

# Where Is My Hope?

[2 Corinthians 5:1](#)



Several years ago, actually around four, I came to believe in the eschatology of preterism. Preterism is the teaching that all prophecy was fulfilled in the [destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70](#). The longer I study the Bible, the more convinced I am that preterism is true? I think that preterism is an eschatology of hope, of victory. But when I share the [preterist view](#) with others, the question that I am inevitably asked is, *"If the Lord has already come back, then, 'Where is my hope?'"*



If you are brave enough to talk to others about the preterist view, you have most likely heard this question, "Where is my hope?" There seems to be a great confusion today about what the church's hope is. Is our hope to be snatched physically off the face of the earth? I think that most Christians would say, "Yes!" So, when you tell them that the Second Coming is a past event, they feel as if they have lost their hope.

Does preterism take away people's hope? Not at all, if anything, it strengthens our hope. And this is very important, because "hope" is very important. To say that preterism destroys the hope of the church is a very serious charge because:

## People Need Hope

"Is there any hope?" That's what the parents wondered when the doctors said, "There's been an accident, and your 20-year-old son is paralyzed from the neck down, and we don't think we can do anything about it."

Is there any hope ... for the married couple who seem to wind up at the same dead-end of unresolved conflict again and again; who worry that they might not make it?

Or what about the man who's fallen victim to alcohol or pornography or gambling or any of a number of addictive behaviors, the man who's in so deep he fears he'll never find a way out? Is there any hope for him?

Where is the hope for the mom-to-be who goes to her obstetrician for a routine checkup and hears, "I'm sorry. We can't find a heartbeat?" Or for the single mom who works a full-time job by day, serves as both mother and father by night and wonders to herself "How long can I keep this up?" Or the person who battles depression and anxiety? Or the man who stands by his wife's bedside as she lies dying?

Where is the hope for a generation of young people who seem to be an easy mark for drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, and the pain of a broken family?

Believers, to all of these we must say, "Yes, there is hope in Jesus Christ. People, as Christians, we can offer hope to the hopeless.

One writer expressed it this way, "Hope is an essential ingredient of life. A man works in hope, he saves in hope, he dies in hope. Every great religion, every political movement has offered hope." Another wrote, "A person can live 40 days without food, 4 days without water, 4 minutes without air, but only 4 seconds without hope." Hope is the power that keeps us going in the toughest times of life. It takes obstacles and transforms them into possibilities. Hope gives us the strength and courage we need to make the most out of life."

I'm sure that you understand the importance of hope. We must have hope, but it must not be a misplaced hope.

If you remember, several years ago 39 members of the cult known as "[Heaven's Gate](#)" took their own lives in the hope of linking up with a UFO that was supposedly traveling in the wake of the comet Hale-Bopp. This is a chilling example of misplaced hope. After their death, authorities discovered video tapes in which the leader of the cult described the hoped-for space encounter. Members came before the camera two at a time, side by side, to say their last good-byes. One woman said, *"Maybe they're crazy for all I know, but I don't have any choice but to go for it because I've been on this planet for 31 years and there's nothing here for me."* As I read that statement it struck me: there's a woman, in desperate need of hope, who gave her very life for a hope that's no hope at all.



Listen to the perceptive analysis of Woody Allen, *"More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness; the other to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."* What a terrible choice! I choose neither road. But Allen reflects the thinking of many today.

I read about an interesting scientific experiment on *survival*, conducted by a group of behavioral Scientists from the Duke University Psychology Department. They took some Norwegian Wharf Rats and divided them into two groups. The first group they put in a large container of water. They also hooked up a spray of water on top of the container. Then they took the rats, one by one, and through them into the container of water. There was no possibility of escape for the first group. The rats placed in this *hopeless* situation were able to swim for 17 minutes before they drowned.

The second group of rats was also placed into a large container of water with the spray, except this time at the 15 or 16 minute mark, just before the rats had exhausted their strength, the rats were *rescued*. The rats were then dried them off and returned them to their cages, fed, and resumed normal activity for a few days. The process was repeated to see the effect of the rescue and it was found that the rats that had *hope of being rescued* were able to survive for 36 hours. So the average survival time for these rats increased from 17 minutes to 36 hours! The scientists explained the phenomenon by pointing out that the second time around, the rats had HOPE. They believed that they could survive this, because they had done so before. (Claude T Stauffer—A Living Hope—A Hopeful Study in the First Epistle of Peter—Chapter 3 page 77-78)

So, we see that hope is very important. We need to have hope.

