

The Elect Were NOT Confused

By Ed Stevens -- *Then and Now Podcast* -- June 9, 2013

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Thank you for joining us here on *Then and Now* for another look at first century history.
- B. Let's pray before we get into our studies --
The Immortal, Invincible, and Most High God, Perfect in Justice, and Holy in All Your Ways. Your Loving-kindness is Everlasting. Your Mercy and Grace is infinitely beyond all that we could ask or imagine. We praise you for all you have done and are doing to save us and use us in service to Your Eternal Kingdom. Be with us now in these studies as we look at how You performed your mighty acts in history to save a people for your own possession, even including us Gentiles in your Set Apart People. Teach us how to seek your kingdom first in our lives, and live in such a way that we bring much glory and honor to You. It is in the Name of Your Son and our Savior Jesus, that we pray. Amen.
- C. Thanks to all of you who are sending us questions and comments. It is so encouraging to know that you are listening, and that you are carefully considering what we are saying here. If there is anything you do not understand, ask me more about it. If what I say here helped you, let me know that, as well.
- D. Last time we looked at one of the major objections that some fellow-preterists have raised against the first century rapture idea. Some critics of the Literal Rapture view have suggested that the SILENCE of Christians after AD 70 about the occurrence of the Parousia, was merely because they were ALL either killed in the **Neronic persecution** or fell away into **apostasy** or **Hellenistic error** by the time of the Parousia, so that there were no Christians after AD 70 who understood the fulfillments. We showed from the Biblical expectation statements why their objection simply does not hold up under careful Biblical and Historical scrutiny.
- E. This time I want to kind of summarize and put the finishing touches on all the material that we presented in the last three podcasts on the Seven Churches of Asia, Where did all the Christians Go, and How Many Saints were left at the time of the Parousia.

More About the Seven Churches

Fall 64 – Nearly every month I get questions from fellow-preterists wanting to know what happened to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor (Turkey)! Since those churches were very near where Paul was arrested, it seems likely that he was arrested while he was among those churches in Asia. The Apostle John was exiled on the island of Patmos, less than 70 miles away from Ephesus, which is the first of

those seven cities mentioned in Revelation. We explained in past sessions how those seven churches were probably wiped out by the Neronic persecution (AD 64).

If there were any Judaizing "Christians" (so-called) who escaped the Neronic persecution and were still living among the Diaspora Jewish communities, they would have suffered another setback right after the Jewish war began in AD 66, when all the non-Jewish residents of the Diaspora cities would have turned upon their Jewish communities and evicted them, plundered them, and killed them. This is when many of the Diaspora Jews fled as refugees back to Palestine to participate in the revolt.

Interesting in this regard is Paul's statement in the last chapter of Hebrews (written in AD 63) urging the Jewish Christians one year before the Neronic persecution to get out of Jerusalem and go "outside the camp" because "here we do not have a lasting city" (Heb. 13:13-14). This very statement may have been misconstrued by the Jewish Christians in Turkey as an attack on their law-keeping. Paul had been accused of telling the Jewish Christians outside of Palestine not to circumcise their children nor walk in the customs of Moses. Now it seemed that he was telling those Jewish Christians to abandon Jerusalem and Judaism. This would have been viewed as treason by those Jewish Christians who were sympathetic to the Zealot cause (e.g., the Judaizers like the Ebionites and Nazarenes). It is clear from looking at some of the Ebionite and Nazarene sects, as well as Papias and Hegesippus, that some of the Jewish Christians were caught up in the literal physical kingdom on earth idea, better known as Jewish chiliasm. They would have seen the coming Parousia of Jesus as the restoration of the Davidic kingdom to Israel, along with the crushing of the Roman Empire. Paul's advice to back away from Jerusalem at this time must have seemed wrong-headed to the Judaizers and Zealot-sympathizers. It was this very Judaizing and Zionistic mindset which was a stumbling-block to the establishment of the universal Church. Christ was sent to be a blessing to ALL the nations, not just to the fleshly Israelites. The Judaizers and Zionists wanted the Messianic blessings for only those who were circumcised law-keepers. Something like this Judaizing or Zionist sentiment may have been the reason why "all who are in Asia" turned away from Paul at the time he was arrested there in Asia. We do know that there were a large number of Jews living in Asia at that time. And it was "Jews from Asia" who stirred up the crowds in Jerusalem against Paul at the time of his first arrest in AD 58. The Jews in Asia evidently viewed Paul as a traitor to the Jewish cause. They failed to realize that their Judaizing and Zionist sentiments were the real treason against the Kingdom of Christ. They backed away from Paul and snuggled up to Judaism at the very time when Judaism was about to jump off the cliff into war with Rome. They did not want to suffer persecution with Paul, but ended up being totally crushed along with the rest of the Jews who supported the war effort. They jumped out of the Christian frying pan into the Jewish fire. Something like this seems to be involved here in the seven churches of Turkey.

