

In this post I want to accept the impressive case that can be built for thinking that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet whom, amongst other things, predicted that ‘the end’ would occur within a generation of his lifetime and critically examine whether Christian theism still has any legs to stand on. My reasons for doing this are:

- 1) The case that can be made for this conclusion is very powerful, and to my mind, if not true, so probable that it requires taking the position very seriously
- 2) A large number of very influential NT scholars hold to some version of the ‘Jesus as apocalyptic prophet’ framework (James Dunn, Dale Allison, Paula Frederickson, E.P. Sanders, and more)
- 3) Very little (actually none, as far as I know) work has been done to determine what follows with respect to the truth of Christian theism, if Jesus truly did make such a prediction; except for those who raise the de facto objection that Jesus was a failed apocalyptic prophet based on Biblical teaching itself (Deut. 18:22), and therefore it is unlikely that God would raise Jesus from the dead (or if Jesus was wrong about something as huge as the timing of the eschaton, then we have little to no basis for trusting anything else he said), or some raise de jure objections that make Jesus into an unsavory fellow such as: ‘only a lunatic would predict such a thing’,
- 4) I am convinced that it is more effective for the cause of Christ to show that Christian theism plausibly fits with the largest number of background beliefs (based on good evidence of course) possible rather than trenchantly defending ones cherished view instead. In other words, even if one thinks Darwinian evolution is largely false, we should try to show that Christian theism is true for someone who thinks Darwinian evolution is actually true. Or, even if one thinks the Bible is inerrant, we would do well to try and develop an alternate theory of inspiration that accords with modern Biblical scholarship. Or again, we would do well to show that for those who think Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who predicted the imminent coming of the kingdom of God that Jesus was still a ‘true’ prophet. This last suggestion will be the focus of this post.

JESUS AS AN UNSAVORY FELLOW / AN ALTERNATE QUADRILEMMA (Mistaken, Deceiver, Lunatic, Fanatic):

Jesus’ error in predicting the timing of the eschaton means that Jesus was either mistaken, a deceiver, a lunatic, a fanatic, or some combination of these.

LUNATIC/FANATIC?:

The legal definition of a lunatic is: a person legally declared to be of unsound mind and who therefore is not held capable or responsible before the law.¹ The definition of a fanatic is: a person with an extreme and uncritical enthusiasm or zeal.² Thus, if Jesus made such a prediction

¹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/lunatic?s=t>

² <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fanatic?s=t>

out of an unsound and uncritical mind in an overzealous manner, then we may conclude that he was some sort of fanatical lunatic. Indeed, we may think that a person today who makes a prediction about ‘the end’ is borderline, or a full-fledged fanatic/lunatic. No doubt, this may be true of some in our Western culture. However, once we develop a sensitive palate for apocalyptic teachings and first century Judaism, I think we will see that Jesus was neither a fanatic or a lunatic for the following reasons:

- 1) The cultural milieu into which Jesus was born and had his being was one of widespread anticipation, hope for, and belief in the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God.³ Thus, Jesus’ eschatological expectations were widespread and the norm in the first century⁴ in stark contrast to our day and age.
- 2) Moreover, unlike the ‘lunatics/fanatics’ of our day, Jewish apocalyptic expectations were revolutions of the imagination of the apocalyptic community where:

“...the revolutionary potential of such an imagination should not be underestimated, as it can foster dissatisfaction with the present and generate visions of what might be. The legacy of the apocalypses includes a powerful rhetoric for denouncing the deficiencies of this world. It also includes the conviction that the world as now constituted is not the end. Most of all, it entails an appreciation of the great resource that lies in the imagination to construct a symbolic world where the integrity of values can be maintained in the face of social and political powerlessness and even of the threat of death”⁵

As Thom Stark writes, “Its significance is that it is a complex, beautiful, and incisively accurate expression of outrage at the existing world order, and a clarion call for fidelity to a new social system based upon justice rather than exploitation...this is not the voice of despair at the world, but the voice of hope, and this, I submit, is the voice of God speaking to us through our Scriptures.”⁶

For Jesus, the final judgment, the general resurrection of the dead, and [the eschatological sojourn of the Gentiles to Zion]⁷ were all at hand, and much like those who finally want to ‘live’ life when they realize that their time is almost up, Jesus was hoping to turn his hearers into eschatological actors of the final drama which in light of the imminency of the kingdom, were too important to ignore.⁸

- 3) Jesus’ apocalypticism was not of the doomsday sort which we find today in which the destruction, or complete annihilation of this world and its inhabitants is usually envisioned; which can arouse great anxiety and fear. Some who make this claim are

³ T. Mos. 10:1; 4Q521, 1QSb 4:25-26, Dan. 7-12

⁴ E.P. Sanders, Judaism: Practice and Belief

⁵ Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 283.

⁶ Thom Stark, The Human Faces of God, 229-230.

⁷ Joachim Jeremias

⁸ Dale Allison, Jesus of Nazareth, 151.

either ignorant of apocalyptic literature, or are simply twisting the facts⁹ Rather, as Dale Allison writes, "...Jesus, ...probably drew no distinction between a millennial kingdom and the eternal world to come, and whose eschatology probably contained, to use Scholem's categories, elements of both restorative and utopian-catastrophic messianism, may similarly have looked for a time "free from old age, death, decomposition, and corruption...when the dead shall rise, when immortality shall come to the living, when the world shall be perfectly renewed."¹⁰ Though it is true that Jesus thought the path to the new world would pass through the suffering and death first (birth pangs), he believed that "his death itself...would be [the] decisive manifestation of those pangs,"¹¹ and most importantly is that the end result was that this world would ultimately be transformed into a perfect one.

- 4) From the overall portrait of Jesus we see in the Gospels, it is unlikely that Jesus was either a lunatic or a fanatic: "He was loving but didn't let his compassion immobilize him; he didn't have a bloated ego, even though he was often surrounded by adoring crowds; he maintained balance despite an often demanding lifestyle; he always knew what he was doing and where he was going; he cared deeply about people, including women and children, who weren't seen as being important back then; he was able to accept people while not merely winking at their sin; he responded to individuals based on where they were at and what they uniquely needed. All in all I just don't see signs that Jesus was suffering from any known mental illness."¹²
- 5) The importance of prophetic apocalyptic literature of the historical sort "rested not in their predictive value so much as in the encouragement they offered to suffering people."¹³ "...critical scholars...view apocalyptic merely as a literary method employed by ancient writers to convey a future hope of better world. The enduring valued of apocalyptic is its promise of this better world to those who are overwhelmed by their present circumstances, such as poverty, disease, and persecution."¹⁴
- 6) It is very difficult, if not impossible to psychoanalyze somebody through historical texts alone, "Psychoanalysis is notoriously difficult even with a patient seated in front of oneself on the couch, but it is virtually impossible with historical figures. That is why the genre of psychobiography is rejected by historians. Martin Hengel rightly concludes, "Lüdemann . . . does not recognize these limits on the historian. Here he gets into the realm of psychological explanations, for which no verification is really possible the sources are far too limited for such psychologizing analyses."¹⁵

⁹John W. Loftus, *Why I Became An Atheist*, 300-302.

¹⁰Allison, 155.

¹¹Oscar Cullman, *Salvation in History*, 229-30.

¹²Gary Collins, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 147 (A psychologist with a doctorate in clinical psychology from Purdue).

¹³Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 251.

¹⁴Holman *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 80.

¹⁵Read more: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/visions-of-jesus-a-critical-assessment-of-gerd-ludemanns#ixzz20kAjNUKT>

7) If Jesus was 'right,' then he was neither a lunatic nor a fanatic with respect to this prediction; which is what I am ultimately going to argue.

Thus, Jesus was far from an unsound and uncritical mind, but instead, he was a thoroughly Jewish minded first century prophet (amongst other things) with an apocalyptic message that has many virtues that we would still cheer for today and who was, to all appearances, also sincere in his message, and thus not a deceiver.

