

The Magnitude of Gary DeMar's Denial of a Bodily Resurrection

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Introduction

As most of you know by now, there is a firestorm that has erupted over Gary DeMar's present theological thoughts. A letter was sent to him by some notable evangelical leaders wanting him to publicly acknowledge these three theological items:

1. Do you believe in a future bodily, glorious return of Christ?
2. Do you believe in a future physical, general resurrection of the dead?
3. Do you believe history will end with the Final Judgment of all men?

The reason the letter was sent is that Gary has been hesitant to come right out and affirm these, but because of growing concern Gary finally has held 5 podcasts dealing with the controversy. I have listened to all 5 podcasts and made periodic comments on Facebook threads dealing with the controversy.

It is with great sadness that I am compelled to have to give this critique of Gary DeMar's apparent theological shift. I believe that our denomination needs to carefully look at his beliefs and determine what we want to do. Gary DeMar's influence with American Vision over the years has been quite significant. Many people have benefited from this ministry; hence, this is what makes this critique so painful. I have not personally known Gary that well even though we were contemporaries at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS during the mid to late 1970's. We both studied under Greg Bahnsen; we both were among a small group that sympathized with Bahnsen's unfortunate dismissal as a professor due to theonomy. It was Bahnsen's influence that was the beginnings of American Vision.

It is evident to me and others around the country that Gary has now fully placed himself in the full preterist camp, though not openly saying he is in the camp. As some of you may know, the full preterists do not believe in a future bodily resurrection of either the righteous or wicked at a coming of Jesus at the end of history, nor do they believe in a final judgment of men where the wicked will be **bodily** assigned to an eternal hell of torment.

In my initial email to you men, I mentioned that in Gary's podcast # 2 that he openly denied affirming WCF 33:2 and argued that there was no eternal hell of torment. This denial in itself is most grievous with tremendous ramifications.

In Gary's subsequent podcasts he essentially denied any kind of future bodily resurrection which I will demonstrate in this paper. This denial of a bodily resurrection as others are pointing out has gospel implications. Virtually all those critical of Gary on this are saying that this view is heretical, but the question some are wrestling with is whether such a denial constitutes as a "damnable heresy" that 2 Peter 2:1 speaks of. Is such a view similar to Paul's condemnation of the Judaizers in Galatians 1:6-9? How does II Timothy 2:14-16 and I Timothy 1:18-20 come into play in wrestling with the nature of a denial of a bodily resurrection?

Gary to my knowledge still claims obviously to be a Christian, and if you were to ask him, "Are you trusting in Jesus alone for your salvation I am sure he would say, yes." One of the things that was disturbing Gary in his podcasts is that he is getting all this grief simply because he is asking questions. Gary believes there is nothing wrong in asking serious questions on various texts. He emphasized that our orthodoxy must be determined by Scripture and not by an adherence to creeds and confessions. While making this comment and while saying that exegesis should drive our theology and not creeds and confessions, he did not engage in any in depth exegesis of biblical texts, and when he did deal with some texts during his podcasts, he just made some passing comments. When he did engage in some exegesis he greatly failed in my opinion and demonstrated himself to have a significant ineptitude in properly exegeting Scripture as I hope to demonstrate in this paper.

I have debated on Facebook someone who is a full preterist, and who for the past year has been relentless in his postings on this view. Six months ago, I decided to engage him because he was getting many likes and positive comments. I just could not sit idly by and let him infect Facebook with this terrible theology. This man kept claiming that exegesis is to determine our theology not the creeds and not the *Westminster Confession*. While agreeing with him that Scripture is the final authority, nonetheless, the WCF we believe faithfully sets forth biblical theology. I told him, “You want to engage in exegesis as you claim? then let’s do it right here on Facebook for the world to see. Since you deny a bodily resurrection and believe all references to a “coming” of Jesus refer to 70 AD, then you give me your exegesis of I Cor. 15, and then I will give you mine of this chapter, and we will debate it.” He refused to debate it, so I said, “You need to quit making the claims about exegesis if you are not willing to engage.”

We talked on the phone twice (he called me) for several hours. He did not like that some were calling him a heretic. He affirmed that he was trusting in Jesus alone, claimed to be a theonomic postmillennial, etc. I told him that at this point I was not necessarily questioning his profession of faith, but I did tell him he was a false teacher, and that I would oppose him on Facebook. Recently, we engaged on some issues, and he said to me, “You are being adversarial towards me; what do I have to do with you?” I said, “Yes, I am being adversarial towards you because as a pastor I have a biblical obligation according to Titus 1 and Jude 3 to protect people from your dangerous theology.”

Gary DeMar says he is asking some hard questions and doesn’t fully know the answers. He would like to see an eschatology church council where we all can sit down and talk. The man I was challenging on Facebook was advocating for such a church council. I am opposed to such a council because it’s not necessary. The Christian church has dealt with important eschatological issues to a certain degree. Yes, the Nicene Creed is a brief statement of Christian orthodoxy, but this doesn’t mean that there wasn’t extensive exegesis done by church leaders that led to the Creed’s formulation. Yes, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is a human document that even acknowledges its own subordination to Scripture as the final determiner of truth. However, we do believe the WCF is a faithful summary of Christian doctrine and that the chapters dealing with eschatological issues are rooted in a faithful exegesis of Scripture.

Gary DeMar in his podcasts was bringing out that the WCF’s proof texts in some places are not universally accepted in the Reformed community, particularly the one dealing with who is the man of lawlessness, and a proof text in the *Larger Catechism* # 56 regarding the phrase “Christ is to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world, in that he, who was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, shall come again at the last day in great power.” There is a proof text of Matt. 24:30 given for that phrase. Gary indicated that even partial preterists do not believe that Matt. 24:30 applies to the coming of Christ at the end of the world. Therefore, why should he be given grief for raising questions?

Not even strict subscriptionists to the WCF argue that all the proof texts are a definitive proof of the doctrine under consideration or may be the best reference, but that doesn’t mean the proof texts aren’t very valuable. The proof texts do demonstrate the theological basis for the doctrines and set the parameters for an understanding of the doctrines. When I wrote my book, *Danger in the Camp: An Analysis and Refutation of the Heresies of the Federal Vision* I pointed out that some of the Federal Vision advocates in their denominations approved the WCF without the footnotes. I demonstrated that this was no minor move on their part. Several Federal Vision men took extreme liberty in their definitions of “election” and on the meaning of the active obedience of Christ. The proof texts dealing with these doctrines guide us in the texts that were exegeted by the Westminster divines. Hence, Gary DeMar’s remarks on the WCF are somewhat strained. Gary spent much time in his podcasts pointing out that the signees of the letter sent to him disagreed on the exegesis of some texts such as II Peter 3, therefore why is he being criticized so harshly for simply asking questions? The problem is not whether a certain proof text is the best to be used. The problem is the severity of Gary’s departure from historic Christian doctrines such as a bodily resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous at the end of the world in a second coming of the Lord Jesus, and his denial of an eternal torment in hell for the wicked.

The primary purpose of this paper is to **exegetically prove where Gary DeMar has gone astray**. I believe, as do others, that a proper understanding of Christian doctrine begins with a careful exegesis of biblical texts, utilizing sound hermeneutical principles. The challenge of every Bible student is to avoid being guilty of “eisegesis.” This is where one reads into a text meanings that are not justified. We must engage in “exegesis” where we pull out the meaning of the inspired text. I believe that Gary and other full preterists are guilty of eisegesis on many texts.

In his 5th podcast, Gary said that people need to look at all the verses on various issues and not let creedal statements alone dictate orthodoxy. He said that an exegesis of verses should dictate our theology. Well, fundamentally, I would not disagree with this, but let’s see how well Gary does in his exegesis of some passages.

It did not take long in one of Gary’s podcasts to demonstrate his ineptitude in dealing with an exegesis of passages regarding the resurrection. Early on in his 5th podcast Gary said “**The Bible does not talk about the resurrection of the body but of the resurrection of the dead**” (bold emphasis is mine). It is obvious from this statement that Gary is making a major distinction between the two.

So the question is: Is Gary correct or mistaken? I believe he has made a terrible exegetical mistake with far reaching ramifications. Gary is aware of several passages that may seem to deal with a bodily resurrection. Let’s look at some of the texts that Gary mentioned.

Acts 23:6-8

But perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, brethren I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead. When he said this, a dissension occurred between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

Gary is arguing for latitude in understanding this passage. For example, Gary mentioned the portion of the Nicene Creed where it says, “I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” Gary said, “Give people some freedom, charity. I believe in the resurrection of the dead. I believe in it, that the dead will be raised.” However, Gary did not mention what was meant by the phrase “the resurrection of the dead” in that particular passage.

Gary then goes to Acts 23:6-8 and states that Paul said, “*I am on trial for the resurrection of the dead.*” Gary then says, “What does that mean? It doesn’t say I look for the resurrection of dead bodies that one day will unite with a soul in heaven. It doesn’t say that.”

Gary is attempting to exegete Acts 23:6-8 and concludes that Paul is not referring to resurrected bodies at all. If Paul did not mean resurrected bodies, what kind of resurrection is he then on trial for? Gary did say, “I believe in the resurrection of the dead” when talking about Acts 23:6-8 but what kind of resurrection could Gary be affirming? It must be by default a spiritual resurrection. Here is Gary’s **exegetical quagmire** - Is this the type of resurrection Paul is referring to in this text? Exegetically, it cannot be. For one, the immediate context is very clear that it is not a spiritual resurrection, and we will see that the broader context of the exact phrase “the resurrection of the dead” will always teach a bodily resurrection.

In Acts 23:6-8, Paul was siding with the Pharisees against the Sadducees when 23:8 has the Sadducees saying, “there is no resurrection...” The Sadducees did not believe in any kind of bodily resurrection whereas the Pharisees did. Just on this one historical fact, exegetically it proves that when Paul says, “I

am on trial for the **resurrection of the dead**” he clearly means **resurrected bodies**. In this context, Paul is not dealing with a spiritual resurrection which the Bible does teach, but not here.

I will set forth from various New Testament texts that the exact phrase “the resurrection of the dead” **always refers to a bodily resurrection** and not to a spiritual resurrection. A spiritual resurrection can be inferred in John 3:3-7 (born again by the Spirit); Eph. 2:1-6 (quicken by the Spirit and raised up to sit in heavenly places); Col. 2: 11-13 (risen through faith and quickened together with Christ); Col. 3:1-3 (risen with Christ and seated with Christ at God’s right hand); Titus 3:4-7 (saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit). Notice that in these passages the spiritual resurrection is phrased in several different ways. However, the phrases “the resurrection of the dead” and “the resurrection of life” refers to a bodily resurrection as we shall see.

Let’s look at the New Testament passages referring to “the resurrection of the dead.” In Acts 23:6, having agreed with the Pharisees over against the Sadducees on the existence of a bodily resurrection, Paul says, *“I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for **the hope and resurrection of the dead!**”* To show exegetically that Paul is not referring to a spiritual resurrection but an actual bodily one, he speaks of the **hope** and resurrection of the dead. Why would Paul refer to a hope of a resurrection that he already possesses? Paul is already regenerated, born again. The fact that he says “hope” means it must refer to a bodily resurrection. And we will note in the New Testament that this “hope” is often tied to a bodily resurrection that the believer receives as part of his eternal inheritance.

Hence, Gary DeMar’s exegesis greatly fails with regards to Acts 23:6-8. Here is what the Reformed commentator Matthew Henry says about this passage. He says:

The account here given of these Sadducees is, [1.] That they *deny the resurrection*; not only the return of the body to life, but a future state of rewards and punishments. They had neither hope of eternal happiness nor dread of eternal misery, nor expectation of anything on the other side of death.”

In this matter of difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees Paul openly declared himself to be on the Pharisees’ side against the Sadducees (v. 6): He *cried out*, so as to be heard by all, *“I am a Pharisee, was bred a Pharisee, nay, I was born one, in effect, for I was the son of a Pharisee, my father was one before me, and thus far I am still a Pharisee that I hope for the resurrection of the dead.*

Gary completely ignored the obvious truth that Paul was agreeing with the Pharisees against the Sadducees regarding the resurrection of the dead, and it was no spiritual resurrection that the Sadducees were thinking of.

Acts 4:1-2

This passage reads:

“As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

Regarding Acts 4:1-2, Matthew Henry states:

They preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, (1.) Was verified in Jesus; this they proved, that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, as the first, the chief, that should rise from the dead, *ch.*

xxvi. 23. They preached the resurrection of Christ as their warrant for what they did. Or, (2.) **It is secured by him to all believers. The resurrection of the dead includes all the happiness of the future state.** This *they preached through Jesus Christ, attainable through him (Phil. iii. 10, 11), and through him only*” (Bold emphasis is mine).

Note that Matthew Henry correctly understands that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead meant that His resurrection **“is secured by him to all believers.”**

Gary DeMar’s belief that the phrase “the resurrection of the dead” does not imply a physical resurrection of bodies is a serious exegetical error. He really should know better than to make this kind of exegetical mistake.

The Lutheran commentator R.C. H. Lenski says the following about Acts 4:1-2. Lenski states:

Peter had not yet preached the general resurrection, but these Sadducees drew the correct conclusion that, if Jesus was risen, their whole contention about the impossibility of the resurrection was null and void.”

What Gary DeMar fails to realize is that even in Acts 4:1-2 the Sadducees realized the import of Peter and John’s preaching. We can ask, “How did Jesus rise from the dead?” He arose in a body! Hence, the phraseology “the resurrection of the dead” teaches a bodily resurrection. The pagan Sadducees understood the implication of a Jesus bodily resurrection and made the connection. But somehow Gary DeMar cannot make that connection. I believe the reason is that Gary is guilty of eisegesis and not exegesis. He cannot bring himself to seeing the obvious because of its far-reaching implications of a second coming of Jesus at the end of the world and a subsequent judgment; therefore, he imports a meaning into the text that the context absolutely cannot sustain.

Matthew 22:23-34

This passage presents major problems with Gary DeMar’s belief that “a resurrection of the dead” does not have to mean a bodily resurrection. So, in this passage, what kind of resurrection are we seeing? Again, the passage focuses on what the Sadducees deny; they deny a bodily resurrection with nothing beyond the grave, and the text clearly brings this out. The Sadducees present to Jesus an absurd situation in order to mock the idea of life after death, particularly a body after death.

The text reads:

“²³On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, ²⁴saying, ‘Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up children for his brother.’ ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us; and the first married and died, and having no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶It was the same also with the second brother, and the third, down to the seventh. ²⁷Last of all, the woman died. ²⁸In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her in marriage.’”²⁹But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, since you do not understand the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ³¹But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ³²‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” ³³When the crowds heard this, they were

*astonished at His teaching.*³⁴ *But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.*”

The Reformed commentator, William Henrikson, has some helpful comments on the passage. He says:

The Sadducees now make their onslaught against Jesus... Their beliefs, denial of the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection of the body, ... In view of the fact that they are going to poke fun of the doctrine of the resurrection, it is understandable that they come all by themselves... It should be borne in mind that this sect regarded the Pentateuch as being higher in value than the other books of the Old Testament. They now make Deut. 25:5-6 the springboard of their question... The Sadducees, then, make use of this commandment in order to show how thoroughly absurd, as they see it, is belief in the resurrection of the body... Provided that their basic assumption—namely, that married life continues in the hereafter—was correct, two husbands would have been sufficient to prove their point. But seven makes the story more interesting and might also make belief in the resurrection seem even more absurd. Jesus answered and said to them, “You are deceiving yourselves, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.” Had they known the Scriptures, they would have known that there is nothing in Deut. 25:5-6 that makes it applicable to the life hereafter, and they would also have known that the Old Testament in various passages teaches the resurrection of the body.”

And had they recognized the power of God (Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:19), they would have understood that God is able to raise the dead in such a manner that marriage will no longer be needed. “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.

v.31-32 “Now concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

Two facts certainly point in that direction: a. the creation of man as body and soul (Gen. 2:7), and b. the very passage, “He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” **Note also that Abraham surely believed in the possibility of a physical resurrection (Heb. 11:19)** (Bold emphasis is mine).

Jesus however refers to another passage, namely Exod. 3:6, “I am the God of Abraham...” and implies that since God is not the God of the dead but of the living, the conclusion is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive, and are awaiting a glorious resurrection. He loves him body and soul. He is going to send his beloved Son in order to ransom him *completely*.

