

Expectations of a Change

Resurrection Series (Part 9)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Oct 13, 2013

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Thanks for joining us here for another study of the Resurrection from a full preterist perspective.
- B. Last time we looked at the Greek word EGEIRO and how the Present Passive form of it should be properly translated as it is used in the context of 1 Cor 15. We noticed that it can indeed be translated with a progressive sense (“the dead are being raised”), but that it does not have to be translated that way, nor does it have to refer to a gradual process of change for a collective body during the transition period from AD 30-70. It can just as easily be understood as a process or series of individual resurrection events going on during the transition period. The Present Passive form of EGEIRO could also just as reasonably be translated as a Gnostic Present (“the dead do rise”) or as a Futuristic Present (“the dead are to be raised”). So the insistence of William Bell and other Collective Body advocates, that it can only be understood as a process of change for a collective body, is mistaken. The Collective Body advocates cannot allow any other meanings for the Present Passive form of EGEIRO as it is used here in 1 Cor 15, since that would not harmonize consistently with Max King's paradigm of dying-rising reciprocity and transformation-change of the collective body during the transition period.
- C. This session we will be looking at the expectations of the pre-70 saints, especially in regard to their hope of being transformed or changed to be like Christ when they saw Him appear at the Parousia.
- D. Before we get into that study, let's ask our Heavenly Father for His blessing --
Our Deliverer and Savior – the Holy One who formed us in our mothers' womb, and guided us all our lives down Your Narrow Pathway, we praise your Wonderful and Awesome works that you have displayed throughout the heavens above and here on earth. We are truth-seekers. We love your truth. We are here with *expectant hearts*. May Your Spirit illuminate us with a much better understanding of your Holy Word. Give us the wisdom to recognize truth when it is expounded accurately from Your Word, and the courage to follow it wherever it leads, no matter what it costs. It is in the Glorious Name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question I want all of us to carefully ponder: How could all of those pre-70 Christians who were so intensely longing for Christ's return, suffering in the tribulation, and crying "How long, O Lord?" and "Marana-tha" (Oh, our Lord, come!), experience that vindication and relief in AD 70, and then walk away in silence forever afterwards?

Futurist critics bring this problem into sharper focus when they ask: "How could pre-70 saints who had consistently been taught that the fulfillments would happen in their lifetime and would occur in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem, suddenly after AD 70 forget all about it and go their merry way as if it was no big deal? Why don't we either hear bitter complaints about the non-occurrence, or their ecstatic and euphoric claims of fulfillment? Ho-hum complacency, ignorance, silence, or confusion after the occurrence or non-occurrence of such significant events is incomprehensible." The second and third century church fathers discuss in detail a lot of other matters which are of much less significance. Why did they totally ignore the most important issues like the consummation of our redemption? The parousia, resurrection, and judgment should be at the top of their discussion list, especially if those three big events actually occurred, and they experienced their fulfillment!

Of course, all this presupposes that the parousia, resurrection and judgment were of such a visible and experiential NATURE that they could not be missed by the true Christians. Did not the faithful saints in the pre-70 Church expect to see and experience those events? Did not Jesus and the apostles tell them that they would see those things and experience them? Were not Jesus and the apostles responsible for creating those expectations in the minds of the pre-70 saints?

So, what WERE their expectations? What did Jesus and the Apostles promise those saints that they would see, hear, and experience at the return of Christ? We need to know exactly what those expectations were, and whether or not those expectations were ever fulfilled.

For instance, in Paul's two epistles to the Thessalonians, all the commentaries point out that Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian saints that they could **expect to see, hear, and experience** some very wonderful and amazing things at the Parousia! And it was not just the Thessalonian saints. Other churches also, such as Corinth, Philippi, Rome, Ephesus, and the churches in Turkey, were given similar vivid expectations. Let's look at some of these.

What Did They EXPECT to EXPERIENCE at the Parousia?

Note that I am not going to cover all the material on the expectation statements in this podcast. There is way too much. I will only give a brief survey of some of their major expectations. The rest of the material about their full expectations is in the Appendix at the end of the PDF.

1. Jesus gave them **lots of signs** to look for, which would let them know when the End was getting near. They were expecting to literally “see” those signs with their physical eyes, not with their spiritual eyes. Jesus told them to look up when they saw those signs, because **their redemption was drawing near** (Lk 21:28). What was this redemption that they would receive from Christ when He came at the Parousia? Did they get that redemption? Did they know they got it? Did it change their life in any way? How did they experience that redemption afterwards? If it was only a spiritual or covenantal change, why were they told to look up in the sky when they saw the signs of the near-approaching End? If it was only a spiritual change inside them, or a change of covenantal status, what was the purpose of looking up into the sky for it?
2. Some of the Jewish saints in **Palestine** sold their possessions, while others abstained from marriage and abandoned the pursuit of their otherwise normal economic activities. They fled the country when the armies approached. They preached the gospel in the midst of overwhelming persecution and tribulation, frantically trying to rescue their families and friends before the End, with the hope and the promise of being **relieved** after a brief but intense period of tribulation, **rescued** before the wrath was poured out, and **rewarded** in the presence of Christ at His Coming. Did they get that relief from the tribulation? Were they rescued out of there before the wrath was poured out upon the unbelieving Jews? Did they receive those rewards that they were promised to receive at the Parousia? Did they know they got those things? Did they experience them in any cognitive way?
3. Jesus promised them that "some of them" would remain alive until the Parousia (Matt 16:27-28). Jesus made it abundantly clear (Matt 24:9-13 and 24:21-24) that not all of the elect would be killed in the Neronic persecution or fall away in the great apostasy. Some of the elect would remain alive and remain faithful until His return (Matt 24:22), at which time He promised to send forth His angels and gather together the living and remaining elect ones to Himself (Matt 24:31). There were many saints and churches in **Palestine**, and Jesus had promised that they would not run out of cities in **Palestine** to which they might flee for refuge before the End arrived (Matt 10:23). Jesus would provide a way of escape for His elect ones, so that they would remain alive and faithful until His return. It is clear from what Jesus says about these elect ones that they were not deceived by the false teachers, but had a clear understanding of the truth to the very end (Matt 24:23-27). They did not fall away into Gnostic, Hellenistic, or Judaizing error.

4. Jesus promised that "some of them" would not taste death before they saw the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with His angels to gather His living and remaining elect ones (Matt 16:27-28; 24:30-31). Question: Did those living and remaining elect ones literally "see" Him return in the sky with His angels? Did they "look up" into the sky to see the angels coming for them (Lk 21:28)? Were they gathered up by the angels and taken to be with Christ as Jesus had promised? Did they experience that angelic gathering? Were they still left on earth afterwards?

5. **1 John 2:28 and 3:2** is another example of the expectations the apostles gave to the Church. John clearly says that those who were true "children of God" would definitely see Christ at His parousia and become like Him. This is not apocalyptic language. There is a very real expectation here. Some of the saints to whom John was writing would remain alive at the time of the Parousia. He tells them not to shrink away from Christ when He appeared, but rather draw near to Him. How could they either shrink away or draw near to Him if they didn't even **see** Christ **appear** at the Parousia? And why does John even use the word "appear" here if the saints would not even see Him appear? John says they would see Christ "appear" at His Parousia and would be changed **to be like Him**. Did they **see Him** when He appeared? Did they **become like Him**? Did they remain on earth afterwards? If so, why didn't they tell anyone about what they saw and experienced? Why didn't any of the post-70 Christians mention **seeing** this **appearance** of Christ and their change "**to be like Him**"?

6. Here is what the Apostle Paul told the **Thessalonian** saints who were being heavily persecuted by the unbelieving Jews there in Thessalonica:

2 Thess 1:6-10 -- "For after all it is only just for God to **repay with affliction** those who afflict you, and to **give relief to you** who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be **revealed** from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will **pay the penalty** of eternal destruction, **away from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be **glorified in His saints on that day**, and to be **marveled at among all who have believed** -- for our testimony to you was believed."

Notice what Paul promises to the Thessalonians. Their Jewish persecutors would be repaid with affliction at the parousia, when Christ would come from heaven in flaming fire to destroy them. Question: Did the Jews experience that destruction in a tangible and visible way? Did they see it and know it occurred? Or was it merely some kind of "spiritualized" fulfillment that was not recognizable by the physical or mental senses? Why wouldn't the first century saints expect their "**relief**" from this tribulation to be just as visible and experiential as the destruction was upon the persecuting Jews? What did Paul mean when he said that the Lord Jesus would be "**revealed**" from heaven with His mighty angels, if in fact they never literally saw Him unveiled in the sky above? Why did Paul use the word "revealed" if no one actually saw Christ revealed? Wouldn't that be a little bit misleading?

Furthermore, notice what else Paul says would happen at the parousia. When Jesus was “revealed” at His parousia, He would be “**glorified**” in His saints on that day, and “**be marveled at** among all who have believed.” Question: Where is the record of this ever happening? Did it actually occur? Was it documented? Why not? Paul says they would not only see Him “revealed” at His return (a Theophany), but would “marvel at Him” in the company of all other true believers (living and dead). Did they cognitively experience that? We know it was going to happen to physically alive people since Paul says it will occur at His parousia when He gave **relief** to them and all others who were alive and suffering in the tribulation at that time. Did they glorify Christ on that day? Did they marvel at Him in the presence of all who had believed? Why don’t we have those folks after AD 70 telling the story about how **glorious** it was to be in His presence and **marvel at His majesty**? Why were those Thessalonian saints, who supposedly saw and experienced all this, so silent afterwards? They should have been dancing in the streets! If they were still around on earth after seeing the parousia and marveling at Christ in His presence, how could they do anything but talk about it afterwards? How could they sit there silently when they heard Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius teach that the Parousia was still future? Why didn’t they speak up and set the record straight? Do you catch the power of that?

7. Paul also told the **Thessalonians** that some of them would “live and remain” until the Parousia, at which time the dead would be raised and the living saints would be reunited with and caught up together with those resurrected saints to be with Christ forever afterwards (1 Thess 4:13-17). Did those “living and remaining saints” at Thessalonica get that reunion with their departed loved ones at the Parousia? Were they caught up together with their departed loved ones to meet Christ in the air above, where they would remain with Him forever afterwards? How did they experience that event? Were they cognitively aware that they were caught up to be with Christ? Did they really experience that reunion with their dead saints? Were they still on earth afterwards? If so, why didn’t they talk about it to the next generation of Christians?
8. Paul told the **Philippians** that each of them who would still be alive at the time of the Parousia would have their lowly fleshly bodies transformed (or changed) to be like Christ’s glorious body. Question: Did they experience that bodily change in a cognitive way? Were their fleshly mortal bodies actually changed into immortal bodies like Christ has? If so, did they have both kinds of bodies at the same time? Or did they only have their immortal bodies after the change? Were they still left on earth after that bodily change?
9. Paul told the **Corinthians** that not all of them would die before the Parousia, and that those who remained alive at the time of the Parousia would be CHANGED (1 Cor 15:51-52). The dead would be RAISED out of Hades at the Parousia, but the living and remaining saints would be CHANGED. Do you see the difference? The dead were raised, but the living were changed. What was this CHANGE of the living saints?