A MISTAKEN JESUS?

If Jesus truly distinguished between this present earthly existence into which the kingdom of God was in-breaking and present for the first time, and the life to be lived in a future kingdom of God that was not yet at hand, then as D.F. Strauss wrote: "it is irrelevant at which nearer or remoter point of time he removed this act; it would be but a human mistake for Jesus to have put the end nearer instead of further than he should."¹⁶

Indeed, it is the majority view (although not a full consensus, thanks to the Jesus Seminar) that Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God was that it was present in his person and ministry and had begun to transform the here and now; and that the futurity of the establishment of God's kingly rule was due to come in its fullness soon although it was not here yet. Thus, in light of the 'already' and 'not yet' temporality of Jesus' teaching with respect to the kingdom of God, and in light of the widespread first century Jewish expectation that Jesus culturally inherited of the imminency of the coming of the kingdom of God that was demonstrated above (although his teaching that it was in breaking and to some degree already present in his ministry is culturally unique); I think we can be charitable to Jesus, and understand the 'error' in his prediction about the timing of the eschaton as a mere human error. However, I do not think Jesus was 'wrong' so to speak and to explain what I mean, I will use ex-apologist's argument as a foil (though John Loftus' would work it isn't as good as ex-apologist's IMO)

I. What implicit premises need to be true in order for ex-apologist's argument to work?

-The OT needs to be inspired according to the verbal, plenary, and confluent theory of inspiration which logically implies inerrancy. If this theory of inspiration was true, then his emphasis on Deut. 18:22, and Jer. 14:14-15 would make it probable that Jesus was a false prophet all else being equal.

-He needs to assume that the OT (Deut. 18:22, and Jer. 14:14-15 in particular) gives us a consistent and clear portrait of YHWH's disdain toward human prophets whose prophecies don't come true.

¹⁶ D.F. Strauss, Life of Jesus 242.

-He needs to assume that YHWH wouldn't allow any, or even many false prophecies to be contained in the OT because if this was the case, then this would actually give us strong reason to think that YHWH not only doesn't abhor false prophecies, but is quite fond of them.

-He needs to assume that the notion of a 'prophecy coming true' is very strict, literal, wooden; absolutely true, or absolutely false.

-He needs to assume either that human beings have the ability to predict the future, or that YHWH is in the business of giving revelation on high to human beings as compared to YHWH working through the cultural trappings to 'reveal' some bit of truth despite any false beliefs that some human being may hold at the time and place they live (i.e. no scientific, historical, ethical errors)

II. What kinds of empirical data about the OT would undercut and/or rebut Ex-apologists case?

-If we found out the OT was not inerrant, then this would undercut our ability to know that Deut. 18:22, and Jer. 14:14-15 are God-given truth without independent argumentation which I don't think ex-apologist can give.

-If we found out that the OT contained many false prophecies, then this would imply that YHWH (no matter what theory of inspiration may be true) does not abhor false prophecies.

-If we can see that time and time again that the worldview of the authors of the OT are a reflection of their time and place, and that we know that these beliefs are false (e.g. in matters of science, history, and ethics) then we would have strong reason to doubt that if YHWH is behind the OT in any manner, he isn't interested changing, nor does he have a wholesale abhorrence for incorrect background beliefs that some human being may have which are largely attributable to the time and place of their existence.

-If we believed that human beings cannot predict the future, and if we use the OT as our background info to determine that it is not probable that YHWH gives 'revelation from on high' based on many failed prophecies in the OT itself, then we would need to ask in what sense God might have revealed himself to Jesus and see if that was correct.

-Perhaps there were different standards of judging some prophecy as right or wrong that Deut. 18:22 would be presupposing, and which would have been implemented in the time of Jesus as well that are different than our own.

III. WHAT EXACTLY IS JESUS TAKEN TO BE WRONG ABOUT?:

'Within a generation' the following was to occur (summarized from the work of Dale Allison and James D.G. Dunn):

1-The Son of Man coming on the clouds

2-The imminency of the general resurrection

3-The last judgment (He would have thought of Daniel 7)—

4-The restoration of Israel-the church, or in-gathering of Gentiles

*Jesus' end-time teaching did not mean that Earth, or humans, or the universe would cease to exist, "I maintain that Jesus was not looking for the literal 'end of the world.' But instead for the restoration of a world in despair (footnote 7 pg. 32 Constructing Jesus)."

IV. Siphoning Off The Presuppositions Of A Speaker Within A Culture From The Statement Of That Speaker

Presupposition & Statement:

When you use words to convey information or express a belief or attitude, it is often easier to do so (you need to use a shorter sentence, and the hearer is more likely to hear it) if you express it in terms of shared presuppositions. Sometimes one speaker makes use of the presuppositions of his audience, even when he does not share them, in order to express his belief or whatever. This too is because he can express his belief more briefly and intelligibly and make it more acceptable to his audience if he uses such a presupposition in terms of which to clothe his message. For example, suppose I seek to comment on a man in the corner having a drink at a party by saying, "The man drinking Martini is very cheerful." However, the man drinking to whom I was intending to refer was drinking a sherry, not Martini. Is what I have said, true, false, or neither? Some say if the first conjunct is false, then the whole is false. Others claim that it is neither true nor false, for since the referring expression fails to refer there is nothing for what I say to be true or false about. **Yet others may plausibly claim that if the context makes clear to whom I am intending to refer and what I say applies to him, then what I have said is true.** This third position seems to be the most reasonable option when there are public criteria that make it clear to what reference is being made—in the sense that others in that context would agree on which object is being referred to (even if the speaker himself did not have the intention of referring to that object); the fact that the reference is made by means of a false description does not affect the truth-value of what is said, and so does not therefore make it false or neither-true-nor-false. The reason I, I suggest, compelling where it is a presupposition, not just of the speaker or one or two of those to whom he is talking, but of the whole culture that the false description applies to the object in question, and that is why public criteria (i.e. those of the culture) pick it out. We of our culture can see what those criteria pick out, and the pick out the object in question by a route which does not use their presuppositions. Although speakers may use declarative sentences for many different purposes (e.g. to express their beliefs or attitudes), their paradigm job is to convey information, to add to the hearer's stock of beliefs. By a sentence such as 'The divine Augustus travelled to Brindisi', written in the course of conveying other detailed information, a Roman historian is seeking to add to his readers' stock of information. He would regard himself as having succeeded if they then came to believe that Augustus travelled to Brindisi, whether or

not they shared his view that Augustus was divine. That that is what is crucial in the utterance of the sentence would be a view held not merely by the individual speaker but by others of his culture; they would see that as the job of the sentence in that location. The writer and his hearers would see the sentence as false if Augustus did not travel to Brindisi. If we judge it as false (or neither-true-nor-false) if either Augustus was not divine or he did not travel to Brindisi, we would be taking into account in judging its truth-value an aspect quite other than the writer and immediate readers would have judged as part of his message; we would have imposed our categories of 'true' and 'false' upon the sentence in virtue of truth-conditions which the speaker and his culture would not have regarded as relevant to the information which the sentence was being used to convey. We would thus be ignoring the close tie between the meaning of a sentence (and so what makes it true or false) and the belief which, other things equal, speakers in a culture use the sentence to instill. Our account of what made the sentence true or false would not be one sensitive to the normal role of the sentence in the circumstances of its utterance. But if the falsity of description of a referent does not destroy the reference or the truth of what is said about it, so long as there are public criteria for what the referent is, the same should apply to other false assumption used in a sentence by means of which a speaker seeks to do a job quite other than convey those assumptions in terms of which its message is cast...But where not merely the assumption of speaker and hearer, but the presuppositions of a whole culture, are what lead a typical speaker to convey information by means of a sentence which encapsulates those presuppositions (information quite other than that those presuppositions are true) then we ought, I suggest, to regard truth and falsity as belonging to a statement which does not contain those presuppositions, although it has been expressed by means of them. This is because the criteria for truth, falsity, and so on of public utterances are those of the whole culture which uses the language; and those criteria must be ones which pick out the sentence as true if the belief which it would be used to instill by a typical speaker of the language in the context in question is a true one.

