with Jesus? But in the classroom at Christ College and Reedy River Church, what does he teach about Hades and the waiting period until the resurrection and judgment? Which is it? Do we go immediately at death to be with God in heaven, or do we have to wait until the resurrection and the judgment? Then at the resurrection he is taken back out of heaven, reunited with his physical body for judgment, then changed into some kind of immortal body after the judgment, and finally moved back into the presence of God in heaven again. How does Gentry get all that out of 1st Cor. 15 or any of the other resurrection texts? This sounds every bit as much fabricated as the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Harris’ view is far more Biblical, easier to understand and consistent.
Indeed, it was this very thought that tipped the scale for me once and for all, as far as full preterism is concerned.

Sproul [continued]:
Russell labors the point that a spiritual body need not be resurrection under the conditions of empirical observation. He asks if a spiritual body can be seen, touched, or handled? Paul’s use of the term *spiritual body* is what gives license to this type of speculation. It is unfortunate that the apostle failed to alert the Corinthians—and us, by extension—that he was speaking of a secret, hidden, spiritual resurrection.

How does Sproul figure that he failed to alert them? It is very clear in 1st Cor. 15:44-56 that what is being delineated wasn’t the *physical* body but the *spiritual*. Again, Paul says “There is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.” (verse 44) “The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.” (verse 46) And to make sure we are certain that the resurrection refers to the *spiritual* body and not the *physical* body, he says, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (verse 50). The natural body, corruptible and mortal, CANNOT be resurrected incorruptible, for it cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But the spiritual form can! Paul is not hidden or unclear at all here. He is very clear about making the distinction between the physical-that-we-have-now and the spiritual-that-we-have-then. Only the futurist paradigm, which imposes its presuppositions of the physical body upon the text, blurs and muddles this distinction. And only Christ’s physical body could be raised and transformed, for only His body did not suffer from the detrimental effects of sin.

Sproul [continued]:
His language certainly suggests something else, particularly as Paul so clearly conjoins the resurrection of our bodies with the resurrection of Christ’s body. The resurrected Christ is the firstfruits of all who will be raised. The apostle clearly teaches that our resurrections will be patterned after the resurrection of Christ:

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. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (*1st Cor. 15:20-26*)
Sproul overstates what is set forth in this passage. What is clear in this passage is the sequence of the resurrection. What is also clear from this passage is that we shall be raised. What is NOT stated here is the pattern that we shall follow. It does not say that we shall be raised in exactly the same manner as Christ. In fact, what is implicit here is that we shall not be raised in the same way. For Christ’s body saw no decay when He died, but ours does. What’s more, Christ’s body was not healed, but rather when He reanimated it, it still had the wounds suffered in life, the nail prints and the wound in the side. It was in the exact same condition as it was in the grave before he reanimated it, only His spirit re-entered his body. If we follow Christ’s pattern, as Sproul suggests, then we will have eternity to spend in bodies that have decayed.

What must be remembered, here and throughout 1st Cor. 15, is that while we will receive a body or form like Christ had after His resurrection, how we are raised is not the same. Christ’s body could be transformed into His heavenly form because it wasn’t tainted by sin. Our sinfulness negates that luxury.

Sproul [continued]:
The New Testament accounts of Christ’s resurrection reveal that in his resurrected body there is both continuity and discontinuity. Obviously his body underwent some sort of change. It became a glorified human body. To the extent that this glorification involved change in his physical composition we can speak of discontinuity. But the Bible lays great stress on the continuity of the body that was placed in the tomb with the body that was raised. It was not a body, it was the same body.

My human body has not been glorified. It undergoes certain biological and chemical changes every moment. It is constantly and relentlessly aging. But though my body is never totally the same from moment to moment, it is nevertheless substantially the same. The body I had yesterday was not annihilated and replaced with an utterly new body today. Despite the changes taking place in my body at the moment, there remains a real continuity with my former body. My present body contains teeth that I have had for decades and scars that have blemished my skin since childhood.

When we assert of Jesus that the same body that died on the cross and was buried in the tomb was then resurrected, we acknowledge that his body underwent certain changes. But it is crucial that after the resurrection, the tomb was empty. Today the graves are not empty. If these bodies had been resurrected, there would be a radical discontinuity between them and the bodies that had been buried. Indeed the discontinuity would be so profound that it would probably be more accurate to say that they had been “reincarnated” rather than resurrected, or that resurrection is such a spiritual
thing that neither the body nor physical matter of any type has anything to do with it.

Indeed, our physical bodies DON’T have anything to do with it! That is precisely why today the graves are not empty. Only of Christ was it promised that his body wouldn’t see decay. For the rest of mankind, the physical body was doomed to return to dust (see Gen. 3:19 and Heb. 9:27). When we die, we get the same kind of form that Christ did, but where Christ kept His original form, we shall not.

The tomb of Christ was empty after His resurrection because He is divine and sinless. He already had immortality before His death and resurrection. He was not subject to decay or being left in Hades. Death could not hold Him. But because our bodies share in the guilt of Adam’s sinfulness and are sinful as a result of our sinning like Adam did, our bodies are not like Christ’s. Our bodies are subject to decay. But our spirit will be set free and given a new body, which is formed in the heavenly realm for the inner man.

To say that the term would better have been “reincarnated” clearly shows that Sproul doesn’t have a handle on just what the resurrection event was. The post-resurrection appearances were NOT crucial to Christ’s resurrection, but rather they were crucial for the apostle’s understanding, as proof that He had indeed conquered death. Christ could have entirely bypassed the earthly manifestations and still have been resurrected. His post-resurrection appearances here on earth were strictly for the apostles’ benefit, and the first-century Jews:

Luke 11:29—As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.

We need to clearly understand what “resurrection” was, and why “reincarnated” clearly would have been the wrong term.

Christ was resurrected not so much by the act of reanimating His earthly body, but by escaping Death and Hades. Resurrection is precisely that—the escape from or being brought out of Hades, and proceeding from Death to Life. Christ’s reanimation of His earthly form wasn’t the resurrection itself, it was the byproduct—and proof—of His resurrection. And even Christ was not raised to be “in the flesh”. He had the same body, but it was transformed into a new kind of body.

From the account of the fall of Adam in Gen. 3, it has been clear that man’s physical body was doomed to return to the dust of the ground at death. (Gen. 3:19, Ps. 146:4, etc.) At the same time, the spirit does not cease to exist, nor is it any longer inside that shell or the dust of the ground. Just as the plant has a seed shell before it is planted and a sprout form after it is planted, so too do we have two different forms—one to house our spirit before we are planted or buried, and another after we shed this earthly body when we die.
and are buried. The spiritual/plant body flows from the physical/seed body, but they are not the same form.

Sproul would concur that today dead saints aren’t in their discarded bodies. So we must ask him, where are the spirits of those that are no longer of this physical realm? For if he contends that 1st Cor. 15 is still a future event, then these saints are not in heaven, but are left waiting in Hades, per 1 Cor. 15:54-56.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for where they were prior to the resurrection is Sheol. In the New Testament the Greek word is Hades. What this place amounted to was a waiting area for disembodied souls. (It is not the final place of punishment for the unrighteous—that is the lake of fire. See Rev. 20:13-15.) Since man was sinful, he couldn’t proceed directly to God. Remember 1st Cor. 15:55:

1st Cor. 15:55—Oh Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?

When Christ died, His spirit, too, went to Hades. But since He was sinless, and immortal, Hades could not hold Him. His earthly manifestation following his resurrection was proof of this. Resurrection, then, is the “raising” of the spirit from Death and Hades into a spiritual body or form. Death has the power to separate man from God, thanks to man’s sinfulness; but Christ, by virtue of His sinlessness, had the power to overcome Death and pave the way for us, by paying the price for our sins on the cross. But salvation was not yet completed on the cross.

The resurrection spoken of by Paul throughout 1st Cor. 15, as well as such places as Acts 24:15, was not the resurrection of Christ out of Hades, but the general resurrection of mankind out of Hades, in conjunction with and by virtue of the completion of the atonement that Christ began on the cross. Heb. 9:23-28:

Heb. 9:23-28—It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.
This reflects back to Leviticus 16, where the atonement wasn’t completed at the sacrifice itself, but rather at the return out of the most holy place by the high priest. This must be firmly put in perspective. The A.D. 70 parousia of Christ was the return from the most holy place, which had the effect of completing atonement and thereby releasing and freeing the souls from Hades. The resurrection event must be associated with this passage, for *they were waiting for Him, too!* And if the completion of the atonement process, which culminates with His saints receiving the power of complete salvation, as clearly associated with the A.D. 70 parousia of Christ in this passage, is insufficient to release them, then they are lost. For the reason they were relegated to Hades in the first place was because they lacked true atonement due to the curse of sin.

**Rom. 3:23 (KJV)**—For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

**Rom. 6:23 (KJV)**—For the wages of sin is Death; but the gift of God is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Because:

**Heb. 10:3-4**—But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The resurrection was a one-time event in which the Old Testament saints were brought out of Hades and finally overcame Death to be with the Lord, thanks to Christ’s finished work of salvation. We today aren’t “resurrected”; we don’t have to wait in Hades. But rather we have put on immortality (but not yet our immortal body) and when we die we immediately take on our spiritual form or body and proceed directly to be with our Father in heaven.

If the parousia of Christ at A.D. 70 was a completion of the entire atonement process, as set forth in Heb. 9 and Lev. 16, then the resurrection event must also be associated with the return of Christ at A.D. 70.

Sproul’s error here is in misunderstanding what the full preterist means by resurrection. It isn’t merely life after physical death, but rather the act of being brought out of Hades and a state apart from God, being saved from the power of Death, and being welcomed into God’s presence with a new spiritual form. It is indeed a resurrection from Death to Life. The saint today, however, does not go through this process. He receives his spiritual form at death. He is not “resurrected” from Death and Hades, he is “caught away” before he even gets there, proceeding directly to heaven!
9. What About Continuity?

Sproul has a serious logical problem in regard to “physical continuity”. When Christ was made alive and His physical body was glorified, these facts are given in Scripture:

Christ only “appeared” (was visible to the human eye) sporadically, at need, and was most of the time not visible. This is in direct contrast to His state prior to His death, when He was always visible and physical.

Christ was not confined to physical limitations. Walls could not keep Him out.