Acts 24:14-15

Gary DeMar has said in his podcast # 5 beginning in the audio at 46:04 – “When Paul says that he is on trial for the “resurrection of the dead” it is not a resurrection of dead bodies. It doesn’t say a resurrection of dead bodies that will unite with the soul in heaven; it doesn’t say that. My point is that we need to give people some charity. I believe the dead will be raised ; we are not in the ground; we are not soul sleeping.”

Gary obviously is believing in a spiritual resurrection of the dead but not a bodily resurrection. I will discuss the nature of this spiritual resurrection later in this paper. While the Scripture does affirm a

spiritual resurrection of the elect, it does affirm a bodily resurrection as well. **A denial of a bodily resurrection is no minor theological error; it is a major departure from biblical orthodoxy.**

We have seen in Acts 23 that Paul most definitely is affirming a bodily resurrection, and we will see in Acts 24:15, 21 he is affirming a bodily resurrection as well. In fact, exegetically it can only mean a bodily resurrection. Acts 24: 14-15 reads:

*But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that **there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and wicked** (Bold emphasis is mine).*

Paul has been brought before Governor Felix regarding the charges that the Jews brought against him that he instigated a riot by challenging the Law and the Prophets by defiling the temple and that he is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Paul claims that he is innocent of the charges that he caused a riot and that he spoke against the Law and the Prophets. He does affirm that he is serving the God of our fathers in accordance with everything written in it. He does affirm that he is serving God by means of the sect some call, “the Way.” Paul emphasizes that a vital part of worshipping the true God revealed in the Law and Prophets is having a **hope** in God which the Jews accusing him also cherish. What is this mutual hope they share? Paul says that there will **certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and wicked**. This is a coming resurrection of the dead, for the dead are either righteous or wicked. Of course, Paul is hoping to participate in that resurrection of the righteous. Most assuredly it is the hope of all Christians! In fact, Paul in Acts 24:21 is referring to his appearance before the Jewish council where he said he was on trial for **the resurrection of the dead**. Hence, exegetically, Paul is asserting that the resurrection of the dead is comprised of two groups- the righteous and the wicked.

Gary DeMar cannot be more wrong in asserting that the phrase “the resurrection of the dead” is not a resurrection of bodies. This resurrection cannot be a spiritual resurrection for one obvious reason- the wicked are never spiritually resurrected! They are left in the deadness of their sins and will one day be raised to judgment!

Gary DeMar keeps asserting that our theology must be determined by the exegesis of Scripture and not based on creeds and confessions. As I have said, I agree that biblical doctrine is determined by a careful exegesis of biblical texts, by understanding the immediate context, how words are used in that context, and by applying the Reformed principle of the “analogy of faith” where we interpret Scripture by Scripture. This is what I am seeking to do in this paper, and seeking to demonstrate that Gary has greatly failed to follow his own admonitions. I am seeking to show how his exegesis is terribly flawed.

Matthew Henry clearly understood the import of Acts 24:14-15 for he says the following in his commentary:

Observe here, [1.] That there shall be a resurrection of the dead, the dead bodies of men, of all men from the beginning to the end of time. It is certain, not only that the soul does not die with the body, but that the body itself shall live again; we have not only another life to live when our present life is at an end, but there is to be another world, which shall commence when this world is at an end, into which all the children of men must enter at once by a resurrection from the dead, as they entered into this, one after another, by their birth. [2.] It shall be a resurrection *both of the just and of the unjust*, the sanctified and the unsanctified, of those that did well, and to them our Saviour has told us that it will be a *resurrection of life*; and of those that did evil, and to them that it will be a resurrection of condemnation, John v. 29. See Dan. xiii. 2.

This implies that it will be a resurrection to a final judgment, by which all the children of men will be determined to everlasting happiness or misery in a world of retribution, according to what they were and what they did in this state of probation and preparation. The just shall rise by virtue of their union with Christ as their head; the unjust shall rise by virtue of Christ's dominion over them as their Judge. [3.] God is to be depended upon for the resurrection of the dead: I have *hope towards God*, and in God, that there shall be a resurrection; it shall be effected by the almighty power of God, in performance of the word which God hath spoken; so that those who doubt of it betray their ignorance both of the scriptures and of the power of God, **Matt. xxii. 29.** [4.] **The resurrection of the dead is a fundamental article of our creed as it was also of that of the Jewish church** (Bold emphasis is mine).

Acts 17:30-34

³⁰So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, ³¹because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.” ³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to scoff, but others said, “We shall hear from you again concerning this.” ³³So Paul went out from among them. ³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

In his contention that the phrase “the resurrection of the dead” does not necessarily mean “the resurrection of physical bodies,” Gary carries this view into his attempted exegesis of Acts 17:30-32. In his 4th podcast, Gary wants to demonstrate that this passage is not teaching about a judgment coming at the end of history but that it must be interpreted as a reference to a soon coming judgment upon apostate Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Gary said that we must look at the context of the passage, but what he failed to do is to look at the whole context of Acts 17:16-34. In his podcast, he did not emphasize what I and others believe to be the thrust of the entire passage that a judgment is coming following the resurrection of the dead and when that resurrection occurs in human history.

I contend that Gary's exegesis of this passage is terribly flawed. Gary prefaced his interpretation by telling the listening audience to see the context. In specifying the context he begins with Acts 17:30-31 and failed to mention the most important earlier context of the chapter. Not once did Gary mention the issue that Paul had with the Greek philosophers. Gary did not even mention who these philosophers were. Acts 17:18 specifically says they were Stoic and Epicurean philosophers who by the way both denied any kind of life after death. Gary did not mention that for it doesn't fit into his interpretation of verses 30-31.

The reason that the Stoics and Epicureans called Paul an idle babbling was because he was preaching some strange god, because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. The context that Gary conveniently ignored was all about the physical resurrection of the dead of which Jesus was the first fruits. This is the biblical context. Gary's attempted exegesis at Acts 17:30-31 is thoroughly flawed. Hence, all men, particularly the Greeks to whom Paul was preaching must repent. Why repent? Because God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man Jesus whom He **raised from the dead**. Gary conveniently left out the immediate context of Acts 17:32! “And when they heard of **the resurrection of the dead**, some mocked and others said, “We will hear thee again of this matter.” The exegesis is quite clear. The context is about a future judgment with Jesus having been resurrected who will judge these Greeks one day and condemn them if they don't repent. Actually, Acts 17:34 said that some believed in Paul's gospel preaching on the resurrection. And, they must have repented of their sins at Paul's exhortation to avoid that fixed day when Jesus will judge the world. Some full preterists I

have talked with do believe that Jesus physically rose from the dead, but this does not mean that men will be raised physically from the dead. Such thinking is ludicrous. Why is Paul preaching Jesus raised from the dead in Acts 17? It's because all men will one day be raised and must face Jesus as the great Judge. We will later look at passages that teach both the righteous and the wicked will be raised with bodies. Those hearing Paul's preaching understood the ramifications.

I don't need to address in any detail Gary's attempted exegesis of the Greek words "*mello*" and "*oikoumene*". That was flawed too in the sense that he centered his whole interpretation of the meaning of "*mello*" which can mean "about." And Gary said that Paul did not use the Greek word "cosmos" but the word "*oikoumene*" which can be translated as "the inhabited earth." Gary argued that "about" must refer to a judgment that is soon to come and that it must be a judgment upon apostate Israel that came in 70 AD. Gary insists that a judgment far off into the future at the end of the world would not make sense to contemporary people. Gary said that this judgment is not of the whole world at the end of history because of the use of "*mello*" meaning "about;" hence, the only judgment that would be "about" to come would be the judgment at 70 AD. Moreover, Gary insisted that the use of "*oikoumene*" and not "cosmos" demonstrated that the whole world is not what the Scripture means. If there was ever a misuse of words and a theological stretch to lead one to an interpretation that is foreign to the text, it is here. Words can shift in their meaning in differing contexts, and separate Greek words do not necessarily mean something different. Can we find a use of "*oikoumene*" where it means the mass of humanity? Hebrews 1:6 states: "*And again, when he brings in the first begotten into the "world" (oikoumene) he says, "And let all the angels of God worship him."*" This text in Hebrews 1 is dealing with the glory of the eternal Son who is the exact representation of God's nature. The coming of the eternal son into this world was none other than His incarnation where the eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory (John 1:14). So, "*oikoumene*" can exegetically refer to the world of humanity. For DeMar to make this something in a very restricted sense in Acts 17:31 is unjustified.

Gary said that this passage exclusively belongs to the judgment coming in 70 AD to the Jewish nation. Yes, a judgment coming to Jews in Jerusalem in 70 AD could be a beginning of a certain judgment but the context of Acts 17 will not sustain at all an exclusive rendering of a judgment only to the apostate Jewish nation. Keep in mind that Paul is preaching in Athens to **Greeks!** In Acts 17:16-34, Paul utterly refuted the Stoics and Epicureans who did not think there is a resurrection of the dead. These Greeks must repent because God is declaring to men **everywhere that they should repent**. Why should all men repent of their sins? It is because God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world through a man whom He has **raised from the dead**.

The context of Acts should be understood with universal implications affecting all men and not restricted to a judgment upon one group of people, namely apostate Jews. Again, I must stress the fact that Paul was speaking directly to Greeks. If, as Gary DeMar contends, the judgment should be seen as a local judgment upon a city (Jerusalem) why should these Greeks repent of something God is going to do far from them?

In doing exegesis, one must consider foremost the immediate context. The immediate context of Acts 17:16-34 emphasizes the preaching of a resurrection from the dead that centers around Jesus Christ. It is this Jesus who God the Father has raised from the dead and made the judge of all men. These Greeks, particularly the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers despite their repudiation of a life after death, must repent or suffer the consequences.

Gary DeMar's interpretation is seriously flawed. His exegesis of this passage is completely unwarranted.

Matthew Henry properly understands Acts 17:30-31 when he says:

The God that made the world will judge it; he that gave the children of men their being and faculties will call them to an account for the use they have made of them,

and recompense them accordingly, whether the body served the soul in serving God or the soul was a drudge to the body in making provision for the flesh; and *every man shall receive according to the things done in the body*, 2 Cor. v. 10. The God that now governs the world will judge it, will reward the faithful friends of his government and punish the rebels. (2.) There is a day appointed for this general review of all that men have done in time, and a final determination of their state for eternity.

Let's look at another passage where the phrase "the resurrection of the dead" is used. We have seen that Gary has already been greatly mistaken by saying that the phrase doesn't mean a resurrection of bodies.

Let's consider Philippians 3:7-14 states:

*⁷But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹**if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.** ¹²Not that I have already grasped it all or have already become perfect, but I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*
(Bold emphasis is mine)

We must keep in mind that Gary insists that the phrase "resurrection of the dead" doesn't mean a bodily resurrection. The only other meaning that Gary is assigning to that phrase must be a spiritual resurrection. But is that what Paul is speaking of here? Hardly. Note that the resurrection Paul is referring to is something "**Not that I have already grasped it all or have already become perfect.**" Paul is not speaking of not yet attaining to a spiritual resurrection because he is already spiritually resurrected when God sovereignly regenerated his heart. The context clearly indicates that the prize that he is pressing towards is that which will be awarded to him due to being resurrected from the dead. Paul is likely thinking of the same thing that he says in II Timothy 4:7-8 which reads- "*⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸in the future there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*"

I Corinthians 15

What is absolutely astounding is that full preterists who contend that there is no bodily resurrection, no second coming of Jesus at the end of the world, and no judgment of the wicked who will be cast into an eternal hell, will actually hold those views despite what has to be the quintessential passage in Scripture that proves a bodily resurrection, the absolute necessity of a resurrection, and proves what must transpire before Jesus bodily returns to bring an end to history as we know it. An exegesis of I Corinthians puts the blow torch to full preterism. What was astounding to me was Gary DeMar's admission that he has never sat down and done an exegesis of this crucial passage. This chapter is a masterful presentation of the necessity of Jesus' resurrection and its implication for believers. For Gary to admit this is very sad. Why would one hold to his positions of denying a future bodily resurrection and of an eternal hell for the wicked without close study of this crucial chapter?

I will work through the entirety of I Corinthians 15. First, Paul informs the Corinthians that he was **preaching the gospel** to them (v. 1). Paul then elaborates on what constitutes the crucial elements of the gospel message. He says that his preaching entailed proclaiming that Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures (v.3). He then states that Jesus was buried thereby affirming that Jesus' body entered the grave. He then proclaimed that Jesus was raised up from the grave on the third day according to the Scriptures (v.4) Hence, we can learn of some of the crucial elements of the gospel message –**Jesus' death for our sins and His bodily resurrection**. Paul makes it clear that Jesus physically arose from the dead because he says Jesus appeared to the apostles, to more than 500 people, and then finally to Paul (vs 5-8).

Paul then mentions that he and the other apostles preached those truths, which is the gospel- Jesus crucified for sin and then raised from the dead for our salvation. It was this message which many believed (v.11).

We should take special note of what Jesus said to His disciples three days after His resurrection as recorded in Luke 24. The resurrected Jesus meets two disciples who were walking on a road to Emmaus. These two were discussing recent events concerning Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus inquires what they were discussing. The Scripture says these men were prevented from knowing that they were walking with Jesus. These two disciples said that Jesus was put to death by crucifixion. Then the disciples said, "*But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel...*" (Luke 24:20-21). These disciples then said that there were women who testified that Jesus' tomb was empty and that angels had informed them that Jesus was alive. At this point, Jesus rebukes these disciples by saying, "*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*" (Luke 24:25-26). Luke then states what Jesus did for these disciples, "*And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*" We should not miss the tremendous theological implication. Though these men and the other disciples will visibly see the risen Christ, they should have never questioned what was prophesied of Christ but **believed the Scriptures regarding the death and resurrection of the Christ**.

After spending the evening with these two disciples and eating with them, then their eyes were opened to realize they had been with the risen Jesus, and then Jesus vanished from their sight. These two will return to Jerusalem and met with the eleven disciples plus others. They related to them how their hearts were burning within them as Jesus explained the Scriptures to them. These two proclaimed to the eleven that the Lord had really risen. While these two were speaking these things to the eleven, Jesus miraculously stood in their midst. This frightened the disciples for they thought they were seeing a spirit (Luke 24:26). It is important what Jesus said to them – "*Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts. See My hands, and My feet, that it is I Myself, touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet* (Luke 24:38-39). **What Jesus does is to powerfully demonstrate that He has arisen from the dead in body!** Jesus further demonstrates that He has a real body because He asked them if they had anything to eat. They gave Jesus a piece of broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them. Jesus then told them what they were to preach. Luke 24:44-48 states:

⁴⁴Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things that are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and He said to them, "So it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.

Note what Jesus said they were to do - to tell people that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the

nations. And Jesus added - “*You are witnesses of these things.*” Witnesses that Jesus was **in a real body and what they were to preach to the world.**

I mention this section out of Luke 24 to establish the fact that Jesus arose with a real glorified body just as the Scriptures prophesied. Moreover, while they were eyewitnesses of His resurrected body, it is the **Scriptures that always taught the great truths of His suffering and exaltation.**

These great truths that Jesus explained to His disciples are what Paul specifically says in I Cor. 15 about Jesus - that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures and was risen from the grave according to the Scriptures. Paul is simply reiterating what Jesus had said and what they were to preach.

Paul affirms to the Corinthians that this is the gospel message that he preached to them that led to their belief. At this point, Paul begins to lay the foundation for the necessity of believing the **bodily resurrection of Jesus.** Paul says in (v.12) - “*Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection from the dead?*” Apparently, some Corinthians thought that it was an impossibility for men to rise from the dead. As we noted in Acts 17 it was a common sentiment among some Greek philosophers to deny life after death. Paul now **establishes the absolute necessity of believing in a bodily resurrection of men in general.** Paul’s argument beginning in v.13 is quite profound but simple – “***But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised***” (bold emphasis is mine). This verse is a theological blow torch to the full preterists who deny that the Bible teaches a bodily resurrection. For Gary DeMar to say that the phrase “the resurrection of the dead” really doesn’t necessitate the belief in “bodies raised from the dead” is in direct opposition to this clear Scripture. Now grant it, Gary DeMar and other full preterists do not question the bodily resurrection of Jesus; they simply deny that men will be bodily raised be they believers or unbelievers. The problem with this, as we shall see as we work through I Cor. 15, is that the Scripture always links the two together- the bodily resurrection of all men with Jesus Christ’s own bodily resurrection from the grave. In other words, Jesus Christ’s bodily resurrection proves that all men will one day be bodily raised – some to everlasting life and others to everlasting destruction in hell. Paul’s argument is that if men don’t rise from the dead, then this means that Jesus did not rise, which has monumental implications if that be the case.

