

Rapture Questions Answered

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- June 23, 2013

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Here we are for another episode of *Then and Now* where we learn from the past to shape a better future.
- B. Let's pray before we get into our studies --
Most High God, and the only God, our Lord and Master who has saved us and redeemed us for your own possession. We thank you for making us your servants and using us as your empty clay vessels to pour out your blessings upon all nations. May your Spirit dwell richly within our hearts and enable us to understand Your Word, and apply it to our hearts in such a way that we are drawn closer to Your Holiness and further away from the corruption that is in the world around us. It is in the Name of Your Son and our Redeemer, that we pray. Amen.
- C. Last time we talked about how things began to rapidly deteriorate for Nero and the Jews after the Neronic persecution. The storm clouds of God's Judgment were looming on the horizon, not only for the Jews, but for the Romans as well. Nero and the Jews had poured out a great tribulation upon the Church, and now it was their turn to reap what they had sown. The wrath was about to be poured out. God was sending all kinds of signals "in the heavens and on the earth" that He was about to judge them for what they had done to His people. We will get back into that historical narrative next week, Lord willing.
- D. This time, however, I need to do another Listener Feedback Session. Our listeners have sent in so many great questions and comments, many of which will be helpful for all of our listeners to hear, that I felt it was time to take another break from our historical studies and share these questions and comments. Of course, no names or personal information will be mentioned, and the wording of some questions or comments may be adjusted in order to protect your identity and privacy. This is very much like a Q&A session at a seminar. Those are the most helpful part of the seminar or podcast, because they deal with the real questions that we all have, and touch us where we are, and take us further along in our understanding. It is like having dessert after the meal. The favorite part of the meal for most of us. So, that is why we will take a break every month or so and do another one of these Listener Feedback sessions. It helps all of us to catch up, and get on the same page, and travel together on this historical journey. That is important. We don't want to leave anyone behind. So, let's get right into it:

[One listener flagged a goof for me] -- You said in your last podcast that the warning to flee Judea was directly related to the Neronic persecution. I had always thought that the warning had more to do with avoiding the war-torn area so as not to become trapped in the living hell which Jerusalem became and was not directly related to their persecution as Christ-followers. How does that jive with "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies..."? In other words, if their admonition to flee was predicated upon the coming persecution, and was not directly related to the war that was about to ensue, why was Jesus' warning tied to the surrounding of the city? So was the tribulation of Matthew 24 speaking of the three and a half year Jewish-Roman war or the three and a half years of Christian persecution at the hands of Nero? In this light, it appears that Rome was a greater threat to the church than the Jews. A whole lot to consider! :)

[ED'S REPLY] -- You are right. My mistake. Thanks for noticing that and bringing to my attention. The problem that was causing my confusion, was that the Matt 24 context is not strictly chronological and sequential. It has some flashbacks and flashforwards. That is why I did the chronological chart several weeks ago, to sort it out and put it in its correct sequence, the way it actually happened historically. That does make a difference. That is where I was coming from when I stated that the great tribulation here is the Neronic persecution. But I was incorrect when I said that the warning to flee in Matt 24:16 and 20 was referring to fleeing before the Neronic persecution. The Neronic persecution was already going on at the time they saw the Abomination and fled. I did not handle that context correctly last time in my comments. It is on my chart, but I did not look at the chart before I made that historical goof.

Looking at my Chronological Chart on the Olivet Discourse, it is pretty clear that Jesus was warning his disciples not to get caught up in the Zealot rebellion and the war. However, in Matt 24:21 it says that the time during which they would see the Abomination of Desolation would be a time of great tribulation. That allows the placement of the Neronic persecution and the great apostasy to be already going on at the time when they saw the Abomination and fled out of Judea (if any of them were still left alive in Judea at that time). Jesus goes on to talk about that great tribulation in the following verses. THAT great tribulation is the Neronic persecution upon the Christians, NOT the wrath-outpouring on the Jews. And that great tribulation was already underway (and nearly over) by the time they saw the Abomination.

It requires a very sharp exegetical knife to parse the context here. But if you look at pages 5 and 6 of the sequencing chart, and read the notes that I wrote on both sides of the chart, I think you will get what I am saying.

