

# The Nature & Timing of the Resurrection

by [Jack Scott](#)

I appreciate so much the desire of Mr. Burk and others to wrestle with the issue of resurrection; it is the essence of covenant life. Not a facet of, or a building block in, it is the finished work of God in Christ. Therefore, if we misapply the timing of the resurrection it skews the wonderful effect of covenant life in Christ; or better perhaps, it evinces a skewed perception of the nature of covenant life.

I agree whole heartedly with Sam's response(s) and would like to add a few thoughts of my own to the implications of any who hold to a view that resurrection and immortality are a yet future event realized at the point of biological death. I hope to point out that the consequences of this view have a serious negative impact on the very nature of God's redemptive work. I wish to underscore at the outset that I do not wish to attribute motives or intent with this review; I accept on the face of it that Mr. Burk and all others espousing similar positions have the best of intent.

Approximately 10 or 11 years ago I, Don Preston and a few others were among the first to hear Ed Stevens begin to share his views (questions at the time) concerning the nature of resurrection. Ed was very concerned, and expressed it, that if we did not find an explanation for resurrection that incorporated the physical body as the primary focus, then the scholars from among the "Reformed" camp would have nothing to do with us. We assured him at that time and times subsequent; that what the reformed community, or any other for that matter, thought of us was of no consequence to us. In those discussions I asked Ed some questions, the implications of which seemed very troubling to me as well as the others who were there. Ed admitted at the time that he wasn't sure how to answer those questions and that he would have to think about it. I have yet see in any writings of the proponents of this view any response to these concerns or those expressed by Sam in all of his spot on defenses.

The effects of this view, I believe, can only be described as a complete surrender of the whole paradigm of covenant eschatology/preterism. This fear was reinforced to me personally 2 years ago, the morning after the close of the Voice of Reason conference in Sparta, NC. Ron Wagner and I were having Breakfast with John Anderson and his wife and Lloyd Dale and his wife. Many issues were discussed and debated, but the discussion soon centered on the timing and nature of resurrection. Both Lloyd and John were espousing that resurrection life was not realized until physical death. To say I and Ron were shocked would be an understatement. Both Ron and I attempted to underscore the nature of covenant life and immortality being equal to resurrection. As it became obvious to all the implications of what these men were saying (both of whom I love), John's wife expressed her confusion and said *"I thought I had life in Christ, are you telling me that we don't have it yet."* Lloyd shook his head "no" and John responded "no we don't, we have the promise of it." Flabbergasted isn't a strong enough description of what I felt. I looked at her as did Ron and we assured her that in Christ she did have resurrected-immortal new covenant life.

I give this personal anecdote not to disparage these men, nor to encourage any negative treatment of them, but to demonstrate that the view they espouse is anything but classic preterism; it is futurism dressed up as preterism. I hope to demonstrate in what follows that it is in fact a denial of the consummation of the new covenant.

Allow me to highlight just a few points. One of the unassailable truths that preterism is based upon is that for the world, i.e. heaven and earth identified with the old covenant age

to pass, all things foretold and promised within it must be fulfilled ([Matt. 5:17-18](#)). Jesus further stated that none of it could pass until all of it was fulfilled. This is the reasoning that has advanced the heart and soul of fulfilled redemption/preterism/covenant eschatology.

Now fast forward with me to Paul's discussion of resurrection in [1Cor. 15](#). As he draws his argument to a conclusion he says: *"for...this mortal must put on immortality"* (15:53). Anticipating the question "when" he answers "so when...this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass (i.e. brought to fulfillment) the saying that is written: *'Death is swallowed up in victory.'* *'O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law"* (15:54-56).

The obvious point of Paul's stated argument is to identify when these old covenant prophecies ([Isa. 25:8](#) & [Hos. 13:14](#)) would be fulfilled, allowing as Christ predicted, the old heaven and earth to pass and the new to supplant it. Regardless of its nature, Paul's inspired answer, as Sam so capably showed, was within their lifetime, when the sting of death-Sin was removed by the victory of resurrection over the strength of sin-the Law.