An even more direct command to get out of the city is found in the book of Revelation, written about the same time (AD 62-63), over a year before the Neronic persecution, where John records a voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4) Those two warnings were very timely, and may have saved some Christians from being killed in the Neronic persecution, and from still being associated with the

Jews when the war broke out, and from being tempted to join the Zealot rebellion. Urging the Christians in AD 63 to back away from not only the city of Jerusalem and Judea, but the whole Jewish system, was a good thing. Those saints who heeded that warning and severed all connections with the Jews and went outside the camp into the Diaspora, or into the hills, or into the caves and rocks, would have had a decent chance of "living and remaining" until the Parousia and Rapture (three years later in AD 66).

Scripture mentions some others (besides the seven churches) who did not heed the warning, such as Demas in 2 Tim. 4:10, who "loved this present age" (the Jewish system) rather than "loving His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8), as well as "all who are in Asia" turning away from Apostle Paul at the time of his second arrest (2 Tim. 1:15; see his prediction of this in 1 Tim 4:1). This evidently included the seven churches of Asia who had been previously warned by Jesus in the book of Revelation. They evidently did not heed the warnings of John or Paul or Peter. Jesus and the apostles had warned the saints about a great apostasy that would occur in the last days, and it clearly came to pass (Matt 10:21-23; 13:21; 24:10-13; Mk 4:17; 13:12; 13:22; Lk 8:13; 21:16-19; Jn 16:2; Acts 20:30; 2 Thess 2:3-12; 1 Tim 1:19; 2 Tim 3:1-9; 3:13; 4:1; 4:4; Heb 3:12; 2 Pet 2:1; 3:3ff; 1 Jn 2:18-26; Jude 1:4-18; Rev 13:14; 19:20; Rev 20:2-3; 20:8-10; cf. 2 Tim 4:10-16). **But not all the remaining saints fell away, nor were all of them killed in the Neronic persecution shortly afterwards. Jesus indicated that the "elect" would NOT be deceived, and would remain until the Parousia and be "gathered" (raptured) by the angels (Matt 24:9-13 and 24:21-22; 24:23-27; 24:31).** When the Neronic persecution broke out (AD 64), Demas might have escaped that persecution (because he was no longer a Christian). But when the revolt occurred (AD 66), he would have been destroyed right along with the rest of the Jewish community there in Thessalonica where he had gone after he deserted Paul.

One preterist writer, who evidently forgot about the Neronic persecution, like most of us have in the past, suggested that the seven churches were destroyed by Vespasian in late AD 66 (the Fall) as he traveled through that area on his way to Antioch, after being dispatched from Greece by Nero. He suggested that Vespasian had some troops with him from Nero's bodyguard in Achaia, and that it was during this movement of Roman troops from Greece to Antioch that Jewish communities with their synagogues and churches along the trade route in Turkey were killed and destroyed (including the Jewish Christians and churches in the seven cities of Asia). Josephus does not tell us how many soldiers were with Vespasian as he traveled through Turkey, but we can presume that he had enough to protect himself while enroute. However, Vespasian did not waste any time getting bogged down in local affairs as he made his swift journey to Antioch. He was in a hurry to get to Antioch before winter, where he amassed his troops for an early Spring attack on Galilee.