Keep in mind that there are several churches represented here, who would each have some of their members still alive at the time of the Parousia. It is true that the Neronic Persecution and the Great Apostasy eliminated the great majority of true Christians before the Parousia. But it did not eliminate all of them. These expectation statements given to all these churches indicate that there would still be a significant number of true elect saints left alive on earth after the Great Apostasy and Great Tribulation and at the time of the Parousia, at least in those particular cities and regions that we mentioned here (Thessalonica, Philippi, Corinth, Judea to whom Jesus spoke, and the seven churches in Turkey to whom John evidently wrote). If there were only two saints left alive in each of those eleven churches at the time of the Parousia, that would be 22 living saints at the time of the Parousia. But these scriptures imply several more churches and cities and living saints than that (perhaps hundreds of saints still alive at the time of the Parousia). If they were not raptured out of there, they would still have been around on earth after the Parousia, and would have been able to testify about all that they saw, heard, and experienced at the Parousia. But obviously they never spoke up and set the record straight, not even when Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius started teaching that the Parousia was still future? Why didn't they speak up? Were they silent because they were absent? Do you catch the power of that?

But what was this "change of the living" that Paul promised to all the saints who would remain alive at the time of the Parousia?

What Was the CHANGE and How Do We Explain It?

Within the Preterist Movement, there are at least three different explanations of the CHANGE that Paul mentioned here in 1 Cor 15:51-54 --

1. **CBV** - ongoing process of transformation of the collective body during the transition period before AD 70, with the completion of that change at the Parousia
2. **IBV (non-rapture)** - it was a spiritual change only, with no bodily affect - it was a change in the status of their souls, or in their access to the fully arrived kingdom and presence of God.
3. **IBV (rapture)** - an individual bodily change at the Parousia for each of the individual living saints. Their individual mortal bodies were changed from mortal to immortal.

Here in this study we are arguing for **the third of those concepts**: an individual bodily change for each of the living saints at the Parousia.

There are **four biblical texts** which promise a CHANGE or TRANSFORMATION of the saints at the time of the Parousia (1 Cor 15:51-54, 2 Cor 5:1-4, Phil 3:21, and 1 Jn 3:2). We need to briefly look at all four of them to get a well-rounded understanding of what this change was all about. We will see from our study of those four texts that the CHANGE had the following four characteristics:

1. The change was a **BODILY** change
2. The change was for the **LIVING SAINTS ONLY** (not for the dead saints)
3. The change was to the bodies of **INDIVIDUAL** saints, not to a collective body
4. The change occurred only **AT THE PAROUSIA**, not before or afterwards

Philippians 3:21

In a previous session we looked at Phil 3:21 and showed how the phrase “transform our lowly body” there is referring to each of the living saints having their own individual bodily transformation at the Parousia, and not at all talking about one big collective body being transformed. This text provides some important details for our study of the bodily change which are not as clearly expressed in the other three texts. That is why we look at the clearer text first, and then use it to help us understand the less clear texts.

Phil. 3:20-21 (20) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also **eagerly wait for the Savior**, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who **will transform** our lowly **body** that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. [NKJV]

Notice the time indicator in verse 20, where it says that they were eagerly awaiting the return of Christ from heaven, at which time He would transform their lowly human mortal bodies to be like His glorious, immortal, incorruptible, spiritual, heavenly body. This was definitely something that those living saints there in Philippi were expecting to happen to them at the Parousia. This text provides all four of the characteristics of CHANGE that we listed above: (1) The change was **bodily**, (2) It would obviously happen to **living saints** who were still in their bodies at the time of the Parousia, (3) It was a transformation of **individual bodies**, and (4) It occurred **at the Parousia** only (not before or afterwards).

It is important to notice all four of these characteristics here in this text, since those who take the Collective Body approach believe that the transformation or change of the collective body was already underway at the time Paul wrote this in AD 63. But that will not work with the future tense that is used here in regard to the transformation: "...who WILL transform" NOT "is already transforming"! This bodily transformation was supposed to occur at the Parousia. And it was a transformation of their physical bodies, NOT a covenantal change, positional change, or spiritual status change of the souls or spirits of the saints. Thus, this one text pretty much invalidates both of the other preterist interpretations of this text. It knocks out the idea of a collective body already in a state of transition, and it shows that the transformation was not just a spiritual status change like the non-rapture IBV is suggesting.

1 John 3:2-3

Notice what Apostle John had to say about some kind of change at the Parousia:

1John 3:2-3 (2) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. [NKJV]

Notice that John includes himself in the "we" who are children of God, and speaks of their individuality in verse 3 by saying "everyone" and "himself." Each of these individuals would "see" Jesus at His Parousia (1 Jn 2:28) and would be changed to "be like Him." Notice also that John uses two "sight" words here: "see Him as He is" and "when He is revealed." Why does John use the word "revealed" if no one was going to "see" Him at His coming? This implies a visible return of Christ, at least visible to the saints. And notice the exhortation to moral and ethical purity in verse 3, which is based on their "hope" of seeing Christ at the Parousia and becoming like Him.

Here again we see at least three of the characteristics mentioned or implied in this text, and maybe all four: (1) The change was implied to be **bodily** when he says "what we shall be" and "we shall be like Him" and "we shall see Him as He is" (2) It would obviously happen to **living saints** who were still in their bodies at the time of the Parousia and would therefore be able to see Christ when He appeared, (3) It was a transformation of **individual bodies** since John refers to "everyone" and "himself" in verse 3, and (4) It occurred **at the Parousia** only (not before or afterwards).

1 Cor 15:51-54 and 2 Cor 5:1-4

The previous two texts were clearer and easier to understand. They will help us grasp the concept of bodily change that is being discussed here in Paul's two epistles to the Corinthians. I have added my comments in brackets for clarification of how I interpret these verses. Let's compare 1 Cor. 15:50-54 with 2 Cor. 5:1-4 --

1Cor. 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT the kingdom of God; nor does the PERISHABLE INHERIT THE IMPERISHABLE.

1Cor. 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be CHANGED,

1Cor. 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and THE DEAD ONES [in Hades] will be RAISED [out of Hades] IMPERISHABLE, and we [the living and remaining ones] will be CHANGED.

1Cor. 15:53 For this perishable must PUT ON the imperishable, and this mortal must PUT ON immortality.

1Cor. 15:54 But when this perishable will have PUT ON the imperishable, and this mortal will have PUT ON immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

2Cor. 5:1 ¶ For we know that if the EARTHLY TENT [physical body] which is our house is torn down, we have a BUILDING [new body] from God, a HOUSE [new body] not made with hands [i.e., not physical], eternal in the heavens [perfectly suited to life in the spiritual realm].

2Cor. 5:2 For indeed in this [body] we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven [our new spiritual body],

2Cor. 5:3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found NAKED [disembodied waiting for the resurrection and the reception of their new bodies].

2Cor. 5:4 For indeed while we are in THIS TENT [physical body], we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be UNCLOTHED [i.e., we do not want to be disembodied by physical death] but to be CLOTHED UPON [i.e., have a new body put on over the top of the old body], so that what is MORTAL [the old mortal body] will be SWALLOWED UP by life [getting the new bodies without having to experience disembodiment of the old ones].

Here again we see all four of those characteristics either explicitly stated or implied: (1) There is definitely a BODILY change involved here; (2) The change was for living saints only, since it explicitly states that the dead saints were raised (not changed); (3) The change was to the bodies of individual living saints, since Paul verbally points to his own individual body when he says "THIS perishable [body]" and "THIS mortal [body]" in verses 53-54; and (4) The change occurred at the Parousia, not before or afterwards, since Paul says that the resurrection of the dead and the change of the living would both occur "in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet" which was at the Parousia. It was an instantaneous change at the Parousia, not some long-drawn out process during the transition period beforehand, nor in the post-70 period after the Parousia.

Having all four of these characteristics stated or implied in all four of these texts deals a deathblow to any view which tries to interpret it as a collective body change, or a process of change that was already going on before the Parousia, or a mere spiritual, positional, covenantal or status change at the Parousia, or a bodily exchange years later after the Parousia as each of those individual saints physically died and traded in their physical bodies for a new immortal body. None of those ideas will work in any of these four texts.

Furthermore, we need to see the contrast in both of these texts (1 Cor 15 and 2 Cor 5) between those who have already died versus those who live and remain until the Parousia. *Jesus is both the RESURRECTION [for the dead ones in Hades] and THE LIFE [for those who "live and remain until the Parousia"]*. The dead ones in Hades were raised out of Hades and given their new immortal bodies, while the "living and remaining ones" had immortality "put on over" their old mortal bodies without experiencing death or disembodiment, so that the mortality of their old bodies was "swallowed up" or "changed." Their old mortal bodies were **changed** into immortal bodies without ever having to experience death and disembodiment. That is a profound idea to try to wrap our minds around, but nevertheless it is exactly what Paul is describing here in this context.

Notice in 2 Cor. 5:4 that Paul shudders at the thought of physical death and disembodiment (“nakedness” of the soul) and prefers not to have to go through that “nakedness,” but rather to be one of those who remains until the Parousia when Christ will put their new bodies on over the top of their old ones without having to experience the disembodiment of physical death. An amazing concept!

Those who “live and remain until the Parousia “do not die” (experience physical death and disembodiment or “nakedness”), but rather have their new bodies “clothed upon” them so that their “mortality” (subjection to death and Hades) is swallowed up (consumed, eliminated) by the new immortal bodies that Christ “puts on” them (or clothes them with) at the Parousia.

Now we can easily see how this “change” of bodies (without experiencing the disembodiment of physical death) fits the rapture idea perfectly. Those who “lived and remained until the Parousia” (1 Thess. 4:15-17) would not have to experience physical death because their bodies would be “changed” right after the dead ones were raised out of Hades and given their new immortal bodies, then both groups, the resurrected dead and the “changed” living saints, would be “caught up together” as one group to meet the Lord. My book, *Expectations Demand a First Century Rapture*, has a lengthy section in the back which provides a phrase-by-phrase exegesis of the 1 Thess. 4:13-17 rapture text. I would encourage everyone here to get that book and read it carefully. It will open your eyes to the most wonderful blessings which those “living and remaining” saints experienced at the Parousia. It will truly bless your socks off when you grasp what Paul is saying there. And it will open up all the resurrection texts to your understanding in ways that you never dreamed possible.

I have also extracted my explanation of 1 Thess. 4:13-17 from the book and put it in a separate PDF, which is available by email request. Simply ask for the PDF entitled, “1 Thess. 4 explanation.”

We covered a lot of concepts here in this session about the bodily change that the living saints were expecting to experience at the Parousia. I suspect that some of this is new to some of our listeners, so do not hesitate emailing me with your questions and comments. Don't forget to look at all the material in the Appendix about the expectations of the pre-70 Christians. That will reinforce all the things we had to say about what those living saints were expecting to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia. It was not going to be a *non-experiential* or *non-cognitive event*. They were going to see Christ at His coming and be changed to be like Him, and then snatched away to be with Him forever afterwards. That was the ultimate experience for any saint! Far better than the non-experienced and non-cognitive mere metaphysical or figurative change that some of the other preterist teachers are suggesting.

Well, I hope that helped all of us get a better handle on the concept of change that Paul is talking about here in 1 Cor 15. If not, be sure to email me with your questions. That will wrap it up for this time. Thank you for listening.

Recommended Books

All three of these may be obtained from *International Preterist Association* by calling our toll-free order line (888-257-7023), or by ordering on our secure website (www.preterist.org).

1. *Taken To Heaven in AD 70 . . . blessings expected at the Parousia*—by Ian D. Harding
2. *The Parousia, A Critical Inquiry Into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*—by James Stuart Russell
3. *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture*—by Edward E. Stevens

There is a detailed, phrase-by-phrase analysis of the primary rapture text (1 Thess 4:15-17) in my book, *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture*. We urge you to get that book and read the section on pages 91-134, to see how we interpret that text. If you are unable to get the book, but wish to read its explanation of 1 Thessalonians 4, please email me (preterist1@preterist.org) requesting the PDF version, and I will send it as an email attachment. The PDF file is labeled, "1 Thess. 4 explanation."