His transformed physical form did not require normal physical sustenance to survive.

His glorified form nonetheless contained the scars and mutilations suffered during his crucifixion.

These are important points. The first three indicate a spiritual state rather than a physical one. This doesn't in the least deny that He was raised into the same body He used before He died. This was done to prove to the disciples that He had kept His word. The tomb was empty! But His physical body was transformed into His spiritual form when He was resurrected. In this regard, He now appeared to His followers at need, having the same properties as the angels.

The last point is perhaps the most damaging to Sproul’s case, and clearly shows a breakdown in his logic. If we indeed will go through the same transformation process as Christ, using the physical body, then we have a major problem. For Christ’s physical body was glorified, transformed, as it was. Physical conditions weren’t corrected. So this means that if Christians are to receive the same treatment, anybody that lives to be 100 will be old and decrepit for eternity. Anybody who lost a limb will have this deformity for eternity. Not a pleasant thought.

But it gets worse. For anybody who has been dead longer than Christ was, that is, anybody whose body has been in the grave for any length of time at all, has had their body suffer decay and decomposition. They then have only a few bones at best to raise back into. And those that have been cremated have no body whatsoever to rise into.

Worse yet, with the recycling of elements (not to mention cannibalism), it is a certainty that the same element was present in the body of many people throughout history. And if even one atom appeared over time in more than one body, which it does, this presents a logistical problem. To which resurrected physical body should it belong?
Sproul would no doubt maintain that the physical bodies of believers are “glorified” by being “reassembled”. But not even Christ had this luxury. And even this doesn’t overcome the problem of an element appearing in more than one body.

So for all Sproul’s claim of speculation by full preterists regarding the spiritual body, it is clearly minimal when compared with his idea regarding how a person gets a “perfected physical body” back. This is logically impossible and theologically insupportable.

In fact, while Sproul charges full preterists with inconsistency regarding the discontinuity between how Christ was raised and how the believer is raised, Sproul is actually left with a discontinuity as well, and one that is potentially more severe. For in the scenario set forth by Sproul, the believer must get a “perfected physical body”. But in according to the believer the miraculous physically perfect condition at the resurrection, isn’t he according to believers something greater than was accorded to Christ? Will the burn victim be “reassembled”? Will the beheaded believer have his head reattached? Will crash victims be miraculously healed of their fatal injuries? Remember, Christ’s physical body was not healed of His nail wounds or the wound from the spear being gashed into His side. His body was merely changed into His heavenly form. Will believers be accorded an honor that not even Christ was accorded? Are believers more worthy than Christ Himself?

Christ’s physical body was able to be transformed in this way because it was not defiled with sin. The body of the believer, however, is doomed to return to the dust from where it came, because of the curse of sin. The price Christ paid for our sins does not release the shell, the outer man of this curse, but rather releases the inner man, so that when the shell is discarded, a new and better form can be inhabited.

10. Christ's Post-Resurrection Body

Regarding Christ’s post-resurrection body, Stevens was very clear in his book (pages 23-24):

Stevens:
In view of Harris’ [Murray Harris in From Grave to Glory] excellent defense of the idea that Christ was raised immortal, it would seem evident that Jesus’ resurrection body cannot be accurately or exhaustively described as nothing more than a “pure physical body.” His post-resurrection appearances reveal that He had more than just a mere physical body. He was raised immortal. All the others who had been raised from physical death before Christ were raised mortal (still subject to death). Lazarus is a case in point. After being raised by Christ, he lived out the rest of his life and died again. He was raised with a pure physical body, nothing more. When Saul coerced the witch at
Endor to summon Samuel from the realm of the dead, it was not a resurrection of Samuel’s physical body. It was the disembodied “pure spirit” form of Samuel (an apparition) which appeared and frightened even the necromancer.

What we see here are two extremely different kinds of appearances: one purely physical, and the other a pure spirit. Jesus’ resurrection body exhibited characteristics of both. His resurrection body was not just purely physical. Nor was it a pure spirit as was Samuel’s reappearance. Harris has shown convincingly and in conformity with biblical orthodoxy that Christ was raised immortal, with a kind of body that no human had ever possessed. How can we say that Jesus is the “firstfruit” of the resurrection if He had the same kind of resurrection body as all the others before Him who had merely been raised physically? Jesus was the first one ever to be raised with that kind of body. He was the “firstfruit” (1st Cor. 15:20) of the resurrection harvest. His resurrection body was not “purely physical,” nor was it “pure spirit.” He was raised with an immortal body. He was the same person, but a different kind of body. He was raised bodily, but not with the same kind of body.

Note how Paul not only clarifies the nature of the resurrection body in 1st Cor. 15, but also affirms the continuity and conformity of our bodies with Christ’s resurrection body:

…it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. …as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (1st Cor. 15:44-50)

We are supposed to get the same kind of body that Jesus has. Jesus’ and our resurrection bodies are described by Paul in this text as being “spiritual,” “glorious,” “imperishable,” “incorruptible,” “immortal” and “heavenly.” This doesn’t sound like a mere physical mortal body at all. Harris has done an excellent job of establishing this point from the Biblical teaching about the resurrection. Jesus wasn’t raised with a physical body first and then changed into a spiritual body. He wasn’t raised mortal and then changed to immortal. He was “raised immortal” and “spiritual” already. As Peter said, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit…” (1st Pet. 3:18)
Jesus was raised with a body that was suited to His life in the heavenly realm. The fact that He ascended into heaven with that same body suggests that it must have been much more than just a pure physical body. Scripture affirms numerous times that mere physical bodies cannot live in the spiritual realm. Christ was able to manifest Himself in a tangible/visible form on several occasions after His resurrection and before His ascension, but He was also able to disappear and remain in an intangible, immaterial form. This is something new. No one had ever been raised with that kind of body before. It was immortal (no longer subject to physical death). When Jesus appeared, He ate with them, but not because His new body needed food to stay alive. He did so for evidence purposes. It was to prove that He truly had been raised and was not just a disembodied spirit (like Samuel’s appearance) awaiting the final resurrection like everyone else. His resurrection with an immortal body was proof that the long-awaited defeat of Death and the reign of Life had begun. His appearances were signs that the eschaton had arrived and that the full and final destruction of Death and Hades was imminent. He disappeared again to prove that He was not just a mortal body like Lazarus’ resuscitated physical body. He was raised immortal. The fact that He was able to exhibit both material and immaterial qualities in His resurrection appearances was proof that He had brought true life and immortality to light. He was the firstfruit of that kind of eternal, immortal life. The fact that Christ appeared in tangible/visible form does not prove that His resurrection body was merely a physical body, nor does it prove that He even had “a physical, tangible resurrection” as Gentry suggested in his point number five. Harris (in From Grave to Glory) has shown the profound significance of these tangible manifestations as evidence that Christ had indeed overcome the power of Death and was raised with an immortal, spiritual, imperishable, incorruptible and glorious heavenly body.

Stevens and Harris show how Christ’s resurrection was clearly better than Lazarus’, because it was the first of the resurrection. But Sproul doesn’t address this at all. And it was one of the main points of Stevens’ work in regards to the nature of the resurrection.
11. The Heavenly Form

Sproul [continued]:

Invisible and Untouchable?

Russell says that perhaps our spiritual bodies may not be seen, touched, or handled. If that is the case, then not only is there radical discontinuity between our earthly bodies and our heavenly bodies, but also there is a radical discontinuity between the nature of our resurrection bodies and the nature of Christ’s. In his resurrection state Christ was seen, touched, and handled.

But this wasn’t His normal condition after His resurrection, but was only the case during His resurrection appearances! Most of the forty days Christ was NOT visible. He only became visible and capable of being touched and handled at intervals as evidence to the apostles that He had indeed been raised. So to be specific, one must say that under normal circumstances a spiritual body cannot be seen, touched, or handled. Let’s review what the Bible actually says.

Luke 20:34-36—Jesus replied, “And answering, Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. And those who are counted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage. For they are not able to die any more; they are like the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

This shows that after the resurrection at A.D. 70 in the afterlife, the state of man is like that of the angels. Angels are spiritual creatures, members of the heavenly realm. Can they be seen, touched, handled? Not under normal conditions. Only for special, revelatory purposes is man given the ability to see them.

Gen. 16:7-10—The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"
"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.
Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

Gen. 19:1-3—The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. "My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning."
"No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square."
But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate.

**Numbers 22:21-31**—Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road.

Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her again.

Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff. Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."

The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?"

"No," he said.

Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

**Judges 13:20**—As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground.

**2 Kings 6:15-17**—When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked.

"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Note that the angelic forms didn’t change, but the humans were given the ability to see them with their physical sense. Their eyes were opened.
In the New Testament:

**Luke 1:11-13**—Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John."

**Luke 1:26-31**—In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. …

**Luke 2:8-15**—And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

That’s just a sampling. And in passages that deal directly with the Lord:

**Gen. 32:22-30**—That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.
Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

**Acts 7:54-60**—When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

**Acts 9:3-7**—As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.

Throughout Scripture, whenever a reference is made to a heavenly being, is it in a state where it cannot be seen, touched, handled? What we see is that under normal circumstances this is the case, but that under special circumstances the Lord makes it possible to see, touch, and even handle heavenly beings.

And this was precisely the state of Christ’s post-resurrection condition. He didn’t remain visible. In fact, He only became visible on occasion, but normally He was in a state that was not visible to the physical eye. This doesn't mean He didn't exist, it only means that His form, which had been changed from a physical form to a heavenly form, was now of a state typical of the heavenly realm; it couldn't be perceived by normal human eyes.

Christ was the only one who was promised that His physical form wouldn’t see decay. Since verification of His resurrection was essential for the church, God transformed His physical body into His heavenly form. This wasn’t necessary for
Christ in the least, but it was for the apostles, to distinguish His real appearing from a vision, by use of the empty tomb and the wounds suffered at His crucifixion. His appearances to His disciples served as a proof of who and what He was.

The whole point here is that our afterlife state or form is such that it is like the angels, a true form of the heavenly realm. Such beings cannot normally be perceived by the physical senses, and only becomes so temporarily for evidentiary or revelatory purposes if God so wills it.

