

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)



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"the churches of Christ salute you" (Romans 16:16)

"Spirit and Life"

Keys to Understanding the New Testament

By Roy Runyon

Editor's Note: We are very excited to have a new writer for Spirit and Life: brother Roy Runyon. Every week new Christians are getting excited about learning what the

Bible says concerning the second coming of Christ and how that it was "at hand" just like the kingdom was in the first century! (James 5:8). Enjoy this excellent article by a good, Christian man!

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in," (Mat 23:13)

This same character flaw still thrives in the heart of man, even today, and is witnessed on a regular basis in quite a number of individuals whose actions exemplify their contemptible lack of reverence for God's Holy Word; whose eyes are blinded by the fog of arrogance, and their ears are deafened

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by the very nonsense spewing from their own mouths! Occasionally, the progenitors of this attitude, in the attempt to thwart all consideration of eschatology, will go to the un-Biblical extremes of slandering those with whom they disagree, and even encourage other Christians to NOT study their Bibles to, "prove all things" (1 Thess.5:21). By their actions, they are "taking away the *key of knowledge* (Lk.11:52) and are shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men.

Having dealt with this reprehensible attitude for the better part of my life has actually taught me to stand on my own, and to study the scriptures for myself; therefore, I want to share with you, some *keys* to understanding the New Testament. The failure to acknowledge these keys will consistently leave one's interpretation flawed due to their false paradigm.

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh... For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled," (Lk.21:20-22).

In order to place the teachings of the NT in the proper context, it is absolutely critical to understand that Jesus, in predicting the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, said that with the fall of "the great city...where also our Lord was crucified" (Rev.11:8), would come the fulfillment of *all* things written, i.e., all prophecies of the Old Testament.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which *must* →shortly← come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for THE TIME IS AT HAND," (Rev.1:1-3).

This is another vital key to placing the contents of the NT in their proper context. The failure to recognize the imminent time statements of this visional Prologue, has, and will continue to create innumerable fanatical theories. Nearly all, I suppose, would agree that *when* this book was written delineates *what* the subject matter pertains to, i.e., if it can be shown that it was written *after* the fall of Jerusalem, then obviously, the vision pertains to something else; however, most will agree, that if it can be substantiated that the Revelation vision was written prior to the end of the Jewish age, then its contents pertain specifically to the utter destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, Judaism, and the fleshly nation of Israel. In the following paragraph, I will list all of the internal evidence which supports the "late date" of the writing of Revelation.

"______"

Then, the only external evidence, except for books written by man, such as encyclopedias and commentaries (lol snort) which 'supports' the late date is one second-hand ambiguous statement by Irenaeus in AD 175.

One needs to look no further than the Bible itself at the overwhelming internal evidence which corroborates the early date of writing, and thereby concurs with the time statements in the prologue, that these things *must* shortly come to pass, for the time IS *at hand*!

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the

court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months," (Rev.11:1-2).

If the Revelation vision was written near the end of the first century, why would John be told to measure the temple and altar, which had been destroyed at least 3 decades earlier?

"And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and ONE IS, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space," (Rev.17:10).

The seven kings are the Caesars, of which Nero was the sixth, i.e., the one that IS, or is reigning, thereby assigning the date of the writing of this vision during the reign Nero, which was from AD 54-68.

"And IN HER was found the *blood of prophets*, and of *saints,* and of ALL that were slain upon the earth," (Rev.18:24).

"Her" is Mystery Babylon, the Mother of Harlots, named in the previous chapter, which Jesus specifically and irrefutably had already identified as being Jerusalem:

"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That UPON YOU may come ALL the *righteous blood shed upon the earth,* from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, ALL these things shall come upon THIS generation. O JERUSALEM JERUSALEM, thou THAT KILLEST THE PROPHETS, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house ←[temple] is left unto you desolate," (Mt.23:34-38).

Since "ALL" of the righteous bloodshed can't be found in 2 separate entities, separated by two millennia or more, this shows solidarity between Jerusalem and the Mother of Harlots, which provides indisputable internal evidence that the Revelation vision is dealing solely with the downfall of Judaism, the greatest enemy of Christianity at that time, bringing the Mosaic age to its consummation.

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Mt.24:1-3).

