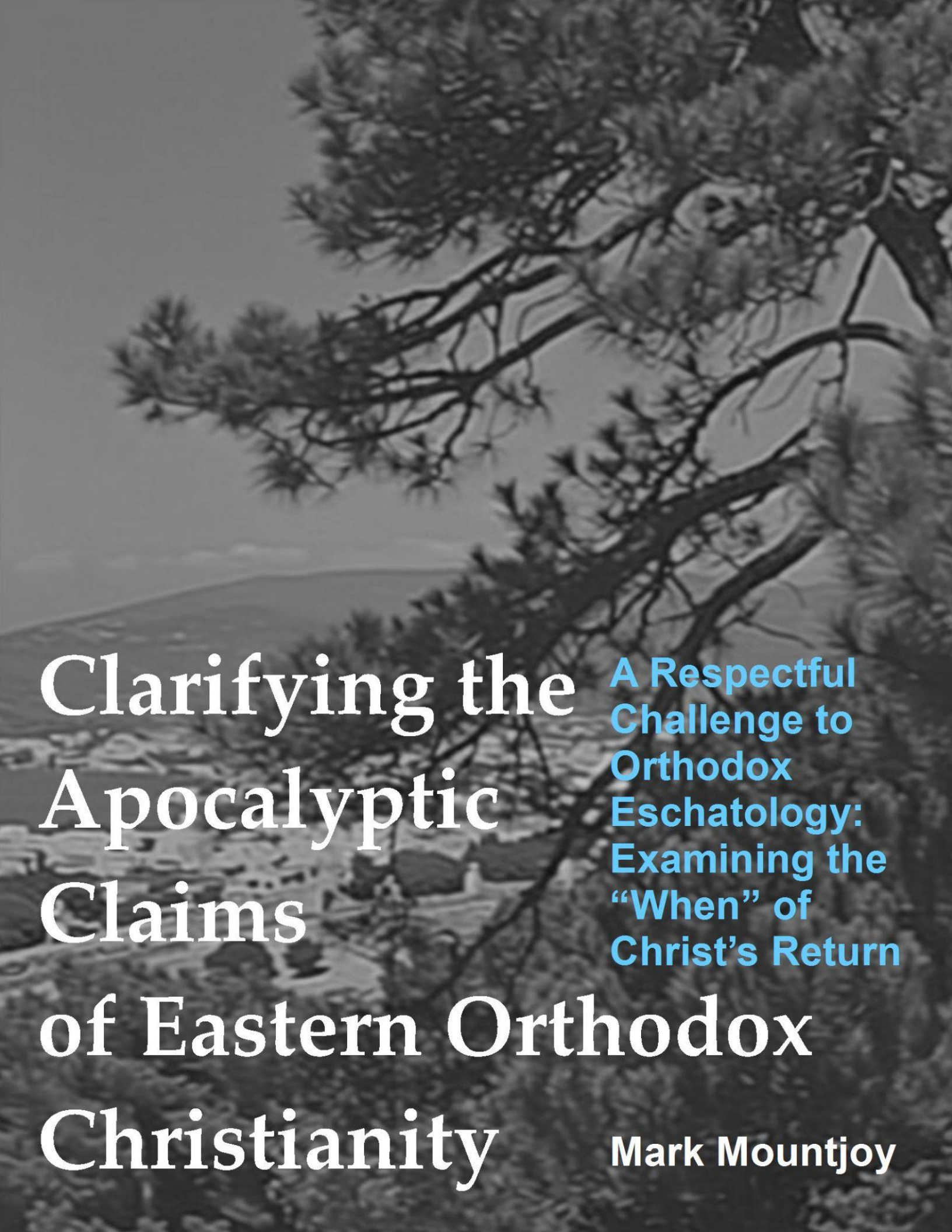




Clarifying the Apocalyptic Claims of Eastern Orthodox Christianity

A Respectful
Challenge to
Orthodox
Eschatology:
Examining the
“When” of
Christ’s Return

Mark Mountjoy

Clarifying the Apocalyptic Claims of Eastern Orthodox Christianity

Clarifying the Apocalyptic Claims of Eastern Orthodox Christianity

*A Respectful Challenge to Orthodox
Eschatology: Examining the “When”
of Christ’s Return*

Mark Mountjoy



Motus Conservationis Christianae

www.truechristianpress.org

**Denver - San Francisco
United States of America**

Copyright © 2025, 2026 by True Christian Press.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review. For more information, address: truechristianpress@gmail.com.

Cover: The Eastern Orthodox Church claims apostolic continuity as its supreme theological authority — preserving what was believed everywhere, always, and by all. This study applies that standard with full rigor to the eschatological question the tradition has been reluctant to examine on its own terms.

The apostolic communities universally expected imminent fulfillment of New Testament prophecy during the late Second Jewish Commonwealth. The Greek temporal vocabulary of the New Testament states this plainly. The historical record of Josephus confirms it with remarkable precision. Two defensive arguments the tradition typically deploys — its role in assembling the canon and its catalogue of failed prophetic predictions — are examined and shown to confirm rather than undermine the fulfilled eschatology framework. The partial rehabilitation of Montanus reveals him as far less confused than tradition supposes. Augustine's decisive move — simultaneously pulling Revelation 20 backward to Pentecost and subsuming the entire preceding nineteen chapters — is identified as the single interpretive stone that shattered the Apocalypse's mirror, concealing the late Second Jewish Commonwealth as its primary antagonist in plain sight for sixteen centuries.

Designed by True Christian Press

Preface — The Question the Tradition Has Not Answered

The Eastern Orthodox Church presents itself to the world as the unbroken custodian of apostolic teaching — the community that has preserved, without addition or subtraction, what was believed by all Christians everywhere from the beginning. This is not a peripheral claim. It is the foundation of Orthodox theological authority, the ground on which every doctrinal declaration rests, and the standard by which the tradition measures the authenticity of Christian belief across every generation.

This study accepts that claim seriously — more seriously, perhaps, than the tradition has recently applied it to the question examined here. Because the question of eschatological timing — when the prophesied events of the New Testament were expected to occur, and when they actually occurred — is precisely the kind of question that the tradition's own authority standard demands be answered with reference to what was believed by all Christians everywhere from the beginning. And when that standard is applied honestly to the eschatological question, the result is not comfortable for the tradition's current position.

The Orthodox tradition maintains that Scripture reveals what Christ will do at His return but remains essentially silent about

when this will occur — that the timing belongs to the sealed mysteries of God rather than to the domain of datable prophetic fulfillment. This position has the convenience of being unfalsifiable. It also has the inconvenience of contradicting what the apostolic communities themselves universally expected, what the New Testament's own Greek temporal vocabulary plainly states, and what the historical record of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth documents with remarkable precision.