Appendix A -- Expectations of the Living Saints

What Did They EXPECT to EXPERIENCE at the Parousia?

Some of the Jewish saints in Palestine sold their possessions, while others abstained from marriage and the pursuit of some of their otherwise normal economic activities. They fled the country when the armies approached. They preached the gospel in the midst of overwhelming persecution and tribulation, frantically trying to rescue their families and friends before the End, with the hope and the promise of being relieved after the tribulation, rescued before the wrath was poured out, and rewarded in the presence of Christ at His Coming.

Did these Christians really have expectations of a real, historical, visible relief and reward that they knew they would absolutely see and experience without fail at the Parousia?

What scriptures reveal these expectations of the pre-AD 70 saints? Here are some key texts documenting their expectations. Please study every one of them in their context:

1. Some of them would definitely live to see and experience the big three events – Mat. 16:28; 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:18; Jude 21; and Rev. 2:25.
2. They were “eagerly waiting” and longing for His return – 1 Cor. 16:22; Phil. 3:20f; Heb. 9:28; Jude 1:21; 1 Thess. 1:10; Rom. 8:18-25; 2 Cor. 5:2; Mat. 9:15; Lk. 12:35-40; 1 Cor. 1:7; 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:13; Rev. 6:10. Was that longing fulfilled? Could they keep silent about it after being pumped up so much beforehand?
3. They were promised “rescue,” “relief” and “reward” – Lk. 21:36; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:13-14; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:4-9, 13; 5:4; Rev. 11:18; 2 Jn. 1:8; Heb. 10:35; Lk. 21:34-36; Rom. 8:17-25; and Rev. 3:10. Did they get the relief? Did they know they got it? Did they see it and experience it?
4. They would actually know about it, and “see” Him “revealed,” meet with him at his coming, and “marvel at Him” and “glorify Him” and have “great joy” in His presence at His return – 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 1 Pet. 1:7,13; 2:12; 4:13; 5:1; 2 Pet. 3:12ff; Jude 1:24; Mat. 25:1,6,21,23; Eph. 5:11-14; Phil. 2:16; 1 Jn. 2:28 and 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:17; 1 Thess. 2:19; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 13:12; Rom. 8:18-25 (“about to be revealed”). Did they see and experience it?

They were expecting to “**enter** into” the kingdom, or “**inherit**” the kingdom, or be “**gathered** into” the kingdom at the Parousia. Could they “inherit” the kingdom, “enter” into it, or be “gathered” into it at the Parousia without being cognitively aware of it?

They were promised that they would be brought before Christ in His Presence at His Parousia. Look at all the statements where Paul mentions their being "**presented**" to Him and before Him at His coming. Did they **see Him** when they were presented before Him? Did they know that they were presented to Christ? Did they experience that in any cognitive way? How? Why does Paul even bother to use this kind of experiential language if they were not actually going to experience those things, or even know that they happened in the unseen realm?

5. Texts which promise a "catching up," "gathering," "reception," "upward call," "change," "transformation," "rescue, relief, reward," or "standing in His presence."

Expectation statements!

Mat. 24:31 - "*gather* together His elect"

Mat. 25:6-10 - "...*meet* him...*went in* with him...door was shut"

Lk. 21:36 - "*escape* all these things...and to stand before the Son of Man"

John 14:3 - "*receive* you to Myself...where I am, you may be also"

1 Cor. 15:51-52 - "we will all be *changed*"

2 Cor. 4:14 - "raise us also with Jesus and will *present us with you*"

Phil. 3:14 - "the prize of the *upward call*"

Phil. 3:21 - "*transform* our lowly bodies...like His glorious body" (NIV)

1 Thess. 1:10 - "*rescues* us from the wrath to come"

1 Thess. 2:19 - "our joy...*in the presence*...at His parousia"

1 Thess. 4:17 - "*caught up* together with them...in the clouds...in the air"

2 Thess. 1:7-10 - "*relief* to you...and to us...when He comes...to be *marveled at*"

2 Thess. 2:1 - "our *gathering together* to Him"

6. Strong moral and ethical exhortations connected with their intense expectations of "seeing" and experiencing the big three events – 1 Pet. 1:13, 2:12, 4:13, 5:1, 5:4; and Rev. 2:25. What happens to their strong motivation before AD 70 if they didn't really expect to see it, and after AD 70 if they never saw it?

7. The sleepers and foolish (unbelievers) would either fail to recognize the time of His visitation, or be killed before they could say anything about what they saw and experienced – Rev. 3:3; Mat. 24:43 (and parallels); 25:10-13; Lk. 21:34-36; cf. 1 Thess. 5:2-4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15; Mat. 13:19.

Were not these expectations given to these first century saints by Jesus and the apostles? If so, then they had to experience those things, or the credibility of the whole Christian faith goes down the drain. Their whole moral and ethical motivation vaporizes if their expectation of seeing these things was not realized. But if these big three events were seen and experienced, how could they remain silent about it and walk away never to mention it again? These are extremely valid questions that demand serious answers.

Strangely enough, we don't have a single record of either the complaint against the non-fulfillment, nor their celebration of the fulfillment. We simply have a "deafening" silence. This is a "documentation problem" for the whole Preterist movement, regardless

of what we believe about the rapture. The silence we are talking about here is regarding the big three events (parousia, resurrection, and judgment), not about the rapture. We will deal with the reasons for the silence about the rapture in a separate section below. Right now we want to focus on the silence about the occurrence of the big three events.

Significant Expectation Statements:

Unless we grasp how much the pre-AD 70 Church was expecting to see and experience when the parousia arrived, we will not understand the problem of their silence after AD 70. So let us take a closer look at some of the texts cited above. How explicit were the apostles in pumping up the expectations of the pre-AD 70 saints? What did the apostles say they would see and experience at the parousia? Here's just one of the many examples of this:

2 Thess 1:6-10 -- "For after all it is only just for God to **repay with affliction** those who afflict you, and to **give relief to you** who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be **revealed** from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will **pay the penalty** of eternal destruction, **away from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be **glorified in His saints on that day**, and to be **marveled at among all who have believed**-for our testimony to you was believed."

Notice what Paul promises to the Thessalonians. Their Jewish persecutors would be repaid with affliction at the parousia, when Christ would come from heaven in flaming fire to destroy them. Question: Did the Jews experience that destruction in a tangible and visible way? Did they see it and know it occurred? Or was it merely some kind of "spiritualized" fulfillment that was not recognizable by the physical or mental senses? Why wouldn't the first century saints expect their "relief" from this tribulation to be seen and experienced in a real and tangible way as well?

Notice what else Paul says would happen at the parousia. When Jesus was "revealed" (implying they would see Him "unveiled") at His coming/parousia, He would be "glorified" by His saints on that day, and "marveled at among all who have believed." Question: Where is the record of this happening? Did it actually occur? Was it documented? Why not? Paul says they would not only see Him "revealed" at His return (a Theophany), but would "marvel at Him" in the company of all other true believers. We know it was going to happen to physically alive people since Paul says it will occur at His parousia when He gives relief to them and all others who were alive and suffering in the tribulation at that time. When and where did this happen? How did it happen? Why don't we have those folks after AD 70 telling the story about how glorious it was to be in His presence and marvel at His majesty? Why are these folks, who supposedly were going to see this marvelous vindication and relief, so silent afterwards? They should have been dancing in the streets! If they were still around on earth after seeing the parousia and marveling at Christ in His presence, how could they do anything but talk

about it afterwards? How could they sit there silently when they heard Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius teach that the Parousia was still future? Why didn't they speak up and set the record straight?

Their silence speaks volumes, especially since a few verses later (2 Thess. 2:1) Paul mentions their "gathering together to Him" at His parousia. If this isn't a promise of a rapture, what else can we make of it? The silence about Christ's parousia from folks who were definitely promised to see it and experience it is very significant! Either those folks in the first century saw it and were raptured immediately to be with Christ, or they did not see it at all and were so embarrassed or disillusioned about the non-fulfillment that they went away quietly and never spoke of it again.

But this second option is not really a valid option for Preterists, since Paul states emphatically that when Christ comes, His saints will see it, and they will be vindicated and rewarded by it, and will marvel at Christ in the company of all the other believing saints. It becomes impossible to account for their silence afterwards unless they were removed from the scene by a literal rapture. And that is exactly what Paul alludes to three verses later (2 Thess. 2:1) when he reminds them about the "gathering to Him" at His parousia. How would the Thessalonians have understood this in view of Paul's teaching in the first letter (1 Thess. 4) about it? What would their expectations have been?

Can you imagine how they would have felt immediately after AD 70 if they had not witnessed Christ's parousia, nor marveled at Him in His coming, nor been "gathered" to Him in any real, tangible sense? Disillusionment is not the word for it. Outrage or indignation would be more like it. They would have been screaming "foul" at the non-fulfillment, or critical of the false expectations they had been given by Paul! Why don't we hear some complaints after AD 70? Why are they so silent? Were they not "gathered to Him" just like Paul promised? Was that not the time when their old bodies would be "changed" (1 Cor. 15:51), or "transformed" (Phil. 3:21) to be like Christ's glorious immortal body, just like John also said it would be (1 Jn. 3:2)? Were they changed at the parousia to "be like Him" and then taken to be with Him in the invisible spiritual realm where they remained forever afterwards? That is the most reasonable explanation of the silence.

1 John 2:28 and 3:2 is another example of the expectations the apostles gave to the Church. John clearly says that those who were true "children of God" would definitely see Christ at His parousia and become like Him. This is not apocalyptic language. There is a very real expectation here. Some of the saints to whom John was writing would remain alive at the time of the Parousia. He tells them not to shrink away from Christ when He appeared, but rather draw near to Him. How could they either shrink away or draw near to Him if they didn't even **see** Christ **appear** at the Parousia? And why does John even use the word "appear" here if the saints would not even see Him appear? John says they would see Christ "appear" at His Parousia and would be changed **to be like Him**. Did they **see Him** when He appeared? Did they **become like Him**? Did they remain on earth afterwards? If so, why didn't they tell anyone about what

they saw and experienced? Why didn't any of the post-70 Christians mention **seeing** this **appearance** of Christ and their change "**to be like Him**"?

John claimed they would see Him at His coming, and that they would know it when He came. Who can believe that John was still around after AD 70 and knew that the parousia had happened, and that his book of Revelation had been fulfilled, but refused to say anything about the fulfillments that he knew had occurred? Even if they were fulfilled in a "spiritual-only" way he should still have at least explained that much of it, if he was still around. He would at least claim a past fulfillment for the parousia. But we don't even have a record of that! We have nothing from any of those apostolic men or their traveling companions about any kind of fulfillments at AD 70. They all could NOT have been killed in the persecution, including Timothy, Titus, Luke, Apollos, Silas, Priscilla, Aquila, Gaius, Aristarchus, and many others. Did all these leaders fail to perceive the fulfillments in spite of the fact they were promised to see and experience them? Why weren't they complaining about the non-fulfillment or non-experience of their expectations? Or were they simply raptured to be with Christ?

Besides the 1 Thess. 4 text which clearly teaches a "catching up" of the living and remaining saints at the Parousia, there are other texts which either assert or imply a rapture. Here's another example - John 14:3.

John 14:3 -- "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, **there** you may be also."