Until Mt.24-25 and its parallels (Mk.13; Lk.17:20-37 & Lk.21) are understood in their proper context of the end of the Jewish nation, and the destruction of their temple, consummating the end of Old covenant, the Bible student will never be able

to overcome the confusion, misunderstanding, blatant textual contradictions, and false theories that arise out of the Greek phrase, "ho sunteleia ho aiōn" translated in the KJV as "the end of the world". This single blunder by scholars in misinterpreting the phrase, "the end of the world" as meaning the end of time and the material universe has created, no doubt, the worst theological disaster of all time! This blunder has fostered a plethora of denominational doctrines, secular novels and movies, as well as countless unscriptural lines and thoughts in our hymn books.

The Greek term, "sunteleia" defined, means "completion" or "consummation", not the end of existence. The Mosaic law did not cease to exist, for we still have it for our learning, (Rom.15:4); however, that law and era, which was to bring us to Christ, (Gal.3:24), was completed, and is no longer binding upon God's people. Likewise, the Greek term, "aion" translated to the ambiguous English term, "world" is defined as an age or period of time, and is the equivalent of the English term, eon, not the physical universe.

"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world \leftarrow [kosmos]: but NOW once in the end of the world \leftarrow [aion] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," (Heb.9:26).

We find, in this passage, the identical phrase that is found in Mt.24:3; therefore, this begs the question, *when* did Jesus appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself: NOW, in the end of the Christian age; was Jesus crucified in the end of eternity; or, did Jesus appear, NOW, in the end of the Jewish age, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself?

Speaking of Christ, Paul said, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:" (Gal.1:4). Note the irrefutable specificity of Paul's words, that Christ, "gave Himself for our sins," (which is identical to, "...he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"), that He would deliver us from THIS PRESENT evil age. Did Jesus deliver them FROM this present *evil* Christian age? Did Jesus give Himself to deliver them FROM eternity? Paul said, "Who hath delivered us FROM the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:" (Col.1:13). Again, Paul said, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come..." (Rom.8:38). Notice the contrast between things present and things to come! It is irrefutable; it is unanswerable, and it is indisputable that the end of the Jewish age had come upon Paul and his audiences (1 Cor.10:11), for in no stretch of the imagination could it be argued that the ends of the Christian age had come upon them!

"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world ←[kosmos]; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest

is the end of the world \leftarrow [aion]; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of THIS world \leftarrow [aion]. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear," (Mt.13:36-43).

Another key to understanding the New Testament is realizing that Jesus was a Hebrew; He taught Hebrews; He preached Hebraic scriptures, in Hebraic thought, and here in this text, He reiterates the prophecy of Dan.12:1-7 in parabolic language, in which He states the harvest IS the end of the age, and then specifies that it will be in the end of THIS age! Since the Christian age had not begun *when* Jesus said this, He, unquestionably, identifies His present age, i.e., the Jewish age.

"Jesus said to them, Have you understood all these things? They said to Him, Yes, Lord," (Mt.13:51).

Since the disciples understood all those things pertaining to the end of the Jewish age; Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Jesus when these things would be, and what sign there would be of the end of the Mosaic age in Mt.24:3.

When scientists discovered how to split the atom, we saw the dawn of the Atomic Age; also, we can identify the dawn of the Industrial Age, the Space Age, the Computer Age, etc., and yet, none of those ages were fully established until many years later. Likewise, when those "about 3000 souls" were baptized for the remission of sins on Pentecost day, the world saw the dawning of the Christian age, but it would be many years later before the kingdom would become fully established. [RR]

SPECIAL OFFER!

The first **twenty** people who e-mail their mailing address to spiritandlife.coc@gmail.com requesting a book, receive a **free** copy of Daniel Roger's new book *The Last Enemy and the Triumph of Christ*!

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New Testament Time Statements and the Second Coming of Christ

By Brent Bischel

Editor's Note: Not only has brother Roy joined our writing staff, but brother Brent Bischel has begun to write for Spirit and Life as well. This wonderful truth is growing more and more each week as honest individuals read and study their Bibles. We are thankful for preachers like Brent, Roy, and John Watson who are willing to share this truth of God's word.

Eccl.9:5-6 "For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun."