This study is not written with hostility toward the Greek Church, Orthodox Christianity or Orthodox Christians. It is written with the conviction that a tradition which genuinely prizes apostolic continuity has both the capacity and the obligation to examine the eschatological question with the same rigor it applies to every other domain of doctrinal inquiry. What follows is that examination — conducted on the tradition's own terms, with the tradition's own stated principles, and arriving at conclusions the tradition's own linguistic heritage makes difficult to avoid.

Two defensive arguments the tradition typically deploys against this inquiry are examined and answered directly. The tradition's role in assembling the New Testament canon is honored and then followed to where it actually leads. The catalogue of failed eschatological predictions from Montanus to the present is examined and shown to confirm rather than undermine the

fulfilled eschatology framework. Neither argument, properly followed, supports the tradition's current position. Both, properly followed, demand the engagement the tradition has been reluctant to undertake.

Chapter One — The Tradition's Own Standard Applied

The epistemological foundation of Orthodox doctrinal authority is the principle articulated by Vincent of Lérins in the fifth century and embraced by the Orthodox tradition as definitive: authentic Christian teaching is what has been believed quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus — everywhere, always, and by all. The Vincentian Canon is not a peripheral methodological preference. It is the tradition's central claim about how to distinguish genuine apostolic teaching from later innovation, corruption, or misunderstanding.

No serious Orthodox theologian would dispute this. The tradition's entire apologetic posture toward Roman Catholicism, toward Protestantism, and toward the various sectarian movements that have proliferated across Christian history rests on this canon. Where Rome has innovated — papal infallibility, the filioque, purgatory — Orthodoxy points to the Vincentian Canon and asks: was this believed everywhere, always, and by all? Where Protestantism has reduced — the sacraments, the communion of saints, the patristic heritage — Orthodoxy applies the same standard. The canon is not invoked selectively. It is the tradition's universal measure of doctrinal authenticity.

Apply it now to the eschatological question with the same rigor.

What All Christians Everywhere Always Believed About Eschatological Timing

What was the universal eschatological expectation of the apostolic communities — the communities the Orthodox tradition claims to be in direct and unbroken continuity with? What did all Christians everywhere always believe about when the prophesied events would occur?

The answer is not ambiguous. It is preserved in the documents the tradition itself canonized and venerated as the authentic apostolic witness. The universal expectation of the apostolic communities was imminent fulfillment — within the generation of the original hearers, within the lifetimes of the people being addressed, during the catastrophic dismantling of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth order that Jesus had announced and that the apostles were living to see unfold.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians using the first person plural — we who are alive and remain — including himself among those who expected to witness the events he was describing. This is not an isolated Pauline enthusiasm. It is the consistent posture of every apostolic writer. James declared that the Judge was standing at the door (James 5:9). Peter announced that the end of all things was at hand (1 Peter 4:7). John opened the Apocalypse

by declaring that the things described must shortly come to pass and that the time was near (Revelation 1:1, 3). Jesus Himself stated that the generation of His hearers would not pass away before all these things took place (Matthew 24:34).

These are not peripheral statements from minor apostolic figures. They are the consistent, universal, cross-tradition testimony of the entire apostolic witness. Father, this is precisely what the Vincentian Canon requires to be treated as authentic Christian teaching. Not the opinion of one theologian. Not the development of one school. The universal apostolic expectation. Everywhere. Always. By all — at least, by all who were actually present in the apostolic communities and who wrote in their own voice about what they expected to witness.

The Contradiction the Tradition Must Face

The Orthodox tradition's current eschatological position — a future physical return, a future general resurrection, a future last judgment still pending after twenty centuries — is not the universal apostolic belief. It is a later development, shaped by the tradition's need to account for the apparent non-occurrence of what the apostles expected imminently, adjusted across generations of theological reflection, and now presented as though it were the timeless apostolic deposit.

But the Vincentian Canon does not permit this substitution without examination. If the canon means what the tradition claims it means, then the universal apostolic expectation of imminent fulfillment during the late Second Jewish Commonwealth is precisely what must be honored as authentic Christian teaching on the eschatological question. The tradition cannot apply the Vincentian Canon to the Trinity, to the Incarnation, to the sacraments — invoking universal apostolic consensus as the ground of doctrinal authority — and then set it aside when the universal apostolic consensus on eschatological timing produces a conclusion the tradition's current framework cannot accommodate.

The tradition's own most fundamental authority standard, applied honestly to the eschatological question, does not support the tradition's current eschatological position. It demands a reckoning with what the apostolic communities universally expected — and what the historical record of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth documents as having occurred.

This is not an external critique imported from a hostile tradition. It is the application of the Orthodox tradition's own stated principles to a question the tradition has been reluctant to examine on those terms. The examination is overdue.

Chapter Two —

What the Greek Text Actually Says

The Orthodox tradition possesses a genuine and significant advantage in the examination of the New Testament's temporal claims. The Koine Greek of the apostolic writings flows through Orthodox liturgy, theological discourse, and patristic heritage in ways that give the tradition an immediacy to the original text that no translation-dependent tradition can fully replicate. This advantage, however, creates a corresponding responsibility. The tradition that reads the New Testament in its original tongue cannot credibly claim ignorance of what that tongue's temporal vocabulary means.

The apostolic writers employed specific Greek constructions that any competent reader of Koine Greek recognizes as indicators of temporal proximity. These are not vague eschatological gestures. They are precise linguistic tools whose meanings are established by consistent usage across the entirety of Greek literature, not merely in the New Testament.

The Vocabulary of Imminence

ἐγγύς (*engys*) — near, at hand — appears throughout the New Testament in contexts where it plainly means temporally proximate. James 5:8 declares that the coming of the Lord is

near. Revelation 1:3 states that the time is near. In every ordinary usage across Koine Greek literature, *engys* means near. The tradition's claim that it means something other than near in eschatological contexts requires a specific grammatical and lexical justification that the tradition has not provided and cannot provide, because no such justification exists in the Greek evidence.

ἐν τάχει (*en tachei*) — shortly, speedily — opens the Apocalypse in Revelation 1:1 with the declaration that the things described must shortly come to pass. The identical construction appears in Luke 18:8 — He will avenge them speedily — where no Orthodox interpreter proposes that speedily means after two thousand years or more. The construction means what it means.

The Apocalypse opens with an explicit temporal declaration that anchors its contents in the immediate future of the communities being addressed.

