

How to Share the Preterist view of Eschatology

This message preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on July 11, 2004

This morning we want to talk about "How to share the Preterist view." It's not the easiest or smartest thing to just say to someone: "I believe that Jesus returned." Although I did that very thing not long ago. So how do you introduce this subject? How can we introduce this without causing people to tear their clothes and throw dust into the air? I have come up with a handout that I use to share Preterism, and I thought I'd share it with you this morning.

But before I share with you how to share Preterism, a question we should first answer is: Why share Preterism? People always says to me, "Why is this important? What does it matter if He has returned or not?" My answer is always the same, "Does truth matter? If it doesn't, than we don't need to study the Bible at all. But if truth does matter, then Preterism matters.

For a less simplistic answer, let me give you several reasons why Preterism is important: why your view of eschatology matters.

1. Eschatology is a major theological issue in the Scriptures. R.C. Sproul says that two thirds of the New Testament is either directly or indirectly eschatological. Other experts say that 25 to 30 percent of the whole bible is eschatological.

2. Salvation is tied to eschatology. How much salvation you currently have depends on your eschatological view. If you were to die right now, where would you go? That depends on your eschatology. No one goes to heaven prior to the second coming. Look at what Jesus said:

John 3:13 (NASB) "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man.

So, has this changed? If so when?

John 13:33 (NASB) "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

John 13:36 (NASB) Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later."

John 14:2-3 (NASB) "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ "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.

If Jesus has not yet returned to receive His disciples to Himself, then John 3:13 is still in effect. Look also at:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (NASB) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

If the dead have not yet been resurrected, which happens at the Second Coming, then no one is yet in heaven. But where do most Christians believe that they go at death? Heaven! Have you ever been to a Christian funeral?

Heaven was not opened until the Second Coming, because salvation

was not complete until the return of Christ:

Hebrews 9:28 (NASB) so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

This is the only place in the New Testament where the return of Christ is called a **Second Coming**. His appearing is said to be "for salvation."

Peter states that their salvation was not yet complete:

1 Peter 1:5 (NKJV) who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Salvation was ready to be revealed, when? In the last time, which would happen at the return of Christ. If Christ has not returned, salvation is incomplete and no one has yet gone to heaven.

3. Israel! What do you do with the modern day nation of Israel? Is God's prophetic calendar tied to the modern day nation of Israel? No! God is through with Israel.

Let's look at a parable:

Matthew 22:1-3 (NKJV) And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ² "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, ³ "and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the

wedding; and they were not willing to come.

The king is God, the son is Christ, and those invited are the nation Israel:



Matthew 22:4-7 (NKJV) "Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."' ⁵ "But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶ "And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. ⁷ "But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

What is verse seven speaking of? Yes, it very clearly is a prediction of the A.D. 70 judgment of Jerusalem.

Matthew 22:8-10 (NKJV) "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ 'Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' ¹⁰ "So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Israel lost its privilege, and all nations were invited to come to the wedding celebration of the Lamb. This destruction of the nation, because of their rejection of Christ, was prophesied from the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry.

Matthew 3:9-10 (NKJV) "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these

stones. ¹⁰ "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Jesus came in judgment on the nation Israel in A.D. 70; ending forever the nation, its physical temple and sacrifices. So, God is through with Israel, but most Christians think that the Jews are God's special people and must be protected. A faulty eschatology is affecting our foreign policy.

4. It affects your world view. If we are living in the last days, and this world is about to end any moment why work for social change? We are not living in the last days. We live in the kingdom of God and we are to be affecting the world in which we live by the power of God. The Kingdom of God has no end, it is an eternal kingdom. As a young Christian I never really planned for the future because I believed the Lord would return at any moment, so why bother with the future?

So, I believe that eschatology matters. And since it matters, we need to be looking for opportunities to share the preterist view, and we need to have a plan to share it. I like to wear the hat that Bill Gann gave me when I'm around believers of the futuristic persuasion, hoping they'll ask about it and I can share with them what Preterism is. It says, "Preterism...it's about time",

Here is my approach to sharing the preterist view. I like to give futurists a handout with all the scriptures on it so they can see them for themselves. The following is included in this handout.

As we read the Bible, we must keep in mind the **hermeneutical** principle of **audience relevance**, which seeks to discover what the **original audience** understood a passage to mean. The Bible is written "for" us, but it is **not** written "to" us. We must seek to understand what Scripture meant to its original audience, then we can apply it to ourselves. As you read the following scriptures, ask yourself these questions: Who is this written

to? When was it written? When did they expect Christ to return?

Jesus said to His disciples:

Matthew 10:23 (NKJV) "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Matthew 16:27-28 (NKJV) "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."

Matthew 24:34 (NKJV) "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Jesus said to Peter:

John 21:21-22 (NKJV) Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man (John)?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

Paul said to the Roman Christians:

Romans 13:11-12 (NKJV) And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Romans 16:20 (NKJV) And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Paul said to the Corinthian Christians:

1 Corinthians 1:7-8 (NKJV) so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our

Lord Jesus Christ,⁸ who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 (NKJV) But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, 30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,³¹ and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

1 Corinthians 10:11 (NKJV) Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NKJV) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Paul said to the Philippian Christians:

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Philippians 4:5 (NKJV) Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

Paul said to the Thessalonian Christians:

1 Thessalonians 4:15 (NKJV) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJV) Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Almost every book in the New Testament talks of a "soon" return of Jesus Christ, and it is very hard to make 2,000 years "soon" by any hermeneutic.