Color code the words "then" and "when" and "those days" and "at that time" in Matt 24:9-31. See if you notice the tribulation --> abomination sequence that I was talking about. The "then" of v. 21 is the same time as the "then" of verse 9 — the time when the saints were delivered up to tribulation. And it was during that same time of tribulation, evidently toward the end of it, after most of the saints had been killed or fallen away, that they would see the Abomination and flee (if there were any saints left in Judea). Notice the language in verses 16-19 is third person ("those" and "him"). That makes me

ask why it was not second person (“you” and “you-all”). In verse 20 he does refer to the flight of the disciples in second person (“your flight”). Evidently Jesus foreknew that there would be some true elect saints still alive in Judea at the time when the Abomination occurred (Spring 66). But he is very clear in telling them to get out of there before the rebellion (mid-to-late-summer 66), so that those “elect ones” would remain alive until the Parousia (early summer 66). If they stayed in Judea after the Abomination occurred, they would have been killed, pressured to fall away, or tempted to join the rebellion.

That is why I did those podcasts back in March on sequencing the tribulation. We preterists are quick to point out to those that want to divide Matthew 24, that Matthew’s version of the synoptic apocalypse is not laid out in strict sequential order. When you compare it with Mark and Luke’s account, and especially with 1 Thess 4-5 and Revelation, you will see what I mean. There are flashbacks and flashforwards in the Olivet Discourse. See the attached charts and lesson outlines from those podcasts. I realize this is confusing for all of us. It was confusing to me until I did the color-coded comparison of the three synoptic accounts. That is the best I have to offer on the subject at this time. The warning to flee when they saw the armies encompassing Jerusalem, was not the FIRST or ONLY warning to get out of Judea that the saints received. There would not have been any saints left in Judea after the Neronic persecution and great apostasy. This appears to be a final warning to any saints left alive in Judea after the Neronic persecution.

[Another listener mentioned that] -- [there was] a comment on FaceBook about your use of history and I would like to know how you would respond: "I was listening to a podcast by Ed Stevens this morning where he was, on the one hand, criticizing "the scholars" for using "secular history" to contradict the Bible while, on the other hand, he was using the same "secular history" to try to substantiate his own "rapture" (silence) view, as well as the early dating and authorship of the NT books! I can't believe the hypocrisy (or inconsistency) of some of these Full Preterist people."

[MY REPLY] -- In the very first podcast posted here at Buzzsprout, entitled "Historical Problem," I explained the right and wrong use of history. History can never PROVE the Bible wrong or right, but it can SUPPORT the Bible and EXPLAIN what it means. And that is how we are using it here. When I criticized the futurists' use of history, I was objecting to their use of unreliable church fathers like Irenaeus to "prove" the late date of the book of Revelation. That is a wrong use of history. All of us are guilty of using history and traditions to "prove" our beliefs. Preterists and Futurists alike. I am guilty of it, and I suspect the fellow who offered that criticism is guilty of it as well. We all need to be more careful about that. History cannot prove anything for or against scripture. But it can legitimately be used to support and explain Scripture. But in the final analysis, only inspired Scripture can determine what is true, regardless of what history and tradition might otherwise demand.

[One Listener commented on the podcast last week] -- Your latest podcast about the heifer giving birth to a lamb was an incredible blessing, since I've always suspected that the lamb side of the story was part of a bigger insight on the signs just before Jerusalem fell. But distinguishing between a heifer and a cow sealed the deal for me. A big time thank you for explaining that.

[MY REPLY] -- That was indeed a very interesting story about the heifer (young virgin cow) giving birth to a lamb. I am glad my farmer father told me what a heifer is. Otherwise, I probably would have missed the significance of that sign. And the fact that the high priest who was leading that heifer away to be sacrificed, was a grandson of the very high priest who led Jesus away to be sacrificed on the Cross, was also amazing. That sealed the deal for me also. There was a triple message from God to the Jewish people and the high priestly family of Ananus in this miraculous birth of the Lamb. Thanks for your good feedback on that.

[Another listener wrote] -- I can't believe how much I'm enjoying your podcasts. Keep up the good work. Your explanations are clear and concise . A lesson a lot more of us teachers of the Word need to take on board. We are not all scripture scholars with years of training, but we do love our Lord and we like to learn.

[ED'S REPLY] -- Thanks for those very encouraging words. As you know, practice makes perfect. The more we teach and preach, the better we get at it. Ninety percent of our performance is based on attitude and desire, the other ten percent is aptitude and skill. Both of those things (attitude and aptitude) take a lot of practice and development. You have the right attitude (love the Lord) and desire (like to learn). God will give you the abilities and skills as you put your attitude and desires into action.