μέλλω (*mellō*) — about to be, on the point of, imminently — is among the most temporally precise verbs in the Greek language. It does not mean will eventually. It means it *is about to*. Revelation 1:19 employs it to describe the things which are about to take place after these — not the things which will eventually take place in a distant eschatological future. The present active indicative of *mellō* carries a force of immediacy

that the tradition's liturgical heritage recognizes in every other context it appears.

ταχύ (*tachy*) — quickly, soon — appears in Christ's own voice in Revelation 2:16, 3:11, 22:7, 22:12, and 22:20: I come quickly.

The present tense combined with the adverb of speed — a construction the tradition's Greek expertise readily identifies — indicates imminent arrival. The closing declaration of the entire Apocalypse — Come, Lord Jesus — was the cry of communities expecting an imminent response, not a liturgical formula for an indefinitely deferred future.

The Olivet Discourse — A Master Class in Prophetic Timing

Nowhere is the question of when more explicitly addressed than in the Lord's own words on the Mount of Olives, preserved in the tradition's own sacred tongue. The disciples' question is temporally unambiguous: **πότε ταῦτα ἔσται** — when shall these things be? They sought temporal information. The Lord's response provides it.

ὅταν οὖν ἴδητε — when therefore you see — employs the aorist subjunctive construction that indicates a definite future event the apostles themselves would witness. The second person plural is not addressed to a distant future generation. It is addressed to the men standing on the mount.

εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ — immediately after — creates an unbreakable chronological link between the tribulation and the cosmic signs that follow. The adverb **εὐθέως** is among the most temporally forceful in the Greek language. It does not mean eventually or in the fullness of time. It means immediately.

ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη — this generation — is the most consequential phrase in the entire discourse and the one the tradition's framework is least able to accommodate. The demonstrative pronoun **αὕτη** functions throughout Greek literature — and throughout the New Testament, including in Matthew's own Gospel — as a pointer to something present and immediate, not distant and future. *Genea* means, in every instance Matthew employs it, the generation of people alive at the time of speaking. The tradition's exegetical attempts to make it mean a race, or a type, or a future generation that will arise when the signs begin, require it to mean something it means nowhere else in the same author's usage. This is not exegesis. It is the text being made to say what the framework requires rather than what the language permits.

The Temple as Temporal Anchor

Paul's description in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 of the man of lawlessness sitting in the temple of God — **καθίσαι εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ** — provides a temporal anchor the tradition's current

eschatological framework cannot honestly engage. The theological significance of the Temple's defilement lies precisely in the defilement of the sanctuary that God had acknowledged through His Shekinah presence. This theological significance is inseparable from the specific Temple of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth — the one that stood, was defiled, and was destroyed within the generation Jesus specified. A future rebuilt temple would not carry this theological freight. Paul was addressing a situation involving the existing Temple — the one whose destruction Jesus had already announced — not a hypothetical future structure whose theological status would require entirely different theological justification.

Chapter Three —

The Historical Record the Tradition Cannot Afford to Read

The fulfilled eschatology framework does not rest on exegetical argument alone. It rests on the correspondence between the New Testament's prophetic announcements and the documented historical record of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth — a correspondence so precise and so extensively documented that it constitutes the most powerful external confirmation of the apostolic claims available to any reader willing to examine it.

Josephus ben Matthias — Flavius Josephus — was a first-century Jewish historian, military commander, and eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem and the events of the

late Second Jewish Commonwealth. His two major works, *The Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews*, provide the most extensive surviving contemporaneous account of the period from the mid-3820s through the destruction of 3831 (70 CE). He was present. He witnessed what he described. He wrote within the generation Jesus specified.

What Josephus documents is not background color for the New Testament narrative. It is a precise, detailed, and independently corroborated account of the events the New Testament announced. The signs in the sky. The armies fighting in the clouds above the city. The great light blazing over the Temple at midnight. The eastern gate opening of its own accord. The voice of the priests declaring departure from the sanctuary. The famine. The siege. The destruction of the Temple down to its foundations — not one stone upon another, exactly as the Lord had described on the Mount of Olives. The scattering of the covenant people. The permanent end of the Levitical sacrificial order.

These are not coincidental parallels between a prophetic text and a historical account. They are the precise fulfillment of specific announcements, in the specific timeframe specified, documented by an eyewitness who had no theological interest in confirming Christian prophetic claims. Josephus was not writing to validate the New Testament. He was writing the history of his own people's catastrophe. The correspondence between his account

and the New Testament's prophetic announcements is therefore more, not less, significant for being unintentional.

Roman historians — Tacitus, Suetonius, Cassius Dio — provide independent corroboration from the perspective of the conquering power. They had no investment in confirming Jewish or Christian eschatological claims. They record the same events from the outside. The convergence of multiple independent historical sources on the events of 3823 to 3831 constitutes a level of external documentary confirmation that no other prophetic tradition in human history can claim for its central predictions.

The tradition that prides itself on preserving the apostolic witness has conspicuously failed to place this historical record in sustained conversation with the New Testament's prophetic announcements. The reason is not difficult to identify. Sustained engagement with the Josephus correspondence produces conclusions the tradition's current eschatological framework cannot accommodate. The record is therefore not engaged. It is not taught in Orthodox seminaries as the historical confirmation of apostolic prophecy. It is not placed alongside the prophetic texts so that the correspondence can be examined. The historical record of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth — the most important piece of external confirmation the New Testament's temporal claims possess — is the document the tradition cannot afford to read honestly.

Chapter Four —

“We Gave You the New Testament”:

The Canon Argument and Where It Leads

When the eschatological question is pressed with the specificity this study has brought to it, the Orthodox tradition typically deploys one of two defensive arguments designed to terminate the inquiry rather than engage it. The first is the canon argument. The second is the failure catalogue. Both deserve careful examination — because both, followed honestly, lead to conclusions that support rather than undermine the fulfilled eschatology framework.

The canon argument asserts that because the Orthodox and patristic tradition played the decisive role in recognizing and preserving the New Testament canon, it possesses an authority over that canon’s interpretation that external challenges cannot override. Without us, the argument runs, there would be no New Testament as we know it. The communities that assembled the canon are the communities whose interpretation of it must be authoritative.

The historical kernel of this argument is genuine and deserves acknowledgment. The councils and communities of the patristic period did play a decisive role in formally recognizing the New

Testament canon. This is historically accurate. The tradition's role in preserving these documents across twenty centuries is not trivial.