12. The Verification of Heavenly Events

Sproul [continued]:
Again to argue that the resurrection applies exclusively to the realm of the spiritual is to make it non-verifiable and non-falsifiable. This is dangerous business. It smacks of the type of argument one hears on behalf of poltergeists. Some argue that poltergeists are allergic to scientists and always disappear when one comes near. Some argue that little green men on the moon have a built-in antipathy to telescopes. The existence of such things can never be falsified because the terms of falsification are limited at the outset.

But isn’t this the case with the entire Parousia-event of A.D. 70? Don’t we only have the signs that show us it happened? Isn’t the Bible the only reason we really know that the War of the Jews that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem was not just another minor human skirmish, but was actually a coming of the Lord?

It is the same Bible, the same time references, that we use to verify the resurrection and the condition of man in the afterlife. If we can only believe or rely on what we can historically verify, then where does that leave us? Can we historically verify grace and salvation?

But yet here are some verses that speak of what is heavenly—the New Covenant and the immortal, heavenly body:

2nd Cor. 4:18—So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2nd Cor. 5:7—We live by faith, not by sight.

Heb. 11:1—Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.
Sproul’s argument against anything “non-verifiable” and “non-falsifiable” goes much deeper than he ever intended it to. It affects our entire Christian faith to the core!

13. The Usage of the Word "Body"

Sproul [continued]:
This is not to say that Russell is arguing in identical form to those who avow the existence of poltergeists or little green men. Russell is trying to deal seriously with Scripture, which he believed is the infallible Word of God. My point, however, is that his arguments concerning resurrection are fraught with peril and beg the question.

For Russell’s arguments to work they must be squeezed into a framework that also raises serious theological questions. As we have already indicated, his arguments raise questions concerning the nature, not only of our resurrected bodies, but also of Christ’s resurrection body. If a spiritual body cannot be seen, touched, or handled, is it a body at all? It is one thing to say that our resurrected bodies will be spiritual bodies, but quite another to imply that our resurrected bodies will be merely spirits. The Bible speaks of spiritual bodies. Though the body will undergo changes during its glorification, it will still be a body.

Sproul’s fallacy here is in thinking that the term body must of necessity be physical. But to get a clearer picture of what Paul was speaking about we must realize what the Corinthians were exposed to, and how that affected their concerns for their brethren who had passed on.

In fact, in his recent radio message, Sproul stressed this point. He said that both the Corinthians and the Thessalonians were concerned that their departed brothers would miss out on these eschatological events, which Sproul says is an end-of-history (and therefore still future) resurrection. But this begs the question—how could they be concerned with an issue Paul never taught them? For nowhere in Scripture prior to these passages do we see Paul teaching them this concept, that the resurrection would be an “end-history” event. In fact, the very pointedness of their concerns seems to indicate that it was an imminent event. But if we check Paul’s teaching, we see that it was:

Acts 24:15(NIV & YLT)—-And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there [is about to be] a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Paul said it was "about to be". Actually, the Greek is literally "a resurrection of the dead being about to be", which carries a very strong sense of imminence.
The Corinthians and Thessalonians were concerned that their dead brothers would miss it. Paul eases their fears. Indeed, if their thought was regarding some far-distant event which wouldn’t take place until long after they, too, had died, then their concern would not have been solely about their departed brethren, but for themselves as well, and Paul would not have included himself or any of his audience in his reassurances by using the familiar pronoun "we". But this language is used precisely because they knew the event was “about to be”.

14. The Greek Concept of "Resurrection"

But to get a clearer idea of what the Corinthians and Thessalonians understood about the resurrection, we need to review their mindset.

There were three prominent Greek after-life beliefs by the first century.

(1) Plato and Socrates taught that man had a definite form in the afterlife.

(2) There was the philosophical belief that man didn’t have a form after life. This thought had two branches—one that believed that all men became one of a larger corporate entity after death, and another that believed that only the aristocracy achieved an after-life status. They still didn’t have a form; they either existed as pure thought or were assimilated into a larger corporate entity.

(3) The third thought was more recent, but quite prevalent by Paul’s day. This was the thought headed by the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Acts 17. While they hadn’t begun as such, by the first century they had evolved to the point of denial of any type of resurrection or afterlife existence. They believed that there was no existence after death. This was also the school of thought that the Sadducees appear to have followed.

It was this third school that Paul was apparently addressing in 1st Cor. 15:12:

1 Cor. 15:12-13—But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

But to bring them back on track, Paul reminds them of the earlier, Platonian thought in 1st Cor. 15:35-38:

1st Cor. 15:35-38—But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a
seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

And as Sproul himself recently pointed out on a recent radio broadcast on Ligonier Ministries, this indeed appears to be an allusion to what Plato and Socrates taught. In fact, it is a brief form of the same analogy that Plato used to show that man would indeed have a form after he died, albeit a different form.

And that is exactly what Paul is teaching here. The term *body* in 1st Cor. 15 is not relegated to the physical sense. But rather it is to show *form*. For in the afterlife, we will be like the angels (Luke 20:36) in that when we get our immortal body, it will be a form of the heavenly realm, not a physical body. This is *exactly* what the angels have, and yet Sproul doesn’t argue that they are physical, does he? The form is heavenly in content, not normally visible to the physical senses, but it is nonetheless a form of its own. It is not a disembodied spirit, as Sproul alludes to with his phrase “merely *spirits*”. But it will be a form or body, distinguishably different than our physical body. “There is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”

And isn’t the point of our continuity *spiritual*? It isn’t the physical that continues, but the spiritual.

**2nd Cor. 4:18**—So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Sproul says Russell’s arguments were “squeezed” into a framework. This is not necessarily a bad thing, if it is Biblical. And in fact, Russell’s arguments are the *only* ones that reconcile what is taught at funerals and what is taught at seminaries.

**15. The Resurrection and the Parousia**

Sproul [continued]:
Russell concludes his analysis of 1st Corinthians 15 by reducing the problem of interpretation to the following dilemma: (1) Either Paul was guided by the Spirit of God and the events Paul predicted came to pass, or (2) the apostle was mistaken and these events did not take place. We agree that if the problem is stated in this manner, option 1 is preferable. Russell’s conclusion, however, strongly implies the fallacy of the false dilemma, also called the “either/or” fallacy. This means that the options are reduced to two when there may be more alternatives.

The same argument holds true for the Olivet Discourse as well. What reduces it down to an either/or alternative is the same thing that reduces the Olivet Discourse to an either/or alternative. Sproul strongly advocates a first-century fulfillment based in part on the strong usage of the personal pronouns in Matt. 24 and elsewhere. “Watch out that no one
deceives you.” (Matt. 24:4) “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed.” (Matt. 24:6) “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.” (Matt. 24:9) And so on.

The same is true in 1st Cor. 15: “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.” (1st Cor. 15:51) “We will be changed.” (1st Cor. 15:52) And “Therefore, my dear brothers, [you] stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1st Cor. 15:58) This exhortation loses its thrust and impetus if the time element is removed. The Corinthians are told to stand firm—because what they were awaiting, and the answer to their fears regarding their dead brethren, was just around the corner.

The pronoun “we” doesn’t necessarily insure that all would be alive at A.D. 70 any more than the pronoun “you” in Matt. 24 insured that all the disciples would be alive. In fact, the phrase “we will not all sleep” is equivalent to what Christ said in Matt. 16:28: “Some who are standing here will not taste death.” Paul doesn’t say “we will all not sleep” but rather “we will not all sleep”. The order of words is important. The first says that “we will all live” while the second, what Paul actually said, means, “not all of us will die”.

Now when we take the personal pronouns as seriously in 1st Cor. 15:51-58 as we do in Matt. 24, the options become narrowed down to just two, the “either/or” case. And of those two, one, that the apostle was mistaken, is clearly unacceptable. Like Matt. 24, then, this leaves us with the realization that it DID happen when Christ and Paul taught it would. If that means that in order to preserve the integrity of Scripture we must necessarily correct our how, or nature of the resurrection, then so be it! Besides, doesn't Daniel 12 clearly teach that the resurrection was to occur at the end of the Jewish or Old Covenantal age?

**Dan. 12:1-13**—"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?"

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The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?"

He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

"From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

"As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

Throughout this chapter, the clear teaching of the judgment against the Jews and the downfall of Jerusalem, which took place at A.D. 70, is intermingled with the promises of the resurrection. In fact, verse 7 clearly summarizes the whole section —"When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." The “all these things” includes the resurrection taught in verses 1-3. In fact, the whole chapter is bracketed with resurrection promises. The book of Daniel ends with the promise to Daniel that he would rise at the end of “these days”, the days about which he was to seal up his prophecy. These days were clarified with the inclusion of the abomination that causes desolation. The resurrection and the abomination that causes desolation in this chapter are clearly in the same time frame! Sproul correctly identifies the abomination that causes desolation mentioned in the Olivet Discourse as being an event that happened in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. Dan. 12 firmly joins the abomination that causes desolation with the resurrection.

And what does this remind us of? It reminds us of the resurrection taught in Matt. 25 at the end of the Olivet Discourse, which is indeed a pronouncement about the coming destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In both passages, the resurrection is tied in directly with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Sproul [continued]:
Russell implies in the context that Paul could have been speaking the truth only if he was speaking of a spiritual resurrection. This approach is driven by Russell’s conviction that all eschatological events predicted in the New Testament fall within the framework of the destruction of Jerusalem. He assumes that the only meaning for “the end” is the end of the Jewish age and that nothing is predicted for the end of the world. He views the judgment of God on Israel as the last and final judgment.
Actually, the meaning in conjunction with the parousia is quite prominent in the New Testament teachings, and always speak of the events that occurred (or were initiated) in A.D. 70. The promise of an imminent “coming” was ingrained throughout the New Testament, as Sproul has shown. So with the Christians indoctrinated with a soon, about-to-happen “coming”, to speak of events happening at a “coming” without specifying clearly that it is any different than the one they are expecting in their lifetime would be confusing to say the least. Indeed, because of its imminence, the Parousia took on such a prominent place in the New Testament that it wasn’t just a coming, it was the coming that they were awaiting, their primary focus. And any reference of a coming or parousia would immediately be understood in this light as being the coming!

One major thread we find throughout Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians is the nearness and expectation of the parousia.

1st Cor. 1:7-8—Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1st Cor. 2:6-8—We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1st Cor. 3:21-23—So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future [the things about to come]—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

1st Cor. 4:5—Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

1st Cor. 7:26-31—Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those
who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. 
For this world in its present form is passing away.