Beginning in v. 14, Paul demonstrates the horrible consequences if Jesus was not raised from the dead. This means that Paul’s preaching and any others who preach are preaching in vain. And your faith is in vain if Jesus didn’t rise. The power of the gospel is rooted in the very resurrection of Jesus from the dead! If Jesus did not rise from the dead, Jesus has no power to save any obviously; it takes a risen Christ to send forth the Holy Spirit to call men to repent and believe in Jesus. Without Jesus’ bodily resurrection preachers are foolish to waste their time and men are fools to believe in Jesus who is still in the grave. Our very salvation is founded on Jesus’ resurrection. Without a risen Christ, then Jesus’ comment in John 6:37, 39, 44 is a complete lie. The texts read – “*All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out... And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing but **raise it up on the last day**...No one can come to Me, unless the Father, who sent Me draws him, and I **will raise him up on the last day***” (Bold emphasis is mine). So, without a risen Christ, what purpose is there for Jesus to have come into this world. Matthew 1:21 says that the eternal Son of God was incarnated to save God’s people from their sins. With no resurrection of Jesus, there is no salvation. With no resurrection it is purposeless for the Father to draw men by the Holy Spirit if Jesus did not overcome death by his own resurrection. And how can a dead Savior raise men from the dead on the last day, if He was not raised Himself? I will discuss later in this paper **when the bodily resurrection occurs; it is on the last day, but when is the last day?** Just from the context of John 6:37, 39, 44 it is clear that Jesus believed in a **general bodily resurrection of the righteous.** For full preterists to relegate this resurrection in John 6 to a spiritual resurrection only is incompetent exegesis to say the least. The Bible does not refer to the spiritual resurrection (which is the doctrine of regeneration) as something occurring “on the last day.” It would make no sense. The only exegetical

possibility is to see this resurrection that Jesus does to believers on the last day is a bodily resurrection, which we will see occurs when Jesus bodily returns to earth to consummate all things. In fact, this is what I Cor. 15 teaches as we progress through that chapter.

As I return to an examination of I Cor. 15, Paul states that if Jesus did not bodily rise from the dead then he is a false witness because Paul's preaching emphasized the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The fact that Paul reiterates in v. 16 a general bodily resurrection is no minor theological point. Paul says in v.16 – ***“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.”*** Paul is doubly stressing the **general bodily resurrection of men** which is the foundation of Jesus rising from the dead.

It is very sad that Gary Demar admits that he has never studied, never exegeted I Corinthians 15. I believe that if he had he would never have gone down this sad full preterist path bringing an unnecessary controversy to Jesus' precious church. The exegesis of I Cor. 15:13,14 is irrefutable – **if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.** The only way that I believe that Gary and others deny a bodily resurrection of men is that they are blinded to this precious biblical truth because of their preconceived notions on the “comings” of Jesus. The cornerstone in full preterist thought is that **all comings (*parousia*) of Jesus in the NT are references to Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD.** Yes, I and many others do believe that Jesus came (*parousia*) to Jerusalem in great judgment, as I believe Jesus prophesied to the Sanhedrin during his arrest. After Jesus affirms that he is the Christ, the Son of God to Caiaphas, the high priest, Jesus says to him – *“You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven.”* Without going into a detailed discussion of the biblical use of “comings of God” in the OT, we can say that these “comings of God on the clouds” is a metaphorical description of God coming in judgment to particular nations. The problem with Gary DeMar and all full preterists is that **they relegate all “comings” (*parousia*) of Jesus in the NT to judgment in 70 AD.** In my debate with a full preterist on Facebook and on the telephone, I said to him – *“Your monumental theological error is that you assume all references of the “*parousia*” of Jesus point to 70 AD. You have made a profound exegetical error with tremendous consequences that has led you by default to misinterpret other portions of Scripture. It ends up by denying the bodily resurrection of men, no final judgment of men where God condemns the wicked to eternal hell. It ends up with you being a false teacher. And I as a pastor have a biblical obligation to oppose you at every step of the way (Jude 3; Titus 1:9).”*

As I work through an exegesis of I Cor. 15, after establishing the necessity of Christ bodily rising from the dead, he gives the profound theological consequences of not believing in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Paul says in v. 17 – *“and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins”* (Bold emphasis is mine). Paul mentions that without Christ's resurrection from the dead we are still under the guilt and condemnation of sin. It is through Jesus' death and sacrifice for sin alone that forgiveness is granted to us. As Ephesians 1:7 states – *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses...”* Jesus' atoning death reconciles men who were dead in sin, condemned under the wrath of a holy God who cannot tolerate sin in His presence. God's justice must be satisfied (propitiated) (I John 4:10-11). The blood of Jesus applied to sinners reconciles men to a holy God (Rom. 5:8). Paul's argument is that the atoning work of Christ in forgiving sins is predicated upon a bodily risen Christ from the grave. Had Jesus remained under the power of death, **how could he deliver us from death's power?** How vain a thing to have faith in Jesus whose body is still in the grave; it means we are still in our sins; it means there is no hope of salvation! Our eternal salvation hinges upon Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead. This is precisely what Rom. 4:23-25 says – *“Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions and was raised for our justification.”* This same truth is seen in Rom. 5:18-20 which says, *“So then as of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be*

*made righteous. And the Law came in that the transgression might increase, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Bold emphasis is mine). This great theological truth is further seen in II Cor. 5:15 – “*And He died for all, that they who live should no longer for themselves, but for Him who died and **rose again on their behalf***” (Bold emphasis is mine).

In Romans 5 we see the great teaching of the federal headship of both the first and second Adam. In Adam all died because of his transgression and death entered into the world being passed on to all those for whom Adam represented, which is all mankind proceeding from him. When Adam sinned with his one act of disobedience, Adam died spiritually and physically the process of death was initiated, for God said the curse would be that from dust he came and to dust he would return (rot in the ground) (Gen. 3:19). On the other hand, by Jesus’ one act of obedience justification of life, eternal life came through all those who are represented by Jesus. We must understand the great import of the federal headship of Adam and Jesus Christ. There is a true parallelism being taught. **If Adam’s rebellion caused both spiritual and physical death, likewise Jesus’ obedience caused both spiritual and physical life.** If Adam had not sinned, he would have lived forever in soul and body. His rebellion ripped man apart in his very essence. At physical death his body would be corrupted. However, in Jesus Christ man is restored to eternal life **in body and soul.**

For Gary DeMar and other full preterists to deny the reality of a bodily resurrection, they are assaulting the glorious doctrine of man’s creation and the truths of the federal headship of Adam and Jesus. The denial of a bodily resurrection is **no minor** theological error.

If Jesus wasn’t raised from the dead, it is a vain thing to believe in Him because we would be looking in vain to have any benefit from Him. If Jesus remained under the power of death, how could we expect to be delivered from death’s power?

Paul asserts another absurdity if Jesus did not bodily rise from the dead. In I Cor. 15:18-19, he says, “*Then those also who **have fallen asleep in Christ** have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied*” (bold emphasis is mine). The phrase “fallen asleep” is a euphemism for “having died” (I Cor. 15:6; I Thess. 4:16; I Cor. 11:29). The great theological truth being expressed here is that all those Christians who have died believing in Jesus have hoped in vain in this life only. Without a risen Christ they have no hope of having a full restoration of **body and soul.** This is exactly why Paul in I Thess. 4:13-18 says that he can comfort Christians who have lost Christian loved ones through physical death. There is the future hope of an eternal life. I will address this great passage later in this paper.

In I Cor. 15, Paul is building a most wonderful case for a hope of a bodily resurrection for the saints (all believers in Christ). In I Cor. 15:20, Paul says, “*But now Christ has been raised from the dead, **the first fruits of those who are asleep***” (Bold emphasis is mine). The coordinating conjunction, “for,” in v. 20 is a transition from the thought of v.19. Whereas a dead Jesus gives no hope for the Christian, a risen Christ gives great hope. Jesus Christ is said to be **the first fruits of those who are dead.** The meaning and significance of a “first fruit” on a tree is a sign that much fruit is to follow! I Cor. 15:21-22 states, “*For since by a man came death, by a man also came the **resurrection of the dead.** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*” **We must not miss the glorious fact that the resurrection of the dead occurs because Jesus was the first fruit of those who were raised from the grave!** For Gary DeMar and other full preterists to deny the bodily resurrection of all men, particularly of believers is to exegetically commit suicide. Jesus Christ’s bodily resurrection guarantees our bodily resurrection. Our hope is not in vain! Eternal life where body and soul are united in bliss forever is our eternal inheritance! The second Adam, Jesus, accomplishes what the first Adam couldn’t. The first Adam’s sin tore all of humanity apart; it separated body and soul at death. The second Adam restores man to his original creative being – a perfect body and soul. The one difference is that whereas Adam could lose it all, which

he did, we who are in Christ can never lose it. We have eternal life as a perfect body and soul. John 10:28 has Jesus saying, “*and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.*” And, as we have already noted in John 6:37, 39, 44 Jesus will **raise up on the last day** all those who the Father gave to Jesus and who He has drawn them to Himself by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What have we seen thus far in I Cor. 15? We have seen that Jesus’ physical resurrection is the guarantee of our physical resurrection one day! I Cor. 15:23 is a most marvelous passage because it exegetically links the physical resurrection of believers in Christ with a “coming” (*parousia*) of Jesus. And it should be exegetically obvious that this “coming” is no coming of Jesus in 70 AD only in the destruction of Jerusalem.

I Cor. 15:23 states, “*But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming.*” Again, we have that coordinating conjunction “but” making the contrast very vivid. The order of the bodily resurrection is set forth. Christ is the first fruits (He arose first as we have seen). After that, those who are Christ’s at His coming will physically rise. The fact that it is a physical resurrection is **exegetically irrefutable** because verses 20 and 21 have said that Jesus is the first fruits of “**the resurrection of the dead.**” Paul’s entire teaching thus far is the establishing of Jesus’ bodily resurrection and its implications of not being true. To import some kind of “spiritual resurrection” into I Cor. 15 is exegetical malpractice.

I Cor. 15:23 sets forth the order of bodily resurrections. I Cor. 15:24 states, “*Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and father, when He has abolished all rule and authority and power.*” I Cor. 15:23-24 teaches us that there will be only one bodily resurrection which is at His coming. This passage confirms that there is nothing after this coming of Christ because it says at His coming “**then comes the end.**” At this coming of Jesus, Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father, **when He has abolished all rule and authority and power.** Even though the word “second” is not used with reference to a coming of Jesus, we can exegetically have warrant to refer to it as a “second coming of Christ” because there is no other coming of Jesus after this. Notice the completed action. Jesus “has abolished” all His enemies. It says He must reign **until** all His enemies are under His feet. This is an obvious allusion to Psalm 110 which we know came to fruition at Jesus’ ascension and enthronement at the right hand of God the Father. This passage clearly places the “reign of Christ” before the Second Coming.

The last enemy that is abolished is death. This obviously takes place at the resurrection which we know is at the Second Coming. We are told in I Corinthians 15:54-55 that at the resurrection of the redeemed, death is swallowed up in victory, for death has lost its sting. It would be totally legitimate to say that these events of I Cor. 15:23-28 refer to the “last day” where Jesus raises the dead, abolishes death, and then hands over a victorious spoil to God the Father.

Sadly, Gary DeMar and other full preterists have gutted this glorious passage relegating it to the judgment of apostate Israel in 70 AD. Such an interpretation is exegetically impossible. For one obvious fact is this—there has been death going on for millennia after the fall of Jerusalem; therefore, how can this passage be twisted to say “death has been abolished” “Death is the last enemy that Jesus will abolish. If we understand it in the immediate context of I Cor. 15 we can see how death is abolished at Jesus’ Second Coming because in the resurrection of the saints, death is abolished!

Continuing in our exegesis of I Cor. 15, I bring out verse 32 that states – “*If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*” We should remember that certain Greek philosophies such as Epicureanism precisely taught that there is no life after death. Paul is saying that if they are correct, then by all means let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. If this life is all we get then why not engage in every desire? But in I Cor.

15:33 Paul carries forth the implications of embracing a philosophy void of a bodily resurrection. He states – “*Do not be deceived: ‘bad company corrupts good morals.’*” Matthew Henry has some good observations on this verse. He says:

Possibly, some of those who said that there was no resurrection of the dead were men of loose lives, and endeavoured to countenance their vicious practices by so corrupt a principle; and had that speech often in their mouths *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*. Now, the apostle grants that their talk was to the purpose if there was no future state. But, having confuted their principle, he now warns the Corinthians how dangerous such men’s conversation must prove. He tells them that they would probably be corrupted by them, and fall in with their course of life, if they gave into their evil principles.

We need to keep in focus the theme of the entirety of I Cor. 15. It has to deal primarily with the nature of the “resurrection of the dead.” Paul is affirming with no uncertain terms that there is a bodily resurrection because Jesus is the first fruits of those raised. In I Cor. 15:35-49, Paul is now addressing what kind of resurrected body men have. Paul says in verse 35 – “*But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?’*” We need to remember that the Sadducees were of the opinion that it was impossible for men to rise. Others may have wondered - Will it be with the same body, with like shape, and form, and stature, and members, and qualities? Concerning those who may have thought it is impossible for men to rise, Paul says to this group why should any be so foolish as to imagine that the man once dead cannot be made to live again by the same power which every year brings the dead grain to life? It is a foolish thing to question the divine power to raise the dead, when we see it every day quickening and reviving things that are dead.

To the second group that were wondering what kind of bodies would constitute these resurrected bodies, Paul sets forth the analogy of seeds being sown in the ground. He says in verses 37-38 that when one sows a seed in the ground and it dies, it will come forth with a distinctive body. Paul says that God gives each seed a body as God wishes. In verse 39, Paul says that not all flesh is the same flesh; there is one kind of flesh of animals and another of humans. This moves Paul to say in v.40 that there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. Earthly bodies are not adapted for heavenly regions, nor are heavenly bodies fitted to earthly conditions. And there is a variety of glory among heavenly bodies themselves – a glory of the sun, another of the moon, and yet another of the stars.

Paul now speaks directly to the issue of the nature of resurrected bodies. I Cor. 15:42-44 states:

*“So is **the resurrection of the dead**. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body”* (Bold emphasis is mine).

We must not miss the major point of the chapter. Is there a resurrection of the dead? Yes, Paul clearly asserts. If there is no such thing as a bodily resurrection, then Jesus did not rise and our faith is in complete shambles and we are still in our sins with no hope. But praise God that Jesus did rise from the dead; He is the first fruits of a bodily resurrection. Having established the reality and necessity of a bodily resurrection what kind of bodies are we to expect? Forthrightly, he says our bodies were sown in corruption. They are liable to putrefaction, they crumble to dust. On the other hand, there is a seed sown in incorruption. Burying the dead is like committing the seed to the earth so that it may spring forth again. We were sown with corrupted bodies but raised with incorruptible bodies, never again liable to corruption. In the words of the apostle, our bodies were sown in dishonor but raised in glory! (v.43). There is hardly anything more loathsome than a dead body. It is thrown into the grave as a broken vessel. But, at the resurrection, for the believing saint, there will be a glory assigned to it. It will be made a

glorious body like our Savior Jesus. He was raised with a glorious body fit for heaven. Our former body of the earth will be transformed or refined into a body fit for the heavenly places. It will be a body resembling His just as I John 3:2 says, “*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.*” Paul says that our bodies were sown in weakness but raised with power. Our earthly body was put in the grave, a helpless thing, but it will be raised in power! It will have a vitality void of any infirmity, weakness, or decay!

Paul says in v.44 – “*it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*” At the resurrection on the last day at Jesus’ coming (*parousia*), we shall have spiritual bodies in the sense that they are completely purified, incorruptible, undefiled in every respect. This is the nature of a “spiritual body.”

Paul then illustrates the nature of the earthly body and the spiritual body by comparing the first and second Adam in verses 45-49. The first Adam was made a living soul, and the second Adam (which we know to be Jesus) was made a life-giving spirit. This fact is expressed in Romans 5 with the federal headship of Adam and Jesus. All those in Adam die; all those in Jesus Christ live. In v. 46, Paul says it is important to keep in mind the order of the earthly and heavenly body. The natural body precedes the spiritual body. In v. 47, Paul says that the first man (who is Adam) is from the earth, meaning it is corruptible while the second man (who is Jesus) is from heaven. In verses 48 and 49, Paul says that the earthly and heavenly have their own respective images. In other words, Adam, the first man is an earthly, corruptible man possessing an earthly and corruptible body. Jesus, as the second man bears the image of the heavenly, meaning an incorruptible body. These truths lead directly into Paul’s glorious revelation of what is going to happen at the resurrection in verses 50-58.

