

STAND FIRM IN THE RESURRECTION HOPE (1)

PMW 2025-033 by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.

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In 1 Corinthians 15:58, we reach Paul's argumentative conclusion to 1 Corinthians. This verse closes out the great resurrection chapter upon which Paul exhorts, *"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you"* (NIV). Standing firm on the resurrection has been the historic commitment of orthodox Christianity for 2000 years. However, recently not only has liberalism undercut the resurrection, but so has the semi-cultic hyper-preterist movement.

Unfortunately, the hyper-preterist movement, as Hal Lindsey may have expressed it (until his recent change of eschatology), is alive and well on Planet Earth. It is actively at work rejecting and/or re-working long-held eschatological doctrines, but not silently and in a corner. Rather, they do so activistically, publicly promoting their various (growing number of) heresies. This tragedy has arisen due to a very prideful error: the replacing of sola Scriptura (Scripture alone) with solo Scriptura (I alone am the interpreter of Scripture). *"I know more than the church of all ages; I do not have to stand on the shoulders of giants."*

Defining hyper-preterism is difficult in some respects. This is because there are several main camps with widely divergent views of crucial defining features. But at the very heart of the matter, hyper-preterists are (in one way or another) rejecting three of the key issues highlighted in biblical eschatology:

- (1) the future, bodily second coming of Christ,
- (2) the material, eternal, bodily resurrection of the dead, and
- (3) the final judgment of all men that ends history.

These are the very issues a group of theological friends of Gary DeMar put to him, seeking a simple yes or no answer regarding whether he accepted them. He declined to answer with a yes or no.

The Hyper-preterist Menace

The eschatological error in hyper-preterism is bad enough. But as they are being swept along by their cheering converts in a classic stage-diving act, their innovative ideas are beginning to erode broader Christian doctrines in their Internet chatrooms. Such accelerating expansion of theological error should be expected since theology is a seamless garment, as Cornelius Van Til has taught us. Thus, the ripping out of these few (rather large!) eschatological threads starts a process of unraveling other areas of the rich tapestry of biblical theology. Tragically, hyper-preterists are systematically destroying systematic theology.

By this I mean that they are reworking several theological loci such as Christology, soteriology, anthropology, cosmology, and more. For instance:

(1) Regarding Christology, many of their leaders deny the ongoing incarnation of Christ. They reject the truth that he is permanently the Son of Man, always possessing the body and soul in which he was incarnated (Col. 2:9). That he continues in his incarnation is seen in his submitting to God the Father at the end of history (1 Cor. 15:28). He does not do this as his co-equal in his divine nature, but in his incarnate state as the God-Man, who is our Mediator with God because of his incarnation (1 Tim. 2:5). They claim that at his ascension, Jesus shed his physical body. They do this without any exegetical warrant, mind you. This is forced on them by their own erroneous theological requirements.

(2) Regarding soteriology and anthropology, they also reject the fullness of personal redemption. They do this by forgetting that God made man with both a material body (flesh) and a spiritual soul (Gen. 2:7). Thus, in Scripture and orthodox Christianity, both body and soul are the objects of either redemption (Rom. 8:19, 23) or condemnation (Matt. 10:28).

(3) Regarding cosmology, they also deny the full, final redemption of the God-created universe as the goal of Christ's redemptive work, which results from God's redemptive plan (Rom. 8:20–21; 1 Cor. 15:27–28), leaving God with a universe forever corrupted by sin and in rebellion against him. And more! And by the way, that redemptive plan began at the fall in Eden (Gen. 3:15). It did not await the arising of Abraham (Gen. 12).

Eventually they should be able to write a systematic anti-theology when they complete their destructive overhauling of the Christian faith—a work in progress on the Internet, even as we speak. Hyper-preterist theologians have attempted to design a horse but have ended up with a camel. Which for them might actually be quite helpful as they wander through the barren wilderness of unsettled theological territory. Sadly, they are selling their Christian birthright for a pot of rubbish.

My Particular Concern

The particular error that I will be focusing on in this mini-series, however, will be narrow. I will exegetically demonstrate the nature of the resurrection body, which involves the fullness of our redemption. I will be theologically affirming and exegetically defending the doctrine of the physical, material, fleshly resurrection of the dead at the future return of Christ.

Surprisingly, I hold to the Statement of Faith on eschatology of DeMar's employer, American Vision. That brief statement reads in part:

"We believe in the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ at the consummation of history. The dead, consisting of believers and non-believers, shall be raised up in final judgment. Those who are saved shall be raised up unto everlasting life and those who have rejected Christ unto eternal damnation".

Unfortunately, this brief Statement of Faith does not state the matter fully enough (by the very nature of the case, creedal statements cannot cover everything—so this is not a complaint, but simply an observation). But the AV Statement does

clearly hold to *“the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ,”* noting that it has not yet occurred (at AD 70 or any other time) because it is awaiting *“the consummation of history.”* Two views that DeMar himself no longer affirms as matters of biblical revelation.

And the AV Statement also states that *“the dead, consisting of believers and non-believers, shall be raised up in final judgment.”* This part of the statement obviously holds that it has not happened yet, for it awaits the time in the future when they *“shall be raised up.”* And this affirms the corporate nature of the resurrection, rather than the individualistic-at-the-moment-of-death view. Yet, this statement does not touch on the nature of the resurrection body that lies in our future. Yet what this statement does affirm is something that DeMar no longer holds. For he believes we receive our resurrection bodies (bodies composed of spirit rather than matter) at the moment of our individual deaths in history.

Conclusion

In this series I will be providing an important exegetical analysis of key portions of 1 Corinthians 15, showing that these do not contradict historic Christian orthodoxy but effectively deny heretical hyper-preterism. I will be dealing with the key issues that trip up the hyper-preterist, causing them to stumble off in the wrong direction. In fact, I will be answering the questions that Paul is answering from the proto-Gnostic members of the church at Corinth: “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?’” (1 Cor. 14:35).

So, along the way we will see what Paul means by *“spiritual body”* (v. 44), by Christ having become a *“life-giving spirit”* (v. 45), and by his declaring that *“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”* (v. 50). These few words in this long and important passage have confused some believers, causing them to become *“children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming”* (Eph. 4:14).