

The Second Coming & Covenant Millennialism:

An Exegetical Response to Pop Full-Preterism

~by~

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“PRETERIST-REALISM”

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Introduction

For some time, Michael Loomis (honcho to AD70.NET) has contributed an important blog to the robust discussion of eschatological themes in the Preterist community. His recent efforts, *Covenant Millennialism: A Synthetic Solution*—a refreshing approach to dealing with the conventional modes of systemic millennialism and other themes in Christian theology—has generated the keen interest and resonance from advocates and sympathizers of the surviving train of contemporary Full-Preterism (now-a-days, modishly, called Covenant Eschatology).

I have been enthusiastic about Michael's approach and honest intentions. Although I applaud him for not preemptively dismissing conventional models of millennialism, his ease to entertaining Full-Preterist conjecture hinders me from accepting his conclusions. But it is not entirely my own bias that is to blame for my aversion; the matter is with regards to exegetical concerns. To his credit, Loomis does not entirely abandon exegesis. Sometimes he gives special attention to the meaning and usage of words and phrases. Nevertheless, I will draw some objections to the application of his method.

In Michael's first segment of the series, he establishes a purpose to his journey: to systematize a synthesis of conventional positions for a millennial model of Revelation chapter 20. He suggests that all of Christianity has not been able to produce such a system that everyone agrees with. Whether Loomis endeavors to do more than just add another interpretation to the list is not quite certain. But he gives the impression that he's on to something—something more than just special insight...conclusions from a bumpy-road of investigation. Thus, he initially wants to lay down the presuppositional groundwork for his arguments to thoroughly explain the reasoning for his novel ideas.

Purpose

I am writing this paper to address the issue of Full-Preterism in the current written efforts of Michael Loomis. I have great esteem and deference for Mr. Loomis; I especially have a high regard for his energy invested into Preterist radio. Nonetheless, this paper is intended to show that popular Full-Preterists views cannot stand up to rigorous exegesis. I trust that careful attention to the Scriptures can propound a Biblical case for conservative Preterism to Christians of differing dispositions. Further, the exegesis in this paper will stand as a defense for the faith.

Focus

The current project of Michael Loomis, called “Covenant Millennialism” is a Full-Preterist invention. Although his work on the subject is at times progressive and often brilliantly on target, his underlying Full-Preterist framework is bothersome to his overall objectives. His Full-Preterism is evidently detectable in his attitude towards the Christ's office as King and the doctrine of the Second Coming. My contention is that the Scriptures do not support the Full-Preterist framework of Covenant Millennialism. To establish this focus, I will give exegesis for 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, and Hebrews 9:26-28.

Christ’s Office as King

In his groundwork, Loomis deals with the Scriptural theme of the last enemy being put under the footstool of Christ. He appeals to 1 Corinthians 15:25-28, Ephesians 2:22-23 [the text is really verses 22-23 of chapter 1], and Hebrews 2:8. In each case, the writer states that all things are put under the subjection of Christ. We must reckon that the same root words—even in the Greek—are being used in most of the expressions describing *all things being put under Him*. The reason he appeals to these passages is because they all refer to a past event: the realization of all things being put under Christ's subjection and authority. The Greek root for the verb is “hupotasso”. In this they all agree. Loomis, on this account, believes he has supplied enough evidence that the last enemy “death” was destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Yet 1 Corinthians 15:25 says something more,

“ For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

Michael's thesis rests on the fact that all things were already put under Christ's feet. Indeed that is what the passages he appealed to suggest. But verse 25, quoted above, hints that there is more to the matter than Loomis allows. Because he consciously avoids exegeting the passage in context, an exegetical look is warranted.

Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Verse 24,

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Verse 24 begins with the successive adverb of time, “then” (*eita*), to coordinate ideas in logical sequence to the presence of Christ—referring to the time during the Parousia (v. 23), the spiritual Presence of the person of Christ after His advent. Thus, from the time after Christ’s advent and continual Presence, there is an end-state. The abrupt nominative fragment, “the end” (*to telos*), is emphatic in brevity—placing the consummation of the Presence in the scheme. The conjunction “whenever” (*hotan*), coupled to the subjunctive “he shall have delivered up” (*paradO*), does not supply a definite time of the end. The suffix “an” appended to the particle in the conjunction, suggests, along with the mood that there is the potential for some event to occur—one that has not been fully realized with respect to time. The direct object is the “kingdom of God” which He is said to deliver up unto the Father. The same conjunction “whenever” sets the mood for the conditions that would accompany the end: when He has put down all rule and all authority and power. The verb, “put down” (*katargEsE*), is not the same word used in the next verses. In this context, it has to do with the influence that Christ has to render all powers powerless. It is more than just His authoritative dominion over all things; it is the outward realization of this—the executive role of Christ during His Presence would end when He has made all rule and authority powerless.

