

DEBATE III / TOPIC II / CLOSING STATEMENT (d.)

The Resurrection Closing Statement

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It was my intention to have this debate with an open mind. I honestly thought that maybe Tim might have a point that I need to see. However, after reading the 20 page “rebuttal” from his hand, I am more confirmed than I ever was concerning the biblical doctrine of Preterism. It is exactly these arguments used by Tim that inspire many to turn away from Dispensationalism (in whatever form) to Preterism. It simply cannot be maintained without utterly destroying biblical hermeneutics.

That brings me to the first point. Tim completely misunderstood my assertions regarding the nature of SYSTEMATIC theology. He actually believes that I intended to teach that in order to make a Scripture FIT a system, one must BEND it. Not so, and hardly near anything that I actually wrote (read it again). I will give a quick example of what I mean. When Paul says “the MAN Christ Jesus” we, as Trinitarians, must make this FIT into Trinitarian, systematic theology (technically called “harmonization”). And we have. Else, we could simply overemphasize the humanity of Christ and shuck the divinity passages, or conclude that the Bible is a hopeless mess (liberalism). Thus, “fitting” Scriptures to suit a BIBLICAL framework is not bad. It is much like a jigsaw puzzle. This piece “fits” here and that piece “fits” there. However, when several Scriptures contradict the framework, then one must do one of two things, as I wrote earlier: reject the system, or “fit” the verses. Sometimes, we opt to “cram” the verses, which is what Tim does, as I will show. Hopefully, this point is settled as to what I (and every textbook of theology I have in my library) state.

He states that Dispensationalists use the “grammatico-historical” method of interpreting the Bible. Is that the one developed by Luther and Calvin, Tim? The same “Reformers” you debunk later with your quote, “And the Reformers were nearly the “mystics” the Romanists were”? Well, Tim, at least thank Calvin for developing the grammatico-historical method into what it is today. Two principles arose from the Reformation: *Scriptura Scripturae interpres* (“Scriptures interpret Scriptures”) and *omnis intellectus ac expositio Scripturae sit analogia fidei* (“Let all understanding and exposition of Scripture be in conformity with the analogy of faith”). The “analogy of faith” was the *analogia Scripturae* or the “analogy of Scripture.” From this, the Protestant Scholastic era developed that “obscure passages” must give way to “clear” passages (this was also seen by Augustine). This principle is taught in II Peter 3:16 in reference to Paul’s “letters.” In these letters Peter wrote that “some things are HARD to understand.” Logically, that means not ALL things are hard to understand. Some things are quite easy to understand. Those things which are CLEAR cannot contradict those things which are OBSCURE.

Tim charges me with having picked out a “few select passages” in order to “force” my interpretation of Scripture. You be the judge. If the analogy of Scripture is true, then one must begin with CLEAR passages, right? That means, that SOME passages are not used to BEGIN with, right? You can’t just start with every passage in the Bible for that is what we are trying to SYSTEMATIZE. Where do you BEGIN? If you start with the CLEAR and reason to the OBSCURE, then obviously you must START with a FEW SELECT PASSAGES (clear ones) to understand the “hard things” also found in the Bible. This is elementary seminary hermeneutics. It is basic LOGIC.

