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A Review of Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry's New Commentary, *The Divorce of Israel: A Redemptive- Historical Interpretation of Revelation*

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A number of people have asked for my assessment of Dr. Ken Gentry's long-awaited, almost-2000-page commentary on the book of Revelation. I consider Dr. Gentry an ally, and enjoyed reading this commentary (yes, all almost-2000 pages). My overall assessment is that Gentry makes some major advancements to Revelation studies in his research on the book, and that this is the best commentary on Revelation written so far. But I also believe it misses the mark in several critical areas, including:

- The main message of the book
- The structure of the book
- The practical value and application of the book

A lot is at stake when it comes to understanding Revelation rightly or wrongly — our doctrine of Scripture and prophecy; whether we walk in fear or confidence about the future; whether we make use of Revelation's amazing amount of practical guidance on civics, economics, personal holiness, spiritual warfare, and a host of other issues. I believe the right understanding of this book unlocks incredible hope, missionality, and confidence in responding to persecution and tyranny. Revelation, understood rightly, is a practical manual on occupying and overcoming in crazy times; truly a book for our times.

I have been studying Revelation for most of my adult life; Dr. Gentry's commentary is the 114th full-length commentary I have studied. I have also read several hundred studies that bring light to the interpretation of Revelation, including extensive exegetical studies and very recent discoveries in archaeology, [seismology](#), [meteorology](#), [meteoritics](#), [ancient astrology](#), [Jewish idolatry](#), [ancient iconography](#) and other studies that open up the book in a whole new way (many of which studies were apparently not available when Dr. Gentry wrote his commentary).

(For those of you wondering about my general theological training, I have an M.Div from Westminster Seminary California, and a PhD from Whitefield Theological Seminary, and am a mentor for Masters level and Doctoral level dissertations in theology.)

Throughout this review I will be pointing to some of my own research over at [The Revelation Project](#) — 2,722 pages of detailed teaching on the book of Revelation and additional supplemental materials.

Dr. Gentry and I have similar approaches to the book of Revelation, so I was reading Gentry with friendly eyes and with a receptive spirit to be corrected in my thinking at every point. Indeed, I was hoping that Dr. Gentry's commentary would be the last one needed and that I would not need to finish my layman's commentary and academic commentary on the book.

We are still in the infancy of Revelation studies, and the more we can challenge each other as "iron sharpening iron" (Prov. 27:17), the more advancements we will see in our understanding of this book. I am writing this review in that spirit of wanting to keep advancing such studies. I always welcome exegetical challenges to my own conclusions. The text should always dictate the system, not vice versa. Dr. Gentry has promised to follow this commentary up with a layman's edition, and I am hoping he will benefit from the critique below and strengthen his conclusions in his next work.

First, the strong points.

What I Really Like About This Commentary

It's extremely well researched and interacts extensively and fairly with other views

Though even more could be said for the contributions and strengths of some eschatological positions than Gentry says,^[1] I appreciate that he presents the strengths and weaknesses of all of the other eschatological approaches to Revelation very fairly. Gentry graciously interacts with many eschatological viewpoints (even very obscure ones) and does a good job of dealing with most of their credible arguments. He outlines the options, systematically eliminates the options he disagrees with by presenting detailed exegetical reasons why (in his opinion) they will not work, and then presents his own opinion with strong exegetical proofs. It is a solid enough commentary that academics of all eschatological persuasions will likely need to interact with Gentry's arguments, if for no other reason than to answer his critiques of their positions.

It's based on a solid hermeneutical approach

- Gentry does a masterful job of showing the Redemptive-historical nature of this book, the Hebraic nature of the book, and Revelation's extensive use of the Old Testament. With

regard to John's use of the Old Testament, Gentry approvingly quotes McKelvey saying, "when reading the book of Revelation, one is plunged fully into the atmosphere of the Old Testament. No book of the New Testament is as saturated with the Old as in the Apocalypse" (p. 120). The extensive way that Gentry demonstrates John's uses of earlier books of the Bible makes this commentary well worth owning. Even those who strongly disagree with Gentry's particular brand of partial preterism^[2] will benefit from those discussions.

- I was pleased to see that Dr. Gentry avoided the [interpretive maximalism that marred David Chilton's approach to Revelation](#).
- I was also very pleased that (for the most part) Gentry avoids the kind of dependence on Jewish non-canonical apocalyptic literature that so many commentators have. For the most part, he simply interprets Scripture with Scripture. For example, he denies that Revelation is "steeped in Jewish apocalyptic literature" (p. 119) and correctly states that "When we detect apparent parallels between Revelation and apocalyptic literature, the parallel is due to the common ideological ancestor, the Old Testament" (p. 125). He later states that "the source of Revelation's bold imagery is not first-century Jewish apocalyptic, but Old Testament era canonical apocalyptic prophecy" (p. 184). Though Gentry for the most part stays consistent with this solid hermeneutical approach, I found him to occasionally deviate from this stance.^[3]

It is my contention that [Revelation is not apocalyptic literature at all](#), but prophetic literature in the genre of Old Testament prophecies. When closely examined, the two genres are quite different. Because of the confusion that can result from the different definitions of "apocalyptic literature," I prefer to avoid the term "apocalyptic" altogether. But Gentry is certainly within mainstream thought when he uses the term. In contrast to Gnostic apocalyptic literature, the images found in Biblical prophecies are grounded in actual, literal, historically verifiable events — a fact that Gentry from time to time notes.

It's solid on authorship

His arguments for the Apostle John being the author are spot-on, and he deals well with all the objections. I highly recommend his argumentation on this subject.

It's solid on dating and immanence clues

Another strength of the book is that it insists that there must be an imminent fulfillment (or at least a partial fulfillment) of all the major sections of Revelation^[4] since John insists that these speak about events that are "soon," "near," or "about to happen" (v. 1i; cf. 1:3,7,19; 2:5,10,16; 3:10,11; 6:11; 11:14; 22:6,7,10,12,20). (More on this [here](#) and [here](#).)

Gentry dates the composition of the book of Revelation to somewhere between AD 65 and 66, a position that I also hold. This makes his constant refrain of "imminent fulfillment" much more credible than the distant historical "fulfillments" proposed by the bulk of historicist and futurist commentaries. While I believe he pushes the imminence of fulfillment way too far by over-applying almost the entire book to AD 66-70 (see my critique below), any other approach will have to deal with his numerous arguments that the repeated phrases, "soon" and "the time is at hand," are literally true.

It's open to the symbols being literal historical events

I appreciate the fact that Gentry repeatedly insists most of the symbols^[5] in the book also likely took place in a literal way in history.

On page 874 he rightly notes:

Nevertheless, Barr (1998: 199) is surely wrong to assert that 'everything in this story is symbolic.' Not everything in it is symbolic, for if it were we would not be able to understand it at all. Symbolic images require a point of contact with literal realities for them to convey meaning, and John certainly intends to convey meaning to his audience (1:3). (p. 874)

On page 708 he says, "A symbolic sum does not demand a symbolic people, whereas a symbolic sum can apply to a literal people." With regard to a prophesied famine, he says, "the symbolic nature of Revelation does not prohibit all literalism" (p. 756).

Gentry sadly misses the documentation for many of the literal fulfillments because his chronology is messed up (by over-applying virtually everything to AD 66-70. More on this later.). In those situations he has to go to great lengths to explain why a literal fulfillment is unnecessary and impossible, even though there are many [historical](#), [seismological](#), [meteoritic](#), and other proofs that the "impossible" actually *did* happen in history.

In Gentry's defense, much of this evidence has been rediscovered in the years since he finished his commentary. (As I understand it, most of his writing was finished in September 2005, and about six years ago Dr. Gentry handed his work to Jay Culotta, to do final editing and layout. Sadly, Jay died with the password to his computer unknown to anyone else. This meant that everything Jay had done needed to be redone.)

But even though he misses the literal fulfillment of numerous prophecies, he is at least usually correct on the *symbolic* import of the prophecies. Overall, I appreciate his openness to a literal fulfillment of many prophecies that might appear to be hyperbolic. And his exegetical uncovering of what was *symbolized* is usually correct and helpful.

It's strong on the meaning of γῆς

To understand where the action happens in the book of Revelation, you have to interpret γῆς well. γῆς is usually translated as "earth" in most translations, but Gentry recognizes that in Revelation it's usually better translated as "land," and refers specifically to Israel. He rightly sees "all tribes of the land" as being a reference to the tribes of Israel (in light of the quote from Zech. 12:10-14). The whole book makes more sense when you read the word γῆς/γῆ this way.

However, as will be seen below, Gentry fails to see that many of Revelation's prophecies are spoken against Gentile nations (including Rome).^[6] As a result, his interpretation does not adequately show how Revelation's judgments establish a *pattern* for Christ's redemptive judgments against Gentile nations throughout New Covenant history.

It's beautifully laid out and printed and a pleasure to read

This two volume set (consisting of 1764 pages of commentary, 98 pages of bibliography — one of the best bibliographies out there — and 106 pages of index: a total of 1968 pages!) is beautifully laid out. The two volumes have a Smyth Sewn binding, which will not only make the book last a lifetime, but will also make it a pleasure to read. Moreover, despite its length (and the depth of the academic research), this is a very readable commentary. Dr. Gentry writes in accessible language even when dealing with difficult concepts. He even occasionally throws in a bit of dry humor. I found it a pleasure to read.

The Weak Points of this Commentary

I will not take the time to list all of the areas of disagreement that I have with Dr. Gentry, but the following will show why I consider the commentary to be majorly marred.

Complete fail on the structure of the book

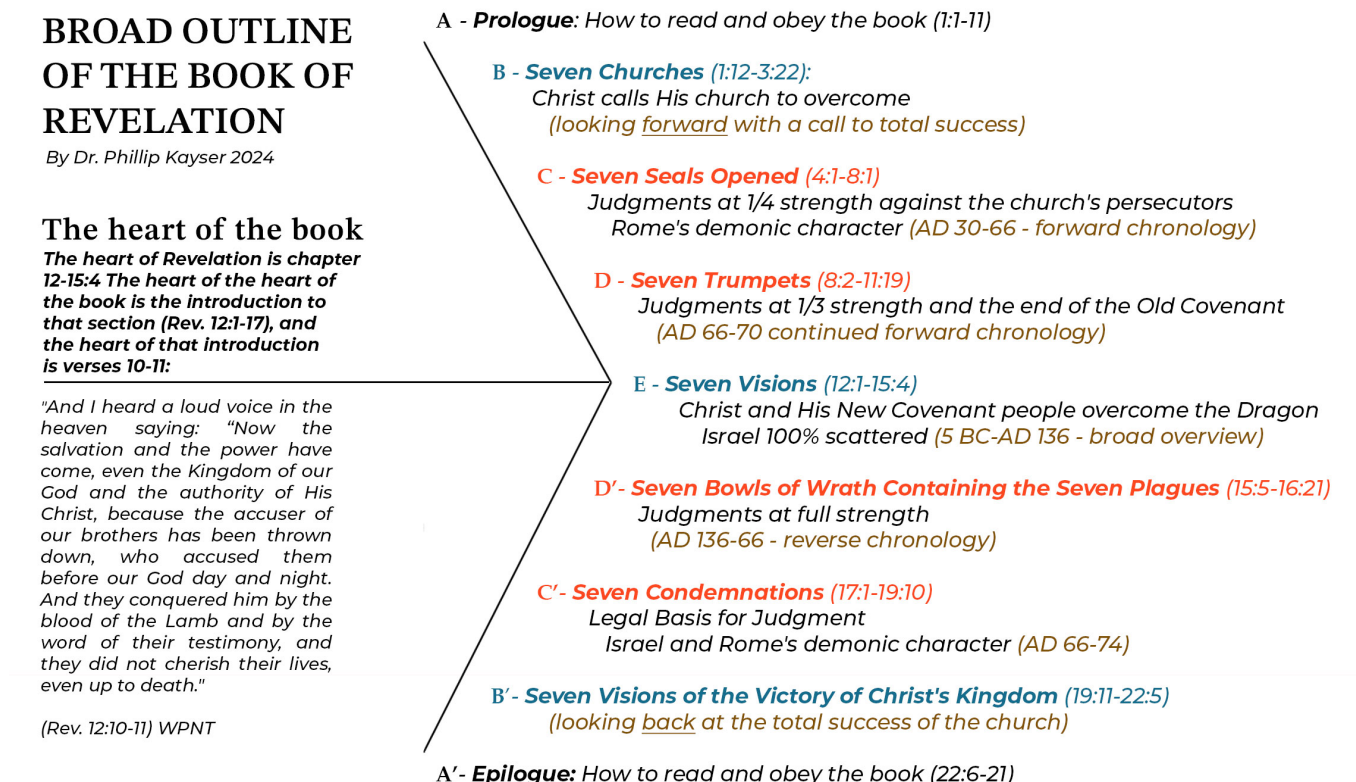
First, Gentry admits that he doesn't know the exact structure of the book. Of course, he insists that no one else has managed to come up with an adequate structure either (pp. 170-173). So he chose to avoid structural controversies altogether. He says:

In light of all the apparently insoluble difficulties in discerning Revelation's structure, I will not attempt a formal, detailed outline. Basically, I will proceed through Revelation verse-by-verse, noting significant structural questions as they arise. Thus, as I follow the order of Revelation's text, I will employ only the most basic framework structured around John's four "in Spirit" (*en pneumati*) experiences (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), three of which are closely aligned with the visionary "come and see" commands (4:1; 17:1; 21:9). (pp. 173-174)

Why does this matter? I believe the structure is critical to understanding Revelation since the structure of a Biblical book always influences the interpretation of that book, and Revelation's

structure in particular provides interpretive clues to many of the trickiest parts of the book, *and* reveals the main message of the book. [Here](#) I demonstrate the chiastic structure of the whole book in detail. As with chiasms in other portions of the Bible, the parallel sections of this chiasm help to interpret each other and show the flow of the book, while the heart of the chiasm shows the central theme.

The most basic outline is as follows:



The identity of the big book and little book

The next area where I disagree with Gentry is on the identity of the two scrolls/books in Revelation. I hold to a very traditional view^[7] that the βιβλίον (big book) of Revelation 5 is the Old Testament, and the βιβλιδάριον (little book) in Revelation 10 is the book of Revelation. Gentry sees the βιβλίον of chapter 5 and the βιβλιδάριον of chapter 10 as being the same book, and says that book was Christ's divorce certificate against Israel.

He admits that "The view that the scroll is a divorce certificate is not widely held among commentators, though it is not without adherents..." He cites Wettstein, Adam Clarke, J.M. Ford (who later retracted the view), and Campbell. I could add to his list that at least one church father also held to his view — Origen.^[8] However, being a minority view is not a strike against his position. The identity of the two books has been hotly debated, and there is plenty of room for continued debate on their identity.