What the Canon Argument Actually Requires

But notice what the argument claims when deployed in the eschatological context. It claims that the authority to recognize the canon confers the authority to determine the canon's meaning — specifically, to determine the meaning of its temporal claims in ways that override the plain force of its own Greek vocabulary. And this is precisely where the argument quietly overreaches in a way that must be named.

The canon argument, pressed to its logical conclusion, requires the tradition to reckon honestly with everything the canon contains — including the temporal claims this study has examined. The tradition cannot invoke canonical authority selectively — applying it to the doctrines the tradition wishes to affirm while suspending it precisely at the point where the canon's own plain temporal claims challenge the tradition's eschatological framework. Either the tradition's canonical authority extends to the temporal statements, in which case it must account honestly for what those statements plainly say, or the canonical authority does not extend to interpretive conclusions, in which case the argument from canonical custodianship collapses entirely.

There is a second and more pointed implication. The communities that produced the documents the tradition canonized were communities whose universal eschatological expectation — as documented in those same texts — was imminent fulfillment during the late Second Jewish Commonwealth. The tradition preserved those documents, with their temporal claims fully intact, across twenty centuries. It did not expunge the time statements. It did not redact Paul's first-person plural. It did not remove this generation from Matthew 24:34. It canonized these texts — formally recognizing them as the authentic apostolic witness — and in doing so, preserved the very evidence that most directly challenges its current eschatological position.

The tradition has been the faithful custodian of the documents that testify against its own framework. The canon argument does not protect the tradition's eschatological position. It demands that the tradition take its own canonical inheritance more seriously than its current framework allows. The communities that recognized the canon recognized documents written by apostolic writers who expected imminent fulfillment. The canonical authority the tradition invokes requires it to account for what those writers expected — not to reinterpret their expectations into conformity with a framework constructed long after the events in question had already occurred.

The Absence of a Formed Canon Does Not Invalidate Apostolic Expectation

A subsidiary form of the canon argument claims that because there was no formally assembled New Testament in the days of the apostles — no bound collection of recognized texts circulating as a single canonical unit during the run-up to the destruction of Jerusalem — the apostolic communities' eschatological expectations cannot be assessed as a unified testimony. The canon was assembled later; its meaning therefore belongs to those who assembled it.

This argument confuses formal canonization with the historical reality of apostolic teaching and expectation. The absence of a formally assembled canon during the late Second Jewish Commonwealth does not mean the apostolic communities lacked consistent eschatological expectations. It means those expectations were expressed in living communities, in circulating letters, in oral teaching, and in the documents that were later formally recognized — precisely because they preserved the authentic apostolic witness. The formal canonization process did not create the apostolic expectation of imminent fulfillment. It preserved the documents that already contained it. The expectation preceded the canon. The canon's authority derives from its fidelity to the expectation — not the reverse.

Chapter Five —

The Failure Catalogue:

What It Proves and What It Does Not

The second defensive argument the tradition deploys against eschatological inquiry is the failure catalogue — the observation that every historical attempt to plot, calculate, or predict eschatological fulfillment has ended in documented failure and often in social disaster. From Montanus in the aftermath of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth to William Miller in the nineteenth century, from the Watchtower Society's multiple date failures to the endless configurations of twentieth-century Dispensationalist date-setting — the catalogue is extensive, the failures are well-documented, and the tradition's conclusion is that no serious Orthodox Christian should involve themselves in the kind of inquiry this study undertakes.

The argument carries genuine weight as a warning against a specific kind of eschatological hubris. The failures in the catalogue are real. The social and spiritual devastation they produced in the communities that organized themselves around failed predictions is real. The tradition's caution is not without historical justification.

But the argument proves something quite different from what the tradition deploys it to prove. And the tradition's use of it as a conversation-stopper rather than as a diagnostic tool reveals more about the tradition's intellectual posture than about the legitimacy of the inquiry itself.

The Shared Methodology of Every Failed Prediction

Examine every item in the failure catalogue with one specific question: what is the shared methodological characteristic of every failed prediction on the list? The answer is immediate and consistent for every item from Miller onward. Every failed eschatological prediction from the nineteenth century to the present is a prediction about a future event — a Futurist calculation or announcement about when something still to come will finally arrive. Miller predicted a future Second Coming in 1844. The Watchtower Society predicted future dates for the end. Dispensationalist date-setters predicted future raptures and tribulations. Harold Camping predicted a future end on specific dates. All of these look for the fulfillment of late Second Jewish Commonwealth prophecy in the future — which is precisely where it cannot be found, because it has already occurred.

Montanus is a more complex case — and the complexity is instructive in ways the tradition's superficial treatment of him has entirely missed. He is not simply the earliest item in a

uniform catalogue of identical Futurist errors. He is a categorically different kind of figure whose specific claims reveal a partial grasp of the fulfilled eschatology framework that no subsequent figure in the catalogue demonstrates. His case deserves examination on its own terms rather than dismissal by association.

Not one item in the failure catalogue is a historical identification of past fulfilled events. Not one item is an examination of the correspondence between apostolic prophecy and the documented historical record of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth. Every failure in the catalogue is a failure of Futurist prediction — a methodology that looks for fulfillment where the New Testament's own temporal claims say not to look.

The fulfilled eschatology framework is not a Futurist prediction. It makes no predictions about future events that could fail. It identifies what already happened, in documented history, during the late Second Jewish Commonwealth — events recorded by Josephus, corroborated by Roman historians, and announced in advance by the apostolic writers with the specific temporal language this study has examined. The failure catalogue has nothing to say about the fulfilled eschatology framework because the failure catalogue is composed entirely of Futurist predictions, and the fulfilled eschatology framework is not a Futurist prediction.

Montanus — A Partial Rehabilitation

Montanus did not appear in an historical vacuum. He appeared in approximately 3911 (151 CE) — roughly a decade after the final terminus of the completed covenantal drama of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth. The sequential catastrophes of that drama — the signs and martyrdoms beginning in 3823, the Jewish-Roman War from 3827 to 3831, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 3831, the Kitos Wars of 3876 to 3878, and the final convulsive terminus of the Bar Kokhba revolt from 3893 to 3901 — had concluded a full decade before he arrived on the scene. That ten-year interval is itself significant. It was long enough for the immediate shock of the catastrophe to settle, for the communities that had navigated the drama to begin normalizing their post-drama existence, and for the gap between what had been visibly expected and what had visibly occurred to produce genuine theological disorientation across the surviving communities.

Now examine what Montanus actually claimed — and what he conspicuously did not claim. He did not predict the Second Coming of Jesus as an imminent future event. He did not prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem, which had already occurred forty years before his emergence. He did not prophesy the destruction of Rome. He did not set a date for a future tribulation, a future Antichrist, a future general resurrection, a future millennium. Every one of these omissions is significant.