Thus, ask yourself, would you begin with trying to find out the “ten horns” then reason what “near” means? I can offer you well over 20 different interpretations as to what the “ten horns” mean. Pick up a commentary. Tim reasons that the “ten horns” are the “conglomerate kingdom, the kingdom of Antichrist.” Wow! The passage in Daniel 7 CLEARLY teaches that! (I am being sarcastic, of course). I guess John was using the “future-present tense” when he wrote, “Dear children IT IS THE LAST HOUR. As you (those to whom John is writing in the FIRST CENTURY) have heard that THE ANTICHRIST IS COMING, even NOW many antichrists HAVE COME. This is HOW WE KNOW that IT IS THE LAST HOUR. They (antichrists) went out from AMONG US” (I John 2.18,19). Tim, can you use your Bill Clinton “it depends on what is is” routine here? The apostle John, writing before A.D. 70, wrote that IT IS the last hour. He uses the TIME PARTICLE “now” to indicate the TIME of the verb. Tim is correct when he states that Greek verbs do not necessarily indicate the action of the time. True. But, these verbs usually occur in the Greek modes other than the INDICATIVE. When a verb is in the INDICATIVE coupled with timing adverbs (“now” “when” “then” etc.), then for one to argue that it is not a present tense simply reminds me of what my Greek professor said to me 12 years ago: “some folks know a little Greek to be dangerous.” Knowing Greek comes from daily working in the Greek text and understanding the actual usage. Tim uses this sloppy technique in rendering Hebrews 12.25-29 as a “prophetic future” tense. Amazing. In Daniel 7 the tense is future in the Greek text (Septuagint), in Hebrews 12.28 is it a present participle in the INDICATIVE coupled with the temporal adverb “now”. Tim, of course, overlooks this, quotes a grammar, applies the rule and entirely misses the text for the sake of rules. Let us read the passage: “But NOW (see that Tim?) he HAS PROMISED saying, “Yet ONCE (time) I will shake (future tense) not only the land, but also the heaven (singular). But the YET ONCE (time) signifies (present tense) of the THINGS being shaken (present passive), the REMOVING (present) of the things having BEEN MADE (past) so that THINGS not shaken MAY REMAIN. Wherefore, a not-to-be-shaken-kingdom (is) being received (passive participle, present, indicative, plural) may we have grace....” Tim, your argument here in comparison with Daniel’s future tense, and the present tense is simply something a first year Greek student would not commit. Find me one translation that places the future tense here. The passage compares that which was being received THEN (“now”) not something that was going to be received thousands of years from then. The comparison is between “things made with hands” and things “not made with hands”, which is the comparison with the OLD COVENANT and the NEW COVENANT. We have inherited a Temple NOT MADE WITH HANDS whereas the temple MADE WITH HANDS was BEING SHAKEN and would soon BE REMOVED (Hebrews 8.13). This is the obvious meaning of the text, the grammar, the historical

background and the context of the entire book of Hebrews. Tim forgets the “historical” in the “grammatico-HISTORICAL” method he claims to use. For Daniel, it was future, to those living in Jesus’ generation, it was a present reality coming to a climax with the vanishing of the old covenant.

One more note while I am at it. The “prophetic-future” is usually brought out in translation. For example, Luke 3:9 uses two presents for “cut down and thrown in the fire.” One could translate this as “being cut down and being thrown into the fire” in a present tense fashion. However, since we know that John is referring to the Great Judgment, an event clearly in the future, the translators of the NIV write, “WILL BE cut down and thrown into the fire.” The rule, then, for translation is that the tense-form of the verb in its NORMAL understanding is the MEANING unless one can demonstrate beyond a doubt that it is not. Tim understands that IF the present tense here IS a present tense, then the kingdom of God WAS BEING received in that generation. Therefore, he MUST conjure up this prophetic-future (listed as a last option in grammars) to AVOID the implications. Preterists simply read it as it is in its NORMAL usage.