In order to separate statement from presupposition, we must ask, whatever the speaker's actual beliefs, what were the common beliefs of the culture which they could reasonably presuppose that the speaker shared with them; and whatever the actual purpose of his utterance, can any such presupposed beliefs be siphoned off, leaving what the culture would naturally suppose to be the main message intact? If they can, we must then judge the truth-value of the utterance by criteria to which the falsity of the presuppositions is irrelevant.

The presuppositions of the culture, about which situations are possible, demarcate the area within which its sentences have clear meaning.

A final connected point is that sentences are normally uttered to convey information in certain particular contexts of enquiry, which have their own standard of the kind of accuracy required. If 'all As are B' is a suggested scientific law of nature, a (repeatable) exception renders the sentence false; but it is a sentence in a guidebook describing a terrain, then maybe the sentence is

true (to the limits of accuracy appropriate in the context). So, a statement being true is a matter of its truth-conditions being satisfied to the degree of accuracy appropriate in the context.

V. Jesus' Vocation As Statement Vs. The Presuppositions, or Background Beliefs Jesus Would Have Used To Envision The Outcome Of His Vocation:

I would want to make a distinction between *Jesus' vocation*, or sense of calling as God's eschatological agent that would usher in the kingdom of God, and the way Jesus' *background beliefs* the as a first century apocalyptic Jew would have formed his vision of how his vocation would play out within a generation; namely, the 4 properties Dunn & Allison identify above.

JESUS' VOCATION:

"...we can deduce, without strain, something of Jesus' own self-understanding regarding...his conviction of being God's eschatological agent at the climax of God's purposes for Israel, his sense of intimate sonship before God and of the dependence of his disciples on him, and probably strong hope for final acknowledgment as the man who was playing the decisive role in bringing the kingdom to fulfillment and consummation (762)—Dunn Jesus Remembered

Indeed, next to the fact that Jesus was crucified by order of Pontius Pilate, his acquiescence to his fate is probably the best-attested fact about his last days. At some point, he determined to assent to his miserable end, accepting it as the will of God (433) Allison Constructing Jesus

Jesus saw himself at *"...the center of his own eschatological scenario."* Barnabas Lindars wrote, The apocalyptic notion of the agent of the divine intervention is the foundation of New Testament Christology...*The most primitive Christology can thus be formulated as follows: Jesus is the man whom God has designated to perform the judgment and to usher in the everlasting kingdom of God's righteousness; as such he has been exalted to the throne at the right hand of God and declared to be the Messiah; he will soon be revealed, wickedness will be extirpated, and the righteous...will enter the joy of the kingdom.*³⁰³ Allison

HOW JESUS' BACKGROUND BELIEFS AS A FIRST CENTURY APOCALYPTIC JEW WOULD HAVE CONSTRAINED HIM IN HIS CONCEPTION OF HOW HIS VOCATION WOULD HAVE COME TO FRUITION:

- 1-The Son of Man coming on the clouds
- 2-The imminency of the general resurrection
- 3-The last judgment (He would have thought of Daniel 7)—
- 4-The restoration of Israel-the church, or in-gathering of Gentiles

VI. In order to separate statement from presupposition, we must ask, whatever the speaker's actual beliefs, what were the common beliefs of the culture which they could reasonably presuppose that the speaker shared with them; and whatever the actual purpose of his utterance, can any such presupposed beliefs be siphoned off, leaving what the culture would naturally suppose to be the main message intact? If they can, we must then judge the truth-value of the utterance by criteria to which the falsity of the presuppositions is irrelevant.

THE RESURRECTION AND ITS RELIGIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AS THE KEY TO DETERMINING THE TRUTH-FUNCTIONAL CONNECTION BETWEEN JESUS' PRESUPPOSITIONS & HIS VOCATION:

John Loftus was objected that since God revealed himself in a high context society, he made it very difficult to understand him. Now, with respect to much in the Bible this true, but my contention is that the high context society of 1st century Palestine actually makes the communication of the significance of the most important bit of revelation in the Bible admirably clear, namely, the meaning of the Christ-event (indeed, without this high context, the meaning of the Christ-event would have been ambiguous and unclear):

“The unity of event and word in the resurrection appearances is important for the question of how this event can establish faith. If the resurrection or the appearances of the resurrected Jesus were only brute facts without inherent significance, then, certainly, the origin of the faith would not be understandable from this event. But that event had its own meaning within its sphere in the history of traditions: the beginning of the end, the confirmation and exaltation of Jesus by God himself, the ultimate demonstration of the divinity of Israel's God as the one God of all men. Only thus can Jesus' resurrection be the basis of faith without being supplemented by an external interpretation added to it.

Naturally, the same is not true of every event one might choose. Every man experiences in the area of his everyday life that the meaning of the various occurrences in the context of our life can be more or less clear in very different degrees. There are occurrences that contain such irresistible evidence that there can be no doubt about their meaning for us. But there are also events whose meaning remains obscure for us and which, when they are incisive, give cause for constantly new reflection over their significance. Within the horizon of Jewish tradition, the event of the Easter appearances experienced as the confrontation with the resurrected Jesus belonged, apparently, more to the first group of events which are to a great extent unambiguous.
“ Pannenberg 73

The religio-historical context in which Jesus' resurrection occurred served to characterize the immediate inherent significance of that event, namely:

1-If Jesus has been raised, then the end of the world has begun (i.e. the general resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, etc. Skip Down To Pg. 17 if you don't want to read the entire explanation of this first point (See Allison, The End of Ages Has Come):

CHAPTER 1:

Jesus hoped that the great and final resolution of the intricacies of Israel's narrative might be near and interpreted his prospective fate as part of the approaching eschatological transition (as in a plot, as of a drama or novel). He announced that the tribulation of the last days had set in, that the resurrection of the dead was just around the corner, and that he himself would meet his end in the one and know vindication in the other. The NT contains texts which interpret the death of Jesus as belonging to the great tribulation and in which his resurrection is set forth as marking the onset of the general resurrection of the dead. Moreover, Jesus anticipated for himself both death and resurrection and understood these two prospects to be defined by the eschatological sequence of tribulation—vindication. The church interpreted the fate of Jesus as inaugurating the eschatological turning point which was almost inevitable given the pre-Easter expectations of Jesus and his disciples.

--Jewish eschatology centered around two themes: the trials of the latter days, and the general resurrection of the dead.

CHAPTER 2:

Many ancient Jewish texts foretell the end of the present world but also a final time of great tribulation which will mark the transition between this present age, and the messianic age to come; the time of tribulation is often described with earthquakes, famine, wars, friends turning against friends, signs in the heavens. But, there is wide disagreement about when such things will happen, whether the righteous will suffer or not, about how significant the event will be, how long the tribulation will last, whether it was past, present, pending, or future, etc. Thus, the idea of a great tribulation heralding the eschatological age was flexible, there was no fixed eschatological doctrine. This allowed for the notion of a final, great tribulation to be interpreted in light of present experience and even past events (Jesus' may have seen his ministry or immediate future this way), Paul understood his sufferings in terms of messianic woes, Mark 13.); and the belief that the time of trouble might extend over a period of many years is also attested.

CHAPTER 3: Gospel of Mark

Mk. 15:33 (Darkness at noon) interprets the end of Jesus in eschatological categories; an eclipse of the sun or of the moon signifies the death of a king or the destruction of a great city and was a common tool for signifying the death of a great man. Yet another interpretation is that Mk. 15:33 is connected with the OT's use of darkness in connection with divine judgment (Is. 13:9-16, Amos 5:18, 20) where the Day of the Lord is a day of judgment so it brings darkness, not light.