Furthermore, we need to remember that the Christians had already been devastated two years earlier by the Neronic persecution which began in the late summer and fall of AD 64 right after the great fire in Rome (July 64). So, there would not have been very many Christians left in Turkey (at least not easily found) for Vespasian to round up. Moreover, according to Josephus, the Greek and Roman citizens of those cities in Turkey had already risen up against their Jewish inhabitants

shortly after news of the revolt first reached them in the Summer of AD 66. All the Jews in Turkey fled for refuge back to Palestine where they were welcomed with open arms to help fight in the rebellion. So Vespasian would not have encountered any Christians or very many Jews in his rushed march through Turkey on his way to Antioch. The seven churches had already been devastated by the Neronic persecution two years earlier (AD 64) before Vespasian came through. It is amazing how so many of us preterists have overlooked the significance and impact of the Neronic persecution. It is the two-thousand-pound gorilla in the room that no one has noticed.

So it seems that the threats against the unrepentant churches in the book of Revelation were carried out. Shortly after the book of Revelation was written (AD 62-63) the Neronic persecution occurred (AD 64) and wiped out all those churches. If there were any true Christians remaining in the area after that, they would have been raptured at Pentecost, just before the war broke out in the Summer of AD 66. The apostate Christians were destroyed because of their lapse back into Judaism and their consequent too close association with the unbelieving Jews in the Jewish quarters of the Gentile cities. Those Jewish communities in Turkey were destroyed as soon as the Gentile citizens heard about the Jewish revolt.

Some have suggested that the church at Smyrna must have survived the Neronic persecution, since Polycarp seems to show up there thirty or forty years after the war. But this church may have been restarted after the war by those who had heard the gospel before the war, but who did not believe until after the war. We simply do not have enough information to give us a clear picture of what happened to those seven churches after the Neronic persecution in AD 64. All the evidence that we have, indicates that their candlesticks were removed, just as Christ had threatened in the book of Revelation.

A fellow preterist asked me about the effect of the rapture upon the seven churches. He was unaware of the Neronic persecution and its implications for the church before AD 70, so that part of the history was very helpful for him. Here is his question:

What Happened to the Seven Churches of Asia?

[QUESTION] What are the implications of a pre-70 rapture upon the seven churches of Revelation. If the Apocalypse was written to those seven churches for the promulgation of the Gospel throughout Asia Minor, and yet all believers were taken in the Rapture, who was left to do the work of God?

AD 64-66 –The Neronic persecution killed most of the Christians during those last two years before the war (from AD 64 to 66). That is why there were **so few Christians left** alive at the time of Christ's Return. Only the "elect" who watched for the signs, understood Christ's teachings, and obeyed His instructions, would live and remain until the Parousia. Jesus says in this text below (Matt. 24:22-27), that there would be "elect ones" who would indeed escape the tribulation, and not be confused or misled by the

false teachers, and would remain alive to experience all the things Christ said they would experience at His Coming:

[Matt. 24:22] “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but **for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.** [23] “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘ There He is,’ **do not believe him.** [24] “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to **mislead, if possible, even the elect.** [25] “Behold, I have told you in advance. [26] “So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ **do not believe them.** [27] “For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Note here that not all of the pre-70 saints were killed in the Neronic persecution, nor fell away in the great apostasy. Jesus mentions that **"the elect"** would not be killed, nor would they be deceived, confused or misled by the false Christs, false prophets, and other false teachers (such as the Gnostics, **Judaizers** and **Hellenizers**).

Some of those pre-70 saints “lived and remained until the Parousia.” Jesus had clearly indicated that when he said, **“Some of those standing here”** (Matt 16:28) and **“the elect”** (Matt 24:21-31) would survive the great tribulation (Neronic persecution) and remain alive until the Parousia, at which time they would be caught up to be with Christ. It is this group of faithful "elect ones" who survived the Neronic persecution that we need to keep in mind here.