[Another email said] -- Ed, I really, really appreciate your time on this. I'm trying the best I can to assimilate these enlightening revelations regarding the **Neronic persecution**. It's something that I knew about, but had never seen it placed in any kind of meaningful sequence.

[MY REPLY] -- That is the situation with all of us, both preterists AND futurists. None of us were ever taught much about the Neronic persecution, certainly not with any clear idea of when it occurred and how it fit into the overall endtime scenario. This is new for all of us. But it is probably the most important factor shaping the endtime events for the Christians in those last four years before the Jewish revolt. That is why I consider it the two-thousand-pound gorilla in the room that no one has noticed.

[That Listener Also Said] -- When the Bible refers to seeing all things clearly, as if "**face to face**," this would have literally been experienced at the rapture, right? I always thought it was a bit cheesy telling people that the post-parousia saints saw Jesus face to face, but in a totally symbolic manner or spiritual sense only. I would think that it would have been very disappointing to be promised "face to face" communication, only to realize that it was business as usual and was merely a notation in the heavenlies about the Old Covenant finally coming to an end.

[MY REPLY] -- If anyone doubts the meaning and intent of the phrase "**face to face**" as it is used in 1 Cor 13:12, simply do a word search in your concordance or Bible search program for that phrase, and you will discover that it always means a direct, personal, cognitive, and experiential encounter with someone or something. It does not allow for the idea of a non-actual, non-experiential, or unaware encounter. If we are not aware of it, or do not experience it in any cognitive way, how can that be called a "face to face" encounter? Face to face necessarily implies a real actual direct cognitive and experiential encounter with someone or something. It necessarily implies that the person who has this face to face encounter KNOWS about it and experiences it in a cognitive way. Therefore, here in 1 Cor 13:12, Paul is saying that when the Perfect comes, they would no longer see things darkly and dimly, vaguely and ambiguously. They would see clearly, as if it was face to face. That kind of clarity about Christ and His Kingdom was supposed to arrive at the Parousia in connection with the Perfect (or complete) state of their knowledge and experience. That only makes sense in a rapture scenario. Here's why: After AD 70 there is nothing but silence and confusion about what happened in AD 70, anything BUT face to face clarity of understanding. Yet, those pre-70 saints who lived and remained until the Parousia ("we will not all sleep" - 1 Cor 15:51), were promised that they would have the "face to face" clarity of understanding and experience AFTER the Perfect arrived. Since we do not see that clarity of understanding in any of the living saints on earth after AD 70, we are faced with two options: EITHER the Perfect did not arrive in AD 70, OR the saints who experienced the Perfection of their knowledge were raptured out of there. Those fellow-preterists who reject the rapture option are left in the uncomfortable situation of trying to explain how the Perfect clarity of understanding never really arrived as it was promised by Apostle Paul. That means that Paul gave them a false hope and a false expectation. At the very time when their understanding was supposed to get face to face clarity, we see nothing but ignorance and confusion about the occurrence of the Parousia. The only solution to that dilemma for the Preterist is to believe that those saints who remained alive until the Parousia were raptured to heaven where they experienced that face to face encounter with Christ and had their understanding completely clarified and perfected.

[That Listener Further Requested me to] -- Have patience with me. I'm trying to rework these exciting new ideas into a fixed paradigm (Sequencing the Neronic Persecution and the Face to Face Perfection). This whole venture is akin to peeling the layers of an onion. Things you said in one podcast may have been abundantly clear were I listening with a fully open mind. Certain ideas have to sink in before others can be assimilated. I'm going to read the NT with these things in mind to see what a fresh perspective may do to the pervading cobwebs.