Or it could denote mourning when men do not, or the cosmic dimensions of the crucifixion or signal its consequences.

Allison says that most recent scholars turn to the eschatological traditions of Judaism where an obscuration of heavenly lights is frequently connected to the consummation which would make this an event of the end time, or comparable to such an event. *More specifically, in Amos 8:9-10, God will make the sun go down at noon on the Day of the Lord, and there will be mourning as for an only son.* The Day of the Lord, in the early church, was a technical term for the passage to and the period of the messianic age or the age to come, a time associated with dawning of the new age in intertestamental and later Judaism. Thus, the historical crucifixion of Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecy concerned with the great Day of the Lord.

The Rending of the Veil: Mk. 15:38

If the wonder in Mk. 15:38 (like the wonders recorded by Josephus, the Talmud, and Liv. Pro. Hab. 12) foretells, or means the end of the temple, it also vindicates Jesus' warnings against the place (13:1-1; 14:58; 15:29). Therefore, even as Jesus dies upon the cross, his words are vindicated, and the judgment of his adversaries, the Jewish leaders, is sealed. The other major line of interpretation understands the inner veil in the Holy of Holies and concludes that this symbolizes the opening of the way to God effected by the death of Christ, or alternatively, and perhaps at the same time, the end of the Temple system. The significance of both interpretations is that in Jewish speculation prior to 70A.D., several Jewish texts announce that the old Temple will not continue into the new age; God will build a new temple. The death of Jesus symbolically destroys the temple.

Zech. 9-14, and the passion of Jesus:

An examination of the contacts observed between Zech. 9-14 and Mark 11-16 indicates that Mark recounts the passion of Jesus as though it were the fulfillment of certain eschatological scriptures: the peaceful king enters the holy city, cleanses his temple, establishes the new covenant in blood, experiences a time of trial and affliction, and is raised from the dead.

Mark 13 and the Markan Passion Narrative:

Vv. 5-13 the reader's present

Vv. 14-23 the reader's future, epoch 1

Vv. 24-37 the reader's future, epoch 2

CHAPTER 4:

Matthew 27:51b-53-In Mark, only two miraculous signs accompany Jesus' crucifixion, but in Matthew, there are several others: the earth shook, the rocks were split, tombs were opened, and

many bodies of saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and they came out of their tombs and went about the city and appeared to many.

Eschatological events were traditionally linked with earthquakes as were the splitting of rocks or mountains at the end time. Earliest Christianity (Rom. 1:4) saw Christ's resurrection as very intimately tied with the general resurrection, but as the church moved away from their beginnings the link was still there but at the same time, Jesus' resurrection became to be viewed more as an isolated event.

Matt. 27:54 Confession of the Gentiles:

Matthew sees this confession as an anticipation or even the beginning of the salvation that is to come to the Gentiles at the eschatological turning point. Before Easter, the disciples went to Israel alone, but after Easter they are to go into all the world.

Matt. 28:2-4 At the tomb of Jesus:

All the elements of this periscope recall signs expected to accompany the coming of the Lord at the end of the world and the irruption of the Kingdom of God; thus Easter morning contained events of the last times (earthquake, angel descending from heaven, the response of those guarding the tomb of Jesus to the descent of the angel)

Matt. 26:64 and 28:16-20: Promise and Fulfillment:

In v. 64 Jesus seems to suggest that the enthronement and Parousia of the Son of Man lie in the near future. 28:16-20 are probably Matthew's representation of the proleptic Parousia, or the enthronement of the Son of Man. Thus, 26:64 receives its partial or initial fulfillment in the resurrection: Jesus had already received authority in heaven; although the Son of Man has not yet come on the clouds of heaven, he has indeed been enthroned; the Second coming will only make manifest on earth a fact that has already been established in heaven (28:20).

CONCLUSION: Mark focuses in the 'messianic woes' and so the present age, whereas in Matthew, the death and resurrection of Jesus show that the present age and the age to come overlap. Although consummation lies ahead, and this age is full of tribulation, and although the Christian casts his hope upon the future coming of the Son of Man, saints have already been raised, the Son of Man has already been enthroned in the heavenly places, and the resurrected Jesus is ever present with his followers (28:20)

CHAPTER 5: The Gospel of John

Johannine eschatology contains elements of future fulfillment, but emphasizes (more than Mark, Matthew, and Luke) that certain eschatological expectations have become present realities through the Spirit. There is continuity in Johannine eschatology and Synoptic eschatology in that events that were expected to mark the transition between this age and the messianic age or

the age to come are, in the first two Gospels, moved back to the narratives of the passion and resurrection.

The coming judgment is one of the most persistent and important themes in Jewish eschatology. One may ask whether Jewish texts on eschatology are concerned above all with God's judgment on the world. The fourth evangelist often speaks as if the great judgment were past, as if it were coincident with the Christ-event, when the Son of Man was lifted up after the judgment of the world was acted out on the cross. Though, it needs to be added that Jn 12:31 doesn't necessarily exclude a yet outstanding judgment, and is similar to Mark 15. For John though, the cross represents the judgment of man and Satan; Jewish and Christian teaching anticipated that the eschatological transition would witness an unprecedented unleashing of the powers of evil and that, at the end of a great final conflict, God's chief opponent, Satan, would be condemned. Another Johannine reinterpretation of eschatology is the presentation of Judas as the antichrist, a devil, whereas in Paul the glorious parousia cannot take place unless the son of perdition first worked the ultimate evil. Another striking feature of John's eschatology is that the Son of Man's glorification occurs on the cross rather than at the time of consummation. But even in John there is an anticipation of a more permanent union with Jesus than that afforded by transitory post-resurrectional appearances.

SUMMARY: For John, the realization of eschatological expectations is, rooted in the passion narrative. The crucifixion is the hour of the Son of Man, the hour of his glorification when he draws all men to himself and thereby reaches the goal of salvation history. Mark and Matthew also associate the passion with eschatological signs. But, John's eschatology is closer to Matthew than Mark. For John, eternal life has been bestowed, divine sonship granted, the resurrection experienced. Matthew thought the messianic age and the present age overlapped; saints have been raised, the son of man has received authority and entered into his glory. Mark leaves his readers in an eschatological transition, the new age has yet to be entered, and the community still suffers the travails of the Messiah; Matthew and John are further along the eschatological line as it were. Despite this, John does contain traces of the tradition according to which Christians experience partakes of the messianic birth pangs. For Mark, the time of the church and the time of the great tribulation coincide which is parallel to John where Jesus' prophecy of the church's future resembles the great tribulation in Mark. However, John thinks Jesus has overcome the world and so he has a harder time associating the present age with the birth pangs of the new age.

CHAPTER 6: The Pauline Epistles

1 Cor. 7:26 presupposes that the present experience of the Corinthians is an eschatological experience: it partakes of the messianic woes and so it is good not to be married (Mk. 13:17, Lk. 23:29). In 2 Thess. 2:7a, Paul thinks that the rebellion whose advent marks the final apostasy has already entered the world, even though its full manifestation belongs to the future (2:7b-9). In Rom. 8:18, and 19-25 almost certainly implies that Paul has in mind the sufferings of the final affliction which is similar to 1 Thess. 3:4 concerning the inevitability of the tribulation. Col.

1:24 probably alludes to the messianic woes that must precede the new age. Redemption will not come until a quota of suffering is met. Rom. 1:18 is speaking of the eschatological wrath of God which begins to manifest itself in the great tribulation; Paul's time belongs to the pangs of the Messiah.