Where are the righteous dead of the N.T. period? Heaven or Hell? If they are in Heaven, then what are they lacking? Is there anything more that they need? Is their salvation full and complete? If not, then why not?

As we look at Rev.7:13-17 "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from? And I said to him, Sir, you know. So he said to me, These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

This is in fulfillment of Isa.49:10. Being in this state (the eternal state of heaven / salvation), is there anything that happens on or to the earth (in the physical / temporal state) that has any effect or real meaning to them? If so please explain?

Notice 1Cor.1:7 "so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ..." So if the traditional view of the second coming of Christ is right (that is that Christ has yet to come and at His coming sometime in the future, the heavens & earth will be burned up / destroyed and then we will have the resurrection of the dead / physical bodies coming out of the graves and the day of judgment occurring on the last day), why would Paul deceive them into thinking that they would still be living for that event, and the gifts of the Spirit still working, as they, the Corinthians, eagerly waited for Christ to return?

If the Corinthians would be long dead, some 2000+ years removed from this event / the second coming of Christ, how in the world could they be expected by the apostle Paul, to eagerly wait for an event that they obviously would not be alive to see?

Paul clearly implied that they would be alive to see the revelation of the Lord by stating that they were to eagerly wait for this event. Was Paul a liar or a deceiver? He either was a deceiver or we have long misinterpreted the Bible.

Notice Phil.3:20-21 "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body (singular / body of Christ) that it may be conformed to His glorious body..."

Paul again tells them that they were to eagerly wait for the Savior. This through implication, is stating that the waiting was to be done while they were ALIVE!! This also implies that Paul taught that Christ would return in their generation / lifetime. Paul also mentions the transformation of their lowly body.

This transformation is the same transformation that Paul speaks about in 1 Cor.15:51-52 "Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, 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 incorruptible, and we shall be CHANGED."

This is speaking of covenantal change or transformation from the complete fading away of the old covenant to the full change or transformation to the new covenant or mode of existence.

Much more to come. [BB]

Every Eye Shall See Him

By Holger Neubauer

Though the book of Revelation is the most symbolic of all the books of the Bible, many assert that John's statement "and every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7), is somehow a guarantee that all human beings will one day see the Lord descending from cirrus clouds. Many uninformed readers believe this text is a refutation of the Lord's return in Jerusalem in 70. It certainly is not. As in all Jewish prophetic apocalyptic language, immediate context, remote context and the prophetic language itself is the key to understanding. The immediate context speaks to the seven churches of Asia in which John stated these things "shall shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). John confirmed as well that the "time was at hand" (Revelation 1:3). John repeats the same phrases at the end of the book (Rev 22:6,10). This literary devise is called an "inclusio" argument. That is, everything in between the "at hand" statements in the beginning of the book and the end of the book, were speaking of the same subject, and the fulfillment was near.

John affirmed the book was "signified" or signed (Revelation 1:1). A sign is a symbol of somethings else, not itself. So, unless a physical concept is demanded we ought to think of a deeper spiritual meaning. No text of the Bible is to be considered an island which is separated from its land base. The Bible is a united book that speaks

to one great theme: the salvation of man through the kingdom of the Son of Man. The book of Revelation has over 500 citations to the Old Testament and is called the "most Hebraic book of the Bible." The Old Testament is the key to understanding the book of Revelation as we understand scripture by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:13). So also is the phrase "every eye shall see him." "Every", "each" and "all" in prophetic texts are usually synonyms in which all those in covenant would see or experience the blessings spoken about in the text.

Consider Peter's statement in Acts 2:17. Peter promises the Spirit would be poured out upon "all flesh." Peter was quoting from Joel 2:28, in which "all flesh" is a reference to both Jew and Gentile. The phrase "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord" in Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:14 is again a reference to both Jew and Gentile having equal access to the Lord. Both Peter and Paul quote from Joel 2:31. Romans 10:12 speaks of no "difference between the Jew and the Greek." Both passages speak from the same context, the last days of Israel bringing salvation to all the world. The phrase "whosoever" and "all flesh" are synonyms referring to the offering of salvation to both Jew and Gentile. In Luke 3:6, in exceedingly symbolic language we find the statement, "and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Do we believe that Luke got confused and affirmed universalism? Of course, not. This is symbolic or poetic language, not to be taken literally. The "all" refers to "all" in covenant, which comprised both Jew and Gentile. Luke was quoting from Isaiah 40:5 in which, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." This is how "all flesh" would see God. Neither Luke or Isaiah had in mind some physical experience. God would be seen by all flesh in a new spiritual way as both Jew and Gentile would experience salvation. Jesus said, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51). The word "see" is to be taken as an experience of a spiritual reality. In that very context, Jesus also said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Abraham saw Christ by faith. Today, both Jew and Gentile have access to God through faith. Today, this is how we "see God." Christians are to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)!