In v. 50, Paul affirms that it is impossible that flesh and blood, meaning earthly, natural bodies can inherit the kingdom of God, which is a heavenly realm. Paul says that it is impossible for the “perishable” to inherit the “imperishable.” It should be apparent why this is the case. There is no putrefaction in heaven. In this life, we all will certainly perish, that is we will die. In heaven there is no more death. Our bodies in the heavenly realm can never die; we possess as the Scripture says, eternal life.

Paul does say in verses 51-57 there is a great mystery. Now we need to understand that “mysteries” in the Bible are not what we are used to understanding like a good detective figuring out who did the murder. A mystery in the Bible is that which we would not on our own understand unless God reveals it. Here is the mystery. Not all saints shall sleep (that is die physically) but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. In other words, what Paul has been teaching throughout the whole chapter is that the natural man who perishes will be instantly changed into the heavenly body that is imperishable. The dead will be raised at the sound of the trumpet. The parallel of I Cor. 15:51-57 with I Thess. 4:13-17 is unmistakable. Later in this paper, I will discuss the significance of I Thess. 4:13-18 and how Gary DeMar fails in his exegesis of that passage.

Paul now gives the reason for this remarkable and glorious transformation. The perishable **must** put on the imperishable and the mortal **must** put on immortality. Perishable mortals are not fit in those bodies to be in heavenly bodies. That is the point Paul made in verses 42-49. Particularly verse 42 mentions that all important phrase - “resurrection of the dead.” Exegetically, contrary to Gary DeMar who thinks this phrase does not mean “the resurrection of dead bodies” the inspired apostle says that dead bodies will be raised with imperishable bodies. Mortal, imperishable bodies must be changed to be capable of enjoying eternal happiness. What is sown in corruption must be quickened. When the mortal and perishable body puts on an immortal and imperishable body, then the glorious truth of I Cor. 15:54 will be realized- “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

If there is one thing that is crystal clear from I Cor. 15 it is that the entirety of the chapter is dealing with **the bodily resurrection of the believers**. Hence, the importance of the phrase in verse 13 which says, “*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised.*” Paul masterfully argues the consequences of a non-risen Christ, but he then tells us that Jesus is the first fruits of those who are asleep (dead). And then verse 21-22 states – “*For since by a man came **death**, by a man also came the **resurrection of the dead**, for as in Adam all **die**, so also in Christ all shall be **made alive***” (Bold emphasis is mine). For Gary DeMar to say that the phrase “the resurrection of the dead” is not a reference to a resurrection of dead bodies is simply to assault the clear teaching of Scripture; it only shows that he has a serious deficiency to properly interpret the Word of God.

I Cor. 15:55- “*O death, where is your victory? O death where is your sting?*” The first Adam brought sin and misery into the world. In Adam all die. Death is the result of the Fall. But hallelujah, the second Adam brought life! Jesus brought hope to our bodies that are mortal and perishable. Since He arose bodily from the grave as the first fruits, He is the guarantee that all who are in union with Him shall **also** be raised with imperishable, immortal, glorified bodies. In Jesus, death has been conquered. O death where is your victory? There is no more sting in death because in Christ we too will have victory over the grave. **Our bodies will live forever in glory.**

Verses 56- 58 elaborates on what is the reason death has lost its sting – “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We know from Scripture that the strength of sin is the law. In fact, the Bible states in I John 3:4: “*Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness and sin is lawlessness.*” The apostle Paul clearly shows that the law of God is what reveals the seriousness of his sin. In Romans 7:7-13 says:

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

The law is not sinful; the law is holy. Paul says that the purpose of the law is to show the magnitude of his sin, to show him as one who is guilty before a holy God needing deliverance, needing salvation. The law of God, which was to give life originally, resulted in his death. What kind of death? It must be death both **spiritually and physically**. The result of Adam’s sin was death both spiritually and physically as we have already noted. As I Cor. 15:56 states, the strength of sin is the law, but the curse of the law is removed by our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ **becoming a curse for us**. Because of Jesus, sin is deprived of its strength and sting for the believer. Physical death will eventually seize all of us (except for those living when Jesus comes again in glory per I Thess. 4:15). For the believer, the sting of death has been removed for **it cannot hold us in its power**. There is a day coming when the grave shall open, the bands of death be loosed, the dead saints revive, become incorruptible and immortal, and put out of the reach of death for ever. And then will it plainly appear that death will have lost its strength and sting. We have already demonstrated in the earlier verses of I Cor. 15 of the **necessity of raised bodies, foremost the resurrection of Jesus Christ’s body!** Jesus is the first fruits of those who are asleep (dead). As I Cor. 15:21 says, “*For since by a man came death, by a man also came the **resurrection of the dead***” (Bold

emphasis is mine). Jesus' resurrection of His body was the proof that death could not hold Him; hence, our union with Jesus by faith is the guarantee that death cannot hold our bodies forever. This is why the Scripture can say – O death where is your victory!

A most wonderful passage is Hebrews 2:14-17:

¹⁴Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. ¹⁶For clearly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brothers so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

This passage most wonderfully stresses the necessity of the eternal Son of God assuming human flesh in order to save us from our sins. To save His people from their enemies, death and Satan, meant that the eternal Son had to become fully human, having a human body in order to set His people free. Jesus willingly endured a shameful death; He died in humiliation **on behalf of His people, His church.** Here is the result of Jesus' death. He conquered Satan and set His people free from the fear of death. It was Satan who deceived Eve. Satan is the great deceiver, for one of his names is "Abaddon," the destroyer. In tempting man to sin and convincing Eve that God was lying, that you would not die if you ate of the forbidden fruit, Satan won out. In man's fall into sin, misery came into the world, and the whole of creation was made subject to futility (Rom. 8:20). After the Fall, Satan had the power of death over Adam and the human race. As Jesus said about Satan in John 8:44- "*He was a murderer from the beginning...*" and desired man's death in the fullest sense- **both physical and spiritual death.** Satan wanted to serve as the angel of death by wielding power over death. Satan indeed had the power over death, for in being the "tempter," Satan knows our propensity towards sin. When he succeeds in leading men into sin, then what is the consequence of being a sinner? Eternal Death (Rom. 6:24). Men in general have a fear of death; death is the great enemy. One of our most basic instincts is to preserve our lives – we don't want to die. In Jesus' incarnation, as I John 3:8 says, "*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*" Jesus' death is the just penalty for **our** rebellion against God's holy law. As I John 4:10-11 and Romans 3:24 say, Jesus' death is the propitiation for our sins. Propitiation is the satisfaction of divine justice by means of a bloody substitute. The blood of Jesus frees us from the penalty of the law. He pays the penalty that we deserved. So, we see the glory of Romans 6:23 – "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Bold emphasis is mine). In Christ the believer need not fear death and impending judgment for his/her sins; hence, Satan's power over death has been destroyed.

We can also say that Christ's incarnation necessitated Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead. What good is Christ's work on the cross if He doesn't have victory over the grave? Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus, there is no risen and ascended Lord interceding for us from God's throne.

We must never forget this momentous truth- **Jesus' bodily resurrection ultimately was not for Himself but for us!** Hebrews 10:5 says, "*Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, But a body Thou hast prepared for Me.*" This is why Paul begins his masterful argument early in I Cor. 15 by stressing Christ's death for our sins and being raised from the dead on the third day. This is the apostolic preaching- Christ crucified and risen from the dead. That dual aspect is what Jesus told His disciples recorded in Luke 24:46 – "*Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day.*" This is the message of the gospel that the apostles took into all the world.

The gravity of what Gary DeMar and other full preterists believe that there is no future bodily resurrection from the dead is that it essentially **guts the glory of the Gospel. It robs Christians of their**

great hope held out for them- the hope of eternal life where body and soul are united forever in perfection. Yes, there is a spiritual resurrection but there must also be a body resurrection for man's redemption to be complete.

Having set forth the necessity of the bodily resurrection in I Cor. 15, I want to move on to some other relevant texts proving that there will be a bodily resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous.

Philippians 3:8-14

*⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹if somehow I **may attain to the resurrection from the dead.** ¹²Not that I have already grasped it all or have already become perfect, but I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Bold emphasis is mine).*

It was the resurrected Christ that had sent the Holy Spirit into his heart for the purpose of his sanctification. There is no question that Paul has **already** experienced the regenerating grace of God in the changing of his heart of stone into a heart of flesh. For Paul was already the great apostle to the Gentile world. In other words, he has already experienced a spiritual resurrection; hence, what Paul is speaking now of is **a future glorification.**

Union with Christ entails all of Christ's redemptive work in the believer. The Christian has suffered in Christ (Rom. 8:17), was crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6), died with him (Rom. 6:8; II Tim. 2:11), was buried with Him (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), made alive with him (Col.2:13), raised with Him (Col. 2:12; 3:1), made joint heirs with Him (Rom. 8: 17), enthroned with Him (Co 3:1; Rev. 20:4), is glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17), and reigns with Him (II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4).

The immediate passage and parallel passages exegetically enables us to understand. Paul has an intense longing for **the resurrection of the dead.** We know he cannot be referring to a spiritual resurrection for that has already happened in his life. It textually can be nothing other than **a bodily resurrection.** Paul recognizes that he has not yet reached perfect; nonetheless, he presses on “*toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” In referring to a prize, Paul is basically using a running analogy of one engaged in a race, pressing on fervently in order to win the prize. The context of this passage clearly reveals that the prize Paul is pressing on towards is that which is awarded to him at the resurrection of the dead.

Philippians 3:20-21

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we **eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body 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** (Bold emphasis is mine).*

We have already noted in Phil. 3:8-14 that Paul is pressing on to that perfection that he will gain in his bodily resurrection at some future point. How much clearer can this be? Our ultimate home or citizenship is in heaven. We are **waiting for** something, meaning that it has not yet occurred. One does not wait for that which they have already obtained. Jesus is going to **transform the humble or perishable body to make it conformed to the body of His glory!** This is about as exegetically clear as it gets. We have already seen in the exegesis of I Cor. 15:49 that we will bear the image of the heavenly. We proved beyond the shadow of doubt that I Cor. 15 was all about an eventual glorification of our bodies. Again, Jesus' bodily resurrection was not ultimately for Himself but for us! The parallel of Phil. 3:20-21 with I Cor. 15 is unmistakable. In I Cor. 15 emphasis was placed on the necessity of the perishable and mortal body giving way to an imperishable and immortal body. We see the transforming our humble **body** into conformity with Christ's **body of glory**. Without a future bodily resurrection that DeMar and other full preterists say doesn't exist, this passage makes no sense whatsoever. This passage affirms that at some future point, a point they are eagerly awaiting, their bodies will be changed from corruption to glory.

A parallel passage which is helpful is I Cor. 1:4-7:

⁴I thank-my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶just as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul is wanting the spiritual sanctification of Corinthian believers **as they eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ**. What is clear is that the Corinthians were eagerly awaiting some future revelation of Jesus.

Gary DeMar and other full preterists do not want to see this kind of "revelation of Jesus" as any future reference to the end of the world at some second coming or revealing of Jesus. DeMar argues that any comings of Jesus in the New Testament all have reference to the coming of Jesus in judgment on Jerusalem in 70 AD. A question that should make DeMar think twice is that both the Philippians and Corinthians were Greeks. There is nothing in either of these contexts that would remotely indicate that these Greeks would be looking forward to some judgment on apostate Judaism. Moreover, Jesus' coming to Jerusalem was **judgment** not some glorification of their bodies.

Another helpful passage on what believers are looking towards is I Peter 1:3-5, 13 which states:

*³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time....
¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

One of the first things we note is that Christians were born again to a living hope through the **resurrection of Jesus**. The Christian hope is not dead; it is not in vain, but it is a living hope. This hope is rooted in Jesus' resurrection, and as we have seen in other passages, **Jesus was not raised for Himself but for His church**. Believers eagerly await for the transformation of their corruptible bodies into Christ's incorruptible, glorified body. Verse 4 reveals the purpose or goal for this hope rooted in Jesus' resurrection. It is to obtain, an inheritance that is **imperishable and undefiled, and will not fade away reserved in heaven!** Verse 5 says that our inheritance is being protected by God Himself through faith for a salvation ready to be **revealed in the last time**. This passage is indicating that our salvation in some sense is also future, not something we already possess. Peter exhorts them in v. 13 to **fix their hope**

completely on the grace to be brought to you **at the revelation of Christ**. Assigning this passage to some coming of Jesus to destroy Jerusalem is never pictured in Scripture as the hope of the believer. How is judgment on Jerusalem our inheritance?

This notion of waiting for some glorious future reality is a focus in part of Romans 8. Let's see the amazing truths that Romans 8:16-25 has for us.

Romans 8:16-25

Gary DeMar and full preterists deny the future bodily resurrection at a future coming of Christ at the end of the world. Romans 8 presents an enormous challenge and refutation to their belief.

Romans 8:16-25 states:

*¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³And not only that, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our body.** ²⁴For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, through perseverance we wait eagerly for it (Bold emphasis is mine).*

In v.16, one of the vital ministries of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is to bear witness that we are children of God. Earlier in Romans 8:9 one cannot be a Christian without the Holy Spirit. Once a person has been regenerated by the Spirit and embraced Christ by faith, the believer is an heir of God and heirs with Christ. We have already seen from I Peter elements of the Christian inheritance. In v. 18 we see that the child of God's sufferings in this world is nothing compared to the glory to come. We suffer with Jesus and we are glorified with Jesus. Jesus because of His sufferings was rewarded with a bodily resurrection which means we too will be glorified with a bodily resurrection. Not only will the Christian be glorified, but the creation itself which was cursed due to Adam's fall into sin (Gen. 3:17) hopes to be set free from its slavery to corruption (v.21). The creation hopes to be set free into the freedom of the **glory** of the children of God. Paul compares the hope of the creation to be freed from its curse to a woman groaning and suffering in the pains of childbirth. And the believer, the child of God, is groaning within "**waiting for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our body**" (v.23). I cannot help but emphasize that the Scripture plainly and powerfully says the child of God is groaning like a woman in childbirth with the hope of a child. We spiritually groan with the hope of our adoption, the redemption of our body. Matthew Henry said it very powerfully:

*What is it we are thus desiring and waiting for? What would we have? *The adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* Though the soul be the principal part of the man, yet the Lord has declared himself for the body also, and has provided a great deal of honour and happiness for the body. The resurrection is here called *the redemption of the body.* It shall then be rescued from the power of death and the grave, and the bondage of corruption; and, though a vile body, yet it shall be refined and beautified, and made like that glorious body of Christ, Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 42. This is called *the adoption.* (Matthew Henry commentary at Rom. 8:23).*

What we see being taught in Romans 8 is that there is a dual adoption and a dual redemption. There is the adoption into the family of God when we believe in Jesus (John 1:12) and here we see there is a future adoption which is exegetically said to be the **redemption of our body**.

John Murray's comments are poignant when he says on Rom. 8:23:

In this respect "adoption" is used as are the terms "salvation" and "redemption." Sometimes they refer to what is in the possession of the believer now (cf. 1:16; 11:11; 3:24; Eph. 1:7, at other times to the consummation of salvation and redemption at the coming of Christ (cf. 13:11; Phil. 2:12; Luke 21:28; Eph. 1:14; 4:30). "Adoption" is peculiarly appropriate to designate the glory that awaits God's people because it denotes the acme of privilege bestowed; nothing serves more to enhance the luster of the glory reserved than to represent it as sonship come to its full fruition and enjoyment. "The redemption of our body" specifies that in which the "adoption" consists – it is the resurrection when the sons of God will be glorified with the immortal and incorruptible body (cf. vs 11; I Cor. 15:50-55; II Cor. 5:2, 3; Phil. 3:21). **The adoption should be identified thus with the resurrection of the body and that the resurrection should be called the *redemption of the body*** draw attention again to the place accorded to the body in the apostle's thinking. The consummation of the redemptive process is waiting for the transformation by which the body of our humiliation will be conformed the likeness of the body of Christ's glory (cf. Phil. 3:21) and it is for that consummation that the sons of God wait (Italics emphasis is Murray; bold emphasis is mine).

Verse 24 sets forth the nature of the Christian hope- "***for in hope we were saved.***" Paul's emphasis is that the salvation bestowed upon the believer in the past, the salvation that he/she now possesses is characterized by hope. In one sense, the salvation that we now possess is incomplete until the redemption of our bodies. Paul emphasizes that hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for that which he sees? This means that hope is no longer "hope" when the thing hoped for is realized. The Christian hopes; the Christian eagerly waits with perseverance. We are waiting for the **redemption of our bodies**. This is the Christian hope.