Now, Tim does some amazing things with Daniel 2. In the dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue. Daniel interprets the statue as a SUCCESSION of empires. The “head” was Babylon (2:38). The second part of the statue was “another kingdom that will come AFTER you (Nebuchadnezzar)” (2:39). So far, this is a clear SUCCESSION of kingdoms, one right after the other. The third is the same: “Next, a third kingdom” and then “FINALLY, there will be a FOURTH.” The Aramaic (portions of Daniel are Aramaic) text here is plain. 1,2,3,4. Surely we can count. I only see four empires here. Tim sees five. He has FIVE! Thus, here is the easy way to interpret Daniel: 1,2,3,4 -then Messiah (the rock) and God establishes the kingdom in the days of those kings (the FINAL FOURTH KINGDOM). Tim does this: 1,2,3,4, Messiah (thousands of years gap), 5 (ten king conglomerate of the Antichrist Empire) then God raptures the church, then a millennium, then God raises the dead, then a new heavens and new earth where God establishes his eternal kingdom never again to be destroyed! He wrote, “the feet with ten toes MUST be a separate KINGDOM that follows AFTER the Roman kingdom declines from world dominance.” Tim, how many “kingdoms” have come after Rome fell in 312 A.D.? Tim wrote, “That Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome follow sequentially is clear from history.” Then, what? After Rome falls the sequence ends? The Antichrist Kingdom follows after SEVERAL kingdoms from Rome to now. The Aramaic, however, neatly show that that “toes and feet” of the “legs of iron” is a single kingdom. The text never hints nor ventures that the “feet and toes” are a “fifth” empire after the “fourth.” The “fourth” is where the SEQUENCE ENDS. Ahem. This is EXACTLY what I am talking about as to how far Dispensationalists will go to CRAM their system into Scriptures that simply DO NOT FIT their scheme. Here is a PRIME example of what I mean, and a PRIME REASON why many have turned from this completely irrational way of handling God’s holy Word. Now, “in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that WILL NEVER BE DESTROYED” (2:44). Sounds like Hebrews 12 that I quoted above, a kingdom that CANNOT BE SHAKEN. The ROCK OF OFFENSE came. All other NATIONS are subject to HIS ETERNAL KINGDOM. They

are either made subjects, or outcasts. Tim understands the implications: if the kingdom is set up in the days of the fourth kingdom, then Dispensationalism fails completely.

Tim tries to show that ‘ten toes’ and ‘ten kings’ have to be ‘ruling together’ and make war against the Whore in Revelation. First off, the verse reads “the ten horns you saw are ten kings (rulers) who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.” Tim likes to use “the church fathers” to support his notion that they agreed that Babylon was Rome. Well, Tim, they also agreed that the ‘beast’ was Rome, too. So do I. Rome was the FOURTH kingdom in Daniel’s prophecy, pictured as a beast in Daniel 7 with ten horns, same as John. Five of these “heads” has fallen (past tense), one “is” (present tense), and the other is “yet to come.” (Rev. 17.10). Interestingly enough, Tim does not deal with this passage, but I will guess that “is” does not mean “is” here, too. Nonetheless, John states, at the time of writing, that one “is” currently ruling. Therefore, the “beast” was currently in power as well. This is the simple meaning and reading of the text that Tim so adamantly assumes he uses. Now, if the beast is Rome, then what are the ten kings? 10, in the Bible, means “totality” (see Milton Terry’s Biblical Apocalypses, p.433). But, for the sake of argument, let us say they are ten in number. The great Christian historian F.W. Farrar in his “The Early Days of Christianity” (1882) wrote that Rome did indeed have ten imperial provinces: Italy, Achaia, Asia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Germany. It is clear from the text that these “kings” RECEIVED authority from the beast. Therefore, they are IN LEAGUE or ALLIANCE with the beast. It is shown in the account of Josephus that many nations and provinces were in league with Rome during the Jewish War.

Aside from these details, let us examine Tim’s Dispensational approach. He says the Woman is the Catholic Church. Well, then who is the beast on which she rides? Read the text: “the beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked and burn her with fire” (17.16). You mean Rome turns against Rome? If the woman is Rome, the Antichrist, and the beast with ten horns is the “ten king conglomerate empire of the Antichrist” then you have the ten horned beast turning against itself, hating itself and burning itself to the ground! Clearly, any sane reading of the text is that the Woman is a kingdom and the beast is another kingdom with ten kingdoms that it rules over. The beast turns against the woman and burns her down. Then John interprets the Woman as “the great city.” Tim wrote “a great city” but the Greek is emphatic with a definite article: “the woman that you saw is THE great city.” He agrees that “THE great city” in Revelation 11 is Jerusalem. Well, then, ask yourself, when the angel interprets the woman as THE great city, what other GREAT CITY is there in Revelation? In the context of the WHOLE BOOK? THE great city has ALREADY been identified in Revelation 11 as Jerusalem, thus the angel only need mention “THE great city” here for the readers to KNOW who he was talking about. Simple. Tim makes it extremely complicated. Did she ride on Rome? Yep. “We have no king but Caesar.” Israel existed because ROME let her exist. Eventually Rome hated her with the surrounding nations, turned AGAINST her and BURNED her down. Simple. Hal Lindsey has made millions of peddling a complicated constantly

revised false teaching by selling this type of slop that no one can understand. Preterism follows the Bible: The great city is the great city and Rome burned her down.

