

A Journey to Preterism – Rewritten Transcript

Introduction

Narrator:

The closest I usually come to stating my belief is this: our generation has more reason to believe that Christ could return in our lifetime than any generation before us. I believe the Antichrist is alive somewhere in Europe right now. I believe the coming of the Lord is very near.

I am not looking for signs—I am listening for sounds. For the trumpet of God shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

You can hold your Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other, and they match. They match perfectly.

If you are like me, that was the view of Bible prophecy you grew up with:

The Antichrist is alive now. Modern technology will enable the mark of the beast. And the world is heading toward Armageddon. But something unexpected happened on my way to believing in the rapture. I encountered a view of Bible prophecy that was radically different. Most people's first reaction is disbelief. "You're kidding. You must be joking." That was certainly my reaction.

How It Began

It all started in 1997 when I changed jobs.

To my surprise, one of my co-workers, Bill, turned out to be someone with whom I had attended church many years earlier.

Bill began by mentioning a mutual acquaintance of ours—Garrett.

Garrett is a retired businessman who lives in the countryside near where I live. Years ago we had both attended church together, and our men's retreats were even held on his property.

Although I had not seen Garrett for years, Bill asked if I had heard about his *strange new doctrine*. As it happened, I had heard something. Garrett owned several properties in town, including a small church building where a newly formed church I attended had been meeting. He was effectively our landlord. My pastor had spent some time with him and later told me that Garrett no longer believed in the Book of Revelation. I remembered Garrett as a man passionate about the Word of God. He was always studying. Soon after his conversion he had even bought a Bible bookstore so that he could have access to study materials. When I heard he supposedly no longer believed in Revelation, I assumed he had simply become isolated and fallen into error. So I said to Bill: **Narrator:** "Yes, I heard that Garrett doesn't believe in Revelation anymore."

Bill: "No," Bill corrected me. "He believes in Revelation. He just believes it has already been fulfilled."

I was stunned.

That almost sounded worse.

But Bill was not finished.

He said:

Bill: "When I first heard about it, I thought Garrett had gone off the deep end living out in the country by himself. But now I believe it too."

I could hardly believe what I was hearing.

Bill and Garrett believed that Revelation had already been fulfilled.

Bill explained that the view was called **preterism**.

The Four Views of Revelation

Preterism is one of four major interpretations of the Book of Revelation.

They are:

1 Preterist

2 Historicist

3 Futurist

4 Idealist

Preterists believe that Revelation was written before AD 70 and that it prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem. Historicists believe Revelation describes events unfolding throughout church history. Futurists believe Revelation predicts future global catastrophe and judgment. The Idealist view sees Revelation as symbolic—representing the ongoing struggle between good and evil. I had never heard these terms before.

Beginning the Investigation

Although I was no Bible scholar, I had read many prophecy books. I could find any book in the Bible without the index.

So I decided to study the issue and prove Bill wrong.

Garrett might be a lost cause—but Bill worked with me, so I planned to keep challenging him until he came back to the truth.

Bill lent me some books.

One of them was **The Parousia** by J. Stuart Russell.

When I saw the book, I stopped cold.

Years earlier I had attended a Sunday school class taught by a man deeply knowledgeable in Scripture. He had once shown me that very

same book and told me it supported the idea that Revelation had already been fulfilled.

Now I was facing two men who were far more knowledgeable than I was—and both believed this view.

Suddenly my task did not seem quite so easy.

Apocalyptic Language

One of the key arguments for preterism involves understanding **Jewish apocalyptic language**.

When the Old Testament prophets described the fall of nations, they often used dramatic cosmic imagery.

For example:

- The sun darkenedThe stars fallingThe heavens shakingBut these descriptions were symbolic of national judgment, not literal astronomical events.Examples appear throughout the Old Testament:**Isaiah 13** describing the fall of Babylon
- **Isaiah 34** describing judgment on Edom
- **Ezekiel 32** describing judgment on Egypt

Yet we know that when those nations fell, the literal sun did not go dark and stars did not fall.Therefore, many scholars believe that such language was **symbolic prophetic imagery**.

Preterists argue that the same type of language is used in the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation.

Jesus and John were Jews writing to a Jewish audience.

Naturally, they would use the same prophetic language familiar to their readers.

The End of the Age

During our discussions, Bill also raised another point.

Many passages commonly interpreted as referring to **the end of the world** may actually refer to **the end of the age**.

Specifically, the end of the Old Covenant age.

In Greek, the word often translated “world” is **aion**, meaning “age.”

Thus passages about “the end of the world” may actually refer to the end of the **Jewish age**, which culminated in AD 70 when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

Historical Events of AD 70

The Jewish historian **Josephus** recorded the horrors of the Roman siege of Jerusalem between AD 66 and 70.

More than a million Jews died through:

faminesworddiseaseand internal conflict. Josephus even recorded: false prophetsfalse messiahsfamilies turning against one anotherAll of these details seemed to echo Jesus’ prophecies in Matthew 24. At first I dismissed this as coincidence. But the parallels were difficult to ignore.

Dating the Book of Revelation

Another crucial issue was the date when Revelation was written.