These are precisely the claims a Futurist enthusiast would make — and Montanus made none of them.

What Montanus claimed was that the New Jerusalem was about to descend upon the Phrygian peninsula near Pepuza and Tymion. This claim is drawn directly from Revelation 21 — not from Revelation 6–19 or Revelation 20. He was not predicting the imminent arrival of the judgment events. He was anticipating the post-judgment consummation. And for Montanus to have positioned Revelation 21 as the next item on the eschatological agenda, he must have been operating — consciously or unconsciously — with the assumption that the events of Revelation 6–20 were already behind the communities he was addressing. He was not waiting for the tribulation. He was not waiting for the millennium or the battle of Gog and Magog. He was waiting for the New Jerusalem — which in Revelation's own narrative sequence appears only after all of those events have concluded.

This means Montanus implicitly conceded what no subsequent figure in the failure catalogue concedes: that Revelation's judgment sequence had already been fulfilled. His eschatological horizon began where the fulfilled eschatology framework says the covenantal drama ended — at the completion of Revelation 20's events. He looked past the fulfilled judgment sequence into what came after it. In this specific and important sense, Montanus was less confused than a

superficial placement of him in the failure catalogue suggests. His error was not the direction of his eschatological gaze but the nature of what he expected to see when he looked in the right direction.

Montanus's Error — Too Small, Not Too Concrete

The tradition has treated Montanus's expectation of the New Jerusalem's physical descent as self-evidently absurd — the fantasy of an overheated prophetic imagination. But this dismissal rests on a theological assumption that the biblical texts do not support. To dismiss the expectation of real, architectural, spatially definite fulfillment is not to honor the transcendence of the promise. It is to rob the promise of its substance.

Jesus said in John 14:3: I go to prepare a place for you — τόπον ὑμῖν — and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. The word τόπος is among the most concretely spatial words in the Greek language. It means a definite location, a specific site that can be occupied. Jesus was not promising a spiritual condition or a metaphysical category. He was promising a place — real, spatial, prepared, inhabitable. The architectural concreteness of the New Jerusalem is not peripheral to the Christian hope. It is the substance of it. A tradition that dissolves the τόπος into pure spirituality has not honored the promise. It has replaced it.

Hebrews 12:22 speaks plainly of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, inhabited by an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. The spirits of just men made perfect are inhabitants — not symbols of inhabitants, not poetic figures for a spiritual condition, but the actual residents of an actual city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). Hebrews 11:14 and 16 state that the patriarchs desired a better country — a heavenly one — and that God has prepared for them a city. 1 Peter 1:4 describes the inheritance as incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven — τετηρημένην, a present perfect passive participle indicating something actively maintained and held in readiness for its recipients. This is not the language of spiritual abstraction. It is the language of a real prepared inheritance awaiting delivery.

The 2 Corinthians 5:1–4 passage requires a reading that the tradition has consistently missed. Paul writes that if the earthly tent we inhabit is dissolved, we have a building from God — a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The universal interpretive assumption is that Paul is contrasting the human body with the resurrection body. But the Greek word for tent throughout the passage is σκῆνος — the diminutive of σκηνή, the specific Septuagint word for the Tabernacle, the portable covenant dwelling of God's presence in the wilderness. This is not generic tent language. It is Levitical covenantal dwelling language. The σκῆνος Paul and his communities are

groaning within is the old covenant order — the Levitical system, the Temple made by human hands, the temporary and portable structure that God had always intended as a way-station toward a permanent habitation of incomparably greater scale and glory.

The groaning Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 5 is therefore covenantal groaning — communities inhabiting the old covenant order and longing for the permanent building from God that it was always pointing toward. This is precisely the groaning witnessed in Revelation 6:9–11, where the souls under the altar — sheltered in the heavenly counterpart of the Levitical structure — cry out How long, O Lord? Both passages describe communities in temporary covenant dwellings waiting for the permanent city. The direction of travel in both is not toward the dissolution of architecture into spirituality. It is toward architecture of permanent glory that makes the Levitical σκῆνος look like what it always was — a preparation for something incomparably greater.

Montanus was therefore not wrong to expect real, architectural, inhabitable fulfillment. He was not wrong to anticipate a spatially definite New Jerusalem. His error was in the scale of his imagination — not that he thought too concretely but that he thought too small. He reduced the incomprehensible to the comprehensible and then tried to fit the reduced version onto existing physical geography. Revelation 21:16 gives the New

Jerusalem as a cube of twelve thousand stadia on each side — approximately fourteen hundred miles in every dimension. No peninsula in Asia Minor could receive a structure of these proportions. But the appropriate response to this observation is not to spiritualize the dimensions. It is to recognize that the New Jerusalem does not descend into the existing physical order unchanged. It descends into a new heaven and a new earth — a recreated cosmos whose geography is not constrained by the present world's topography. The dimensions are real. The architecture is real. The scale simply exceeds what the present physical order can contain, which is precisely why a new creation is required to receive it.

We are marching toward architecture — architecture of a scale and order that no present human category can exhaust and that no present physical geography can contain. This does not make it less real. It makes it more real than anything the present world has produced or can produce. Montanus's error was not that he marched toward it. His error was that he imagined he could find it before the road was finished.

Augustine and the Stone That Shattered the Mirror

Montanism persisted for nearly six centuries — from approximately 391 to somewhere in the sixth or seventh century of the conventional calendar. This extraordinary longevity is not an embarrassment to be explained away. It is a

datum. Movements that survive six centuries are not simply enthusiastic errors that burned themselves out. They met a genuine and sustained need that the majority tradition was failing to supply. What Montanism supplied — however imperfectly, however much distorted by its own internal developments across those centuries — was a framework that at least preserved the sense that the covenantal drama had concluded and that the eschatological narrative had moved forward into a new phase. The communities that remained Montanist for six centuries were communities that could not accept an eschatology without a destination. They were wrong about the imminence and the geography of the New Jerusalem. But they were right that the narrative had moved — and the majority tradition's failure to provide a satisfying account of where it had moved kept Montanism alive far longer than a simple prophetic enthusiasm should have survived.

What finally displaced Montanism — and what simultaneously produced the most consequential single eschatological decision in the history of the Christian tradition — was not a more careful reading of the Apocalypse's narrative sequence. It was the theological genius of Augustine of Hippo, working in a context so distant from the events of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth that the living memory of those events had been extinct for more than two centuries.