In my second response, Tim nowhere dealt with the fact that the language of Revelation 17 and the prophets, particularly Ezekiel, calls Israel a Whore, dressed in fine linen and purple, decked with gold and jewelry and committed adultery with the nations. This is a COVENANTAL description of ISRAEL, and John is using the SAME LANGUAGE to describe the nation that killed its Messiah and cried out: "we have NO KING but CAESAR." In COVENANTAL TERMS this is DAMNING evidence against her. Israel had become that which she claimed never to be: BABYLON, SODOM, and EGYPT. In covenantal terms, she was nothing but a whore, and the faithful remnant (144,000) Jews who "followed the Lamb" fled her walls, her temple, and her sins. Finally, on this matter, she is described as one that "in her was found the blood of prophets and saints and ALL WHO HAVE BEEN KILLED on the land" (Rev. 18.24). Hear the word of our Lord and Savior Jesus who was talking to the rulers of Jerusalem in his day: "And so will come upon YOU ALL THE RIGHTEOUS BLOOD that has been SHED ON THE EARTH (land), from the blood of righteous ABEL (Genesis) to the blood of ZECHARIAH (one of the last prophets)...I tell you the truth, ALL this will come UPON THIS GENERATION" (Matthew 23.35,36). Folks, if you cannot see the unmistakable identification here, then I don't know. How can the "ALL the blood" come upon that generation? Did Caiphas kill Abel? No. Did the Pharisees kill Isaiah? No. Then why is that GENERATION singled out to "FILL UP THE MEASURE" of their sins? (Matthew 23.32). Notice, in Revelation 17,18 the woman FILLS UP her abominations. But, if this is not enough, Paul said, "...the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way THEY always heap up THEIR SINS TO THE LIMIT. The WRATH OF GOD HAS COME UPON THEM AT LAST" (I Thess. 2.14-16). The Bible is a self-contained book. In Tim's view, we have guess after guess after guess after guess after guess after guess (2000 years of guessing) who the Antichrist is. In the Biblical view, the Bible spells it out: the woman that you saw is THE GREAT CITY where our Lord was crucified, who fills up the measure of her sins, who is a whore with the nations, and who, in the end, will be burned because of her attempts to stop the gospel from spreading. THAT is the Bible interpreting the Bible.

Tim quotes Matthew 24 as an instance of "direct" statements as to what would happen. "Immediately AFTER the tribulation of those days" the language used to denote Jerusalem's downfall is widely recognized as apocalyptic language to denote national disaster. The Bible is replete with using language like this. Read Psalm 18 and compare it to the historical examples of David's deliverances from his enemies in I and II Samuel. The Psalm appears in II Samuel 22. Nothing happened in terms of how David described God as delivering him, but that is the way David pictured it. Tim cannot understand the correct usage of metaphorical language in Matthew 24, and since stars did not "literally" fall from the sky and plummet on the earth, then it cannot be A.D. 70 but an event still future. Well, if a star is the size of the sun, then no star would come close to earth without the earth exploding, yet, the Bible says they "fall the earth." And that's the PLURAL "stars" hitting the earth. Therefore, several sun-sized stars are going

to hit planet earth. The absurdity of such a view (not to mention its impossibility astronomically speaking) coupled with the fact that the Bible uses “de-creation” language to refer to national disasters leads me to conclude that Jesus was using figures of speech peppered with straight prose. It’s either that, or believe in the absurd.