## What Is HOPE?

Let me give you the biblical definition of hope, because the word "hope" has come to have a different meaning today than that which was originally used in the New Testament. Today it indicates something of contingency; expectancy that something will happen, but there is some question as to whether or not it will really occur. We say, "I hope it doesn't rain," or, "I hope I can make it to next payday," indicating some uneasiness or uncertainty about the future. But this is not the New Testament usage. In the New Testament it indicates an **absolute certainty about the future**, an attitude of eager expectancy, of confidence in God and his ability to do what he has promised. It is an attitude that says, "I have the resources in Jesus Christ to meet the world head-on."

When Christians hear about preterism, they question, "Where is my hope", because they have been taught to believe that our hope is tied up in the second coming of Christ.

John Piper writes, *"The blessed hope of all who believe is THE APPEARING OF OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST."*

Jerry Falwell writes, *"Most born again Christians believe in the premillennial, pretribulational coming of Christ for all of His church. This is the blessed hope of the church. The anticipation of the imminent return of*

*Christ to catch away His Bride is the one factor which distinguishes followers of Christ from all other inhabitants of this planet."*

The Bible definitely teaches that the coming of Christ was a blessed hope:

**[Titus 2:13](#) (NKJV) *looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,***

Here is the problem - the second coming of Christ was the hope of the first century church, but it is a hope that has been fulfilled. We live in a different age than the original recipients of the New Testament letters. All through the New Testament we see **two ages** in contrast: "This age," and the "age to come."

**[Matthew 12:32](#) (NKJV) *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age [mello] to come.***

The word "come" at the end of the verse is simply the Greek word mello, which means: *"about to be."* We could translate this: *"the age about to come."* About to come for whom? For the original first century audience.

**[Ephesians 1:21](#) (NKJV) *far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is [mello]to come.***

Here again, we see the two ages. So, the New Testament speaks of two ages, "this age," and *"the age to come."* The understanding of these two ages and when they changed is fundamental to interpreting the Bible and to understanding what our hope is today.

The New Testament writers lived in the age that they called *"this age."* To the New Testament writers, *"the age to come"* was future, but it was very near because *"this age"* was about to end.

**[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.***

Paul said very plainly that the end of the ages was coming upon them, the first century saints. "This age," was about to end.

The "this age" of the Bible was the Old Covenant age, the Jewish age. That age came to an end with the destruction of the temple in AD 70. So, the New Testament writers lived in what the Bible calls *"this age."* We live in what the Bible calls, *"the age to come"*. In the first century, the *"this age"* the age of the Old Covenant, was fading away and ended completely when the Jewish temple was destroyed in AD 70. The "this age" of the Bible is now ancient history.

With this in mind, let's trace the word **"hope"** through the New Testament. We find several things that were the hope of the early church, those who lived in what the Bible calls, *"this age."* And let's see if the teaching of preterism destroys any of these hopes.

In the New Testament, we find several things that were objects of hope:

## **1. The Second Coming:**

**[Titus 2:13](#) (NKJV) *looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,***

**[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 John 3:2-3](#) (NKJV) *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*<sup>3</sup> *And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

So, we see that the second coming was a hope to those who lived in "this age".

## 2. The Resurrection:

Paul clearly taught that the resurrection was the hope of Israel and the New Testament saints:

[Acts 23:6](#) (NKJV) *But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"*

[Acts 24:15](#) (YLT) *having hope toward God, which they themselves also wait for, [that] there is about to be [mello] a rising again of the dead, both of righteous and unrighteous;*

[Acts 28:20](#) (NKJV) *"For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."*

[Acts 26:6-8](#) (NKJV) *"And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers."<sup>7</sup> "To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews."<sup>8</sup> "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?"*

It is clear from this last verse that Paul sees the resurrection of the dead as that which fulfills "*the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers.*"

## 3. Righteousness was a hope of the New Testament church:

[Galatians 5:5](#) (NKJV) *For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

## 4. Salvation was a hope of the New Testament church:

[1 Thessalonians 5:8](#) (NKJV) *But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*

## 5. Eternal life was a hope of the New Testament church:

[Titus 1:2](#) (NKJV) *in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,*

[Titus 3:7](#) (NKJV) *that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Now, if we were to tell people that we have eternal life, salvation, and righteousness right now, would they ask us, "Where is my hope?" No, because they believe they have those things now. But eternal life, salvation, and righteousness were all a hope of those who lived in "this age". Eternal life, salvation, and righteousness became the full possession of the church at the second coming, which happened at the end of the Old Covenant age.