Ephesians 1:13-14 informs us of the same glorious truth when it says:

¹³In Him you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of the promise, ¹⁴who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of His glory.

Just as Romans 8:16 says that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and co-heirs with Christ, this passage refers to the Holy Spirit as a pledge, a down payment as it were, of our inheritance, an inheritance to the redemption of God's own possession.

According to Scripture, man's redemption is not viewed as complete until his body and soul are reunited in perfection in heaven. This reuniting of body/soul in perfection is termed "glorification."

Romans 8:29-30

This passage states:

²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters;

³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

This passage is known as the “*ordo salutis*” (order of salvation) in Reformed Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). The order of salvation is set forth from start to finish, from those who God foreknew to their glorification. The problem with Gary DeMar and full preterism is that they deny the bodily resurrection of the saints. The only resurrection of the saints that they acknowledge is that of a spiritual resurrection. This resurrection which is found in several places can also be viewed as effectual calling. The term “born again” would refer to one’s spiritual birth (John 3:5). Since the saint’s resurrection is tied to those who are “called” where does “glorification” fit in with a full preterist view? It cannot be the spiritual resurrection because one must be regenerated in order to have faith, in order to be justified, and the text refers to those who are glorified after they are justified.

Gary DeMar and full preterism robs the Christian’s hope; it robs the redemption of our bodies. Man is not complete until body and soul are reunited in perfection in glory. Though our souls are redeemed when we believe, our bodies are not redeemed until the glorious resurrection of our bodies from the grave. Because Jesus’ body was raised and glorified, so shall our body be raised and glorified. All of creation is eagerly awaiting its restoration. Only in the resurrection of the Christian’s body will man’s creation as a body/soul find its restoration.

While full preterism only recognizes a spiritual resurrection and not a bodily resurrection, this view cannot be sustained by an exegetical analysis of the relationship of John 5:24-29; Colossians 3:1-4 and Rev. 20:1-6.

Revelation 20:1-6 states:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²And he took hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. ⁴Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their foreheads and on their hands; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

John 5:24-29

This text has Jesus saying:

²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life ²⁵Truly, truly, I say to you, a time is coming and even now has arrived, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; ²⁷and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. ²⁸Do

not be amazed at this; for a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹and will come out: those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the bad deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Colossians 3:1-4

Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

I mention Revelation 20:5-6 first because it speaks of those saints who take part in a **first resurrection** over who the second death has no power. The second death is mentioned in Revelation 20:11-15 where Jesus judges all mankind from His Great White Throne. All those not found in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire, which is said to be the second death.

The first resurrection implies obviously that there is at least another resurrection because Scripture refers to a “first” resurrection. It is a spiritual resurrection whereby a deadened soul is said to be brought from death to life.

In John 5:24-29, Jesus taught concerning these two resurrections. In verses 24-25, Jesus says that the hour now is when those who hear His word and believe do not come unto judgment but pass out of death unto life. The dead are said to “hear the voice of the Son of God.” John 8:47 and 10:27 refer to those who hear Jesus and follow Him. Then we read in John 5:28-29 where Jesus said an hour is coming when those in their “**tombs**” will hear His voice and will come forth. This is a general resurrection of the physical dead where some will be raised to life but others will be raised to judgment. This corresponds well with Revelation 20:11-15. Those who are raised to life are those whose names are in the book of life, but those raised to judgment are those whose names are not in the book of life, and they will be judged and condemned to the lake of fire, which is the second death.

It is apparent that the **second resurrection** is a bodily resurrection for John 5:28 refers to those **in their “tombs”** who hear Jesus. We are told in I Thessalonians 4:16-18 about one aspect of the physical resurrection at the end of the world. Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and the dead in Christ will rise first and then those alive at the time will be raptured (caught up) with Jesus in the air. Even though nothing is said about the wicked being raised at this time, it doesn’t mean that they are not raised at this time. The focus of Paul in I Thessalonians is to comfort the Thessalonian Christians about those who have died in the faith (verse 18). John 5:28-29 does refer to both the righteous and the wicked being raised. An Old Testament passage that teaches this general resurrection is Daniel 12:2 where Daniel speaks of a coming resurrection of some to everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt.

In Jesus’ comment about those in their tombs hearing His voice and coming out of their tombs, we should all be familiar with the greatest of Jesus’ miraculous signs in raising Lazarus from his tomb where he had been dead for four days. When did Lazarus come out of his tomb? It was when Jesus with a loud voice cried out, “*Lazarus, come forth!*” Lazarus had to obey the voice of Jesus; hence, as Jesus said in John 5:29, all those in their tombs will come forth.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is very clear in John 5:24-29 distinguishing two groups **who hear My word**. The first group who hear His word believe and have eternal life and do not come into judgment, that is, condemnation. In hearing and believing they pass from death into life. This is surely speaking of being born again by the Spirit of which Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:5). The next group that Jesus mentions

who hear His word are those who are in **their tombs**. It should be inescapably clear exegetically that “tombs” is referencing those who are “physically dead.” An hour is coming when the physically dead shall hear Jesus’ voice and rise from the dead. Jesus makes it very clear in v. 29 that there is a general resurrection consisting of **both the righteous and the unrighteous**. The righteous rise at the voice of Jesus to life **while the unrighteous rise to a resurrection of judgment**. Jesus says that some who rise from their tombs are those who did good deeds. A parallel of this passage is to the final Day of Judgment pictured in Matt. 25:31-46. This is where Jesus separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep are those who did good by ministering to those who were hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison. In other words, their good deeds demonstrated that they had been justified by faith (James 2:14-26). The goats are those who did not do these things thereby demonstrating they never had justifying faith. Jesus, in Matt. 25:46 referencing both the sheep and goats says – *“And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.”*

Jesus is teaching a general resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. It is likely that Jesus is thinking of what is said in Daniel 12:1-2 which says – *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”* The similarity of Daniel 12:1-2 and John 5:29 is essentially the same.

Another passage that would teach what Jesus is referencing in John 5:29 is Revelation 20:11-15 which says –

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them; and they were judged, each one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Without going into any in depth exegesis of this passage, I want to emphasize several things. First, the phrase, *“I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne,”* must be referencing the physically dead. This fact would be confirmed by what v. 13 says - *“the sea gave up the dead.”* Second, these dead are judged from opened books. Those not found in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire, which is specifically said in v. 15 to be the second death. What would have been the first death? It would be the physical death, being in the tomb. Hence, the second death is a judgment of condemnation where the unrighteous dead are thrown into the lake of fire. Rev. 20:10 says that the devil has already been thrown into this lake of fire where he is being tormented day and night forever and ever.

Despite what Gary DeMar and other full preterists contend, **Jesus taught two resurrections- a spiritual one and a bodily one**. For Gary to deny a future bodily resurrection is a direct assault on Christ’s clear teaching.

The full preterists insist that the only resurrection in the Bible is a spiritual one. They are only partially correct. Let’s look at Colossians 3:1-4. Paul has stated that believers have been raised up with Christ where Christ is seated at God the Father’s right hand. They were raised up spiritually when because of a regenerated heart they were born again by the power of the Holy Spirit and empowered to believe in Jesus. Since the believer is in spiritual union with Christ, he must in this life keep constantly seeking the things of above. In other words, he must be seeking to obey the Lord Jesus in all respects; he needs to grow in sanctification. The believer as v. 3 states has died and his life is hidden with Christ. This death is

a death to a former life of sin. A good parallel passage teaching this is Rom. 6:4-22. Rom. 6:5 states - “*For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.*” John Murray points out in his commentary on Romans, “the apostle is not dealing here with our physical death and resurrection; he is dealing with our death to sin and our resurrection to spiritual life, as is apparent from the preceding context and will become even more apparent in the verses that follow” (John Murray commentary on Romans, p.218).

So, Colossians 3:1-3 is teaching a spiritual resurrection, but v. 4 is a different matter. Verse 4 states – “*When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*” This verse is teaching the glorification of the believer who was regenerated and who live a godly life in Christ. Col. 3:4 is teaching what Jesus said in John 5:25 with reference to those who were raised from their tombs to a resurrection of life.

Gary DeMar in denying the resurrection of the body for saints while affirming a spiritual resurrection did not mention Colossians 3:4, which is fully understandable because it does not fit into his eschatological presuppositions, although to be fair there were many passages he did not deal with in his podcasts. Nonetheless, Col. 3:4 poses a real exegetical dilemma for his denial of a bodily resurrection because a spiritual resurrection has already been seen in verses 1-3.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as indeed the rest of mankind do, who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. ¹⁵For we say this 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. ¹⁶For 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 ¹⁸Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

Gary’s understanding of I Thessalonians 4:13-18 is seriously flawed. In his podcast # 3, Gary discussed this passage and referred to it as the supposed “go to” passage for the dead bodily rising at a second coming of Jesus at the end of the world. He then refutes that widely held view by evangelicals. Gary did admit, “It is not an easy passage for me; I don’t know what it means because of all the study I have put into it; there is a lot going on here” (audio recording starting at 38:41). If he says he is not sure what it means supposedly after all his study, then why oppose the common understanding of the passage? In fact, Gary said, “I originally had the traditional understanding in my book *Last Days Madness*, but I later took it out because I was uncomfortable with the view. As with all full preterists, Gary believes **all** references in the New Testament of Christ’s coming (*parousia*) are references to Jesus’ coming in judgment to Jerusalem in 70 AD.

As I have mentioned previously, it is essential in properly understanding the Scripture that one understands that words and phrases need to be understood in their immediate context while also being aware that parallel passages elsewhere can often provide insight into a meaning of a text. Gary DeMar’s approach to I Thess. 4:13-18 has very serious exegetical flaws. One of the biggest errors that Gary makes is his over emphasis on what he calls, “audience relevance.” By this he means one must understand who the apostle is talking to and that whatever the apostle says must have a present application. There is some merit to this; however, one must be very careful not to exclude the reality that the apostle is referring to future events particularly events at the end of the world.

In I Thess. 4:15, Gary makes a huge deal of the “we” in the verse. He says that “we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.” Gary says that the “we” implies that some **presently living** will be alive at Christ’s coming (*parousia*). Here is where Gary gets into a serious exegetical error which leads him to completely miss the meaning of the text. As I have told a full preterist that I have debated, you **cannot import the meaning of “parousia” in one context to every text that uses “parousia.”** If one does this, it can completely distort the meaning of the text under consideration. Gary makes a very serious exegetical error by concluding that all references of “*parousia*” in the New Testament refers to the “*parousia*” of Jesus in Matt. 24 in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. By what right exegetically does Gary have in making **this assumption?** Let’s apply his assumption to I Thess. 4:13-18 and see if it makes any sense. First, let’s recognize who the epistle was written to. It was written to the church at Thessalonica, a Greek city, meaning Gentiles. What was the judgment that came in 70 AD to Jerusalem? It was a judgment against **apostate Judaism**. In applying Gary’s insistence upon “audience relevance” why should we view Paul’s comments to these Greek believers as meaning that the “we” of v. 15 **must** be some who are alive to witness the fall of Jerusalem?

We must not ignore how the apostle Paul has already used the word “*parousia*” in his epistle to the Thessalonians. When interpreting one context in a book of the Bible, it is extremely important to at least look at how the same word or phrase is used elsewhere in that book. Paul wrote the following to the Thessalonians in I Thess. 2. Paul, in chapter 2, emphasizes his ministry to those in Thessalonica, how he and his apostolic team lived godly lives in their presence. Paul is exhorting in I Thess. 2:10-12 for the Thessalonian believers to “*walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom.*” Paul does mention in I Thess.2:14-16 that the Thessalonian believers have endured sufferings by apostate Jews in their city. Paul says that these apostate Jews persecuting the Thessalonians are like the apostate Jews who killed Jesus and the prophets. Paul says that these apostate Jews are seeking to hinder their preaching to the Gentiles with the hope that the Gentiles might be saved (v.16). Paul also describes what is going to happen to these apostate Jews that attempt to hinder the apostle’s ministry “*with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.*” I do think that Paul is referencing the destruction coming to apostate Judaism at a future date, which we do know to be 70 AD. We must remember what Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees in Matt. 23. After giving a scathing condemnation of their corruption, Jesus says in Matt. 23:31-32 that they bear witness against themselves and that they are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Jesus directly says to them – “*Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers*” (v.33). And then Jesus goes on to tell His disciples that the temple will be torn down.

Gary DeMar argues, “See, I Thess.2:14-16 is the proof that the coming of Jesus in 70 AD is therefore the context of how to interpret I Thess. 4:13ff. To this I would respond, “Gary, why **must** what Paul says is going to happen to the Jews one day **has to be the meaning of *parousia* in I Thess. 4:13-18?** Gary, don’t be exegetically guilty of importing into a text a meaning that cannot be sustained in the meaning of that text.” Let’s see how Paul uses “*parousia*” in I Thess. 2:19. The text says – “*For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at **His coming***” (Bold emphasis is mine). Paul is telling the Thessalonian believers how precious they are to him. Their coming to faith in Jesus because of his preaching is his hope, his joy and crown of exultation. This hope (remember hope is always future), his crown of exultation will occur “**at His coming.**” One cannot but wonder if this is part of what he could be referring to when he writes to Timothy – “*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸in the future there is reserved for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me **on that day**; and not only to me, but also to all who have **loved His appearing***” (Bold emphasis is mine).

This “coming of Jesus” in I Thess. 2:19 would hardly make any sense if it was a reference to God’s judgment upon apostate Judaism. However, this “*parousia*” of Jesus would fit in well with the context of

I Thessalonians if “*parousia*” was a coming at the end of the world, on that day which is referred to elsewhere in the NT as the “last day” which is the day of resurrection (John 6:39,44; I Cor. 15:21-23). Paul is associating the “coming of Jesus” with a reward that he will receive at Jesus’ appearing. The Thessalonians are his joy, his crown.

Let’s see how the context of I Thessalonians further describes Paul’s use of “*parousia*.” In I Thess. 3, Paul mentions the joy in hearing Timothy’s report to him how the Thessalonian believers were doing well despite their affliction. Paul is praying for them that they may increase and abound in love for one another “*so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints*” (v.13). The fact that this coming of Jesus is **with all His saints** should greatly aid us in understanding the context of I Thess. 4:17 where Paul says, “*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together **with them** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord*” (Bold emphasis is mine). Paul is encouraging the Thessalonian believers that there is a future day where their hearts will be established blameless in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

In the earlier part of I Thess. 4, Paul is exhorting them to holiness of life and for them to continue in their great love for one another (4:9). Now, we come to the passage that Gary DeMar says is the “go to” passage for all of us who believe that I Thess. 4:13-18 is referring to a coming of Christ at the end of the world. Gary believes that this “*parousia*” in this passage should be interpreted as the coming of Jesus to destroy Jerusalem in 70 AD, not as some “second” coming of Jesus at the end of the world. First, Gary failed to properly see how Paul **has already** used “*parousia*” in I Thess. 2:19; 3:13. To import some judgment of apostate Judaism as the meaning of “*parousia*” into I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15 makes no exegetical sense. I believe Gary is guilty of a serious example of eisegesis (reading into the text) that which is not true.

I Thess. 4:13 itself should be a clear sign exegetically what the apostle is referring to. The verse states – “*But we do not want you to be uniformed brethren, about those **who are asleep**, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope*” (Bold emphasis is mine). We know from Paul’s use elsewhere of “those who are asleep” as referring to those who have physically died. Now, Gary DeMar has already said in his podcasts that references to “the resurrection of the dead” is not a reference to dead bodies which is the primary reason that has led him to not believe in a future bodily resurrection. So, coming to this text, Gary has already prejudiced himself. His faulty presupposition prevents him from seeing what is the obvious. The Thessalonian believers were wondering about their departed loved ones- those “who are asleep.” Is their death the end of everything? Is there no hope for believers after death? Obviously, it would be depressing if that were the case. It would be exactly what Paul says in I Cor. 15. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then our faith is in vain, then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished (I Cor. 15:18), then there is no hope and we should be pitied. Contrary to this impossible scenario, Paul says that we are not like those who have no hope (I Thess. 4:13).