The Old Testament is the background of the New Testament. Jesus himself came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17,18). Without knowledge of the Old Testament, much of the teaching of the New Testament is not fully comprehended. When Jacob leaned on his staff and worshipped as he was dying (Hebrews 11:31), we might envision Jacob leaning on a shepherd's staff. But when we read the Old Testament text we discover it was a bed staff that Jacob leaned upon (Genesis 48:2). When a New Testament writer quotes from an Old Testament book, the quotes are always in context. Just as we are not at liberty to quote a New Testament passage out of context today, the New Testament writers were not at liberty to quote the Old Testament out

of context. When we read that "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess" we might envision a coerced bow and confession. Yet, Philippians 2:11,12 is a quotation from Isaiah 45:23. Isaiah prophesies about a time in which Israel would receive an everlasting salvation (Is 45:17). During this time, every knee would bow and every tongue would confess. This is not a picture of an end of time event in which there would be a coerced confession made by physically bowing, but a picture of both Jew and Gentile submitting to God. Paul wrote "for which cause I bow my knees" (Ephesians 3:14). John wrote, "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in Him" (1 John 4:15). The picture is of voluntary submission by both Jew and Gentile in the new covenant. The confessing and bowing is a reference to recognizing the authority of the Lord in their lives. As the Gospel advanced throughout the world, both and Jew and Gentile would bow before the throne and confess Jesus as their Savior.

Those of the futurist camp will generally argue that Jesus' statement in Matthew 16:28 has reference to Pentecost. The Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here that will not taste of death until they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Then we ask, "how did the disciples see Jesus coming on Pentecost?" Certainly, not with physical eyesight. They are forced by their own misunderstanding to say what we are saying; that this coming of Jesus is a reference to a spiritual reality. They would see Jesus through the events of Pentecost. But Matthew 16:28 is not a reference to Pentecost. Matthew 16:27 says, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with his angels; and they he shall reward every man according to his works." This is a judgment text. John refers to Jesus coming with his reward (Revelation 22:12), and that coming was "at hand" (Revelation 22:10) in John's day. Does anyone see a train coming yet? Jesus also affirmed that his coming in judgment, to reward every man according to his works, would take place in "this generation" (Mark 8:38; Mark 9:1). Jesus was not speaking of a future generation thousands of years later, but rather He was speaking about the generation He was addressing then. There is simply no doubt about it, Jesus returned as he said he would; in the very generation He was living in then!

John's statement "every eye shall see him" is apocalyptic and a reference to the time they would see Jesus "face to face" (Rev 22:4). Jesus placed the time of his revealing at the fall of Jerusalem. Notice Jesus' own words in Luke 17:30,31 "Even thus shall it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be on the housetop and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field let him not return back." Jesus is speaking about the fall of Jerusalem and the "time of the end," not the end of time. The word "revealed" in Luke 17:30 is from the Greek "apocaluptatais." This is the same basic word of from which is derived the "Revelation." The face to face meeting that the saints were

longing for was spiritual in nature, not physical. Paul uses the same figure in 1 Corinthians 13:10, "but then face to face, shall I know even as I am known." Paul is speaking about the same realities not different! The spiritual gifts were promised until the coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:6-8). The clarity of the day was coming as Peter said, "wherefore ye do well to take heed as a light in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts' (2 Peter 1:19). Jesus was the Bright and Morning Star that was coming quickly (Revelation 22:16). The picture is about spiritual reality and His presence, not carnal longings and physical realities.