Notice that Jesus promises to return to them after He has prepared a place for them in the heavenly realm (John 14:1-3). He says He will come back and "receive [them] to Himself," so that where He is (in heaven), they would be also. Mat. 16:27-28 leaves the possibility open that some of the twelve apostles might still be alive at Christ's return ("some of those standing here"). Mat. 19:28 says that "in the regeneration" (after the resurrection at the Parousia) all twelve of them would be seated on thrones with Christ and judge the twelve tribes. Notice that it says all twelve of them, not just the ones who had already died by that time. This implies that any of the apostles who were still alive at the parousia would be "caught up" or "received unto" Christ at the Parousia to sit on the twelve thrones alongside Christ and the other resurrected apostles.

This sounds like the same thing Paul was talking about in 1 Thess. 4? From whom did Paul claim to get these ideas? Was it not from Jesus Himself? (see 1 Thess. 4:15 "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord"). Compare this with John 14:3 ("receive you to myself") and Matt 24:31 ("gather together the elect").

If Jesus didn't come back and "receive the living and remaining ones to Himself" then there were not twelve occupied thrones in the period (AD 66-70) when Christ was "present" in His parousia judging the twelve tribes for their covenantal unfaithfulness. John 14:3 (along with Mat. 19:28; John 21:22f and Mat. 16:27f) forces the issue on this.

There is a real thorny "documentation problem" here. If you had been one of the

twelve apostles who lived and remained until the parousia, how would you feel afterwards? You knew His parousia occurred, yet you were not taken to heaven where He is, nor seated on a throne at His side, nor riding the heavens with Him as He and His angels judged the twelve tribes and avenged the blood of His saints for that three and a half years of His “visitation” (parousia)? Would you be scratching your head wondering what happened? “Where is the promise of my reception into heaven, and my sitting on a throne at Christ’s side, and my judging the twelve tribes? My eyes are not seeing what my ears have heard promised.” Do you catch the power of that?

It was awareness of such an “about to come” “terrifying expectation of judgment” against the Jewish nation, and an exceedingly greater glory that was about to be revealed to the saints (Rom. 8:18), that drove apostle Paul in his missionary zeal to save some of them before the End. “Knowing therefore the **terror** of the Lord [that awaits the unbelieving Jews] we persuade men.” (2 Cor. 5:11) But that was not his only motivation, nor even his greatest incentive. He also knew that the faithful “sanctified” true Christians would be rewarded with an “upward call” (Phil. 3:14) in which their bodies would be “changed” (1 Cor. 15:51; 2 Cor. 5:1-4) or “transformed” (Phil. 3:21) from mortality to immortality “to be like Him” (1 Jn. 3-2) as they were “gathered” (2 Thess. 2:1; Mat. 24:31), “received” (John 14:3), or “caught up” (1 Thess. 4:17) into the “presence” (2 Thess. 1:10) of Christ at His parousia. There are too many of these promises to simply ignore. They all reinforce one another. The saints would have been more than disillusioned if the parousia was not seen or experienced in the way Jesus and the Apostles had led them to expect.

In view of all the many apostolic statements about what they would see and experience at the parousia, what should we reasonably expect to hear from them immediately after AD 70 if they were still around? We should have heard jubilant, ecstatic claims of fulfillment coming from them – wonderful descriptions of the glorious advent of Christ from heaven with His angels rewarding them and destroying their persecutors. Instead, we find a “deafening silence.”

And it was not just the apostles who were silent. All the leadership of the Church was silent, even saints like Luke, Timothy, Titus, Apollos, Silas, Gaius, and Aristarchus. Surely not all of these leaders were killed in the persecution. Some of them must have survived beyond AD 70 if there was no rapture. Why didn’t some of them say something about the fulfillments they had just witnessed at the parousia? The whole Church and all the apostolic traveling companions and leadership were strangely silent.

The New Testament canon closed abruptly at AD 64, and left us hanging without any information about when, where, and how these leaders died, or where they were buried. They vanish without a trace leaving no record of their experience of the parousia.

The post-70 Church, evidently composed of only those who became Christians after the Parousia, obviously failed to recognize Christ’s second coming, the same way the Jews failed to recognize His first coming.

“...and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your *visitation*.” (Luke 19:44)

“Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of *visitation*.” (1 Pet. 2:12)

This later passage by Peter implies that the true Christians would know it when Christ returned. His true elect saints expected to see and experience the vindication and reward on that “day of visitation,” and to “glorify God on that day.” Did they get their reward and see His return? Did they “know” they received it? Did they “glorify God” silently on that day and forever afterwards? Why didn’t they say anything about it? Why the silence? Were they ashamed of Christ at His coming? The New Testament writers say that only the wicked would shrink away in shame at His coming. (1 Jn. 2:28) His true saints would draw near and *glorify* Him and *marvel* at Him in His presence! (2 Thess. 1:10) Their “great joy” and ecstasy could not have subsided so quickly and completely after AD 70. Something is wrong with that scenario. If these folks were still around, they would still be venting their exhilaration afterward for the rest of their lives on earth. Where is it? Why don’t we hear it? Why the silence? There is something significant about this silence. It is not what we would have expected if they were still around after just experiencing the big three eschatological events.

Great Expectations

The following six questions focus on some of the central issues regarding the rapture. As you read each question and study the related verses, try to imagine how the first-century Christians who remained alive until the Parousia would have responded. We know that the dead saints were raised out of Hades and given their new immortal bodies at the Parousia, but what about the saints who were still alive at Christ's return? *What does Scripture say they would see, hear, and experience at the Second Coming?* Read each question and search the following Scriptures and their contexts to find the answers (all Scriptures NASB95, except where otherwise noted):

1. What did Jesus say the living saints would see, hear, and experience at His return?

Matt 16:28 . . . some of those who are standing here who *will not taste death* until they see *the Son of Man coming*

Matt 24:30-31 . . . they will see *the Son of Man coming* on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a *great trumpet* and they will *gather together His elect*

Luke 21:36 . . . that you may have strength to *escape* all these things that are about to take place, and to *stand before the Son of Man*.

John 14:3 . . . I will come again and *receive you to Myself*, that *where I am, there you may be also*.

2. What did the Apostles say the living saints would see, hear, and experience at His return?

1 Thess 5:23 . . . may your *whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved* blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

Rom 8:18-25 . . . the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with *the glory* that is about to be [Gk. mello] *revealed to us*. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for *the revealing* of the sons of God . . . for our *adoption as sons, the redemption of our body*

1 John 2:28 . . . abide in Him so that *when He appears* we may *have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming*

2 Thess 1:7, 10 . . . the Lord Jesus will be *revealed* from heaven with His mighty angels . . . when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be *marveled at among all who have believed*

1 Cor 15:51-53 . . . we will not all sleep [die before the parousia], but *we will all be changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the *trumpet will sound*, and the dead [Gk. is plural] will be raised imperishable, and *we will be changed*. . . *put on the imperishable . . . put on immortality*.

1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a *shout*, with the *voice of the archangel* and with the *trumpet of God*, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then *we who are alive and remain* will be *caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*.

3. What rewards did Christ and the Apostles say that the living saints would receive at His return?

Matt 19:28-29 . . . you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, *you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* And everyone who has [forfeited property or relationships] for My name's sake, *will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.*

Jude 1:21 . . . waiting anxiously for . . . *eternal life.*

1 Thess 1:10 . . . wait for His Son from heaven . . . who *rescues us* from the wrath to come.

1 Thess 5:9-10 . . . God has not appointed us to wrath, but for *obtaining salvation* . . . and to await His Son from Heaven . . . the One *delivering us from the coming wrath.*

2 Thess 1:7-10 . . . *give relief to you* who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire. . . . when He comes to be *glorified in His saints* on that day, and *to be marveled at among all who have believed*

1 Pet 1:7 . . . so that the proof of your faith . . . may be found to *result in praise and glory and honor* at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 5:1, 4, 6 . . . partaker also of *the glory that is about to be* [Gk. mello] *revealed* . . . when the Chief Shepherd appears you will *receive the unfading crown of glory* . . . *exalt you* at the proper time

Rom 8:17-23 . . . if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be *glorified with Him.* For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with *the glory that is about to be* [Gk. mello] *revealed to us.* . . . *the revealing of the sons of God.* . . . creation itself also will be *set free from its slavery to corruption* into the *freedom of the glory of the children of God.* . . . we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our *adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

2 Tim 4:8 . . . in the future there is laid up for me the *crown of righteousness,* which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will *award to* . . . all who have loved His appearing.

Rev 3:10-11 . . . I also will *keep you from the hour of testing,* that hour which is about to come upon the whole world . . . hold fast what you have, so that no one will take *your crown.*

4. How intense were the expectations and emotions of the living saints?

Heb 9:28 [Christ] . . . will appear a second time . . . to those who *eagerly await* Him.

Rev 6:10 . . . **How long, O Lord,** holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging

1 Cor 16:22 . . . **Maranatha** [Aramaic expression meaning, *Our Lord, Come!*].

Rev 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

Rom 8:19-25 For the *anxious longing* of the creation *waits eagerly* for the revealing of the sons of God . . . we ourselves *groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly*

- for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body . . . we *hope* for what we do not see, with perseverance we *wait eagerly* for it.
- 2 Cor 5:2-4 For indeed in this house *we groan, longing to be clothed* with our dwelling from heaven . . . while we are in this tent, *we groan, being burdened*
- 2 Tim 4:8 . . . the crown of righteousness, which the Lord . . . will award to . . . all who have *loved His appearing*.
- Jude 1:21 . . . *waiting anxiously* for . . . eternal life.
- 1 Cor 1:7 . . . *awaiting eagerly* the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Luke 21:36 But *keep on the alert* at all times, *praying* that you may have strength to escape . . . and to stand before the Son of Man.
- 2 Pet 3:12-14 . . . *looking for and hastening* the coming of the day of God . . . according to His promise *we are looking for* new heavens and a new earth . . . since *you look for these things*, be *diligent* to be *found by Him* in peace, spotless and blameless
- 1 Pet 1:13 Therefore, *prepare your minds* for action, *keep sober* in spirit, *fix your hope completely* on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- 1 Pet 4:13 . . . but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, *keep on rejoicing*, so that also at the revelation of His glory *you may rejoice with exultation*.
- 1 John 2:28 . . . abide in Him so that *when He appears* we may have confidence and *not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming*

5. What was supposed to happen to the bodies of the living saints at the Parousia?

- 1 Cor 15:37-38 . . . that which you sow [the seed], *you do not sow the body which is to be* . . . But *God gives it* [the seed] *a body* just as He wished, and *to each of the seeds a body of its own*. [note the plural number of bodies here, not one collective body]
- 1 Cor 15:51-53 . . . we will *not all sleep* [die], but *we will all be changed* . . . the dead ones [plural] will be raised incorruptible, and *we will be changed*. . . . *put on incorruption* . . . *put on immortality*. [Correct translation of the Greek—note the plural number of dead ones, and the distinction between living and dead saints. The dead saints are raised, but the living saints are changed. So the resurrection is not of a collective body of both living and dead saints. The resurrection applies only to the dead saints.]
- 1 John 3:2 . . . We know that when He appears, *we will be like Him*
- Phil 3:20-21 . . . eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will *transform our lowly [mortal] body* that it may be *conformed to His glorious body* (NKJV)
- 2 Cor 5:2-4 . . . *in this house* we groan, longing to be *clothed with our dwelling from heaven*, inasmuch as we, having *put it on*, will not be found naked [disembodied]. . . . *in this tent*, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be *unclothed* [disembodied by death] but *to be clothed upon [with our*

immortal bodies], so that what is *mortal will be swallowed up by life*. (cf. Weymouth and NIV)

Rom 8:17-23 . . . if indeed we *suffer* with Him so that we may also be *glorified* with Him. For I consider that the *sufferings* of this present time are not worthy to be compared with *the glory* that is about to be [Gk. *mello*] revealed to us. . . . the revealing of the sons of God. . . . creation itself also will be *set free from its slavery to corruption* into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. . . . we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the *redemption of our body*.