As far as ‘entering heaven’ or being ‘seated with him in heavenly places’ Tim thinks that I am teaching that we are in heaven. Yet, he wrote that the temple offerings and the like are used by Paul to represent “a future reality we now realize in Christ.” This is an amazing sentence. A “future” reality that is NOW realized? If it is NOW realized, then it cannot be FUTURE anymore. That’s like saying I have a million dollars NOW, but I am going to get that million dollars 50 years from now! You either have it or you don’t. Then, interestingly enough, Tim does use the word “metaphor” a lot. Tim sees ours relationship to God in the holy of holies as mere “metaphor.” Well, a “metaphor” is based in REALITY, else it is not a metaphor. A metaphor is a figure of speech that STANDS IN THE PLACE of a real object. Therefore, what is the metaphor of entering the holy of holies standing in the place of? Nothing? Preterists believe that Jesus’ prayer was answered: “thy kingdom come” - it did. The Temple of God is on earth as it was in heaven, and the church dwells in that Temple (Christ), and for Paul IS the temple as well. You are not metaphorically a priest of God, you ARE a priest of God, period. Well, priests serve in the Temple, do they not? Are we a TEMPLE-LESS priesthood? What TEMPLE are we serving in? These are spiritual REALITIES that Tim simply reduces to mere “metaphor.”

We have already dealt with the “land” issues, so there is no need to rehash that here. The Land of Canaan was a “shadow” of the kingdom of God inherited through Christ. To insist that Israel will one day inherit the “shadow” is to besmirch the promises of God.

Next, Tim does an amazing thing with the word “near.” He says that “it can mean either near in TIME or near in LOCATION”. Then he admits that “near” does not “necessarily indicate” that the kingdom would come soon. “The language,” he wrote, “PERMITS that understanding, but does not require it.” Catch that. Near can actually mean near. Now, he states that “near” means “location” in terms of proximity. Well, okay, the kingdom of God is near in terms of proximity. I am sure you might be bobbling your head as well. But, let me continue. Tim states that the kingdom was “near” because Jesus, the King, was there. Hmm. Was Jesus King when he was ministering before the event of the Ascension to his glorious throne and CROWNED LORD OF ALL, Tim? Now, when Paul says “the day is at hand” and Peter says “the end of all things HAS DRAWN NEAR” (perfect tense), was he referring to proximity or time? Notice that Jesus said, “The kingdom of God HAS ARRIVED (perfect tense), the TIME HAS DRAWN NEAR (perfect tense).” The perfect tense denotes an action as having occurred in the past with PRESENT results. What kingdom was this? Where does Daniel foresee an arrival of the kingdom, only to be taken away again, then received thousands of years later after its first initial arrival in Jesus? Daniel ONLY SEES ONE ARRIVAL after the FOURTH and FINAL empire of the dream. Tim has two arrivals: one when Jesus was here, and after thousands of years, another. The last one is when the saints will finally “receive” it! Now, get this statement: “the kingdom’s nearness was in proximity rather than

timing.” Jesus SPECIFICALLY SAID that the TIME was at hand! Tim MUST downplay time because he knows that if the TIME is at hand, then it not just referring to Jesus being “near” but also the TIME. What TIME was that? Daniel 7:22 answers: “the Ancient of Days pronounced judgment in favor of the saints and the TIME (same word) came when they POSSESSED the KINGDOM.” Jesus comes on the scene during the days of the FOURTH empire: “The KINGDOM has drawn near! The TIME has arrived! REPENT.” Now, if Jesus knew that Daniel meant that the kingdom was only “near” in proximity, and that after thousands of years of Church history, it would come to fruition, then Jesus is surely misleading the people of Israel by using the LANGUAGE of Daniel. Jesus would have known that the kingdom’s arrival was not for thousands of years after his message, and thus the “near” language and the “time is near” phrase are completely superfluous and misleading. Israel was directly confronted to REPENT because the TIME was coming for JUDGMENT upon their HOUSE (“judgment begins in the HOUSE OF THE LORD” Peter wrote). Tim’s contrived “solution” to the “time” problem simply creates more problems, and does not solve them. It is clear to me that this is a desperate attempt to salvage Dispensationalism.

