

# God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #29 (Pt. 17)

1 Corinthians 15:26

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This Lord's Day I would like to continue our study of Full Preterism by considering the most detailed passage that the Holy Spirit has left us on the subject of the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15). In the previous sermon (from Acts 1:9-11), it was noted that the interpretive world for the Preterist hinges upon the **TIMING** of the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. In other words, what is of supreme importance to the Full Preterist is **WHEN** the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead should occur, and having fixed and settled **WHEN** these prophesied events should happen (namely, by 70 a.d. according to the Full Preterist), he then defines the **NATURE** of these prophesied events as to **WHAT** they are to consist of. This interpretive principle of Full Preterists in allowing the **TIMING** to define the **NATURE**, or the **WHEN** to define the **WHAT**, is even acknowledged by Full Preterists themselves as we see in the following citation by a Full Preterist.

Time defines nature. Since the resurrection event must have happened then [i.e. in 70 a.d.—GLP], and since it didn't occur in the physically literal manner that we have expected, we are forced to reinterpret the nature of fulfillment as defined by the creeds (Ed Stevens, *Questions About the Afterlife*, p. 51).

I submit that this overarching and all-defining interpretive principle has led Full Preterists to deny such cardinal truths as Christ's bodily and visible second coming and the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust. Of course the Full Preterist would not say that he is denying either the second coming of Christ or the resurrection of the dead (but is merely reinterpreting these prophesied events), but dear ones, one may profess

to believe in God, in Christ, in the second coming of Christ, or in the resurrection of the dead, but by his re-interpretation of who God is, who Christ is, what the second coming of Christ is, or what the resurrection of the dead is, he may yet deny these essential doctrines of the faith. Just as Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons are highly offended when we must tell them that they deny Christ by their heretical re-definition of who Christ is, so Full Preterists would no doubt be highly offended when we must likewise tell them that they deny the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead by their heretical re-definition of what these events are.

In today's sermon, I will not make much progress in explicitly expounding 1 Corinthians 15 as much as laying a foundation for an accurate understanding of 1 Corinthians 15 which we will consider in the next sermon. I hope to demonstrate from our study of 1 Corinthians 15 that when one accurately interprets (in context) the **NATURE** of the resurrection of the dead, Full Preterism is revealed to be a heretical interpretive system that evacuates the Gospel of Jesus Christ of a full and accomplished redemption for all of God's elect from sin and its penalty. Thus, our goal is to answer this question from 1 Corinthians 15: What is the Nature of the Resurrection from the Dead? But in order to get to that goal, we must first answer a couple of preliminary questions in this sermon that must necessarily precede our further consideration of 1 Corinthians 15: (1) Is Physical Death a Penalty For Sin? (2) Did Christ Redeem the Material Bodies As Well As the Immaterial Souls of His Elect?

## **1. Is Physical Death a Penalty For Sin?**

A. The reason why this is such an important question is because **IF** physical death is a penalty or curse for sin (as I believe is taught in Scripture), and **IF** Christ has redeemed us from the full penalty and curse

of sin by becoming a curse for us (Galatians 3:13), **THEN** He necessarily redeemed our material bodies from the curse of physical death (just as He redeemed our immaterial souls from the curse of spiritual death and our souls and bodies from the curse of eternal death in hell). And as a result of Christ's full redemption of both our souls and our bodies, our immaterial souls are then not only spiritually resurrected by the death and bodily resurrection of Christ (Ephesians 2:5; Colossians 2:14), but our material bodies are also physically resurrected by the death and bodily resurrection of Christ (Romans 8:11). In other words, dear ones, the biblical truth is this: Just as the curse of Adam's sin reached to both the immaterial soul and the material body of all his posterity (i.e. all his posterity by ordinary generation), so the redemption of Christ in removing the curse from all His elect reached to the immaterial soul (leading to the resurrection of the dead soul) **AND** reached to the material body (leading to the resurrection of the dead body). Dear ones, without the redemption of the physical body of believers, Christ's redemption would be incomplete, for the sin of Adam brought physical death into the world (as we shall see). That I believe is the clear teaching of God's holy Word, and demonstrates why Full Preterism is a damnable heresy. For Full Preterism attacks the full and complete redemption of Christ (in both body and soul) and by consequence leaves sinners under the curse of God (as to their bodies). Full Preterism, therefore, leaves every man unredeemed and doomed to hell.

