11th Annual ACRC Conference – Opening Address  
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Introduction...

Excerpts from the ACRC Statement of Faith...
From the Section on Essentials...
Eschatology (Last Things)

We believe in the personal, physical, and future return of Jesus Christ to the earth, to rule in righteousness and to inaugurate the New Heavens and New Earth. We believe in the physical resurrection of the body, the eternal blessedness of the saved, and the eternal damnation and misery of the lost.

From the Section concerning Non-Essentials...
Eschatological Details:
We believe the important thing here is the essential truth that Christ will return one day, physically, to rule the earth in righteousness. The exact details of all of this are where we believe we can differ. Whether one is Amillennial, Premillennial, Pre-Trib, Post-Trib, Mid-Trib, etc., is indeed important. In the ACRC we all have our opinions and enjoy dialog concerning them, but again, these are not areas that we believe should separate us as reformed brethren.

First, let’s look at the most important, most glorious and most central subject of Eschatology, the Future Physical and Visible Return of Jesus Christ to Rule the Earth in Righteousness. This doctrine is taught extensively and explicitly in both OT and NT.

First, consider the word “coming” itself. When Scripture speaks of Christ’s Second “Coming” the primary word used is “Parousia” (pa-roo-see-ah).

Parousia’s basic meaning is...
Thayer’s Lexicon – simply “presence” or the presence of one coming, hence, the coming, arrival or advent

Louw and Nida Lexicon – the presence of an object at a particular place, being at hand, to be in person.

W.E. Vines – denotes both an "arrival" and a consequent "presence with." For instance, in a papyrus letter a lady speaks of the necessity of her parousia in a certain place in order to attend to matters relating to her property there. See also Phil.2:12 where Paul speaks of his “parousia” in contrast to his apousia, "his absence"

Other Examples from Scripture...
2 Cor 7:6-7 ESV
6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,
7 and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.

2 Cor 10:10 ESV
10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."
So, the simple meaning of the word is a “literal physical presence”. It is used 16 times in the NT in reference to Christ’s Second “Coming”.
Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39, 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, 8, James 5:7-8, 2 Peter 3:3-4, 1 John 2:28

What “Parousia” does NOT mean...
Sometimes Jesus (and other Biblical writers) speak of Christ “coming” in other ways. I do think it’s important to understand that these other “ways” in which He is said to “come” use a different word from “parousia”, most generally “erchomai” (air-cho-my). Erchomai means basically “to come or go”. While it certainly can mean a physical coming (indeed, it is used with reference to Christ’s Second Coming) it is also used in a spiritual/metaphorical/figurative sense as well.

Examples:
Christ speaks of “Coming” to His Disciples in His Post Resurrection Appearances...
John 14:15-20, 23 KJV
15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.
16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;
17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.
18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (ERCHOMAI NOT PAROUSIA)

• It is a Physical “coming” in Resurrection...
  19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. (Compare Jn.16:16-22)

• But also Spiritually in Regeneration/the Indwelling Holy Spirit...
  20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.
  23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come (ERCHOMAI NOT PAROUSIA) unto him, and make our abode with him.

Also on this same note...
Matt 16:24-28 KJV
24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
27 For (because) the Son of man shall come (ERCHOMAI) in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.
28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming (ERCHOMAI) in his kingdom.
Calvin’s Commentary is interesting here because he points out 2 different uses of “erchomai” in close proximity to each other.

Vs.27 That the doctrine which has just been laid down ("what doth it profit") may more deeply affect our minds, Christ places before our eyes the future judgment; for if we would perceive the worthlessness of this fading life, we must be deeply affected by the view of the heavenly life. So tardy and sluggish is our mind, that it needs to be aided by looking towards heaven. Christ here summons believers to his judgment-seat, to lead them to reflect at all times that they should live for no other object than to long after that blessed redemption, which will be revealed at the proper time.

Vs.28 By the coming of the kingdom of God we are to understand the manifestation of heavenly glory, which Christ began to make at his resurrection (or possibly in the next chapter, the Transfiguration), and which he afterwards more fully made by sending the Holy Spirit, and by the performance of miracles; for by those beginnings he gave his people a taste of the newness of the heavenly life, when they perceived, by certain and undoubted proofs, that he was sitting at the right hand of the Father.

So, Christ "comes" (ERCHOMAI) spiritually in the New Birth and He came spiritually in the Person of The Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Two "comings" but NOT THE SECOND COMING (PAROUSIA).