[MY REPLY] -- That is exactly what I said when I encountered these ideas for the first time. It drove me back to the Bible to see what it really teaches. I remember the struggle I had with all this back in 2002 as I was preparing a seminar speech on the History of the early church and how they got so confused about eschatology so quickly after AD 70. I finally decided that the only way to resolve this issue was to go back to the Bible to see what Jesus and the Apostles actually taught about the Parousia. I got on my treadmill day after day for about two weeks, reading back through the whole New Testament, listing all the verses which talk about what the saints would see, hear, and experience at the Parousia. Here were the two questions that I wanted to answer: (1) What did Jesus and the Apostles promise those saints that they would see, hear, and experience at the Parousia? and (2) What do the apostles and other saints say that they were expecting to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia? I have to tell you that I was blown away by what I found in the New Testament. It was a paradigm-shift for me. Jesus and the apostles did not teach a non-experiential Parousia, nor were the saints expecting to live through that event, not experiencing anything and not even knowing it happened. To the contrary, their expectations were clear and fever-pitch: "Oh our Lord come!" and "How long Oh Lord?" and "Amen, Come Lord Jesus!" They were promised that they would be relieved from the persecution, rescued out of the great tribulation, and rewarded in the presence of Christ, where they would glorify him on that day, and marvel at him in the presence of all who had believed. Jesus and the Apostles had given them all the signs to look for, so they would not miss it. Jesus said the "elect ones" would not be confused by all the false teachers, but would instead be gathered to Him by the angels at His Parousia. Paul said that not all the saints would die before the Parousia, but that some of them would live and remain until the Parousia, at which time their bodies would be changed from mortal to immortal, and then be caught up with the resurrected dead in the unseen realm to meet Christ, with whom they would remain forever afterwards. To summarize: If any of those pre-70 saints were still on earth after AD 70, they should have had the clarity of knowledge and perfection of understanding to easily refute the heretics and claim the fulfillments of the Parousia and its related endtime events. Their silence in the face of all the false teachers and futurist statements is incriminating. If they truly experienced what they were promised to experience, and what they were expecting to experience at the Parousia, then they absolutely KNEW without a shadow of doubt that the Parousia had occurred, and they would be dancing in the streets and proclaiming it from the rooftops. Their silence about the fulfillment of the Parousia can only mean one of two things: EITHER the Parousia did not happen and their expectations were not met, OR they were taken out of there so that they were no longer around to document the Parousia and their experience of it.

[ANOTHER EMAIL THAT CAME IN, SAID THE FOLLOWING] -- I fear that the blunt force which you are applying to the fingers of fellow-preterists that are desperately clinging to their figurative rapture idea (better known as the CBV), threatens to dislodge them, not only from the Collective Body View, but from Preterism itself. That is, if they reject your conclusions. Many of them are so committed to the collective body view, that they would rather give up Preterism, before they would ever give up their collective body view of the resurrection. I have no one particular in mind. This is simply a general observation about those preterists with whom I am in dialogue, who are firmly entrenched in the CBV. It seems to me that you are drawing a rather pronounced line in the sand by saying that there can be no other valid explanation for the silence besides the rapture. In other words, if there was no rapture, then Preterism has been proven false by the historical evidence. Again, I'm not criticizing your view, but merely stating how you seem to be coming across to those preterists who hold the Collective Body View.

[MY REPLY] I totally understand what you are saying, but that is the nature of truth. It always challenges our paradigms. Truth is never comfortable when we first encounter it. Critics of the rapture are far more dogmatic and aggressive in their teaching of their Collective Body View, and in their ridicule of the rapture, than I ever have been with the rapture view. If I need to be less forceful, then they need to tone down their harsh criticism even more so. But I see your point about how some of our fellow preterists are so desperately clinging to the Collective Body View as the only possible answer to the futurist challenge, that they would tend to back away from Preterism altogether, if they were ever convinced that the Collective Body View was mistaken. That is how I felt twenty years ago when futurist critics pointed out the lack of historical documentation for the Parousia. I realized that the Collective Body View did not have a satisfying answer to that documentation problem. The interaction between Max King and a dozen Reformed theologians at the 1993 symposium in Mt. Dora Florida, exposed the weakness and inadequacy of Max's Collective Body View, and forced me to back away from it. That really shook me up. Just like the fellow preterists you have alluded to, my faith in the preterist view was challenged when the Collective Body View was shown to be inconsistent and inadequate, both exegetically and historically. However, I still knew that the Parousia must have occurred in the first century, or else Jesus and the New Testament are mistaken and Christianity is a hoax. **So, that meant that I merely needed to rethink my view of the resurrection, rather than throw the whole preterist view out the window.** I had already been having second thoughts about it anyway, after seeing Murray Harris' view of the resurrection and applying his individual body concept to the AD 70 resurrection. That really made sense for me, and gave me a satisfactory answer to the futurist objections on the resurrection issue, and rescued Preterism out of the jaws of the futurist critics (at least on the issue of the resurrection). Not long after that I was challenged by the organizer of that 1993 symposium to take a serious look at the literal rapture concept of James Stuart Russell. I told him I would do more than just look at it, I would refute it. But when I remembered the serious historical documentation problem for the Parousia, and our need to account for that without a

rapture, I quickly realized that there was no viable alternative. Either all of those saints were taken out of there, or there was no occurrence of the Parousia to report. Dr. Charles Hill, who was one of the speakers at that 1993 symposium, did a thorough job of showing the inconsistencies and inadequacies of the Collective Body View by showing how it fails to solve the documentation problem. That is what pushed me kicking and screaming toward taking a serious look at Russell's rapture view. And my careful trek back through the whole New Testament to identify all the expectations of those saints who remained alive at the Parousia, sealed the deal. If they experienced all those things that they were promised to experience, there is no way they could have been confused or silent about it afterwards.

