

Doctrine of Eschatology

The Resurrection and the Rapture of the Preterist View

1. Preterism is the system of belief that the future prophecies of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 were fulfilled by the end of the first century of the Christian era.



2. The term "Preterist" is taken from the Hebrew language's "Preterite" tense, which is the "past perfect" sense, in terms of once for all completion, or accomplishment
3. A distinction must be made between the "Full Preterist" and the "Partial Preterist" advocates. Partial Preterist believe that the return of Jesus, the great resurrection, and a new heaven and new earth are future events. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was a coming of Christ, but not the coming of Christ.
4. While both positions of Preterism unite on many points, division takes place concerning the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul speaks about the resurrection.
 - *1 Corinthians 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

5. United to Scripture is the Apostle's Creed which affirms faith in the resurrection of the body.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN."

6. As Christ has promised to be the firstfruits of those who are raised from the dead, the saints anticipate a resurrection body. The soul and body are to be forever united. The saints are not to wander in a disembodied state throughout eternity.
7. Full Preterist argue that the resurrection has already been fulfilled in the past.
8. Why Do Preterist Believe This? Turning to 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, Preterist notice that no time frame is given for the fulfillment of the text. However, they seize upon the word "we". Verse 52 says, "*and we shall be changed.*"
9. The argument is that the word "we" indicates a first century fulfillment. This resurrection passage is then linked to the Rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 which includes the language, "Then we which are alive..." Again, the argument is that Paul includes himself in the events.
10. Of course, the language of identity does not necessitate that Paul believed he would personally be alive at an immediate Rapture, or Resurrection. The word "we" is used in an expanded sense. Paul would be included in the resurrection whenever it took place, in the first century, or later.

Special Note.

The Higher Critics have seized upon the language of Paul to declare that he was mistaken in his belief that he would be part of the final coming in his generation, and a general resurrection. Therefore the Scriptures cannot be true. However, a possible inference from a text does not necessitate that inference from the text.

11. In order for the Preterist position to prevail, the resurrection, and the Rapture must be spiritualized.
12. Spiritualizing the resurrection, and the Rapture, is not easy to do contextually, because the language of Scripture is plainly dealing with literal and bodily events.

Special Note.

It is difficult to spiritualize the bodily resurrection of the saints without at the same time denying the bodily resurrection of the saints. If the resurrection is only spiritual, then it is manifestly not a physical resurrection.

13. Preterism has been charged with Gnosticism, which also denied the resurrection of Jesus.
14. Preterism does the same with the Rapture.

- *1 Thessalonians 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

15. Paul insists that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and then those who are still alive shall be caught up (Raptured) to meet, and greet the coming Lord who is returning for the second time for all who believe. There is no escaping a literal, physical, bodily resurrection of the dead. This event cannot be spiritualized.
16. The Preterist have to insist on a secret and silent Rapture in order to spiritualize this event and make the Rapture a historical reality. Their position is that nobody heard the Rapture, no one saw it, no one recorded it, but it happened spiritually.
17. If the return of Christ did take place in the first century, it is the best kept secret in church history.
18. Today, many Christians believe the Rapture of the church, and a first resurrection takes place prior to a Great Tribulation. This is known as the Pretribulation Rapture Theory.
19. In this Pretribulation Rapture scheme, Jesus will come near the earth for his saints, and then disappear with them into heaven, only to reappear seven years later for His final manifestation in glory.

20. On this return flight, Jesus will rule the earth from Jerusalem for one thousand literal years.
21. This two stage, or two phase Rapture, misses the imagery of 1 Thessalonians 4. The image is that of a returning hero who is greeted in his glory, and escorted back to the place to which he is coming.
22. Jesus Christ is the King of kings who shall return the second time, and not in stages, or phases. But He shall return in glory, manifested with the shout of the archangel, the trump of God, the rising of the saints to greet Him, the resurrection of the dead, and His decent to earth.
- *Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*
 - *Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*
23. The return of Christ is reflected in the victorious return of a Roman military officer.

Special Note.

The commanding Roman military general would place his camp, and all of his entourage, outside the gates of the city of Rome. A message would be sent to the Senate that he had returned. There would be great preparations made to receive the coming conquering hero.

An arch of triumph would be built. Buildings and streets would be made clean and decorated. Garlands with a sweet aroma would be strewn to cover up any stench. At a prearranged time a signal would be made whereby the trumpets would sound announcing the hero. The armies of Rome would march in triumph into Rome. All the citizens of Rome were invited to come outside the city, join the triumphant army, and march back into the city so that they participated in the victory and in the triumph.

When Jesus comes, He shall return with all the saints. He will continue to descend and meet with resurrected saints. What a future awaits Christians!