In each of these passages in 1st Corinthians, Paul refers to an event that is imminent. The Corinthians lived in an unusual time, referred to by Paul as “the present crisis” or as some translations render it, “the present distress”. The primary focus, and therefore the mindset, of the Corinthian church, therefore, was what was happening around them, which would culminate in the about-to-come parousia in A.D. 70. In light of this, the concern of the Corinthians for their dead brothers and the parousia in 1st Cor. 15 demands a first-century fulfillment, for they knew the time was short. Throughout 1st Corinthians Paul is giving instruction in light of the imminence of the parousia of Christ. Why should we expect any deviation of this in 1st Cor. 15? The eschatology of the entire book is one of imminence and exhortation in light of that imminence. When the Corinthians hear about His coming in 1st Cor. 15, why would they think of any other coming? In fact, where have they been taught any other coming at all?

16. What the Term “Resurrection” Means?

Sproul [continued]:
In our day Max R. King has written voluminously in support of full preterism and a spiritual resurrection. He argues that there are three successive stages in the resurrection of the dead. …

This schema indicates a single resurrection that takes place in three distinct stages during one eschatological period. For this schema to work, the traditional idea of resurrection must be replaced with a metaphorical idea of resurrection, dying to an old redemptive age or eon and “rising” to the new eon. This end of the age is the only “end” with which biblical eschatology is concerned.

Actually, there are three basic views of resurrection in the New Testament—the metaphorical or redemptive age view, of which King espouses, that reduces the resurrection to a collective, corporate raising of Christianity out of Judaism; the soteriological or salvational resurrection view, which redefines the resurrection as merely another term for salvation; and the individual immortal-body-at-death resurrection view. Of these three, only the last truly addresses the Corinthian concerns for their dead brethren as spelled out in the beginning of 1st Cor. 15, by maintaining the definition of resurrection as an after-life event that deals with the heavenly realm. This also maintains the idea or thought of what was commonly meant and understood by the word “resurrection” in the first century. Even the Greek thought of resurrection never included a re-animation of the human body, but
rather dealt solely with what happened to the human spirit after leaving the human body.

It is quite simply a misstatement for Sproul to say that for the first-century resurrection schema to work, it must be metaphorical. Here, very simply, is the framework of resurrection in the New Testament.

First there is Christ’s resurrection. His actual resurrection is His going to Hades and coming back out. When he was resurrected from Hades, He was raised into His original body, which was transformed into His heavenly form. This was done as a sign to the apostles that He had done what He had promised. In conjunction with Christ’s resurrection was the beginning of the “first resurrection”, with the resurrection of a select group of saints in Matt. 27:51-53. This group was freed from Hades, but were not yet able to proceed to the Most Holy Place in heaven.

Following Christ’s resurrection was the interim or transition period, when those faithful saints who were martyred were also given part in the “first resurrection”; bypassing Hades thanks to Christ but not yet in the Holy of Holies. These are represented in Rev. 6-7, and were waiting along with the saints of Matt. 27:51-53 for the completion of atonement.

And finally, at A.D. 70, on the “last day”, the general resurrection was the emptying of Hades and the beginning of judgment, per Rev. 20:13-15.

In studying all three views of full preterism, this is the only one that truly answers the rationale behind these nearly identical phrases:

1st Cor. 15:13—If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

1st Cor. 15:16—For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

Paul’s reasoning here is that Christ’s being raised is contingent on there being a resurrection, not the other way around. The only view that successfully addresses this concern, in conjunction with the concerns of the Corinthians: “If Christ has not been raised … those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost” (verses 17-18), the other first-century time statements like: “We shall not all sleep” (verse 51) and the exhortations to the Corinthians that follow to “Stand firm!” (verse 58) is the full preterist individual immortal-body-at-death resurrection viewpoint. To place these events all in the first century does not demand a metaphorical “redefinition” of resurrection.

Sproul [continued]:
Edward E. Stevens indicates that the full-preterist view of the resurrection is not monolithic. He says:
Stevens: Within the full preterist community there are at least three different views regarding the implications of the resurrection event for the individual Christian. That may sound like a lot of confusion among preterists, until you look at the legion of views among futurists. Max King has suggested an approach which focuses almost exclusively on the collective body of the church being raised out of the Old Testament Jewish system. This view has some difficulty explaining the continuity of our resurrection bodies with Christ’s resurrection body, and it forces the exclusive collective body concept into passages which may be dealing with the individual implications of the resurrection instead. J.S. Russell and Milton S. Terry have suggested a resurrection (in the unseen realm) and a literal (but unnoticed) rapture at A.D. 70 (the “change”) for which (so far) no historical evidence has surfaced. Others have proposed a resurrection of the dead in the heavenly realm with visible signs being given in the physical realm, and say that the rapture is just another description of the invisible “gathering” into the presence of God at A.D. 70. I would tend to favor this latter view, although Russell and Terry’s idea cannot be lightly dismissed.

I tend to differ with Russell and Terry on this point. It seems that if various prominent church members disappeared as a result of a promised “rapture”, some mention would have been made of it in early writings as an absolute proof that what was promised actually occurred. But first-century writings are positively silent on this issue. And there is reason to believe that several that I would have expected to have been in that primary group, John the apostle and Clement, lived and evangelized before, during, and after the War of the Jews. In addition, I would expect the church leaders to be needed more right after the destruction of Jerusalem, with the consummation of the new age in conjunction with the cessation of the transitory gifts of the Spirit. Does it make sense to rob the church of its leaders just as it was in a position to spring forth and be fully established in the void left by the removal of Judaism?

These issues will be looked at in more depth when we examine the rapture.

17. The Charge of Gnosticism

Sproul [continued]: Stevens bristles against Gentry’s charge that full preterism slips into a kind of gnosticism with respect to the resurrection. Stevens cites the work of
Murray J. Harris to steer a course between a totally spiritualized view of the resurrection and a view of full bodily resurrection. It seems to me that Stevens and other full preterists he cites go more in the direction of gnosticism than Harris does.

The label of Gnosticism has become a serious charge through the years. Even the hint of any Gnostic thought has been viewed as sheer heresy. It has, in effect, been indirectly responsible for steering the church down the road to a physical resurrection. But is this fair? In answer to Sproul’s charge here, we need to examine just what the Gnostics believed and what errors they were being called to correct. Otherwise we may find we are guilty of “throwing the baby out with the bath water”.

The Gnostics believed many things that were correct. To accuse anybody’s view of being Gnostic today must of necessity include a clarification of where that view is in fact in error where the Gnostics were also in error. The Christian view is similar to the view of the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses in many areas. That doesn’t make them the same. All three believe in the existence of God and Christ. What must be examined are the differences addressed in Scripture. The same is true with Gnosticism.

This is exactly the point Stevens was making on page 27:

Stevens:
Gentry comes close to accusing the full preterist view of Gnosticism in its Christology or anthropology (or both). This would indeed be a “serious problem” if he is correct. Let’s make this point very clear—full preterists are not Gnostics, either in our Christology or in our anthropology. We do not believe in a secret mysterious gnosis (knowledge) that saves us, nor are we dualistic (matter is essentially evil) or docetic (Christ only seemed to come in the flesh). And we do not go to the radical spiritualizing extreme that the Gnostics went to because of their dualism and docetism. Even if we were overly spiritualizing like Origen was, it would still not make us any more Gnostic than he was. Our position on the nature of the resurrection body is basically the same as Murray Harris. We are no more Gnostic than he is (see his book, From Grave to Glory, mentioned elsewhere in this paper).

The term “Gnostic” is a very broad term with a lot of ideas associated with it. Nearly everyone’s theology has a point of contact with “gnostic” hermeneutics in some sense. But that doesn’t make everyone Gnostics! So, Gentry needs to be more specific in pointing out exactly where he sees the similarity with gnostic teaching, and then prove from the Bible that this similarity is anti-Biblical. The Gnostics had a different approach to the resurrection than traditional Christianity, but their approach is not the only other approach possible. Full
preterists would repudiate the Gnostic approach as well as the overly-physical extreme reaction to it by the Western Church. We take an approach that is different from Western tradition and the Gnostics. We would be closer to the Eastern Church’s position on the nature of the resurrection. Gentry would have to pin a Gnostic label on Murray Harris, Gleason Archer, J.I. Packer, Peter Toon, and many other orthodox conservative scholars also, since they take the same view of the nature of the resurrection body as full preterists do.

Sproul does not adequately address this either, preferring instead to issue the broad label as Gentry does, without pinpointing why he is doing so and showing why it is in fact in error. But Stevens is correct—full preterists are not Gnostics.

Gnostics believed in a resurrection that did not involve the physical body. This much is true. But is this the error that is addressed in Scripture? Not at all. In essence, rather, while correctly recognizing the difference between the heavenly and the physical, the Gnostics were guilty of overstepping the bounds. They felt that since the physical body was matter of this world, it was considered evil. This led to two mistreatments of the body. On the one hand, they treated it harshly. On the other hand, since salvation was a spiritual item rather than physical, they felt that gave them license to physical freedoms of any and every type—licentiousness, gluttony, and the like.

This is what New Testament writers speak against. Nowhere are they directly redressed for an errant view of the resurrection body. In fact, if their primary error were in the nature of the resurrection, I would expect to see that addressed very strongly. But the epistles of John, which speak out strongly against Gnostic beliefs, are silent on this key point! Even in 1st Cor. 15, where the nature of the resurrection is discussed, we find evidence that the body of the heavenly realm is distinctly differentiated from the body of the physical realm. The Gnostics and the Corinthians almost certainly recognized the plant analogy from Plato’s philosophy that drove home that very point.

With this point clearly in view, let’s look at two other Scriptures that echo the same problem, that of overstepping not the nature of the resurrection, but rather the bounds of resurrection.

2nd Thes. 2:1-3—Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.
2nd Tim. 2:17-18—Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

These are two examples of a premature teaching of the coming of the parousia. What is to be noted is that in neither case is an argument made based on physical proofs—“Look around, the dead are still in their graves. Of course the resurrection hasn’t come yet!” The second case is more pointed than the first, but both are of the same type. In both cases, however, as well as with the Gnostics, the question arises—how could this errant belief of an already-come parousia and resurrection have arisen within the church if the apostolic teaching of the resurrection were a physical one?