B. Full Preterism teaches that physical death is NOT a penalty for sin, but is rather a natural event in the life of humans and that Adam from the very beginning was created by God with a mortal, perishable body. Thus, according to Full Preterism, Christ's redemptive work did not include the redemption of the physical body of God's elect because physical death is not the curse or wage for sin. One Full Preterist author summarizes the position in this way:

[P]hysical death is merely the natural consequence of being human and made from dust. And the ultimate resurrection was to reverse whatever “death” God placed on mankind in the beginning. If that original death was spiritual, then the resurrection which reverses it must also be spiritual. [And by parity of reason, if that original death included physical death, then the resurrection which reverses it must also be physical—GLP] We believe spiritual death (the real curse) can be reversed without all the physical consequences being eliminated. . . . Physical death seems to be a planned, “natural” consequence of being human and living on the earth (Ed Stevens, *Stevens’ Response to Gentry*, pp. 56-58 [cited by Robert Strimple in *When Shall These Things Be?*, p. 316]).

1. First, the Full Preterist argues that Adam’s body was made from the perishable dust of the ground. Therefore, from the very beginning of Adam’s creation, his perishable body of dust would return to dust as a natural part of man’s existence.

2. Second, the Full Preterist states that when God told Adam that in the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit that he would surely die, God did not mean that Adam would physically die, for it is clear from Scripture (according to the Full Preterist) that Adam did not physically die on the very day that he ate of the forbidden fruit. In fact, Adam lived to the ripe old age of 930 years, and then he died (Genesis 5:5).

3. Third, the Full Preterist explains that Adam did indeed die on the very day that he ate of the forbidden fruit, but it was a spiritual death rather than a physical death. Therefore, all passages of Scripture that speak of the wages of sin being death (as we see in Romans 6:23) refer to spiritual death rather than physical death.

4. Thus, the Full Preterist concludes that if physical death is not the penalty or curse for sin, then Christ did not redeem man from physical death as a curse for sin, and God has no moral/theological reason to raise the physical body of man from the dead.

C. I submit in response that the Scripture clearly refutes the position asserted by Full Preterists and does in fact teach that physical death is a penalty or curse for sin (sin being biblically defined as the transgression of God’s Law, 1 John 3:4).

1. The death threatened by God in the Covenant of Works for eating the forbidden fruit (in Genesis 2:17) does indeed include physical death (contrary to the position of Full Preterism), for when God pronounced the curse upon Adam after Adam had sinned, not only did God curse the ground and fill man's life with hard labor and misery in bringing forth a living upon the earth, but God also pronounced as a part of that same curse upon man, that he shall return to the dust from which he was taken (Genesis 3:17-19), i.e. physically die. Obviously, the various aspects of this curse upon man specifically cited by God in Genesis 3:17-19 were not natural to Adam at the time of his creation, otherwise they would be meaningless as an inflicted curse for sin subsequent to his fall. If thorns and thistles, hard work and miseries, and physical death were already a present reality for Adam from the time of his creation before he sinned, how could they be considered a curse upon man for his sin? Physical death (in Genesis 3:19) can only be considered as a curse inflicted upon Adam (and all his posterity by ordinary generation) because God deems it to be a just punishment for Adam's sin. So although Adam's body was created from the dust of the earth, the Bible does not indicate that it was a perishable body **UNTIL** Adam sinned, and only after his sin is it said that Adam would return to dust (i.e. physically die).