Rapture -OR- non-occurrence seem to be the only reasonable explanations for their utter silence about the Parousia in the face of all the false teachers and later patristic writers saying that the Parousia was still future. It is simply not credible to wave our magic hyper-spiritualizing wand over the problem and pretend that it is solved in some sorta metaphysical, spiritual, or figurative sense. Our futurist critics are not fooled by that approach. We are only deceiving ourselves. We have got to take the historical documentation problem seriously. We all agree that there were "some" pre-70 saints who "lived and remained until the Parousia" who would have still been alive on earth afterwards if they were not raptured. Why weren't they refuting the heretics and claiming the fulfillment of the Parousia? Their silence in the face of all the false teachers and futurist statements is disturbing and incriminating. If they truly experienced what they were **expecting to experience** at the Parousia, and "knew all things" and saw all things clearly "face to face", then they absolutely KNEW without a shadow of doubt that the Parousia had occurred! They would have been dancing in the streets and proclaiming it from the rooftops. Anything but silent about it. Their failure to document the fulfillment of the Parousia can only mean one of two things: EITHER the Parousia did not happen and their expectations were not fulfilled, OR they were taken out of there so that they were no longer around afterwards to talk about it. It is not the silence of history which refutes the Parousia, but rather the **silence of the saints** to refute the heretics and claim the fulfillments, if they were still on earth after the Parousia. THAT is the real problem facing ALL preterists who reject the rapture solution.

Those pre-70 saints were told in advance by the apostles what they would experience at the Parousia. Their expectations were vivid, intense, and extremely experiential. They were not expecting the Parousia to come and go without them being aware of it, and experiencing it to the max. Paul told them that when the Perfect came, they would "know fully as they had been known," and would "see all things clearly as if face to face." They were told that they would stand in His presence at His Parousia, and not shrink away from Him in shame (like Adam and Eve did), but draw near to Him. They were told that they would glorify Christ on the day of His coming, and marvel at Him in the presence of all who had believed. They were told that their bodies would be changed into immortal bodies at the Parousia. They would be relieved from the persecution and tribulation, and be rewarded for their faithfulness in the presence of Christ at His Parousia. On and on we could go, listing all the dozens of expectations that Jesus and the apostles gave to those first century saints. Did they experience all

those things that were promised to them? If so, why didn't they talk about it afterwards, if they were still around on earth? Even if only one of them was still around, he should have spoken up and set the record straight. Silence in the face of the heretical challenge and the futurist claims, is discrediting to those saints who experienced the Parousia and knew that it had occurred. Their faithfulness and integrity is blown away by their failure to speak up and testify to all that they saw, heard, and experienced at the Parousia. If they were still around on earth after experiencing all those things, their silence totally discredits them. The only excuse they could have for silence is if the Parousia did not occur, or if it did not occur in the experiential way Jesus and the Apostles told them it would occur. But that would discredit Christ and the Apostles for giving them wrong expectations. And if the Parousia did not occur in the extremely experiential way that they were expecting, then they should have been complaining about the non-fulfillment, and labeling Jesus and the Apostles as false prophets and deceivers for giving them false expectations. The only reasonable explanation for their silence, **in view of their intense expectations beforehand**, is that they were taken to heaven to be with Christ, just as Jesus and the Apostles had promised them, and **just as they were expecting**.