Paul said to Timothy:

1 Timothy 6:14 (NKJV) that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,

Paul said to Titus:

Titus 2:12-13 (NKJV) teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

The writer of Hebrews said to the Hebrew Christians:

Hebrews 10:37 (NKJV) "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

James wrote to Christians:

James 5:7-9 (NKJV) Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.⁸ 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!

Peter wrote to Christians:

1 Peter 1:13 (NKJV) Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 4:7 (NKJV) But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be

serious and watchful in your prayers.

John wrote to the seven Churches in Asia Minor:

Revelation 1:1 (NKJV) The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants; things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

Revelation 1:3 (NKJV) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Jesus said to the first century church of Thyatira:

Revelation 2:25 (NKJV) "But hold fast what you have till I come.

Jesus said to the first century church of Philadelphia:

Revelation 3:11 (NKJV) "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Revelation 22:6-7 (NKJV) Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.⁷ "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Revelation 22:10 (NKJV) And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

Revelation 22:12 (NKJV) "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Revelation 22:20 (NKJV) He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Keep in mind audience relevance, which seeks to discover what the original audience understood a

passage to mean. He said He was coming soon, He said His coming was "at hand." He said He was coming in the life time of those He was speaking to. He said He was coming in "their generation." You cannot read the New Testament without seeing the imminent expectation that they had for the return of Christ. This has caused problems for many.

The self-proclaimed atheist, Bertrand Russell, made use of this obvious conclusion in his work, *Why I Am Not A Christian*: "I am concerned with Christ as He appears in the Gospel narrative as it stands, and there one does find some things that do not seem very wise. For one thing, He certainly thought that His Second Coming would occur in clouds of glory before the death of all the people who were living at that time. There are a great many texts that prove it.... That was the belief of His early followers, and it was the basis of a good deal of His moral teaching" (page 16).

Russell used the New Testament's "imminent" texts as "proof" that Jesus could not be the Son of God. And modern Christianity, in general, has not been able to answer adequately such objections from atheists and non-Christians. Believers today must address directly the vast misunderstanding that exists within the realm of Christianity regarding Christ's eschatological teachings.

Matthew 24:34 (NKJV) "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Jesus, here, very plainly and very clearly, tells His disciples that ALL of the things He had mentioned would come to pass in **THEIR GENERATION**. If you study the context, you will see that this includes the gospel being preached in all the world, the abomination of desolation, the great tribulation, and the Second Coming of Christ. This is so clear that it greatly troubles those who hold to a futuristic eschatology. Look at what C.S. Lewis said about Matthew 24:34:

The apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be

false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be done." And He was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else. This is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible. (Essay "The World's Last Night" (1960), found in The Essential C.S. Lewis, p. 385)

Is Lewis right? Was Jesus wrong? I can't accept that, can you? Fortunately, Christ did keep His promise to come within the first-century generation. Christ's Second Coming occurred spiritually -- the way He intended it -- at the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. This highly verified historical event signified that sin finally had been atoned forever and that all Christians, from generation to generation, could live eternally -- on earth and in heaven -- without separation from God.

Now, I'm sure that you're thinking: If the Lord did come back in 70 AD, how did we miss it for all these years? How could He have come back and we not have known it? The problem here is one of **preconceived** ideas. It is because of the paradigms that we have developed. We think that the Second Coming is an earth burning, heaven melting, globe changing event; so we assume it could not have already happened.

I submit to you that either Scripture is wrong about the time of the Second Coming and thus not inerrant, or our paradigms are wrong about the **nature** of the Second Coming. Which one of those are you more comfortable with; an incorrect paradigm or an uninspired Scripture? I think I can prove that our understanding of the "nature" of the Second Coming is wrong.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 (NKJV) Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask

you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

How is it that the Thessalonians thought that the Second Coming had already happened? If they viewed the nature of these things as literal, how on earth could they have thought that they already happened? If their concept of the Second Coming was an earth burning; heaven melting; globe changing event, how could they have thought it had already happened? If Paul was teaching the Second Coming as an earth burning; heaven melting; globe changing event, all he would have had to say to the Thessalonians is, "Hello, look out your windows, the earth is not on fire, the sky is still blue." Paul never corrects their idea of the nature of the Second Coming, he simply says it has not happened yet. They must have viewed the nature of the Second Coming differently than we do.

Nowhere do the Scriptures teach that the **physical creation** will be destroyed. Notice what God said after the flood of Noah's day:

Genesis 8:21 (NKJV) And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

Now, folks will say that the Lord destroyed the earth by water one time, and He'll destroy it by fire the next time. Is God's promise here to just change His **method** of destroying everything? Is there comfort in being destroyed by fire instead of water? Or is He promising not to destroy the earth again?

Psalms 148:4-6 (NKJV) Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! ⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. ⁶ He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.

What decree did God make concerning the establishment of the heaven and the earth that will never pass away? Genesis 8:21! God said that He would never again destroy every living thing. God can be trusted, He keeps his word. He said He was coming soon, and He did.

Until January, 1997, I had never heard of the preterist (meaning past in fulfillment) view of eschatology, so, I obviously could not believe what I didn't know. When a friend first shared it with me, I thought he was MAD. As I began to study this view, I saw that though it went against what the majority of the Church was teaching, it was what the Bible was

teaching. I had to make a choice between **tradition** and the **Scripture**--the choice was easy. If this view is new to you, I would ask that you would openly and honestly look at what it is saying. Almost every book in the New Testament talks of a "soon" return of Jesus Christ, and it is very hard to make 2,000 years "soon," by any hermeneutic. The major issue to me in all of this is the **Inspiration of Scripture**. Don't let tradition rob you of the precious truths which our Lord taught. I challenge you to be a Berean and daily search the Scripture to see if these things are so.



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