

The Error of Preterism

by Jan Markell

Friday, February 18, 2005 4:49 PM

Haven't You Noticed? It's Heaven on Earth Right Now! The Error of Preterism--by Jan Markell

Olive Tree Ministries, Inc. - www.olivetreeviews.org

Preterism is the eschatological teaching that all Bible prophecy is history. Most of it took place in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The Tribulation was the persecution of the saints and Nero was the antichrist. At the heart of the doctrine is that prophecy was declared and destined to be fulfilled within the generation of Christ's earthly ministry. All references in the Bible to the "last days" refer to the "last days" of Israel, which means that today she has no more relevance than the Canary Islands. The "New Jerusalem" is the Church now and forever. It will "Christianize" the world.

There are "Full Preterists" and "Partial Preterists." Partial Preterists actually consider much of what Full Preterists teach to be heretical. A Full Preterist says that Jesus returned "in spirit" in 70 AD and NOTHING is future. Good-bye "blessed Hope." We're in "the New Heavens and New Earth" right now and Satan is bound. But to Full and Partial Preterists, hardly anything is taken literally--most all is allegorical or symbolic, particularly the entire book of Revelation. To all Preterists, the Olivet Discourse is not about the coming of our Lord but about the destruction of Jerusalem. Revelation was not written in 95 AD but much earlier according to Full and Partial Preterists.

Partial Preterists do believe in a Second Coming, resurrection of believers (but not in the Rapture), and Judgment Seat of Christ. They do not believe in a literal Millennium, Battle of Armageddon, literal antichrist, or a role for national Israel. Prominent Partial Preterists include Gary DeMar, R.C. Sproul, Ken Gentry, and "The Bible Answerman", Hank Hanegraaff.

This theology wasn't taken seriously until the 17th Century, though they will argue that. They will tell you that Dispensationalism wasn't taken seriously until 1817 which is totally false and is another message.

Preterism became prominent thanks to a Jesuit priest, Luis de Alcazar, who sought to defend the Catholic Church against attacks of the Reformers. He sought to defend the Roman Church from some claims they were making about Catholic apostasy. The Preterism taught today, however, only became popular in the late 20th Century.

Dr. Thomas Ice and I will discuss this on this weekend's radio broadcast, January 29 (see my Web site for listening options...www.olivetreeviews.org). All programs are posted on "Radio Archives" 5-6 days later. So here are some bullet points to consider:

☐ Nero was the antichrist. The term in the Bible they say is not some "future Fuhrer" but was a symbol of Nero and the Roman Empire. The False Prophet was the leadership of apostate Israel who rejected Christ and worshipped instead the Roman Empire (who tormented them, then slaughtered them). Nero's persecutions were limited to Rome, not the whole world.

☐ Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation are all fulfilled. The destruction of Jerusalem was the Great Tribulation along with the persecution of believers. So how do they justify Matthew 24:21 where it states that the Tribulation will be the worst time in all of history? Many scenarios since 70 AD have been far worse than the destruction of 70 AD, including World War II. And ALL NATIONS of the world did not come against Jerusalem in 70 AD...only Rome. All nations coming against her are to be destroyed. It didn't happen.

☐ Everything is taken symbolically including the Millennium. Actually, there is no Millennium as Dispensationalists know it. We are now in the "Kingdom of Christ" and have been since the days of the early church. Satan is bound, even though the earth is reeling with sorrow, pain, disasters, and godless governments under Communism and radical Islam. More than 50 million believers have died since 70 AD and there have been 15,000 wars. Some "Kingdom"! Our Lord must be weeping.

☐ Jesus isn't coming back so what do they do with such obvious scriptures as Acts 1:11, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go"? This should be a challenge to the Full Preterists who believe He came back "in spirit" in 70 AD and that's it for His return!

☐ The Jews as a nation did not turn to Messiah in 70 AD as prophesied in Zechariah 12:10.

☐ If all these events took place in 70 AD, when were the nations judged as described in Matthew 25:31-46? They weren't back then because this is FUTURE.

☐ As for Nero--he wasn't the antichrist! He died in 68 AD before the destruction of Jerusalem. He was a whimpy emperor though evil, indeed. But he doesn't come close to being the "King of fierce countenance" of Daniel 8:23, and he made no covenant with Israel, Daniel 9:26, 27.

Dispensationalists believe he will be destroyed by the King of kings, but Nero committed suicide. Before that, he issued no "mark" and people could buy and sell. He sat in no Temple declaring himself God, demanding he be worshipped (II Thess. 2:4). All Preterists deny there will be future Temples such as the Tribulation Temple and Millennial Temple.

❑ The vials, bowls, seals, and trumpet judgments of Revelation are all symbolic to all Preterists. Thus the carnage (and victory) of Revelation is overlooked and written off.

❑ Why can people with this theology accept that all of the prophecies of Jesus' first coming were fulfilled literally but Second Coming verses must be symbolic? Are we permitted to pick and choose like this and remain with any hermeneutical credibility and accuracy? This is Biblically and intellectually disingenuous.

CONCLUSION: Revelation was written in about 95 AD and not before 70 AD. Preterism is just another teaching that is filled with doctrinal error and should not be taken seriously. It takes our eyes off of our "blessed hope"--the glorious return of our Lord to take us out of our world of pain and sorrow. The wonderful time of the lion and lamb side by side will be a glorious time. Satan is hardly bound, but he will be and I trust Fox and CNN [will] capture the moment when he is thrown into the pit forever. The King of kings will inaugurate the greatest kingdom the world has even known! What a glorious day awaits us as believers!

This is but a very brief review of the teaching. Consult my Web site, www.olivetreeviews.org, then go to Prophecy Watch for many articles on Preterism. Also get Dr. Thomas Ice's book, "The End Times' Controversy—The Second Coming Under Attack." It is co-authored by Tim LaHaye, a man derided by most Preterists.

Awaiting His return,
Jan Markell