However, since Gentry stakes the *whole* thesis of his book^[9] on his minority interpretation of the book's identity, one would hope that his arguments in favor of it being a divorce certificate would be substantial. After all, he claims that the identity of this book becomes "the key to the entire Book of Revelation" and the "interpretive key for the rest of the book" (p. 541). If he gets this wrong, it will negatively impact his interpretation of the book as a whole.

I will first interact with his arguments in favor of his view, and follow those with additional arguments against it.

Gentry's first argument is that "The scroll must apply to first-century events..." (p. 548). I agree; both of our views are tightly tied to AD 70.

Gentry's second argument is that "The scroll should refer to Israel, for Revelation's theme refers to 'those who pierced him' (1:7; cp. 11:8)" (p. 548). **Gentry is correct that Revelation has evidences of being a legal covenant lawsuit. Where he goes wrong is seeing the covenant lawsuit as only being against Israel. In contrast, I see the covenant lawsuit against both Israel and the pagan nations (just as the scrolls in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were against both Israel and the nations — see below). This is what gives the book such relevance today. God continues to hold *all* nations accountable to His law, not just ancient Israel.**^[10]

Gentry gives a supporting argument that "in the Old Testament Daniel receives a scroll and then a command to 'seal up the book until the time of the end' (Da 12:4, cp. 12:9)" whereas John is told not to seal up the words of his prophecy (22:10) since "the time is at hand." Gentry's conclusion is that since Daniel mentions that "'there will be a time of distress such as never occurred' (12:1) that will come upon 'your people' (the Jews), except for the ones who are 'written in the book' (12:1)" that both Daniel's scroll and John's scroll are "dealing with the Jews" (p. 548).

My response is threefold:

- First, how would this connection with Daniel force a viewpoint restricted to Israel? Daniel's visions also dealt with God's judgments on Gentile nations such as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and other kings. Thus, while his supporting argument definitely nails the timing down to the AD 70 time-frame, it does not force the scroll to only relate to the Jews. All nations are subject to Christ and His laws.
- Second, there is no evidence that *Daniel's* scroll was a divorce certificate. Instead, we find that Daniel was commanded to "seal up the vision" he had received (8:26; 9:24). In other words, the scroll contained the "words" or prophecies that had been given to Daniel (Dan. 12:4,9).
- Third, the full message to Daniel supports my theory that the two scrolls (and Revelation's preoccupation with the last of the prophets) tie in tightly with Daniel's scroll. Daniel prophesied that all vision and prophecy would be sealed up by the end of the Great Tribulation (9:24-27; 12:1-13). It is precisely that prophecy that becomes a major theme in

Revelation — the opening of the canon, the use of the canon against Israel and the nations, and the sealing up of vision and prophecy when the book of Revelation is written. Thus the connection to Daniel undermines Gentry's view and supports the majority view that the big book is the Old Testament canon and the small book of chapter 10 is the final book of the canon (Revelation).

Gentry's third argument is correct. He states that "Revelation's throne-imparted scroll should have Old Testament warrant, for as Thomas (1992:41) well notes, 'The influence of the OT on Revelation is overwhelming' (cp. Beale 77; Bauckham 1993b: 4; Moyise 1995: 14; Osborne 25; Paulien 2001:5)" (p. 549). I agree, though I would also note that each of these authors that he cited disagrees with Gentry's interpretation.

Gentry's fourth argument is that "This scroll from the throne must also fit the dramatic flow of Revelation... " (p. 549). Again, I agree. But as we will see below, the dramatic flow of Revelation and the chiastic heart of the book deals with the enthronement of Jesus and His victorious war against any and all nations who resist him and His law word. But there are other reasons to reject Gentry's thesis that the central theme is the divorce of Israel.

First, when he eats the book it is sweet to his mouth (10:9-10) — hardly something characteristic of a divorce. But it is a characteristic of Scripture.

Second, upon eating the book, the angel tells John, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings" (10:11). The little book is the legal basis for bringing judgments against any nations who resist Jesus. How could a divorce of Israel be the legal basis for judging other nations? But if the little book is Scripture, it is indeed the legal basis for judging Israel, Rome, and other hostile nations — a subject at the core of the book.

Third, there is no need to divorce a person who is being put to death. Divorce is a lesser penalty, and it is crystal clear in the book of Revelation that Christ's purpose with Israel is not to "put her away" but to destroy this harlot woman (chapters 17-19).

Fourth, Jesus describes the church as being His bride during His earthly ministry (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34; cf. John 3:29). Furthermore, John the Baptist claimed to be the bridegroom's best man (John 3:22-36). Would He do that before He divorced Israel? While it is true that Israel is designated as a harlot, the book of Revelation does not treat national apostate Israel as Christ's bride. Instead, He told the church of Philadelphia, "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you." (Rev. 3:9; cf. same language to Smyrna in Rev. 2:9). Judaism was not truly Jewish. Why? Because they rejected Jesus and were thus cast out of the true church and treated as heathen and publicans. But that casting out happened long before AD 70. Paul said the same thing much earlier, declaring Judaism to be the "dogs" and "the mutilation" and the Jewish-Gentile church to be "the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit" (Phil. 3:3). He also said that unbelieving Jewish branches *had been* broken off the one olive tree of God's people, and believing Gentile branches had been grafted

into it (Rom. 11:16-24). If there really was a place where a divorce of Israel needed to happen, it is more logical to place that at the point that Jesus left the temple in AD 30.^[11] **There was no need for a later divorce in AD 70 — only a *death* for Israel, Rome, and any other nation that fought against the true bride — a bride who was *already* asking Jesus to "Come!" in judgment before AD 70 (Rev. 22:17).**

Gentry also points out that the likely Old Testament background to John's scroll is Ezekiel's scroll in Ezekiel 2:9-10. While I agree, it is actually an additional argument against Gentry's position as I will show below in my arguments for the true identity.

Having dismissed Gentry's arguments in favor of the scroll being a divorce certificate, let me give a sampling of my arguments that the big book (βιβλίον) of Revelation 5 is the Old Testament canon and that the little book (βιβλιδῶριον) of Revelation 10 is the book of Revelation.

First, the scroll/book is in the Father's open hand ("upon" - ἐπὶ with accusative), and goes from the Father on the throne (v. 1) to the Son (v. 7) to John (chapters 6 and following) in a similar fashion to the handing of Ezekiel's scroll from God to Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:9-3:11). It therefore appears to be a *revelation*, not simply the unrevealed secret decrees of God. Nor is this the Son petitioning the Father for a divorce of His "wife." The *Father* originates this transaction, not the Son (the supposed husband).

Second, this scroll is not simply revelation, but is a *written* revelation (v. 1 - see also parallel scroll in Ezekiel and Daniel being written revelation). Though divorces were written, they were not written revelation, but rather were based upon the law of God. In any case, we have already seen that Jesus was not married to Judaism and did not need to divorce Judaism. The true Israel was formed early in Jesus's earthly ministry, was called the bride (John 3:29), with John the Baptist being called the bridegroom's friend (John 3:29), and from that time on that remnant Israel kept growing as the new Israel (the church).

Third, this unusual scroll is written on both sides of the scroll (v. 1) just like Ezekiel's scroll is written on both sides (Ezek. 2:9-10), and this implies some point of identity between the two passages. When Ezekiel chapters 2-3 are compared, it is clear that Ezekiel's scroll is inspired Scripture.^[12] This would argue that the book of Revelation 5 is inspired Scripture too. Jeremiah's scroll is similar. In Jeremiah 36, God commanded Jeremiah to write on the scroll all the words that God has spoken against Israel and the nations (Jer. 36:2ff).

Fourth, though Gentry claims that the scrolls of chapter 5 and chapter 10 are identical, the Greek words are actually quite different. The scroll in chapter 5 is a βιβλίον (a book) and the scroll in chapter 10 is a βιβλιδῶριον (a little book). Revelation keeps those two books distinguished. This is the same distinction in Ezekiel 2 where John is given "a scroll of a book" (v. 9). The "book" is the developing canon and the "scroll" is Ezekiel's prophecies. Ezekiel's prophetic revelation is one scroll within a "book" (or collection) of scrolls (מִגְלַת סֵפֶר - *migilath*

sepher). In the same way, the βιβλίον of Revelation 5 is the canon while the "little scroll" (βιβλιδάριον - cf. Rev. 10:8,9,10 in MT and 10:9,10 in USB) is being added to the canon.

Fifth, this written revelation had been previously closed up and sealed (5:2-5; 6:1f.) (For more on the closing of the Old Testament canon and the four hundred years of silence, see my book, *The Canon of Scripture: A Presuppositional Study*). The judgments that Israel deserved would all flow from the law and prophets of the Old Testament, and as Gentry himself points out, Revelation is saturated with the Old Testament as the basis for the judgments it prophetically announces. See Amos 8:11-14 for one of several prophecies of 400 years of prophetic silence. It is not surprising to see the Old Testament as a closed book.

Sixth, Gentry points out that there are parallels between Revelation 5 and Daniel's scroll being closed up and sealed until the last days of the old covenant (Daniel 12:4,9). While this nails down the time period to AD 70, it also directly ties in with Daniel's prophecy of the sealing up of all vision and prophecy in Dan. 9:24 before AD 70 (cf. v. 27). That latter reference is clearly a closing up of all inspired revelation in AD 70. According to Daniel's prophecy, once the seventy weeks was finished (9:24) and the great tribulation destroyed both Jerusalem and the temple (9:26; 12:1,7,11-12), vision and prophecy would be ended (9:24; 12:4,9). Stephen Miller comments on this saying:

Gabriel therefore was instructing Daniel to preserve 'the words of the scroll,' not merely this final vision but the whole book for those who will live at 'the time of the end' when the message will be needed. This future generation will undergo the horrors of the tribulation ('time of distress') and will need the precious promises contained in the Book of Daniel...^[13]

Once the book of Daniel was sealed, nothing more could be added to it. In the book of Revelation, we witness the last book of the Bible being commissioned (the little scroll of chapter 10), and the last of the prophets being killed (two witnesses of chapter 11), after which time all vision and prophecy would be sealed up (Dan. 9:24). This ties into my view of the βιβλίον of Revelation 5, but makes no sense of the divorce certificate view.

Seventh, all of the judgments of the seals are judgments based on the laws and prophecies in the Old Testament (prophecies that were not just against Israel, but also against the nations — see the references from Revelation in my response to Gentry's second argument above). **Revelation is not a divorce certificate. It is a covenant lawsuit against all nations who stand in opposition to Christ and His law-Word.**

He thus misses the central theme of the book (hint: it is not the divorce of Israel)

Gentry sees the message of the scroll in Rev. 5:1-14 as "the fulcrum upon which Revelation turns" and "the key to the entire Book of Revelation" (p. 541). Not only does Gentry think the

scroll is the divorce certificate against Israel, he thinks the divorce of Israel is the *main message* of the book.

Besides my previous arguments against the scroll being the divorce certificate, the chiastic structure of the book makes it clear that **Revelation 12-14 (the central septet), is the heart of the book: Christ and His New Covenant people overcoming the dragon.** Moreover, the introduction to that septet (which is also a chiasm) holds the interpretive key to the whole book. The heart of the introduction's chiasm, Revelation 12:10-11, says:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."

Below is the chiastic structure of Revelation 12 (the interpretive introduction to the heart of the book):

- a The Bride reflecting the glory of her husband (12:1)
- b The child of the woman (12:2)
- c The dragon tries to devour the Child (12:3-5)
- d The woman flees to the wilderness (12:6)
- e Dragon war in heaven (12:7-9)
- f Victory of Christ & His people over the dragon (12:10-11)
- e' Dragon war on earth (12:12-13)
- d' The woman flees to the wilderness (12:14)
- c' The dragon pursues the fleeing woman (12:15-16)
- b' The rest of the children of the woman (12:17a)
- a' The church reflecting the word of Christ (12:17b)

The heart of the book is not the scroll (however you interpret that), but the guaranteed victory of Jesus and His church over the devil.

Why does this matter? If the main message of this book is just the divorce of Israel and the ending of the Old Covenant, we lose the application that God intended for the church through the rest of history. But if the main message is the victory of Christ's people over the devil through Jesus' power, the relevance and application to every age is huge. As many Idealists point out, this is a theme that is relevant to every age of the New Covenant. We continue to overcome by the blood of the Lamb long after Israel was destroyed.

There are a number of other exegetical clues that point to chapter 12 as being the interpretive key to the whole book. I'll just mention one of those exegetical clues: In my Revelation series I point out how each of the introductions to the seven sections show Christ's universal kingship, and how His judgments are not just against Israel, but against all nations that oppose Him

(beginning with Israel and moving out from there). I believe they are key to overthrowing the Israel-centric view that the whole book is simply a divorce lawsuit. Each of those sections give hints of the universal focus of Christ's war. They also give tremendous encouragement by showing that Christ's judgments are redemptive judgments that are advancing His kingdom on earth. Those introductions are as follows:

A 1:1-11 shows how to interpret the book in a Christ-centered way. B 1:12-20 introduces the first septet and assures us that *Christ is present with His church*.

C 4:1-5:14 introduces the seven seals by showing that *the judgments that fall from heaven reveal Christ on His throne, and tightly connect our prayers with angelic warfare*.

D 8:1-6 introduces the seven trumpets by showing *the role of angels and our prayers in heaven's temple bringing redemptive judgments to earth*.

E 12:1-17 introduces the seven visions and shows that *Christ identifies with His people as they engage in spiritual warfare, and how these invisible spiritual battles are the key to the earthly battles*.

D' 15:2-16:1 introduces the seven bowls of wrath by showing *the role that angels and our prayers play in bringing redemptive judgments*.

C' 16:18-21 introduces the seven condemnations and shows *judgments falling from heaven*

B' 19:11-21 introduces the seven visions and shows that *Christ is present in the judgments as He invincibly advances His kingdom*.

A' 22:6-21 shows how to interpret the book in a Christ-centered way.

G. K. Beale's commentary shows many other parallels between each of those septets, but the Christological theme of each of the introductions clearly reinforces the central theme in Revelation 12, and especially the heart of that chiasm in verses 10-11.

He fails to take seriously numerous timing clues

While Gentry takes seriously *some* timing indicators, as I mentioned above, he explains away other timing indicators that are just as clear. Since the timing indicators are so crucial to the proper interpretation of Revelation, I will devote a fair bit of space to interacting with his approach.