The Death of Jesus and the Great Tribulation:

The time between the first and second advents is the period of messianic woes both in the Gospels, and in Paul; the passion of Jesus introduces the messianic woes, and the church suffers them until the second advent. For Paul, the end of ages have come (1 Cor. 10:11), in Christ there is a 'new creation,' (2 Cor. 5:17), believers are rescued from 'the present age of evil' (Gal. 1:4), the fullness of time has come (Gal. 4:4), the messiah already reigns (1 Cor. 15:25). If the new age has dawned with the death of Jesus, and if the Christ has suffered, and if tribulation must introduce the new creation, then it follows that Jesus suffered the messianic woes.

For Paul, the believer has already been crucified with Christ, and undergone death, but he yet suffers with Christ; Paul wants to know Christ and share his sufferings; those who suffer with Christ share the messianic woes. For Paul, Jesus' death was what started the great eschatological tribulation, while Jesus' resurrection was part of the general resurrection. 1 Cor. 15:20 could denote the first, beginning, the best or main part of the crop, and it could represent the whole and symbolize the onset of a new period of time. So, Christ's resurrection (Rom. 1:4) serves the cosmic function of the beginning of the general resurrection for Paul which is the same in Matt. 27:51b-53.

Passages in the three Gospels and the Pauline epistles agree in seeing the eschatological time of trouble as a period extending from the death of Jesus to the consummation and that the resurrection of Jesus was the beginning of the general resurrection of the dead (there are pre-Pauline) traditions that have the same apocalyptic view.

CHAPTER 7: The Revelation of John

The Apocalypse was almost certainly composed during a time of severe affliction (during the reign of Domitian). The seer understood his own tribulation to be the great, messianic tribulation. Revelation also views the cross and resurrection as the inauguration of the eschatological tribulation.

CHAPTER 8: The Gospel of Luke

Mark, Matthew, John, the epistles of Paul, the Apocalypse all view the end of Jesus as the beginning of the fulfillment of eschatological expectations. Luke-Acts diverges from this pattern. Luke is focused on the guilt of the Jewish leaders. He takes the darkness from Mark, and applies it to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders. Luke also brings the darkness and the rending of the veil (which are separated in Mark) together in one event where

the veil symbolizes the destruction of the temple that was brought about by the leaders of the temple who rejected Jesus. Even in the hour of 'apparent' triumph for the leaders who executed Jesus, the judgment which they bring upon themselves is sure and foreshadows their demise. Why this shift? Four possibilities:

1-Luke's consciousness of the Parousia explains the matter. If the age to come had already begun, then the last act could not be far off, but by the time of Luke's Gospel, the end should have arrived but hadn't. So, Luke changes the focus from the passion and resurrection as eschatological events. Specifically, Luke thought too much time had passed to still maintain that the passion and resurrection had inaugurated the parousia.

Objection: While Luke didn't expect Jesus to come back at any moment, he did not give up hope that the redemption might come sooner than later. Acts 14:22 suggests that Luke associated the sufferings of mission as eschatological. Moreover, Luke-Acts is not written for generations to come (Lk. 9:27; 12:35-48; 13:1-9; 18:7-8; 21:32, 34-36; Acts 3:19-21).

2-Luke-Acts was directed against Gnostic or proto-Gnostic tendencies. Gnostics were big supporters of realized eschatology, and so would be interested in a 'realized eschatological' meaning for the passion and resurrection of Jesus by applying them to the individual. Thus, since Luke was an enemy of Gnostic tendencies it is very likely he would have toned down the eschatology we see in the rest of the NT. Luke 19:11 supports this further where the Messiah is said to be going, not coming and an interval of time must pass before the kingdom of God is revealed. This passage is almost certainly redactional which further supports this view. Acts 1:6 can be construed similarly where it is made clear that the ascension is not identical with the Parousia.

3-Like option 2, we could view Luke as combatting the notion of 'realized eschatology' without Gnosticism in the background since members of the early church before Paul already had a 'realized eschatology' which was prior to Gnosticism. Other NT authors also seemed to have had to explain that a 'realized eschatology' was wrong headed (1 Corinthians; and perhaps in Mark, Phillipians, 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Timothy).

4-Perhaps Luke was so distant from the earliest communities that he didn't know the significance the passion and resurrection had already received.

Option 2 or 3 are most probable.

OBJECTION TO OVERALL CASE SO FAR:

-Inaugurated eschatology was not the earliest interpretation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. For the earliest communities, the death of an individual held no existential meaning. The general resurrection played no part in the Baptists' or Jesus' ministry. The prayer 'Maranatha' takes no account of a coming resurrection. In the earliest formulas only Jesus' resurrection is

mentioned, not a general resurrection. Where did the focus on the general resurrection come from then? It came from 1 Thess. 1:9-10 when the members of that community began dying the question arose: Would those who have died share in the messianic kingdom? Paul had to come up with an answer that appealed to the general resurrection. 1 Cor. was a further elaboration of the idea since they denied a future resurrection.

REPLY: Matt. 27:51b-53 is very early and includes the notion of the general resurrection. Rom. 1:3-4 is not exegeted correctly by Becker, it alludes to the general resurrection. Becker's case relies too much on an argument from silence; none of which logically implies no expectation of a general resurrection. Resurrection did play a role in Jesus' teaching (he predicted his own fate, and interpreted that in eschatological terms; passing through the messianic travail and sharing in the resurrection of the dead). Every strand of tradition we have (except Luke) interpret the resurrection of Jesus as marking the onset of the general resurrection (not just a Pauline epistle or two).

CHAPTER 9: The Problem of Realized Eschatology

It is commonplace in scholarship to recognize that the NT authors associate the Christ-event (esp. the passion and resurrection) with language that Judaism typically reserved for discourse about the last things. However, an obvious question presents itself: Why did this happen since the passion and resurrection completely coincide with the Jewish expectation of the last things? Some have tried to argue that NT use of eschatological language is metaphorical, or existential only (Barth, Bultmann, etc.).

CAIRD: The biblical writers regularly used end-of-the-world language metaphorically to refer to what they knew was not the end of the world. Apocalyptic seers like the prophets had bifocal vision. With their near sight they foresaw on the horizon impending historical events, while with their far sight they beheld the Day of the Lord.

REPLY: Many Christians viewed the Christ-event as the literal fulfillment of numerous passages in Scripture. When the end is imminent, unusual disturbances in nature were related to the tribulation. Many documents Caird appeals to do in fact expect a literal and imminent end. No ancient Jewish source parades the significance of an event from the past by adorning it with a resurrection. The early church believed Jesus to be the Messiah, and this was bound up with the last things, and that the terrors or wonders of eschatological expectation must be present or very near to hand.

Realized Eschatology and Jewish Parallels: Neither the belief that the great tribulation had broken in upon the present nor the belief that the blessings of the eschatological future could be anticipated is unique to Christianity. But, teaching that the Messiah has come, that resurrections have taken place, that the sun has hidden its face, that judgment has been accomplished, the NT does set itself apart. The focus of much 'realized eschatology' in the NT is not Christian experience, but the Christ-event (the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus). It was the Christ-

event that determined the conceptualization of the church's experience, not the other way around.

CHAPTER 10: Jesus and the kingdom of God

Critical scholarship agrees that:

-The kingdom of God signifies God's dynamic activity as ruler, not the territory God rules.

-The kingdom should both be considered present and future

Future: A number of dominical parables testify to the kingdom's future (mustard seed, the seed growing secretly, the leaven, parables of growth (perhaps the parable of the sower), parable of the weeds among the wheat, parable of the dragnet. 'Thy kingdom come' in the Lord's prayer is a reference to the future. A future fulfillment also shows up on Jesus' teaching about the messianic banquet (Mtt. 8:11=Lk. 13:28-29), eschatological reversal, sayings about entering the kingdom, beatitudes, and by his use of the phrase 'reign of God' which carries a future reference in other Jewish literature.

