

What Is a Preterist

(and why would I want to become one)?

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According to Webster's Dictionary, a Preterist is "a theologian who believes that the prophecies of the Apocalypse have already been fulfilled." In the most basic terms, a Preterist believes that all the prophecies of the Bible were fulfilled by the end of the first century AD (usually by AD 70), and those prophecies have continuing results (effects) today. For instance, when Jesus began His preaching, He proclaimed that the kingdom of God was "*at hand*." The kingdom "came with power" in A.D. 70 (Mk. 9:1) and continues to exist in power today. There are several reasons why you may want to become a Preterist:

First, your eschatological (prophetic) view will be *consistent with Scripture*. When Jesus says something such as, "***This generation shall certainly not pass away before all these things are fulfilled***" (Mt 24:34), you can say, "Amen! He was telling the truth!" without having to go through various hermeneutical (interpretive) gymnastics in order to deny the *plain sense* of the Master's words.

Second, you can know the joy of having received *all* the promises the OT saints were eagerly awaiting. You can acknowledge the fact that you are a *full-fledged* child of God living in His eternal kingdom right **now**, and enjoying the benefits of a fully-accomplished salvation! Never again will you have to say that you are only a *second-class citizen* because you weren't born Jewish or live in the modern-day state called "Israel." No more will you be required to impugn the foresight of your heavenly Father by sheepishly explaining that the so-called "Church age" is merely a parenthesis (a "hiccup," if you will) in the plan of God. Nay, you can know for sure that you are a **citizen** of the *true Israel* with full rights and privileges, a *true child of Abraham*, whether you are Jew or Gentile.

You can also have the confidence of knowing that you are living in the Kingdom age (you can call it the "Church age" if you like), and that it is *everlasting* in its duration!

Thirdly, you can live your life productively! No pessimism is necessary in this view. You won't have to be discouraged from working to change society because you will know that the things you do can make a difference! You will discover that the "ship" is not sinking, and it is therefore a good idea not only to "polish the brass," but also to swab the decks (you could even turn on the bilge pump)! You can live your life free from the fear of imminent disaster and tribulation. Nor more do you need to fear being "*left behind*" in an allegedly future "rapture." The energy you formerly wasted worrying needlessly about these things can be used positively now to further the spread of God's wonderful kingdom!

Fourth, when you share the gospel with someone, you can offer them truly *good news*. All is **not** lost! The heathen are *not* destined to take over, and *never* were! (The only reason they have the position they do now of apparent superiority is because the Church has been poisoned with the false notion that the Bible prophesies her defeat). You can have the confidence of knowing that you belong to one of the greatest and most powerful "fighting machines" in the universe and you are *destined to win*!

Now, the question is: Do you have the courage to take Jesus at His word? Can you *believe* Him when He says that His second coming would take place before the generation of people He spoke to during His earthly ministry had passed away? Are you able to trust Him enough to believe what He said when He assured some of His first century audience members that they would not die before they saw His return and the full establishment of the New Covenant kingdom of God?

Yes, it takes courage to become a Preterist. I have been called a heretic and been yelled at by those holding to differing views of Bible prophecy (who cite their favorite teacher, not the **Scriptures**, as their authority). My troubles have been minor compared to others. Some have been ousted from their church homes and slandered. They have been accused of teaching "dangerous and destructive heresies" and had their names run through the mud publicly and throughout the churches in their community. Jesus warned us that if we were to truly follow Him, it would cost us, sometimes dearly (Lk 14:26-33). Certainly it is nothing to be entered into lightly!

So, here is the challenge: Examine the following Scripture passages and see if you can accept what they say at face value. The problem with most people is that when they come across verses such as these, and understand the obvious implication of them, they immediately begin looking for an *alternate explanation*. Not because the *text* demands it, but because the *system* they have been taught requires it!

"When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matt 10:23)

"For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matt 16:27-28).

The transfiguration that took place a few days after Jesus made this statement cannot be the fulfillment of this prophecy. Note that during the transfiguration there were *no angels present*, and *no rewards given* in accordance to anyone's deeds. It would also have been an odd thing to say that only "**some**" of those listening to Him would live long enough to witness this event! (Perhaps His audience was composed of *octogenarians*).

"Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened" (Matt 24:33-34).

Compare this to the NEB translation: "**I tell you this: the present generation will live to see it all.**" For those who may be tempted to interpret the word "*generation*" (Greek: *genea*) as meaning "race" (Greek: *genos*), compare the use of the **same** word by the **same** author, just *one chapter earlier* :

"And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berehiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation" (Matt 23:35-36).

"But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 'Yes, it is as you say,' Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven'" (Matt 26:63-64).

Please note that the high priest Jesus was addressing died *during the AD 70 siege of Jerusalem*. If he did *not* see the coming of Christ in the events that took place at that time, Jesus was *mistaken!*

Throughout the NT, salvation is equated with the second coming of Christ, and it is spoken of as being yet future:

"And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (Rom 13:11).

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30).

"...who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet 1:5).

If Christ has not yet returned as He said He would, we are still waiting for salvation!

There is a principle in scientific research that can be applied to a case such as this. When a theory has a number of apparent anomalies that cannot be explained without complicated "exceptions to the rules," it usually indicates that it is time to come up with a new theory—one that explains all the data. If you find yourself having to apply "special" rules of interpretation to certain passages of Scripture (e.g., redefining words in order to escape their primary meanings), perhaps you need to re-examine your basic assumptions. In the scientific community this is known as a "paradigm shift." [\[1\]](#)

The data (*all* the data) is re-examined and new theories are proposed that take into account and explain those things that were previously thought to be anomalies. For example, in the study of the universe, Ptolemy's theory of a geocentric (earth-centered) universe reigned supreme for over one thousand years. However, it could not explain certain planetary actions, such as their periodic "retrograde" (backward) movement, without the use of a

series of complicated calculations, all designed to explain these apparent exceptions to the rule. When Copernicus finally appeared on the scene, he postulated a new theory, one that took into account all the observable data. He suggested that the universe was heliocentric (Sun-centered) and that the Earth turned on its axis every 24 hours. As we know, his theory was much closer to the truth than that of Ptolemy.

This is what must take place in the subject of eschatology. Under the current schemes, there are many "anomalies" that these views fail to adequately explain with their rules of interpretation. A *paradigm shift* must take place and a "new" theory has to replace the old ones. I say "new" because the view that takes *all* the data into account is not really new. It has been around since the first century (Jesus and His apostles were Preterists). It has merely been *forgotten* or *overlooked* by most people today. The time has come, however, to take another look at this view in light of the Scriptures!

Many other Scripture passages could be cited that demonstrate the fact that Jesus taught His disciples to look for His return within *their* lifetimes. They wrote down what He taught and passed it on to the Church. *Many people forget that the Bible was written to communicate God's truth to man.* It is not written in a special "God code" that only He can understand. True, it may be difficult to accept, but this is due to the presuppositions we bring to the text of Scripture, not because of any ambiguity in the Word. There comes a time when we must admit that we don't know everything and simply *believe what the Word of God says. That is why I became a Preterist.* That is why **you** should become one, too!

¹ Cf. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2d ed., enl.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).