[Another email explained how these podcasts have helped him when he said] -- There are specific takeaways from your teachings here on the podcasts that I've found invigorating. The historical backstory is one such arena. I have found each of your studies regarding the **dating of the NT books** rather fascinating and enlightening. You have brought to life some of the exchanges and interplay between NT figures in a coherent, concise manner. And I must admit that, although I was a rather staunch opponent of the rapture view, **I'm now leaning in that direction**. It's quite amazing how easily our presuppositions manipulate the evidence to form conclusions consistent with our paradigm. It's like living in a cage with no door. I've done everything in my power to erase my preconceived ideas before reading Scripture, but it's clearly been an ever-present battle. Since I had been convinced that many Christians, not the least of which the Apostle John, survived the holocaust, the literal rapture view seemed, well, **kind of silly**. Shame on me for not digging deeper to find that there were formidable answers to my legion of objections. I think if someone took the time to read "Expectations Demand a First Century Rapture" and "First Century Events in Chronological Order", AND then listened to your most recent 20 or so podcasts on the dating and authorship of the NT books, they would at the very least **take the literal rapture view seriously and possibly even change their paradigm**. The other part of the equation as I have listened to each lesson, is that the **credibility and authenticity of the Bible** has come to light. Not that I was a prior skeptic, but these lectures have done nothing but **bolster my confidence** in God's Word and His abundant faithfulness. As I continue to read the **plethora of imminent expectations** of the pre-70 believers, I find it **more difficult than ever to spiritualize** those promises. If the promised rescue was merely a **covenantal/spiritual change in cyberspace**, having no specific impact on their dire situation, it almost seems cruel. Like promising to give a sun-scorched man a drink of fresh cold water, yet ultimately saying that the relief you bring is merely a symbolic

empty glass. Though clearly living water is by far the greater eternal gift, short term vindication and relief from the fiery tribulation would be the only refreshment that would satisfy them in their temporal setting.

[ED'S REPLY] The only thing I can say to that is: "AMEN! Preach it, brother!"

[QUESTION-COMMENT] -- Good podcast on "The Elect Were Not Confused at the Parousia." 1 Thess. 5:4, 5 says, "But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness." And 1 Cor. 14:33 says God is not the author of confusion, but peace. So I agree that it is not a good biblical argument for the critics of the rapture to say that the Jewish Christians in the first century were confused, in the dark, and without peace before, during, or after the Parousia. 1 Thess. 5 and 1 Cor. 14 say the opposite.

[ED'S REPLY] -- Great comment. I wish I had thought of those verses when I was preparing my lesson outline! You are exactly right. It reflects adversely on both the prophecies of Jesus and the teaching abilities of the inspired apostles to say that their elect Jewish followers, who remained alive until the Parousia, were totally confused about the nature of the Parousia, and misunderstood it, mis-categorized it, and misplaced their hope into the future. That simply is not a credible explanation for the silence of those Jewish Christians after AD 70. They were silent because they were absent. They were gone, taken to heaven by the angels, at the Parousia. Trying to excuse their silence by saying that they were confused or ignorant, is not only an attack on their faithfulness and intelligence, but on the teaching abilities of the apostles, and the clear predictions of Jesus about what those pre-70 saints should expect to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia. Were their expectations fulfilled? They were crying, "Oh our Lord come!" and "How long oh Lord?" and "Amen, Come Lord Jesus!" They had fixed their hope completely on His Coming, they were waiting anxiously for it, and expecting it soon. Jesus and the apostles had given them the signs, and told them what to look for. They were promised that they would be gathered into His presence, and would be reunited with their fellow saints who had died before the Parousia, where they all together would "glorify Him on that day, and marvel at Him in the presence of all who had believed up to that point" including both the living and dead. Did they see the signs? Were they gathered into His presence along with their departed loved ones? Did they glorify Him on that day, and marvel at Him in the presence of all who had believed, like Apostle Paul said they would? Was Paul mistaken? You see, there are some very serious historical and exegetical problems for critics of the rapture who say that the Parousia was not documented by those pre-70 saints because they were ignorant of the occurrence of the Parousia and confused about it afterwards. It reflects adversely on those saints, on the apostles, and on Jesus Himself. It preserves the integrity of all of them when we realize that their expectations to be raptured were fulfilled.

[Here is another great question and comment from one of our listeners]

"Can we construe that since Polycarp died as a martyr in AD 155, minus his lifespan of 86 years (as he stated in his 'four scores and six years' comment at his martyrdom), that he was born in AD 69? This would mean that he did not become a Christian until sometime after AD 70, after all the apostles were supposedly dead. How do we account for what Irenaeus said that "Polycarp was 'instructed by the apostles... appointed bishop of Smyrna (presumably by the same apostles)? Could it be that Polycarp was just one of those simply professing but not true Christians? Furthermore, why did he not mention the rapture and that he was left behind?"