At the [end of the Old Covenant](#) age in AD 70, which was the last day (of the Old Covenant), several things happened:

## 1. Christ returned:

[2 Timothy 4:1](#) (NKJV) *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will (mello: about to come) judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom*

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

## 2. The resurrection occurred:

[John 11:24](#) (NKJV) *Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

This was the "last day" of "this age," "the age to come" has no last days. So, the resurrection was to happen at the end of the Old Covenant age when the Lord returned.

## 3. The judgment occurred:

[Matthew 13:40](#) (NKJV) *"Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.*

Since the "this age" of the Bible ended in AD 70 with the destruction of the temple and the coming of the Lord, we must be in "the age to come." And if we are in "the age to come," then Christ has already returned, the resurrection has already happened and the judgment of the nations has taken place.

Notice what Jesus said the believers would receive in the age to come:

[Mark 10:29-30](#) (NKJV) *So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, 30 "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the AGE [about] TO COME, ETERNAL LIFE. (Greek word "mello" which means "about to be" or "to be about")*

As we saw, eternal life was a "hope" to those who lived in "this age" but it is a present possession of all believers in the "age to come," which is the New Covenant age.

Now, since the second coming, the resurrection, the judgment, eternal life, salvation and righteousness have already come, why should they be our future hope? You don't hope for what you have:

[Romans 8:24-25](#) (NKJV) *For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.*

As preterists, we are not taking hope away; we are saying it is fulfilled. We have as a present possession what the early church hoped for.

## So, What Is Our Hope Today?

To those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, there is no hope:

[Ephesians 2:12](#) (NKJV) *that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

But for all of us who have placed our trust in Jesus Christ, our hope is heaven. Remember what we said; Biblical hope is not finger-crossing. It is a confident expectation of good things to come.

[2 Corinthians 5:1](#) (NKJV) *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

Paul is using "tent" here as the physical body. This is the same way that Peter uses it in:

[2 Peter 1:13-14](#) (NKJV) *Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,<sup>14</sup> knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.*

Believer, some day we will physically die, and when that happens, we will not go out of existence, and we will not go to the Lake of fire, we will go to heaven.

[2 Corinthians 5:6-8](#) (NKJV) *So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.<sup>7</sup> For we walk by faith, not by sight.<sup>8</sup> We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

Our hope (hope meaning: "*absolute certainty about the future*") is that when we leave this body at death, we will be with the Lord in Heaven.

Those who are familiar with Old Testament Scriptures will remember the story of the visit of the [queen of Sheba](#) with [Solomon](#). The queen of Sheba had heard of Solomon's greatness and glory and wisdom. Her subjects had tried to give her an idea of what it was like. They spoke vividly and strongly of Solomon's glory. But she simply could not believe it. So we read, in [1 Kings 10](#), that she determined to go see for herself. When she came, she listened to the wisdom of Solomon, who told her all that was in her heart. She asked him many different questions and she saw all of his glory, his apparel, and all the things attending his kingdom. And beholding all the glory of King Solomon, she exclaimed:

[1 Kings 10:6-7](#) (NKJV) *Then she said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. <sup>7</sup> "However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.*

*"The half was not told me."* That will be the experience of those who go to heaven. The half of what heaven is cannot be told to you.

## Where Is Heaven?

In answer to that, the Bible tells us that heaven is spiritual. Heaven is real; only it is in a different realm than that of the earth. We read in the Bible of the heavenly realm and of the earthly realm. The earthly realm is the realm of the physical, the material, the visible to our eyes, the realm that we can see, touch, smell, hear, and taste.

