

What is the Preterist View?

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Is the End of the World near? Are we living in the Last Days? Is Christ's return at hand? For 150 years here in America we have constantly been told that we are living on the threshold of the End of the World and Christ's Return. Prediction after prediction has failed to materialize, and false hope after false hope has been foisted upon the Christian community. Many Christians have been disillusioned, and are already looking for more reasonable explanations. Some have been so disillusioned they left the faith altogether. And the secular media (who are always looking for an excuse) are further discrediting Christianity because of it. Something is terribly wrong with traditional views of Bible Prophecy. There is a serious need to re-examine the whole issue of Last Things.

Bible prophecy can be understood, but Futurist views have fallen far short for many reasons: their extreme physical/literalizing approach, their seeming inability to distinguish between figurative and literal language, and their failure to properly take into account the historical-grammatical-cultural context of the prophecies (specifically what they meant to their original audience). Even the most difficult prophetic passage comes alive when approached properly. It is time to look at some alternatives, and the Preterist view is a great place to start.

"Preterist" means past in fulfillment, and "Futurist" means future in fulfillment. Preterist basically means the opposite of Futurist. Futurists believe most end-time prophecies (especially the big three events — the Second Coming, Resurrection, and Judgment) are yet to be fulfilled. Preterists believe that most or all of Bible Prophecy (especially the big three events) has already been fulfilled in Christ and the ongoing expansion of His Eternal Kingdom. Many Futurists do not really believe that Christ has been successful in fully establishing His Kingdom. They think it was indefinitely postponed when the Jews rejected and crucified Jesus.

The Preterist interpretation of Bible prophecy is capturing significant media attention, and according to one critic, is "spreading like wildfire" in the social media. It is compatible with the essential beliefs of all Christians, and is already represented in nearly all Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church. It has been mentioned several times in publications such as Christianity Today, Christian News, Great Christian Books catalog, World Magazine, and several others. Hundreds of preterist books, eBooks, video and audio resources are available, with many more in the works. There are dozens of preterist websites, and several online podcasts, one of which (*Then and Now* podcast) is hosted right here on this website. There is also a quarterly preterist newsletter (*Fulfilled* magazine), for which this author writes a regular column ("Creation to Consummation").

WWJD. *When Was Jesus Due?* What did Christ say about the TIME of His coming? He said he would return in that first century *generation*, before "some of those standing there tasted death" (Matt. 10:23; Matt. 16:27,28; Matt. 24:34). Did you ever wonder *why* the First Century Christians expected Jesus to come in their lifetime, and *how* they got that expectation? Take a look at the extreme sense of urgency and imminency in these passages: James 5:8,9; 1 Pet. 4:7; Matt. 10:23; Matt. 16:27,28; Matt. 24:34. These verses have always troubled Bible students, and have been used by liberal theologians to attack

the inspiration of Scripture. They reason that these passages were not fulfilled when they were supposed to be (the first century generation), so Jesus and the NT writers failed in their predictions and were therefore not inspired. But these verses point to Christ's coming in some sense in connection with the Fall of Jerusalem at 70 AD.

So, Jesus' predictions were fulfilled. He did not fail, nor do we need to engage in theological gymnastics to try to explain-away the seeming delay or postponement of His return. It happened right on schedule. Many theologians know that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was important in God's scheme of redemption, but never understood its full significance. It has to do with the consummation of the plan of redemption. The final events of the redemptive drama came to pass in the first century within the apostles' generation (before A.D. 70). Christ's kingdom is here now. Paradise has been restored in Christ (for our afterlife in heaven above). Christ has conquered all His enemies and has given us His Eternal Kingdom, "of the increase of which there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

This view offers a much more positive and realistic worldview. It is conservative, consistent, optimistic, responsible and accountable. And it robs us of no motivation for either living the Christian life, or evangelizing the world. In fact, it's the only view which gives us a consistent reason for being constructively involved in making the world a better place for the eternal long-term, unlike the short-term escapist, retreatist, defeatist, and withdrawal mindset of many futurists.