[ED'S REPLY] Kudos to whoever asked these very perceptive questions. Just the kind of stuff I love to deal with here. If Polycarp was not even born until 69 (three years after the Rapture), obviously he missed the rapture. Irenaeus has been proven wrong on many different points, and this one is no exception. The only apostle that could possibly have been in Asia Minor to appoint Polycarp would have been John, and according to two of the Synoptic gospels (Matt 20 and Mark 10) John was supposed to suffer a martyr's death before the Parousia (most likely in the Neronic persecution, AD 64).

That means Irenaeus must be mistaken on this, probably because he was following earlier corrupted sources (such as Papias or Hegesippus or some of the heretical writers). This is another good example of how convoluted and corrupt our historical information from the late first and early second centuries really is. That is why I am digging into all this so carefully. It is also why I am doing my Masters Thesis on one of the Apostolic Father books. I am determined to get to the bottom of this historical enigma. I want to know who made the mistakes, when they made them, and why. The futurists have been duped by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions that were manufactured by the power-hungry bishops in their churches. Preterist scholars in future generations will bring all this corruption out into the open and expose it to view for all of us to see. If you are a young person and interested in historical theology, I would seriously urge you to make that one of your goals in life. The whole corrupt futurist establishment needs to be exposed and reformed. That is what the Preterist movement is all about -- the next reformation of Christianity -- back to Biblically Correct Christianity.

Your last question was the best one: "Why did Polycarp not mention the rapture and that he was left behind?" As you noted, he was obviously not left behind because he was not even born until three years after the rapture (AD 69). If there was no rapture, then he should have heard about the Parousia from other Christians who experienced it and were still around afterwards. Suggesting that, however, opens the floodgates of questions from all futurists regarding why Polycarp did not mention the PAROUSIA and the RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD and the JUDGMENT OF BOTH THE LIVING AND THE DEAD that also supposedly occurred in AD 70.

You see, ALL of us preterists have a historical problem here, not just the rapture preterists. All of us preterists need to come up with an explanation for this very question:

Why didn't Papias and Polycarp and all the other post-70 Christians know about the occurrence of the Parousia, Resurrection, and Judgment at AD 70?

If any of the pre-70 saints who had seen, heard, and experienced the Parousia were still around after AD 70, why didn't they tell the post-70 saints like Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius about the Parousia? And, if Apostle John was still around (as Irenaeus asserts), then why didn't he speak up and set the record straight with Papias and Polycarp, and tell them that his book of Revelation had been fulfilled, and that the Parousia had occurred?

This is a huge historical problem for ALL preterists. All of us preterist leaders and writers have been sweeping it under the carpet, hoping that no one would notice. Well, the futurists have noticed (e.g., Dr. Charles Hill, et al), and they are stabbing us with it every chance they get. Most of the futurists I interact with every year in our exhibit booth at the Evangelical Theological Society stab me with that question.

Without a rapture of all the pre-70 saints (true Christians, the elect), there is no excuse for those saints to NOT mention the Parousia afterwards to the next generation. Their silence about the Parousia incriminates them. The only valid excuse for their SILENCE would be their ABSENCE (by rapture). Otherwise, we would have to assume (like the futurists) that the Parousia did not occur. *Think about this: If their failure to mention the rapture proves a non-occurrence of the rapture, then their failure to mention the Parousia proves the non-occurrence of the Parousia. Do you catch the power of that?*

Obviously, the reason Polycarp, Papias, Ignatius, Hegesippus, and Justin did not mention the Parousia (Resurrection, Judgment, or Rapture) is because they did NOT KNOW it happened. But how could they NOT have known about the occurrence of the Parousia IF any of the pre-70 saints who experienced it were still around afterwards to talk about it? Do you see the problem here?

It does no good to suggest, as some of our fellow-preterists have, that **the great majority** of Christians were either killed in the Neronic persecution, fell away in the great apostasy, or were confused by Hellenizers. Few of the Jewish saints would have been confused by the Hellenizers, and not all of the Gentile Christians would have been confused either. Furthermore, Jesus and the apostles stated several times that true faithful "elect" Christians would "live and remain" until the Parousia. Jesus said in Matthew 24:24 that the "elect" would not be misled by the false teachers, nor killed in the great tribulation, nor fall away in the apostasy. They would be kept safe until His coming, at which time He would send forth His angels to gather together His faithful, unconfused, and watchful elect ones. Apostle Paul said that not all of the Corinthian saints would die before the Parousia (1 Cor. 15:51), but that those who remained alive would be "changed" and "put on immortality." Paul also said that when the Perfect arrived, the saints would "know all things" and "see face to face" (1 Cor. 12:13), NOT be left in confusion and ignorance! Paul also said that some of the Thessalonians saints would "live and remain" until the Parousia, at which time they would be caught up together with the resurrected saints to meet Christ in the air at His descent from heaven