This is exactly the point Stevens was making on pages 34-35:

Stevens:

How could people with a supposedly pure physical concept of the resurrection ever get the idea that the resurrection had already taken place? It would have been too obviously wrong. Paul could easily refute it by saying, “Look around folks, the tombs are still occupied.” How could Hymenaeus and Philetus have missed such an obvious dilemma, and how could the faith of the saints be so easily upset with such irrefutable evidence readily available? It is clear that Hymenaeus and Philetus didn’t conceive of the resurrection in physical resuscitation terms.

This begs the question: If they didn’t hold the common physical concept of resurrection, what was their concept? Where did they get it? In what sense did they believe it was already past? Notice Paul doesn’t challenge their concept of the nature of the resurrection, but rather their timing of it. It should have been obvious to Paul that they didn’t have a physical concept. Why didn’t he challenge their non-physical concept if he was in fact teaching a physical concept (as Gentry alleges)?

In fact, I seriously doubt that if the resurrection that was being taught in the first century had been based on a changed physical body that these aberrations would have been mentioned at all, for their error would have been self-evident. I would even go further and say that these errors not only wouldn’t have arisen in light of a physical-body-transformation understanding of the resurrection, they couldn’t have arisen! If the apostles taught such a resurrection, how could anybody possibly have come up with the notion that it had already happened?

I submit that the very existence of these errors so early in the apostolic era, as well as the Gnostics themselves, are proofs in and of themselves against the resurrection being purely physical, as most futurists and partial preterists contend!
18. Comparing Eschatological Passages

Sproul’s final section in his chapter on resurrection is titled “The Rapture of the Living”:

Sproul [continued]:

The debate over the nature and time of the resurrection is closely linked with Paul’s teaching regarding the rapture. Paul sets this forth in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians:

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.  

(1 Thess. 4:13-18—NKJV)

Russell treats this text regarding the rapture in much the same way he treats Paul’s teaching on resurrection in 1st Corinthians 15. Russell argues that the phase “we who are alive” (1st Thess. 4:17) indicates that the apostle expected the rapture to occur in his own lifetime. Russell links the rapture with the coming of Christ in judgment on Jerusalem: “It may be said that we have no evidence of such facts having occurred as are here described—the Lord descending with a shout, the sounding of the trumpet, the raising of the sleeping dead, the rapture of the living saints. True, but is it certain that these are facts cognisable by the senses? Is their place in the region of the material and the visible?”

To maintain a past fulfillment of the rapture, Russell argues for a “secret” rapture that takes place in the non-physical, spiritual realm. He admits there is no evidence that these events occurred as described. But this is because the events described took place in the non-sensory realm.

If this is the case, why did the apostle use the language he did? He said the Lord would descend with a shout, but Russell says nobody could hear it. The voice of the archangel is silent, and the trumpet of God is mute. Not only this,
but the multitude of the rising dead were caught up invisibly into invisible clouds to meet the invisible, coming Lord.

This raises severe questions of hermeneutics. One can legitimately take the descriptive language of the Olivet Discourse in a figurative way, because the language is so similar to Old Testament prophetic imagery. But Paul’s language in 1st Thessalonians 4 is clearly of a different sort. Here the genre of the text makes it highly unlikely that Paul was describing an event hidden from earthly view.

Why? Sproul’s argument here falls short. In essence, he is saying “If we can’t hear it, it didn’t happen!” Reminds one a little of the old adage “If a tree falls in the forest, does it make a sound?”, only he turns it on its head: “If a tree makes a great sound as it comes to earth in the forest, but nobody is around to hear it, did it really fall?”

The language in 1st Thess. 4:13-18 is of the same genre as that of Matt. 24:30-34, although one was written and the other was oral. We know that Sproul correctly places the Olivet Discourse fulfillment with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, so let’s make a quick comparison of four passages:

**Matt. 24:30-34**—"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming [parousia] on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

**1st Cor. 15:22-24**—For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes [parousia], those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

**1st Cor. 15:51-52a**—Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

**1st Thess. 4:15-17a**—According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming [parousia] of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel.
and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

**Rev. 11:15-18**—The seventh [last] angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth [land]."

**Rev. 14:13**—Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."
"Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

**Rev. 22:6-7**—The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."
"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

While it is true that similarity of language does not insure equality of subject, it is nonetheless true that Scripture should be used to interpret Scripture. These are four passages that speak of the same things. Two of the passages, Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation, Sproul has already shown to have been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. We already noted Sproul’s statement asserting that he was convinced that “the substance of the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in A.D. 70 and that the bulk of Revelation was likewise fulfilled in that time frame.”

But a closer examination will show what elements are common in all four passages—the coming of Christ; time statements regarding when it would be and/or who would witness it; the blast of the last trumpet; and a gathering of the saints as they die. These elements don’t appear in one or two, they appear in all four. And yet Sproul wants to put two in the past and the other two thousands of years later in the future!

Notice especially Sproul’s objections to an A.D. 70 fulfillment of 1st Thess. 4. He claims that the language insists on a more tangible coming. But in doing so, he has contradicted himself! The trumpet, which was not mute (as Sproul suggests), appears in Matt. 24:31 and Revelation 11:15 as well as 1st Cor. 15:52 and 1st Thess. 4:16. So if
Sproul has a problem with a trumpet blast in 1st Thess. 4:16 then the very same argument must be applied to Matt. 24:31! I urge all partial preterists to look closely at this! This is precisely the reason why full preterists consider themselves consistent preterists!

The trumpet wasn’t a physical one, it was a heavenly one! It could make a great noise, and those on earth would only hear it if the Lord wanted them to. For man cannot normally perceive the heavenly. But that doesn’t mean they are silent! But if this is strictly apocalyptic language, which it could be, then the language of 1st Thess. 4:13-18 is exactly the same as in Matt. 24:31! But notice in Rev. 11:15 that the trumpet definitely sounded in A.D. 70! Remember, in Num. 22 both the angel that Balaam’s donkey say, and the sword the angel carried were real and literal. They weren’t physical in nature, but they were real nonetheless. So, too, is the trumpet of Matt. 24:31, 1st Cor. 15:52, 1st Thess. 4:16, and Rev. 11:15.

19. The Time Statements of 1 Thess. 4-5

Regarding the time statements of 1 Thess. 4, it must be noted that Paul actually makes it stronger with the addition of the Greek word perileipomai, which literally means to remain or survive. This word appears only in the New Testament in 1st Thess. 4:15 and 1st Thess. 4:17. And these verses can only be seen against the backdrop of verse 13—“we do not want you to be ignorant about those that fall asleep”. It appears as though the Thessalonians have the same concerns for their departed brethren as did the Corinthians. Paul reassures them by telling them in 1st Thess. 4:14-18 not to worry, for they would rise with Christ at the Parousia, and “we who remain alive will follow in our turn!” This is directed very specifically toward the first-century Thessalonians.

To make it even stronger, Paul follows it up:

1st Thess. 5:1-6—Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

Paul is telling the first-century Thessalonians to be alert! The personal pronouns here are clear. “This day should not surprise you.” Not very likely if that day was two thousand years off! He follows it with “Be alert!” This is a clear exhortation to the first-century Thessalonians, and a clear indication of their nearness to the coming of the
Lord and the resurrection spoken of just prior to this passage in 1st Thess. 4. The strength of the language in this passage makes little or no sense seen in any other light.

Milton S. Terry, in *Biblical Hermeneutics*, also noted the time indicators 1st Thess. 5:1-10 and its relevance to the eschatological section immediately preceding it:

Terry [page 456]:
Paul, in this immediate context (1st Thes. 5:1-10), speaks of the uncertainty of “the times and the seasons.” He admonishes the Thessalonians that the day comes “as a thief in the night” (as if referring to the words of the Lord himself in Matt. 24:42-44), and then adds: “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief.” Were these words meant for the Thessalonians, or for brethren of a far distant age? Or can they mean: Brethren, ye are in no danger of having that day overtake you as a thief, for it will not come until untold centuries after ye have all fallen asleep?

The urgency of the words to the Thessalonians must be seen in the light of the imminence and immediacy of the entire eschatological passage that begins at 1st Thess. 4:13.

20. The Rapture

Sproul [continued]:
Max R. King argues that the language of the rapture, like that of the Olivet Discourse, is apocalyptic imagery. “In these and other related passages dealing with the End, or the Day of the Lord, the sounding of the trumpet is not to be understood in a literal sense,” King writes. “The language is symbolic, calling attention to the eschatological action of God in the consummation of the age. Being caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air simply is accommodative language denoting the end-of-the-age gathering together of God’s elect (Eph. 1:10).” King links the trumpet image with that used in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:31. In both loci he sees it as the symbol of a spiritual truth.

Others have argued that the description of the rapture adapts a Roman ceremony of victory and is therefore symbolic. Paul frequently borrows such images from then-contemporary culture, such as “leading captivity captive.”

When legionnaires returned to Rome from a military conquest, they would encamp temporarily outside the city while preparations were made to celebrate the victory. Garlands were spread in the streets to overcome the odor of the filthy and sweating slaves that would march in bondage into the city. An arch was constructed through which the conquering army marched in a "ticker-tape"
parade. When everything was ready, a trumpet alerted the citizens to go out and join the returning victors in the parade. The soldiers had carried into battle their banner emblazoned with the letters SPQR, which stood for the motto of the Senate and the people of Rome. Since the soldiers represented the Senate and the people, both groups were invited to join the victorious entourage.

In like manner the rapture imagery may have been designed to communicate that the people of Christ would join him in his triumphant return. The rapture imagery may be symbolic in this sense, in terms of what the rapture represents. But the rapture imagery is not symbolic in the sense that the rapture is altogether invisible.

Here I have a major objection—both with Sproul and with King. King sees the resurrection and rapture as both purely symbolic. I have major problems with this, since the resurrection and rapture passages (1st Cor. 15; 1st Thess. 4) follow concerns that the churches had with their dead brethren—real death, not just soteriological death. King has done some good work, but on this issue I have disagreed with him from the beginning.

With Sproul (and King to a lesser degree) I question the usage of symbolic. Remember, a symbolic reference gets its force from the reality it reflects.

Sproul’s last sentence, in particular, is obscure. Something is either metaphorical or it is literal. To say something is symbolic just because it is (or takes place) in the heavenly realm is tantamount to reducing the angels, Christ, and God Himself to mere symbolism. This type of philosophy is dangerous, and is against Scripture. Being invisible is not equivalent to being symbolic.