But John said, "and they that pierced him" (Revelation 1:7). Every eye refers to those in covenant, and those who pierced him are the Jews who were responsible for his death. John quotes from Zechariah 12:10 in which time all families of the land would mourn. This is fulfilled in Jesus' statement, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, then shall all of the tribes mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great glory" (Matthew 24:30). That coming was completed in the very generation Jesus was living (Matthew 24:34). While Jesus was on the earth He promised to come again with the clouds and great glory. Jesus never spoke of two future comings with clouds and great glory. There were never two second comings. The timing of the second coming of Jesus was at the fall of Jerusalem. Any other conclusion has one adding or subtracting from the "Revelation" (22:18,19). Every eye did see him, just as all in Christ today see his salvation. At least we should. [HN]



Another Denham-Neubauer <u>DEBATE</u> on April 20-23 in Pensacola, FL at the Bellview church of Christ!

For more information, contact Holger Neubauer or Steve Baisden

Reserved unto Fire – Part 5 (A Series on 2nd Peter 3)

(A Series on 2nd Peter 3)

By Scott Klaft

Our examination of the far-reaching implications of what Peter writes in 2nd Peter 3:1, 2 has drawn a comparison of how Peter, himself, had previously referenced the Old Covenant scriptures to discuss the same subject matters as are found in chapter 3. Peter is intentionally *reminding* his readers of subjects that he, and the other inspired penmen of the New *and Old* Testaments had already taught them.

This requires that we interpret what is written there from the perspective of the first generation of Christians to whom Peter ministered. It also demands a harmonization to correctly understanding what Peter has to say. This is what we mean by insisting, "Context determines the meaning." Instead of forcing a material/physical view of 2nd Peter 3, and then trying to coerce all other passages into fitting that presupposition; we must reverse that course, and let *all* scripture be the driving historical context that determines what Peter is saying. And that, of course, would include everything found in the more immediate context of Peter's Second Epistle. This is where we left off in the last installment of this series.

The Immediate Context – The Second Epistle of the Apostle Peter (continued)

2nd Peter 1:12-15

This passage was briefly included in the previous article, but a moment must be given to something else here. Peter speaks of his own demise, which he calls "put[ting] off [his] tabernacle"; meaning, the temporary house of his spirit, the fleshly body. He is reminding us of the scene recorded in John 21:15-24 indicating that Peter would die in his later years, but before the coming of the Lord. While it relates the two events together, indicating a relatively close, and imminent association (what is the point stating it if thousands of years could stand between the two events?), it would be a stretch to measure the timing of Christ's coming against Peter's death. There is nothing specific to indicate the length of time between the events; and that is not what we are attempting to do here.

Instead, what the reader should notice is Peter's use of the word, "shortly" (KJV/ NKJV). This is the Greek word, *tachinos*, which means "shortly, swift" (Strong's G5031). This precise form is only used twice in scripture, both of which are in 2nd Peter. Peter uses it in 2nd Peter 2:1 to express the nearness of destruction that is brought upon the false teachers he is referencing.

There are two options for interpreting the word. Either it refers to the speed of something taking place, or it refers to the nearness in time to something taking place. The speed at which destruction of the false teachers happens, however, can hardly be what Peter is considering. He is referring to the nearness of the event; it is only a short time before taking place. Thus, the translators of both the King James and the New King James versions were inclined to render the English as "shortly" in 1:14. Peter was told by the Lord that his death would take place when he is old; and now, at the time of his penning these words, he had arrived at an age where he supposes his physical demise to be near at hand.

The point is this: Peter, guided by inspiration, was not confused about the meaning of words that express imminence of occurrence. This Greek word is just another form of, *tachos*, which means, "a brief space (of time) ...in haste: quickly,

shortly, speedily" (Strong's G5034); and, it has eight occurrences in the KJV. As "shortly," it is found four times: Acts 25:4 to express Festus' intention to depart after a short interval. Romans 16:20 is Paul declaring the fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy; and, it was to take place in a time frame that the Christians in Rome who received the original manuscript would see it. Of particular interest is John's use of the word at both the beginning (1:1) and the end (22:6) of the book of Revelation. There is nothing between those two citations that was not imminent at the time John penned the words; nor is there anything written between them that has not yet taken place.