Partly due to missing sequence

On pages 164-170 Gentry explains why he does not see linear sequential progression as occurring in the judgment sections of the book. Like me, he rejects the view of R. H. Charles, who insists that "the events in these seven parts are described in visions *in strict chronological order*, save in the case of certain proleptic visions." (p. 164). At the same time, he (like me) believes that this symbolic book still deals with real history. Since he rightly sees some repetition in the book, he adopts what he calls a "recapitulation or spiral approach" to the progression of the judgments. He clarifies that:

Though the images move in a cyclical fashion, they are not *purely* circular...After all, Revelation's drama certainly heads somewhere. Actually Revelation's movement is characteristically Johannine - it involves a *spiraling* (or helical) motion, as do John's Gospel^[14] and 1 John^[15]... Revelation recasts earlier prophecies, even though 'each series is not simply a repetition of the previous one, but is a development of it.' (Filho 215). (p. 166)

While there is an element of truth in what Gentry says, he misses the big picture. Where the linear approach of Charles ignores very clear recapitulation in the book, Gentry introduces recapitulations where none exist. I will explain more fully below why his system demands this, but given the overwhelming evidence for linear progression in at *least* the seals and trumpets, his over-realized-recapitulation is totally unnecessary.

While [my sermons on the seal and trumpet judgments](#) show numerous indicators that there is a forward chronological sequence to these judgments, Gentry denies this. He first denies that the trumpets come *after* the seals as to historical fulfillment,^[16] and then denies that there needs to be a chronologically sequential fulfillment *within* the trumpets.^[17] He acknowledges that in the seal judgments there is only 1/4 devastation while in the trumpet judgments there is 1/3 devastation, but he insists (with Smalley) that "the fraction cannot be taken literally" (p. 755). He is forced to that conclusion because he wrongly thinks the trumpets and the seals cover the same history.

This failure to see sequence forces him to either bounce back and forth on what he sees as historical fulfillment,^[18] to admit that he has not been able to find historical fulfillment,^[19] or to deny that a literal historical fulfillment is even possible^[20] (thus resorting to hyperbole, symbolism, or poetic license). He wrongly concludes that "Such dischronology is common in biblical revelation" (p. 1041).^[21] But when the chronological markers in Revelation are taken seriously, a perfect sequence of historical fulfillments can be found from AD 66 to AD 136 (when Israel was *completely* removed from Palestine). Contrary to his assertion that AD 70 "marked the end of the history of ancient Israel" (p. 901), history books of Israel show that it continued to exist as a nation all the way up to the Bar Kochba Rebellion. Since *one* of Revelation's themes is the destruction of Israel (among Christ's other foes), it makes sense that there would be a linear progression all the way up to the Bar Kochba Rebellion, at which point the "hyperbolic" judgments in Gentry's commentary turn out to not be hyperbolic at all. They were literally fulfilled.

Since Gentry's "system" dictates that all the judgments happened in the first half of the war (AD 66-70), he does not accurately distinguish the following:

- The distinction between tribulation, the Great Tribulation, and the Great Wrath.^[22]
- The distinction between the "time, times, and half a time" as historically verifiable periods.
- The distinction between Rome's seven year pact with Israel against the church (which was supposed to last from AD 62-70, but was broken) and the seven year war (AD 66-74). So

much of Gentry's argumentation could have been simplified if he had simply seen the war as being seven years.

- The difference between the two distinct periods of 1260 days on each side of the burning temple.
- The literal nature of the 1290 days.
- The 1335 days before Masada fell.
- The Bar Kochba Rebellion, the final war that completely removed Israel from Palestine (AD 133-136).

This makes Gentry mistakenly identify historical events as being the fulfillment of certain prophecies, even though they only fit in a general way (not as to details). This issue of timing becomes especially problematic in volume 2 where Gentry has to repeatedly distance himself from timing indicators by saying that they show nothing about the historical order of events.^[23]

Of course, Gentry says that he isn't the only one who sees major difficulties in seeing sequence (see pages 164-170). But it is my view that these sequence issues are only difficult because they contradict a theory. Our theories should be subject to the text, not vice versa. Sequence of seals and trumpets has been very well documented by both historicists and futurists. It is time that partial preterists take those indicators seriously.

Partly due to limiting the timing to AD 66-70

His second timing error is to limit the focus of God's judgments to only the AD 66-70 portion of Rome's war against Israel.^[24] But this is a huge mistake. As I demonstrate in great detail [here](#), the first century war was *seven* years long, and the book of Revelation distinguishes between the two halves of the war quite clearly in a number of ways. But Gentry inverts prophecies^[25] that the history of the war shows no need to invert.

Partly due to thinking God's judgments on Israel finished in AD 70

As has already been mentioned, his repeated assertions that the history of Israel ended in AD 70 are also false. He approvingly quotes Shanks as saying that "AD 70 'marked the end of the history of ancient Israel' in a very real sense" (p. 901). But it is quite clear from history that Israel did not end as a nation until it was wiped off the face of the map in the Bar Kochba Rebellion (a period that the E section of the chiasm deals with in great detail). The first half of the judgment sections of the book move in a perfect linear fashion from AD 66 to AD 136, when Israel was completely wiped out and removed from the land (more on that below).

Moreover, since the history contained in the central septet (the heart of the book) spans 5 BC-AD 136, it shows Christ's judgments continuing to fall on nations (both Jewish and Gentile) long after AD 70.

Partly due to explaining away obvious time markers

His fourth error is to fail to take seriously some of the numerous explicitly stated time markers given by the Apostle John such as "and" (as a Hebraic expression of sequence), "then," "after," "after this," "after these things," "must take place after these," "the second woe is past," "the third woe is coming quickly," "the last plagues," "the wrath of God is completed," "for about half an hour," "five months," "in those days," "the hour and day and month and year," "three and a half days," each part of the time sequence in "a time and times and half a time," the progression from "a fourth" to "a third" to 100% (Rev. 16) of all things being destroyed, 1260 days, 1290 days, 1335 days, "three-and-a-half days," "in the same hour," etc.

Here are just three examples of where he gets the timing indicators wrong:

Example: "last plagues"

First, in 15:1 and again in 21:9 the angels holding the bowls are said to be delivering the seven "last plagues." The word "last" implies that at least some of these bowl plagues had to be fulfilled at a *later* date than the earlier plagues already described in the series of trumpets (see 9:18, 20; 11:6 for earlier plagues). However, having the "last plagues" as *historically last* does not fit Gentry's paradigm (which necessitates septets 2-6 to all be fulfilled in the years AD 66-70). So Gentry gives two possible explanations that do not necessitate a *chronological* "last."

The first explanation is Beale's argument that "it simply gives us 'the order in which John saw the visions and not necessarily the chronological order of their occurrences in history'" (p. 1188). The problem with this interpretation is that even *after* the visions of the bowls (16:2-21) are completely finished, there are visions of *more* "plagues" in the *next* septet (see 18:4,8 and the whole context). So in terms of *visionary* sequence they are not last at all. Since the plagues mentioned in the bowls are not the last plagues to be mentioned in visions, simple logic dictates that the term "last" attributed to "bowls" must refer to something else. And my claim is that they refer to the last plagues on Israel *in history*. And if the chiasmic reversal in the book is true, then the plagues in chapter 18 do indeed occur before the last plagues in the bowls.

And it may be for this reason that Gentry suggests another meaning for "last." Even though Gentry says that Beale "is surely correct," he covers his bases by giving another possible interpretation — that it may mean "last" in the sense that these plagues suggest.

the *finality* of the wrath of God *upon Israel*, for **in them the wrath of God is finished**... That is, God's wrath is completed upon those for whom it is intended. (pp. 1188-1189).

So he places the fulfillment of the last plagues as relating to AD 70. There are two problems with this second interpretation. First, God's wrath was not simply against Israel; it was also against *Gentile nations (plural)*,^[26] and God's wrath against Rome and its tributaries did not end in AD 70. Second, Israel itself wasn't totally destroyed in AD 70. The war with Rome lasted for

another three and a half years, after which Rome entered into a pact with Israel and allowed Israel to continue as a nation. Indeed, Israel's persecution of Christians continued long after AD 70. The fact of the matter is that Israel was not wiped off the face of the map completely until AD 136 at the end of the Bar Kochba Rebellion, which is vividly described in chapters 14:14 to 16:21.

Because of this chronological mistake, Gentry has to explain away things like the [blood up to the horses' bridles](#) and [every living thing in the sea dying because it becomes congealed like the blood of a dead man](#) (p. 1185, 1200-1202), the springs becoming blood (1202-1203), [men being scorched with heat](#) (1205f) [at the very time that the kingdom of the beast is completely darkened](#) (1209f), etc. He cannot find historical fulfillment for these and many other prophesied events because they simply do not exist in the first three and a half year period. But research shows that these things were perfectly fulfilled in later history.

Example: "after these things"

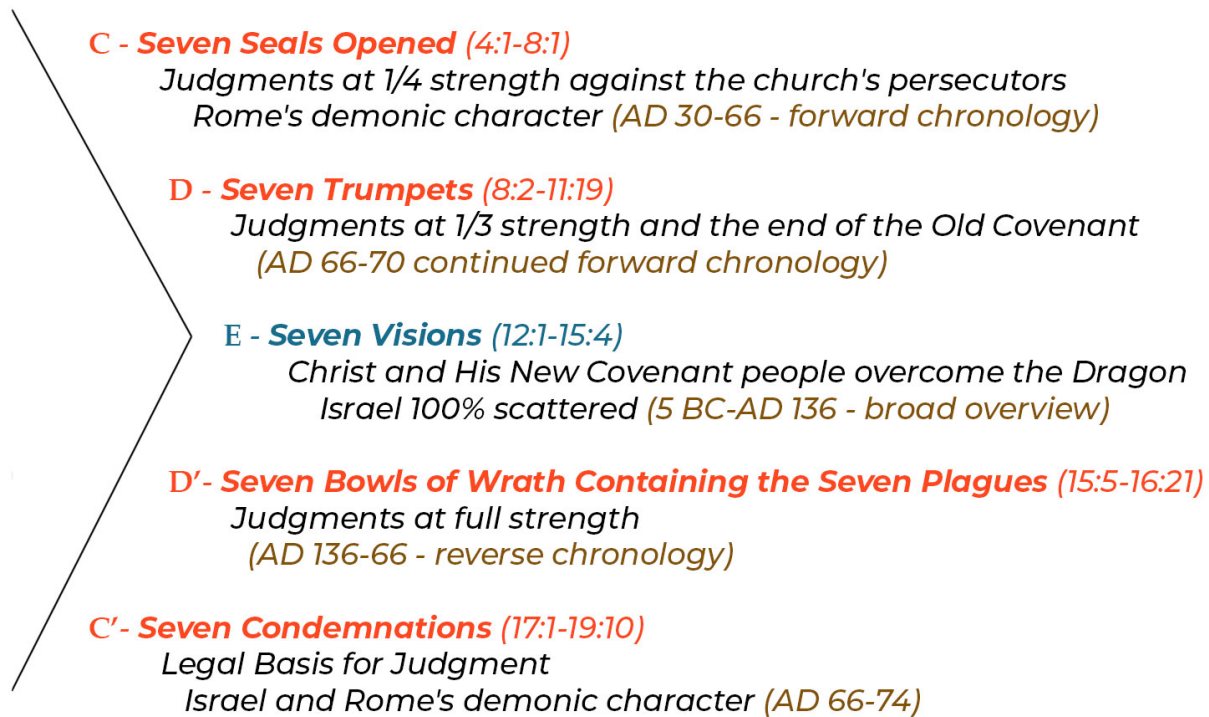
A second example of timing error is that he takes "after these things" as referring only to a sequence in *vision*, but not to a sequence in *history*.^[27] For example, after quoting 9:12 as saying, "The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things," Gentry claims that John (who is speaking) is not telling the reader about sequence in historical details. Instead, John is explaining that a new vision is about to happen, that is, that there is going to now be "progress in the visionary narrative" (p. 804). But why would John state the obvious about succession of visions — especially when the next verse clearly states, "Then the sixth angel sounded"? The *reader* can clearly see the demarcations in visions without such an explanation. The most natural reading of the verse shows that this is talking about the "woe" *itself* being past, and that two worse woes will only come "after these *things*" (i.e., events) have been fulfilled. But Gentry is forced to show historical fulfillment as jumping back and forth throughout his commentary.^[28] To do otherwise would mess up Gentry's insistence that all these judgments must fit into the first three and a half years of the war. He gets around the chronological conundrum by either saying that there is recapitulation via spiral and/or by resorting to calling these things "hyperbole."^[29]

Likewise, though 15:5 has another "after these things" statement, Gentry jumbles the history together to try to fit chapters 15-16 into the AD 66-70 history. As can be seen by my time map below, the first two bowls *do* occur immediately after the events described by the seven visions of chapters 13-14. But a careful study of his commentary will show that Gentry does not see sequence as being necessitated by these words. I won't bother to outline in detail each and every way that Gentry explains away the obvious linear fashion in which the text moves historical events forward from chapter 5-14, but before I outline the dates, I will outline yet another timing error: the failure to adequately see reversal in the fifth and sixth septets.

Example: missing the reversal of the chiasm at chapter 16

The next timing clue that Gentry misses is the reversal of the chiasm at chapter 16.

Many commentators ^[30] have shown that, beginning in the seven plagues of chapter 16, there is a reversal of the order of events, like so:



Though Gentry acknowledges that a kind of reversal *appears* to take place, he tries to avoid being tied to any kind of chronologically linear reversal, instead opting to say that "In Revelation 16 the bowls offer a recapitulatory advance on the trumpets as John's drama spirals forward (p. 1195)." ^[31] By spiral he seems to mean that the bowls appear (on his interpretation) to go back in time and then forward again on more than one occasion. But when the exegetical evidence advanced by the scholars already cited ^[30-1] is coupled with the chiastic structure of the book, it is imperative to take the beginning of the bowls as being fulfilled at the very end of Israel's history in the land (AD 136) and moving *backwards* in time to AD 66, with only two explicitly stated exceptions. ^[32] My sermon series shows perfect literal fulfillment of every detail when this is done. Thus both grammatical clues, structural clues, and history line up beautifully.

Example: His discussion of the New Heavens and New Earth

Another example of timing is his discussion of the New Heavens and New Earth. There is truth in Gentry's contention that "God's redemptive work through Christ involves three basic stages of development: the legal, historical, and consummational. That is, salvation is legally

accomplished in Christ, unfolded in history, and fully realized in the consummation" (p. 1610). This obvious theological truth is not the point of contention on Revelation 21.

The point of contention revolves around whether the passing away of the first heaven and earth and the elimination of the sea (21:1) happens in history or at the end of history. It is Gentry's contention that the first heaven and earth metaphorically/legally pass away in AD 70, though the vision occasionally looks proleptically^[33] forward to all that will be accomplished. In contrast, I agree with Beale that many exegetical details necessitate that chapter 21 must follow *after* the final judgment in chapter 20:7-15, and that from an *eternal* perspective John's vision is looking backwards on all the enemies that have *already* been put down in history, but it is looking at these New Covenant realities only *after* the final enemy (death) has been once and for all eliminated, and the created order renewed in its entirety (as per 2 Pet. 3:10-13). This includes the absence of a sea — something Gentry denies will take place in eternity (pp. 1626ff). You can see me explain my position in more detail [here](#).

