

Will We Eat and Drink in the Coming Kingdom of God?

An Interaction with Origen, Cerinthus, the Church Fathers, and the
Literal Interpretation of the Scriptures on the Nature of the Millennial Kingdom

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I. Introduction

This topic is a test case for me on the literal interpretation of the New Testament teaching on the coming millennial kingdom, and possible subtleties in the biblical text that provide meaning that I had not previously examined. Only recently did I consider how ~~viewing the idea~~ of millennial saints as functioning in a finite, immortal body in the earthly kingdom of God would impinge on necessary and mundane aspects of our humanness, and also HOW THIS WOULD reflect the interaction between the resurrected saints and those who enter into the millennium in mortal bodies.

~~Reading of~~ The clash between the literal interpretation practiced during the first century church, and for a couple of centuries afterwards, centered on the adoption of non-Jewish and apostolic interpretative practices in contrast to the rapid development of allegorical interpretation within the church. The “spiritual” interpretative model advocated by the late second century fathers of the church, leading up to the Reformation, and even afterwards among Reformers in regard to eschatology, has often produced an arrogance on the part of Christian ~~many~~ interpreters, who looked down on Christians who interpreted the Scriptures literally, even viewing the literal approach as beneath biblical interpretation and sometimes even heretical.

Concomitant with writing this paper, I became more aware of the work of J. Dwight Pentecost, a former colleague at Dallas Seminary, in his mammoth volume *Things to Come*,¹ where he discusses the interaction of what he calls living and resurrected humans in the millennial period. Pentecost remarks,

There has been general confusion, even among premillennialists, concerning the relationship that would exist during the millennial age between the resurrected and translated saints of the church age, the resurrected saints of the Old Testament, and the living saints from among both Jews and Gentiles, all of whom would bear some relationship to that period.²

In addition, there is little said about the nature of these beings, their daily activities, and the similarity to the post-resurrection body of Jesus.

Several questions came to me when considering these groups of people during the millennial reign of Christ. Are their bodies fleshly, or as some suppose, like the angels? Do the statements in Scripture about “flesh and bones” and “flesh and blood” convey different ideas about the nature of the human body? Do resurrected saints have the abilities that many consider Christ to have had, namely, to appear and disappear, or even to fly, or were these activities

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¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Company, 542-546.

² Ibid, p. 532.

representative of His deity rather than His immortal body? Especially in relation to the resurrected saints, can they eat and drink, and even enjoy this?

II. Old Testament Understanding of the Coming Kingdom

Before discussing the Messianic kingdom embraced by the Jewish community in the first century, the subsequent two centuries in the church of the eastern empire, and through much of the fourth century in the west, I would like to briefly characterize the nature of the Messianic kingdom given to us in the Old Testament. This is the basis for the tenacious belief of the Jewish-Christian community, and even Gentile-Christian believers until the triumph of allegorism in the eastern empire, the overwhelming influence of Augustine in the west, and finally the rise of the marriage between the Roman Empire and the church by the middle of the fourth century.

One observes throughout the prophetic passages of the Old Testament that there is an anticipation of an earthly Messianic kingdom that follows the work of Jesus among humanity. A number of Old Testament texts speak to different aspects of Messiah's work, and the conditions present in the earthly kingdom of Messiah. Isaiah 2:1-4 says that Yahweh's law will go out from Jerusalem, and He will judge among the nations. His rule will bring peace in the earth, according to Isaiah 11:1-16. In Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, the heavens and the earth are associated with His kingdom. One interesting point that relates more directly to an aspect of the paper of the mortal and immortal humans during the millennium, is that during the earthly kingdom some will continue to age (Zech 8:3-5), and even die (Isa 65:20). As well, even though Messiah's reign will restrain, and fairly judge, humans, they will still sin (Isa 65:20; Jer 31:30). The final abolition of sin and death is when the the Messianic Kingdom transitions to the eternal state of the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev 21:4).

III. Jewish-Christian Understanding of the Millennium in the Apostolic Era

This earthly Messianic kingdom mentioned above was anticipated by the Jews when Jesus came (and even upon his return to the Father according to Acts 1:3, 6; see Acts 3:19-21), at his death (Luke 22:28-30), and is the eschatological church (Acts 15:13-17; Rom 11:25-27).