This executive ruling is distinguished from the authoritative domain He is given by the Father. In the executive rule, the Apostle describes in the present tense; he assigns the bestowing of the authoritative domain to a past reality. Also, he uses two different words to describe the different powers. This does not refute Full-Preterism by any means, but it discredits sophomoric and overreaching arguments that equate the realization of Christ's coronation to its consummation. In the past, He enters into His kingdom; in the future He delivers the kingdom to the Father.

Verse 25,

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Verse 25 begins with the active present “*dei*”; the necessity implied thereby is translated with the supplied modal “must”. The verb is coupled with the explanatory conjunction “for” (*gar*) to relate the accusative personal pronoun “Him” (*auton*) to the preceding verse. This clause explains things that come before the consummation of all things being subject to His reign. It is, thus, fitting to name the operation in the interim between Christ's Resurrection and the resurrection of everyman [in Adam during His Presence (cf.v.20-23)] as the “reign” of Christ.

The infinitive, the word “reign” (*basileuein*), is in the present active under the

umbrella of the indicative. The infinitive for “reign” is rare in the New Testament—meaning to rule as a king. The preposition, “until” (*achris*), completes the idea that there is an end to an extended period of reigning. The subject of this subordinating clause is implied by the masculine singular reflexive pronoun “*hou*”. The subject is, no doubt, Christ. The genitive of the reflexive in this prepositional phrase suggests a condition where Christ would do something to those He possesses dominion over. The subjunctive mood of the aorist “hath put” (*an thE*) is governed by the conditional preposition. Contrasted from the present active of the indicative clause, the second clause of v. 25 refers to a future realization. The rare verb, not used again in this place, is used in a very general sense. Yet this is not to overlook the fact that the reflexive denotes that Christ personally puts all enemies under His feet.

Verse 26,

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Verse 25 is parenthetical to explain the concept of an end. Verse 26 picks up from verse 24. There, Christ was said to have put down all powers—stripping the powers of power—in effect, destroying them. The same verb is used, translated as “shall be destroyed” (*katargeitai*), except the subjunctive mood is changed into the present indicative. The last of the enemies that He is personally putting down is the “death” (*ho thanatos*). Because the verb is in the passive voice, the death, being the subject, compliments the predicate nominative: the “last enemy” (*eschatos echthros*). The “enemy” is an adjective, describing that this is the last of all the enemies that are being disarmed. This is important because it depicts Christ’s activity as a progression culminating in the future resurrection of all men in Christ (v.22). Further it underlines continuity in the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 15, where verse 22 says that all shall be made alive—a future tense of the verb (*zOopoiEthEsontai*).

Although this shows that the Resurrection was not progressive upon regeneration, it does not, in itself, refute Full-Preterism because its proponents could hold that the future resurrection was definitively fulfilled in AD 70. When I was a Full-Preterist, I thought this could work just fine. But Full-Preterists are not off the hook so easy. The death (specified with the definite article), destroyed by Christ *after* His Parousia in the end, is the same death that all men in Adam die (v.22). This section has undeniable continuity. Likewise the resurrection of every man from the dead is the same as being made alive in Christ for all those who are His at the Parousia (v.23). The question is whether the Parousia is (1) in AD 70 (as Full-Preterists are inclined to maintain), (2) in the future (as futurists are), or (3) whether Christ was already present then and present now. Looking back at verses 22-23, it is Christ who was the first-fruits to be made alive in His own order. The continuity leaves no room for any other interpretation than the bodily resurrection of Christ (cf.v.12-16). Verse 23 then uses the adverb “afterward”

(*epeita*)—meaning thereafter. Thus, after the resurrection each of those in the Presence of Christ would be the next order.

Yet, if the Parousia spoken of here occurs before AD 70, and if the end is after this (c. AD 70), then those men—in their own order to be raised—would only include those already born in Adam to be made alive. For, if Christ destroyed the last enemy in AD 70, then those who have been born since then would not thereby die in Adam. Thus, the central theme of this section—which explains the continuity of the malady in mankind and the salvation in mankind in the humanity of the federal head—would have serious theological implications for Christians after AD 70. For if Christ has already defeated the death that corrupts the stock of Adam, then we are now naturally born already delivered from the death—thus, the Gospel becomes pantellist-universalism. The implication is that mankind no longer needs to be saved by Christ; creatures would be naturally born free of original sin. This has difficult consequences on the doctrine of Sanctification.

Although some hyper-preterists are comfortable with accepting this conclusion, conservative Full-Preterists do not generally acknowledge it. This may be why Loomis cannot make the central theme part of his focus when interpreting this text. Sometimes we see that some forms of minority Preterist groups will simply dismiss the systematic framework of elementary doctrines (e.g. original sin and the purpose of the Incarnation) to avoid the banner of universalism. This arbitrary move, often passed off as a zealous stand against the supposedly invented doctrines of men, is evidently a defensive ploy to apply their own fanciful interpretations of the themes addressed in this passage.

