

Why I Became a Preterist

By [Ward Fenley](#)

There are lots of articles and posts entitled, "Why I am Not a Preterist." I felt I should take the time to write why I am a preterist. I am sure others have written about why they are preterists too. But this is my perspective.

Though 'preterist' is somewhat of a crude-sounding word, it is the word used to define a person who believes that Jesus Christ did not lie. I used to believe that the rapture would take place in my future; that the tribulation would take place immediately following the rapture and last for seven years; that the antichrist would make a covenant with Israel in the middle of the seven years; that one hundred forty-four thousand Jews would get saved and then preach to the Gentiles and that all of those who got saved during that seven-year period and escaped without getting killed by the antichrist would repopulate the thousand year millennium after Christ returned at the end of the seven years.

I also believed that during the millennium those Christians would repopulated the earth would have unsaved children who would ultimately revolt against Christ. Those who didn't revolt would reinstitute animal sacrifices and offer them up at Jerusalem. I was a classic premillennial hardcore dispensationalist. Revelation was my book. I immersed myself in JN Darby, William Kelly, CH McIntosh, John Walvoord, Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, Robert Saucy, and could articulate the doctrine of premillennial dispensationalism better than my Dad, who believed this and read even more than I did. My pastors told me to interpret the book of Revelation literally. So I did. Then I realized I skipped over the first three verses which I apparently forgot to take literally:

(Revelation 1:1-3) The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must *****shortly***** come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: {2} Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. {3} Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is *****at hand.*****

I also forgot to take these verses in Revelation literally:

Rev 22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must *****shortly***** be done.

Rev 22:10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for *****the time is at hand.*****

Rev 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I ***come quickly***. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

I simply could not believe that Christ lied, therefore I now interpret those verses literally.

The book of Revelation is couched in between verses that say it would be at hand, shortly, quickly. So then, I have concluded that those events mentioned in Revelation took place when Jesus and John said they would take place, because I do not believe that Jesus and John lied.

This prompted me to study the use of apocalyptic language in the Old Testament where God frequently speaks with the use of metaphors:

(Psalms 18:6-16) In my distress I called upon the LORD, And cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, *even* to His ears. {7} Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, because He was angry. {8} Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth; coals were kindled by it. {9} He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. {10} And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind. {11} He made darkness His secret place; His canopy around Him *was* dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies. {12} From the brightness before Him, His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire. {13} The LORD thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. {14} He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe, lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them. {15} Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. {16} He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters.

Revelation uses this type of metaphorical terminology throughout:

Rev 1:16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.

Rev 1:15 His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

But I could never find where God used time statements metaphorically. In fact, I found contrary:

(Ezekiel 12:22-28) “Son of man, what *is* this proverb *that* you *people* have about the land of Israel, which says, ‘The days are prolonged, and every vision fails’? {23} Tell them therefore, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I will lay this proverb to rest, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.” But say to them, “The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision. {24} For no more shall there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. {25} For I *am* the LORD. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed; for in your days, O

rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it,” says the Lord GOD.” {26} Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, {27} “Son of man, look, the house of Israel is saying, ‘The vision that he sees *is* for many days *from now*, and he prophesies of times far off.’ {28} Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “None of My words will be postponed any more, but the word which I speak will be done,” says the Lord GOD.”

When God uses time statements to men, He means them.

The conclusion, therefore, is that John and Jesus intended the seven churches to understand the time statements literally and the apocalyptic statements figuratively.

This statement of Jesus clarifies the issue:

(Matthew 16:27-28) For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. {28} Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

This statement from John clarifies the issue:

1 John 2:18 Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour.

This statement from James clarifies the issue:

James 5:8-9 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. {9} Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!.

This statement from Peter clarifies the issue:

1 Pet 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Therefore, this statement of Jesus to Peter, James, and John (the writers just mentioned), makes perfect sense and clarifies the issue:

(Matthew 24:2-3) And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. {3} And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Mark 13:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, {4} “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”

Still speaking to those same three:

(Matthew 24:32-34) “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. {33} So you also, when you [disciples] see all these things, know that it^[a] is near—at the doors! {34} Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

If Jesus did not return, Christianity is a hoax and every liberal anti-Christian professor whoever darkened the doors of a Cathedral is correct.

But I don't believe that. I must believe that Christ meant what He said, regardless of whether I have a difficult time understanding how it all worked out. I would rather say that I don't know how it all worked out than deny the absolutely clear statements of Jesus Christ and the apostles that His return would take place within their lifetime.

That is why I am a preterist. And there is no turning back, because I would rather lack understanding of certain apocalyptic elements than have a supposed Savior who lied and generated the most heinous deception of all religions. There are no two ways about it. Jesus Christ either returned or He is a monstrous liar and everything every liberal and skeptic has every said against Him is true. I cannot accept the latter.