Present: Lk. 11:20=Mt. 12:28; Mk. 2:21-22, 2:19; Mt. 10:7=Lk. 10:9, 11; Mt. 4:17=Mk. 1:15

How do we make sense of these two notions? For Jesus, the advent of God's kingdom did not belong to a moment, but constituted a series of events that would cover a period of time. This is similar to the Deutero-Isaiah section of Scripture where the coming of the kingdom does not occur in the 'winking of an eye' (Is. 40:3-5), but as a process. So, the apparent contradiction is resolved once we realize that Jewish thinking could envision the final events—the judgment of evil and the arrival of the kingdom of God—as extending over time, and as a process or series of events that could involve the present. When Jesus says that the kingdom has come and is coming, this means that the last act has begun but has not yet reached its climax. Even though the consummation remains outstanding, in him eschatological promises are being fulfilled. The kingdom of God is conceived as 'a total event...composed of several significant parts together make up that whole—and several of the episodes that constitute that total event have already transpired. Jesus is the only Jew of ancient times known to us who preached that the new age had already dawned.

The kingdom of God: Its character—Jesus expected a supernatural intervention by God that would bring renewal to the world; it would bring an end to sin and evil. Several of the teachings of Jesus (the poor will be blessed, those doing the Father's will will enter the kingdom, etc.) are meant to be about the eschatological manifestation of God's kingship to all peoples. This is not to deny that God is presently king, rather, if God is already disclosing his kingly activity, this requires a future fulfillment as the climax at which God will make manifest to all his innermost nature and thence assume his role as undisputed sovereign. This would also reveal God's saving work. Jesus spoke of the kingdom as already present because, in his eyes, the powers of the

coming age had, in his person and ministry, already begun to invade and thus transform the here and now and this meant that the eschatological establishment of God's kingly rule was due to come in its fullness soon.

CHAPTER 11: The death of Jesus and the great tribulation

While Jesus accepted traditional beliefs about resurrection, judgment, and eschatological tribulation, these must be regarded as marginal, as things he was not interested in depicting or expounding at length. But, we can fill in some more details about what Jesus thought about these beliefs at the same time.

TRIBULATION: Jesus most likely foresaw a coming tribulation (like many of his contemporaries) out of which the new age to come would be birthed (Jesus says that the kingdom of God does not come without violence, that there would be a decisive struggle between God and Satan, he called for preparation as for a storm, he announces that weeping and woes lie ahead, that the time to come holds days of the sword, that Jerusalem will be visited with destruction, that the faithful will be forced to take flight, that families will be divided, etc.).

The prospect of suffering and death: Jesus anticipated suffering and an untimely death (pg. 116-118) for himself. The sufferings of Jesus cannot be severed from the sufferings of his disciples either.

The death of Jesus and the Great Tribulation: Jesus not only thought of the birth pangs of the end as already coming into operation during his earthly ministry, but also believed that 'his death itself... would be (the) decisive manifestation of those pangs.' Jesus' appearance causes a crisis that divides Israel, even the members of one's household, and a holy war of the last times.

The kingdom of God and violence: In the eyes of Jesus, the coming of the new age was to be preceded by violence done against the kingdom of God and its people. Humans tried to close access to the kingdom for others by their opposition to the heralds of that kingdom (John and Jesus), and the kingdom of Satan would also oppose the kingdom of God during the final conflict before the great redemption.

FIRE ON EARTH: Jesus envisioned his fate as a baptism. Lk. 12:49-50 mentions fire which probably symbolically refers to the eschatological judgment. By baptism, Jesus was probably thinking of water as a symbol for calamity; to be overcome as in a flood. How are these two notions to be related? The eschatological judgment and the portending flood that will overtake Jesus are related in that the two prospects can be related because Jesus sees the eschatological tribulation (which is the beginning of God's judgment on the world), as the context of his own suffering. Jesus saw himself as the bringer of the new age, but was troubled deeply by this since the way to new creation lies through disaster and destruction (through water and fire). Then, in Mt. 10:38-39, Jesus connects his prospective baptism with a standing symbol of God's judgment,

with fire in Luke, and a cup in Mark. Jesus' was a necessary prelude to, and merely part of the messianic woes.

SON OF MAN: When Jesus spoke of the Son of Man (pace Casey) he had in view a community at whose head he saw himself: a corporate personality embodied most fully in his own person. Daniel's one like a Son of Man is a suffering figure who is vindicated. Jesus interpreted his mission and prospective destiny in eschatological categories like this as well.

Passion Predictions: After anticipating death in fulfillment of the commission laid upon him by God, Jesus would naturally have expected vindication in the form of a general resurrection. The phrase 'three days' seems to have been equivalent to 'a little while; or 'a few days' or it is also possible that Hos. 6:12 which the targum and the rabbis took to refer to the general resurrection stands in the background, and just as in Dan. 7 the saints of the most high, who are identified with the one like a son of man, are delivered into the hands of their enemy, only to receive the kingdom after a time, two times, and half a time, so Jesus promises that the Son of man, the faithful community whose representative he is, will be delivered into the hands of men, only to be resurrected after three days.

The Lord's Prayer: Authentic beyond dispute. Luke preserves original length, Matthew preserves original wording. First two petitions are eschatological, and the remaining three may or may not be as well. It is unclear whether Jesus meant to pass this prayer onto his disciples so that he was above the prayer himself, or if it would have been his prayer as well in which case (if the thorough-going eschatology interpretation of the all the petitions is adopted) it seems like Jesus entertained the possibility of finding himself alive during the final tribulation.

FROM EXPECTATION TO INTERPRETATION:

Despite the tension between the expectation of Jesus' vision of what was to come and what actually occurred, promise and fulfillment were seen. Second, it was stated that the reason expectation and outcome did not completely match is because the teachings of the master had been partially misunderstood. Third, Christians thought that the consummation had not been reached because certain preconditions were not reached (i.e. the repentance of the people of Israel). The disciples came to the passion and to the events of Easter with definite expectation, and although their expectations were not precisely met, there was a clear note of harmony between the predictions of Jesus and the actual course of events. The death of Jesus and its sequel, the appearances of the risen Lord, were not in themselves the sufficient cause of the interpretation that made them into eschatological without taking notice of their pre-Easter expectations. 'Inaugurated eschatology' arose as sociological response to a pressing question: How could Jesus' pre-Easter prophecies be related to what happened? However, over time, this inaugurated eschatology became for some Christians an 'over-realized eschatology' or 'realized eschatology.' In John's Gospel, the eschatological transition or stages having begun with Jesus and soon to be consummation is reserved for the fate of Jesus alone (although there is still a last

day coming). This can also be seen in 2 Thess. 2:2, 2 Tim. 2:17-18, 1 Cor. (although this is more of an over-realized eschatology whereas John and Luke have a different version of an inaugurated eschatology than Mark, Matthew, Apocalypse, and Pauline thinking). What accounts for the over-realized eschatology? Given the passage of time, and the original imminence of the second coming, certain members of the early church must have come to see the eschatological promises of Jesus to have been wholly fulfilled in their master's fate.

The Motif of Misunderstanding: If outcome and expectation were not in complete concord, the cause could never lie with Jesus, for his word was unquestionably true. So, it must be that the disciples had misunderstood Jesus. The evidence to think this is what happened is the following:

- 1- John 2:13-22 makes it clear that the followers of Jesus wrestled, after Easter, with the saying here preserved.
- 2- Mk. 14:58, Matt. 26:61, Mk. 15:29, Mt. 27:40 is about destruction and renewal of the temple and we see that the renewal aspect is dropped from Luke. Mark asserts that this saying came from false witnesses, not from the lips of Jesus himself as in John.
- 3- Mk. 9:31-32 & 9:9-10 also are examples of the disciples going back and saying that they had misunderstood what Jesus said.
- 4- Jn. 12:12-15 is another example of this.
- 5- Lk. 19:11-27 is another example as is Acts 1:6

Contingent Eschatology: This type of eschatology was not foreign to the Jewish traditions of the time, and when the communal aspect of the tribulation and resurrection went unfulfilled, the Synoptic writers, Acts, all have a missionary impulse since they were thinking that only if all the nations would repent (including Israel) that God would send the Messiah.