2. Physical death is often mentioned (with the approval of God in Scripture) as the just punishment for those who are guilty of sin (e.g. Genesis 9:6; Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 21:22,23; Romans 1:32 [note that "judgment of God" declares that those who commit such sins are "worthy of death"]]). If physical death is simply a natural part of life from the time of man's creation before man became guilty for sin (as the Full Preterist claims), then how does physical death in the passages above become a just punishment and curse upon man for sin committed against God and man after the fall throughout the rest of Scripture (both Old and New Testaments)? I submit that the penalty of capital

punishment upon those who are “worthy of death” cannot be reasonably explained apart from the curse of physical death upon Adam and his descendants for the guilt incurred for Adam’s first sin.

3. Also as we consider some places in Scripture where God is appealed to as the righteous Judge of the earth, the appeals from man confirm that God does not slay innocent nations or innocent cities. For example, in Genesis 18:23,25, Abraham appeals to God not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if 10 innocent persons be found. Abraham pleads with the Lord in these words: “Wilt thou also destroy the righteous [i.e. the innocent—GLP] with the wicked? . . . Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Or again in Genesis 20:4, King Abimelech humbly appeals to the Lord on behalf of his kingdom: “Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous [i.e. an innocent—GLP] nation?” And if the Lord would not destroy the innocent with the wicked nor slay an entire kingdom that was innocent, shall He slay Adam, and the entire world of men who came from Adam for no sin at all? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

4. What then is the nature of the death threatened (in the Covenant of Works) that would befall Adam and all his posterity by ordinary generation if he ate of the forbidden fruit: “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:7).

a. I submit that the biblical concept of death here threatened as a curse for sin in the Covenant of Works included physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death. Physical death may be defined as the end of physical life by the separation of the soul from the body (Ecclesiastes 12:7; James 2:26). Spiritual death is the separation of man from God’s spiritual life and as indicated by the fact that Adam and Eve hid themselves from the Lord due to the guilt and corruption of all their faculties (Genesis 3:8). And the just consequence of spiritual death was that of eternal death in hell where there is an eternal separation of man from God and only torment to bear with no hope of rest from it forever and ever (this is the second death, Revelation 21:8). Thus, it is true that

Adam died spiritually and deserved eternal death the very day that he sinned. But that threatened death included more than mere spiritual death.

b. With regard to the curse of physical death, the seeds of death were sown in Adam's body on the very day that he sinned to which were added all the miseries, pains, and afflictions in the body that would also evidence the curse of God for sin (as we see is true of Eve in Genesis 3:16 and of Adam in Genesis 3:17-19, these miseries specifically mentioned are only representative of all miseries in this life which men and women bear as a curse for sin).

c. However, it might also be reasonably and biblically argued that the phrase "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17) does not necessarily mean that Adam would physically die the very day he ate of the forbidden fruit, for "in the day" is a Hebrew idiom that means "as surely as" i.e. "AS SURELY AS thou eatest of the forbidden fruit thou shalt surely die." Consider another place in Scripture where physical death is threatened "in the day" that one disobeys a command, and yet physical death certainly befalls the guilty even if it doesn't befall the guilty in the very day of disobedience as threatened: 1 Kings 2:37 (where Solomon does not mean that Shemei should certainly be executed in the very day that he crosses the Kidron, but rather that "as surely as" he crosses the Kidron, he shall surely die). Consider other passages as well that use the same language: Exodus 10:28; Ezekiel 33:12,13.

d. Thus, when we come to the New Testament where we find passages of Scripture that connect death as the penalty for sin, it is not a spiritual death alone that is in view, but a physical death is implied if not specifically intended within the immediate context (Romans 5:12; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:22,26). In the interpretive system of Full Preterism, physical death is not an enemy or a curse upon man from which Christ has redeemed sinners. To the contrary, physical

death must rather be something very good (if Full Preterists are to be consistent) because according to the Full Preterist the seeds of death were in Adam from his very creation, and yet when God saw everything that he had made, including man, He said, “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Therefore, physical death for the Full Preterist will never be conquered and vanquished upon the earth because for the Full Preterist physical death is not an enemy (it is natural and even “very good”). The Full Preterist believes in an eternity of physical death here upon the earth with no promised hope of its final destruction upon earth. But as we shall now see, that is not the certain hope and confident expectation granted to God’s people in light of Christ’s redemption for His elect.