Augustine was born in what the conventional calendar marks as 354 CE — approximately 217 years after the Bar Kokhba terminus at 3901. He was separated from the completed covenantal drama by more than seven generations. He had no community memory connecting him to eyewitnesses of what Josephus had documented. He had no oral tradition anchoring him to the visceral historical reality of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth's catastrophic conclusion. What he had was the accumulated weight of two centuries of interpretive tradition already working to account for the gap between apostolic expectation and visible historical reality — and he had the immediate crisis of Rome's fall in 410 CE, which shattered the identification of the Roman Empire with the providential order of Christian civilization and demanded a theological response of the highest order.

The City of God was that response — one of the supreme achievements of Christian theological literature, a framework of genuine power and enduring value. Augustine needed an eschatology that could survive Rome's fall, that was not hostage to the fate of any earthly political order, that gave the Church a stable identity and a secure horizon regardless of what the empire did or failed to do. He found it in Revelation 20 — the millennial reign of Christ with His saints, the binding of Satan, the first resurrection. And here is where the single most consequential interpretive move in the history of Christian eschatology was made.

Augustine pulled Revelation 20 backward. He relocated the millennium — drew it back from its position as the conclusion of the judgment sequence and made it coextensive with the entire Church age from Pentecost forward, beginning at 3793/3794. The millennium was not a future period to be anticipated or a concluded historical period to be identified. It was the present and ongoing condition of the Church in every age — the reign of Christ already established, the binding of Satan already accomplished, the first resurrection already underway in the spiritual life of every believer.

This was the stone hitting the center of the mirror. And the two consequences were not sequential but simultaneous — they were the same single act viewed from two angles, inseparable from each other as cause is inseparable from effect.

The first consequence was the relocation itself — Revelation 20 pulled backward to 3793/3794, made ambient, made coextensive with all of Christian history, stripped of its character as a defined period with a specific beginning and a specific end. The millennium became the water the Church swims in rather than a stage in a journey the Church is passing through. This gave Augustine the institutional stability he needed. An ongoing millennial condition cannot fail to arrive, cannot be falsified by the passage of time, cannot be disrupted by the fall of empires. It is simply the condition of the Church in every age until the final consummation.

The second consequence — simultaneous and inseparable — was the subsumption of Revelation 1:1 through 19:21. The moment Revelation 20 was pulled backward to become the ambient framework of the entire Church age, the nineteen chapters that preceded it in the text lost their narrative destination. They had been building toward something — a sequential drama of judgment, vindication, and millennial conclusion moving through specific historical events toward a datable climax. That destination was now relocated to the beginning. The journey had been absorbed into its own arrival point. And nineteen chapters of sequential, temporally anchored, historically specific prophetic narrative lost their plot.

They did not lose their words. They did not lose their canonical status. Augustine cited them extensively, honored them as Scripture, interpreted them with genuine intellectual power. But they lost their narrative function — their role as a sequential account of specific events with specific historical referents. Subsumed into the millennial backdrop, they became illustrations of the ongoing spiritual warfare of the Church age rather than the story of how the covenantal drama of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth was judged and concluded. They became ambient rather than sequential. They became general rather than specific. And the specific historical identifications embedded in those nineteen chapters — the Remez identifications that pointed unmistakably to the late Second

Jewish Commonwealth as the primary antagonist of the entire drama — became inaudible.

The answer was always there in plain sight. It was not hidden behind the text. It was on the surface of the text — in the great city where the Lord was crucified, in the 666 that bore Solomon's apostasy signature, in the Gog and Magog multitude numerous as the sand of the sea. Augustine's move did not erase these identifications. It created so much interpretive noise around them that they could no longer be heard.

The late Second Jewish Commonwealth — the real antagonist, hidden in plain sight across nineteen chapters of specific Remez identification — became invisible not because it was concealed but because the instrument that would have made it visible was shattered. The mirror that had reflected a specific and identifiable image was hit at its center. Each fragment still reflects something — tyranny, judgment, cosmic warfare, divine sovereignty. But no fragment reflects the complete image that the intact mirror would have shown.

And into the vacuum created by the subsumption, the Roman Empire floated as the default antagonist. Not because anyone chose it through careful exegesis. Not because the Remez identifications pointed toward it — they do not. But because it was the largest and most historically prominent power in the subsumed background, the obvious candidate in the absence of

the narrative tools that the subsumption had destroyed. The wrong answer became dominant not through deliberate error but through the interpretive silence that Augustine's single move created — a silence in which the right answer, present on the surface of the text all along, could no longer be heard by communities no longer equipped to listen for it.

This is Augustine's eschatological legacy — not the malicious distortion of a hostile tradition but the unintended consequence of a brilliant theological move made at enormous distance from the events it was interpreting, in response to a crisis that demanded institutional stability over historical specificity, by a mind that had no living access to the context that would have made the text's own plain identifications audible. The City of God is a masterwork. The eschatological price it paid was the fracture of the Apocalypse's mirror — the simultaneous relocation of Revelation 20 and subsumption of everything that preceded it — a price that the Orthodox tradition, the Catholic tradition, and through their influence the entire subsequent history of Christian eschatology has been paying ever since.

The Catalogue After Montanus — A Different Error Entirely

Every figure in the failure catalogue after Montanus made the opposite error. Where Montanus had looked past the fulfilled judgment sequence toward the consummation, Miller, the

Watchtower, and the Dispensationalist date-setters looked back into the fulfilled judgment sequence and declared it still future. They were not reaching toward Revelation 21. They were predicting the events of Revelation 6–19 as though those events had not already occurred during the late Second Jewish Commonwealth. Their error was not in the character of what they expected at the destination. It was in the direction of their eschatological gaze — looking forward for what was already behind them.

The tradition has lumped Montanus with Miller as though they were making the same kind of mistake. They were not. Montanus had implicitly grasped that the judgment sequence was past and was reaching — however imperfectly and with too small an imagination — for what came after it. Miller and his successors had not grasped this at all. The catalogue contains at least two fundamentally different kinds of errors. The tradition's failure to distinguish them is itself evidence of how superficially the failure catalogue has been examined — and how much more careful analysis the fulfilled eschatology framework is able to bring to questions the tradition has been content to dismiss with a list of names.