Heaven, on the other hand, is spiritual. It is heavenly. We cannot see it with these eyes. We cannot hear it with our present ears. We cannot feel it with our hands. We cannot taste or smell it. Heaven is not made of anything of this earth. Paul told the Greek philosophers:

[Acts 17:24](#) (NKJV) *"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.*

Paul said this while standing before the Greek philosophers on [Mars' Hill](#). The Greeks had made houses of stone for their gods. And they would give their gods various gifts: fruits and meat to eat. Perhaps the ancient idolaters would even provide their idol gods with swords and canoes and all sorts of equipment for the after-life. They conceived of the realm of the gods in terms of this earthly life. And Paul says that is not the case; it is folly. **Heaven is spiritual.** Heaven is the place created by the eternal and the living God. It is the place where the angels live. It is the place, as we read in Hebrews, where the spirits of just men made perfect now dwell. It is a sanctuary, it is glorious, it is high, and it is fair.

The difference between the heavenly and the earthly, the Bible tells us, is in terms of glory. Heaven is exalted. Heaven is high and lifted up—not in the physical sense, not that it is higher in altitude. But it is high, lifted up in majesty, lifted up in the glory of God, lifted up in the holiness of God. We read in Psalm 113:

**Psalms 113:5 (NKJV) *Who is like the LORD our God, Who dwells on high,***

High in majesty. We read again:

**Isaiah 57:15 (NKJV) *For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.***

And again, in Isaiah 63, we read,

**Isaiah 63:15 (NKJV) *Look down from heaven, and see from Your habitation, holy and glorious. Where are Your zeal and Your strength, The yearning of Your heart and Your mercies toward me? Are they restrained?***

Heaven is the place of God's holiness and glory. Heaven is pure, holy and glorious. God must give you new eyes before you can see it.

## **What Is Heaven?**

Everywhere the Bible answers: Heaven is God's dwelling place. It is the place where we shall have perfect fellowship with the living and true God. That truth is like a golden thread running throughout all of the Scriptures. Repeatedly, we are told that heaven is exactly this: It is God's dwelling. It is where God's presence is fully revealed, and God's presence is fully enjoyed, at least as much as a creature can ever enjoy the blessed fellowship of the living God.

The Bible uses these terms to describe heaven: Thy holy habitation, Thy dwelling place, His holy dwelling, the height of His sanctuary. It speaks of God who dwells in the heavens. Heaven is the dwelling place of God, where the intimate life of God and life with God is to be enjoyed. The word "dwell" is such a rich word, you know. It means much more than simply to live. When you say that this is where I dwell, you are not saying simply that that is where you are. But the word "dwell" conveys the idea of fellowship. Where you dwell is where you reveal who you are. You open up. You show your love, you share the intimate parts of your life. So, heaven is God's dwelling, the place where the presence and fellowship, the love and grace of God are made known. That is what makes heaven, heaven. That is all the glory of heaven, the things that we cannot imagine. Notice what Paul says of heaven:

**2 Corinthians 12:1-4 (NKJV) *It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago; whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows; such a one was caught up to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup> And I know such a man; whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows; <sup>4</sup> how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.***

The Bible does not tell us much about heaven; not only because right now it is beyond our ability to comprehend, but also because God wants us to understand that heaven, as to its very heart, is God's dwelling. There is one central thing that makes heaven so blessed, so majestic, so awful in its splendor. That one thing is this: we shall see God.

That, believer, is our hope - heaven. According to 1 Thessalonians, when we die we will be taken to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. What a glorious hope that is.

**1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NKJV) *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [seized] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.***

“Caught up” is the Greek word *harpazo*[a°rpa/zw], it means: *“to seize or snatch away.”* This is where the word “rapture” comes from. But certainly “to seize” or being “caught up” means something different than a levitation of the physical body from earth up into the atmosphere of the sky. (“up” is only inserted by the translators by presupposition—it appear nowhere in the Greek) *Harpazo* refers to the Christian being “caught” or “seized” without the body. It should also be noted that “air” [*aēr*] means *“the air, particularly the lower and denser air as distinguished from the higher and rarer air.”*

It is not the physical body that is raptured. It is the Christian himself who is raptured as he leaves his body behind at physical death and moves into the spiritual realm. The dead believers were resurrected when Christ returned, and all other Christians would be “seized” at their physical death.

What greater hope could we have than to be taken to heaven to dwell with Christ for all eternity? This is the present day hope of the church, and preterism does not deny it but strongly affirms it.

Believers, we won't escape physical death - everybody dies:

**Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV) *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,***

But when we do die physically, we will move into the heavenly realm where we will live forever with the Lord! What a blessed hope!

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