Inasmuch as Peter knew the time of his physical demise was near, *though* he did not know the precise day or hour, the apostles knew the time of Christ's coming, and the events described in the book of Revelation were going to take place within a short period of time from their perspective. This does not allow for a futurist view of any flavor or sort. We may not elasticize the term, "at hand" or "shortly" to wedge-in 2000 years-and-still-counting any more than we can assume Peter thought he might live in his physical body for another 2000 years or more.

2nd Peter 1:16 - 21

It is natural that the apostle would write in order to help his fellow Christians keep in mind, after his demise, the things that pertain to their yet-to-occur entrance into the kingdom. But what other reason does he express for writing this second letter? It is to encourage them to keep confident in the anticipation of "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 16). Here, Peter has begun a counterargument for what must surely have been circulated by the enemies of the cross. The coming again of Christ in power (literally, his powerful, coming presence) is *not an intricately woven fable*, which is what the Jewish persecutors of their day would surely have asserted (cf. Acts 17:1-7; 1Thes. 2:14-16).

The powerful coming-presence of the Son of God was not left as an empty hope or unsubstantiated claims of uncertain verity. There is/was evidence on which the first generation of Christians could base their confidence. Peter is citing that evidence *to the* Christians, to *remind* the Christians, of *why* they had *become* Christians in the first place.

"Exhibit A" is the eyewitness testimony of men whose credibility is beyond question. Even beyond the eyewitness testimony of the twelve beginning from Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan (cf. Acts 1:21, 22), Peter cites what took place on the mountain along with the sons of Zebedee, James and John. Before their very eyes, Jesus was "transfigured" from his fleshly form into what would be His glorified form, demonstrating not only the divine origin of every word and deed of Jesus, but also of His divine nature (cf. Matthew 17:1-8). Peter offers his own testimony as proof of the powerful presence of divinity in Christ.

But even the law of Moses, under which Peter was raised, requires more than one witness to draw a proper conclusion (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15 & Matt. 18:6; 2Cor. 13:1; 1Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28). Of course, John, the apostle, could have corroborated Peter's testimony, and probably did. Peter cited, instead, a "more sure word of prophecy" as his second witness, "Exhibit B." Peter wants them to "take heed" to that more-sure-word-of-prophecy for a certain time. He wants them to keep the words of prophecy in mind, "until the day dawns and the morning star rises in [their] hearts" (2Pet. 1:19 – NKJV). This is another expression of the powerful-coming-presence of Christ. It is that for which they waited and endured. The "morning star" is that of the dawn of the new day, the new creation, the spiritual blessings in Christ promised to those who overcome:

"[H]e that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations... And I will give him the morning star." (Revelation 2:26-28)

True to his initial purpose, Peter is still reminding them of what convicted their hearts to obey the gospel; and, he encourages them to continue to hold on to it until the return of the Lord. Had Peter been offering them an eschatological hope that extended to a possible two hundred, two thousand, two hundred thousand – or two million years, or more ...there would be very little assurance that would make the trials of fire easier to endure for that first generation of Christians. Even Jesus had a more immediate goal on which to set His eyes (cf. Heb. 12:2).

That which makes the testimony of the scripture "more sure" is that the scripture is the inerrant, infallible, incorruptible word of God. God is the author, not the prophets themselves. This is what he explains in the rest of the chapter.

V. 20 is an often-abused verse that well-meaning folks have used to say that individuals are not free to impose their own views upon the scripture so as to come up with a "private interpretation." It is a noble thought. For the most part, we can understand what they mean. But what they are saying is probably not what they intend. That line of thinking leads straight to the Roman Catholic practice of insisting one class of people have the right and ability to discern what the scripture teaches while the common person cannot. It leaves a truth-seeker wholly dependant on a potentially corrupt and/ or ignorant system of men for the knowledge of Christ. It makes men the arbiter of God's grace.

Fortunately, condemning a private study and understanding of scripture is not what Peter is doing or saying. He is explaining the method of miraculous inspiration given to those prophets of the Old Testament scripture. This explanation is *why* their words are "more firm" (Young's Literal Translation), *why* they are worthy of attention and remembrance as evidence for "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 16).