1 Thess 5:23 . . . may your *whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved* blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [NKJV]

1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then *we who are alive and remain* will be *caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*

[Note that the catching up is something that happens to living people while they are still alive, not after they die. The dead are raised and caught up, but the living are changed and caught up. The bodies of the living saints had to be changed, since flesh and blood bodies cannot dwell in the spiritual realm (1 Cor. 15:50-52). This bodily change enabled them to avoid physical death, and then they were caught up in their new immortal bodies along with the resurrected dead to be with Christ forever.]

6. Where was Christ, and where were the living saints at the time of the Parousia?

Matt 19:28 And Jesus said to [the twelve] . . . in the regeneration when the Son of Man will *sit on His glorious throne*, you also shall *sit upon twelve thrones*, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Luke 22:30 that you may eat and drink *at My table in My kingdom*, and you will *sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. [cf. Matt 8:11; Luke 13:28-29; 14:15; and Enoch 62:14]

Matt 24:30-31 . . . they will see the Son of Man coming *on the clouds of heaven* with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will *gather together His elect* . . . from one end of the heavens to the other.

2 Thess 2:1 . . . the coming [Gk. Parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ and *our gathering together to Him*

John 14:3 I will come again and *receive you to Myself*, that *where I am, there you may be also*.

2 Thess 1:7-10 . . . the Lord Jesus will be *revealed from heaven* with His mighty angels in flaming fire . . . when He comes to be *glorified in His saints* on that day, and to be *marveled at among all who have believed*

Col 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, is *revealed*, then you also will be *revealed with Him in glory*.

Luke 21:36 . . . *stand before the Son of Man*.

Jude 24 . . . *stand in the presence of His glory* blameless with *great joy*

1 John 2:28 . . . abide in Him so that *when He appears* we may have confidence and *not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming*

- 2 Cor 4:14 . . . knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and *will present us with you*.
- 1 Thess 2:19 . . . *in the presence* of our Lord Jesus *at His parousia*
- 1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will *descend from heaven* . . . caught up together with them in the clouds to *meet the Lord in the air*. And so we will *always be with the Lord*.

Implications of These Statements

From the above, it is apparent that the saints living at the time of the Parousia were anxiously awaiting His return, groaning within themselves, longing to be clothed with their immortal bodies. They were looking for and hastening the day. They had fixed their hope completely upon it. It was not something they would let pass by unnoticed.

They were told they would not only be consciously aware of Christ's return, but that they would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, and Christ would send His angels to gather them. He told the apostles that all twelve of them (including those still alive) would be received to Him and sit on twelve thrones and dwell in the places He had prepared for them in His Father's house (heaven).

Before the saints could be caught up into the spiritual realm where Christ and the angels were, their lowly (mortal) bodies had to be changed (transformed) from mortal to immortal to be like Christ's glorious body. The dead were raised first, then the living were changed, and together as one group they were caught up to be with Christ.

They would not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming, but would draw near and glorify him on that day and marvel at Him in the presence of all who had been gathered. They would rejoice with exultation when they stood before the Son of Man in the presence of His glory at His Parousia, and from that time forward they would always be with the Lord.

These were their great expectations, and if they were not realized in the experiential way these Scriptures indicate, then they would not only have been disappointed, but outraged and disillusioned and complaining about it afterwards. These expectations were given to them by Christ and the apostles. What the *time statements* do for the *time* of fulfillment, the *expectation statements* do for the *nature* of fulfillment. It is not enough to affirm that the *time* of Christ's return was fulfilled accurately. The *nature* of that coming (as defined by these expectation statements) must also be fulfilled exactly the way Christ and the apostles promised it would, or the credibility of the Christian faith is annulled. The *expectation statements* demand our attention just as much as the *time statements*.

Expectations of the Pre-70 Saints

By Ed Stevens

Some of us preterists are quick to explain away the visual, audible, and experiential language of all the expectation statements as merely being accommodative, apocalyptic, spiritual, or covenantal language -- *anything but visible, audible, and experiential!* However, the one thing we cannot explain away is the fact that Jesus taught a clearly recognizable return. The first century saints would not miss it. We might quibble over **HOW** the Parousia occurred (its nature of fulfillment), but we cannot negate the **FACT** that they would **KNOW** that it occurred.

Jesus said in Matt 24:25-27 that he was giving them advance warning here so that they would not have to wonder about where to find him at his return. He said not to follow the false messiahs out into the wilderness, or expect to find him in some inner room behind closed doors. His coming would be so clear and unmistakable that they would not have to search for him. It would be like lightning flashing across the sky. They would not miss it. They would definitely know it when He returned.

The very least we have to admit about these two texts (Matt 24:25-27; 24:30) is that the Parousia would be a recognizable event. They would not miss the fact that He had returned. They would at least know when it occurred, and that it **HAD** occurred. The event would not come and go without their awareness. It would **NOT** be a "non-event."

They would not be ignorant of it after AD 70. This poses a serious dilemma for preterists. What we see after AD 70 is that there are no Christians after AD 70 affirming that the Parousia occurred, while at the same time there are Christians saying that it is still future. Why didn't those Christians who knew it had occurred speak up and set the record straight? Why didn't they tell the other Christians who were still looking for the return that Christ had already come? Do you see the dilemma here?

1. Jesus said His return would be as recognizable as lightning across the sky, and that they would not miss it.
2. But we have Christians after AD 70 saying that His return is still future, and not a single Christian, who knew the Parousia had occurred, spoke up to set the record straight.
3. This creates some dilemmas for preterists:
 - a. Did those saints miss the Parousia (making Jesus wrong about His prediction of a recognizable return), -OR-
 - b. Did He fail to return, thus explaining their silence about it? -OR-
 - c. Did they know about His return, but chose for some reason not to say anything about it, even though other Christians were saying it was still future (making them guilty of hiding their light under a bushel basket). -OR-
 - d. Is there another option that we have not listed here?

It is easy to see that Jesus promised a recognizable return that could not be missed. Futurists assert that since Christians after AD 70 do not show any awareness of His return, then we have to assume that it did not occur, since Jesus promised that His return would be so recognizable that they would not miss it. If they knew about His return, why didn't they speak up about it when other Christians said it was still future?

It simply is not enough to affirm that the **TIME of fulfillment** was in the first century. Deut. 18:22 demands that there be a recognizable fulfillment of all prophecies before we can claim that it has come true. The first century Christians (at least) should have been aware of the occurrence of the Parousia. They were told that they would **be aware of it**. Since the post-70 church did not acknowledge Christ's return as having occurred in AD 70, it puts a huge burden of proof upon the Preterist.

This is a serious problem that Preterists have been very reluctant to deal with. We usually just wave our magic spiritualizing wand over the prophecy and claim it was fulfilled in a covenantal, spiritual, or metaphysical sense, and then pat ourselves on the back for being so creative.

But that approach is not satisfactory to the skeptics and critics, who repeatedly stress the point that the return of Christ was going to be a **VISIBLE** event, and therefore an **experienced** event. Since they are not aware of anything like that occurring in the first century, they assume that Christ did not return, and that the prophecies failed. They say that Preterists are proven wrong precisely at this point because we cannot show a visible and experiential return of Christ in the first century. Nor is it satisfactory to our Futurist brothers who also know that the nature of fulfillment was supposed to be **VISIBLE** and **EXPERIENTIAL**.

In the multi-authored book attacking Preterism, edited by Keith Mathison, Dr. Charles Hill presses this very issue, using the early church father writings to make his point. From a historical perspective, Hill argues forcefully and convincingly that it is virtually impossible for a recognizable coming of Christ to have occurred in AD 70 and the saints then remain quiet about it and ignorant about it forever afterwards, as if it had not occurred. That argument needs a better response than we have given it to date. It forces a re-examination of our concepts of the **NATURE of fulfillment** of the Second Coming. When I began to interact with Dr. Hill's arguments, my first step was to re-read the whole New Testament asking these three questions:

1. Did Jesus actually **promise** them that they would know about it when He returned, or see, hear, and experience anything at His coming?
2. Do the NT writers make any statements which tell us what their **expectations** were? Did they expect to see, hear, or experience anything at His coming?
3. Or does Jesus indicate that it would be a **non-experiential** event, which they would not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor experience in any cognitive way?

Here is what I discovered when I read back through the whole New Testament:

What Did Jesus Promise? *What Did They Expect?*

Biblical Text	Expectation	How Fulfilled?
<p>Matt. 16:28; 24:34; <u>1 Cor. 15:51</u>; <u>1 Thess. 4:15</u>; <u>Matt 24:22-24</u>; <u>Lk 18:7-8</u>; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:18; Jude 21; Rev. 2:25;</p>	<p>Some saints would still be alive at the time of His return. But it would not be a huge number. Most died in the tribulation, or fell away.</p>	<p>Some of the 12 apostles could have remained alive until AD 66. Not all of the saints died in the tribulation, or fell away in apostasy.</p>
<p><u>1 Cor. 16:22</u>; <u>Rev. 6:10</u>; <u>2 Tim. 4:8</u>; <u>1 Pet. 1:13</u>; Phil. 3:20f; Heb. 9:28; Jude 21; 1 Thess 1:10; Rom 8:19-25; 2 Cor. 5:2; Matt. 9:15; Lk. 12:35-40; Lk. 21:36; 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:13; 2 Pet. 3:12-13; 1 Jn. 2:28; Rev. 22:20</p>	<p>They were eagerly waiting and longing for His return. They “loved his appearing” and “fixed their hope completely” on it.</p>	<p>Was that intense longing fulfilled? Could they have kept silent about it after being so pumped up about it beforehand? Especially when some fellow Christians started saying it was still future? And if it did not occur, why don't we see disillusionment and bitter complaints over the non-fulfillment?</p>
<p><u>2 Thess. 1:6-10</u>; <u>Rom. 8:17-25</u>; Matt. 19:28; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:13-14; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:4-9, 13; 5:4, 6, 16; Rev. 11:18; 2 Jn. 1:8; Heb. 10:35; Lk. 21:34-36; Rev. 3:10; Lk. 21:28</p>	<p>They were promised rescue, relief, reward, glory, exaltation, crowns, thrones, be revealed as sons of God, adoption, salvation, redemption, and grace at the return of Christ.</p>	<p>Did they get these things? Did they KNOW they got it? Did they see it and experience it in any way? Why didn't they say something about it later? Why didn't they set the record straight?</p>
<p><u>2 Thess 1:6-10</u>; <u>Matt 16:28</u>; <u>1 Jn 2:28--3:2</u>; <u>1 Thes 2:19</u>; <u>1 Pet. 4:13</u>; <u>5:1-4</u>; <u>Lk 21:36</u>; <u>Rom 8:18-25</u>; <u>2 Cor 4:14</u>; <u>1 Thess 4:17</u>; <u>Col 3:4</u>; 1 Pet 1:7-13; 2:12; 2 Pet 3:12ff; Jude 24; Matt 25:1,6,21,23; Phil 2:16 1 Jn. 4:17; Col 1:22; 1 Cor 13:12; Matt. 25:6-10;</p>	<p>They would actually know about His return, and SEE Him revealed, MEET with Him at His coming, GLORIFY Him, STAND before Him, and have GREAT JOY in His PRESENCE at His return.</p>	<p>Did they experience these things? Why didn't they say something about it later? How could they experience all this and then go on with their lives as if nothing ever happened? This would have been a life-changing experience. Life would never be the same.</p>
<p><u>1 Thess 4:15-17</u>; Jn 14:1-3; <u>Matt 24:31</u>; <u>2 Thess 2:1</u> Phil 3:14;</p>	<p>Reunited and caught up together with their departed loved ones, received to Him; gathered, upward call</p>	<p>What was this gathering by the angels, the catching up, the being received to be with Jesus where He was?</p>
<p><u>2 Cor 5:1-4</u>; Phil 3:21; <u>1 Cor 15:51-54</u>; 15:37-38;</p>	<p>Their bodies would be changed, transformed, to</p>	<p>What was this bodily transformation, change?</p>

1 Jn 3:2; Rom. 8:17-23; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 5:23;	be like Christ	Put on immortality? Redemption of the body?
1 John 2:28; Heb 10:38-39	Would see Him appear , and would not shrink away from him at his Parousia	Did they see him appear? Did they shrink away from Him at His Parousia, or draw near to Him? Did they see Him “appear” and cognitively-experientially draw near to Him?