Notice that Jesus describes them as "elect ones," implying that they were faithful believers who understood what they were supposed to be doing until He returned, and knew the signs to watch for, so they would not miss the Parousia when it occurred. They were faithful saints who understood what Jesus and the Apostles were teaching. They were not ALL confused by the **Judaizers** or the **Hellenizers**. These faithful elect saints were expecting to see, and hear, and experience some things at the Parousia. They were not expecting to be left around afterwards wondering what happened. They knew what signs to look for. They were expecting to be relieved from the persecution, rescued out of the tribulation, and rewarded in Christ's presence. This group of "elect ones" were told that they would be gathered by the angels at the Parousia and taken to be with Christ forever afterwards. They were not expecting to miss the Parousia and be left around on earth afterwards confused and unaware that the Parousia even happened.

The favorite excuse of our fellow-preterists who object to the rapture, is to blame the silence on their ignorance and confusion. They rely on Max King's **Hellenization** argument from thirty years ago, which says that all of the rest of the remaining saints just before the Parousia were confused by the **Hellenizers** and therefore misunderstood, mis-categorized, or mis-characterized the Parousia in their thinking, so that they were unable to recognize the Parousia when it occurred. But that flawed theory has been comprehensively discredited and refuted by **Dr. Charles Hill** in his article in Mathison's book. There is a lot more I could say about it, but I think the following will suffice to show the inadequacy of that theory: This Hellenization theory alleges that ALL the remaining "elect ones" were confused by the **Hellenizers**, including

even the Jewish Christians who tended to follow the **Judaizers**. It is highly unlikely that very many of the Jewish Christians would have been affected by the Hellenizers, much less ALL of them. Furthermore, neither would ALL of the Gentile Christians have been confused by the Hellenizers. Only some of them. There is no way ALL of the Gentile and Jewish Christians could have been confused by the Hellenizers, since the apostles were still around right up to the time of the Parousia, and their inspired writings were in circulation, which would have easily enabled them to refute the Hellenizers. Furthermore, we have Paul's explicit statements in Ephesians 4 that both Jews and Gentiles would "attain to the unity of the faith" at the time of the Parousia, and that the Church would reach its state of Perfection at the Parousia, which would enable them to "know fully" and "see face to face." Was Paul mistaken? Did the Hellenizers confuse the remaining Jewish and Gentile saints so badly that they failed to "attain to the unity of the faith" and the Perfect state? So, this theory about the confusion or **Hellenization** of ALL the remaining saints, including the Jewish Christians, simply does not pass the test of reason or history, nor does it square with the things that Apostle Paul said would happen at the time of the Parousia. These critics of the rapture have ALL the remaining saints in a state of ignorance, confusion and disunity, at the very time when Paul said they would "attain the unity of the faith" and reach the Perfect state of "seeing clearly face to face" and "knowing fully." Do you catch the power of that? Who is teaching correctly here: Apostle Paul or these rapture critics? I think I will side with Apostle Paul. The critics of the rapture are simply engaging in a futile exercise in desperation to avoid the clear implications of the silence and absence of the pre-70 saints after the Parousia. They hate the idea of a rapture so very passionately, that they will grasp at straws -- something, anything -- to get around having to admit that there was a rapture. My question to them is: Why do you hate the concept of a rapture so much? Why does it bother you? If it is biblical, why not accept it? Is it simply because it does not fit your preconceived paradigm? Then maybe you need to re-theologize your paradigm and bring it into harmony with Scripture! Otherwise, you may find yourself "invalidating the Word of God by your paradigm."

Apostle Paul indicated in two different places that "not all of those pre-70 saints would die" (1 Cor 15:51 - "**not all of us will sleep**") and that some of them would "**live and remain until the Parousia**" (1 Thess 4:16-17). In chapter five of his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul said that some of them would be "awake" (living and remaining) at the time of the Parousia, at which time all of them (whether living or dead) would be caught up together to live with Christ forever afterwards (1 Thess 5:10).