It would take way too much space to interact with all the back and forth arguments needed to settle this question, but Beale does a great job of demonstrating that it must be *after* the last day of history. After all, "there shall be no death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (v. 4). In contrast, Gentry says that "the vision of the heaven and earth passing away signifies God's removing the old covenant order — as is appropriate given Revelation's theme (1:7) and specific references (e.g., 11:1-2). Thus, probably the 'sea' here continues that symbolism" (p. 1628; see also his discussion on pp. 1608-1696). According to Gentry, the absence of death "highlights the eternal life that comes in Christ's new-covenant redemption, beginning in the first century" (p. 1647). I believe his misplaced timing of Revelation 21 hugely mars the commentary and gives up some of the best exegetical arguments that can be mustered against Full Preterism. It is no wonder that full preterists are loving his commentary. I praise God that Gentry is not a full preterist, but he gives away too much ground to Full Preterism.

His view of the first and second resurrections

I cannot fault Gentry very much for his mistaken view of the "first resurrection" and the raising of "the rest of the dead" (20:4-6). After all, other commentators are also all over the map on the meaning of the first and second resurrections. There is no consensus on the meaning of the two resurrections. However, Gentry's unique view is that while the second resurrection is a literal resurrection of corpses at the end of time, the first resurrection is a metaphorical resurrection of the church out of the metaphorical corpse of Israel in AD 70.

He gets the timing of the resurrection right

He gets the timing right. He admits that the first and second resurrections are still future to John when writing the book. And he gives cogent arguments as to why the first resurrection must be imminent and must have happened in AD 70. Gentry provides plenty of exegetical data that cogently points to this conclusion. But because he doesn't see a *literal* resurrection as happening in AD 70, he has to explain away numerous passages that *show* it to be literal. I'll just reference the two on which he spends the most time.

Daniel 12 proves the opposite of what Gentry believes on the first resurrection

Gentry correctly concludes that Daniel 12 points to the first resurrection. He also gives accurate exegetical detail to prove that Daniel 12:1-3 must be fulfilled in AD 70 (pp. 856ff). So far, so good. Third, he also admits that the language used *seems* to be language of a literal resurrection. [\[34\]](#) This too is good.

However, because he sees only *one* future bodily resurrection, he claims that "Daniel draws on imagery based on the future, literal resurrection of the body and applies it symbolically to portray the deliverance of many Jews from within the 'body' of Israel that would perish in the great tribulation" (p. 857). Thus, he teaches that the church-body is metaphorically resurrected out of the corpse-body of Israel. There are several problems with this theory.

The first problem is that Daniel doesn't speak of a resurrection of *one* corporate church-body out of *one* corporate corpse-body of Israel. Instead, it speaks of "*many*" sleeping and *some* of those "*many*" being raised up to condemnation and *some* of those "*many*" being raised up to everlasting life (v. 2).

Second, it is the very ones who sleep in the dust of the earth who awake (v. 2). On Gentry's interpretation that would mean that the corpse of Judaism would have to rise — something that he does not teach. Furthermore, even if we take the church as being resurrected out of the corpse of Judaism, in what way can it be said that spiritually alive people (the church) only get resurrected in AD 70? Was the church not alive before that? And were not the people who make up the church not alive before that?

Third, the language of that resurrection is not of a *temporal* resurrection of a church on earth, but is a resurrection to "*everlasting* life" and a resurrection to "*everlasting* contempt." Daniel says, "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to *everlasting* life, some to shame and *everlasting* contempt" (v. 2). That language more naturally refers to a literal resurrection in AD 70.

The two witnesses in Revelation 11 prove the opposite of what Gentry believes on the first resurrection

He gets the timing right

Gentry also is correct that the [two witnesses](#) in Revelation 11 were resurrected in the first resurrection. He thus gets the timing of this resurrection right.^[35] Gentry cogently argues that everything points to a resurrection that happens in AD 70.

But he misses out on the nature of the first resurrection

However, Gentry denies that this was part of a massive first century bodily resurrection. Instead, he sees this resurrection as "probably not...a bodily resurrection" (p. 962). I like the "probably." That leaves the door open. In any case, Gentry's current position is that the passage is referring to the same metaphorical resurrection he has wrongly attributed to Daniel 12. There are several problems with this.

First, Revelation 11 does not speak of a dead body (singular - i.e., Israel) but says that "their dead *bodies* will lie in the street of that great city" and "those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead *bodies* three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead *bodies* to be put in the graves" (vv. 8-10). It is *two bodies* that are being referred to, not Gentry's one corporate corpse-body of Judaism.

Second, the passage connects dead bodies with what normally should occupy "graves" (v. 9). Why would John have that kind of specificity if he was not going to be talking about a literal resurrection of literal dead bodies? And why would he use the plural "graves" rather than "grave" if his intention was to metaphorically describe a corporate death of Judaism and a corporate resurrection of the church?

Third, the beast is prophesied to "overcome them, and kill them" (v. 7). But even on Gentry's interpretation, the beast does not kill the church — the church is protected. Nor can the dead bodies symbolize apostate Israel, since the witnesses are admittedly good, not apostate.

Fourth, it is the bodies of those killed who are raised, not souls or something other than what was killed.

Fifth, the two witnesses who die in AD 70 cannot be said to have a spiritual resurrection^[36] because:

- They are only resurrected *after* their bodies lie exposed and remain unburied for three-and-a-half days, not at the moment of their death (11:9,11).
- God causes life to come into their *bodies* (11:11), not their souls.
- Their *bodies* ascend (11:12), not simply their souls.

Sixth, the timing for being caught up is when the seventh trumpet sounds and those in heaven rejoice because "the time of the dead, that they should be judged" has come (11:18). This surely is a reference to a judgment of the dead.

These and other details show that Revelation 11 is indeed referring to a literal resurrection of the bodies of saints — whether two or more in AD 70 (v. 12).

But I will freely admit that seeing the first resurrection as metaphorical or spiritual is not without precedent. Commentators can be divided into two groups: those who accept Alford's dictum^[37] and those who reject it. In a nutshell, Henry Alford tried to show that if the first resurrection is spiritual, then the second has to be spiritual; if the second resurrection is literal, then the first resurrection has to be literal. I will outline the main views around those who affirm or deny this dictum.

The interpretations that accept Alford's dictum as legitimate are as follows:

1. Two *bodily* resurrections — 1) that of Jesus and 2) everyone else at the end of history.^[38]
2. Two *bodily* resurrections ("the hour is coming and now is" — John 5:25-29).^[39] 1) **The "now is" resurrection** is symbolized by the *barley harvest* composed of two parts: the firstfruits (representing the bodies of Christ and some Old Testament saints who were resurrected in AD 30) and the main barley harvest (representing the bodies of the rest of saints who died prior to AD 70 — cf. Daniel 12:1-3, which also ties a resurrection to AD 70); 2) **the "hour is coming" resurrection** is symbolized by the *wheat harvest* representing the resurrection of the bodies of everyone else at the end of the age.^[40]
3. Two bodily resurrections in the future — one being before the supposed future millennium and the other after the millennium. (This is the standard view of both Dispensational and Historic Premillennialists.)^[41]
4. Being raised into Christ's bodily resurrection through baptism, with the second resurrection being only the bodies of the non-elect.^[42]
5. Two spiritual resurrections.^[43]

Next, those who reject Alford's dictum that both resurrections must be of the same kind:

6. The first resurrection is regeneration and the second is a physical resurrection.^[44]
7. Gentry's view that the first resurrection is a metaphor of the church being resurrected out of the dead corpse of Judaism and the second resurrection being a literal physical bodily resurrection.^[45]
8. The first resurrection is spirits taken to heaven when they die and the second is bodies raised at the end of history.^[46]

I believe the simplest view and the one that gives the most natural reading of the text is View 2: All the resurrection passages in the Bible can easily be placed into two literal bodily resurrections, with the first resurrection occurring in the first century (a two-part resurrection of firstfruits and [main barley harvest](#)) and the second resurrection occurring at the end of time (the wheat harvest). You can read a more detailed explanation of my view and the reasons for it [here](#).

However, I did think that Gentry's attempt to place his spiritual first resurrection in AD 70 argues even more strongly (and naturally) for a literal first century resurrection. Let me give an extended quote from him that I believe supports my view better than his. Gentry says:

I previously held the Augustinian view (that John is picturing regeneration), yet many commentators note that *ezesan* here cannot indicate regeneration.^[47] After all, John is clearly focusing on *martyrs* and *martyrs only* - and the surprising victory that comes from their deaths...

(1) John sees the 'souls' of those 'who had been beheaded' (20:4b).

(2) In the next verse, he contrasts those who 'came to life' with 'the rest of the dead' (20:5a). Thus, the enthroned ones were previously dead, in the same literal sense as 'the rest of the dead.'

(3) Most significantly, this vision fulfills the promise of 6:9-11. There the 'souls' of the 'slain' cry out from 'underneath the altar' (6:9). These souls are *awaiting* something they do not *presently* have — but something they will receive after waiting only 'a little while longer [*chronon mikron*]' for their martyr-brothers, 'who were to be killed even as they had been' (6:11). This corresponds to the promise in 2:10-11: 'Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life' (implying that they did not have that crown while alive on earth).

(4) All of this dovetails with John's near-term indicators: he is directly concerned with people who have died or will soon die. They are the ones that he must encourage by letting them know that they will soon be vindicated. Certainly all those alive when John wrote were promised a blessing from hearing and keeping the words of Revelation (1:3). Yet some special blessing awaits those who are slain: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord *from now on*' (14:13). Even dispensationalists agree regarding 20:4 that 'all are not in view at this point.' (Thomas 1995: 417)... (pp. 1580-1581).

He continues his argument on the following pages, and concludes:

But contrary to Rainbow, Morris, and others, this coming to life and reigning does not occur *immediately* upon their deaths (though they enter heaven immediately, Lk 23:43; Ac 7:59; 2Co 5:8; Php 1:21-23). Note that *they* (pl.) come to life. This plural action implies that their coming to life is simultaneous for all of them. This coming to life does not occur to individuals one-at-a-time as they die; rather it occurs to all the martyrs simultaneously at some point, while gathered together in heaven above... (pp. 1582-1583)

The fact that these are said to 'reign' for the *whole* thousand years also suggests their first-century coming to life; John is not speaking of martyrdoms occurring a year before the end of history, for they would not reign for the complete 'thousand' years. Furthermore, their coming to life fits John's near-term indicators (1:1,3; 22:6,10; 22:6,10), though with a view to the ongoing long-term consequences. Besides, these martyrs suffered during the time of the first-century beast, Nero. John wanted his audience to understand that any martyrs among them would be vindicated and rewarded... (p. 1583)

But from the heavenly perspective, martyrs do not *remain* dead. They certainly *are* dead as far as earthly matters are concerned (they are 'beheaded'!), but they arise from their ignoble death on earth below to an immortal dignity in heaven above. Contrary to the persecutors' intent, martyrs *overcome* [*enikesan*] their tormentors because 'they did not love their life even when faced with death' (12:1) and, in fact, come off 'victorious' (*tous nikontas*, 15:2).

In this way, the martyrs follow the pattern of Christ who was slain and then 'caught up to God and to His throne' (12:5), for he 'became dead' (*ebenomen nekros*) and yet 'behold' he is now 'alive forevermore' (1:18)..." (p. 1584)

Almost every argument (above) that he advances for an AD 70 metaphorical/spiritual/corporate resurrection could be used for an AD 70 literal/bodily resurrection. Daniel 12:1-3 and several other passages are most naturally read to mean that there would be a bodily resurrection from the graves in AD 70. This view is devastating to both Premillennialism and Full Preterism. If the first resurrection happens in AD 70, then the second resurrection must be after that (i.e., at the end of history).

There are other clues that Revelation is talking about two bodily resurrections:

- The phrase, "the rest of the dead," implies that a part of a set gets raised in the first century and the rest of that entire set gets raised at the end of time; but it is the same set. It is the set of dead corpses. Spiritually dead makes no sense of the text, whereas physically dead people does.
- N. T. Wright has a number of persuasive arguments *that first century pagans and Christians only knew one kind of resurrection — the resurrection of the body.*^[48]
- Revelation 20 is not the only passage that connects "first" with a resurrection, and it is at least worth asking whether those passages might help to define the first resurrection in Revelation. It is my opinion that they do. Those passages are: Acts 3:26; 26:23; also see "firstfruits" in 1 Cor. 15:20,23; Rom. 8:23; see "Feast of Firstfruits" in Lev. 23:9-22; Ex. 23:19; Ex. 34:26.
- As to Gentry's argument that "first" (πρῶτος) refers to *quality* rather than sequence, I would respond that this is to import a meaning to the word that John does not use anywhere else in Revelation. Those who accept Alford's Dictum above have rightly pointed out that John *consistently* uses the word "first" to refer to the first in a sequence, such as "first angel," "first beast," etc.^[49] People sometimes point to 1 Corinthians 15:45 to establish a different meaning for the word, but even there, the primary meaning of sequence makes more sense. It says, "The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." The meaning is that there are two humanities — one is united to the first Adam and the other is united to the second or last Adam.
- As Gentry himself admits, there are strong verbal parallels between the first resurrection and the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb (p. 1584). This argues against a metaphorical resurrection of the church out of the corpse of Judaism. With such strong verbal parallels between Christ's literal bodily resurrection and the resurrection that he admits is in AD

70, we should assume that both resurrections are of the same nature — bodily resurrections.

- There are other passages that may point to two different kinds of bodily resurrections: Daniel 12:1-3,^[50] Luke 14:14,^[51] 1 Corinthians 15:22-57,^[52] Acts 24:14-15,^[53] Philippians 3:11,^[54] Matthew 16:27-28.^[55]
- It might be thought (and some have argued) that if the second death can be spiritual, surely the first resurrection can be spiritual. But Matthew 5:29-30 and 10:28 make it clear that it is not simply the *soul* that is thrown into hell, but also the *body*. Thus Revelation 20:13-15 shows not only Hades (the place where *souls* went) being emptied, but also the sea and Death being emptied. The "and" in "Death and Hades" indicates two things being conquered. Thus even if one were to argue chiastically A (first resurrection), B (second resurrection), B' (first death), A' (second death), there is still no basis for removing the body from the first resurrection since the body is also involved in the second death (hell, i.e. the lake of fire).
- My final argument is an argument from the perspicuity of Scripture. This argument actually applies to *most* of the differences that I am noting with Gentry in this review, but it certainly applies to his discussions of the first resurrection. My argument in a nutshell is that if an explanation of the text is true, one should be able to see that meaning (once it is understood) by reading the text of Scripture again without the aid of the commentary. The meaning should then jump out of the text fairly clearly. After all, God expected the reader to be able to understand Revelation (1:3,20; 17:7). Greg Bahnsen noted that (unlike non-canonical apocalyptic literature, which was inscrutable), the first verse of Revelation describes itself as "an unveiling" or clear explanation.^[56] After giving several additional proofs that John intended the book to be easily understood, Bahnsen correctly stated:

If we have difficulty with the book of Revelation — with the unveiling of the naked truth — then our first consideration must be that the difficulty somehow lies in us, not in the book itself! When God "reveals" Himself and His message, even by means of unusual visions, those who fail to understand what they are "shown" (cf. Rev. 1:1) have this mental problem either due to the obscuring effects of sin in their lives or because they are not utilizing appropriate hermeneutical techniques for the literature involved. God is not somehow to blame for failure to communicate clearly.^[57]

In contrast, Gentry repeatedly admits that (on his interpretation) the meaning of the first resurrection passages^[58] as well as many other passages in Revelation^[59] are very difficult to discern. Certainly Revelation must be studied carefully and explained, but once the explanation has been given, one would expect that the reader should be able to get that same meaning out of the text *itself*. There are several explanations that he gives that do not make any intuitive sense when reading the text *alone*. In contrast, numerous people have noted the simplicity and naturalness of the exegesis for [my position](#) versus the complexity of argumentation needed to sustain Gentry's viewpoint.