The Origin of the Second Advent: Jesus had no notion of a resurrection, and then a second coming. So, when certain pre-Easter expectations were fulfilled with Jesus, the rest was left to a second advent producing the inaugurated or 'already' and 'not yet' element in the NT. The Christ has come and has been raised, and the Christ will come again in glory on the clouds of heaven.

2-If Jesus has been raised, this for a Jew can only mean that God himself has confirmed the pre-Easter activity (or VOCATION) of Jesus. A Jew, could certainly not take an event of this kind as one that came to be apart from the will of his God. So, contra ex-apologist, if God raised Jesus from the dead, then the unambiguous and clear message such an act communicates is the Jesus was not a failed apocalyptic prophet.

3-Through his resurrection from the dead, Jesus moved so close to the Son of Man that the insight became obvious: the Son of Man is none other than the man Jesus who will come again. The pre-Easter Jesus had already proclaimed a correspondence in function between his own

attitude toward men and the future attitude of the Son of Man...The distinction between these two figures consists only in the fact that the pre-Easter Jesus walked visibly on Earth, whereas the Son of Man was to come only in the future on the clouds of heaven and was expected as a heavenly being. This difference disappeared with Jesus' resurrection: as the one who has been taken away to God, Jesus is a heavenly being. Thus, it is understandable that Jesus was no longer distinguished from the Son of Man, but was himself seen as the Son of Man whose coming was expected in the future...after Jesus' resurrection it must have become meaningless to expect a second figure in addition to him with the same function and the same mode of coming. By virtue of his resurrection, Jesus had moved into the role of the Son of Man.

4-The transition to the Gentile mission is motivated by the eschatological resurrection of Jesus as resurrection of the crucified one. Israelite prophecy expected the self-demonstration of God, which it proclaimed, as an event that would take place before the eyes of all peoples. Not just Israel but all nations were to recognize from this future event the exclusive divinity of Israel's God. The exilic prophets Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel especially preached this way. The same proclamation occurs repeatedly in the psalms. This expectation corresponds to the hope, rooted in the Jerusalem tradition of the election of David and Zion, that in the end time all peoples would submit themselves to the Lordship of YHWH and his Anointed One. Also, in post-exilic Judaism the expectation remained alive that the nations would one day be included in the eschatological salvation hoped for Israel. Though Jesus considered himself sent as sent only to the Israelites pre-Easter (even though on occasion he recognized the faith of non-Jews as a valid acceptance of eschatological salvation), Jesus did not predict divine vengeance on the Gentiles for the eschaton, but the participation of many of them in eschatological salvation (Matt. 25:34, 8:111; Lk. 13:29) which would be the result of God's eschatological act of power. A Gentile mission seems to have arisen shortly after Jesus' resurrection since this could only mean that Jesus has now already been exalted to Lordship in heaven and consequently the news of his Lordship is to be carried to all the nations:

In ancient Jewish thought, with echoes of Daniel 7, for Jesus to be seated at the right hand of the Father meant that Jesus was in charge of the entire world. We have been lured, perhaps by our embarrassment at the literalistic sense of Jesus flying up like a spaceman to a heaven located a few miles up within our universe, into ignoring the real meaning both of heaven (which is not a place within our universe at all, but God's place, intersecting with our world in all sorts of ways) and of ascension itself, which is about sovereignty of Jesus as the Father's accredited and appointed agent given authority over the world (Matt. 28:18, Acts 1:6-11). The ascension wrongly implies for many, Jesus' absences rather than his universal presence and sovereign rule. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, and Revelation all think that Jesus is already in charge of the world. But for the 4 Gospels, this didn't begin at the ascension, it began from the moment Jesus began his public career. –How God Became King

VII: SECOND TEMPLE HERMENEUTICS: A final connected point is that sentences are normally uttered to convey information in certain particular contexts of enquiry, which have their

own standard of the kind of accuracy required. If ‘all As are B’ is a suggested scientific law of nature, a (repeatable) exception renders the sentence false; but it is a sentence in a guidebook describing a terrain, then maybe the sentence is true (to the limits of accuracy appropriate in the context). So, a statement being true is a matter of its truth-conditions being satisfied to the degree of accuracy appropriate in the context.

With the discovery of so much extra-biblical literature in the past century or so, we have been privileged to discover what is commonly called Second-Temple Hermeneutics (516 BC-70AD).

As Thom Stark says in another context about the Chicago inerrantists misunderstanding with respect to Second Temple Heremeneutic, “...They present themselves with a false dichtomy: either Paul interprets Moses correctly or incorrectly. If incorrectly, then Paul is wrong and the Bible is not inerrant. The problem is that interpreters like Paul were not concerned with interpreting Moses “correctly,” if by “correctly’ one means, “historically-grammatically.” Like most other Jewish interpreters of his day, Paul was interested in the text not for what it said in the past, but for what it was saying to Paul’s own generation. When the Chicago inerrantists insist that a given passage can only have one fixed meaning, they are---unwittingly or not—rejecting a principle of interpretation that was axiomatic for Paul: the text has both a historical meaning and an eschatological meaning. Paul shared this assumption with virtually all apocalyptic Jews of his day. To such thinkers, the text has at least two meanings, if not more, none of which were necessarily tied by any fixed principle to any of the other meanings.”¹⁷

Peter Enns puts it this way, “in the same way that *grammatical–historical* exegesis is vital for our understanding the words of the biblical authors, a *hermeneutical–historical* approach is vital for our understanding of the *hermeneutics* of biblical authors. In other words, we must extend what is implied in *grammatical–historical* exegesis, the principle that original context matters, to the world of apostolic hermeneutics.”¹⁸ Thus, in order to understand how the disciples could judge Jesus’ prediction to be true requires us to understand their cultural moment within Second Temple Judaism, while at the same time if we want to understand why they viewed Jesus’ prediction and pre-Easter ministry as vindicated we must understand their eschatological moment, which was rooted in the historical facticity of the resurrection and the backdrop of first century Jewish apocalypticism. This means that if we want to accurately judge the merit and validity of Jesus’ ministry and parousia prediction, we must judge it within the Second Temple phenomena in which it occurred, “Revelation necessarily implies a human context. When God speaks and acts, he does so within the human drama as it is expressed at a certain time and place and with all the cultural trappings that go along with it. This makes revelation somewhat messy...it would seem that God would not have it any other way. For the apostles to interpret the Old Testament in ways consistent with the hermeneutical expectations of the Second Temple world is analogous to Christ himself becoming a Second Temple citizen...[thus, we cannot

¹⁷ Stark, 19.

¹⁸ http://www.apologeticsinthechurch.com/uploads/7/4/5/6/7456646/aposexegtj-fall_03-final.pdf, pg. 269

properly] shy away from identifying the New Testament, the written witness to Christ, [including the witness of Christ himself], as likewise [being] defined by its first-century context. [This] should remind us that our own understanding of the Old Testament---and the gospel---has a contextual message as well.”¹⁹ Though we may not like it very much because it is ‘messy’ as Enns says, we cannot say that Jesus was ‘wrong.’ Enns gives the following illustration that I think makes this point very well, “If Matthew were transported back in time and told Hosea that Hosea’s words would be fulfilled in the boy Jesus and that, furthermore, this Jesus would be crucified and rise for God’s people, I am not sure if Hosea would have known what to make of it. But if Hosea were to go forward to Matthew’s day, it would be very different for him. There Hosea would be forced, in light of recent events, to see his words...in the final eschatological context. In a stunning reversal it is now Matthew who would show Hosea how his words fit into God’s ultimate redemptive goal: the death and resurrection of Jesus. And so Hosea’s words, which in their original historical context did not speak of Jesus of Nazareth, now do.”²⁰ The same point applies to Jesus’ prediction concerning the timing of the parousia.