Then, Paul prayed that the "spirit, soul, and **BODY**" of some of those saints in Thessalonica "would be **preserved complete**, without blame, at the Parousia" (1 Thess 5:23). Note here that it mentions the bodies of those living saints being preserved complete at the Parousia. It is not talking about dead disembodied saints. It was talking about living saints who would still be in their bodies at the time of the Parousia, and their bodies would be "changed" from mortal to immortal, so that their bodies would not have to die, but rather would be preserved complete for them at the Parousia. When it talks about their bodies being preserved, it is referring to that bodily change from mortal to immortal, which would enable them to continue living in their bodies without death and

disembodiment. Their bodies would be preserved complete or perfect for them by being changed from mortal to immortal without having to die physically.

In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, he clearly indicated that those LIVING saints who would be suffering in the persecution at the time of the Parousia, would receive **"relief" from those tribulations** (2 Thess. 1:7-10) and be **"gathered together to Christ"** at His coming (2 Thess. 2:1-2). Those living and remaining saints were given signs to look for, and promised great rewards that they were expecting to receive and experience at the Parousia. Did they see those signs that Jesus told them to look for? Did they receive all those benefits that Jesus and the apostles told them that they would experience at the Parousia? Did they KNOW that they received them? Did they experience them in a cognitive way, like Jesus said they would?

Moreover, Paul and John mentioned in several texts that those who remained alive at the time of the Parousia would be **presented to Christ**, and would stand in the presence of Christ right along with the resurrected dead (2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Col 3:4; 1 Jn. 2:28; Jude 24). They would glorify Him on that day of His coming, and marvel at Him in the presence of all who had believed (2 Thess. 1:7-10). So, even though the vast majority of living Christians were killed in the persecution, these texts indicate that a significant number of them (i.e., more than a few) remained alive until the Parousia, at which time they were gathered into Christ's presence and received the rewards that Christ had promised.

We also need to keep in mind that anyone who was not a Christian would have backed away from the Christians and had **no association with them**. The Christians would not have been welcome to live in the Jewish quarters or Greek/Roman quarters of the cities during the Neronic persecution. It was not safe for non-Christians to hang around with the persecuted and condemned Christians. When the few Christians that were left alive after the Neronic persecution suddenly disappeared, the non-Christians would not have known what happened to them, because they were not hanging around with the Christians, nor living in the same quarters of the city with them. If they even noticed the absence of the Christians, they would have merely thought that **the Romans or Jews had arrested them in the night and taken them away to be killed**. They would not have believed in a rapture, since they did not even believe in Christ. They would only have thought that the Christians were **rounded up by the Romans and the Jews and killed**. This is the same kind of thing that happened in World War Two in Nazi Germany. The Jews were arrested and taken away. No one ever knew what happened to them.

This is the same way it happened in the first century. Everyone assumed that all of the Christians were **killed in the Neronic persecution**. And if they even noticed the absence of those few Christians, they would not have gone down to the local Roman or Jewish authorities to inquire about the Christians, for fear that they also would be arrested on suspicion of being Christians! This happened in Nazi Germany. When the Jews were arrested and taken away in the night, none of their neighbors dared ask any questions about it to the Nazi authorities for fear that they would be arrested on suspicion of being Jewish or a Jewish sympathizer, and taken away also.

We simply need to remember how things really were back in the first century. Because of the Neronic persecution, the church had to go underground. No one but the most faithful true Christians ("the elect") would have dared associate together as a church ("on pain of death"). There were no unbelievers in their assemblies at that point. If they were not a true Christian, they would have backed away from any association with the Christians, and would have gotten as far away from the condemned Christians as possible, for fear of their own arrest and death. Nero with the help of his Jewish informers rounded up all the Christians they could find and took them away to be killed. This easily explains when and how the **seven churches of Asia** were devastated, and consequently disappeared, so that by the time of Trajan or Nerva (AD 95-98) there was no evidence of a church ever existing in Thyatira before that time (according to various historians).