THE PAROUSIA IS NOT CHRIST “COMING” AT THE BELIEVERS DEATH...
John 14:1-4 KJV
1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, (ERCHOMAI NOT PAROUSIA) and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.
4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

THE PAROUSIA IS NOT CHRIST “COMING” IN JUDGMENT IN AD 70...
Finally, many believe that Scriptures such as Matt.10:23 speak of Christ’s Spiritual “Coming” in Judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70.
Matt 10:23 KJV
23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. (BUT AGAIN, IT'S “ERCHOMAI” NOT PAROUSIA.)

Preterism – there are 2 types of Preterists. – Partial (orthodox) Preterist/Full (heterodox) Preterist. Both see much or all of Matt.24 and the Book of Revelation as having already been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Full Preterism however is, I believe, HERETICAL. Full Preterism believes that nothing concerning the Second Coming of Christ is yet to be fulfilled.

The Second Coming = The Judgment of AD 70.
The Resurrection = The Resurrection of only the Soul from Sheol/Hades.

This is absolutely condemned as Heresy.
Heb 6:1-3, 2 Tim 2:17-18, 1 Cor 15:12, Phil 3:20-21
The New Heavens and New Earth = The New (Post-Jewish/Mosaic) Age

POINT: “PAROUSIA” RULES OUT A “FULL PRETERIST” VIEW SIMPLY BECAUSE OF ITS INHERENT MEANING.

Also, in this connection, Full Preterism (and Partial Preterism to some degree) is in large part built around certain Scriptures that speak of certain events being “soon to come to pass”. These passages are what I believe to be “prophetic language of imminence”.

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

Rev 1:1 KJV
6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.
7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Note from Alan Johnson – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary
The words “what must soon take place” in Rev 1:1 implies that the revelation concerns events that are future. But in what sense can we understand that the events will arise “soon” (en tachei)? From the Preterist point of view (that the events are seen to be imminent to the time of the author) the sense is plain: all will “soon” take place – i.e. in John’s day. Others however translate en tachei as “quickly” or “speedily” (grammatically this is acceptable) and understand the author to describe events that will rapidly run their course once they begin. However, this author believes it is better to translate en tachei as “soon” in light of the words “the time is near” in vs.3 and in Ch.22:10.

Yet, if we adopt this sense, it is not necessary to follow the Preterist interpretation of the book. In eschatology and apocalyptic literature, the future is always viewed as imminent without the necessity of intervening time. (He cites Lu.18:6-8 as an example.)

Luke 18:6-8 KJV (The Parable of the Unjust Judge)
6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily (en tachei). Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

That en tachei does not preclude delay or intervening events (here in Lu.18:8) is evident also from the Book of Revelation itself. In Ch.6 we hear the cry of the martyred saints: “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you…avenge our blood?” They are told to “wait a little longer” (vs.10-11). Therefore, “soonness” means imminence in eschatological terms. The church in every age has always lived with the expectancy of the consummation of all things in its day. Imminency describes an event possible any day, impossible no day. If this sense is followed we are neither forced to accept a “mistaken apocalyptic” view as Schweitzer advocated nor a Preterist interpretation.

(NO T E: Albert Barnes also has a great section in his commentary on the “nature” of prophecy. He speaks of many of the OT prophets as being set as “Watchmen on a Wall/Tower” and how they would see the mountain peaks of the future but did not see the valleys in between.)

The Final, Biblical word on these types of verses is 2 Peter 3:3-8…
2 Peter 3:3-8 KJV
3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,
4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming (PAROUSIA)? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.
5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:
6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:
7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.
8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Point: They (the Apostles) knew it would be awhile.

See also Acts 1:4-11, Zech.12-14

Finally, as we have already discussed, we also hold common the uncertainty of the Physical Resurrection of the Saints. But Scripture clearly teaches the fact of a Physical Resurrection for both the Saved and the Unsaved. Consider then the ramifications of this for the Unsaved.

John 5:28-29 KJV
28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,
29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Acts 24:14-15 KJV
14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:
15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

It is difficult for us to imagine the gravity of what this really means. They will have, in some sense, a literal, physical Resurrection! Jesus speaks in the Gospels of “the worm that does not die”. What does that mean?

Mark 9:43-44 KJV
43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell (gehenna – a burial dump for criminals and animal carcasses), into the fire that never shall be quenched:
44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Many, if not most, view this as type/shadow imagery of the final fate of the wicked. Most see it as not being literal. But, if the unsaved dead will be resurrected physically???
Whatever the nature of it the torment of the wicked will be without mercy or end.

Rev 14:9-11 KJV
9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,
10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:
11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

So, these things we hold common.
We believe in the personal, physical, and future return of Jesus Christ to the earth, to rule in righteousness and to inaugurate the New Heavens and New Earth. We believe in the physical resurrection of the body, the eternal blessedness of the saved, and the eternal damnation and misery of the lost.