21. Preterist Views of the Rapture

The rapture is not a settled issue, even among full preterists. Preterists like King take it symbolically. Some in the “immortal body at death” camp take it literally.

One possible explanation is that there actually was a limited rapture of saints in conjunction with the parousia at A.D. 70. Russell, Terry, Weymouth and Hampden-Cook supported this idea. This explanation is laudable for two reasons. First, it gives a definite goal for first-century Christians, and therefore adds impetus to the exhortations to the Corinthians at the end on 1st Cor. 15 and to the Thessalonians in 1st Thess. 5. Second, it recognizes the supernatural nature of being “caught away” in such passages as Acts 8:39 and 2nd Cor. 12:1-4 while maintaining the time frame of 1st Thess. 4 in light of the exhortations associated with it in 1st Thess. 5:1-10. It gives the Thessalonians a concrete reason to “stay awake!”
The problem with this, is that several folks I would have fully expected to be part of this rapture, like John the Apostle and Clement of Rome, seemed to have lived well past A.D. 70. And with the destruction of Jerusalem, the consummation of the kingdom, and the cessation of the apostolic gifts, the church would definitely have been in need of firm leadership to help it along in its infancy stage.

In addition, there is evidence that the church of Jerusalem, which fled to Pella, returned to Jerusalem after A.D. 70. And the church in Thessalonica, to whom the letter was written, did not collapse or cease to exist at A.D. 70 due to the rapture.

If indeed early church leaders were “raptured” away, wouldn’t we see evidence of this in early writings? Indeed, it is very likely that we would have seen it a lot—pointing to those that were well known and were raptured as proof positive that Christ fulfilled his promise. It would have been prominent in the writing shortly after that period as building up the church, as well as perhaps a mourning that those left behind weren't “good enough” to be part of it. But we see neither of this. In this case, the silence is deafening.

In addition, it is not necessary to force this supernatural event into Scripture. Gary DeMar concurs in Last Days Madness. Referring to 1st Thess. 4:16-17, he says:

DeMar [page 157]
This verse—a favorite of those who believe in a two-stage coming of Jesus prior to the establishment of an earthly millennium—says nothing about a rapture, either pre-, mid-, or post-tribulational. Not a word is said about an earthly, political Millennium ruled by Jews with Jesus reigning from Jerusalem in the midst of a rebuilt temple, a reestablished priesthood, and a bloody sacrificial system. When the event described in 1st Thessalonians 4:16-17 occurs, “we shall always be with the Lord.” Nothing else is said to follow this event. The entire futurist scenario is based upon unproven assumptions that are read into this text.

While DeMar applies the text to the end of history, he does make one critical point—the text says nothing about a rapture.

In fact, in looking at the related passages in determining what immediately followed the parousia, we find the phrases “gather the elect from the four winds” in Matt. 24:31, “each in his own turn” in 1st Cor. 15:23, “We who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” in 1st Thess. 4:17, and “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” In Rev. 14:13. These are all equivalent, and are applicable for us today. This lends a certain additional consistency to the passages. The process of being “snatched” or “caught away from” death and Hades and being “gathered in” straight to heaven be an in A.D. 70. Different words, same concept. This goes and in hand with the judgment that we go through at the same time, which appears in several of these passages as
well—Matt. 25:31-46, the end of the Olivet Discourse; Rev. 11:18 in conjunction with the Kingdom of the world now being the kingdom of God, just as in 1st Cor. 15:24; and Rev. 20:11-15 in conjunction with the coming of the new age of Rev. 21-22.

The “rapture” is supernatural, in that it deals with a passage to the heavenly realm, but there is no need to make it a special event. We are all snatched away when we die. Rev. 11:18 is clear in showing an ongoing condition of the new age that began at A.D. 70—“blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on” (Rev. 14:13). This gathering began immediately after the parousia of Christ, the establishment of the “age to come”, and the resurrection of the dead saints out of Hades. Praise the Lord, in my turn I, too, will be gathered to Him!

The Greek word “snatched away” is harpazo. Its usage is limited in the New Testament, but always gives the meaning of a sudden or forceful seizing—see Matt. 11:12; 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12, 28, 29; Acts 8:39; 23:10; 2nd Cor. 12:2, 4; Jude 23; Rev. 12:5. A case can be made for a limited rapture at A.D. 70. I have no problem or argument with those that hold to this. But I would carefully examine the verses to see if it holds up to the standard usage. In Acts 8:39, Philip was caught physically from one place to another. In 2nd Cor. 12:1-4, an unidentified person was caught up to paradise. The inference in the passage, however, is that it was not an afterlife or life-ending experience, but one from which he returned after hearing unspeakable things. Rev. 12:5 almost certainly describes the ascension to the throne of Christ. For Him, it most certainly was an afterlife experience, but He had already died. In none of these verses can a case be made for a life-ending experience, or a “translation” on the order of Enoch or Elijah. In fact, a case could easily be made for the difference in the Greek words. After all, if this is what Paul meant, wouldn’t he have used the same word, metatithemi, as is used in Heb. 11:5 when describing Enoch’s translation from this life to the heavenly realm?

The word harpazo seems to work better in describing a snatching from Death (Hades) to Life (Heaven) than it does in a physical rapture out of the physical realm into the heavenly realm. It actually carries the sense of a “forceful seizing” rather than any change or metamorphosis. In all the passages where it is used, we don’t find any metamorphosis taking place at all. This speaks rather pointedly against any “translation” rapture theory.

And the very wording of 1st Thess. 4:17 seems to indicate something that all the saints would achieve. And the later thought by the Thessalonians that the parousia had already come in 2nd Thess. 2:1-3 indicates that their understanding of the nature of what was meant by the word harpazo wasn’t a rapture-from-this-earth. After all, they were still there, and Paul was still preaching. If their understanding was of saints leaving this world suddenly, they would never have come to the mistaken idea that the parousia and rapture had already happened.

Another strike against a physical-to-heavenly “instant” rapture of saints at A.D. 70 is the very language of the exhortations. The Thessalonians aren’t told to simply
“have faith”, which should be sufficient to insure participation in any immediate blessings for the saints, but are told to “stay awake”.

And last, but not least, the concept of a physical-to-heavenly rapture, similar to that of the dispensationalists, is a relatively new concept, being developed in the early nineteenth century. There seems to be no evidence whatsoever of any early writings that hold to this concept.

The proof is hardly incontrovertible, however, and either case can be argued from a full preterist point of view. The fact is, there just isn’t enough clarification by Paul in 1st Thess. 4 or elsewhere where to pin it down for certain. It is my feeling, though, that when seen in light of its sister passages, the Olivet Discourse, 1st Cor. 15, and the book of Revelation, what Paul is describing is what is also described in these passages, a gathering to heaven that began in A.D. 70.

Incidentally, while Sproul’s explanation of the Roman ceremonial concept is certainly interesting, the Bible says that the concept was Jewish long before the Romans—see Joshua 6 and the tumbling walls of Jericho. Those walls fell with the sounding of the last trumpet and a loud shout as well!

22. Sproul’s Inconclusive Conclusion

Sproul [continued]:
In conclusion, the chief difference between full preterists and partial preterists has to do with the time of the great resurrection. David Chilton (before his alleged conversion to full preterism) summed it up in the following manner: “We can add to this what the Apostle Paul tells us about the Resurrection: it will coincide with the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture of living believers (1st Thess. 4:16-17). Some have tried to evade the force of this text by suggesting a series of resurrections—one at the Rapture, another at the Second Coming (perhaps some years later), and at least one more at the consummation of the Kingdom, the end of history (where it belongs)....Obviously, in terms of these texts, there can be only one Resurrection of believers. And this Resurrection, which coincides with the Rapture, will take place on the Last Day.”

The dispute focuses on the meaning of the last day. For the full preterist all references to the end and to the day of the Lord points to the destruction of Jerusalem. This is the only “second coming” or parousia of Jesus. Partial preterists make a sharp distinction between (1) the judgment-coming of Christ to the Jews at the end of the Jewish age and (2) his parousia and final coming to the world at the end of history. For the full preterist the great resurrection and the rapture occurred in the past. For the partial preterist they remain in the future.
The manner in which Sproul lightly handles Stevens’ Response to Gentry is actually rather disappointing. In Stevens’ response there is a vast amount of information about the resurrection, about the resurrection body of Christ, and about the afterlife body of the believer, to which Sproul gives little or no heed. In fact, what Sproul neglects is the very thing Stevens strived to do — really define the resurrection. For example, why was Christ’s resurrection different than Lazarus' resurrection? Lazarus was raised back to a physical life, and did not escape Hades of his own power or action. Christ was the first to permanently resurrect from Hades, and when He raised, He did so to a permanent, heavenly form. He only used His physical body as a sign for us. What followed at A.D. 70 as the general resurrection was the freeing of saints out of Hades upon the completion of atonement.

As post-A.D. 70 believers, we won’t be resurrected out of Hades, only caught away on our way to Hades, snatched to be with Christ. Death has been annulled, made powerless; the penalty of sin, separation from God in Hades, does not apply to us. For Christ paid the price for us.

Nowhere does the phrase “resurrection of the body” occur. Indeed, 1st Cor. 15 is clear in showing a distinct difference between the physical body and the heavenly body or form as two different forms for us. Our continuity is in what really matters—our essence, our spirit. As in the plant analogy, we will shed this outer shell in order to put on a form that is appropriate for where we will be. The plant needs the shell while in seed form, but once it sprouts, it casts off the shell in favor of a superior form. So, too, do we when we die.