Verse 27,

For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

Verse 27. The word “all” (*panta*) is syntactically positioned for emphasis. The “all” spares nothing from the scope of discussion. The adjective is substantive to describe a whole set of things. In this context, there is little doubt that “the enemies” are meant. Paul has just addressed *all* the rule, and *all* the authority and power: “*all* enemies”, every one unto the last enemy. Thus, the explanatory conjunction, “for” (*gar*), assigns reason for the evident difficulty, i.e. the termination of Christ's reign.

In the previous verses, we see a teleological purpose and finality of the reign of Christ. His kingdom shall have no end, but His reign will eventually accomplish the duties appointed unto Him. In Christ's passion, His redemptive merits were accomplished for us. Yet His kingly office is not limited to our saving graces; Christ is putting down everything that offends God. Paul states very clearly, though, that the sin

death of Adam is the last of the enemies to be destroyed. Certainly, by virtue of the cross, Christ has rendered His verdict against sin and has abolished the penalty He paid for. Thus, because we naturally die in this life, Christ will not only raise us from the dead, but He will also actually destroy our curse.

Remaining in the indicative mood, Paul asserts that all things have been put under His feet. The verb, meaning “having been put” is in the perfect passive—implying that God the Father has done this. This is a different activity that verse 25 follows from. God the Father has put all things under Christ's authority. Thereby, Christ is executing His authority by smashing the enemies under Him.

The next clause of verse 27 switches back to the subjunctive mood, submitting a still unmet condition. The adversative conjunction “but” (*de*), wedded to the emphatic “when” (*hotan*), is meant to make a marked contrast between what has been realized in the past, and what is yet to be actualized in the future. The subjunctive aorist, “He says” (*eipE*), suggests that though He has all authority in heaven and earth, He has yet to pronounce the full end of His executive power. This apparent delay in the fulfillment of this is of no deficiency in the efficacy of His power; it shows both the breadth of His longsuffering to redeem ages upon ages of Christians.

Verse 28,

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Under the condition that Christ declares all things are under Him, it will be clear that He is not subject to Himself. Verse 28 uses a different word for “subdued” (*hupotagE*). The unmet condition is that not all things are made obedient unto Him—even though they are under His domain. When this is fulfilled in the future, Christ Himself will be subject to the Father who gave Him the authority. In this way, God will be all-in-all: there will no longer be any transgression. This is the end of sin and the penalty thereof.

Full-Preterism in Covenant Millennialism

Loomis does not address these unmet conditions of the subjunctive mood. He simplifies the text to refer to only past fulfillment. Indeed, some of these things were fulfilled long before AD 70. Nonetheless, the central theme of these things in 1 Corinthians 15 expands upon them more fully to reveal the breadth of Christ's reign. The author of Hebrews makes this point more clearly, although the ideal aspect of Christ's dominion is realized from eternity, “we do not yet see all things put under Him.” However, Loomis posits that the reason these things were not seen was a matter of perception. In some sense, this is true. Yet, let us not overshadow the central ideas of

a text with our own novel insights. Loomis attempts to straddle the issue of *when* and *how* death was dealt with.

In an effort to argue that the last enemy was put-down in the past, he first appeals to 1 Corinthians 15:27a, Ephesians 1:22a, and Hebrews 2:8. He suggests that the statement “He put all things under His feet” is sufficient enough to ignore objections to the Full-Preterist view. The objection that he consciously dismisses is: physical death is still going on today; therefore not all things have been put under Jesus' feet. Considering our foregoing exegesis, the sense of something being put under Jesus' feet must be categorically defined since it is used in at least two different senses. Because Loomis does not exegete the section in its context, it is easy enough for him to brush over this point without much hassle.

Michael's argument could be summarized:

**All things—including all enemies—had been put under Christ's feet in the past.
Physical death is still going on today.**

Therefore, physical death is not an enemy put under Christ's feet.

...

**All things—including all enemies—had been put under Christ's feet in the past.
Death is an enemy.**

Death was put under Christ's feet in the past.

Physical death is not an enemy put under Christ's feet.

Therefore physical death is not the death.

Then Loomis argues that the vindication (sic.) that was soon coming upon the enemies of the Gospel is proved by “the reality that was already a reality made manifest through the death burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ to His throne in Acts 2 [verses 22-36, perhaps]”. He appeals to Hebrews 2:14-15 and John 11:26 for further support that death was being dealt with already. But because he straddles the issue, he never explains *when* and *how* death is dealt with. First he showed that it must have been in the past before AD 70, yet here, he now shows that it was progressively being realized before AD 70. And if the last enemy to be destroyed was death, and death was—according to the implications of Michael's argumentation—destroyed before AD 70, then this leaves no enemies to be defeated in AD 70. Yet although these implications are not generally accepted in Full-Preterist circles, Loomis seems to be comfortable with exploring this territory. He is on an enterprise of tackling the presuppositions—both Futurist and Preterist biases—which he contends are in the way of how we interpret the Millennium.