The prophets did not merely see a vision and try their best to interpret what they saw. The Holy Spirit moved them in their words. It is the 'theopneustos' – Godbreathed – message (cf. 2Tim. 3:16, 17). Peter was showing with certainty that they did not follow "cunningly devised fables." They were following the very message intended by God as given by the Old Testament prophets. The inspired prophets spoke of the powerful-coming-presence of "the day of God," "the day of the Lord," "the day of judgment," and all of those same subjects we see discussed in 2nd Peter 3.

Not only did that first generation of Christians have the irreproachable testimony of Peter and John having personally witnessed the glorified Christ and heard the Divine testimony of God's approval. That first generation did not merely have the corroborating testimony of the other apostles (not to mention the miracles witnessed by them – Heb. 2:1-4; Acts 2:22). But their testimony of the powerfulcoming presence of the Lord is corroborated by the inspired, Old Testament prophets as well.

At this point in this series, that should sound a bit familiar. We have had five full articles dedicated to examining the meaning of just the first two verses of 2^{nd} Peter chapter 3 – and there is more yet to come. All of it is standing as the *very same* evidence Peter is calling upon to give proof of the power and coming of the Lord. Namely, his own testimony, the testimony of the other eye witnesses with the other apostles, and most especially, the Old Testament scripture.

It is an avalanche of proof for the initial premise: There is *nothing* new being taught in the 3^{rd} chapter of 2^{nd} Peter. It is not a separated prophecy distinctly applied to a future event in which the material universe is destroyed. If it were, we would see it also in the Old Testament prophecies; and, we don't. Instead, we see a consistent message that pertained to Peter's generation.

Please consider, in *their* contexts, the following passages pertaining to that generation between John the Baptist and the end of the Jewish nation in A.D. 70: Matthew 3:7; 11:6; 12:34, 39-45; 16:27-28 17:17; 23:33-36; 24:34; Luke 11:29-51; 21:20-32; Acts 2:40 (and all of their parallels in Mark, Luke, John, et. al.).

In the next installment: How chapter 2 contributes context to chapter 3 in 2^{nd} Peter. – [SK]

Questions? Comments? Want more material? <u>We want to hear from you!</u> Spirit and Life, P.O. Box 718, Pentwater, MI. 49449

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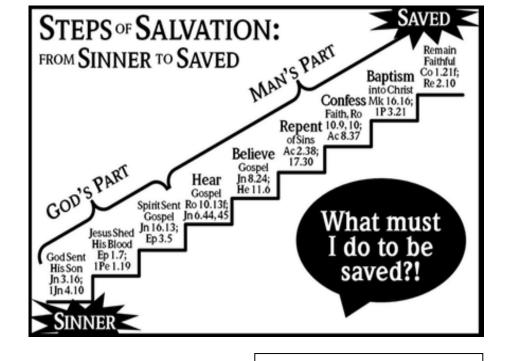
Question: If God created physical death, why not spiritual death also?

Thank you for your question and for your words of encouragement, brother! In my article "What is Death?" I demonstrated that physical death was part of natural creation. To illustrate this further, God told Adam that he could eat of any tree that was in the garden. Why do you reckon that was? If he wouldn't have touched any food at all, then what would have happened to him? His cells would no longer be able to use the glucose in the food to make usable energy that biologists call ATP. Without this process, an individual will eventually die physically. Spiritual death, on the other hand, was not a created condition by God; that is, while man had to die physically, man did not **have** to die spiritually. Spiritual death – that is, separation from God – was brought in when man sinned by eating the fruit (Genesis 2:16-17; cf. Romans 5:12). It was brought about by man – not God. Hope that helps – DR.



- 1. John Watson will be debating Mark Newton on Friday, February 24 at Hendricks Co Fairgrounds in Daneville, IN. It will begin at 7:00 PM
- 2. Dr. Don K. Preston will be debating Dr. David Hester at the Eastern Meadows church of Christ in Montgomery, AL on June 15-16.
- 3. Steve Baisden will be debating Drew Leonard at this year's lectures in Ludington, MI at the Ludington church of Christ on August 4-6. More details to come
- 4. ALL of our previous issues are available at www.cocludington.com. Sign up for our mailing list by e-mailing us at spiritandlife.coc@gmail.com





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- ONE FAITH (Law of Faith)
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- ONE GOD (Father)

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(Eph 4:4-6)