The commentary is thin on application, especially on Revelation being a spiritual war manual

The next issue I have with the book is the lack of practical application to the issues of today. Perhaps Gentry will focus more on practical application in his layman's commentary, but my experience over and over in reading his academic commentary was, "Great point! Now where is the application that can transform people's lives?" Revelation is a book that has an amazing amount of practical guidance on civics, economics, personal holiness, spiritual warfare, and a host of other issues. As Dr. Greg Bahnsen pointed out, John wanted his readers' lives to be transformed by living out the principles of the book. He said:

It has always been God's purpose that this inspired revelation to His servants be read, heard, *and obeyed* (1:3; 22:7); thus divine reward has been promised *to those who comply with that purpose*. The great unveiling holds great blessing for God's people — as well as *calling them to committed service and obedience to the Lord*.

John did not write Revelation in order to be misunderstood; he wrote it in order to inform our thinking *and guide our behavior...* In Revelation, Christ through John requires His followers *to keep the words of the prophecy; Revelation contains imperial orders for the King's servants*. Therefore, to hold that Revelation's meaning is hidden from us and not understandable is to foreclose on the blessing which God promises in the book, and it is to *render full discipleship impossible by standing in the way of keeping the words of the prophecy* — an intolerable consequence. Despite any initial feeling of difficulty in interpreting the book of Revelation, true disciples of Christ will obediently seek the blessing which comes from understanding its message and *living in terms of it*. This is not optional or peripheral; it is the will of the Lord for His servants, those who know tribulation for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:1, 9).^[60]

Let me begin by bemoaning how little application there is to one of the most pervasive themes in Revelation — Revelation as a spiritual war manual. In my sermon series on Revelation, I demonstrate how incredibly practical this book would be if the church of today would implement its detailed plans, purposes, tactics, strategies, and pray for angelic reinforcements for Christ's cosmic warfare.^[61] The early church used the plans God outlined in this book to conquer the Roman Empire and nations beyond. They knew that because Christ rules (1:5; 2:27; 3:14; 11:15,17; 12:5; 19:15; 20:6), all of those who are united with Christ are also called kings (1:6; 5:10), have been given kingly “authority” over the nations (2:26-28), reign with Him (2:26-27; 5:10; 20:4,6; 22:5), and wear crowns (2:10; 3:11; cf. 4:4). Of course, as kings, Christians must put on the characteristics of self-control, perseverance, boldness, patience, overcoming, etc. that are associated with their kingship (cf. 2:2-3,7,10,11,17,26-28; 3:5,7,9,10,11,12,21; 4:4; 13:10; 21:7). Thus taking on the nations must coincide with taking on our own flesh and the demonic forces that are all around us.

This conquest of the Roman Empire was started by the 144,000 spiritual storm troopers of the first century. This 144,000 Jewish remnant (7:1-8) were "overcomers" (12:10-12) engaging in a tactical flight in order to regroup (12:13-17) and conquer the nations with the Gospel (14:1-5, 14-16).^[62] Whereas Gentry sees 19:11 as referring to Christ's war against Jerusalem, I see it as referring to Christ victoriously advancing Christ's kingdom to the ends of the earth *after* the war. And Christ used saints like the 144,000 to do so. At every point they obeyed Christ even when obedience brought them into conflict with man. They were called by Christ to "overcome" state resistance to the gospel (17:14; 2:13, 17; 15:2) and/or on occasion to flee from a state's oversight (12:6, 14). The book gives wisdom to know when to tactically engage in both.

The book of Revelation also gives a very practical philosophy of civics. For example, it helped Christians realize that any time the state exceeds its God-given authority, it takes on **bestial characteristics**. The early church had to learn how to distinguish between a state functioning as a "minister of God" and a state that acts like a "beast" in character (11:7; 13:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 23, 14, 15, 17, 18; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2, 10, 13; 17:3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17; 19:19; 19:20; 20:4; 20:10). They put off fear of persecution because they were convinced that God was in control whether they were martyred or whether they were protected by God's angelic hosts (6:9-11; 7:1-8; etc.). The book of Revelation gave them faith that they were invincible until it was God's purpose for them to go to their heavenly reward. But because it taught them true Biblical civics, it enabled them to know when it was lawful for them to disobey the state and when it was lawful for them to submit.

Of course, this book condemned anarchy as well as tyranny (Rev. 8-11), and thus they were not sucked in by the Zealot's rioting and *godless* resistance to the tyranny of Rome. Gentry *documents* the anarchy that was happening in Israel very well, but doesn't point out that the anarchy was described by John to warn us against getting sidelined by conservative movements of resistance that are not grounded in the Word of God.

This was also a book that taught Christians how to recognize **the limits of the church and how to resist church tyranny**. For example, they had a responsibility to test even so-called "apostles" to see if they were the real deal (2:2), and to refuse to bear with those in the church who were evil (2:2, 6, 14-15, 20-23). Thus, they named apostate churches and opposed them (2:9; 3:9) and refused to be taken in by false apostles or prophetesses (2:14-15, 20). God called them to leave false churches (11:1; 18:4; 2:9; 3:7-9) and to stand for the truth even when being threatened (2:10, 13). The tyranny of false excommunication was exposed (3:7-12). When either the state or the church goes beyond the Regulative Principle of Government,^[63] God considers them to be an enemy. That is richly illustrated in this book.

But it is especially **the warfare of the saints against the demonic** that is not adequately applied in this commentary. Revelation is rich with principles by which Christians can fight against the demonic hordes that hold nations, states, counties, cities, families, and individuals in bondage. This book was intended to give confidence in our power over demons (9:4) since we can conquer them by the power of the blood of Christ and with the Scriptures on our lips (12:11). Some of

this absence of spiritual warfare themes might possibly be connected to the next disagreement I have with Gentry.

Seeing the angel Michael as being Jesus

Gentry argues for more than one angelic appearance in Revelation as being a Christophany. While I do not see *any* of the angels of Revelation as being Jesus, I will focus on his argumentation from Revelation 12:7-9 defending his view that Michael the archangel is Jesus. While Gentry stands in good company in holding to this viewpoint,^[64] I do not find those arguments persuasive.

First, Gentry says "the protoevangelium ('first promise of the gospel') presents the conquest of Satan as being by the 'seed of the woman,' whom evangelicals generally recognize ultimately as Christ" (p. 1017). It seems unlikely to Gentry that this passage would relegate such a role to a lesser being. The problem with that argument is that even on his view verse 7 does indeed credit both "Michael *and his angels*" to casting Satan out of heaven (Rev. 1:7). This means that creaturely agents ("angels") are indeed involved in this war. If other angels are admittedly involved in casting Satan out of heaven, why does that preclude Michael from being an angel? After all, Revelation repeatedly attributes the binding of demons and the judgment on his subjects to human activity. For example, it is the "prayers of the saints" (5:8; 8:3-4) that result (see 8:5-6 for the connection) in God's judgments being poured out (9:7ff). This is because those prayers lay claim to Christ's authority. The issue is not whether an angel is stronger than Satan, but whether the prayers of the saints that result in regiment after regiment of angels going into battle have Christ's power *behind* them. Neither angels nor humans may passively wait for Jesus to do the work. Instead, they engage in warfare through Christ's authority.

Second, Gentry argues that "Michael appears most famously in Daniel 10:13, 21 and 12:1, which appears to be John's main source... There Michael is probably a Christophany" (p. 1018). Of course, this too is contested. Why would the angelic Michael be "*one* of the chief princes" (Dan. 10:13) instead of *the* chief? There were multiple chief princes among the angels, and many scholars believe the seven angels of Revelation are those chief princes, each of whom led one of the seven armies of heaven. To lump the preincarnate Son of God in with the other chief princes seems to make Him the same kind of being as the other chief princes. That's exactly what Jehovah's Witnesses try to teach — that Jesus was a created angel *before* He became a man. But Jesus was not the God-angel; He was the God-man. Furthermore, the preincarnate Son of God had no peers among angels. Hebrews 1 says that He was *greater* than the angels. Barnes points out that the expression "one of the chief princes" makes Michael *one in the rank of other angelic princes*.^[65] It identifies him as a true angel. So this argument fails.

Gentry says, "Third, the Hebrew for 'Michael' (*mikael*) means 'who is like God?' (BDB 567) and is based on Exodus 15:11 and Psalm 89:6-8, which suggest that this is not a created being (Hengstenberg 1:465)" (p. 1019). But all people admit that the humans who were named Michael

in the Old Testament (Numb. 13:13; 1 Chron. 5:13-14; 6:40; 7:3; 8:16; 12:20; 27:18; 2 Chron. 21:2; Ezra 8:8) were simply humans. The name honors God, it does not identify the being as God. Indeed, many names of ancient saints reflected the name or attributes of God. That an angel also has the name "Michael" proves nothing.

Fourth, Gentry says:

In Jude 9, 'Michael' is called an 'archangel' (*archangelos*) which means 'head' or 'ruler' of the angels (Carrington 221). This would equate him with the Christophanic 'captain of the host of the Lord' (Jos 5:14-15). Christ has 'his angels' (Mt 13:41; 16:27; 24:31; 1 Ti 5:21); see especially 2 Thessalonians 1:7. (p. 1019)

But look at how problematic it is to identify Michael with Jesus in Jude 9, which says, "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" First, the word "dared not" is *τολμάω*, and is defined as "to show boldness or resolution in the face of danger, opposition, or a problem, dare, bring oneself to [do something]" (BDAG). So it means that Michael did not have the boldness to rebuke Satan because of the danger of doing so. It implies that Satan was stronger than Michael. That doesn't fit the character of the Pre-incarnate Son of God at all. It doesn't even fit the character of the *Incarnate* Jesus. Jesus as the God-Man would certainly dare to rebuke Satan, and indeed did so many times while on earth. He rebuked him sharply, saying, "Get behind me, Satan" (Luke 4:8). The idea of not daring to rebuke Satan simply cannot be said of Jesus. Even if one were to point to the humanity of Jesus, He was given all authority over all creation. Second, even if the above was not true, this verse clearly distinguishes between Michael and "the Lord" to whom Michael appeals.

His next argument is that "the whole New Testament theology of redemption favors Christ's casting down Satan... Why would such a strongly Christ-exalting (1:1; 5:5), redemption-centered (1:5; 5:6; 7:14; 12:11) book such as Revelation present an angel performing Christ's great work in defeating our greatest enemy?" (pp. 1019-1020). But that is missing the point that in *all* spiritual warfare, the creaturely warriors (whether angelic or human) must operate in Christ's power, with His Word, and based upon His redemption. But *they* are still said to overcome. Revelation calls ordinary believers to "overcome" (2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21), and it attributes such overcoming to Christ: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony..." (12:11). Certainly it is true that "the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (17:14), but the verse goes on to say that His saints are "with Him." There is nothing demeaning to Christ's redemption for Christ to "grant" creatures His authority. "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (3:21). I suspect that it is Gentry's focus on Christ's legal victory (which is indeed a very important truth) that has kept him from emphasizing that Jesus has chosen not to advance His kingdom apart from the prayers and actions of the saints. For example, Revelation 8 says that there was "silence in heaven" prior to prayer, and though the angels were ready to sound (v. 2), they could not go into battle until the prayers of the saints

ascended (vv. 3-5). But the moment the prayers of the saints were heard, the angels prepared themselves to inflict historical judgments (vv. 56ff).

His next argument is that "on several occasions in Revelation we see Christ appearing under the imagery of an angel (e.g., 10:2; 18:1; 20:1)" (p. 1020). Here are just a few of my reasons why this is not the case (read more [here](#)): First, when Revelation 10:2 says that this angel is "another" angel, it uses the Greek word ἄλλος (another of the same kind) not ἕτερος (another of a different kind). Second, the angel in 10:2 didn't swear by Himself (as God would do), but instead, he "swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer..." (10:6). This clearly distinguishes between the angel and the Creator. Third, since Christ was the Creator of all things, the angel can't be Christ.

Gentry's sixth argument is that the context of Revelation 12 (which alludes to Genesis 3:15) must expect Christ Himself to do the work since it was the woman's seed that would crush the head of the serpent. The problem with this viewpoint is that in this vision John has already identified Jesus with the Man-Child who ascends to His throne in verse 5 and rules the nations with a rod of iron. There are four players in this drama: the woman, the dragon, the Man-Child, and Michael. To make Michael Jesus not only messes with the character development, but does so with absolutely no explanation. It makes no sense. Think of it: Christ is explicitly mentioned all through this chapter as the Man-Child and specifically named as Jesus Christ. He is mentioned in verses 1,2,5,10,11,13, and 17. To be so clear in identifying Christ all the way through as the Man-Child and then to introduce the archangel Michael as being Jesus without explaining that we have moved from Man-Child in verse 5 to to Michael in verse 7 and then back to Man-Child in verse 13 makes absolutely no sense. But if Michael is not Jesus, but is an angel who leads Christ's armies, it makes perfect sense.

Why does this matter? Because Gentry's view on this highlights his failure to understand the genius of spiritual warfare — **that Christ uses weak creatures who appropriate His strength to advance His kingdom at every stage.** Revelation is a war manual that teaches the citizens of Christ's kingdom how to bind demons progressively to the pit over the course of history until no more demons will eventually be left on planet earth. It is only on the last day of history that demons and reprobate humans are unleashed from the pit and allowed to engage in one last attempt to overcome Christ's kingdom — an attempt which will be cut short by God's fiery judgment on the same day that it started — the subject of the next point.