We need to seriously ask ourselves what these Biblical texts would have meant to the first century saints. How would they have understood these things?

My awareness of these promises and expectations of an experiential return of Christ created another problem for me. Since I now knew that the Parousia must have been seen, heard, witnessed, and experienced by the first century saints, I was baffled by the **lack of documentation** for it. This is the same problem that the skeptics and our Futurist brothers have. They know it was supposed to be seen and experienced. Why don't we hear something afterwards from those saints who saw it and experienced it?

Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. What if they were raptured out of there just like these expectation statements suggest? That would explain why we do not have any statements from them afterwards about what it was like to **SEE** Him at His coming, and **GLORIFY** Him on that day, and **MARVEL** at Him in the presence of all who had believed. They were gone! Jesus took His bride with Him when He came! And it would explain why the church fathers were so confused later, and why they fell into so many doctrinal deviations in the next generation after AD 70, especially in their continued belief that the Parousia was still future. All the folks who had seen it and experienced it were gone.

Now you can only imagine how stunned I was. I did not like the idea of a rapture at all, but there was no other reasonable explanation for their silence after experiencing the Parousia in the way these texts indicated that they would.

Jesus promised, and the first century saints expected, a **recognizable Parousia**. It would not be missed. The New Testament has dozens of texts cataloging their expectations of an **audible, visible, and experiential Parousia**.

A rapture is the only way to explain how they could experience the Parousia and yet not say a word about it afterwards to later Christians who thought it was still future. They could not set the record straight because they were no longer on earth to do it. Their **silence** was because of their **absence**, NOT because of a **non-occurrence** or a **non-awareness** of the Parousia.

Appendix B – Two More Lessons on the CHANGE

The Change of the Living

Garrettsville, Ohio -- Sept. 17, 2011

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The Context of the Change.

1. The Bible is “about” answering the question, “How does God redeem humanity?” We see how God deals with humanity by the way of judgments (Noah), Covenants (Abraham, Moses), and promises (David). It is instructive to realize that during these times of God’s heightened redemptive and revelatory activity, that God was dealing with the particular individuals who were alive at those particular times, but that his activity was *applicable* to all his covenant people at all times. E.g., see Paul’s surprising language in 1 Cor 10:1-11, or how the writer of Hebrews speaks of his contemporaries in 11:39-12:1, referencing the “cloud of witnesses” who would have to wait for them to finish their race before being “perfected” (11:40).
2. So when we talk about a particular company of saints undergoing a “change” or “alteration” of body during one of God’s great redemptive acts, it should not strike us as something so far out that it can’t be believed. Do you believe that the elders of Israel *actually* ate and drank in the very presence of God on Sinai (Ex 24:9-11)? I mean, come on, that is “crazy”!!! Do you believe Enoch was removed from the earth (Gen 5:21-24)? The point is that the history of redemption is replete with “exceptions to the rules” for normal human lives. Indeed, this is how we know these are *God’s* activities, right?
3. The “change of the living” witnessed to in the New Testament, is, then, yet one more of God’s redemptive actions that he performed in the first century, and it was one in a long list of supernatural interventions that God performed during this time of redemptive fulfillment that has been aptly coined by Barth as the “Christ event.” (NB: this is not to endorse everything Barth taught, just to say he coined a good theological descriptor here.) More to the point, we will see that the change of the living is intimately tied in with the Parousia of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

Looking at the Relevant Texts:

1. Paul says on a number of occasions that **he himself** expected to “present” (Gk. *paristemi*) the very people to whom he was writing before God some day. This word was often used to describe the activity of bringing an offering before a deity, and this usage fits well for these passages. This had always confused me. He says it twice, namely, 2 Cor 11:2 (as a virgin bride), and Col 1:28 (as complete in Christ). I was confused because first of all, Paul was not sure he would even be alive at the *Parousia* in his earlier letters. But then in 2 Tim 4:6, he is clear that he will be dead before the *Parousia*. But if Paul was saying that he would be “presenting” the people to whom he was writing before the Lord, some of whom were alive on earth at the time of the

Parousia when Paul would have been in the heavenly realm, how would that work out? This is just one of many conundrums that are solved when it is accepted that Paul understood that the people to whom he was writing would **not** be on earth at the *Parousia*, but would be in the heavenly realm *with* him. In fact, a lot of such conundrums are solved with this understanding, many of which are treated quite well by Ed Stevens in his book, *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture*.

1 Cor 15:50-54: ⁵⁰ And this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood the reign of God is not able to inherit, nor doth the corruption inherit the incorruption; ⁵¹ lo, I tell you a secret; we indeed shall not all sleep, and we all shall be changed; ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in the last trumpet, for it shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we -- we shall be changed: ⁵³ for it behoveth this corruptible to put on incorruption, and this mortal to put on immortality; ⁵⁴ and when this corruptible may have put on incorruption, and this mortal may have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the word that hath been written, 'The Death was swallowed up -- to victory; (YLT)

This text ties in with the idea of God's people being "presented" to him "as a virgin" (using marriage language) or "spotless and blameless" (using sacrificial language) since Paul is suggesting that people would not be allowed into the heavenly realm (i.e., into God's presence in the afterlife) unless they actually *were* in this pure state. Indeed, in this passage Paul is specifically discussing the *kind of body* that the dead saints would be inheriting at the resurrection. His emphasis is on the idea that the resurrected body is *incorruptible* as well as *imperishable* (or *immortal*). And this is *how they would be* at their resurrection. But then Paul reveals a "mystery," namely that not all of them would die! ("Sleep" is **clearly** a metaphor for Christian death). Look carefully at vs. 51. Also, he says that those who would not die would find themselves "clothed" ("may have put on" uses a verb, *enduo*, that refers to the act of clothing) with incorruption and immortality, indicating that they would have the *same kinds of bodies* as those who had been raised from the dead. This also indicates the nature of the change, in that the identity of the persons (the "inner man") who will undergo the change will be intact, but the kind of body (what people "wear" or are "covered by" (e.g., see 2 Pet 1:14)) is altered.

The other feature of this text that I want to point out is that Paul is seeing the change of the living as a fulfillment of prophecy. In verse 53 he uses *dei*, meaning "it is necessary" that "this corruptible" should put on incorruption. That is, *this body* (that we now possess) which is capable of corruption (Paul is careful to use an *adjective* here) must (Gk. *dei*) *itself* put on incorruption, which is exactly what the resurrected dead would be inheriting. He then uses the same language for "mortal" (again, an adjective in the Greek) and immortality. There are two prophecies that Paul alludes to here, Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14.

1 Thess 4:13-18: ¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.** ¹⁷ **Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,** and so we shall always be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. (NASB)

This is the second key text where Paul indicates that God will be changing the living members of his audience at the *Parousia*. The context of the passage is established in verse 13; the Thessalonians were concerned for their brethren who had died after receiving the gospel, and Paul was “comforting” (or “encouraging”) them regarding their feelings of grief. What Paul reveals to them is that not only will they not miss their brethren, but will be joined with them into a heavenly place at the time of the Lord’s *Parousia*. And not only that, but those who had died will be resurrected first (that is, receive their incorruptible and imperishable bodies) before they, (after being changed), are “snatched up” with them. And Paul lays out the sequence of how everything is going to work out in verse 17. (And remember, Paul is speaking by “word of the Lord,” that is, this is a God-supplied revelation, similar to the “I tell you a mystery” language of 1 Cor 15.) Verse 17 strikes me as one of the most carefully worded sentences in the entire New Testament:

- a. Paul is careful to use a time marker, *epeita*, which means “the next thing in sequence.”
- b. He then uses two articular participles after the “we” pronoun (*hemeis*) that act as *adjectives* that modify “we,” so it is particularly clear exactly whom he means by the “we.”
- c. He uses the phrase *hama sun autois* (“together with them” or “at the same time with them”) to make it clear that those who are living and remaining will be **the same ones** who will, **with** the resurrected dead, be joining in the Lord’s “meeting” in the air.
- d. He finishes with a “*houtos*” phrase to emphasize that their state of being with the Lord will be a permanent situation. *This also indicates that they must be living in their incorruptible and immortal bodies at this event* since they are in such a permanent situation.
- e. The sentence is, in general, very logically laid out, with a clear hierarchy, and without a moving around of words as is typically done in Greek for emphasis purposes (i.e., the flow of the words follows the flow of the events.)

2 Cor 5:1-4¹ For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.² For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed [over] with our dwelling from heaven,³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.⁴ For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed [over], so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. (NASB)

Murray Harris says of this passage, “No passage in 2 Corinthians has prompted more discussion than this. As a consequence, the diversity of scholarly interpretation is rather bewildering.” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10, p. 346) I am supposing that Paul’s resurrection discussion and his “mystery revelation” caused quite a stir among the Corinthians, so had become the “talk of the town.” The language Paul uses in this section of 2 Corinthians is quite similar to that used in 1 Cor 15, which gives credence to the idea that that text (1 Cor 15) is behind his discussion here. The context is that of Paul recounting and giving context to the suffering that himself and his fellow preachers are enduring for the sake of the gospel and its followers, thus the “us and you” language in 4:12. But then the language becomes inclusive in verse 4:14 (“He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.”) It is somewhat difficult to follow the antecedent of the usage of the pronoun “we” in a few places, but what is obvious and important is that he is using key concepts that are found in the 1 Cor 15 as well as the First Thessalonian passages we looked at. For instance:

- a. He uses the phrase “we who are living” (4:11) as in 1 Thess 4:15 & 17. It is precisely the same in the Greek (*hemeis hoi zontes*).
- b. The idea of “clothing” is used (as in 1 Cor 15:53-4). (The verbs translated “put on” or “put over” refer to the act of clothing). It is interesting to note that the verb Paul uses here in verses 2 & 4 are slightly different than the one used in 1 Cor, namely *ependuo*, vs. *enduo*, which depicts the putting on of an *outside* garment. So in this instance Paul is emphasizing that the bodies of those who would be living at the time of the *Parousia* would be *clothed over* their existing bodies. Indeed, if we look closely at verse 2 he is using the metaphors of a “(terrestrial) house” being clothed over with an “dwelling from heaven” Verse 3, as some commentators have suggested, may have been added by Paul in order to emphasize to the people in Corinth that the people who would be experiencing the change would not ever be bodiless (as there was apparently a faction that supported the Greek idea of a bodiless afterlife). (See Harris, p. 347, and the NIGTC on this verse). It should also be noted that there is a textual variant for verse 3. The NA27 reading is “having been stripped”, but there is actually pretty strong evidence that the original reading should be “having put on” or “having been clothed.” Most, if not all, translators prefer this reading. And assuming this is the case, then what Paul is intimating is that persons would essentially “skip” the process of becoming naked before being clothed in the heavenly realm, which harmonizes with what is being taught in the two “rapture” passages we have looked at so far.