## **2. Did Christ Redeem the Material Bodies As Well As the Immaterial Souls of His Elect?**

A. Whatever was cursed by God as a result of the sin of the first Adam is redeemed from the curse by the death and bodily resurrection of the second Adam (Galatians 3:13). Christ’s redemption is all comprehensive in redeeming His people from everything the curse touched in Adam and in his posterity. Not only the soul of man (by way of the faculties of his intellect, will, and emotions) was cursed, but also the physical body of man was cursed with pain, sorrow, miseries, and death (as has already been demonstrated from God’s Word). Thus, dear ones, Christ redeemed these physical bodies (as well as our souls from the curse and punishment of sin) as we see is taught in passages like (Romans 8:11,26; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Philippians 3:20,21).

B. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 6:13-15,20 where we are clearly taught that Christ redeemed and purchased these physical bodies as well as our immaterial spirits. In fact, the theological reason why we (as redeemed Christians) are not to use these physical bodies to commit



sexual sin is because our physical bodies (as well as our spirits) belong to the Lord Jesus Christ by way of His redemption. Therefore, we are to glorify the Lord in both body and spirit which are God's by way of Christ's redemption (and not simply by way of God's original creation). Clearly then the Scripture teaches that since the physical body (as well as the immaterial spirit) of man incurred the just curse of a holy God on account of sin, both the physical body and the immaterial soul of God's elect have been redeemed by the death and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and shall be gloriously raised from the dead in likeness of Christ's own bodily resurrection (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:14 [those who "sleep in Jesus" must refer to the dead bodies of Christians being united to Christ], 16 ["the dead in Christ" must likewise refer to the physically dead bodies of Christians being united to Christ since it cannot refer to the dead souls of Christians]) .

C. Moreover, even the healing and resurrection of physical bodies accomplished by the power of Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry pointed to the fact that Christ bore not only the curse of sin that afflicted the souls of sinners, but also bore the curse of sin that afflicted the bodies of sinners (as we see in Matthew 8:17, which the Holy Spirit states is a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the atonement and redemption of Christ in Isaiah 53:4,5). Thus, dear ones, I submit that Christ's healing of these mortal bodies is included in the atonement of Christ (whether it is a healing in part in this life or our full and perfect healing at the resurrection and redemption of these mortal bodies, Romans 8:11,26).

D. Why then do Christians yet physically die if Christ redeemed our bodies from the curse of sin? Just as the Lord has redeemed the souls of Christians from the curse of sin, and yet our souls continue to be afflicted with various miseries and effects of sin in this life, so the Lord

has likewise redeemed the physical bodies of Christians from the curse of sin, and yet our bodies continue to be afflicted with various miseries and effects of sin in this life. However, neither the soul nor the body of the Christian that yet suffers the miseries of this life suffers these miseries as a curse, but suffers these miseries as the loving discipline and training of our heavenly Father who blesses these miseries to our sanctification in preparing His children to inherit the eternal glory of their heavenly inheritance. And though Christians will yet physically die, the curse and sting of death have been removed so that physical death becomes simply the means by which we enter heaven to await the resurrection of our bodies. Christ has legally abolished death (both spiritual and physical death) according to 2 Timothy 1:10 by His death and resurrection, but we await the full realization of that victory over the curse of death until the final resurrection of these vile and corruptible bodies which we, dear ones, anxiously hope for and anticipate in the words of the Apostle Paul:

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:54-58).

Dear ones, your labor is indeed in vain in the Lord **IF** there is no physical resurrection of these bodies, for **IF** these physical bodies are not raised, then the curse of God yet remains upon you. However, the very reason the Apostle Paul exhorts you to be steadfast in all that you do for Jesus Christ in this life is because your future physical resurrection of the body assures you that the curse of God against you (in both body and soul) has been paid in full by your blessed Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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