Not only were the canonical books of the Hebrew Scriptures a storehouse of teaching on the future Messianic kingdom, but also non-canonical Jewish works also taught in similar fashion, and will be briefly explored in the next portion of the paper.

Millennialism is a natural outgrowth of Jewish messianism, in which there is an anticipation of a second coming of Jesus to the earth to culminate the kingdom of God on the earth foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament and the discourses of Jesus and the apostles. A major reason for the development of various events on earth, culminating in His reign in the earth, is that these events were intertwined, and the advent could not stand alone.

Other startling events were to cluster around it. These are principally the resurrection of the dead, the end of the world, the final judgment, the destruction of the wicked, and the entrance of the righteous upon their heavenly reward. There were other features less common, such as the appearance of the Antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, the first resurrection, the millennial reign. The last, viewed as a distinctly limited period of time, occupies a comparatively small space in the literature. It is mentioned only once in the New Testament. But because it joined directly onto the Jewish hope of an earthly kingdom and because it was closely associated with the second advent in physical form, it becomes especially significant of a distinct theological

attitude.³

This teaching of the returning Messiah within the physical plane of earth was able to confront Gnosticism. Yet to the growing influence of the thinking of Christians such as Clement, and his brilliant student, Origen, the millennium became an allegory. Cross comments,

And yet the Christian church as a whole has not taken kindly to millenarianism, probably on account of the feeling that it is contrary to the high spirituality of the faith and because of its tendency to fanaticism. In contrast with its retention of the idea of a personal coming, the resurrection, the judgment, and the eternal Kingdom because of the moral value it has been able to attach to these views, the church has found the thousand years' reign, with a later renewal of conflict, destitute of moral significance to the Christian conscience, and the passage that affirms it has been ignored or explained away for the most part. In Clement of Rome, Polycarp, the *Didache*, Hermas, Barnabas, and Ignatius there is no mention of the thousand years, notwithstanding their realism in places.⁴

Cross continues, "In contrast with these, Justin Martyr, the great apologist of the second century, in his attempt to prove that all the great facts on which he supposed that the Christian faith reposed had been literally foretold, carried out the realism of the apocalypses to the full, because he saw no other way of proving the truth of the new faith—to him, the old faith."⁵

The literal method of interpretation and Jewish method (though over literalistic among the Rabbis) became synonymous, according to Farrar, "This same literal interpretation was a marked feature of Old Testament interpretation. Jerome, in rejecting the strict literal method of interpretation, "calls the literal interpretation 'Jewish,' implies that it may easily become heretical, and repeatedly says it is inferior to the 'spiritual.'"⁶ Pentecost adds, "It would seem that the literal method and Jewish interpretation were synonymous in Jerome's mind."⁷

It is sometimes thought that the apostle Paul followed allegorical interpretation, but as Farrar responds, "Allegory, though once used by St. Paul by way of passing illustration, is unknown to the other Apostles, and is never sanctioned by Christ."⁸

Not only did the apostles of Christ not interpret Scripture allegorically, but instead followed the standard Jewish literal approach, Pentecost indicates that Jesus did not use an allegorical approach in his teaching:

Even as liberal as was Briggs, he recognized that Jesus did not use the methods of His day, nor follow the fallacies of His generation. He says: "The apostles and their disciples in the New Testament use the methods of the Lord Jesus rather than those of the men of their time. The New Testament writers differed among themselves in the tendencies of their thought...in them all, the methods of the Lord Jesus prevail over the other methods and ennoble them."⁹

At the end of the first century, a Jewish-Christian manual of discipline was written, known as the *Didache* (teaching), that reflects Jewish views on the coming of Christ, though unfortunately, (and some believe by a later removal) any mention of a millennial reign of the Messiah is not included. Yet the last chapter, abruptly ended, does speak clearly of a resurrection of believers at

³George Cross, "Millenarianism in Christian History," *The Biblical World*, Jul., 1915, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Jul., 1915), 4
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⁴ Cross, "Millenarianism in Christian History," 5.

⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pp. 16-17, quoting F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*," pp. 47-48.