Furthermore, there IS adequate documentation in Josephus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, Tacitus, and Eusebius to inform us about **WHAT** happened and **HOW** it happened, but most Christians today are totally ignorant of it. Those historians give us enough information for us to reconstruct what probably happened. That is what I am doing here in these historical podcasts and in my **FIRST CENTURY EVENTS** book that I am working on.

Moreover, we need to remember that Christ's Parousia only began in AD 66, it did not end there. It was apparently a **three and a half year visitation in reward of the saints and judgment upon the Jews** throughout the Diaspora. Christ had his angels with him, judging the wicked throughout that whole period. All those who were true Christians at the time of Pentecost in 66 were indeed raptured, no matter where they happened to be at the time. All of the true Christians who were still alive at the time of the Parousia were taken as one group (i.e., the "bride" of Christ) together "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." The parable of the Bridegroom (Matt 25:1ff) does not seem to allow for any other raptures later. When the Groom returned, he snatched away his bride and took her to his Father's House, where she remained forever afterwards with Him. After the wedding entourage went into the feast, the door was shut. No late arrivers were allowed into the wedding feast after that. The window of opportunity was gone. That fits a rapture scenario very well.

We also need to ask our fellow-preterists who are skeptical of the rapture: Where is ANY documentation of the Parousia by ANY of those pre-70 Christians who were supposedly still left on earth after AD 70? If they were still around after seeing, hearing, and experiencing all these things at **the Parousia**, why were they so silent about it, especially in view of the new Christians (like Papias and Polycarp) who were saying that **the Parousia** was still future? Why didn't those remaining pre-70 Christians speak up and inform **Papias and Polycarp** that **the Parousia** had already occurred? If Apostle John was still around, why didn't he speak up and remind them that his **book of Revelation** was already fulfilled? Why did he let **Papias and Polycarp** keep believing and teaching that **the Parousia** was still future and that the **book of Revelation** had not been fulfilled? And why did they let all the teachings and writings of the Judaizers,

Gnostics, and heretics proliferate unchallenged? Why do we have lots of writings from those heretics, but nothing from the pre-70 Christians to refute them? Why are the heretical writings preserved, but the supposed Christian writings not preserved? And why do the few writings that we have from Christians after AD 70 talk about all kinds of lesser important matters, but not one word about the occurrence of the most important event of all redemptive history (the Parousia). This was the event which crushed the final enemy of mankind, raised the dead, and rewarded the living saints? How could those living saints experience all those benefits, and live through that event, and not say a word about it later when Papias and Polycarp began saying it was all still future?

That is the point which is being ignored and overlooked by everyone, including most preterists! Our New Testament lists over eighty individuals by name who worked with the apostles in the spreading of the gospel, including youngsters like Timothy who could easily have remained alive until the early decades of the second century. **Yet, not a single one of them ever reappeared** after AD 70 to write anything, or to set the record straight with **Papias and Polycarp**, or to refute all the Gnostics, Judaizers, and other heretics who were proliferating at that time. It would be criminal negligence on their part (especially for Apostle John) to have heard the next generation of Christians after AD 70 saying that the Parousia was still future, and then NOT say anything to set the record straight! They knew that the Parousia had occurred, and that the book of Revelation was fulfilled. Why didn't they speak up and tell **Papias and Polycarp** about it, if they were still around, especially apostle John? Do you catch the power of that?

Which one of these **three options** best explains their silence?

1. OPTION #1 -- They did not speak up because they were **EMBARRASSED** about the non-occurrence of the Parousia, or the non-fulfillment of their expectations. If it did not occur in the way they were expecting it to, or in the way that Jesus and the apostles had told that it would, then why weren't they complaining about the non-fulfillment if they were still around? Why weren't they expressing their disillusionment and frustration over the non-fulfillment of their great expectations? Why weren't they charging Jesus and the Apostles with error and false prophecy. Silence is not what we would expect, if their expectations had not been fulfilled. There would have been complaints, and Christianity would have been abandoned as a false hope and a failed religion. But we hear no complaints or disillusionment or abandonment. All we have is silence.