In I Thess. 4:14 Paul specifically mentions **the resurrection of the dead, specifically the Lord Jesus**. The text says, “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.*” In addressing the concern of the Thessalonians about their dead relatives, Paul says Jesus died but **rose again!** And this resurrected Christ will bring with Him **those who have fallen asleep**, those who have died. In other words, don’t be worrying about your departed loved ones, for they **will be brought with Jesus**. We do need to understand where believers are presently who have died in faith. The Scripture says that their souls are with Jesus in heaven. Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8), and Paul himself preferred to depart from this world and be with Christ (Phil. 1:23). Hence, those who Jesus is bringing with Him (I Thess. 4:14) must be the souls of departed saints. This contextually fits in very well with I Thess. 3:13 where it says “*at the coming of our Lord Jesus **with all His saints***” (Bold emphasis is mine). So, which is exegetically sounder? To understand I Thess. 4:13-14 as **not** referring to dead bodies and a coming of judgment to

Jerusalem in 70 AD, or to believe the historic, orthodox view of a future coming of Jesus at the end of the world?

Having said that the departed saints will one day be coming with Jesus, Paul now says in I Thess. 4:15 that “we” who are alive and remain until the “coming of the Lord” shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. Contrary to Gary DeMar’s attempted exegesis to say that the “we” should be understood in association to those living to see the coming of Jesus in judgment upon Jerusalem, the context clearly indicates that the “we” is to be understood of those alive at a coming of Jesus with the souls of departed believers. It makes no sense whatsoever to interpret I Thess. 4 as the coming of judgment to Jerusalem in 70 AD. How did departed saints come with Jesus to judge Jerusalem? DeMar’s exegesis is completely flawed and is a view that robs Christian’s of their eternal hope.

In referencing the “coming of the Lord,” I Thess. 4:16 says that at this coming of Jesus with all His saints, the Lord descends from heaven with a shout and with the trumpet of God “**and the dead in Christ shall rise first.**” This clearly states exegetically that there is a physical resurrection of dead believers at Jesus’ coming (*parousia*). This fits in perfectly with what Paul says in I Cor. 15:23. Gary DeMar cannot accept this because his faulty presuppositions will not allow it. And, it corresponds exactly with what Jesus has said in John 5:29; 6:39, 44.

In I Thess. 4:17 Paul says, “*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*” The “we” is a future reference to those alive at this coming of Jesus at the end of the world. Moreover, it corresponds exactly with what Paul said in I Cor 15:51-56. This resurrection of the dead which is the theme of I Cor. 15 pictures the changing of perishable, mortal bodies into imperishable, immortal bodies in the twinkling of an eye. This incredible transformation occurs at the “**sound of the trumpet and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.**” What is happening in I Thess. 4:16-17? A trumpet is sounding and dead bodies rising first and those alive being caught up in the air to meet the Lord. Obviously, those who are alive must be changed from mortal to immortal in order to rise up to be with the Lord.

Paul concludes this section with his great encouragement to the Thessalonian believers in I Thess. 4:18 – “*Therefore, **comfort one another with these words***” (Bold emphasis is mine). How are they to be comforted? The living Thessalonian believers can be comforted that their physically dead loved ones will one day live again! They haven’t perished with no hope like the unbelievers who have no hope.

Gary DeMar and all full preterists have **gutted the glory of the gospel of a future bodily resurrection.** When Gary said in his podcast that I don’t know what exactly to do with I Thess. 4:13-18, he was inadvertently confessing his inability to properly exegete this passage. The word of God was given to us to understand. We cannot or should not simply throw up our arms and say, “the passage is too hard for me; it is so difficult to come up with some definitive view.” However, this is not exactly true about Gary, for he has said that the passage is not about a second coming of Jesus at the end of the world and “resurrection of the dead” cannot be about dead bodies. We could say to Gary, “Gary, you have said that I should not be catching grief because I am asking questions. Gary, you said that our theology should be determined by exegesis not simply because of creeds and confessions of faith. Well, the evangelical church down through the centuries has done an exegesis of these texts and has concluded that I Thess. 4:13-18 does affirm a second coming of Jesus at the end of the world and there is a bodily resurrection of the dead at Jesus’ coming. The church has done its exegesis and has shown you to be wrong!” Gary’s theological errors are not minor errors; they are profound. If Paul told the Thessalonians to be comforted by a knowledge that there will one day be a bodily resurrection, then imagine the negative impact upon we Christians today if there is no hope that our bodies will be perfected.

I Thessalonians 5:23

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit and body** be preserved complete, without blame, **at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** (Bold emphasis is mine).*

We cannot help but see the parallel between this verse and what the apostle said in I Thess. 3:13 where in that passage he looks to a coming of Jesus with all His saints when believers will have their hearts established unblamable in holiness. Here in I Thess. 5:23, Paul says virtually the exact same thing but adds a very vital phrase – **your spirit and body (soma)**. Paul envisions a blamelessness, an entire sanctification at the coming of Jesus. This complete sanctification entails both spirit and body. As we noted in our exegesis of I Cor. 15, man was created as a body/soul. This is man’s duality at creation. Man’s fall into sin ripped man apart at his very essence. The hope that the Bible holds out for Christians as we have seen in several passages is that the believer will once again be made complete where the body and soul will be perfect forever! This is indeed a precious hope!

Gary DeMar has terribly failed in his exegesis of the book of first Thessalonians. We see a common understanding of “the coming of Jesus” in all four uses of “*parousia*” at I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15, and 5:23. It is Gary DeMar who has failed to study the book in its context. It is he who has introduced a foreign notion of “*parousia*” into the entire book. In DeMar’s restricting of all “*parousias*” to one event of judgment in 70 AD and then import that meaning into I Thessalonians is exegetically unfounded. Such an interpretation is not being diligent to present oneself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15).

II Thessalonians 1:6-10

⁶For after all it is only right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us, when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels ⁸in 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. ⁹These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes to be glorified among His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—because our testimony to you was believed.

Gary approaches this passage in the same way as he attempted to interpret Acts 17:30-31 and I Thessalonians. He again stresses the importance of what he calls “audience relevance.” He says II Thessalonians had to apply to “their day” otherwise it is not relevant to the Thessalonians in the first century. Gary attempts to build a case for this “audience relevance” by pointing out that the affliction the Thessalonians were experiencing at the hands of reprobate Jews in Thessalonica will be recompensed by a righteous judgment of God upon these persecutors of the church (II Thess. 1:5). There will most surely be a future recompense of the wicked by a Holy God who loves His church. There is coming a soon great recompense, payback time, for the wicked. **When will God’s recompense occur? When will God give relief to the Thessalonians?** Gary says this soon relief will occur “*when the Lord Jesus shall 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. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*” (II Thess. 1:7-9) (Bold emphasis is mine).

Gary says that “audience relevance” meaning the church to whom the epistle was written demands a soon recompense of judgment to these wicked Jews. Gary says that an interpretation of this passage to a future judgment of all men at the end of the world would have no meaning for the Thessalonians who are

presently suffering at the hands of these wicked Jews. Gary says that the only proper interpretation is a soon judgment and one that will transpire within 40 years at 70 AD. But I say to Gary, “Gary, why must you think the recompense of God for their sufferings **must be in their lifetime**? Does God always judge men according to their deeds during our lifetime?”

Yes, Paul is commending the Thessalonians for their perseverance and faith in the midst of the afflictions they are enduring (II Thess. 1:4). Yes, Paul is saying that a holy and loving God will recompense the persecutors of His church accordingly. We must not ignore the testimony of Scripture elsewhere as in Romans 8:17-19 “*And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him in order 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 to be revealed** to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.*” In Romans, Paul makes it very clear that our present-day sufferings pale in insignificance when we consider the glory to come- **when that glory will be revealed in the revealing of the sons of God.** And when is that revealing of the sons of God? Romans 8:23 says it is the eager awaiting of our adoption as sons, **the redemption of our body.** This coming day of our body’s redemption is something we eagerly wait for. We hope for it; we expect it in hope, but it is yet future. This event in Scripture is the day of resurrection at Christ’s coming (I Cor. 15:23). It is the “last day” that Jesus mentions (John 6:39, 44); it is the day when the tombs are opened and the righteous are raised to a resurrection of life (John 5:29).

We could say to Gary DeMar, “The when of God’s recompense to the persecutors of the Thessalonians doesn’t have to be some soon recompense in a generation. And how does God’s recompense upon apostate Judaism in 70 AD in Jerusalem’s destruction a satisfaction for Greek believers? To insert a judgment of Jerusalem into II Thess. 1:7-9 simply makes no exegetical sense whatsoever; however, if we view the recompense in a coming day when Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels dealing out **eternal punishment** to these wicked men who will be sent away from the presence of the Lord and from His glory then it does make exegetical sense.

In his podcast, Gary failed to address II Thess. 1:10 – “*when He comes to be glorified among His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—because our testimony to you was believed.*” This verse implies that God’s retribution to the persecutors of His church not only in Thessalonica but everywhere throughout history occurs when Jesus comes to be glorified among His saints. Interpreting II Thess. 1:6-10 in the context of the entire epistles to the Thessalonians means that there is a bodily resurrection of saints at the end history, at a coming of Jesus when He is revealed.

Gary referred to the view of a bodily resurrection occurring at a second coming of Jesus at the end of the world as the “traditional” view. There is good reason for this. It’s because it’s exegetically sound; however, Gary’s full preterist views cannot withstand a close exegetical scrutiny of God’s precious Word.

Gary DeMar’s Denial of An Eternal Torment in Hell for the Wicked

With Gary’s denial of a bodily resurrection of both the righteous and wicked at the coming of Jesus at the end of the world, it forces him to call into question the idea that the wicked will be tormented in hell forever. In his podcast # 2, Gary discussed the third question that was asked of him in the letter sent to him. That question was- Do you believe history will end with the final judgment of all men? Gary stated that he does believe in a future judgment and that God is judging presently. He said that he did believe that evil would be done away with, but he raised the questions – “How does this affect our view of hell? If hell is eternal so is evil, then how do you get rid of sin and evil if you have a doctrine of hell with the wicked being tormented? Gary also said, “Anyone who claims they know what is going to happen at the end is daydreaming; we **just don’t know, and I really don’t care.**” So, Gary thinks nobody can know how history ends, or what happens to death and evil. And then to say, “**I don’t care.**” Gary then commented that all these Reformed guys (referring to those who signed the letter to Gary) hold to the

Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 33:2. Gary read this portion of 33:2 – “... but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” When Gary was reading WCF 33:2 he raised his voice when he got to “shall be cast into ETERNAL TORMENTS...” After reading this section, Gary said, “There is no way I could answer in the affirmative because you have a doctrine of hell where they will be there forever and evil is not cast out of the universe; they will have to deal with that.” Gary then asked, “What is the Reformed view of hell? He mentioned a man, Steve Craig who wrote a book, *All That You Want to Know About Hell*. In this book Craig mentioned there were three evangelical views of hell. Craig mentions three Christian views of God’s final solution to the problem of evil which would in fact answer question # 3 but which way do you answer it? Do you do it with traditionalism of eternal torment which doesn’t get rid of it or annihilationism or restorationism where everyone will be saved in the end. Gary said that Reformed theology only recognizes the traditional view as set forth in WCF 33:2. Amazingly, Gary would not affirm which of the three supposed evangelical views he held to. But, he actually did mention that he could not accept WCF 33:2 on an eternal hell of torment, so he has answered the question.

I find it amazing that Gary said that anyone who says they know how it will all end in human history is daydreaming. Really? The WCF chapters 32 and 33 titled “Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the dead,” and “Of the Last Judgment” **do set forth how it will all end. So, were the Westminster divines daydreamers? When the apostle Paul tells us in I Cor. 15 how it will end, is he a daydreamer? And when the Lord Jesus informs us of the end and what happens to the righteous and unrighteous on the last day, was our blessed Lord a daydreamer?**

Gary DeMar point blank is challenging the *Westminster Standards*. WCF chapters 32 and 33 and Larger Catechism questions 82-90 clearly affirm the following: The bodies of men die returning to dust seeing corruption. The souls of the righteous go into the highest heavens being made perfect in holiness with their souls waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. The souls of the wicked are cast into hell where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. At the last day, those who are alive shall not die, but be changed. The dead will be raised up with the selfsame bodies and shall be united with their souls forever. The bodies of the unjust shall be raised to dishonor while the bodies of the just will be made conformable to His own glorious body. God has appointed a day where He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ. In this day, apostate angels will be judged. Also, all persons that have lived on earth will appear before Christ’s tribunal to give an account of what they have done, good or evil. The purpose for that Day is for the eternal salvation of the elect, and of His justice in the **damnation of the reprobate**. The righteous go into everlasting life, but the wicked shall be cast into **eternal torments and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power**.

Gary DeMar has placed himself in direct opposition to Reformed theology and the Lord Jesus. He actually has placed himself outside of Christian orthodoxy.

Gary made a huge deal that our doctrinal views must be rooted in biblical exegesis not simply subscription to creeds and confessions of faith. I have already shown Gary’s failed exegesis in terms of a bodily resurrection, now I turn to an exegesis of biblical passages that definitively teach an eternal hell of torment for the wicked.

The Meaning and Use of “Gehenna” or “Hell”

Some of the following information was taken from a very useful article titled “The Use of Hell in the New Testament” written by Wayne Jackson.

The term “hell” is found twenty-three times in the King James Version of the English Bible. There is a great deal of confusion among religious folks regarding this word due to the fact that the English form “hell” actually represents three different terms in the Greek New Testament. Let us give consideration to this matter.

Hades is used for the general abode of the spirits of the dead, whether good or evil. Jesus affirmed that he possessed the keys (authority to open) of “death” (the receptacle of the body) and “Hades” (the realm of the departed soul) (Rev. 1:18). In one of his visions, John sees “death” riding a pale horse, followed by “Hades” (Rev. 6:8). Both death and Hades will be emptied at the time of the judgment (Rev. 20:13-14), i.e., the grave will give up the body, and the spirit sphere will surrender the soul.

In Matthew 25:41, Jesus says on the Day of Judgment to the unbelievers (goats) that they are cursed, and He commands them to depart to “everlasting fire” **prepared for the Devil and his angels.**

It is interesting that eleven out of the twelve times that “Gehenna” or “hell” is used in the New Testament, Jesus is the one using it!

What was “Gehenna” like in biblical times and why did Jesus refer to “Gehenna” or “hell” the way He did? Jesus used “Gehenna” for a very good reason. It represented a place of great disgust. What is the history of the “Valley of the sons of Hinom”? This valley was used by certain apostate Hebrews as a place where their children were offered into the fiery arms of the pagan god Molech (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6). It was thus an area of suffering and weeping. When Josiah launched his reformation, this valley was regarded as a site of heinous abomination (2 Kgs. 23:10-14). After the 70-year exile, the Jews repurposed a place of infanticide to an ever-burning rubbish heap. Later it became a common receptacle for all the refuse of the city. Here dead bodies of animals and criminals, and all kinds of refuse was cast into it and consumed by fire; it was a place that was always burning. It was a place where maggots and worms crawled through the waste. It was a place that was utterly filthy, disgusting, and repulsive to eyes and nose. It was an image of everlasting destruction. Jesus aptly used this place for His teaching on hell.

Let’s see how the Lord Jesus Christ spoke about “Gehenna” or “hell.”

Matthew 5:29-30:

*“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your **whole body to be cast into hell.**” (Bold Emphasis mine).*

In this passage, Jesus uses hyperbole to say that it would be better to go through life with great loss (e.g. deprived of an eye or a limb), rather than having Gehenna as a final destiny.

Matthew 10:28:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Bold Emphasis is mine).

This passage poses a significant refutation of Gary DeMar’s view on a bodily resurrection and with regards to a body being in hell. For Gary to say that no knows what will become of men in the end is astounding. Jesus is making it very clear that God is the one who destroys **both souls and bodies in hell.** Jesus in Scripture describes just how terrible that place is.

Mark 9:43-48:

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched where 'their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Jesus is teaching that “Gehenna” or “hell” is **a place where the fire is never quenched and where the worm does not die.** It should be evident that the idea of “never” applying to the fire and the worm is meant to convey “everlasting.”

Judas Iscariot is an example of one going to his own place of destruction.

Acts 1:15-20, 25

*And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.” (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) “For it is written in the book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office. Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.’” And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship **from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.**” And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

Concerning Judas Iscariot and his heinous crime of betraying Jesus, Jesus said about Judas in

Mark 14:21:

The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.

Putting these two passages together from Acts and Mark about Judas Iscariot, we learn that Jesus said that it would have been better for Judas never to have been born. The Scripture says that Judas went to his own place. None of this would make sense if the worse thing to happen to Judas is that he simply ceased to exist. This is hardly a penalty warranting Jesus’ comment that it would have been better if he had never been born.