What Stevens wrote in his *Response to Gentry* on page 51 applies to Sproul as well:

Stevens:
His [Gentry] questions about the resurrection (points five through eight) seem to make it the heart of the controversy. He verbalizes many relevant and poignant objections. It does not seem that he has reckoned with the possibility that Murray Harris’ view of the nature of Christ’s resurrection body might be the correct one. He assumes there is only one legitimate way to view the nature of our resurrection bodies (“physical, tangible”). Murray Harris has shown otherwise. The “seed analogy” in 1st Cor. 15:35ff easily solves many of the problems raised here by Gentry. The traditional views of a “physical, tangible” resurrection raise more difficulties than they solve. Gentry’s funeral eschatology is at odds with his systematic eschatology. Full preterists are consistent on this. Regardless of what the resurrection is, it had to have been an A.D. 70 event since it is connected with the return of Christ in several contexts of imminency. According to Gentry’s own hermeneutics, the imminency factor has to be taken seriously in determining when a passage was to be fulfilled. But, he has ignored this imminency factor when it comes to the resurrection.
Sproul, after stressing the personal pronouns in the Olivet Discourse, ignores them in such passages as 1st Cor. 15 and 1st Thess. 4-5. Particularly in 1st Thess. 4-5, the warnings to stay alert and watch so that the Day wouldn’t catch them unaware are particularly pointed, and cannot be so lightly dismissed. What’s more, Sproul misses these very direct time statements, when reviewing the resurrection:

Acts 24:15—and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be [is about to be] a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

2 Timothy 4:1-2—In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will [is about to] judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared [be urgent] in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction.

Paul is very clear regarding the nearness of the resurrection, and conveys (and confers) this imminency and urgency to his audience.

23. The Times of the Gentiles

Sproul seems fully aware that A.D. 70 was indeed a covenantal shift, yet he seems to want to cling to the physical at points. This is abundantly clear in another section of Sproul’s book, the section titled "The Times of the Gentiles" on pages 84-85.

Sproul [pages 84-85]:
Since the New Testament does speak of the age of the Gentiles, it is reasonable to assume that this age is in contrast to some age of the Jews, since the context makes a sharp contrast between Jews and Gentiles.

We first meet the concept of the age of the Gentiles in Luke’s version of the Olivet Discourse, when Jesus describes the destruction of Jerusalem:

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And
Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.


Here the times of the Gentiles are related to the occupation of Jerusalem by non Jewish people. But this Gentile occupation of Jerusalem will not endure indefinitely. There is a crucial “until” mentioned here. This word fixes a temporal point of completion. This text figured prominently in eschatological expectations that were rekindled in 1967 when Jews wrested control of Jerusalem from the Arab Gentiles who had controlled it.

In Luke’s account of the Olivet Discourse, the description of the parousia follows immediately upon verse 24. This raises the question: Will the parousia described here take place *after* the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, i.e. after Jerusalem is restored to the Jews? Or does Luke 21:27 refer to a parousia that signals the end of one age or time (the age of the Jews) and the beginning of a new one, the times of the Gentiles?

Various schemas have been offered. One is that the Jewish dispensation was temporarily halted in A.D. 70, followed by an interim during which the focus is on the mission to the Gentiles, followed by the renewal of Jewish redemption at the end of time. Another is that all Christian history between the fall of Jerusalem and the parousia of Christ is the times of the Gentiles. And a third is that the times of the Gentiles was the very short span of time between the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem and the city’s destruction.

Luke’s reference to “the times of the Gentiles” lends credence to the idea that Scripture distinguishes between a Jewish epoch and a Gentile epoch. This in turn supports the idea that “the end of the age” may refer to the end of the Jewish age.

Sproul makes several errors in this section. First, he interprets the Greek word for time, *kairos*, as if it were equivalent to the word for age, *aion*. If Christ were comparing two ages, wouldn’t he have used the word “age”? But he uses “time” instead. Nowhere in the New Testament is *kairos* ever given such a broad scope. “Time” normally has a relatively narrow scope—certainly narrower than “age”. The alternate translation for this word is “season”. This is a much shorter duration than “age”. (See the prior example of 2nd Tim. 4:1-2 for a good example of this and how it ties in with the resurrection and the end of the age.) The contrasting ages are never referred to as “times”. The reference to “the time is coming” is limited to the time of an event or series of events. It does not cover a whole epoch.
The second error that Sproul makes is in his definition of the age that was about to come in terms of duration. He indicates a *terminal* point, a “temporal point of completion”. But Scripture says otherwise:

**Dan. 7:14**—He *[the Ancient of Days]* was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

**Luke 1:33**—“and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

**Heb. 12:28**—Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

The new age, the Kingdom, the New Jerusalem, are unending. This is one of the major mistakes that the dispensationalists make. Indeed, it is why they are called dispensationalists. And their idea that the old-age kingdom of the Jews is coming back, and that the Jews have a future share in that materialistic Kingdom that is in some way special, is foreign to Scripture.

**Heb. 8:13**—By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

There is no indication that the old kingdom will return at all.

The third error he makes, similar to the second, is in his definition of the age in terms of type. Sproul makes it clear that he is setting the “age of the Jews” prior to A.D. 70 against the “time of the Gentiles” after A.D. 70. He thereby makes the kingdom a *national* kingdom—of the Jews and of the Gentiles.

But that isn’t what the contrasting kingdoms are about at all. In fact, the New Testament is quite clear that the new age kingdom differs from the old not in its geography, but in its nature. The old age kingdom—of the Jews—was based on the physical. The new age kingdom is based on the spiritual. It is not an age of Gentiles at all. In fact, the death knell to Sproul’s view here is the fact that in the new kingdom, the perfect of which the Jewish kingdom was but a shadow (Heb. 10:1), *there is no Jew or Gentile!* There is no contrast among nationalities in the new kingdom age.

**Gal. 3:26-29**—You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If
you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Col. 3:9-11—Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Rev. 15:4—"Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

There are no longer any natural boundaries in the kingdom of God. There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. All are the same in God’s sight!

In the Old Testament covenant system, the distinction was made on natural boundaries, using physical differences. The Jews were set apart from the Gentiles. In the “age that was to come”, the Christian age or new covenant system, these distinctions are nullified in favor of spiritual distinctions. No longer is there a distinction based on nationalities. There is no distinction of Jews and Gentiles. The distinction is along spiritual lines. The true Israel, the believers, is distinct from pagans, or unbelievers. The members of the Kingdom are set apart from those not in the Kingdom along purely spiritual lines.

24. The Curse and the Result of Apostasy

So how do we interpret the phrase "times of the Gentiles”? It must be seen in the covenantal setting.

Upon establishment of the law and the Mosaic system, Israel was given covenant blessings and covenant curses. These were conditional. Their obedience to God brought covenantal blessings, their disobedience brought covenantal curses. These were spelled out for the Israelites in Deut. 28. The blessings begin with “If you fully obey the Lord your God…” (verse 1) and the curses begin with “However, if you do not obey the Lord your God…” (verse 15). Part of the curse includes being stripped of self-rule and placed in a position of subjection, under the power and dominion of other nations.

Deut. 28:36—The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone.

Deut. 28:49-52—The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose
language you will not understand, a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young. They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine or oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks until you are ruined. They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the LORD your God is giving you.

**Deut. 28:64**—Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.

The Israelites did maintain self-rule for awhile, under the judges and the kings. But as they grew more and more apostate, the curses drew closer to them.

**Amos 9:9**—"For I will give the command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground.

Once Babylon had subjected Israel, putting the kingdom under Gentile rule for the first time since the giving of the Law, several prophets recognized the fulfillment of the curse.

**Ps. 106:40-43**—[written after the Babylonian invasion]—Therefore the LORD was angry with his people and abhorred his inheritance. He handed them over to the nations, and their foes ruled over them. Their enemies oppressed them and subjected them to their power. Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin.

**Lam. 2:7**—The Lord has rejected his altar and abandoned his sanctuary. He has handed over to the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have raised a shout in the house of the LORD as on the day of an appointed feast.

**Ez. 39:23-24**—And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid my face from them.

Now take a look at the vision of the statue in Dan. 2:27-45:

**Dan. 2:27-45**—Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King
Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these:

"As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

"You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

"This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

"After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.
"The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

This is very important! Notice that Nebuchadnezzar was given dominion, power, might and glory. What does this statue represent? Certainly not all the kingdoms of the earth for all time, for there were many more. This statue has covenental significance. These kingdoms were the nations (or Gentile kingdoms) that had dominion over the Israelites, the covenant people.

25. The Rock and the Kingdom

When did this “dominion by the nations” end? When the rock, the true kingdom, came and smashed it. That rock is the kingdom that never ends. With the establishment of the rock-kingdom, the promise is that it will not be left to another people. In essence, it passes out of the hands of “other peoples” (the nations or Gentiles) and establishes itself in its own right. No more can the kingdom be subjected to the human rule of other people!

This passing from a physical system to the spiritual system in A.D. 70 was indeed the crushing of the physical reign over the covenant people. The kingdom is no longer a physical kingdom that can be subjugated by physical means. The true kingdom ends, annuls, destroys this power forever!

Dan. 7:13-14—"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

And later in the same chapter, specifically referring to the first-century War of the Jews and the victory of the saints:

Dan. 7:17-27—“The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.’

"Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of
Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

"He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

"'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'"

Here we see the same scenario—the power and dominion was taken away from the beasts, the Gentile kingdoms, at A.D. 70 and given to the saints. The everlasting kingdom was set up and consummated.

There is nothing here that pertains to the new age as being an age taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles. In fact, the opposite is true, in a sense. At A.D. 70 the dominion over the kingdom was taken from the Gentiles and given to the saints, the true Israel. The end of the “times of the Gentiles” does not follow, but rather is simultaneous to the end of the Jewish age. In fact, it is the Jewish age that defines the “times of the Gentiles”, for Gentiles only existed within the framework of the kingdom of the Jews. Today is not the “times of the Gentiles” but rather the “times of the true saints”, when we have taken possession of the eternal kingdom, as promised in Dan. 7! The Kingdom of our Lord has already come:

Revelation 11:15—The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

The last trumpet sounded in A.D. 70. Revelation is a book of judgment against the old covenant and of blessings for the new covenant. Sproul in fact agrees with this. Rev. 11 is imbedded in the heart of this prophecy, which is fulfilled at A.D. 70.

And where do we see similar language?

1st Corinthians 15:22-28—For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his
feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

When did Christ destroy all dominion, authority, and power over the covenant kingdom? According to Dan. 2, Dan. 7, and Rev. 11, at A.D. 70 when the rock crushed the ten toes!

**Heb. 12:28-29**—Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

So now we have come full circle. Not only does a covenantal view of Scripture show that the “times of the Gentiles” ended with the parousia, it also shows that with that transfer of dominion and power, the resurrection passage of 1st Cor. 15 must be seen in this light as well. The language throughout 1st Cor. 15 is consistent with the language in the Old Testament surrounding the coming kingdom, and in the New Testament concerning the parousia. And the clear concerns of both the Corinthians and the Thessalonians, as well as the sharp exhortations (“Watch!”) lend a sense of imminence and immediacy that cannot be ignored.