If Revelation was written **before AD 70**, it could plausibly refer to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Kenneth Gentry’s book **Before Jerusalem Fell** argues strongly for this early date.

Many scholars—even those who reject preterism—acknowledge that Gentry’s case is compelling.

Audience Relevance

Perhaps the strongest argument for preterism is **audience relevance**.

Scripture must be understood in the context of the people to whom it was written.

Many New Testament passages indicate that the early Christians expected Christ's coming soon.

Examples include:

Matthew 16:28 Hebrews 10:37 James 5:8 Revelation 3:11 These passages speak of Christ's coming as **near** or **at hand**.

Preterists argue that these statements must be taken seriously.

Partial vs Full Preterism

Eventually my study led me to accept **partial preterism**.

This view teaches:

Most of Jesus' prophecy and Revelation refer to AD 70. But a future physical return of Christ still remains. However, Bill believed something more radical. He believed **full preterism**—that all eschatological prophecy, including the Second Coming, was fulfilled in AD 70.

The Turning Point

At first I rejected that idea completely.

But as I continued studying, one question troubled me:

If the New Testament repeatedly says Christ would come soon, how could those statements refer to events thousands of years later?

Eventually I reached a difficult conclusion.

Christ promised to return within the lifetime of that generation.

And according to this view, He did—through the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Conclusion

My journey was long and difficult.

I studied both sides.

I read books defending preterism and books opposing it.

In the end I found the preterist view answered many questions that futurism could not.

I still have unanswered questions.

But I now believe that many of the prophecies Christians place in our future were actually fulfilled in the first century.

Final Appeal

My purpose is not to force anyone to adopt preterism.

Rather, I hope this presentation encourages you to study the Scriptures carefully.

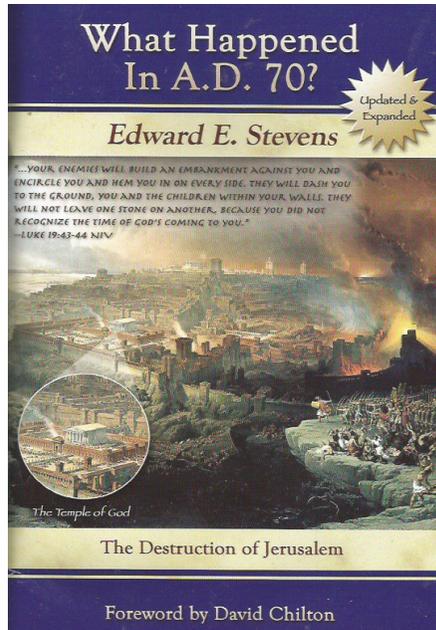
Like the Bereans, examine everything in the light of God's Word.

Truth matters.

And wherever the truth leads, we must be willing to follow.

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70



This book introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have found extremely helpful in their Bible study. It explains the end time riddles which have always bothered students of Bible prophecy. It is a **consistent view** which makes the book of Revelation much easier to understand. It establishes when the New Testament canon of scripture was completed, demolishes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament, and is more **conservative** on most other issues than traditional views. And there is **no compromise** of any essential Biblical doctrine of the Christian faith.

The key to understand any passage of scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written (**audience relevance**). Two thousand years from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of “American English” to read our USA newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and elephant, what would they think? How would they go about understanding it? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economics. The same applies to Bible study. If we are really going to understand what all the “donkeys and elephants” (beasts, harlots, dragons, etc.) Symbolize in the book of Revelation, we

will have to seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, the truths essential for salvation are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are “hard to understand” (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), and Bible prophecy is one of those things which must be approached with much more focus on the original historical art cultural context (audience relevance)

One of the main purposes of this book is to provide a closer look at the historical framework behind the New Testament. Many have found it helpful to lay aside (at least temporarily) the legion of speculative opinions about the book of Revelation, and look at a more historical alternative, which is that *the book of Revelation was written to the first century church and had primary relevance to them*. It warned of events that were about to happen in their lifetime, and prepared them for the tribulation and other events associated with the End of the Jewish Age.

Atheists, skeptics, Jew, Muslims, and liberal critics of the bible use the supposed failure of those end times events to occur in the First Century to undermine the integrity of Christ and the inspired NT writings.

Non-Christian Jews laugh at this supposed non-occurrence, and use it as evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah. Their forefathers in the flesh rejected Jesus in His first coming because He did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies in the materialistic and nationalistic way that they were expecting, even though Jesus told them that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it would be within them instead. Yet it seems that many futurists today are expecting that same kind of materialistic and nationalistic kingdom to arrive at a future return of Christ. Are they making the same mistake about the Second Coming that the Jews made about His first coming? Jesus repeatedly said His Kingdom is “not of this world” and that it would “not come with observation.” It is a spiritual entity, and it has arrived. We live in it. Both futurist Christians and non-Christian Jews need to realize this.

Christians are finally beginning to seek alternatives to the fatally flawed *futurist* interpretation. This book introduces the Preterist view.

“Preterist” simply means past in fulfillment. It means that Christ has already fulfilled His promise to return and consummate redemption in Himself and His ongoing spiritual kingdom (the church). We should be like the noble-minded Bereans and “search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are true” You might want to have your Bible open alongside as you read.

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