2. OPTION #2 -- They did not speak up because they were **IGNORANT** or **CONFUSED** about the occurrence of the Parousia, even though Christ and the Apostles had given them a bunch of signs to look for, and a bunch of things they were expecting to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia. Did they see the signs? Did they experience those things? Did they know that Christ came? There is no excuse for them to NOT know it happened, especially when we hear them beforehand saying, "O our Lord Come!" and "longing for His return" and "anxiously awaiting it" and so on! If they did not experience those things, they would have been complaining about it. But, we don't even have that! All we have is silence. This is the favorite option of fellow-preterists who reject the rapture. They rely on Max King's theory that all of the rest of the remaining

saints just before the Parousia were confused by the **Hellenizers** and therefore misunderstood the nature of the Parousia, so that they were unable to recognize the Parousia when it occurred. As noted above, that flawed theory of **Max King** has been thoroughly refuted by **Dr. Charles Hill** in his article in Keith Mathison's book (*When Shall These Things Be*). And we have shown above also, that Jesus and the apostles gave them signs to look for, and very clear expectations about what they would see, hear, and experience at the Parousia. There was simply no way ALL of the remaining Jewish and Gentile Christians (i.e., "the Elect" - Matt. 24:24) could have been confused and misled by the Hellenizers or the Judaizers, so that they missed the Parousia when it occurred. So, this option also fails to solve the silence problem.

3. OPTION #3 -- They could not speak up because they were **ABSENT** from the scene (raptured). They were gone! They did not write anything because they were no longer on earth.

All Christian historians note the **absence** and **silence** of the first generation of apostolic Christians after AD 70. They all scratch their heads bald wondering how all that intense missionary activity and book-writing could come to such a sudden and complete halt. John A. T. Robinson likens it to a noisy train going into a tunnel and coming out the other side drastically changed. Something significant happened to cause that tunnel period, but we are at a loss to know what it was (unless it was a rapture). If any of those pre-70 Christians were still around, why didn't they mention seeing the Parousia and getting the great relief, rescue, and reward that Christ promised to give them at AD 70? Why do all 80 of the Christians mentioned by name in the NT vanish without a trace after AD 70? All the historians are puzzled and frustrated by this absence and silence. I quote several of them in my final speech at the Garrettsville 2011 seminar (title: **First Generation After**). The PDF of that is available. Simply email me and request it.

The only reasonable option for a preterist (number 3 above) is to believe that **ALL of the "living and remaining" pre-70 saints** were taken up in the rapture, and were therefore no longer around on earth after AD 70 to mention it and set the record straight for Papias and Polycarp. That is why we do not see any of those 80+ individuals ever reappearing after AD 70 and doing any more mission work or writing any more epistles. They were **SILENT** because they were **ABSENT**.

So the next generation of Christians had no one to correct them. That is why they got so confused so quickly after AD 70. That kind of doctrinal confusion and eschatological error is inexplicable if any of those pre-70 saints were still around after AD 70 to set the record straight. Their silence is extremely problematic for ALL preterists, not just for the rapture preterists. It is a HUGE historical problem for ALL preterists. Our futurist critics, like Dr. Charles Hill, have relentlessly stabbed us with this objection. The only satisfying solution that I have found for it, is the rapture.

You would benefit greatly from reading what I have to say about all this in my rapture book (**Expectations Demand a First Century Rapture**) and my history book (**First Century Events**). I would encourage all of our listeners to get copies of those two

books if you do not already have them. These two books can be ordered right on our website at <<http://preterist.org>>

Well, that will wrap it up for this time. In coming weeks I want to move on into the events of AD 65 and 66, just before the Jewish war with Rome began. If any of our listeners have questions or comments about what we looked at here in this session, do not hesitate to email me. Please send me some feedback, positive or negative. I would love to hear from you. My email address is: **preterist1@preterist.org**

Lord willing, we will see you next week. Thanks so much for listening.

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