So, the really fascinating point here is that both John Loftus and Ex-Apologist have anachronistically hi-jacked Deut. 18:22 out of Second Temple Judaism thereby giving away their case since as anybody in that period would say, the eschatological meaning and vindication of Jesus’ prediction via the resurrection shows him to be a true prophet after all! Enns says it so well, “If I may speak this way, for God himself, the Second Temple setting of the Apostles is not a problem for modern interpreters to *overcome* but to *understand*... that it has pleased God to reveal himself in time and place, and that understanding something about those times and places will help us understand not just what a passage *means*, but what Scripture *is*. Thus, for us to look back at Jesus’ prediction today and judge it as being either absolutely right or absolutely wrong is not only misguided given fuzzy logic, but it is wrong-headed and anachronistic given the first century context and the practice of Second Temple Hermeneutics.

In other words, if we want to have a meaningful conversation about the ‘wrongness’ or ‘rightness’ of Jesus’ parousia prediction, we must hear that prediction in its ancient voice against the backdrop of Second Temple Judaism and not impose questions or burdens of proof upon that prediction that it will not bear. Or again, if we want to bring the parousia prediction into our world we must first understand the world of Second Temple Judaism and what Jesus’ prediction was saying in that world all things considered. Then we will be in a position to understand how Jesus’ parousia prediction can be appropriated for today.

If we anachronistically pass over the first century context of Second Temple Hermeneutical practices we present ourselves with a false dilemma about the prediction of Jesus regarding the timing of the parousia: he was either right or wrong. I am not saying that as a matter of historical facticity Jesus did not predict this, but what I am saying is that the eschatological meaning of this prediction was rooted and revealed in the historical facticity of the resurrection such that we

¹⁹ Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation* 161.

²⁰ Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*

cannot shy away from the Second Temple Hermeneutical standards if we want to correctly understand not only the truth-functional connection between the resurrection and Jesus' prediction about the parousia according to our standards of logic and evidence, but to correctly judge Jesus' prediction from within its own time and place (religio-historical context) so as to guide our present judgment about that very same prediction.

VIII: DOES THE OT GIVE US A HIGH PRIOR PROBABILITY WITH RESPECT TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER YHWH ACCOMODATES, OR USES THE PRESUPPOSITIONS & CULTURAL TRAPPINGS OF ANY GIVEN SPEAKER THROUGHOUT TIME? Hell yes it does:

A) FAILED PROPHECIES: Is. 19:5-7, 17:1-2, Ez. 26:7-14; 29:17-20, 29:8-12, 29:19-20, 36:30; Dan. 11:45 (164-165) The Christian Delusion

B) John Loftus: My contention is that there is not a single statement in the Bible that reveals a divine mind behind the human authors. Everything in it can be more credibly explained by the hypothesis that it's just the musings of an ancient, superstitious, barbaric people—period. (202) The Christian Delusion

C) When YHWH speaks in the first person in the texts of the Old Testament, the deity is often depicted as making statements that include references to historical, cosmographical, geographical, biological, and other types of phenomena that we today know are not factual. What betrays the all too human origin of the divine mind is the simple fact that the ideas YHWH entertains about reality are hardly better than the superstitions and misconceptions in the indigenous knowledge systems of the people who worshipped him. (pg. 140) The End of Christianity

D) http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/theodore_drange/bible.html to see more failed prophecies, factual errors, and contradictions contained in the OT.

E) Throughout the Old Testament, God was speaking in ways that the Israelites in their time and place could understand. This is why there are many elements of God's revelation in the Old Testament that are very similar to what we find among Israel's neighbors. In fact, as is well known, there is hardly a single element of Israelite culture that does not reflect well-established practices (e.g., sacrificial systems, priests, temples, kings, prophets, law codes, wisdom sayings).

--Peter Enns

F) This fact wasn't lost on some 'believing' traditions either:

The organic nature of Scripture...implies the idea that the Holy Spirit, in the inscripturation of the word of God, **did not spurn anything human** to serve as an organ of the divine. **The revelation of God is not abstractly supernatural but has entered into the human fabric, into persons and states of beings, into forms and usages, into history and life.** It does not fly high

above us but descends into our situation; it has become flesh and blood, like us in all things except sin. Divine revelation is now an ineradicable constituent of this cosmos in which we live and, effecting renewal and restoration, continues its operation. **The human has become an instrument of the divine;** the natural has become a revelation of the supernatural; the visible has become a sign and seal of the invisible. In the process of inspiration, use has been made of all the gifts and forces resident in human nature” (“Reformed Dogmatics” 1.442–43; my emphasis).

IX. WHAT ABOUT THE DELAY OF THE SECOND COMING?:

THE PAROUSIA / GENERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD: What about the delay of the parousia and the still yet ‘to be’ future general resurrection, does Pannenberg’s view of the resurrection still make sense; especially since Jesus’ resurrection was understood as signaling the imminency of the general resurrection in the writings of Paul? Pannenberg’s answer is yes; what counts is the material analogy of what has already happened in and with Jesus and that for which the apocalyptic expectation hopes from the ultimate future. If they are essentially the same, then time cannot change their qualitative identity. The difference between the resurrection of Jesus and the general resurrection of the dead is quantitative, not qualitative. Thus, if Jesus was really raised from the dead, then the general human destiny has occurred in Jesus; He truly is the first of many; this underscores the eschatological interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection. What is this ‘material identity’ that Pannenberg is referring to in relationship to this long temporal gap? Pannenberg expresses the ‘material identity’ of Jesus’ resurrection and the eventual resurrection of others by the term ‘anticipation,’ or ‘prolepsis,’ which are equivalent. Pannenberg sees prolepsis as a ‘new systematic category’ for the resurrection rooted in its ‘historic facticity.’ For the resurrection is at once an event in history and the eschatological salvation-event, a past event and one that remains before us in as our ultimate future. The resurrection of Jesus is a pre-realization of the future. Only in this sense can the final self-revelation of God, which can only occur at the end of history, have already taken place in the history of Jesus. The idea of the return of Jesus keeps alive the tension between the resurrection of Jesus and the general resurrection. The return of Christ brings with it the completion of God’s rule. Pannenberg’s concept of prolepsis or anticipation, is linked with the resurrection and the eschatological events that will establish God’s rule in its fullness. God’s rule has already come proleptically in Jesus ministry and resurrection; though differently from the way he may have expected, Jesus’ message of the coming kingdom of God received its confirmation in his resurrection...[though] obliquely, Jesus’ resurrection can be understood as the fulfillment of his expectation of the imminence of the kingdom of God.”²¹

CONCLUSION: It seems like if Jesus was really resurrected, then his vocation was vindicated (pace Pannenberg), but his background beliefs about how those events would play out were not

²¹ God and the Future.

completely on target. More importantly, the prior probability of YHWH not wanting to resurrect Jesus because he had a first century Jewish apocalyptic worldview is not at all low, in fact, when we look at the OT, we see that YHWH does not abhor false prophecies, but in fact, YHWH seems quite fond of false prophecies, but more importantly, YHWH accommodates Himself to the cultural trappings of any given and time place over and over again which indicates that we shouldn't be surprised that YHWH would give us a message in the person of Jesus through the Jewish presuppositions of the time which were quite common then. Moreover, we have seen that the vocation and message of Jesus is truth-functionally separable from his presupposition and given the resurrection, Jesus' vocation was vindicated by God (which means he wasn't a failed apocalyptic prophet) even if his presuppositions about how his vocation would play out weren't completely on target. We also saw that according to the standards of accuracy within Second Temple Judaism, Jesus' prediction didn't have to be accurate according to our standards which means that the truth-conditions for Jesus' vocation cannot be accurately judged with our stricter standards, but must be judged within his own cultures standards. Lastly, we saw that the delay of the Second Coming should not be a cause for doubt with respect to the truth of Christianity either.