- c. The phrase “the mortal might be swallowed by the life” is similar to 1 Cor 15:54 “Death was swallowed into a victory!” The word “mortal” is used as a synonym for “death” earlier in the same verse, so we see he is using language very similar to a passage that is specifically referring to living people who are changed.
- d. As a side note, Paul uses the verb “present” that I talked about earlier in 2 Cor 4:14. He makes it clear that himself, his fellow apostles (who had died and been raised), as well as his audience, will all be “presented” *together*. This harmonizes with the text of 1 Thess 4:17. Also, this verse may provide a localized backdrop for 5:1-4 since the “presentation” will take place in the heavenly realm, and people would need to be properly “clothed” for the occasion. A key lesson to be taken away from this is that Paul has moved beyond the “revelation” phase of discussing the nature of the resurrection body and the change of the living and the rapture, and has moved into *using these ideas* for the purposes of teaching and illustration in this lengthy discussion of the nature of apostleship.

1 John 3:2: Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (NASB)

This text suggests that John’s audience will become like Christ when he is “made manifest” (at his *Parousia*), that is, they will be transformed to his realm and have a similar kind of body.

Phil 3:20-21: ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the bod[ies] of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (NASB)

This text combines many of the elements from all of the previous texts we have looked at. Namely, that the bodies of the saints to whom Paul was writing were expected to be “transformed” to become like Christ’s body when he arrived from his heavenly abode as Savior. This idea is similar to what we see in 1 John 3:2, but is also supported in 1 Cor 15. The verb describing the “transformation” in this passage is different than our other verses (Gk. *metaschematizo*). This verb focuses on the idea of an *outer change*, so that the inner person remains intact. This harmonizes with the usage in our 2 Cor passage, where Paul, in using the verb “clothe upon” to describe the bodily change, is emphasizing the continuity of the inner person. Also, we note in this passage that this activity is something that the *Lord* will himself do as an act of power, and that he does these things in the heavenly realm (where his “body of glory” resides).

There is a grammatical issue with some translations of verse 21. Many translations translate this as “our lowly body” (ESV), or “the body of our humble estate” (NASB). But I submit that the translations “our weak mortal bodies” (NLT) or “these humble bodies of ours” (NET) are more accurate in that they properly recognize that the

normal way a Greek would have wanted to emphasize individual items within a group would be to combine the singular form of the item (“body”) with the plural form of the group (“our”), so in English we should say “our bodies” instead of “our body.” This is a very common grammatical construction in the New Testament, and there are many examples where this is the only way the construction makes sense. So it is quite clear that Paul is talking about the particular bodies of the individuals within the Philippian church. This idea is furthered when we look back at the discussion in 2:8-9 where Paul is talking about (the one) Christ moving from lowliness into glory, so that in context Christ then becomes a *prototype* for any of the individual Philippians who similarly choose to humble themselves, indicating what they might expect as a result of their humility.

Summary

We notice there are a few key ideas that anchor these texts regarding the anticipated change of the living. Among them are the ideas of *presentation*, *clothing*, death being *swallowed*, the mention of the activity in the *heavenly* realm, as well as a clear *distinction* between the dead and living saints at the time of the *Parousia*.

By looking for these kinds of markers, we are aided in getting a fuller picture of what happened during these days of the Lord’s great redemptive activity. For instance, the word for “meeting” (1 Thess 4:17) is only used four times in the New Testament, including twice in Matt 25:1, 6. Does this tie these two passages together?

More on the Change of the Living

By Ed Stevens -- Garretttsville Seminar -- Sept. 16-17, 2011

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INTRODUCTION:

There are two other things that were supposed to happen in connection with the Resurrection of the dead: (1) the Change of the Living, and (2) the Catching Up to be with Christ. Let's look at the change of the living.

I. CHANGE OF THE LIVING (FROM MORTAL TO IMMORTAL)

1. The Collective Body View tends to put all of its resurrection focus on the conversion experience and its "dying with" and "rising with" Christ. But their dying and rising with Christ spiritually and covenantally was only the pledge of their inheritance, not the reality of it. We can see that more clearly in the case of Adam and Eve. The death of the sacrificial lamb on their behalf was only a pledge of their actual inheritance to be given later at the resurrection and judgment. The full inheritance was to go to Heaven in their new immortal bodies. That fullness would only be given to those who had "**died with**" the Lamb and had "**put on**" his life. This resurrection would not come until the Parousia, when the dead disembodied souls of those who "died with the Lamb" would be raised out of Sheol and "put on" their new skins that were like the immortal body of the Lamb. What most people miss here, is that both the living and dead saints would receive their new immortal bodies at the Parousia and go to heaven. The new immortal bodies were not just given to the resurrected dead saints. The same kind of immortal body and entrance into heaven was given to all those who were in Christ, whether living or dead. Let's look at the texts which show that the living were changed also:
2. **1 John 3:2** -- "we shall be like Him" -- John tells those who would still be alive at time of the Parousia that they would be changed to "be like Him", because they would "see him as he is ... when He appears."
3. **The Individual Body View of 1 Cor. 15:50-54**: Note what Paul says in verse 50, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom" (flesh and blood or corruptible bodies cannot inherit incorruption, immortality, nor dwell in heaven) -- This means that the corruptible mortal bodies of the living saints would either have to die at the Parousia, or be changed in order to get their new bodies. In verse 51, Paul clearly decides in favor of the "change" idea, since he says that not all of those alive at the time he is writing (AD 57) would die. Some of them standing there would still be alive at the time Christ returned. In verse 52 he says that the dead would be raised (and receive their new bodies), while **the living would be changed** (into their new bodies). When was this resurrection and change going to occur? "in a moment, in the twinkling of eye, at the last trump." The change would not occur at their death years later. It would occur instantaneously at the Last Trumpet. Therefore, the living saints would not have to die to receive their new bodies. Their mortal

corruptible bodies would be changed into incorruptible immortal bodies. This change of bodies would occur at the moment (twinkling of an eye) when they "put on" incorruption and immortality. Notice verses 53 and 54 where he says that the corruptible and mortal bodies would "put on" on incorruption and immortality. Question: Is this talking about the resurrected dead putting on their new bodies, or is it talking about the living saints putting on their new bodies? How can we know which it is? Easy. The dead disembodied souls did not have a body to be changed. They were not in a corruptible mortal body, so Paul cannot be talking about the dead here in verses 53 and 54. He is talking about the living who still had their corruptible mortal bodies, which needed to be changed by putting on incorruption and immortality. So, verses 53 and 54 are talking about what would happen to the living at the Parousia. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the disembodied dead souls would be raised out of Hades and given their new bodies, then the living would have their corruptible mortal bodies changed by putting on incorruption and immortality. Paul says even more about this change of the living in his second letter to these same Corinthians. Flip over a few pages to 2 Cor. 5:1ff.

4. **2 Cor. 5:1-4** -- In chapter 4, Paul had talked about the persecution that they were suffering in their "earthen vessels" (4:7) which was referring to their individual mortal bodies (4:10-11). Then notice what he promises to those saints at Corinth who would be alive at the time of the Parousia: the dead would be raised and the living would be presented together with the dead to Christ. Now think about that. How were the living going to be presented to Christ right along with the resurrected dead? He hints at it in verse 4:18 (in the unseen realm). But how are the living going to get into the unseen realm with the resurrected dead without dying? This is the question that chapter five answers. In 2 Cor. 5:1, Paul says that those whose bodies were killed in the persecution already had a body waiting for them in heaven. Then in verse 2 he says that even while still alive in their present bodies the living saints were groaning under the persecution, longing to have their new bodies "put on over" their old ones. This is the Greek word EP-ENDUO, which means to put on over the top of, without taking off the old body first. Then in verse 3, he shows that this is what he means when he says that this "putting on over" does not result in disembodiment (nakedness). When the living put their new immortal bodies on over the top of their old mortal bodies, they do not have to take their old bodies off first and become disembodied before they put on their new bodies! Do you realize how utterly mind-boggling this is! But it gets even more amazing in verse 4, where he explains what is happening when the new body is put on over the top of the old body. And this verse uses that same Greek word EP-ENDUO (used in verse 2), which means to put on over the top of the existing clothing. Here Paul reiterates the fact that he is talking about living saints when he says that "while we are in this tent." That is speaking of living people still in their mortal bodies, and suffering persecution. They were burdened and groaning in the persecution, NOT because they wanted to die and get it over with, but rather because they wanted to remain alive until they could be "clothed upon" with their new bodies, without having to take the old bodies off first. Then he says that when the new bodies were "put on over the top of" their old bodies, the mortality of the

old body would be swallowed up by the life or immortality of the new body. They were changed into immortal without having to die physically. And this "putting on" is a reference to the same "putting on" that we find in 1 Cor 15:52-54, which is likewise talking about the change that happens to the living who are still in their mortal, corruptible bodies. They put the new bodies on over the top of their old ones, so that the old ones are changed, and their mortality is swallowed up by the immortality that is put on over the top of it. *This is profound beyond words. Once you see this, it will bless your socks off. What a reward the living saints got when Christ returned! The dead were raised and the living were changed.* But we are still not through with the change idea. There is one more text in Phil. 3:20-21 that we need to look at.

5. **Phil. 3:20-21** -- Note what verse 21 says: [Jesus] "will transform our lowly body into conformity with His glorious body." This is talking about a bodily change which would occur at the Parousia. This is the same idea we saw in 1 Jn. 3:2, where John said that when Christ appeared, the living would become like Him. And this is the same Apostle Paul who taught this same bodily change idea in his two letters to the Corinthians, which were written six years earlier (AD 57) just before Paul was arrested and sent to Rome. This letter to the Philippians was written in AD 63 just before Paul was released from that imprisonment in Rome. The transformation here in Phil. 3:21 is obviously talking about the living saints, since the ones getting the change were still in their lowly bodies. They were not dead and disembodied. They still had their old bodies on, and those old lowly bodies were going to be transformed to become like Christ's glorious body.

Another point that we do not want to miss here, is that the living do not have two bodies simultaneously. They are not a dynamic duo. The old body is changed into the new body, so that they only have one body at a time. According to 1 Cor. 15:52, that change occurs instantly "in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump" so that there is no overlap. There is no moment when they had both bodies at the same time. The change from one to the other was instantaneous. It was not a long-drawn-out process over a period of days, weeks, or years. The change occurred "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump".

Now I can just see the Collective Body advocates waving a red flag here, and reminding us that Paul is using a plural possessive pronoun ("our") with a singular noun ("body"), thus indicating that Paul is talking about a collective body being transformed. This is the flagship text of the Collective Body View. They rest their case on this plural pronoun and singular noun combination. They assert that this is talking about the church as a collective body being transformed at the Parousia, and that it cannot mean a group of living individuals each undergoing their own individual bodily changes.