Other Points in Covenant Millennialism

One presupposition that Loomis attempts to tackle is the organizational ordering

of sequence in the book of Revelation. He says,

I am going to suggest that within the genre of apocalyptic literature, it is a mistake to attempt to build a doctrine based on chronology or flow of events within the apocalyptic framework.

He goes on to suppose that a narrowed attention to the chronological sequence and specific aspects of the accounts in the Revelation can detract our attention from the central theme. In this respect, I think he is right on. But although the sequence of the apocalyptic may not always reflect a temporal chronological sequence, we must not understate the importance of order in revealed Scripture. Sequence may be in order of importance, causal, logical, topical, problem-solution, systematic, thematic, climatic, or other. Loomis does justice, particularly in part 12 of his blog, in establishing the fact that there is a definite and conscious organizational order in the framework of the Revelation.

Besides dealing with the idea of continuity in conventional hermeneutics, Loomis also questions the idea that only one period of thousands of years is spoken of in Revelation 20. He proposes—without any exegetical support—the legitimacy of Bi-Millennialism. This is something we would have to deal with in a separate survey.

Covenant Millennialism and the Second Coming

Loomis also scrutinizes familiar theological concepts such as *the Second Coming*. His first objection to the historical theological term “Second Coming” is that the term is not found in the Bible. Michael's distaste with practical theological terms may get in the way of his acceptance of other important theological terms like the “Trinity” and “AD 70”. But to his credit, he does not simply dismiss the term on those grounds; he attempts to use Scripture to deal with the Futurist baggage that Preterists may still have. Ultimately, he wants to show that the idea of a “Second Coming” is unbiblical, causing some confusion in the formulation of eschatological doctrines.

To do this he challenges other Futurist ideas such as the “Rapture”. The Rapture, basically, is a literal snatching away of Christians—body and all—into heaven in the future. Although, by no means, is the Rapture broadly accepted in historical Christian orthodoxy, Loomis treats it on the same level of acceptance as the Second Coming. First, though, he deals with the Rapture.

Loomis comments of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17,

My view of what was being spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4, is a much simpler one. It was simply talking about deliverance of God's faithful from those that were persecuting them. In this case the followers of Christ being delivered from the Jewish

persecution.

Instead of actually exegeting the text though, Loomis admits that he gets his understanding from another passage—Exodus 19:4,

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

Despite Michael's remarks, the Exodus account does not state that the Israelites were "caught up...in...the air" when they were delivered from Egypt. Still, Loomis maintains that the same central idea is being expressed in Exodus and 1 Thessalonians 4. Actually, they are very different. Principally, 1 Thessalonians 4 does not mention a *persecution* at all. I understand that persecution was a historical concern in those times, but the perenetic immediate context does not address the issue. Instead, Paul brings up other particular concerns—primarily, applied points of doctrine concerning the resurrection of the dead.

Yet Loomis modishly maintains,

It is the same thing being spoken of in the greater context of both Exodus and Thessalonian accounts. Deliverance from persecution.

By the "greater" context, Loomis refers to some subtext that surrounds the text—not the immediate context. However, if we consistently applied Michael's hermeneutic, then every section of Scripture in this time-period would speak about deliverance from persecution. But that is not the case. For example, some texts in the New Testament simply speak of persecution without mention of deliverance. You may object and say that "deliverance" is not immediately mentioned in those sections—to which I would reply that "persecution" is not immediately mentioned anywhere in 1 Thessalonians 4. The standard criterion is that two different passages must share the same central theme to apply analogy of faith in the way Loomis has. Yet he has not established a direct correlation between the two passages to support his bare assertion.

Because exegesis would only weaken his argument, Loomis is forced to appeal to other texts—with *other* central themes—to support his conclusion. He quotes to Isaiah 40:31 and Revelation 12:14, emphasizing the eagle wing motif, to spark up a correlation between 1 Thessalonians 4 and Exodus 19:4. However, the eagle wing motif is not found in 1 Thessalonians 4. Further he emphasizes the idea of "being 'caught up'"...yet only 1 Thessalonians 4:17 speaks of that.

There are other differences too. Exodus 19:4 uses figurative language to describe a historical event. Yet Loomis is attempting to argue that 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 refers

to figurative language that refers to the typological deliverance of the children of God. He accordingly gives no satisfactory explanation of who the faithful were delivered from.

The Second Coming

Despite the contentions of Full-Preterism, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 does indeed teach of the Second Coming. When I first left Full-Preterism, I also clung to a typological interpretation of this text. However, I could not fight the exegesis in good conscience. This is one of the most compelling texts that teach the Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead.

Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

Verse 13,

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

In verse 13, Paul exhorts doctrine so that his immediate audience is not ignorant or sorrowful about the deceased. He establishes the basis for their expectation in verse 14. He begins with the conditional particle “if” (*ei*), connected with the explanatory conjunction “for” (*gar*), to explain the doctrine which supplies their hope. He uses the present indicative “we believe” (*pisteuomen*) to introduce the agreed axiomatic condition that he will draw his inspired conclusion. The foundational doctrine is that Jesus died and rose from the dead. This establishes the categorical definition of further discussion. He uses the adverb “even so” (*houtos*) to postulate about the deceased. There is no doubt that the participle describing the slumber of those in Christ refers to being physically deceased. Those in Christ cannot be dead in their soul; it is the same euphemism (*koimethentas*)—only once used elsewhere, in 1 Corinthians 15:18—to describe the perished. This euphemism is sparingly used only to sensitively describe believers perished in Christ.

Verse 14,

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Thus, on the basis of the Gospel, God will bring the dead together with Himself. The subject of the clause is “God” (*ho theos*), who leads the ones passed away. The verb, “will bring” (*axei*), is in the future indicative. The verb is only used in this place of Scripture, describing the leading of them in the same way Christ was raised from the dead. The preposition, “with” (*sun*), denotes a union of being together with the indirect

object. The dative “Him” (*autO*), in this application, is the reflexive pronoun to refer to *Himself*. As John Gill states, “either God the Father will bring them with his Son, or Jehovah the Son will bring them with himself”—for Christ is the Head of the Church. We have the person of the Son in mind as the pronoun since the ones asleep are through Jesus. The prepositional phrase “in Jesus” means “through” (*dia*; cf. Gk. “*en*”) the agency of Jesus’ own death and resurrection. Syntactically, it is normal to read the proper name “Jesus” as the nearest antecedent for the pronoun “*auto*”—the person who is also the subject of the first clause of the sentence.

Verse 15,

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

The demonstrative neuter pronoun “this” (*touto*), beginning verse 15, with the conjunction “for” (*gar*), develops the idea further. The indirect object, “unto you” (*humin*), flags the immediate audience. He uses the plural person for the verb “we say” (*legomen*) to broaden the scope of his declaration to all Christians—it is not a private insight; it is the in “the word of the Lord”. By the “Lord” (*kuriou*), Paul means the Lord Jesus Christ in this place (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 1:3, 2:15, 2:19, 3:11-13, 4:1).

Paul begins this word with the emphatic form of the pronoun “we” (*hEmeis*). The complete subject is “we which are alive”. The participle for “alive” (*zOntes*) is not colored by the subjunctive mood or anything that would suggest he means “we who will be living (the ones remaining)”. It is in the present tense. Most Full-Preterists would get prematurely excited thinking this demands “audience relevance”—meaning that they *themselves* would remain until the coming of Christ in AD 70. But the present tense means much more. The participle for “remain” (*perileipomenoi*) is also in the present tense. The preposition “unto” is the word “*eis*”—meaning the point reached into. The thing that they were presently entered into was “the Presence” (*tEn parousian*) of the Lord. It was already a present thing that they had reached in their life—the Parousia was not a future thing in this context.

Paul uses the emphatic combination for the negation “not” (*ou mE*). The aorist is in the subjunctive mood to entertain a possibility. Paul is checking the objection that their living in Christ's presence would not “prevent”—or better: “precede beforehand” (*phthasOmen*)—the deceased with respect to God's leading together with Christ.

Verse 16,

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

He continues in verse 16. The demonstrative conjunction “for the” (*hoti*) names the reflexive “himself” (*autos*). The same Lord—*Himself*— is the force of the phrase. Loomis submits that there are several passages in the Old Testament which speak of the Father “came down” in history (e.g. Genesis 11:5, 11:7, Exodus 3:8, Nehemiah 9:13a, Psalm 144:5, Isaiah 64:1, 64:3). Yet although God, in His ordinary providence, makes use of means to come down [WCF5.3] through His wisdom (Genesis 11:5), through power and divinity in the Trinity before the Incarnation (Genesis 11:7), the special revelation from heaven (Exodus 3:8), majesty (Psalms 144:5), the Assyrian Armies (Isaiah 31:4), and His Presence (Isaiah 64:1, 64:3), 1 Thessalonians 4:16a emphatically refers to the Lord Jesus in His person.

The difference is essentially a matter of Christology and Theology Proper. In the Old Testament, God the Father appeared in theophanies, secondary causes, and through the general revelation of His attributes. In many ways and in various ways of old God revealed Himself—sometimes in a personal way (e.g. the giving of the Covenants). Yet God the Father is not a man (Numbers 23:19a, 1 Samuel 15:29b,), nor can He be seen (Exodus 33:20, Deuteronomy 4:12, John 1:18, 5:37-39, 6:46, 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:20; cf. WCF 2.1). But Jesus Christ is a man—both very God and very man (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 1:14a, 1 Corinthians 15:45-47, Philippians 2:6-8, Hebrews 2:6-13, Revelation 1:13). For this sake *the Word was made flesh*: to be the Mediator of God and of men. As Christians, we believe it is absolutely essential for Christ to share in our humanity as a High Priest—as much as we believe in the necessity of the Incarnation and the empty tomb. Dismissing this is to dismiss the very fundamentals of the faith.