Gentry wrongly believes in a final apostasy (Revelation 20:7-10)

Rev 20:7 Now when the thousand years are finished Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and he will come out to deceive the nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war, whose number is like the sand of the sea. 9 They arose up onto the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the

beloved city. And fire came down out of heaven from God and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the Lake of Fire and brimstone, where the Beast and the False prophet also are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

I appreciate the fact that Gentry is a solid Postmillennialist. He believes that we will see all nations Christianized in the future and that the Gospel will triumph gloriously for a prolonged period of time. But there is one fatal flaw in his variety of Postmillennialism — he believes in a final apostasy: a massive apostasy of humanity that will be so extensive that the number of the reprobate will be "like the sand of the sea" (20:8). While I appreciate his willingness to let the text dictate his eschatology at this point, he has failed to see that the literal Greek does not speak about any apostasy whatsoever. But before I get to that, let me show some of the problems with his interpretation.

First, it contradicts the many Scriptures showing a completely Christianized world at the end of history, not an apostate world (Isa. 2:4; 9:7; 11:9; 66:23; Jer. 31:34; Dan. 2:35; Ps. 37:9-11,22,28,29; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; Rom. 11:12,14,16,25-27; Matt. 5:18; John 1:29; 12:32; 2 Pet. 3:9; Heb. 12:27 with Haggai 2:6-7 – "all nations"; Matt. 6:10; Jer. 31:34; Rom. 5:20-21; Matt. 6:10). Isaiah 9:7 promises "Of the *increase* of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice *from that time forward, even forever*. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." Apostasy contradicts the concept of the non-stop increase of Christ's kingdom.

Second, Revelation 20 requires that Satan's release and deception of nations occur on the last day of history. Thus there is no time available to gather living nations together. But there would be no problem with deceiving the just resurrected nations that have been with him in Hades. Here's proof that verses 7-10 occur on the last day of history just before the elect are resurrected:

- Satan is bound for the full 1000 years (v. 2).
- He cannot deceive nations until the 1000 years is finished (v. 3).
- The saints reign for the same full 1000 years (v. 4). They don't stop their reign any earlier. And there is no evidence from other Scriptures that their reign gets interrupted for a few years. No, they reign for exactly the same duration that Satan is bound. (Since I interpret the "short time" of verse 3 as exactly one hour long based on John 5, this can be taken literally.)
- Once again, verse 6 shows that the saints will reign for the entire thousand years.
- Satan is released when the thousand years is finished (v. 7); that is, he is released at exactly the same time when "the rest of the dead" are released/resurrected (v. 5).

Third, it is clear that the gathering of the nations is the gathering of nations that were in Hades. This is not a gathering together of already existing nations on the earth. Consider the following points:

- Gog and Magog were 100% eradicated in the time of Esther (Ezek. 38:21; 39:4,7,11), and thus God "will not let them profane My holy name anymore" (Ezek. 39:7). If all of Gog and Magog are dead, then v. 7 confirms that the nations deceived by Satan are the unbelieving nations resurrected on the same day Satan was unleashed. See more on Gog and Magog and Esther, [here](#).
- Note that Gog and Magog are "in the four corners of the land (γῆς)" of Israel, where they had previously all been buried (Ezek. 38:21; 39:4,11-20).
- Note that the unbelieving nations "arose up onto the breadth of the earth." The word for "arose up" is the same word used for demons and men arising out of Hades in Rev. 9:2; 11:7; 13:11; 17:8. So when these nations arose up from the earth, where were they? In Hades, which is in the center of the earth. The Greek word ἀναβαίνω refers to motion upwards (BDAG). Ephesians 4:8-9 uses this word when it says:

8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

The word for "He ascended" is used of Christ's soul coming up from Hades. And Paul interprets that word as necessitating that for Jesus to rise up or to ascend must mean that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth. He says that is the implication of the word ἀναβαίνω. Christ's soul was in Hades, and when His body was resurrected, his soul came up onto the earth. Well, exactly the same thing happened to Gog and Magog. Their *bodies* are "in" (Greek = ἐν) the land of Israel (v. 8). But their *souls* are in Hades, where Satan was. So verse 9 describes what happens to their souls when their bodies are resurrected. It uses the same language used of Christ's soul arising when His body was resurrected. It says, "They arose up onto the breadth of the earth/land..."

And it is not just Postmillennialists who see this as being *resurrected* nations. W. Metzger sees these resurrected nations as the nations that had previously fought in chapter 19 *before* the thousand years.^[66] Mathias Rissi says this is the "kingdom... of all the dead in the underworld."^[67] There are Premillennialists like J. Webb Mealy^[68] who have been writing very technical books and articles that prove that verses 7-10 is dealing with the second resurrection that verse 5 anticipates. They have some strong exegesis to back it up.

Fourth, there are two parts to the final resurrection. The non-elect rise first (vv. 7-10 with Matthew 13:24-30,37-43) and surround the living generation of Christians. The elect dead rise next (probably an hour later, John 5:25, 28). Among the elect, the dead elect rise first (1 Thess. 4:16) and the living rise second (1 Thess. 4:16). All of this happens on the "last day" (John 6:39,40,44,54; 11:24; 12:48) and probably within an hour (John 5:25,28).

I can't get into the full exegesis of the passage (I'm more thorough in [my sermon on Revelation 20:7-10](#)), but like B. B. Warfield, I take the final day of history to contain a fully-Christianized world, and it is only *after* the resurrection that Satan tries to get the non-elect to engage in one last battle before they are thrown into the lake of fire. Thus, there is no end to the increase of Christ's kingdom; there is no final apostasy.

Miscellaneous minor differences

Below I will note a few minor differences that I have with Gentry. Because they are not critical, I will not go into the same depth of interacting with him. But this does show that there can be a number of legitimate differences among partial preterist interpreters.

Revelation 11:1-2 — The trampling of the city for 42 months

Rev. 11:1 I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood saying, "Rise and measure the temple (*naos*) of God and the altar, and those who are worshiping there. 2 And leave out the outer court of the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

Gentry says that the outer court here is not literal, but symbolizes the temple system and the rejected Israel while "The inner temple (*naos*) and its worshipers represent the faithful remnant in Israel (Rom. 11:5; Php 3:3), the spiritual, inward seed of Abraham (Rom. 2:29)" (p. 918).

My view (more detail [here](#)) is that:

1. This is a straightforward prophecy of the imminent destruction of the temple and everything explicitly related to the ceremonial law, while sparing the outlying walls and towers that were not directly related to the ceremonial law. This prophecy was about a literal temple doomed to destruction, not to a spiritual temple being protected or built. The only things that were destroyed completely were the things directly related to the ceremonial system — everything in the ναός, the altar, and the people who worshiped there — the priests and the unbelieving Jews. Not one stone was left upon another in the portions measured. But there were stones left upon another in the very outer courts that were not measured — things like the Roman garrison tower, and what is now the wailing wall. Those weren't part of the temple. This passage explicitly excludes them from destruction. So I take both the outer court and the *naos* inner court literally.

2. I believe it is quite clear that it is first century Romans who trampled the temple and city, and that they trampled it for a full forty-two months. There is only one period of time in which the Romans occupied the temple for exactly 42 months, and that is AD 70-74 — the second half of the seven year war. I believe the "forty-two months" and the "one thousand two hundred and

sixty days," while they mathematically both add up to three and a half years, are pointing to two different periods. This is where many partial preterists get it wrong. Daniel divides the war against Jerusalem up into two three and a half year periods, and uses this kind of language to distinguish the two periods. The first of those two periods goes from AD 66-70, and ends with the burning of the temple. The second period goes from AD 70 to January of AD 74, during which time the Romans very literally did occupy Jerusalem and the outer court areas of the temple before they handed it back to Jewish authorities.

3. Since the witnesses prophesied *before* Jerusalem and the temple were trampled (see vv. 4-11), the 1260 days of verse 3 must occur *before* the 42 months of verse 2 (see also Dan. 9:27; 12:7, 11-12).

Given the enormous variety of interpretations on this passage, I can appreciate the difference of opinion. Moses Stuart says of this passage that "The first two verses of this chapter have occasioned much trouble to commentators; and the variety of opinion respecting them is so great, that even to give a tolerably full account of it would occupy many pages."^[69] But the passage can be *easily* solved if we jettison a three-and-a-half-year war and embrace the reality of a seven-year war. Most partial preterists who never consider a seven-year war have to really fudge on the figure of forty two months, and there are more than twenty additional issues that have to be settled before a definitive answer can be given.

Revelation 12:10-12 — The battle in the heavenlies: symbolic vs literal

Gentry sees the battle in the heavenlies as being symbolic (p. 1029) whereas I see it as a literal battle between demons and good angels. This is one of many passages that highlight the importance of spiritual warfare, which involves both humans and angels.

Revelation 13:7 — Timing of the war against the saints in Rev. 13:7

Gentry sees the war against the saints in 13:7 as being from November of AD 64 to June of AD 68, whereas it is clear from the immediate context that it must occur *after* Nero's death (v. 3a) and *after* the death of the entire empire and its subsequent resurrection under Vespasian (v. 3b). Thus, it is my opinion that this refers to the persecution of the saints that [Titus engaged in from AD 70-74](#).

Revelation 13:11-18 — Timing and identity of the beast from the land

Gentry gets the beast from the land correct, but he gets the timing wrong. Thus he sees the two horns on the beast from the land as representing the high priesthood and the temple guard (p. 1092). This again misses the time clues. He recognizes this tension when he says, "But before we go further, I must once more note that John does not present his drama chronologically here,

but thematically. That is, he does not concern himself with the historical order of events" (p. 1094).

However, time sequences are highly important in this book. I give a great deal of evidence internally and externally that this had to have occurred in the *second* half of the war, and the land-beast's head was Herod Agrippa II, and the two horns were Josephus and Yohannan. Once Agrippa was possessed by the demonic beast, "he started to" (literal Greek) enforce what the Jewish Encyclopedia calls "blind submission to the emperor."^[70] He minted coins with the emperor on one side and the goddess of the Romans on the other side and all Jews were forced to wear the coin (with a literal 666) on their right hands or foreheads as a sign of loyalty and to pledge allegiance to the emperor as lord. Josephus justified this by saying, "Our Legislator [referring to God] has forbidden us to laugh at or blaspheme those who are considered gods by others on account of the very name of God given to them" (*Against Apion*, 2.33-34). But it was Yohannan who took the rationalizations of emperor worship to a very sophisticated degree.^[71] Agrippa (the head) together with Josephus and Yohannan were successful in getting Jews to compromise in this idolatry. All of this can be taken very literally.

Revelation 13:13 — The beast performing great miracles

With regard to 13:13, where the beast from the land "performs great miracles, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men," Gentry dismisses the miraculous by saying, "In his narrative, John dramatically presents the land beast (high priest) claiming legitimacy through the continuation of the original, divinely-ordained altar fire" (p. 1128). Wait! That altar had already been destroyed (11:1-6). Second, continuing the sacrifices is a far cry from a *miracle* of fire coming down from heaven to earth in the sight of men! I give internal and external evidence to show that the leaders of the new Judaism did indeed perform amazing miracles to convince both Rome and Jews that they were "true prophets," and this was part of the demonic process of ensuring that the new Talmudic Judaism of Yohannan would continue. There was a very literal calling down of fire from heaven.

Revelation 13:15 — The image of the beast speaking

Concerning the image of the beast *speaking* (13:15), Gentry says, "Revelation *dramatically presents the temple itself as the image of the beast*" (p. 1133), whereas I demonstrate that this was yet another **historically documented miracle**: the statue Agrippa made was literally made to speak (no doubt by demonic power).

Revelation 13:18 (cf. 14:11; 16:2) — The mark of the beast

Gentry sees the mark of the beast as being phylacteries (p. 1139ff), whereas I document that the Jews had to literally have the mark of the beast (666) on their bodies.

Revelation 17:14-18 — The connection of the great city with the goddess Roma

While Gentry correctly sees the great city that rules over the kings of the earth as being Jerusalem, and while there is an element of truth that she represents "Jerusalem's dominance over the religious authorities of the Land" (p. 1362), there is more to the image than that. My question is — how do we explain the fact that the Roman coins that display the goddess Roma sitting on the seven hills were clearly understood by first century Romans as being the patron goddess Roma ruling over the seven hills of the capitol of Rome? The imagery in Revelation 17 seems to be a clear reference to that well-known image.



Gentry rightly points out that there is indeed a Jewish connection, but many commentaries give abundant evidence that there is also a connection to the goddess Roma sitting on the seven hills of Rome. [In my sermons](#) I give numerous proofs that the harlot was a symbol for the leadership of Jerusalem. So the shocking message is that the goddess Roma was controlling the Sadducees and the Sadducees were controlling Rome. And it is this occult connection and Israel's controlling influence over Rome's leadership that needs to be clarified. The history of how Jewish leaders managed to control Rome is a fascinating history.^[72] Though Gentry does not

see the Sadducees as having previously engaged in literal idolatry (the Roma connection), [new archaeological evidence shows that they did](#). This is not so much a strong disagreement as it is an important clarification.

Revelation 19:11-16 — The white horse

In Gentry's comments on Revelation 19:11-16, he sees Christ's white horse as making war against Jerusalem in AD 66-70 (pp. 1485f). [I give evidence](#) that this is describing Christ advancing His kingdom to the ends of the earth.

While other differences could be highlighted, these should be sufficient to show the degree to which the true structure of the book and strict adherence to the book's timing clues can influence one's interpretation.

Final Evaluation

While I have documented problems with this commentary, I still recommend people purchase it. Why is that? I recommend it because I believe that Gentry makes some major advancements to Revelation studies in his research on the book. If it is read with discernment, there is much that can be gleaned from it. Neither Gentry nor I have the final word on the amazing book of Revelation, and I welcome exegetical challenges to my own conclusions. We are both seeking to stimulate further deep thinking on this amazing part of Scripture. I will reiterate that we are still in the infancy of Revelation studies and the more we can challenge each other as "iron sharpening iron" (Prov. 27:17), the more advancements we will see in our understanding of this book.

