

What Does Preterism Mean?

by Tony Warren

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hat Does Preterist Mean? The term Preterit or Praeterit identifies Christians who believe that most or nearly all of Bible Prophecy has already been fulfilled in Christ and the on-going expansion of His Kingdom. The word *Preterit* is derived from the Latin "praeterit" meaning before or past. i.e., [*L. praeteritus, gone by*]. It is expressing time fulfilled. In theological terms, it is the doctrine of Past-fulfillment of most of Christian prophecy. Those who hold to this eschatological view point to the witness of Scripture that Jesus and his apostles said that His coming (*or presence*) and the end of all things would occur soon, meaning (*ironically*) "literally" in that generation.

What does Preterist mean? Well, like the doctrine of Premillennialism, there are different versions or off-shoots of this eschatology. There are "Partial Preterists" who only spiritualize some prophecies as being fulfilled. While those calling themselves "consistent Preterists" (*also known as full preterists*) spiritualize nearly all of the passages like Matthew chapter 24 as having already taken place in the past. They also teach that Christ actually returned in 70 A.D., fulfilling prophecy of the second advent.

While most learned Theologians understand that some spiritualizing or figurative language is a sound fundamental part of the exegesis of, and discernment in Scripture, there generally must be some strong and clear justification in Scripture for it. It is generally believed that Preterism takes a very liberal approach to this rule of sound hermeneutics. Another of the passages that Preterists use to support their belief is Matthew chapter 23:

Matthew 23:37-39

- "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
- Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

- For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Using Scriptures such as Matthew 23, they hypothesize that when His disciples asked about the end of the world [*aion*] or age, it was in referral to the end of a dispensation which they believe took place in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Thus Preterists' generally hold that the "age to come," is a designation by Christ for the Christian era.

One of the weaknesses in this position is that they selectively interpret the word age/world [*aion*], and then arbitrarily make the supposition that there was an end of the age in 70 A.D with the destruction of Jerusalem. However, this does not agree with, nor explain, verses such as:

Luke 18:30

- "Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

The word translated world is this exact same word [*aion*], meaning age. If that present time or age was before 70 A.D., and the age to come is eternal life, then 70 A.D. (*being the coming age according to their hypothesis*), was the start of this eternal life. This is inconsistent with Christ's words concerning salvation and the Spirit of Pentecost many years before.

What does Preterism mean? Simply defined, Preterism is the view that much or all of the eschatological prophecies have already been fulfilled, with the emphasis on the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Peace,

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The Mountain Retreat / twarren10@aol.com

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