For these reasons, when the personal pronoun “Himself” is added, unlike in the Old Testament passages that speak of before the Incarnation, and unlike the New Testament passages which speak of Christ's Parousia and His judgments upon the nations, 1 Thessalonians 4 specifically teaches of the personal coming of Christ. The text does not entertain secondary causes or other means of His providence. Michael's interpretation simply adds to the text with respect to this point.

The dative phrases are marked by the preposition “in” (*en*)—translated as “with” for simplification. Although the verb “shall descend” denotes motion, the preposition denotes a fixed position. The three things Christ comes in are “a shout” (*keleusmati*), a order or command; “the voice of the archangel” (*phone archaggelou*), the herald of the chief angel; and “the trump of God” (*salpiggi theou*), the Last Trumpet. The preposition does not allow these things to be secondary causes as if Jesus came “into” them or accompanied with them or in their form. Instead, in accordance with the declaration of God—and in great noise—Jesus will descend from heaven. The verb is, of course, in the future indicative.

The simple conjunction “and” (*kai*) connects the next clause. The subject is the substantive “the dead” to describe the deceased. The dead referred to are the Christians who will be the first to rise. The adverb of time starting verse 17, “then” (*epeita*), makes the adverb “first” (*prOton*) of verse 16 mean “first in sequence”.

The souls of the deceased in Christ were not ever separated from the life in the Head of their Salvation. The saints fully expected their souls to go straight to be with Christ when they died (Luke 23:43, Acts 7:59, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23, Revelation 14:13). Still, they are called dead in this place. Death did not touch their soul because they believed in Christ (John 3:16, 3:36, 5:24, 6:40, 6:47, 8:51, 10:28-29, 11:26, 20:31, 1 John 3:14). Nonetheless, though the deceased are asleep in Jesus—present with the Lord—Paul still says that they were to be raised. The only death that was left to be raised was the corruption of the mortal body. Their natural body must be raised from corruption unto an incorruptible body. Thus, most of Full-Preterism simply falls apart when examined with Scripture. Whosoever believes on Him will not die—and yet though he/she dies in his/her flesh, the Lord Jesus will raise him/her at the Last Day (cf. John 6:40).

Verse 17,

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Verse 17 begins with the personal pronoun “we” (*hEmeis*). When I was a Full-Preterist, I thought that audience relevance demands that “we” means that Paul must have been inspired to know that the Resurrection would occur in their lifetime, particularly in c. AD 70. But Paul and some of the persons who had read this Epistle before that time may have not survived until AD 70. Actually, because Paul possibly did not survive makes the inclusive force more appropriate. It is perfectly natural for Paul to use the emphatic “we” to speak of Christians in general. “We who are in Christ and alive and remaining” is the sense from the context. In verse 15, Paul says “for this 'we' say unto you by the word of the Lord”; he is establishing a broad scope in the usage of the pronoun. It is especially an appropriate usage since he did not know how soon this would happen. The central idea is the certainty of this word. If it were a time-text, then the literalistic understanding of the pronoun would be established by the context.

There are virtually hundreds of similar examples of the inclusive usage of the pronoun. In the next chapter he uses the same word “we” (*hEmeis*) when he says, “let 'us', who are of the day”. He does not mean they are the ones of the day *exclusively*. Even Christ taught Christians to pray “and forgive us 'our' debts., as 'we' forgive our debtors”, and we all know that Christ did no sin. Nonetheless, the complete subject is modified by the phrase “which are alive and remain”. The present passive participle

“remain” (*perileipomenoi*) means the ones surviving from us. The resurrection is not limited to Paul and the Thessalonians who the epistle is addressed to. Paul evidently means *Christians*; the clause is restricted to those Christians who are dead or remaining in Christ Presence when He descends from heaven. Even more so, there are no indicators of immanency in this text with regards to the timing of the fulfillment of this hope. Thus, because the continuing issue at hand is the Christian coping and comforting one another in loss, and given all the afore mentioned things, we conclude that the pronoun “we” does not necessarily demand the first-century fulfillment.

The adverb “*hama*”, often omitted in translation, suggests that the surviving Christians would be raised at the same time, or in a close association to the raising of the dead. The association is their union “together” (*sun*) with those raised from the dead. The passive future indicative “shall be caught up” (*harpagEsometha*) indicates that the ones who are still living at this time will be forcibly snatched up. This rare verb modified by the adverb and governed by the preposition does serious ail to the IBD Preterist (immortal-body-after-death of progressive individual resurrection) minority position. It is clear that there was a future event when all the dead would be together raised to a higher glory than they already had in the intermediate state. Further, the living would not be gradually resurrected, but snatched in person together—at the same time.