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1. My sermons on Revelation at revelation.biblicalblueprints.com outline many of the contributions that each school of eschatology has made to Revelation studies. We do need to learn from each other. I have found Idealists often do a great job of making applications to Christians in all ages. Historicist and Futurist approaches to revelation tend to take the textual clues to linear sequence in the seals and trumpets much more seriously than Gentry does. And there are many other ways in which we can learn from scholars from other eschatological persuasions. ←
 2. Partial Preterism simply means some Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled while others are not yet fulfilled. Full Preterism means all prophecies have been completely fulfilled (including Christ's Second Coming, the final resurrection, and the Last Judgment), which is heretical. Gentry and I are both partial preterists on the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25) and on the book of Revelation, believing many (but not all) of those passages' prophecies were fulfilled in the first or second centuries AD. Historicists believe they are fulfilled by events in church history (e.g. the Papacy is the harlot). Futurists believe they will be fulfilled by future events. Idealists believe Revelation is not speaking of specific historical events at all. ←

3. For example, Gentry in one place claims that Revelation is apocalyptic literature and that parts of it represent "a Jewish midrashic style (in vv 5-7,11), as at Qumran, and shows 'a pervasive use of Jewish sources, especially apocalyptic ones' (DLNTD 612)" (p. 441). He thus shows dependence on 2 Baruch, 1 Enoch, 3 Enoch, Testament of Job (p. 462), 4 Ezra (p. 854), Sibylline Oracles (p. 882). In another place he approvingly quotes Smalley, saying, "This is not an uncommon 'apocalyptic motif' (Smalley 130; see 2 Esd. 5:13; 1 En 90:41; 2 En. 1:3; 3 Apoc. Bar. 2:10)" (p. 585). ↩
4. On his general structure, all four major sections; on my structure all seven major sections. See below on my structure and why it is a critical interpretive clue to Revelation. ↩
5. On Revelation 1:1, Gentry rightly points out that the Greek word *seimaino*, "which occurs three times in John's Gospel (Jn 12:33; 18:32; 21:9) and once in Revelation (1:1)" are clearly an indication that he was communicating with symbols. Likewise, the Greek word *deixai* ("to show") is a word "suggesting the idea of 'symbolic portrayal' (Mounce 42). Thus Revelation involves... figurative representation' (Hort 6). This is confirmed by John's next verse where he mentions 'all that he saw' (1:2): Revelation is a book of visions symbolizing historical events and theological truths." (p. 240). ↩
6. On page 868 he admits that John is commissioned to prophesy against nations, but that commission does not seem to be realized very well in his commentary since Gentry sees most of the book as revolving around the judgment of Israel. Throughout the commentary Gentry insists that "Jerusalem always remains at the center of his attention and is the very point of his writing" (p. cvii). I disagree, and will document that Revelation also brings covenant lawsuits against Rome and other Gentile nations. It thus has abiding relevance to the judgments we see all through covenant history in other nations. ↩
7. Many commentaries could be cited who point to the ancient origins of this interpretation and its continuing followers. Robinson says, "The traditional view, so far as there is one, of this sealed book is, that it represents the Old Testament." J. Armitage Robinson, "Preface by the General Editor," in *The Revelation of S. John the Divine, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 78. This is the view of O. Piper, "The Apocalypse of John and the Liturgy of the Ancient Church," *Church History* 20 (1951), 13-15; L. Mowry, "Revelation 4-5 and Early Christian Liturgical Usage," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1952), 82-83; M. H. Shepherd, *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse* (Richmond: John Knox, 1960), 88; H. B. Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1914, 123. Prigent, Harrington, and others could be cited. ↩
8. Origen said, "And a sign that she has received the bill of divorcement is this, that Jerusalem was destroyed along with what they called the sanctuary of the things in it which were believed to be holy, and with the altar of burnt offerings, and all the worship associated with it." Origen, "Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew," Allan Menzies, trans. John Patrick, vol. 9, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1897), 507. ↩
9. His thesis is nicely captured in the title, *The Divorce of Israel*. ↩
10. Revelation has a lot to say about God's claim on/God's lordship over "the nations" (2:26; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9,18; 12:5; 14:8; 15:4; 16:19; 17:15; 18:3,23; 19:15; 20:3,8; 21:24,26; 22:2), "all nations" (7:9; 12:5; 14:8; 15:4; 18:3), "the cities of the nations" (16:19), Gentiles" (11:2), "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (5:9; 13:7; 14:6), the "great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" (7:9), "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues" (17:5), "the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations" (11:9), etc. Even John's *commission* demonstrates this as John was called to "prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings" (10:11). ↩
11. For example, Alistair I. Wilson believes this. He says, "The statement that Jesus left the temple forms a conclusion to the temple scenes begun at the beginning of chapter 21 and running right through chapters 22 and 23, thus also forming a link between chapters 21-23 and the eschatological discourse

- of chapters 24–25. Besides being a statement of historical fact, the action is symbolic of Jesus' abandoning the temple. The account recalls Ezekiel's vision of the departure of the glory of God from the temple (Ezek. 10:18–19), particularly when the link is made with the Mount of Olives in verse 3 (cf. Ezek. 11:22–23)." Alistair I. Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen?: A Study of Jesus as Judge in Matthew 21–25* (Milton Keynes; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 135. ↩
12. This is a very common viewpoint. Fruchtenbaum says, "In verse 10, the content of this scroll he is to eat or assimilate is essentially his prophecies, the Book of Ezekiel." Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Bible Study Collection*, vol. 152 (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1983), 16. Dyer says, "Many interpretations of why the scroll was written on both sides have been given, but the best explanation seems to be that God had much that He wanted Ezekiel to communicate to Israel." Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1230. Quotes could be multiplied. ↩
 13. Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 320–321. ↩
 14. Actually, this is not true. See [here](#) for the intricately structured covenant lawsuit in the book of John. John's love for chiasms and other interwoven structural themes is richly evident in this Gospel. ↩
 15. While there are three spirals, the chiastic structure of the book of 1 John is *the* dominant structuring feature (as has been noted by J. C. Thomas, Daniel Aiken, and others), with additional sophisticated structures interweaving through the chiasm. For my detailed explanation of the chiastic structure, see my sermon on [1 John](#). ↩
 16. For example, he says, "Though the seven trumpets will soon begin blasting, this does not require successive chronological development so that the trumpet judgments follow after the seal judgments are completed" (p. 735). He approvingly quotes Mounce, who says, "While there is a rather clear discernible *literary* development [between the seals, trumpets, and bowls], it is not to represent a corresponding *chronological* development" (p. 749). He states that the seals and trumpets essentially point to the same historical realities (p. 750). ↩
 17. For example, on the statement in 9:12 that "The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things," Gentry says, "John's statement that 'the first woe is past' is not a statement about his historical circumstances as he writes, but about the progress in the visionary narrative" (p. 804).
↩
 18. Notice especially the quotes from Josephus that he sees as being a possible fulfillment for the details in chapters 6 through 14. The chronological dates in Josephus do not always fit a chronological pattern in the commentary. In my sermon series they do. ↩
 19. For example, the enormous number of cavalry in 9:16, or the fulfillment of 9:20–21 (of which he says, "This is one of the most difficult statements for the Israel-Jerusalem thesis" [p. 829]), or the presence of sodomy in Jerusalem (p. 830), or the worship of idols (p. 830), or the tenth of the city falling (p. 967), and a bunch of other prophecies for which my website has found solid historical evidence. ↩
 20. Many examples could be given, but consider the following: On Rev. 16:6 ("You have given them blood to drink"), Gentry says, "We should remember that this is hyperbolic drama. We should not expect that anyone is literally going to drink blood" (p. 1204). Likewise he denies that the sea coagulated into blood, that the rivers and streams were literally full of blood. But at the Bar Kochba Rebellion, those things literally happened. See the evidence here: [Bowls 1-3 - The End of Israel](#). When Rev. 16:12 speaks of the great Euphrates river being completely dried up, Gentry's explanation is that "the drying of the waters can poetically express God's wrath upon a people..." and "is symbolically portraying the ease with which the marauding armies from outside the Land flowed into Israel" (p. 1224). But for solid evidence of a literal fulfillment, see [Bowl 6 - Armageddon](#). When Revelation 16:18–20 speaks of an earthquake greater than any before or since, Gentry dismisses it as "hyperbolic

description" (p. 1239). But consider the scientific evidence I highlight in this sermon that shows it to be literal: [Bowl 7 - Where Judgment Began](#). Many other examples could be given of a needless dismissal of a literal interpretation. I would hasten to say that Gentry often gets the symbolic lessons correct even if he misses the historical reality of the symbol. ↵

21. The context is dealing with Rev. 12:13-17. Gentry says, "Before moving on, I must note a chronological difficulty confronting the preterist interpretation here. A seriatim reading of Revelation suggests that the Roman persecution anticipated in 12:17 (cf. 13:7) occurred *after* the outbreak of the Jewish War which formally began in Spring of AD 67. Yet the Neronian persecution historically began before the Jewish War, erupting at Rome in late AD. [sic] Such dischronology is common in biblical revelation. John focuses first on Jerusalem's judgment because that is his main theme and because Israel's opposition to Christianity began before (and even caused) the Roman persecution (Ac 4:1-3, 29; 5:17-18, 33, 40-41; 6:9-12). I will deal with this problem more fully in my exposition of Revelation 13." (p. 1041) ↵
22. Revelation 1:9 indicates that the tribulation (τῇ θλίψει) had already begun when John wrote the book and John shared (κοινωνῶς) this experience of tribulation and endurance with the first century churches (v. 9a). This is one of several hints that we must distinguish between 1) general persecution/tribulation (Jn, 16:33; Acts 11:19; 14:22; 20:23; Rom. 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; 1 Cor. 7:28; 2 Cor. 1:4; 1:8; 2:4; 4:17; 6:4; 7:4; 8:2; Eph. 3:13; Phil. 1:16; 4:14; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess. 1:6; 3:3; 3:7; 2 Thess. 1:4; Heb 10:33), 2) "the tribulation" or "the great tribulation" that Christians would experience (Matt. 24:9-12, 21-29; Rev. 1:9; 2:22; Rev. 7:14), and 3) the great wrath of God against the Jews (Matt. 3:7; Luke 21:21-22; Rom. 9:22; 1 Thess. 2:16; Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 12:12; 14:8-10; 14:19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 18:3; 19:15). Christians would never have to face God's wrathful judgment (1 Thess. 1:10; Rom. 5:9; Matt. 3:7; Rom. 2:5-8; 1 Thess. 5:9). ↵
23. For example, Gentry says, "But before I go further, I must once more note that John does not present his drama chronologically here, but thematically. That is, he does not concern himself with the historical order of events." (p. 1094). When commenting on 13:12c, which speaks of the beast "whose fatal wound was healed," Gentry says, "It identifies *who* the beast is in John's drama (after all, there are two beasts), but it does not inform us *when* the following action occurs" (p. 1122). Though 14:8 says that Babylon has already fallen, Gentry softens it by saying, "Not only is her doom assured in this statement, but 'Babylon's introduction as 'Fallen, fallen' signals Babylon's *impending* doom through a formulaic dirge or lament..." (p. 1173, emphasis mine). Other examples can be found elsewhere in this review. ↵
24. For example, he says, "I have already noted that John's reference to the two witnesses' prophesying 'for twelve hundred and sixty days' (11:3) apparently covers the same period of forty-two months' during which the Gentiles trample the holy city (11:2)..." (p. 935). On the next page he says, "But Keener (292-93) is probably correct in suggesting that the forty-two month period highlights the beast's time whereas the 1260 days pictures God's people's time. In 11:2, the Gentiles (the Roman beast) trample Jerusalem for forty-two months; in 13:5, the beast acts against God for the same period. But in 11:3, Christ's two prophets operate unscathed for 1260 days, and in 12:6, God nourishes the saints in the wilderness for this period" (p. 936). ↵
25. As some examples, his fulfillment of the fifth and sixth trumpets occurs before trumpets one through three. ↵
26. See Rev. 11:18; 14:8; 16:19; 18:3; 19:15. It's not just Babylon (Jerusalem) that fell. "The cities of the nations fell" (16:19) and "all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (18:3), and a sharp sword was given to Christ so that "He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." ↵

27. For example, after quoting Revelation 4:1 ("After these things, I looked, and behold...") Gentry says, "The phrase *meta tauta*, with a verb of seeing occurs here and in 7:9; 15:5; 18:1. As Osborne (223) notes, 'the movement is rhetorical rather than temporal.' That is, this phraseology indicates the occurrence of the visions, not the events themselves" (p. 513). At 7:1 he says, "His statement **after this I saw** (7:1a) speaks of the order of the revelatory *visions*, not the historical events" (p. 688). At 7:9 he says much the same: "*Meta tauta* does not necessarily speak of chronological progress in the action, but can indicate the order in which John received the visions..." (p. 719), though he then admits "We see this phrase in contexts that *obviously* speak of progress (1:19; 9:12; 20:3) and those that probably do (18:1 [cp. 17:16] and 19:1 [cp. 18:19-24])" (p. 719). But what makes the latter examples indicators of historical progress and not the former? I believe it is his theory that is driving the exegesis rather than the exegesis driving what the theory should be. ↩
28. As some examples, his fulfillment of the fifth and sixth trumpets occurs before trumpets one through three. Likewise bowl six (the gathering of armies) occurs before bowls 1-5 (the result of that gathering). ↩
29. See his comments concerning hyperbole on pages 812-813, 852, 983, 1100, 1124, 1185, 1204, 1239-1240, 1242, 1432, 1515, etc. ↩
30. For example, Beale says, "The bowls go back in time and explain in greater detail the woes throughout the age..." G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, vol. 166, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 200. Sproul says that the "symbolic personages are introduced into the drama one by one, and their destinies are revealed in the reverse order." R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version* (2015 Edition) (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015), 2296. Beale and Campbell say, "The bowls go back in time and explain in greater detail the woes throughout the age..." G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 328. Osborne says, "The reversal of the order is deliberate and adds emphasis to both aspects." Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse*, *Osborne New Testament Commentaries* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 267. Many other commentators have noted the same thing, with many explicitly tying it to timing. ↩ ↩
31. Gentry must do this since he ends chapter 15 in AD 70 rather than the Bar Kochba Rebellion. ↩
32. See [Introduction to the Seven Bowls](#) for a detailed analysis of the language showing linear progress forward to chapter 16 and then a dozen indicators that the visions are moving backwards in historical sequence. ↩
33. Proleptically: The representation of a future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished in anticipation of its fulfillment or occurrence in the future. ↩
34. He says that this is because "Daniel draws on imagery based on the future, literal resurrection of the body and applies it symbolically to portray the deliverance of many Jews from within the 'body' of Israel that would perish in the great tribulation" (p. 857). "Thus, Daniel 12 does not directly teach individual, bodily resurrection. Nevertheless, the fact that it uses such language shows that a literal bodily resurrection lay behind the image, and so it indirectly affirms the future bodily resurrection" (p. 856, footnote 14). ↩
35. Gentry correctly notes, "Historically, we should remember that the two witnesses' resurrection takes place very near the final collapse of the temple" (p. 963). ↩
36. In contrast, Gentry says, "This does not require a physical resurrection but most likely represents a spiritual gathering into the church (which involves a *spiritual* resurrection, cp. Jn 5:24-26)" (p. 1182). ↩
37. The summary of his position is, "If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain *psuchai ezesan* at the first, and the rest of the *nekroi ezesan* only at the end of a specified period after that first, — if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual

rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; — then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain: but if the second is literal, then so is the first." Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968 [1958]), IV:732–33. ↵