The tradition that deploys this catalogue as grounds for avoiding eschatological inquiry has misread its own evidence. The catalogue does not demonstrate that eschatological identification is inherently unreliable. It demonstrates that Futurist

eschatological prediction is consistently unreliable — which is precisely what the fulfilled eschatology framework has been arguing. The reason the post-Montanus catalogue fails uniformly is that every item looks for the fulfillment of late Second Jewish Commonwealth prophecy in the future. The fulfilled eschatology framework says: turn around. The fulfillment is behind you, documented in the historical record of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth, confirmed by Josephus, corroborated by Roman historians, announced in advance by the apostolic writers in the precise temporal language this study has examined.

The Argument from the Catalogue Is Not Neutrality — It Is Protection

The tradition's use of the failure catalogue as grounds for refusing to engage with eschatological fulfillment questions is not intellectual neutrality. It is institutional protection. If serious inquiry into eschatological fulfillment is categorically delegitimized by reference to the failures of Futurist prediction, then the tradition's own eschatological framework — which is itself a form of Futurist expectation — never has to be tested against the evidence. The failure catalogue serves the tradition's intellectual convenience. It does not serve its stated commitment to truth.

The appropriate response to a catalogue of methodological failures is to examine the methodology that produced them — not to declare the entire field of inquiry off-limits. The failures in the catalogue were produced by one specific methodology: looking for the fulfillment of late Second Jewish Commonwealth prophecy in the future. The correction of that methodology is not to stop examining the question. It is to look in the right direction — which is where the New Testament’s own temporal vocabulary, the Josephus correspondence, and the historical record of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth all consistently point.

Chapter Six —

The Hermeneutics of Remez: How the Apocalypse Subtly Names Its Referents

The Orthodox tradition’s patristic heritage has always recognized and valued the typological method of biblical interpretation — the reading of earlier scriptural figures and events as patterns that illuminate later fulfillments. This tradition of typological reading, developed extensively in the Alexandrian school and present throughout the patristic corpus, provides the tradition with the hermeneutical resources to appreciate one of the Apocalypse’s most sophisticated interpretive features.

The Apocalypse does not identify its antagonists in plain prosaic language. It employs the rabbinic technique known as Remez — the embedding of contemporary identifications within layers of scriptural allusion, so that the text speaks with precision to readers formed in the Jewish interpretive tradition while communicating through a form of encoded reference that protects the communities being addressed. This is not mystification. It is the precise hermeneutical tool of the Apocalypse's first-century Jewish-Christian context, and it speaks with far greater specificity than the tradition's allegorizing or futurizing readings have recognized.

The Number of the Beast — Solomon's Apostasy

The number 666 in Revelation 13:17–18 has generated more speculative interpretation than almost any other passage in the Apocalypse. The Remez method resolves the speculation immediately. The key lies in the connection to 3 Kings 10:14 and 2 Paralipomenon 9:13, where the annual weight of gold received by Solomon is recorded as precisely six hundred and sixty-six talents. This is not coincidental numerology. It is deliberate Remez — the Apocalypse identifying its antagonist through the specific biblical signature of Solomon's departure from covenant faithfulness, the moment when Israel's greatest king began his descent into the idolatry and economic corruption that divided the kingdom and initiated its long decline.

The beast's economic control — the buying and selling that requires the mark — directly parallels Solomon's later corruption through foreign commercial alliances and the oppressive taxation that funded his increasingly apostate regime. The Remez identifies the antagonist not as a vague future figure but as someone whose covenantal corruption in the late Second Jewish Commonwealth context carries the specific signature of Solomon's trajectory — a leader of God's people who has become the instrument of covenantal destruction.

The Great City — Jerusalem Named Through Typology

Revelation 11:8 provides one of the Apocalypse's most explicit geographical identifications, rendered with clarity in the Greek text:

ἥτις καλεῖται πνευματικῶς Σόδομα καὶ Αἴγυπτος, ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἐσταυρώθη — which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

The phrase ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἐσταυρώθη provides definitive geographical identification — this is Jerusalem, the only city where the Lord was crucified. The Remez then deepens the identification through the Exodus typology embedded in the Egypt reference. Luke 9:31 records Moses and Elijah speaking with Christ at the Transfiguration about τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἤμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ — His

exodus which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Jerusalem had become, in the Apocalypse's typological reading, the Egypt from which the new covenant people needed deliverance — the place of bondage requiring a new exodus. The city where the Messiah was crucified had spiritually become what Egypt had been — the oppressive system from which God's people must flee before its judgment falls.

Gog and Magog — Numbers as the Sand of the Sea

The Remez identification of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:8–9 is among the most precise in the entire Apocalypse. The numerical description — ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης, whose number is as the sand of the sea — triggers an immediate intertextual recognition for readers formed in the Hebrew Scriptures. The phrase appears in three crucial contexts: God's promise to Jacob in Genesis 32:12, Isaiah's prophecy of the remnant in Isaiah 10:22, and Paul's citation of Isaiah in Romans 9:27 regarding the children of Israel.

The Remez is unmistakable. The multitude of Gog and Magog represents the apostate covenant people of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth — numerous as the sand, as God had promised to Jacob, but turned against His anointed. This is not a vague future rebellion of distant nations. It is the specific fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy regarding the rebellious majority and the faithful remnant — played out in the final

convulsive catastrophe of the Bar Kokhba revolt from 3893 to 3897, which constituted the last gathering of the forces of covenant resistance before the final terminus of the covenantal drama at 3901.

The sophistication of the Remez method throughout the Apocalypse demonstrates that the text was not written in abstract, timeless symbols awaiting assignment to distant future events. It was written with precise first-century referents, embedded in the hermeneutical conventions of its era, speaking with specificity to the communities of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth who possessed the scriptural formation to decode its identifications. Reading it as timeless allegory or as prophecy of events still future after two thousand years requires ignoring its own hermeneutical character — which is precisely what the fulfilled eschatology framework declines to do.

Chapter Seven —

The Structural Contradiction the Tradition Must Resolve

The evidence assembled in the preceding chapters produces a conclusion that the Orthodox tradition's stated principles require it to engage honestly. The tradition claims apostolic continuity as its foundational authority. The apostolic communities universally expected imminent fulfillment during the late Second Jewish Commonwealth. The New Testament's Greek

temporal vocabulary plainly states that the prophesied events were near, shortly, at hand, and expected within the generation of the original audience. The historical record of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth documents the fulfillment of those specific announcements with remarkable precision. The tradition's own failure catalogue, properly examined, confirms rather than undermines the fulfilled eschatology framework.

Taken together, these evidential threads produce not a peripheral challenge to Orthodox eschatology but a structural one — a contradiction at the level of the tradition's own most fundamental claims that cannot be resolved by further allegorizing, further deference to patristic authority, or further deployment of the canon argument and the failure catalogue as conversation-stoppers.