⁷ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 17.

⁸ Farrar, 217, quoted by Pentecost, p. 19.

⁹ Charles Augustus Briggs, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scriptures*, 443, quoted in Pentecost, p 20.

the Parousia.¹⁰

IV. Early Gentile Christian Understanding of the Millennium

As Jewish influence waned in the second century, its dominance over the literal interpretation of the Messianic kingdom of Christ did also. Writings such as 2 Esdras were written to explain the destruction of Jerusalem and the rejection of the Jewish people, but in later additions to the book introduced teaching advocating a replacement theology¹¹ in which the church becomes the spiritual Israel.¹²

In similar fashion, the influential work by Justin Martyr that advocated a literal view of the millennial reign of Christ also had the church who reigned with Christ to be the spiritual Israel of God, the church. In the words of Justin, “I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.”

Justin’s comments referred to the teaching of Isaiah 65:17-19: “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more.”

This Old Testament text is echoed in the words of John, in the book of Revelation, chapter 21. A literal reading of the text, as done by Justin, and other millennialists in the Old Testament, the apostolic period, and today is clear. The city of Jerusalem, though with changed dimensions, becomes the center of God’s dwelling among redeemed humanity, Jew and Gentile.

Though millennialists rejoice in Justin’s words, the spiritualization of Israel to be the church signaled the eventual demise of the view, since the theology had lost its moorings in the literal interpretation of the Old Testament.

This is illustrated in the words of Origen, who had a primary influence in moving the church from the literal view of the prophetic Scriptures, and believed that “the future life will be a life of the spirit; the flesh will have no part in it.”¹³ Even an obvious literal statement of the second coming of Christ was spiritualized by Origen. Regarding the statement of Christ coming in the clouds, in Matthew 24:30, “referred to the Lord’s coming into the souls of the openhearted when they accepted the basic truths of doctrine.”¹⁴

Cross explains the reason for the demise of millennial teaching in the early church. Unlike the teaching of fathers such as Tertullian, Commodianus, Arnobius, and Lactantius,¹⁵ the eastern church was

¹⁰ William C. Varner, “The Didache ‘Apocalypse’ and Matthew 24,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Vol 165; No. 659), 308-322. Especially see appendix A chart at the end of the article that shows parallels between Didache 16 and Matthew 24.

¹¹ For a discussion of replacement theology, see the chapter in H. Wayne House, “The Church’s Appropriation of Israel’s Blessings,” in *Israel: the Land and the People*, H. W. House, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), pp 77-110.

¹² Dialogue with Trypho, 80.

¹³ A. McGiffert, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York: Scribner’s, 1946), 231.

¹⁴ Mal Couch, “The Allegorists Who Undermined the Normal Interpretation of Scripture,” class notes for An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics.

¹⁵ Commodianus, Arnobius, and Lactantius believed that children would be born to the righteous during the millennium, the latter apparently believing the immortal ones would produce large numbers of offsprings.

moving another direction due the influence of gnostic philosophy and the influence of spiritual or allegorical interpretation. Origen developed a three-fold manner of interpreting Scripture, namely, the somatic, the psychical, and the spiritual foci in the text. He was able to brush aside the first two and embrace the latter for mature believers. After the rise of Constantine, and later the influence of Augustine, the need for a millennial reign of Christ changed the direction of the church. In this mix, Dionysius joined millennialism to the teaching of Cerinthus, to be discussed below, who taught about the earthly reign of Christ.¹⁶

In fact, with the rise of Constantine, the major figures, such as Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzen, Basil the Great, John of Damascus, Ambrose, et al rejected an earthly millennial reign of Jesus, with only a small deviation with Augustine, who admits that he had once held to a millennial period, but had abandoned the view through allegorical interpretation.¹⁷ The words of Jerome sound out clear the fourth century conclusion to millennialism, “let the story of the thousand years cease.”¹⁸

What is the future world to be in the eyes of Origen? Historian Philip Schaff concluded that Origen’s view of the future resurrection was “denial of a material resurrection.”¹⁹ He criticized, quite mockingly, Christians who held to a correspondence between the body that dies and the one that rises:

Certain persons, then, refusing the labour of thinking, and adopting a superficial view of the letter of the law, and yielding rather in some measure to the indulgence of their own desires and lusts, being disciples of the letter alone, are of opinion that the fulfilment of the promises of the future are to be looked for in bodily pleasure and luxury; and therefore, they especially desire to have again, after the resurrection, such bodily structures as may never be without the power of eating, and drinking, and performing all the functions of flesh and blood, not following the opinion of the Apostle Paul regarding the resurrection of a spiritual body. . . . Those, however, who receive the representations of Scripture according to the understanding of the apostles, entertain the hope that the saints will eat indeed, but that it will be the bread of life, which may nourish the soul with the food of truth and wisdom, and enlighten the mind, and cause it to drink from the cup of divine wisdom, according to the declaration of holy Scripture: ‘Wisdom has prepared her table, she has killed her beasts, she has mingled her wine in her cup, and she cries with a loud voice, Come to me, eat the bread which I have prepared for you, and drink the wine which I have mingled.’ (*De Principiis*, 2:11:2-3)

We now turn our attention to some of our own (believers), who, either from feebleness of intellect or want of proper instruction, adopt a very low and abject view of the resurrection of the body. We ask these persons in what manner they understand that an animal body is to be changed by the grace of the resurrection, and to become a spiritual one; and how that which is sown in weakness will arise in power; how that which is planted in dishonour will arise in glory; and that which was sown in corruption, will be changed to a state of incorruption. Because if they believe the apostle, that a body which arises in glory, and power, and incorruptibility, has already become spiritual, it appears absurd and contrary to his meaning to say that it can again be entangled with the passions of flesh and blood, seeing the apostle manifestly declares that ‘flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God, nor shall corruption inherit incorruption.’ But how do they understand the declaration of the apostle, ‘We shall all be changed?’ This transformation certainly is to be looked for, according to the order which we have taught above; and in it, undoubtedly, it becomes us to hope for something worthy of divine grace; and this we believe will take place in the order in which the apostle describes the sowing in the ground of a ‘bare grain of com, or of any other fruit,’ to which ‘God gives a body

¹⁶ Cross, Millenarianism in Christian History, *The Biblical World*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Cross, Millenarianism in Christian History, *The Biblical World*, p. 6, 7.

¹⁸ Earle E. Cairns, Eschatology and Church History, Part I (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1958), p. 141, quoted in Vaterlaus, “Amillennialism vs Premillennialism,” <http://www.rapturenotes.com/amillennialism.html> (last visited December 1, 2010).

¹⁹ Philip Schaff 187:2.

as it pleases Him,' as soon as the grain of corn is dead. For in the same way also our bodies are to be supposed to fall into the earth like a grain; and (that germ being implanted in them which contains the bodily substance) although the bodies die, and become corrupted, and are scattered abroad, yet by the word of God, that very germ which is always safe in the substance of the body, raises them from the earth, and restores and repairs them, as the power which is in the grain of wheat, after its corruption and death, repairs and restores the grain into a body having stalk and ear. And so also to those who shall deserve to obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, that germ of the body's restoration, which we have before mentioned, by God's command restores out of the earthly and animal body a spiritual one of inhabiting the heavens" (*De Principiis*, 2:10:3).

Consequently, due to the influence of Origen and those who followed him, the Christian church began to view the literal understanding of prophecy to be “contrary to the high spirituality of the faith and because of its tendency to fanaticism.”²⁰ By this was included the statements of orthodox and heretic alike, regarding the millennium, who spoke of “eating and drinking, and even sexual relationships for bearing of children among the inhabitants of the earth.”²¹

Will We Eat and Drink in the Millennium?

It is because of Origen, and those who were influenced by him, that caused the general dismissal of a literal millennial kingdom²² in the Christian church from the fourth century A.D. until the Reformation.

A common example of the physical, material millennium in the later church fathers are the alleged perspectives of the man Cerinthus, recognized as a heretic by the church and a contemporary of the apostle John. His heretical views on non-eschatological matters, at times, becomes the basis of rejecting his views of a physical millennium, and we are unsure if the explanations of his views are not given in the worst light possible, and subject to the genetic fallacy in logic. But they do raise the question as to whether the bodies of the mortal and immortals during the millennium are able to participate in a physical, material world.