These old cov. promises are not fulfilled until death is overcome with resurrection, i.e., mortality has put on immortality. The question rising from all of this is, "when then is the old cov. fulfilled; when is the promise of resurrected immortal life realized?" Hear the answer of the modern proponents of resurrection at physical death, "Not Yet! Not until you physically die!" The ENTIRE "last days" redemptive worked of God to bring covenantal, immortal life is now held hostage to the biological death of every living Christian; as well as the fulfillment of all old cov. promises. None can pass till all is fulfilled. At best the fulfillment of all redemptive promises is something that only happens at the death of each individual covenant believer. Clearly, Paul sees no such protracted delay taking place throughout the millennia to follow.

Briefly, let me address this very point and its implications from the vantage point of another new cov. fulfillment context: [Hebrews 10:11-18](#). As will be shown, this is a companion of both 1 Cor 15 and Heb. 8. The writer's overall context: the superiority of the Priesthood, temple, sacrifice, atonement and covenant of Christ vs. the Mosaic; this is eschatology 101 among preterists. Concerning Christ's superior, one-time, priestly offering, that is the empowerment of the New Cov., the understood question of the whole context (chs. 9-10) is "when." The answers: When the *"promise of the eternal inheritance"* comes with the New Cov. mediated by Christ (9:15); at the *"appearing a second time apart from sin for salvation"* by Christ ([9:28](#)); in a *"very very little while"* ([10:37](#)). What is commonly missed though, are the implications of 10:11-18.

Again, Christ is superior, able to do what the old could not do. What is the one thing the old could not do? It could not provide immortal, covenantal, resurrected life. The Hebrew writer answers when this take place: *"But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us...this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them...their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."* So, what is the expectation of these two chapters? Nothing less than the realization of Jeremiah's promises of the New Cov. ([31:31-34](#)); the removal of sin's guilt - the reception salvation (9:28), the essence of the eternal inheritance/promise (9:15; 10:36).

Yet, in this context there is an absolute, incontrovertible indicator as to when this process would be finished, i.e., the "When." Concerning the interim time of the writing, he pens *"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool"* (10:12-13). When would all of these blessings be realized - the blessings which are the essence of Jeremiah's New Cov. prophecy? Answer: when His enemies are made His footstool!

I believe most reading this already see the implications. The "*last days*" are the days when Christ's work is defeating all enemies of man's redemptive hopes ([Heb. 1:1ff.](#)). The question, having so much relevance to Paul's treatment of resurrection is, "what is the last enemy?" His answer, therefore the ultimate answer to the Hebrews writer's "when will the New Cov. be realized?" is "*For he must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be (lit. "being") destroyed is death*" (15:25-26).

The realization of all New Cov. redemptive hopes are when His enemies are defeated. The last enemy is death, therefore the New Cov. redemptive hopes will only be realized and empowered when death is overcome in life, i.e., RESURRECTION! This point cannot be missed, Paul's resurrection, whatever and whenever it is, is the overthrow of death - the last enemy, which is when the blessings of the New Cov. are realized.

If resurrection is something only realized at physical death or some other future time as advocated by many preterists, then that is "when" in their scheme "death" is finally overcome. The concomitant disastrous implication is that this is when, and only when, the New Cov. is realized. Such has led some at least, like those mentioned earlier to suggest, consistently, that we do not yet have life only the hope of it.

Excuse me, but I can only reject such a view as strongly as I know how. I don't reject the men who mistakenly hold to it - I love them, but the implications of their doctrine are contradictory to every tenant of fulfilled redemption, and should be lovingly opposed.

As always, I will encourage, and only be involved in, a reasoned and loving examination of the issues at hand. It is my hope that this will contribute positively to the search of those who read these things. Thanks and God Bless.

Jack Scott

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*[Jack Scott](#) is a columnist for [PlanetPreterist.com](#).*

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