The fundamental problem with the false doctrine of annihilationism is that there is nothing to fear. How is Judas' place that he went any different than any other person who died in unbelief?

Jesus speaks of some being "cast into" Gehenna (hell). The clear implication of Jesus' warning is that "hell" is a place where people are thrown. Looking at the Greek word for "cast" we learn that it is the word "ballo." Thayer's Lexicon understands its meaning when it says: to throw either with force, or without force yet with a purpose, or even carelessly.

The other context which is essential for us to take a look at Revelation 20:10-14.

Revelation 20:10-14

*The devil, who deceived them, was **cast into the lake of fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet are. **And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.** Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were **cast into the lake of fire.** This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was **cast into the lake of fire.** (bold emphasis mine)*

Jesus is referring to someone casting reprobates into this place where there is endless torment, where the fire continues and where the worm does not die. Gehenna (hell) is a place obviously where someone is thrown. Who is in this place? The beast, the false prophet, the devil, the demons, and whoever was not found in the book of life. The picture of Revelation 20 is the Final Day of Judgment. Allowing the text to govern our understanding, all the dead who have ever lived were presented before the Judge who judges them according to their works.

What do some full preterists say about Revelation 20? In one fell swoop they say it is referring to the devastation brought upon the Jews in 70AD. While it is true that a huge portion of Revelation deals with Jerusalem's destruction, it is quite evident that the context of Revelation 20:10-14 is not referring to the historical event of 70AD but the coming event of God's judgment upon all men. Those in the lake of fire, particularly the devil are **tormented night and day forever and ever.** The context is clear- perpetual suffering! The literal Greek in referring to forever and ever is: "the ages of the ages."

Let's elaborate a bit more on Revelation 20:10-14. In Rev. 20:13, death and hell (hades) delivered up all that was in them to judgment. The KJV says "hell." The word for "hell" here is the Greek word, "hades," which normally refers to the "grave." Hence, the text says that those in the grave because of death are delivered up for judgment. When death and "hades" are thrown into the lake of fire, its meaning is essentially the same as in I Cor. 15 where death is swallowed up in victory (I Cor. 15:54), for death is the last enemy to be destroyed (I Cor. 15:26). When it says "hell" or "hades" is thrown into lake of fire, it means that it will never again receive a wicked human soul as it did when "the death" killed wicked men on earth. If hades means hell, and the lake of fire also means hell, we may wonder how the one can be thrown into the other. This death is the second death, namely the lake of fire. This death- the throwing of the two companions into the lake of fire. This is the second death; this death is the lake of fire. The Hades is mentioned 10 times in the New Testament. Hell (Gehenna) is the place into which the souls of the wicked go at the time of death until at the time of the resurrection the death and hades give up these souls so they may be reunited with their bodies and stand before Christ's judgment throne to receive the verdict.

The reason that the book of Revelation has “the death” and “the hades” found together is that “the death” separates the body of the wicked from their souls while their bodies lie in the grave until Judgment Day. The wicked souls are kept in the hades until that day when their bodies and souls are cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:10-14 pictures the final destiny of unbelievers. Nothing in this context could in anyway simply teach that the unbelievers and the devil are just annihilated, cease to exist. No, the lake of fire is a real place just like Jesus taught. It is a place of eternal punishment. The degree of that torment corresponds with the severity of their sins. As noted elsewhere, some are beaten with more stripes than others (Matt. 10:15; 11:20-24; Luke 10:10-16). We could safely say that the devil and his demons will be beaten the worst. The lake of fire is said to be the “second death.” In other words, the lake of fire is the final destruction of unbelievers, but it is a destruction that is eternal suffering as the context clearly sets forth. It is not mere death or annihilation.

Revelation 21:4-8

In speaking about the new heavens and new earth this text says:

*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be Myson. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall **have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death**” (Bold emphasis is mine)*

In Rev. 21:4-8, we see the drastic contrast between those in heaven and those who will be cast into the lake of fire. Whereas there is no pain or suffering in heaven, the clear implication of verse 8 is that there will be suffering for these wicked persons. The contrast is not blissful existence in heaven as opposed to mere annihilation of being. This would be no real contrast. We must remember that Scripture teaches that each man will be judged according to his deeds. Romans 2:5-10 essentially teaches the same truth as Revelation 21:4-8.

The Meaning of Tormented

This brings us to another important word that we must consider with reference to Gehenna (hell). It is the word, “tormented.” We have seen that the devil is tormented in the lake of fire forever and ever. We have seen in Matthew 25:41 that all unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels (demons).

There are three Greek words translated as “tormented” in the New Testament. The most commonly used word occurs five times. It is the word, “*basinizo*.” Wherever it is used in the New Testament it conveys intense suffering. The Greek word “*kakoucheo*” is used once found in Hebrews 11:37. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon says that it conveys the notion of suffering, to treat ill or oppress. The context of Hebrew 11:37 deals with the ill treatment that the saints have had to endure. The other Greek word is “*odynao*” which is used twice in Luke 16.

Let’s look at some of the passages using “*basinizo*.” Let’s consider Revelation 9:5-6.

Revelation 9:5-6

*And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their **torment** was like the **torment** of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them (Bold emphasis is mine).*

The context here is an angel who releases great suffering upon those who do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads (Rev. 9:4). The torment is likened to a sting of a scorpion, and the torment will be so intense that men will want to die but can't. Now, it is granted that this passage in Revelation is dealing with the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD when the Romans besieged Jerusalem. The Jewish historian, Josephus, documents in detail the intense suffering of the Jews in Jerusalem. Even though this tormenting applies to a historical event on earth, the point is to note how the word "*basinizo*" is being used.

Let's consider another use of "*basinizo*" in Revelation 14:6-13.

Revelation 14:6-13

⁶And I saw another angel flying in midheaven with an eternal gospel to preach to those who ^llive on the earth, and to every nation, tribe, language, and people; ⁷and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth, and sea and springs of waters." ⁸And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality." ⁹Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." ¹²Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and ^ltheir faith in Jesus. ¹³And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

This is another passage dealing with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but it goes a bit further than just earthly suffering for those who worship the beast and have the beast's seal on their forehead. These are experiencing the wrath and indignation of God. When these unbelievers die **they shall suffer no rest day or night and are tormented with fire and brimstone**. In contrast to those who worshipped the beast and their torment are the saints who keep God's commandments and have the faith of Jesus. These saints rest from their labors, and their good works follow them.

This passage is dealing with the eventual state of the reprobates in contrast with believers. We will see that there is much parallel in Revelation 14:6-13 with Revelation 20:10-14. As noted previously, regarding Revelation 20:11-14, the context is clearly referring to the final Day of Judgment and the torment that the devil and his angels will experience as well as all those whose names were not written in the book of life.

The key point to remember is that to be "tormented" means to suffer intensely. The idea of annihilation where the devil, the demons, the wicked, and all unbelievers simply cease to exist with no conscious pain

is a twisting of the Scripture to mean something about a word, “torment” that cannot be supported at all in any of its usages in the New Testament.

Let’s see how “tormented” is applied to the demonic realm.

Matthew 8:29:

When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”

This is one of the most interesting Scriptures. First, the demons know who Jesus is! They know him to be the Son of God. This should be a warning to some professing Christians. Mere knowledge of who Jesus is does not mean that one knows Him in a saving way. As James 2:19 demonstrates, the demons understand that God is one and tremble. Second, these demons made an amazing statement to Jesus- “have you come here to **torment us before the time?**” Even though the demons don’t know when the Final Judgment Day will come, they know that it is certain, and they fear it, as they should. We have already seen that “the time” is what Revelation 20:10 and Matthew 25:41 are referencing.

Annihilationism will go to virtually any lengths to re-interpret the meanings of words in order to deny the notion of eternal suffering in hell. What else does the Scripture say about the demonic realm?

The Demons Being Reserved in Darkness For the Day of Judgment

Let’s consider some texts dealing with the demonic realm.

Jude 6, 7:

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

In this short epistle, Jude is fundamentally dealing with warnings issued to ungodly men and their actions. Before I discuss what shall become of these ungodly men, I want to discuss what the Scripture teaches about the demonic realm. From Jude 6-7, we learn that there were angels who rebelled in heaven. The consequences of this rebellion were that God has reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

I have noted previously that words mean what they mean in their given context, but then it can be helpful to see how the Scriptures fit together into a wonderful unity. We cannot interpret a passage in such a way as to contradict the biblical teaching of that concept elsewhere in Scripture. The question raised in Jude 6 is: what does it mean for the demons to be reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day? We need to understand the meanings of “reserved,” “everlasting chains,” “under darkness,” and “judgment of the great day? Let’s consider the Greek word “*tereo*.” Translators in this context chose the English word “reserved” to convey the Greek meaning. Elsewhere, this Greek word can be translated “to guard carefully.” The meanings are essentially the same- to carefully control and keep someone in their present state. In Jude 6, the fallen angels (demons) are being kept in their present state for a coming day of judgment. There is no escape for the demonic realm for their appointed time of judgment. Regarding the meaning of “everlasting chains,” the meaning conveys that of being bound.

Somehow the demonic realm which includes Satan and his demons is presently bound in chains. To understand how this is the case, we need to look at some other New Testament passages to shed some light on how the demonic realm is bound. One of the first passages is Revelation 20:1-8.

Revelation 20:1-8:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

This is the classic passage on the biblical teaching of the millennium. It is not necessary for this paper to delve into the various theological debates over when the millennium occurs. The prevalent position of the Reformed world is that of amillennialism or postmillennialism. Both of these positions believe that the Scripture teaches that the “millennium” (1000 years) is an indefinite period of time of the Messiah’s kingly reign on earth prior to His Second Coming. Hence, this passage in Revelation is teaching that Satan is bound by a great chain by an angel who has the key to the bottomless pit. Most commentators agree that this angel is none other the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, Jesus has bound Satan for 1000 years. We must be careful to understand that this “binding with a chain” does not mean total cessation of activity. Remember, words mean what their context say that they mean. Here in Revelation 20, the binding of Satan during the millennium is for what purpose? It is as verse 3 states, “that Satan should not deceive the nations.” When Satan is released after the millennium, he goes out to deceive the nations again (verse 8). Note in our passage that Satan is said to be in “the bottomless pit” during this millennial age. This bottomless pit should not be said to be “hell” because it is only on the Day of Judgment that Satan and his host is cast into the lake of fire forever. The “bottomless pit” and “hell” are not the same. The bottomless pit conveys the idea that there is no ability of those in the pit to escape. Our text in Revelation 20:3 says that Jesus bound Satan with a chain and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and put a seal on him **so that he should not deceive the nations** until the 1000 years were finished. The point is: Satan and his demons are presently bound in chains in this bottomless pit (a place of no escape) so that they cannot deceive the nations.

I Peter 5:8:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

From this Scripture, we know that Satan is still active during this present age (the millennium). He is the Christian’s greatest enemy, and we must be vigilant to avoid Satan’s temptations. Jesus told His disciples

in the night that He was betrayed to be vigilant so that they would not succumb to temptation (Matt 26:41). We know that Satan filled Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:27); we know that Jesus allowed Satan to sift Peter like wheat to lead Peter to his denial of Jesus (Luke 22:31); we know that the Christian must put on the armor of God to be able to do battle with the devil (Ephesians 6:10-17). Also, from passages quoted earlier, we see that demonic possession was a common thing. All of these passages inform us that the demonic world is presently active, but at the same time the demonic world is bound in chains in the bottomless pit.

Let's consider this very important passage in Matthew 12:22-29.

Matthew 12:22-29:

*Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first **binds the strong man**? And then he will plunder his house.*

This passage demonstrates that Jesus' ability to cast out demons indicated that the strong man "Satan" has been bound during the millennial age. Returning to the phrase mentioned in Jude 6-7 – "*reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day,*" we have looked at the meaning of "reserved" and "in everlasting chains." While the demonic realm is still active, it is bound so that it cannot have unrestricted activity to deceive the nations as Revelation 20 states. Jude 6 states that the demonic realm is reserved in chains "**under darkness**" for the judgment of the great day. What does it mean for the demonic realm to be under darkness? Matthew Henry, in his commentary, says about this phrase – "they are *under darkness*, though once *angels of light*; so horribly in the dark are they that they continue to fight against God, as if there were yet some small hope at least left them of prevailing and overcoming in the conflict." The words "darkness" and "light" are used in Scripture often as the condition of one's moral character. I John 1:5 says, "*God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

Isaiah 5:20 says, "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness...*" Luke 22: 53 records Jesus saying about His arrest, "*When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*" I John 1:6 states, "*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*"

For Satan and his demonic realm to be under darkness simply means that they are hopelessly given over to moral evil. Ephesians 2:1-2 refers to mankind in its fallen state as walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. II Timothy 2:26 says that unbelievers are in the snare of the devil, held captive to do his will. II Corinthians 4:3-6 says that the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelieving men that they cannot see the light of the gospel. And the only way these men see is if the Lord shines in their hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The most important point to see in Jude 6-7 is that Satan and his demonic hosts are under God's complete control. As evil as they are, they can only do what God permits them to do. When the Son of God commands them to come out of people, they must come out. As noted earlier, Satan and his host know of their eventual doom- "the great day." On this great day as pictured in Revelation 20:10, they will be cast into the lake of fire "to be tormented day and night forever and ever."

The Meaning of Being Cast Into the Outer Darkness

As I have endeavored several times to mention, words mean what they mean in their given contexts. We have seen that "darkness" can mean moral depravity as it applies to unbelieving men and Satanic hosts. But darkness is used in several places to refer to a **place unbelievers go. It is referred to as the "outer darkness" where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

Let's consider some passages that speak of the afterlife of unbelievers as a place of darkness where there is gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 8:5-12

*Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom **will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**" (Bold emphasis is mine).*

Jesus marvels at the faith of this Gentile Centurion soldier saying that He has not seen such faith in all of Israel. In verse 11, Jesus says that many will come from east and west and sit down with the patriarchs of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In other words, the Gentiles (those who come from east and west) will be in the kingdom of heaven but the "sons of the kingdom" that is, Israelites, will be cast out into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The phrase "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven alludes to that great banquet in heaven one day. It is not some earthly event. Hence, in the afterlife there will be severe judgment upon those Jews who refused to believe in Jesus.

Let's consider Luke 13:22-29.

Luke 13:22-29

And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from.

Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God (Bold emphasis is mine).

The only difference between this passage and the one in Matthew 8 is that “outer darkness” is not mentioned, but it is evident that Jesus is referring to the same event when the true believers in Israel will be at the great marriage banquet. Those who refused to enter in through the narrow gate (that is believe in Jesus) are called workers of iniquity who will experience weeping and gnashing of teeth as they see God’s blessings on the prophets of God and on the Gentiles who will come from every place on earth that believed in Jesus.

Let’s consider Matthew 22:1-14.

Matthew 22:1-14

*And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘**Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**’ For many are called, but few are chosen (Bold emphasis is mine).*

This passage is commonly known as the marriage banquet of Christ when all His chosen people (His bride) will sit down and enjoy a great feast with their husband. The only ones who will be eating at this great feast are those who were chosen, who believed. The way to have a wedding garment is to trust in Christ as one’s Lord and Savior. Those who did not believe will be cast out into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Let’s consider Matthew 24:45-51.

Matthew 24:45-51

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his

*coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, **and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth**" (Bold emphasis is mine).*

In this parable, Jesus says that the **wicked servant will be cut into and appointed a portion with hypocrites where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** No man knows when he will die, that is, when the Lord will require of him his soul. It is just like Jesus' parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) who thought he could enlarge his barns that would provide for him for years so that he could take his ease and eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, "*Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?*" Jesus is clearly referring to a place that has been prepared ahead of time where there will be constant weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Let's consider Matthew 25:14-30

Matthew 25:14-30

*For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. **And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**" (Bold emphasis is mine).*

In this parable, Jesus is fundamentally teaching that God hates any spirit that does not believe and that will not live his life in trust, abandoning all to Christ's service. Those who do trust and give all to Christ regardless of the amount entrusted to them will receive that blessed praise from Jesus – "*Well done good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Lord.*" Note the contrast between the two groups. Genuine Christians enter into the joy of their Lord while those wicked people will be cast into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Believers go to a place of great joy while unbelievers go to a place of immense suffering.

False and Immoral Teachers Go To A Place of Darkness

Let's consider Jude 4-16.