Dionysius explains Cerinthus' view of the coming kingdom of Christ thus:

“But (they say that) Cerinthus, who founded the sect which was called, after him, the Cerinthian, desiring reputable authority for his fiction, prefixed the name. For the doctrine which he taught was this: that the kingdom of Christ will be an earthly one.

And as he was himself devoted to the pleasures of the body and altogether sensual in his nature, he dreamed that that kingdom would consist in those things which he desired, namely, in the delights of the belly and of sexual passion, that is to say, in eating and drinking and marrying, and in festivals and sacrifices and the slaying of victims, under the guise of which he thought he could indulge his appetites with a better grace.”²³

The negative statements about Cerinthus by several of the fathers of the church who were allegorists causes me to wonder to what extent his views on the nature of the millennium is in fact heretical or to what degree the physical nature of the millennium allows humans—both those who did not have a resurrected body and those who had a resurrected body—to participate in similar fashion in the millennium to what was done in the pre-millennial world. This view seems to be what was advocated by Dr. Pentecost: “The living saints who go into the millennium in their natural bodies will beget children throughout the age. The earth's population will soar.

²⁰ Cross, 5.

²¹ H. Wayne House, “Premillennialism in the Ante-Nicene Church: Why the Divide in the Early Church on Chiliasm” (paper given at Pre-Trib Study Group Annual Meeting, December 6, 2010), 10.

²² Millennialism was even condemned at the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431.

²³ Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol I, 160 (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997). Also see Epiphanius (who is not always the most careful scholar) on Cerinthus, in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, trans. Frank Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2009 116-122.

These born in the age will not be born without a sin nature, so salvation will be required (Jer. 30:20; 31:29; Ezek. 47:22; Zech. 10:8).²⁴

Reading some of the fathers on Cerinthus' views sounds as if he focused on prurient or lustful thinking rather than simply eating, drinking, and normal marriage; that is, common acts of humans today seem to have been viewed as non-spiritual and sinful to the fathers.

Viewing the future existence of humans, angels and God in the millennial age as spiritual, and thus superior to the pre-millennial world of the original creation of God, should help us to evaluate whether a spiritual, non-physical millennium, is better than the world in which God and believers have experienced heretofore.

I believe that we will discover that God's world of the future will be created without moral and physical flaws, even as the original creation. The fall of the original creation was the result of sin. God, as the original and perfect designer of the universe is not an anti-matter creator. He looked at the original creation and exclaimed "it is very good," and not "I made some design mistakes." He finds the beauty and creativity provided through material and human existence to be a proper extension of His desires, as a canvas is to the mind of an artist, and as pure spirit He has chosen to work within such a creation, and He anticipated a spiritual fall of humanity that would ultimately bring to Him greater glory through the redemption of His Son. The resurrection body of Jesus, and those recreated after that image for the new creation, are physical beings with a spirit and soul, absent sin, and they function as deathless and incorruptible beings similar in most respects to the original creation of God, reflecting the Hebraic understanding of humanity and not that of the Greek world wrongly embraced by Plato, Philo, and Origen.

In order to evaluate the credibility of viewing the millennial reign of the Messiah as being a physical world similar to the original world in which God and other spiritual beings have worked in the past, let us examine various ways in which the Creator God, His ministering spirits, the angels, and finally even the Incarnate Son worked within human existence. This anticipates the final expression of God's work among humanity, eventuating in the Millennial Reign of the Messiah, and the inauguration of the eternal New Heavens and New Earth, in which God will dwell among His creation more fully than ever before, and for all of eternity.

A. God took human form in the Old Testament, interacting with Adam and Eve

1. Yahweh *interacted* with Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen 1:8-21)
 - a. The couple heard God *walking* in the garden (1:8)
 - b. Yahweh *called out*, "Where are you?" (1:9)
 - c. Adam said, "I heard *your voice*," speaking of God (1:10)
 - d. God *questions Adam* to receive answers from Adam and Eve (1:11-13)
 - e. Yahweh *made garments* of animal skins for them and *clothed them*. (1:21)
2. Should we understand these passages as reflecting actual events and words or merely a story, an allegory to explain man's separation from an unknown deity? I believe the former, which reflects a literal interpretation of the account.