However, if I said, "When **we** get to heaven **we** will get a new **body**," would you understand that I was referring to each of us getting his own new body, or would you think I meant that when we all go to heaven as a collective group, we will all be

a part of only one new collective body that we share in common, like the BORG collective in Star Trek? I suspect you would rightly understand me as meaning that each of us will get his or her own new individual body to dwell in heaven with. And that seems to be the same way Paul is using this language here in Phil. 3:21.

So, if we can find examples of this grammatical construction in contexts where it is clearly talking about each individual in a group having their own individual bodies, then the Collective Body argument for this text collapses. Using my computer Bible search software (Accordance for the Macintosh) I was able to find several examples of this very construction. Paul used this idiomatic expression often in his writings. Here are a few examples:

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with **our spirit** that we are children of God,

Rom. 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of **our body**.

Rom. 8:26 In the same way the Spirit also helps **our weakness**; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

1 Cor. 15:14 and if Christ has not been raised, then **our preaching** is vain, your faith also is vain.

2 Cor. 1:12 For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of **our conscience**, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

2 Cor. 4:10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in **our body**.

2 Cor. 5:1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is **our house** is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Cor. 5:2 For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with **our dwelling** from heaven,

2 Cor. 6:11 **Our mouth** has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.

2 Cor. 9:3 But I have sent the brethren, in order that **our boasting** about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared;

1 Thess. 1:5 for **our gospel** did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

2 Thess. 1:10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for **our testimony** to you was believed.

2 Thess. 2:14 It was for this He called you through **our gospel**, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I asked a Full Preterist Greek scholar [Dr. David Warren, Amridge University, Montgomery, Alabama] what the Greek grammars call this phenomenon when the plural possessive personal pronoun is used with a singular noun. Here is his reply:

You should look in the index of the grammar of your choice under the head term “number.” Usually you will find this subject under “Number, Concord/Agreement in” and then under the exceptions that follow. For Robertson’s large grammar, see pp. 403–409; for Blass and Debrunner, see pp. 73–76; for Wallace, see pp. 399–406. Robertson calls these exceptions “idiomatic plurals” or conversely “idiomatic singulars.” Blass and Debrunner prefer the term *constructio ad sensum* (Latin = “construction according to the sense”). As for Wallace, he uses several categories (which is a typical distinguishing mark of all his comments): “collective singular subjects,” “compound subjects,” “indefinite plurals,” and “categorical plurals.”

6. Here are some comments from Tim Warner and Roger Samsel (a couple of futurist critics of the collective body view of Sam Frost) back in 2003 when Frost was still a Full Preterist:

[TIM WARNER] [Some] Preterists typically claim that the use of the singular "body" (who shall change our vile body) with the plural personal pronoun (our) indicates Paul was referring to the collective body of believers, "our" (plural) being all believers, and "body" (singular) being the collective whole. This explanation, however, cannot be correct on two counts. First, while "body" is [sometimes] used metaphorically in reference to the Church, it is ALWAYS Christ's body, NEVER OUR body. Further, "vile body" cannot refer to the Church prior to AD 70, because elsewhere Paul calls the pre-AD70 church Christ's body. And Christ's body is not "vile." The only alternative is that Paul was referring to the individual body of flesh....

Secondly, the Preterist explanation [collective body view] is not grammatically correct. The use of the singular "body" with the plural genitive personal pronoun (our) does not mean a collective body. Rather, it is intended to emphasize the application to each and every "body" within his target audience. Consider the following passages:

2 Cor 4:8-11

- 8 WE (plural) are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; WE (plural) are perplexed, but not in despair;
- 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
- 10 Always bearing about in THE BODY (singular) the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in OUR (plural) BODY (singular).
- 11 For WE (plural) which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in OUR (plural) MORTAL FLESH (singular). (KJV)

The last two words ("our body") in verse 10 in Greek are "tō somati hēmōn." "To" is the definite article. "somati" is the word "body"; it is singular in this case. "Hemon" is the first person plural genitive personal pronoun (our). Literally, it is "the body belonging to us." But notice that the context [2 Cor 4:7-12] clearly refers to Paul and his companions' physical sufferings for the sake of Christ. "Body" (singular) here is used of each of their bodies, NOT a collective "body" of people. In Phil 3:21, it is exactly the same: "to soma" (the body) "hemon" (belonging to us). This construction with the use of the definite article refers to each and every body (singular) of us (plural). It does NOT refer to a single body of which all are a part. Here is an example from Jesus:

Matt 6:25

- 25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for YOUR (plural) LIFE (singular), what YE (plural) shall eat, or what YE (plural) shall drink; nor yet for YOUR (plural) BODY (singular), what YE (plural) shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (KJV)

Since Jesus did not expect the collective Church to wear clothes, He obviously was referring to each and every one in his target audience. In the Greek, Jesus said, "to somati umon" (the body of yours). The only difference here is Jesus used the second person pronoun (your - not including Himself) while Paul used the first person pronoun (our - including himself). The important point being that the singular "body" with the definite article combined with the plural personal pronoun ("your" or "our"), does NOT refer to a COLLECTIVE body consisting of many individuals, but to EACH and every "body" belonging to each those included in the personal pronoun. It is the difference between "each" and "all." Here is another example from Paul.

1 Cor 6:18-20

- 18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without THE BODY (singular); but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own BODY (singular).
- 19 What? know ye not that YOUR (plural) BODY (singular) is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in YOU (plural), which YE (plural) have of God, and YE (plural) are not your own?
- 20 For YE (plural) are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in YOUR (plural) BODY (singular), and in YOUR (plural) SPIRIT (singular), which are God's. (KJV)

Here is another example:

1 Thess 5:23

23 And the very God of peace sanctify YOU (plural) wholly; and I pray God YOUR (plural) whole SPIRIT (singular) and SOUL (singular) and BODY (singular) be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

As is very obvious, Paul, speaking collectively to the whole church, uses plural personal pronouns. Yet, because his words are meant to be individually applied, he also speaks to each and every one using singular nouns, like "body," "soul," and "spirit."

Therefore, it is obvious that in Phil 3:21, Paul does NOT mean that the "vile body" is a collective "body" of people. He uses the term precisely as in the above examples, speaking to the whole group collectively, about each and every one of them and their own "body."

It is true that sometimes Paul uses a plural noun when referring to each of their bodies, spirits, etc. But, it seems that Paul typically chose to use the singular when he wanted to emphasize the certainness of application to each and every individual in his audience. When he merely wanted to refer to the whole group without such specific emphasis, he used the plural noun. For more examples of plural genitive personal pronouns with singular nouns, cf. **Rom. 6:19, Rom. 8:16, Rom. 8:23, Rom. 12:2, 2 Cor. 1:12, 2 Cor. 4:16, 2 Cor. 5:1-2, 2 Cor. 6:11, 2 Cor. 7:5, Eph. 2:3, Gal. 6:13, Gal. 6:18, Eph. 4:29, Eph. 5:19, Eph. 6:5, Col. 2:13, Col. 3:3, Col. 3:8, 1 Thess. 2:17, Heb. 9:14, Heb. 12:9, James 5:3, 1 Pet. 1:13, 1 John 3:20-21.** These passages use the same kind of construction as Phil. 3:21, yet in each case it is obvious that the singular noun applies to each and every person within his target audience. In none of them does he use the singular noun to refer to the whole collective group.

[ROGER SAMSEL] Your [Tim Warner] reasoning on the plural personal possessive pronouns with the singular "body" is very correct in my opinion and the examples you cited for comparison are overwhelming evidence to support your conclusion. I noticed something else when I was going over the passages you cited. Phil 3:21 is translated this way in Young's Literal Translation:

"Who shall transform the body of our humiliation to its becoming conformed to the body of his glory..."

What does "our vile body" (KJV), "our lowly body" (NKJV) or "the body of our humiliation" (YLT) mean? The word "humiliation," is the noun form of the verb found in Phil 2:8, "He HUMBLED himself..." speaking of Christ's emptying of Himself to take upon Himself human flesh. It does not mean "vile" in the sense of "wicked." It means "lowly," "of low rank," and "humble." In Phil 2:8 it expressly

refers to Christ's taking upon Himself human form and became obedient to the point of physical death:

Phil. 2:5-11

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, He **HUMBLED** Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
9 Therefore God also has **highly exalted Him** and given Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the **glory** of God the Father.

Just as the body of His humiliation was exalted, so Paul says [within the context of this same book of Philippians] the body of our humiliation will also be transformed to its becoming conformed to His glorified body. This is critical. Since "He humbled Himself" [Phil. 2:8] refers to Christ's taking on human flesh, then "our humiliation" in Phil 3:21 **clearly refers to our physical humanity** [not some status of the collective body of the church]. It means our flesh and blood body that is subject to death. This being the case, there is no getting around the fact that our body's "being conformed to the body of His glory" must find its explanation in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. "...knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him." (Rom 6:9) [bracketed and boldface clarifications are mine, ees]

Ed's Concluding Thoughts on Phil. 3:21 and the Bodily Change of the Living --

The point we want to emphasize here is that the "change" of the living saints was an **individual bodily change** which occurred to those saints who were still alive at the time of the Parousia. This bodily change occurred "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:51-54). After the change of their bodies, those living saints were no longer in the visible realm. It was like Enoch -- one second he was there, the next second he had vanished into the unseen realm. However, it is not clear what kind of bodily form Enoch had after he was taken into the unseen realm, nor to which part of the heavenly unseen realm he was taken. The book of Enoch can probably answer those questions. The living were changed into their new immortal bodies and translated (like Enoch) to the unseen realm where the resurrected dead were also. We might also note here that this "change" of the living is the very kind of change that would have occurred to Adam and Eve if they had not sinned. They would not have died, but instead would have "put on" immortality at the successful end of their testing, and then dwelt in heaven with God forever afterwards.

There is one more resurrection text we need to look at, which tells the rest of the story about what happened to all those dead and living saints who were raised and changed at the Parousia. That text is 1 Thess. 4:13-17. Since I have already explained that text in a separate PDF, you can simply get that PDF from me by email request. The PDF file is labeled, "1 Thess. 4 explanation" and the article inside is entitled, "Exposition of 1 Thess. 4:13-7."

In previous sessions, we noticed that in the previous context of 2 Cor 5:1-4, there is a clear indication that Paul is talking about the individual bodies of the living saints, and not a collective body:

2 Cor 4:8-11

- 8 WE (plural) are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; **WE** (plural) are perplexed, but not in despair;
- 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
- 10 Always bearing about in **THE BODY** (singular) the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in **OUR (plural) BODY (singular)**.
- 11 For **WE** (plural) which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in **OUR (plural) MORTAL FLESH (singular)**. (KJV)

These verses are clearly talking about the persecution that Paul and his fellow-workers were suffering in their physical bodies at that time. Notice that Paul is using the very same words and phrases that we find in Rom. 8:23 and Phil 3:21 about the transformation, change, or redemption of their bodies that would occur at the Parousia. He was referring to those saints who would live and remain until the Parousia. Their bodies would be changed, transformed, or redeemed by Christ at the Parousia.

Here is another example:

1 Thess 5:23

- 23 And the very God of peace sanctify YOU (plural) wholly; and I pray God YOUR (plural) whole SPIRIT (singular) and SOUL (singular) and BODY (singular) be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Why was Paul so concerned about the bodies of those living saints remaining alive and well until the Parousia? If they were not going to even know that the Parousia had occurred, nor be affected in any cognitive way by that Parousia, why all the fuss here about their physical bodies being preserved complete until the Parousia? Could it be that he was praying for them to stay safe and stay alive until the Parousia, so that they could receive the bodily change and rapture without having to die in the persecution and be temporarily disembodied? I suspect so!