Jude 4-16

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

*And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; **raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.** Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage." (Bold emphasis is mine).*

I quoted part of the section earlier as it applied to the demonic realm that are bound to chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. The context of this passage is that of false and immoral teachers who have crept into the visible church to corrupt it. Jude has scathing remarks about them. If God has bound the demonic realm awaiting Judgment Day, He will surely do the same for these wicked men. Jude is issuing a warning to these men. If God poured out His vengeance of eternal fire upon the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, He will surely do the same to these false and immoral teachers. The text says that God's vengeance on Sodom and Gomorrah was done to serve as an example of what He will do to these men. In verse 12, Jude says that these false teachers have been reserved for the "blackness of darkness forever." Verses 13 and 14 point out that there is a day coming when the Lord comes with thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon the ungodly. The judgment for these ungodly is the blackness forever.

Let's consider finally II Peter 2:1-17

II Peter 2:1-17

*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)-- then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. **These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever** (Bold emphasis is mine).*

This passage is very similar to the Jude passage. The judgment coming to these false teachers is essentially the same as the judgment coming to the demonic realm. Peter refers to their teaching as a “damnable heresy” that warrants their swift destruction. Noah’s flood is given as an example of God’s judgment upon ungodliness. If God did not spare the world with the except of Noah’s family, then neither will He spare any ungodly men. Sodom and Gomorrah is mentioned here as well serving as an example for future ungodly men. The point God is making is that if He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wicked deeds, God will likewise destroy these false teachers. The penalty for all ungodliness is- **the blackness of darkness forever!**

At Jesus’ Second Coming, There Will Be Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth for the Reprobate

There are two parables of Jesus that describes what will happen when He comes again at the end of the world. They are the parables of the wheat and tares and the drag net. I do know that Gary DeMar does not believe that the parables teach anything about a future second coming of Jesus at the end of the world. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into how he places these events at the fall of Jerusalem. Just like all full preterists the governing thought by which all these events must be understood is the coming of Jesus in judgment upon apostate Israel in 70 AD. Needless to say, such an interpretation of these parables of Jesus just doesn’t hold up exegetically.

Let’s consider the parable of the wheat and tares found in Matthew 13:24-30.

Matthew 13:24-30

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

When Jesus' disciples ask Jesus to explain this parable to them, Jesus says in Matthew 13:34-43.

Matthew 13:34-43

*All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and **will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.** Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear (Bold emphasis is mine).*

Jesus states that the wheat are the good seed who are sons of the kingdom of God while the tares are the bad seed who are sons of the wicked one, the devil. Jesus said that the harvest is at the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. The meaning of the "end of the age" must be at the end of the world when all the elect have been brought in and separated from the reprobate. The angels of Jesus are the instruments used by Him to gather both the wheat and tares. The tares are all those who have practiced lawlessness. What will the angels do to them? They will cast the reprobate into the "furnace of fire." In this furnace, there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. In contrast to the fate of the reprobate, the wheat, the righteous will shine forth in the kingdom of God. We must see the parallel of this parable to what is mentioned on the great Day of Judgment that happens at the end of the age or world when Jesus comes. Those whose names are not in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire where they will be tormented day and night.

Let's consider the parable of the drag net recorded in Matthew 13:47-50.

Matthew 13:47-50

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and

gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Bold emphasis is mine).

In this parable, the good fish are said to be the “just.” The bad fish are said to be “the wicked.” At the end of the age, God’s angels will be the instruments used to separate the good fish from the bad fish. The fate of the bad fish is that they will be cast into the furnace of fire where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

General Comments on the Symbols Regarding Hell

As we put together the entire Bible’s teaching on the afterlife for unbelievers, we learn that there is no necessary inconsistency in affirming that the torment of the lake of fire consists of the blackness of darkness forever where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth and where the “worm does not die,” meaning that the weeping and anguish do not end. The lake of fire does not have to be literal but a symbol of eternal destruction. We are told that the devil and his angels are thrown into this lake of fire at Judgment Day where they are tormented day and night. Spiritual beings cannot literally be burned. When death is thrown into the lake of fire at Judgment Day, death cannot literally be burned. It means that death is swallowed up in victory. But, being cast into this lake of fire where there is eternal suffering is said to be the second death. We can see in the context of Revelation 20 that “death” is taking on a different meaning. The act of physical dying is “death.” And, being cast into this lake of fire is a “second death” but one that is not physical per se but spiritual. The second death is eternal destruction with all of the Bible’s descriptions of the suffering for unbelievers. It is helpful to see Jesus’ comments to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, just prior to Jesus raising dead Lazarus from his tomb. In John 11: 25-26 Jesus says to Martha- *“I am the resurrection and the life, he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me, shall never die...”* Those who believe in Jesus will not only be raised from the dead physically, they will never experience the second death (spiritual destruction in hell forever). As Revelation 20:15 says, *“And whosoever was not found in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”* The way to avoid the “second death” is to believe in Jesus! The lake of fire is a symbol of **eternal destruction, total ruin where there is eternal suffering.**

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³²And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³and He will put the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ³⁸And when did we see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me.’ ⁴¹Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you accursed people, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me

nothing to drink; ⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or as a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ ⁴⁵Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for Me, either.’ ⁴⁶These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Bold emphasis is mine).

Gary, in his 5th and final podcast briefly dealt with this passage. Gary asks, “What kind of judgment is Jesus talking about? In quoting some other evangelicals like Keith Mathison, Gary believes that the judgment referred to in Matthew 25 is **not a one time, end time event but the beginning of judgment and continuing judgment throughout history**. Gary says he is saying all of this because we need a new hearing to discuss these passages and give some guidance on how to interpret these things without calling people “heretics.” Gary said, “Let’s admit it, this needs to be studied. I want to deal with this exegetically.”

I find it amazing that Gary thinks more study needs to be done on this as if these passages haven’t been exegetically handled down through the centuries. So, Calvin didn’t exegete these passages? His New Testament commentaries and His *Institutes* indicate that he did. So, the great Reformed commentator Matthew Henry didn’t exegete these passages? So, the Westminster divines apparently didn’t exegete the relevant passages?

I must mention that I know that the late Dr. Greg Bahnsen had a profound impact theologically upon Gary during Gary’s seminary education when Bahnsen was professor of Apologetics, Ethics, and Eschatology. Bahnsen had a profound impact upon Ken Gentry and myself during our education at Reformed Theological Seminary. Sadly, if Greg Bahnsen were alive today, he would be greatly disheartened as to what has become of Gary DeMar. For example, Dr. Bahnsen in a tape titled, “Chronology of the End” sets forth the exact teaching of the *Westminster Confession* on eschatological issues. Bahnsen believed everything that Gary DeMar now refutes regarding the second coming of Christ, the general resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous, and the final Day of Judgment citing Matthew 25. In the tape, when asked a question about the fate of unbelievers dying before Christ came, Bahnsen said, “The unbeliever who died before Christ is in hell where they await a resurrection of judgment where they will suffer **body and soul in hell for all eternity**.” Bahnsen also said, “The day is coming when we will receive our new bodies and live in a new heavens and new earth. There will be a day of general resurrection when men will be raised from their tombs and face a general judgment where the sheep and goats will be separated, of which the sheep shall receive eternal glory while the goats go away into eternal punishment in hell.” Obviously, Bahnsen was alluding to Matt. 25. Regarding II Thess. 1:6-10, Bahnsen states that in Jesus’ coming he will bring relief to His persecuted people. So, apparently, we need to add to Gary’s list of day dreamers the name Greg Bahnsen because he was confident how history will end because he did his exegesis as others have done.

Gary’s exegesis of Matthew 25:31-46 is terribly wrong. It is not exegesis but eisegesis to think this passage is speaking of a judgment in 70 AD and not of an end time judgment. For one, Jesus mentions that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. To the goats Jesus will say, “*Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41). How is this statement of Jesus about the devil pertinent to the fall of Jerusalem? And in Matt. 25:46, Jesus says about the goats that they will go away into **eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life**. How is the future destiny of sheep and goats pertaining to the fall of Jerusalem?

Exegetically, whatever is true of the righteous, the converse must be true of the unrighteous. Since the sheep will experience **eternal bliss, the goats will experience eternal punishment**. Gary thinks it is not that simple, but it is that simple. Gary just cannot do proper exegesis. Gary has said that he doesn’t know

how it will all end. Gary may not know, but the Scripture plainly knows. The predecessors of Gary have known. There is no need to sit down and talk with Gary or any other full preterist. Contrary to Gary's contention that serious exegesis needs to be done, **it has already been done, and it has found him outside the pale of Christian orthodoxy.**

How are we to Assess Gary DeMar's False Theology?

I want to conclude with an exegesis of two passages – II Timothy 2:15-18 and I Timothy 1:18-19.

II Timothy 2:15-18

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly {and} empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

In his podcast # 4, Gary simply made passing mention of this verse with no detailed exegesis of it. He simply said that I don't think Paul is talking about a resurrection of dead bodies at all. Well, why was the apostle Paul warning Timothy to avoid worldly and empty chatter that can be infectious like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus **had gone astray from the truth.** In v.15, Paul is exhorting Timothy to be a diligent student of God's word. Matthew Henry aptly said on this verse:

Ministers must be workmen; they have work to do, and they must take pains in it. Workmen that are unskillful, or unfaithful, or lazy, have need to be ashamed; but those who mind their business, and keep to their work, are workmen that need not be ashamed. And what is their work? It is *rightly to divide the word of truth.* Not to invent a new gospel, but rightly to divide the gospel that is committed to their trust (Matthew Henry commentary on II Tim. 2:15).

Matthew Henry continues with his commentary on verses 16-18:

Upon this occasion the apostle mentions some who had lately advanced erroneous doctrines: *Hymeneus and Philetus*. He names these corrupt teachers, by which he sets a brand upon them, to their perpetual infamy, and warns all people against hearkening to them. **They have erred concerning the truth, or concerning one of the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, which is truth. The resurrection of the dead is one of the great doctrines of Christ.** Now see the subtlety of the serpent and the serpent's seed. They did not deny the resurrection (for that had been boldly and avowedly to confront the word of Christ), but they put a corrupt interpretation upon that true doctrine, saying that the resurrection was past already, that what Christ spoke concerning the resurrection was *to be understood mystically* and by way of allegory, that it must be meant of a spiritual resurrection only. **It is true, there is a spiritual resurrection, but to infer thence that there will not be a true and real resurrection of the body at the last day is to dash one truth of Christ in pieces against another. By this they overthrew the faith of some, took them off from the belief of the resurrection of the dead; and if there be no resurrection of the dead, nor future state, no recompence of our services and sufferings in another world, we are of men the most miserable, 1 Cor. xv. 19. Whatever takes away the**

doctrine of a future state overthrows the faith of Christians (Italics emphasis is Henry; Bold emphasis is mine).

William Hendrikson makes these comments on II Tim.2:16-18:

It is immediately evident that Paul is not discussing a minor difference of opinion among men who basically thought alike. On the contrary, **he refers to capital error.** Their *error* consisted in this, that they said, "The resurrection has already occurred." In this they resembled those present day liberal who, while refusing to be caught saying, "There is no resurrection," allegorize the concept. Now it must be admitted that Paul, too, believed in a *spiritual* resurrection, the act of God whereby he imparts the new life to those who are dead in sins and trespasses (Rom. 6:3,4; Eph. 2:6; Phil. 3:11; Col. 2:12; 3:1; and cf Luke 15:24) But the apostle also most definitely taught *the resurrection of the body* (I Cor. 15; Phil. 3:21), just as Jesus had done (John 5:28). According to Paul's teaching, **denial of the bodily resurrection implies the complete overthrow of faith**, for "if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith is in vain... and you are still in your sins" (I Cor. 15:13,14,17) (Italics emphasis is Hendrikson and bold emphasis is mine)

Since Gary DeMar nonchalantly passed over this passage simply saying it is not a resurrection of dead bodies, then what is it, Gary? If it is not a physical resurrection, then by default it must be a spiritual resurrection, but how would advocating a spiritual resurrection (which is true in certain passages) be upsetting the faith of some? A properly understood spiritual resurrection is not a gangrene and a going astray from the truth. Hence, it can only mean a physical resurrection. Gary DeMar has seriously erred in his exegesis of the text. Hence, his views of denying a future bodily resurrection of saints puts him in the camp of Hymeneus and Philetus, those who have strayed from the truth. But the exegetical evidence says that the error of these men is that they were saying that the resurrection **had already taken place.** Their error is not in advocating a spiritual resurrection that had already happened for actually a spiritual resurrection biblically must precede a physical resurrection of the dead bodies of saints. No, the clear evidence is that these two men had said the physical resurrection had already occurred; hence, it would take away the Christian hope! And yes, that would be most disturbing for the Christian not to think there will be a future bodily resurrection where the corruptible must put on incorruption.

How serious is it to be in that camp? Let's take a look at I Tim. 1:18-20.

I Timothy 1:18-20

*This command I entrust to you Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered **shipwreck in regard to their faith.** Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, **whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme** (Bold emphasis is mine).*

Matthew Henry comments on this passage:

As for those who had made shipwreck of the faith, he specifies two, *Hymeneus and Alexander*, who had made a profession of the Christian religion, but had quitted that profession; and Paul had delivered them to Satan, had declared them to belong to the kingdom of Satan, and, as some think, had, by an extraordinary power, delivered them to be terrified or tormented by Satan, *that they might learn not to blaspheme* not to

contradict or revile the doctrine of Christ and the good ways of the Lord. Observe, The primary design of the highest censure in the primitive church was to prevent further sin and to reclaim the sinner. In this case it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. v. 5. Observe, (1.) Those who love the *over to Satan*. (2.) God can, if he please, work by contraries: Hymeneus and Alexander are delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, when one would rather think they would learn of Satan to blaspheme the more. (3.) Those who have put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, will not stick at anything, blasphemy not excepted. (4.) Therefore let us hold faith and a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy; for, if we once let go our hold of these, we do not know where we shall stop.

William Henrikson makes some very good comments on this passage when he states:

The Hymeneus and Alexander to whom Paul refers here in I Tim. 1:20 were leaders among the Ephesian *heretics*. They were self-righteous persons who yearned to be law teachers, although they understood neither the words which they were speaking nor the themes on which they were harping with such confidence. So far did these heretical teachers advance in error that they even railed at the true presentation of the gospel. Hence, Paul declares whom I have handed over to Satan in order that they may be disciplined not to blaspheme. The expression “handed over to Satan,” which also occurs in I Cor. 5:5 is somewhat obscure. That it refer to expulsion from the church (excommunication) – a sentence to be carried out by the congregation under the direction of its elders. - seems certain (I Cor. 5:2,7).

However, even when this extreme measure was resorted to, its purpose was *remedial*. Not damnation but reclamation was the object, “in order that they may be *disciplined* (cf. II Tim. 2:25) not to blaspheme.”...the apostle is earnestly desirous that the discipline – the divine pedagogy- imposed may have a salutary effect on Hymeneus and Alexander. **He is hoping and praying that by means of this dire affliction these false teachers many come to see themselves as grievous sinner and may be brought in genuine repentance, so that they will no longer rail at the truth and thereby revile its Author** (Italics emphasis is Hendrikson and bold emphasis is mine).

We know from II Tim. 2:16-18 that this is most likely the same Hymeneus who was teaching that the bodily resurrection had already occurred. As these Reformed commentators that I have quoted have said, to deny a future bodily resurrection is no minor error; it is huge! It tarnishes the glory of the gospel; it robs the Christian of part of their blessed hope. Scripture says that such men should be silenced, that they should be taught not to blaspheme by teaching such error.

Ministers of the gospel have a biblical admonition to earnestly contend for the Faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). We must be faithful to our calling as elders of Jesus’ blessed church to carry out Titus 1:9-11:

*Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching that he may be able **both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict**. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceiver, especially those of the circumcision **who must be silenced** because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain (Bold emphasis is mine).*

I am not saying that Gary DeMar has the motives mentioned in this passage such as sordid gain, nor that his theology is of the Judaizer theology of works righteousness, but he is guilty of promoting false doctrine that should not be taught, which can upset the faith of God's precious sheep. Denying a future bodily resurrection of all men and believing that the wicked will not be punished with eternal torment in hell is a serious departure from the Faith. He, like Hymeneaus and Philetus, has strayed from the truth.

Nowhere in God's word are we called upon to sit down and discuss in some ecclesiastical council the possibility that the church has missed vital truths over the centuries. It is not because we will not conduct biblical exegesis because many already have already done this. It is because sound exegesis of these passages has already been done and the faithful church of Jesus has come to a consensus of what constitutes Christian orthodoxy.

Gary DeMar should be called to repentance with the hope that his wandering from the truth can be remedied.