Finally, concerning the resurrection passages, I stand by every word I wrote in the Response. Tim’s “scholarship” has failed to convince me otherwise. However, I do want to point out more inconsistencies on Tim’s part concerning his last section on Ezekiel. There he insists that the “law has been superceded” and “never again to be reinstated” but something will carry over in the Ezekielian Temple (Ez. 40-48). Well, Ezekiel mentions SACRIFICES in order to ATONE for SINS. Some Dispensationalists get around this by saying that these sacrifices are mere “memorials” and have no ATONING value. But, that is NOT what Ezekiel says. The Hebrew is plain in those passages: “in order to atone for sins.” So, I ask, will the SACRIFICES be “carried over” as Tim states, and as Ezekiel PLAINLY tells us? Tim can either answer “yes” or “no.” If he answers “yes” then he contradicts Paul that tells us that these things ARE RUBBISH and SHADOWS of the REALITY in CHRIST. Is God going to erect once again the things he came to REMOVE?

Ezekiel says in 44.9 that “no foreigner uncircumcised in HEART or flesh is to enter my sanctuary”. Wow. Gentiles like Tim cannot enter into the sanctuary when it finally gets here! The only way to answer this is to somehow take Ezekiel’s DETAILED prophecy SPIRITUALLY. If you are going to be a CONSISTENT literalists like Tim, then EVERYTHING Ezekiel says will happen, will happen. Preterists understand with Paul that Ezekiel was seeing the Church in which the ONCE AND FOR ALL TIME sacrifice of Jesus was offered up, making those who believe PRIESTS who ENTER the SANCTUARY. The Church is made up of the family of Abraham. The Church is a royal priesthood. The church rules and reigns as kings. The Church drinks from living waters (Ez 47). Tim mentions three appointed feasts. Ezekiel mentions several (Ez.46). This is another place where Tim is simply dancing around the issue. Only Dispensationalists believe that sacrifices will once again be instituted in the Ezekielian Temple during the Millennium. The idea flies in the face of students of Paul who, without hesitation, denounced those things as “rubbish” and “weak and beggarly elements” destined for destruction. Well, if they are weak and beggarly, and since Jesus once and for all

fulfilled them, then it follows by strict biblical logic that they will NEVER again resurface.

Conclusion

It should be clear to many that Preterism is a viable alternative to what has been witnessed. The insertion of “gaps” and “kingdoms” that are not there, the redefinition of what “near” means, the inability to consistently follow Ezekiel literally. These problems have vexed Christian eschatology since its early days. Along its long development, several solutions have been put forward. Amillennialism correctly saw the problem of Ezekiel’s temple. It cannot be literal. Postmillennialists correctly saw the kingship of Jesus now, in this day and time, and live to improve the earth, not wait for its destruction. Premillennialists saw, however, the defect of Amillennialism’s failure to deal with passages like Ezekiel. Dispensationalists, albeit overboard, correctly saw the Jew/Gentile distinction in Paul. Combining all of their strengths and weaknesses, Preterism, about the same time Dispensationalism came about, made its case. Today, it has more adherents than any time in history. Tim LaHaye wrote End Time Controversy for the very reason of the “alarming growth” of Preterism in Evangelical churches. Debates like these are needed. Some never change. Some have ministries to protect. But, some begin to see the pattern of Preterism, its history and roots, and the inconsistencies of what they had “been taught.” Thus, you have to ask yourself something always as a reader of the Bible: am I cramming something here that is not there? If Jesus was offered “once and for all time” then what are the sacrifices in Ezekiel’s vision of the future? If Daniel only mentions four empires, then where does this “fifth” empire come from? Why do all the New Testament writers use “near” when referring to the “day of the Lord”? Did they understand that, somehow, they were living in Daniel’s “fullness of the time”? Questions lead to answers, but maintaining tradition for the mere sake of tradition leads to despair.