The verb suggests that they would personally be rounded up to meet the Lord in the air. The implication is that Christ would descend from His current position in heaven to personally meet by the living from earth—somewhere in the middle. This expression may have figurative elements, but the normative sense is conveyed. There is no evidence of symbolism. For example, the prepositional phrase “in the clouds” (*en nephelais*) conveys a fixed position of glory that they are in. The clouds may not be literal because the preposition “en” would not normally allow the raptured to move into them. It reflects their state of being—and the only other time this is used in the dative is in Mark 13:26 where the same expression is used to describe the glory of the coming of the Son of Man upon Jerusalem. However, this is another central theme with a different context and particular application. Nonetheless, the clouds are not a symbol for glory—they simply convey it.

The next prepositional phrase is “to meet the Lord” (*eis apantEsin tou kuriou*). This time, “*eis*” is used instead of “*en*”; the preposition “into” is meant. They are snatched in glory into a meeting with the Lord Himself. The word “meeting” refers to a personal meeting of friends. It is not a transcendental experience—an actual meeting of persons. The preposition “into” (*eis*) is used again to show where they go to: “the air” (*aera*). This could refer to a spiritual plane, as in the nominative rendering in Ephesians 2:2—but it usually refers to the actual air we breathe. It probably does not mean sky or atmosphere—especially since the higher we go up into the atmosphere there is actually

less air.

The central idea is Christ actually coming down—not from outer-space—and we being lifted out of the terrestrial existence. Whatever is meant, we will be united personally and forever with the deceased and Christ after He descends from His throne. Any further conjecture on the details is speculative. But the main inference thus far is that the New Testament foretells a heralded personal return of Christ in His deity and humanity. The eisegetical interpretation from Michael Loomis just does not come close.

Covenant Millennialism and the Second Coming (Continued)

Loomis goes on to question whether the Second Coming is Biblical by dealing with Hebrews 9:28.

He writes,

So what about the, “Second Coming?” Doesn’t Hebrews 9:28 suggest that there was still a yet future second coming?

Hebrews 9:28 To those who eagerly wait for Him He will *appear* a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Well...I’m not so sure it does. Why you ask? Well...The Bible documents that Jesus had already appeared at least two other times. Once to Steven when he was being stoned and again to Paul on the road to Damascus. And for Paul...It was quite literally...For salvation.

Loomis rightly points out that Hebrews 9:28 refers to an “appearing” of Christ rather than a “coming”. But one thing Loomis misses off the bat is that the word “appears” (*ophthEsetai*) is a verb in the passive voice. Actually, the whole phrase “unto them that look for Him shall He appear” can be translated as “He shall be visible to those who wait for Him”. In the passive voice, the force is not that He shall show Himself, but that people will see Him. This is central because the Second Coming differs from a vision in that Christ's person is visible in the same way He was visible in His first advent. Open visions are tactile perceptions of figures.

Loomis objects to the idea that the Second Coming is only the second appearing. He alludes to Acts 7:55-59 and 9:3-8 where both Stephen and Saul had a vision of Christ. But Hebrews 9:28b is a different kind of appearing than a vision. Although Loomis is correct about a great deal in this section, he does not give the immediate text enough exegetical attention to spare him the energy he exhausts in speculation. Nonetheless, he rightly understands that Christ first appeared before God as a Mediator when He ascended into heaven itself (cf. v. 24-26). Thus Christ was once offered to bear the sins of the many, where He currently presents Himself to the face of God for us. But if he had a better command of the elements of the text, then his Full-Preterist conclusions would not be so strongly held. Again, we will compare his interpretation

with Scriptural exegesis.

Exegesis of Hebrews 9:26-28

Verses 24-25,

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

Verse 24 uses the emphatic adverb of time “now” (*nun*) to describe the infinitive aorist “to appear” (*emphanisthEnai*). The author of Hebrews thereby states that Christ was at that time, since the ascension, presenting Himself as a High Priest and Sacrifice before God. It is absolutely essential that He remains in His humanity to be a priest and substitutionary atonement. He did not have to redo the sacrifice; it is sufficient for all. Nonetheless, the epistle writer suggests that His mediatorial duties were ongoing.

Verse 26,

For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Contrasted with the word “to appear” in verse 24, verse 26 uses the perfect passive to describe His appearing (*pephanerOtai*) before God for us. The perfect passive suggests that “He has been made manifest”—something ongoing even until that time.

Verse 27,

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Verse 27 addresses the condition which stands: it is appointed to men to die once. The preposition “according” (*kath*) takes the accusative pronoun for “as” (*hoson*). The present indicative verb “appointed” (*apokeitai*) gives the phrase the sense “as it is appointed”. The indirect object of the verb is the men and women of mankind (*tois anthrOpois*). The adverb “once” syntactically modifies the main verb since Enoch and Elijah did not die and those remaining unto the Last Day will not die. The appointment was once decreed by God reserving unto men to be dying. The infinitive (*apothanein*) implies the continual dying of men even after the conclusion of the ages in which Christ has often suffered since the foundation of the world. The preposition “after” (*meta*) properly is adverbial to describe what would follow the current affair of things. The adversative conjunction “but” (*de*) thinks beyond the appointment of death. The

demonstrative “this” (*touto*) recalls the reservation of death upon men.