Bible prophecy absolutely makes sense when approached from this past-fulfillment (preterist) perspective! It puts emphasis on the spiritual nature of God's Kingdom, not on the physical, materialistic, sensual, and sensational. It teaches a realized spiritual salvation in Christ and the Church now, instead of a frustrated hope for a postponed sensually-gratifying paradise way off in the future. It has an optimistic worldview that gets involved, makes a positive difference, and lights a candle, rather than cursing the darkness, longing for a rapture-escape, or compromising with the culture. It doesn't engage in wild-eyed speculation like futurist views. It's just simple, straight-forward Biblical and historical teaching.

Some of the great theologians and scholars of the last 300 years have suggested the preterist view for consideration, but traditional Christianity was too caught up with the idea that the Pope was the Antichrist or some other such Futurist notion. But all that is changing. We are not as gullible now as we were when William Miller, Darby, C. T. Russell, Rutherford, Scofield, Walvoord, and Hal Lindsey came along. A constant barrage of false predictions by the date-setters has made us more wary.

Most Christian theologians in Europe a century ago took a somewhat preterist approach, and none of them considered it heretical. One of the leading proponents of the preterist view back then was *James Stuart Russell* (not to be confused with the Watchtower founder, Charles Taze Russell). J. S. Russell (1816-1895) published a book in 1878 entitled, *The Parousia*. We here at IPA have reprinted it, and it is available [here in our bookstore](#). Some leading theologians and Christian spokesmen have had the following to say about the book and the preterist view:

- Charles H. Spurgeon, who did not accept the preterist view, nevertheless stated that Russell's book "throws so much new light upon obscure portions of the Scriptures, and is accompanied with so much critical research and close reasoning, that it can be injurious to none and may be profitable to all."

- Walt Hibbard (Chairman, Great Christian Books) “In view of Dr. Russell’s marvelous and insightful observations, no serious student of Biblical eschatology should attempt to construct a systematic scheme of apocalyptic events without first consulting this 19th century work, *The Parousia*.”
- Gary DeMar (President of American Vision) “How many times have you struggled with the interpretation of certain Biblical texts related to the time of Jesus’ return because they did not fit with a preconceived system of eschatology? Russell’s Parousia takes the Bible seriously when it tells us of the nearness of Christ’s return. Those who claim to interpret the Bible literally, trip over the obvious meaning of these time texts by making Scripture mean the opposite of what it unequivocally declares. Reading Russell is a breath of fresh air in a room filled with smoke and mirror hermeneutics.”
- Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. (Presbyterian pastor, theologian, and author): “Although I do not agree with all the conclusions of J. Stuart Russell’s *The Parousia*, I highly recommend this well-organized, carefully argued, and compellingly written defense of preterism to serious and mature students of the Bible. It is one of the most persuasive and challenging books I have read on the subject of eschatology, and has had a great impact on my own thinking. Russell’s biblico-theological study of New Testament eschatology sets a standard of excellence.”
- Dr. R. C. Sproul (Ligonier Ministries) “I believe that Russell’s work is one of the most important treatments on Biblical eschatology that is available to the church today. The issues raised in this volume with respect to the time-frame references of the New Testament to the Parousia are vitally important not only for eschatology but for the future debate over the credibility of Sacred Scripture.”
- Dr. R. C. Sproul (Ligonier Ministries): “Russell’s book has forced me to take the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem far more seriously than before, and to open my eyes to the radical significance of this event in redemptive history. It vindicates the apostolic hope and prediction of our Lord’s close-at hand coming in judgment. My views on these matters remain in transition, as I have spelled out in *The Last Days According to Jesus*. But for me one thing is certain: **I can never read the New Testament again the same way I read it before reading *The Parousia***. I hope better scholars than I will continue to analyze and evaluate the content of J. Stuart Russell’s important work.”

Many who never knew anyone else took the Preterist view, have independently discovered it in the Scriptures, and are finding Biblical prophecy bursting with meaning now. If you haven’t taken a look at it, *it is time you did*. There are many helpful books, eBooks, and audio/video media available [right here on this website](#). These resources will help you finally make sense out of Bible Prophecy without being taken for a ride by the date-setters.

For more free information about how all these endtime events were fulfilled in the first century, simply [click here](#) to request our FREE 32-page PDF documentary of fulfillments (“Preterist Info”)