(1 Thess. 4:15-17; 5:10; 5:23). That means there were **"some"** true elect saints still around at the Parousia who knew what signs to look for, and what they were promised to experience at the Parousia. They must have experienced those things, and their expectations had to be fulfilled, or Jesus and the Apostles are deceivers and false prophets. And if their expectations were fulfilled, and they experienced the Parousia, they would have known that it occurred, and could not have been silent about it afterwards, especially when post-70 Christians started saying it was still future. If Apostle John was still around after AD 70, like some preterists think, then why didn't he speak up and set the record straight when Papias and Polycarp right there in Turkey started saying that the book of Revelation was still future in fulfillment and claiming that they got that teaching from John himself. Why didn't John tell them that his book of Revelation had already been fulfilled?

You see there is a huge problem here for ALL preterists. If there was no rapture, there should have been **"some"** pre-70 Christians still around to testify about what they had just seen, heard, and experienced at the Parousia! Why don't we hear from those folks, IF they were still around? Why didn't Papias, Polycarp, Ignatius, Hegesippus, Justin, and Irenaeus hear about it from those pre-70 saints who were supposedly still around after AD 70? Do you catch the power of that? There is a HUGE problem here for ALL preterists. But the rapture solves it. They were silent about it, because they were gone.

[Our final comment is from one of our long-time listeners] --"Thank you for your most recent podcasts about the rapture. It's a very important issue and critical to moving forward in growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should all be trying to get to the bottom of what was going on during that generation right before AD 70. I think it's very unfortunate that the events surrounding AD 70 are not even discussed in the Sunday or midweek gatherings of the great majority of local churches. If someone is a Preterist, then the Literal Rapture view is the strongest position biblically in my estimation and study. When I asked you how the Church got restarted after the rapture, you gave me your PDF on that. I've read it a few times now, and you've dealt with it in some of your recent podcasts. No matter what position one takes in Eschatology, one thing is for sure: It takes a bit of faith to believe some of these things. But we must always be open to where the evidence leads us. Our Faith should never be blind leaps into the darkness, but steps into just enough light and evidence to make us take another step. I think we should all be much more comfortable in having Faith in a Jesus who was truly concerned with the physical well being of His Church. We should not think it strange that He called true believers home to be with Him in that house with many dwelling places. This explains the silence better than believing our first century brothers and sisters were so weak, fragile and afraid to speak up and clear up the confusion of those post-70 Christians, and that they let the teachings of those confused post-70 Christians triumph during that dark obscure period."

[Ed's Reply] No one could say it better than that! Thanks for that great comment, dear brother!

Well, that is all of the Listener feedback that we have for this session. If any of this has raised questions or provoked comments that you would like to share with me or our fellow-listeners, please do not hesitate to email me. I would love to hear from you. Let me know if there is any of this material that you do not understand, and I will try to clear it up for you. My email address is: preterist1@preterist.org

In coming weeks, we will be looking at a lot of material from Josephus. Fascinating stuff. If you do not have a copy of his book (**Josephus - Complete Works**), this is the time to get it! It is available on our website (www.preterist.org). You will want to read what he has to say about all the signs they saw occurring at that time when the war was just about to break out. I would also recommend getting copies of F. F. Bruce's book (**Israel and the Nations**), and my book (**First Century Events**). This will really help you get a handle on all this history that fulfilled the predictions of all the prophets, apostles, and Jesus. All three of these books are available right there on our website.

Next week we will look at **Gessius Florus**, the Roman procurator in Judea in AD 64-66, and all the things that he did to provoke the Jews to go to war. We will also look at the probable fulfillment of the **Abomination of Desolation**.

If you have not already done so, you might want to bookmark this podcast in your browser, so it will be easy to re-connect next time.

That will do it for this session. Thanks so much for listening.

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There are a lot of great supplementary articles posted on our website,
plus books and audio/video media for purchase. Go there and browse all you want.
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If you would like a couple of great books which detail all of these events, I would highly recommend **ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS** by F. F. Bruce, and my book, **First Century Events**, which deals with the Roman, Jewish, and Christian events of the first century. We are using both of these resources here in our studies. You can purchase both of them from our website: www.preterist.org

Some further recommended reading:

The Complete Works of Josephus (Antiquities and Wars), which is also available from our website: www.preterist.org