Verse 28,

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

After these things judgment is all that is left for men after those appointed to die run their course. Thus for this reason, Christ is said to be having been once offered to bear the sins of the many. The aorist participle for offered (*prosenechtheis*) refers to a single event that has been being realized when sinners sin sins that He lent Himself to bear. This is not a reference to Christ offering His sacrifice as a propitiation for sin, but the offering His self *into the many* to bear their sins. This is not the effectual call in mind, rather the part where Jesus says “take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you.” The object of the preposition is the accusative: the sins of many. This cannot be the same appearing as His appearing before God in heaven.

The preposition “*ek*” refers to the place of origin from where the subject comes from. Christ who once bore the sins of the many—dealing with them before God—lends Himself again to the many whose sins He bore. “The second time” (*deuterou*) is not second in terms of advent. It is second in terms of *His being offered into the many*. Yet after He has paid their penalty, He saves them from their penalty. The ones whose sins He bore will see Him in the future.

Conclusion

Although the central theme of Hebrews 9:28b does not explicitly teach the doctrine of the Second Coming, the text nevertheless implies it. Loomis spends a great deal of energy and speculation tackling erroneous Futurist views of this text. Nonetheless, the exegesis of the text sheds more light on what the text actually says than Full-Preterist guesswork. In Michael's interpretation, in effort to prove futurist interpretations wrong, he suggests that “the appearing a 'second time' will also be of the same nature as the first...In heaven...Into the true holy place...In the presence of God on our behalf.” An understandable mistake since the English translates several words as “appear” in this section, perhaps the cause of Michael's confusion. However, the grammar is conclusively against his guess.

Loomis apparently discovers the secret that there are actually “three different words in the Greek” in part 19 of his blog. He posits that the three different words mean “He who was, is, and is to come”. This Bible-code non-sense is not even worth entertaining. Not confident with his fanciful opinion, Loomis requests for people to share their own thoughts so he can be sure that he is not looking too deeply into the matter. I would say he is not looking deeply enough.

Loomis goes on to assert that the Second Coming is not in the Old Testament. He says,

If Jesus or the authors of the New Testament were actually talking about a second coming(advent) we should be able to find it in the Old Testament.

This is, of course not a logical argument. If A is in B, the A is in C. His support is the postulate that “virtually every page of the New Testament that was being taught was nothing new.” This is false. Jesus taught that “every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old (Matthew 13:52). And although the Scriptures and the prophets testified of the Gospel (Romans 16:25-26), there was clearly revealed knowledge made known unto the holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit by the Spirit which, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men (Matthew 13:11, Ephesians 3:3-10, Colossians 1:25-26). Scripture teaches that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh—that old men would dream dreams and young men would see visions (Joel 2:28-32). Think of the Apocalypse of John, although it alludes to hundreds of Old Testament passages and type conventions, it goes into more details about eschatological things than most of the Old Testament. Otherwise, we would not need it in our Bibles.

Even though Michael's demand for the Old Testament to be explicit about the Second Coming is unfounded, the Old Testament nonetheless refers to it. Further, many central Christian doctrines are systematically formulated. The Second Coming and other eschatological doctrines are extrapolated from a large scope of Scriptures and from varied theological inferences. But one of Michael's concerns the Old Testament prophecies of Christ. For him, it does not seem to be depicting two comings with a long interim. Rather, he observes one locus; the Old Testament apparently does not speak with the same theological categories that Christians today are familiar with. He suggests that this is an observation he finds in futurist scholarship.

Loomis is probably right about the Old Testament's conservative expression of Christ; I share the same opinion about it, anyway. Yet Loomis does not explain why this objection presents a real problem. Even if the Old Testament does not give every detail about either coming, just as Loomis suggested, the New Testament reiterates the Old Testament conventions in an unconcealed program. For example, most of the commemorative Feasts were fulfilled in Christ's first advent. But we do not yet see the fulfillment of the Feast of Booths. Another section, Isaiah 25:6-12 manifestly is a picture of the Second Coming. Although it does not satisfy Michael's criteria of what a “Second Coming” prophecy would look like, I believe these are the kind of passages that testified of what would become formulated into an expectation of Christ's return.

In conclusion, the Covenant Millennialism of Michael Loomis—although deserving of attention—is just another brand of Full-Preterism. It cannot stand up to the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. An example of Michael's distaste for conventional exegesis is found in part 18 of his blog. There, he gives commentary on four verses without supplementary exegetical work. As insightful and promising as Michael's ideas seem, they are lacking in the kind of exegetical support needed for such an enterprise. Further, the inherent Full-Preterist framework of his system stands to challenge fundamental elements of the Christian faith. We see that the Scriptures do manifestly teach the core doctrines of the faith such as the Second Coming of Christ. These doctrines are not only of mere theological importance to our understanding of the Redemptive purposes of God; they are of great comfort to our hope in God's Salvation.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

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