### 26. The Partial Preterist View

Finally, on page 170, at the end of the chapter on resurrection, Sproul gives a chart:

Sproul [page 170):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.D. 7</th>
<th>Still future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The coming (parousia) of Christ</td>
<td>The coming (parousia) of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The day of the Lord</td>
<td>The day of the Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The resurrection of the dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The rapture of the living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A judgment</td>
<td>The (final) judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The end of the Jewish age</td>
<td>The end of history</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sproul readily admits that the A.D. 70 parousia of Christ was pervasive throughout the New Testament. Each book of the New Testament contains a reference to it, and usually with an exhortation to be on guard. So to the apostles, and to the first-century church, the coming or parousia was almost there. They were focused on the nearness of the coming, and getting ready for it.

Why, then, would the apostles refer to a coming of Christ, using very similar language, and not clarify that they weren’t referring to the immediate coming? Yet nowhere do we see such a distinction. In fact, Paul had been instructing the Corinthians about the impending coming (1st Cor. 4:5; 11:26; and even 13:10). Then in chapter 15, he assures them that their dead won’t miss out “When He comes” (1st Cor. 15:23). I would expect a qualification here to keep the Corinthians from confusion if this were a different coming, wording such as “the final coming” or something similar. But no qualification appears to distinguish this parousia-coming as distinct from what was clearly their focal parousia-coming. Paul’s teaching, then, certainly in the understanding of the Corinthian church, would naturally apply to the “coming” of which they had been taught.

The same is true in the Thessalonian church, but there is one pointer that is even stronger. In 1st Thess. 4:15, Paul says “According to the Lord’s own word” when referring to the parousia mentioned in 1st Thess. 4:13-18. What is Christ’s own word? Sproul has done an excellent job of showing that when Christ Himself talks about His parousia, He primarily—indeed always!—refers to the end of the Jewish age, the parousia to establish His eternal kingdom (see Matt.16:28; 24:30, 42, 44; and 26:64). And if Christ always refers to His future parousia in conjunction with the end of the Jewish age, and the Thessalonians have already been instructed about its imminence (1st Thess. 2:19; 3:13), then this reference must be to His words regarding the same event, not some future far-off coming at the end of history.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, let me reiterate that men like Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., Gary DeMar, and R. C. Sproul have all done terrific work in countering the common futurist perception of the Olivet Discourse and in showing that the imminence of the coming of Christ in the New Testament must be shown and dealt with in light of the original hearers, or the entire integrity of the Bible suffers a major setback. Such critics as Bertrand Russell have legitimate arguments in reference to the imminence of the coming of Christ in the New Testament. Such futurist teachers as Hal Lindsay do not answer these questions—in fact, they actually make the case worse instead of better. This is because they miss two important items—the covenantal language and meaning of the New Testament, and the imminency phrases that are interlaced throughout the New Testament. They have missed the parousia for the same reason the Jews missed Christ's first advent—they are looking for a physical, political kingdom. That was never what Christ’s parousia and the establishment of the new kingdom was all about. To assert that there is a future physical
resurrection is to assert the very thing that Christ was denying, that the true kingdom has a dependency on the physical.

Gentry (Before Jerusalem Fell), DeMar (Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church), and Sproul (The Last Days According to Jesus) all do remarkable work toward dispelling these fallacies. But they don’t go far enough. They stop short, and in doing so, expose themselves to inconsistency. Both Sproul and De Mar are clear about the Olivet Discourse being fulfilled in the first century based on the language and the time statements, which include personal pronouns. They accurately apply this to the book of Revelation as well. But they don’t apply it to 1st Cor. 15 and 1st Thess. 4-5, even though similar language and the same time elements exist in these passages!

Sproul, in particular, seems to be too concerned with seeing a physical proof of the fulfillment of the resurrection. But the new kingdom was never about a physical kingdom, a physical manifestation. The idea that if the event didn’t happen physically, it didn’t happen at all, is singularly poor reasoning in light of the nature of the new kingdom. Indeed, it makes him guilty of the very same errant expectations as the dispensationalists—that of expecting a physical fulfillment of a spiritual prophecy. The dispensationalists do this with the new kingdom and the resurrection; Sproul only does it with the resurrection. Didn’t the Jews miss the Messiah because they misunderstood the nature of the Kingdom He was bringing? All physical fulfillments ended with the ending of the physical shadow, the Jewish age. The true kingdom was exalted over all physical kingdoms:

Isaiah 2:2—In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

The Lord’s holy mountain, the rock of Dan. 2, is a kingdom that transcends physical kingdoms and rises above it. It is the true never-ending heavenly kingdom, the Jerusalem from above, the new heaven and earth. And it was established in the last days of the Jewish age. It is a blessed reality for us today.

In addition, both Sproul and DeMar make the error of looking for a direct time statement before assigning a passage to A.D. 70. Yet in light of the situation, it is much more reasonable and consistent to assign any eschatological passage to the events they were faced with unless a clear time statement to the contrary is indicated! The lack of any time statement is in effect a concession to their primary concern as already stated—the soon-to-come parousia of Christ and the events surrounding it.

Quite simply, it is inconsistent to apply all the eschatological parousia passages of both 1st Corinthians and 1st Thessalonians—as well as 2nd Thess. 2—to the events surrounding A.D. 70 only to leave out one passage in each book. If Paul’s concern in 1st Corinthians and 1st Thessalonians was for the readiness and anticipation of Christ’s
parousia that was about to take place, why assume the resurrection passages deviate from this pattern? Consistent hermeneutics demand that they are part of the whole, and in the absence of clear statements to the contrary, have the same focus and time frame.

I hope that Sproul and other partial preterists will honestly review this. It is crucial to our understanding to see how the four key passages cited above (Matt. 24-25, 1st Cor. 15, 1st Thess. 4-5, and Rev. 11, 14, 20-22) all have such a similarity of language as to be in little doubt as to the fact that they are describing the same event.

Finally, let me quote from the book of job, using the proper Hebrew translation:

Job 19:25-27—I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the Land. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet apart from my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Amen! This is exactly what Paul is saying in the seed analogy:

1st Cor. 15:35-38—But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

The seed analogy, by showing that the old body or shell is discarded in favor of a new and better form when we die, challenges the Reformed thought of psychosomatic unity, which says that man is not complete without his physical body. We will have no more need for the shell once we leave this physical realm behind than the plant has need for the seed shell once it has sprouted. Indeed, the heavenly form we will have is as much superior to the physical body we have now as the plant is to the seed.

The Christian funeral is a reason to be joyous. When a saint dies, he indeed sheds this physical seed-body and in the heavenly realm has a body as is appropriate for that realm. And the saint realizes what Job was yearning for, seeing God! And all because our Redeemer lives, and finished what He promised in the first century. Amen!

Finally, one last quote from R.C. Sproul:

Sproul [in his conclusion at the end of his book, page 203: We must take seriously the skeptics’ critiques of the time-frame references of New Testament prophecy, and we must answer them convincingly.]
Again, I say, amen! But it cannot be stressed enough that in order to be convincing, the answer must also be consistent. Amen.

Bibliography


1. From page 38—an understanding of the word **MELLO**

**Acts 24:15 (NIV)**—and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

**Acts 24:15 (YLT)**—having hope toward God, which they themselves also wait for, that there is about to be a rising again of the dead, both of righteous and unrighteous;

**Act 24:15 (KJV+Strongs)**—And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

**G3195 μελλω - mel'lo**
A strengthened form of G3199 (through the idea of expectation); to intend, that is, be about to be, do, or suffer something (of persons or things, especially events; in the sense of purpose, duty, necessity, probability, possibility, or hesitation): - about, after that, be (almost), (that which is, things, + which was for) to come, intend, was to (be), mean, mind, be at the point, (be) ready, + return, shall (begin), (which, that) should (after, afterwards, hereafter) tarry, which was for, will, would, be yet.

**Kenneth L. Gentry**
"...this term means ‘be on the point of, be about to.’...According to Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible, Revelation 1:19 reads: ‘Write the things that thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to come [mello] after these things." The leading interlinear versions of the New Testament concur. This is surely the proper translation of the verse." (The Beast of Revelation pp.23-24)

**Acts 24:15 (NIV & YLT)**—And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there is about to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

"It is enough for good people to do nothing, for evil people to succeed."

12 Little Things Every Filipino Can Do To Help Our Country

by Alexander L. Lacson
Prophecy Quiz

Be diligent to come to me quickly . . . (2 Tim 4:9)

In the above verse Paul:

A. wants Timothy to join him as soon as possible

B. doesn’t care when Timothy comes, he just wants Timothy to travel rapidly once he departs

Without doubt, Paul desired Timothy to join him as soon as possible. In fact, the second option appears laughable and not really an option at all. But is this not exactly how some want us to understand the following?

He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Both instances of “quickly” in these verses come from the same root in the Greek. Yet, in order to avoid the obvious implication that Jesus claimed He was coming soon, there are those who would have us believe that Jesus was not proclaiming when He was coming, but how—rapidly. His Second Coming might not occur until centuries after He spoke these words, but once it commenced it would not be a drawn-out affair—it would occur rapidly! Would we accept that meaning for quickly in Paul’s request of Timothy? If not, then perhaps we should question that meaning for Jesus’ statement in Revelation.
What We Believe

- **Sola Scriptura**: The Scripture Alone is the Standard
- **Soli Deo Gloria**: For the Glory of God Alone
- **Solo Christo**: By Christ's Work Alone are We Saved
- **Sola Gratia**: Salvation by Grace Alone
- **Sola Fide**: Justification by Faith Alone

--- Sites to do research ---

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- www.beyondtheendtimes.com — Ken Davies of Grace Ministries
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- www.fulfilledmagazine.com — Brian Martin
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- www.bereanbiblechurch.org — David Curtis
- www.americanvision.org — Dr. Gary DeMar
- www.preteristarchive.com — Todd Dennis

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or to have a simple talk surrounding the subject

Write to:

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Cagayan de Oro 9000
Mindanao, Philippines

**Eph 3:21** Unto him be glory in the Church
by Christ Jesus throughout all ages

*World Without End* Amen