38. Examples: Philip E. Hughes, "The First Resurrection: Another Interpretation," *WTJ* 39 (Spring 1977): 315–18; Samuel E. Waldron in his book, *The End Times Made Simple: How Could Everyone Be So Wrong About Biblical Prophecy?* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 2003). Though Gentry admits that Christ being "the firstborn from the dead" was a literal resurrection (p. 261, 589), he says that the word "first" is "emphasizing priority in rank and favor rather than precedence in time" (p. 258). His explanation is that "though this authority is legally bestowed at Christ's exaltation (the complex of events including his resurrection, ascension, and session), it is historically demonstrated in the conquering of his first enemy, Israel, in the destruction of the temple in AD 70" (p. 592; cf. 977). On my view, Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits part of the first resurrection. ↵
39. John 5:25-29 says, "25 Most assuredly, I say to you, *the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.* 26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27 and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this; *for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*" ↵
40. Ignatius, Irenaeus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Clement of Alexandria, Hillary of Potiers, Remigius, and other early church fathers spoke of a massive first century resurrection and yet looked forward to their own resurrection. For a detailed exposition of this, see [Barley Harvest](#) on the Barley Harvest and [The Two Resurrections](#) on the two resurrections. ↵
41. But they fail to explain how a future resurrection can be "first" when Christ is explicitly said to be the first to rise from the dead with a resurrection body. ↵
42. Norman Shepherd, "The Resurrections of Revelation 20," *WTJ* 20 (Fall 1974): 34–43. ↵
43. James Hughes, "Revelation 20:4–6 and the Question of the Millennium," *WTJ* 35 (1973): 281–302; Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 223–38. ↵
44. This was the classic view of Augustine and many older Amillennialists. For example, Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, vol. 3 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853) 698. For a newer example, see Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 281. ↵
45. Gentry says, "We should probably not understand this episode as an actual public, visible, bodily resurrection. Rather it is reminiscent of Ezekiel 37, which speaks of the revival of Israel after her Babylonian judgment... They would therefore picture Christianity's 'resurrection' as the true, living new covenant Israel from out of the false, dead, old covenant Israel..." (p. 962). "This does not require a physical resurrection but most likely represents a spiritual gathering into the church (which involves a *spiritual* resurrection, cp. Jn 5:24-26)" (p. 1182). ↵
46. Kline, Meredith G. "THE FIRST RESURRECTION." *Westminster Theological Journal* 1975, Vol. 37 (3), pp: 366–375; Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, vol. 20, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 540. ↵
47. His footnote 84 says, "Many modern non-literalist commentators deny the Augustinian (regeneration) view, e.g., Swete 266; Caird 252-54; Summers 204-5; Morris 230; Metzger 93; Kistemaker 537-39; Johnson 2001: 293; Poythress 180-81." ↵
48. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003). N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York:

HarperOne, 2008). Wright shows how the ancients (whether pagan, Jewish, or Christian) all used the term for resurrection to refer to a bodily resurrection after a long period of being dead. Here are some sample summary statements of his research: "Here there is no difference between pagans, Jews and Christians. They all understood the Greek word *anastasis* and its cognates, and the other related terms we shall meet, to mean ... new life *after* a period of being dead. Pagans denied this possibility; some Jews affirmed it as a long-term future hope; virtually all Christians claimed that it had happened to Jesus and would happen to them in the future." *Resurrection of the Son* p. 31. "'Resurrection' denoted a new embodied life which would follow whatever 'life after death' there might be. 'Resurrection' was, by definition, not the existence into which someone might (or might not) go immediately upon death; it was not a disembodied 'heavenly' life; it was a further stage, out beyond all that. It was not a redescription or redefinition of death. It was death's reversal." *Ibid.*, p. 83. Resurrection was a way of "speaking of a new life after 'life after death' in the popular sense, a fresh living embodiment following a period of death-as-a-state." *Ibid*, p. 31. ↵

49. The complete listing of occurrences of this word in the Majority Text are Rev. 1:17; 2:4; 2:5; 2:8; 2:19; 4:1; 4:7; 8:7; 13:12; 16:2; 20:5; 20:6; 21:1; 21:4; 21:19; 22:13. It might be thought that "First and the Last" is an exception, but if "first" is taken as primary or first in quality, then in what way would Jesus be "Last"? Would it not be the antithesis of primary (i.e., least)? That makes no sense. However, if instead John is using the first and last letters of the alphabet as a merism, then the expression makes perfect sense. Beale says, "These divine titles are figures of speech (merisms) in which the figurative point is to mention the opposite poles of something in order to emphasize the totality of all that lies between. The use of the first and last letters of the alphabet was typical of the ancients in expressing merisms. So Jews could say that the law should be kept 'from aleph to tau.' That God is the beginning and end of history means that he rules over all events in between." G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1055. ↵
50. Daniel 12 explicitly ties a massive resurrection together with the tribulation in AD 70, saying, "1 At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." ↵
51. The phrase "the resurrection of the just" may imply a different resurrection that includes the unjust. ↵
52. That is, 1) Christ the firstfruits with the rest of the harvest being at His coming, 2) "the end" when the last enemy death is conquered. ↵
53. This passage speaks of a resurrection "about to happen" (ἀνάστασιν μέλλειν ἔσεσθαι νεκρῶν). While it is certainly possible that μέλλω could mean certainty rather than imminency, it is a historical fact that many Pharisees had an expectation of a Messiah, a resurrection, and a kingdom that they believed would all happen at the same time and which they thought would be imminent. So the "about to" meaning of μέλλω is contextually possible. Though the majority of scholars argue that imminent apocalyptic expectations within Judaism were limited to the pseudepigraphal writers and the Essenes, some recent scholars are beginning to connect imminent apocalypticism (including the resurrection) to the writings of at least some Pharisees. See for example, Walter F. Taylor Jr., *Paul: Apostle to the Nations: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 55. As one example, see the Pharisaical writing, Shemoneh Esreh, which says in Benediction 14: "And to Jerusalem, thy city, return in mercy, and dwell therein as thou hast spoken; rebuild it soon in our days as an everlasting

building, and speedily set up therein the throne of David. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who rebuildest Jerusalem." as translated by C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* p.163. Because the Pharisees tied the coming of Messiah, His kingdom, the exaltation of Jerusalem, the renewal of the earth, and the resurrection together, references to imminence on any one of these kingdom issues hints at imminence on the others. John Cooper summarizes the evidence saying, "The Pharisees awaited the coming Messiah, who would effect a resurrection of the dead and initiate his kingdom." John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 89. This fits my own reading of the quotes of R. Akiba, Simeon b. Koseba, Rabbi Simeon b. Johai, and others. See discussions in Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), pp. 29ff; etc. There is more and more evidence that there was an expectation of an imminent resurrection and restoration of the kingdom to Israel. So though others are certainly within their translational rights to make the resurrection a certainty instead of something about to happen, historical context makes "about to" more likely in this case. ↵

54. Paul's hope in Phil. 3:11 that he can be a part of the resurrection is in contrast to his certainty that all will be raised at some point (1 Cor. 15). The point of "if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" may then indicate that he hopes he will die before the first resurrection and not have to wait till the end of history. Zerwick and Grosvenor are two of many grammarians who point out that "εἴ πως" is a form of grammar "indicating that what it modifies may not happen (cf. Acts 27:12; Rom. 1:10; 11:14)." Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 599. Thus many commentators (going all the way back to Chrysostom) have pointed out that the words "εἴ πως" must have some element of uncertainty or doubt in Philippians 3:11. But they wrestle with this conclusion since the words modify a clause ("that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead") that Paul elsewhere expresses absolute certainty about (1 Cor. 15; Rom. 6:5; etc.). Arminian commentaries have used this passage to disprove the perseverance of the saints, but many have cogently responded that this would contradict Paul's statements elsewhere of confidence in his own perseverance (2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18; etc.). So some have proposed that Paul is being modest, or is uncertain about what kind of death he will face, or they insert some other kind of uncertainty. None of these interpretations take the grammar seriously. Reformed commentator Moisés Silva interacts with various ways people have tried to get around "the apparent tentativeness of Paul's language" and seeks to show how each explanation is inadequate to deal with the various features of the passage. See Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 165–167. Others who have shown the problems with denying this uncertainty include Otto, R. E. "If Possible I May Obtain Resurrection from the Dead (Phil. 3.11)." *CBQ* 57 (1995): 324–40. Gramacki is probably close to the truth when he says, "Paul did not doubt the reality of Christ's return, the translation of living saints, or the resurrection of the dead. The conditional character of the verse thus points to the uncertainty as to whether he would be alive or dead in that day. Since the return of Christ was imminent, Paul wanted to be spiritually ready at all times. He wanted to be praised before the Savior, not ashamed (Matt. 24:44–47; 1 John 2:28)." Robert Gromacki, *Stand United in Joy: An Exposition of Philippians, The Gromacki Expository Series* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 153. Obviously Gromacki (as a Futurist) does not recognize a first century resurrection (only an imminent Second Coming and resurrection). However, if the first resurrection culminated in AD 70 and the second resurrection will be at the end of history, then in a very real sense Paul could be uncertain whether he would live past the AD 70 resurrection or attain to it. ↵
55. Verse 27 says, "For the Son of Man is about to [that's the Greek word μέλλω] come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." Rewarding each

according to his works is connected often with the resurrection in the Bible. And lest you think that can't possibly be a reference to AD 70, He goes on to clarify what He means in the very next verse by saying that this judgment is indeed about to happen. He says in verse 28: "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." ↵

56. To quote Bahnsen at length, "If the book of revelation is this difficult to interpret and understand, why should it be studied at all? John supplies the answer to this question in the first three verses of the book itself. Indeed, the very first word of chapter 1 describes the book as *Apokalupsis*, "An unveiling" or "A revelation." Instead of obscuring and covering over the truth, the book of Revelation uncovers and discloses the truth to God's servants (Rev. 1:1). In the nature of the case the book of Revelation was intended to provide insight, not confusion and ignorance. In secular authors the *apokalupsis* - related words pertain to making something known (e.g., Plato) or rendering it bare and naked (e.g., Plutarch). The sense of the word in Biblical usage can be discerned from a survey of the Septuagint, where it can mean "to open" (Gen. 8:13), "to expose" (Micah 1:6), "to uncover nakedness" (Ex. 20:26; cf. the euphemistic nominal form in I Kings-I Samuel 20:30), "to remove a veil" (Isa. 47:2), or "to disclose secrets" (Prov. 11:13; cf. apocryphal Sirac 22:22; 41:23). *Apokalupsis* brings things out into the open to be known. If nothing else, then, the first word of the book of Revelation indicates that whatever excuse may have previously stood in the way of understanding certain divine truths has now been decisively removed. What Revelation communicates can no longer, just because of the "revelation" (*apokalupsis*), be deemed a secret. It is now uncovered and naked, open for all to see and know. The truth is out!" Bahnsen then continues to give extensive treatment of the term in the New Testament to demonstrate that when the term was used, it was used to show that what was written was intended to be perspicuous. Dr. Greg Bahnsen, "Hermeneutics in the Book of Revelation," unpublished paper given to me by the author, p. 4. ↵
57. Bahnsen, *Ibid.*, p. 5. ↵
58. As one example, related to the first resurrection passage in Revelation 11, Gentry says, "Before engaging this section, the reader should understand that we are entering a part of Revelation that is 'universally recognized' (Mounce 211) as perhaps the most difficult portion of the book" (p. 9191). He quotes others as saying, "the most difficult...most enigmatic... most perplexing... most abstruse... most obscure... notoriously difficult... extraordinarily difficult... insuperable difficulties... enormous difficulties... resists all attempts at explanation" (p. 920). He continues by saying, "I myself confess that I am the least confident in the *historical particulars* of my exposition below than I am of any other portion of Revelation, though I believe that the *general point* of the passage is tolerably clear and perfectly fitted within the theme and flow of the book" (p. 919-920). In contrast, if the reader will examine the exegesis of the first resurrection passages on my Revelation website, he will see that seeing a literal resurrection of bodies from the graves in AD 70 and a second resurrection at the end of history, makes eminent sense and simplifies the interpretation of many other sections of the book. It is the most natural reading of the text. And interestingly, there is documentation from the first century of people seeing a resurrection of bodies. ↵
59. After giving numerous quotes from authors on how bewildering the book as a whole is (pp. 1-5), Gentry asks, "How shall we approach such a bewildering and abused work? Despite the enormous difficulties facing us, the task is not impossible." True, Gentry has greatly opened up a number of passages, but here and there he speaks of passages being very difficult to understand. ↵
60. Bahnsen, *Ibid.*, p. 6, emphasis mine. ↵
61. Virtually every sermon at my Revelation website shows the practical application for daily living and for advancing Christ's kingdom in our evil age, but for a very brief introduction to some of the

spiritual warfare principles, see the two sermons at [Revelation as a Spiritual War Manual, Part 1](#) and at [Revelation as a Spiritual War Manual, Part 2](#). ↵

62. For more on the 144,000, see my sermons [God's Incredible Protection](#) and [Christ's Shock Troops For Missions](#). ↵
63. The Regulative Principle of Government (the dominant Reformed view of civics and ecclesiology in history), says that the state and church may only do what God has explicitly authorized them to do in the Scriptures. The further that church and state drift from this anchoring principle, the more they begin to look like the beast from the sea and the beast from the land. Revelation declares Christ to be the "ruler over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5) and the "Lord of lords and the King of kings" (17:14; 19:16). If Christ is the King (1 Tim. 6:15) and the only Lawgiver (James 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17), that fact demands that civil magistrates neither add to nor subtract from His statutes (Deut. 5:32) and be subject themselves to all His statutes, not turning "aside from the commandment to the right or to the left" (Deut. 17:19-20). This is sometimes summarized as Lex Rex (the law is king). Of course, since the church is also limited by the Regulative Principle of Government (see Rev. 2-3), it *too* must be careful not to impinge upon the liberties of individuals or families. ↵
64. For example, Calvin, Lightfoot, Gill, Matthew Henry, Bullinger, Kovacs, Glasgow, Scott, Russell, Hengstenberg, Terry, Clark, Milligan, and Carrington. ↵
65. Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Daniel*, vol. 2 (London: Blackie & Son, 1853), 199. ↵
66. W. Metzger, "Das Zwischenreich," in M. Loeser (Hg.), *Auf dem Grunde der Apostel und Propheten*. Festschrift Theophil Wurm, 1948, 100-118. Using Google Translate. ↵
67. Mathias Rissi, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19:11-22:15* (Scm-Canterbury Press, 1972). ↵
68. J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20* (JSOT Press, 1992); J. Webb Mealy, *The End of the Unrepentant* (Wipf and Stock, 2012). ↵
69. Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, vol. 2 (Andover; New York: Allen, Morrill and Wardwell; M. H. Newman, 1845), 213. ↵
70. The Jewish Encyclopedia says of Agrippa II, "When the final struggle broke out he saw safety and salvation for his people only in blind submission to the emperor, and employed his brilliant eloquence to warn the inflamed leaders against extremes, and counseled the return, so far as possible, to calmness and deliberation... But the people hated him for his arbitrary treatment of the high-priesthood, and for the adoption of the heathen emblems on his coins."
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/913-agrippa-ii> ↵
71. Ibid. ↵
72. Several of my sermons delve into this, but the comments on 17:14-18 can be found here: [Conspirators Are Not Invincible](#). ↵