B. God took human form in the Old Testament, along with two angels, to interact with Abram about Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen 18)

²⁴ Pentecost, 489.

1. Yahweh is the primary one that *communicated* with Abram, but all three received attention (rest, shade, food, and drink), and all three *ate the food* Abram offered. (18:1-15)
 - a. All three men *rested* and *ate the food* (18:8)
 - b. Two of the men went to Sodom, and *Yahweh stayed behind* (18:22)
2. Yahweh and Abram discussed the judgment upon Sodom
 - a. Abram *stood before* Yahweh (1:22)
 - b. Yahweh *went His way* (1:33)
3. Is this an allegory or a literal account of an historical event? I believe the latter.

C. Angels are Spirits and Not Flesh (Heb 1:13, 14)

1. Angels are spirits and not human by nature
 But to which of the angels has He ever said:
 “Sit at My right hand,
 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?
 Are they not all *ministering spirits* sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation, that is *human beings*?
2. The Essential Nature of Angels is “spirit” and not flesh, though they may appear as being flesh.
3. The essential nature of humans is fleshly, along with the soul and spirit given by God. The resurrected body of humans does not cease such existence, but adds the nature of *deathlessness and incorruptibility*, so that the humans can function *within a physical existence for ever* (1 Cor 15). Spiritual body is not the same as spirit-body. Spiritual is an adjective describing the energizing of the spirit on the body and not the nature of the body.

D. Angels appeared in human form and acted like humans

1. Genesis 18:1-8 indicates that two angels visited the house of Lot and ate with him.
 - a. The two angels from the account in Gen 18, came to Sodom and to Lot, and appeared to be human. (19:1)
 - b. Lot urged them to wash their feet (19:2)
 - c. Lot prepared them a large meal and the angels ate. (19:3)
2. Angels (sons of God) cohabited with women, bore children, and were judged by God (Gen 6:1-4; Jude 6)
 - a. Sons of God (angels) were *attracted to human women* and took wives (Gen 6:2).
 - b. The women *impregnated by angels* bore children, who were mighty (Gen 6:4).
 - c. Jude indicates that the angels who sinned by taking human women, have been *kept in eternal bonds* waiting for the judgment of the great day (Jude 6)

E. In the resurrection, humans will be like the angels, and not marrying

1. When Jesus was in a debate with the Sadducees, He spoke of the resurrection, commenting that resurrected persons are like the angels in heaven, in that they also do not marry, *not* that humans are spirits, as are angels. (Matt 22:29, 30; Mk 12:25).
2. Luke's record of this account connects the eternal nature of the sons of the resurrection, unlike sons of this age, who marry, in that they no longer die because they are equal to angels (Lk 20:36).

F. How Should We Understand Jesus in Regard to His Humanity, Deity, and Resurrection Body

1. He performed *supernatural acts* in His *mortal body* by means of His divine nature
 - a. Transfiguration on the mountain, along with Moses and Elijah, when He was bright as the sun (Matt 16:13-28; Mk 8:27-38; Lk 9:18-27)
 - b. He walked on Lake Kinneret (Matt 14:22-36)
2. He performed, and will perform, *natural acts* in His *immortal body*
 - a. He broke bread with the men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:30)
 - b. His body was flesh and bones, and not a spirit as some envisioned (Lk 24:39)²⁵
3. He performed *divine acts* through His *immortal body*.
 - a. He kept the men on road to Emmaus from recognizing Him (Lk 24:29)
 - b. He vanished out of the sight of these two disciples (Lk 24:30)
 - c. He appeared in the midst of the disciples in Jerusalem, and proved the resurrection of His body by eating with the disciples (Lk 24:35, 40-44)
 - d. He said that He would not partake of the fruit of the vine until He would share it with the disciples in the coming kingdom of God (Matt 26:29; Mk 14:25), something I would view as a literal event.