Apostolic Continuity and Apostolic Expectation

The tradition claims continuity with the apostolic communities. Those communities universally expected imminent fulfillment. The tradition's current eschatological position is not continuous with that expectation. It developed in response to the apparent non-fulfillment of what the apostles expected imminently — gradually substituting a future-oriented framework for the imminent-fulfillment framework that the apostolic documents themselves preserve.

This substitution may have been pastorally necessary given the tradition's failure to recognize the late Second Jewish Commonwealth fulfillment for what it was. It may have been institutionally inevitable given the pressures of a tradition that needed to account for the passage of time without the visible physical return many had expected. But it is not apostolic continuity in the sense the tradition claims. It is a departure from the apostolic expectation — performed gradually, over generations, with the best of intentions — that the tradition's own Vincentian Canon requires it to examine rather than protect.

The Canon Preserved and the Canon's Plain Claims

The tradition preserved the canon. The canon contains these temporal claims. The tradition's own canonical authority therefore requires it to account for what those claims plainly say — not to invoke that authority as a shield against the examination the claims demand. A tradition that appeals to canonical authority in order to avoid engaging honestly with what the canon says has inverted the relationship between authority and text in a way that the tradition's own stated principles do not permit.

The Failure Catalogue and the Framework It Indicts

Every item in the tradition's failure catalogue is a Futurist prediction. The tradition's own current eschatological position is

a form of Futurist expectation — a future physical return, a future resurrection, a future judgment still pending. The failure catalogue is therefore a catalogue of failures produced by the same methodological family as the tradition's own framework.

The tradition deploys the catalogue as grounds for avoiding eschatological inquiry while itself holding a position whose methodology the catalogue indicts.

These three structural contradictions — between the claim to apostolic continuity and the departure from apostolic expectation, between the appeal to canonical authority and the evasion of the canon's plain claims, between the deployment of the failure catalogue and the sharing of the failed methodology — constitute the challenge this study places before the Orthodox tradition. Not as a hostile external critic. As a fellow reader of the same texts, applying the tradition's own stated standards with the rigor the tradition claims to prize.

Conclusion — The Question the Tradition's Own Principles Demand

The Orthodox tradition has survived twenty centuries of challenge, persecution, and theological controversy by maintaining its commitment to what was believed everywhere, always, and by all — and by applying that commitment with the scholarly rigor that its linguistic and patristic heritage makes

possible. This is not a small achievement. It is the most impressive record of doctrinal continuity in Christian history.

It is precisely because the tradition prizes this commitment that the eschatological question demands the engagement this study has called for. The tradition cannot invoke apostolic continuity as its supreme authority and simultaneously decline to examine what the apostolic communities universally expected. It cannot appeal to canonical authority and simultaneously evade what the canon's own Greek temporal vocabulary plainly states. It cannot deploy the failure catalogue against fulfilled eschatology inquiry while holding a position whose methodology the catalogue consistently indicts.

The question before the tradition is not whether the fulfilled eschatology framework threatens authentic Christianity. The arguments of this study have been made from within the tradition's own sources — the Greek New Testament it venerates, the Vincentian Canon it upholds, the patristic hermeneutical methods it has developed. The framework does not threaten authentic Christianity. It may represent a return to the apostolic clarity that the tradition's own stated principles require.

The question is whether the tradition has the intellectual and theological courage to apply its own most fundamental standards — *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus* — to the eschatological question with the same rigor it applies to every

other domain of doctrinal inquiry. The apostolic communities of the late Second Jewish Commonwealth expected imminent fulfillment. They documented that expectation in the texts the tradition canonized. The historical record confirms what was fulfilled. The Greek vocabulary states when it was expected.

The Josephus correspondence shows what occurred.

The tradition that assembled the canon preserved all of this evidence. The tradition that claims apostolic continuity is the custodian of the documents that most directly challenge its current eschatological framework. The tradition that deploys the failure catalogue as a warning against eschatological inquiry holds a position the failure catalogue indicts.

These are not external accusations. They are the internal implications of the tradition's own most fundamental claims, followed honestly to where they lead. The invitation is not to abandon the tradition. It is to honor its own highest standard — and to allow the apostolic tongue it has preserved for twenty centuries to speak, at last, with its own voice about when the promises were kept.

ὁ καιρὸς γὰρ ἐγγύς — for the time is near. (Revelation 1:3)

The time was near when John wrote it. It was near because it was about to arrive — in the catastrophic and glorious events of

the late Second Jewish Commonwealth, in the judgment of the covenant people who had rejected their Messiah, in the vindication of the witnesses who had proclaimed Him, in the establishment of the unshakeable kingdom that no subsequent empire has been able to destroy. It was near. It came. The tradition that has preserved John's words for twenty centuries now faces the question of whether it will allow those words to mean what they say.

That question awaits an answer worthy of the tradition's own stated commitment to truth.

Appendix — Key Greek Terms for Scholarly Examination

Temporal Indicators of Imminence

ἐγγύς (engys) — near, at hand; indicates genuine temporal proximity

ἐν τάχει (en tachei) — shortly, speedily; indicates rapid occurrence

ταχύ (tachy) — quickly, soon; adverb of speed combined with present tense indicating imminent arrival

μέλλω (mellō) — about to be, on the point of; the most temporally forceful imminence verb in Koine Greek

ἤδη (ēdē) — already, now; indicates present or immediately prior occurrence

Demonstrative Pronouns of Present Reference

αὕτη (hautē) — this (feminine); demonstrative pointing to something present and immediate

οὗτος (houtos) — this (masculine); immediate reference, present context

ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη (hē genea hautē) — this generation; the generation of the speaker’s contemporaries, consistently throughout

Matthew’s Gospel

Temporal Sequence Markers

εὐθέως (eutheōs) — immediately; among the most forceful temporal adverbs in Greek

μετὰ ταῦτα (meta tauta) — after these things; sequential marker

ὅταν (hotan) + aorist subjunctive — when (definite future from speaker’s perspective, expected by the audience addressed)

The Covenantal Historical Framework

Late Second Jewish Commonwealth — the proper designation for the covenantal era from the apostolic proclamation through the progressive catastrophes of 3823, 3827, 3831, 3834, 3876–3878, 3893–3897, and the final terminus of 3901; the period within which the New Testament’s prophetic announcements were fulfilled, as documented by Josephus and corroborated by Roman historical sources.

Other PDFs by True Christian Press

Semantic Agreement Between Christians

**Intramural Discussions
Can Spark a Renewed
Self-understanding Among
God's New Testament People**

Mark Mountjoy