Conclusion

The interpretation battle between literal and allegorical interpretation that moved the church from denying the literal interpretation of much of the Bible, and especially books like Daniel and the Book of Revelation, is still with us. Contemporary anti-millenarian scholars view the Old Testament and New Testament books that they consider uncomfortable with theological commitments of a more spiritual nature are easily considered allegories. This has occurred, for example, with some Christians who embrace more liberal views of the creation of the earth and the existence of the biblical Adam and Eve. For example, Old Testament interpreter Tremper Longman, who is also an evolutionist, views the days of Genesis as metaphorical, and denies the historical, biblical representational of Adam and Eve.²⁶ That this must be so to these interpreters is the fact that the first three days of creation has light without the sun and the moon, created on

²⁵ Flesh and bones is to be distinguished from "flesh and blood," which seems to be a method of speaking of the mortal, physical body.

²⁶ "Tremper Longman argues that Genesis 1-11 is "theological history." "The narrative is written about past events but uses highly figurative language. Genesis 1 is not to be understood as saying God created in 6 24-hour days; the author is using an analogy to the 6-day workweek to describe creation. The Flood narrative uses hyperbolic language about a real regional flood event to teach important theological truths about who God is as a God of judgement and grace, and who we are as sinners." Interpreting Genesis 1-11 with Tremper Longman," <https://biologos.org/resources/interpreting-genesis-1-11-with-tremper-longman>.

the fourth day.²⁷ The answer to this alleged problem in Genesis 1:3-13 is answered in the last book of the Bible. Examining Revelation 22:23-25, one observes that in the New Heavens and New Earth, they also do not have a sun, but there is no need because the glory of God lights the earth, so that there is no night. As well, Longman contends that the Adam and Eve of the Genesis account are not actually the first parents of the race, but represent the evolutionary development of humanity.²⁸ Thus, the demands of science and liberal theology do not always square with the creation of God.

Similarly, some of the same struggles that Philo had with “uncomfortable” practices of the Israelites, and the wars of Joshua, for “spiritual interpreters” must also be explained (away) by allegorical interpretation.

The desire for a “more spiritual” or allegorical interpretation of features within the future reign with Christ is desired by non-millennialists in our age, no less than the early centuries of the church with men like Origen, Jerome, and Augustine. The description of the physical nature of the resurrection bodies need to give way to more spiritual relations with Christ than what is described in the biblical texts of 1 Corinthians, 1 John, and the Revelation. Historical narrative is generally literal in nature, along with figures of speech that can readily be understand within historical genre.

In the resurrected, glorified body of Jesus, we have an example of what we will be like in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:22, 23; 1 John 3:1, 2). When the Son of God came to this earth, He did not strip Himself of His divine nature (John 1:14), and when He went back to the Father, He bore with Him the likeness of humanity.

Scripture says in the resurrection that we will be like Him (1 John) and Paul says we will be changed into the incorruption of His body (1 Cor 15). What does this mean? The biblical text is clear that at the resurrection of our bodies they will be like Christ’s glorious body (Phil 3:21). It is not unreasonable to believe, then, that those believers who survive the tribulation and who enter the millennium as only mortals are like Jesus in his first century appearances²⁹ and will share this ability with His saints in the millennium to come. However, the question of whether we share with Jesus the immortality and incorruptibility only, or we might receive ability to do supernatural acts (such as flying, vanishing), properties of angels and Jesus, are not suggested in the biblical text, and reside within the category of speculation, it would appear.

²⁷ Longman says, “However, as has been long recognized, the absence of the sun, moon, and stars until the fourth day means that this pictorial description of creation as taking place during a week is not describing what actually happened. Origen (185–254 AD), as well, cannot contain his astonishment that some might treat Gen 1 in such a wooden fashion: To what person of intelligence, I ask, will the account seem logically consistent that says there was a first day and a second day and a third day in which also evening and morning are named, without a sun, without a moon and without stars and even in the case of the first day without a heaven? [3] Tremper Longman, “What Genesis 1-2 Teaches (and What It Doesn’t), *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation* (Hendrickson Publishers. Kindle Edition), p. 197.

²⁸ Longman., “What Genesis 1-2 Teaches (and What It Doesn’t),” 222.

²⁹ This would be like the angels in Genesis 18, who, along with Yahweh, appeared in physical form and shared in a meal (among other events recorded) with Abraham.