

Preterist Theology

What is your opinion of preterist eschatology?

Preterist eschatology, more than anything else, is the belief that the events of the “end-times” occurred in 66-70 C.E. during the period of the Jewish revolt against Rome, the destruction of the Temple, and the rise of Roman persecution against the Believers. Preterist theologians argue for a very early composition of the Book of Revelation, and believe that Nero Caesar was “the antichrist.” Preterist theologians adhere to the belief that the Abomination of Desolation occurred in 70 C.E. with the destruction of the Second Temple.

The demographics among those who deal with eschatology reveal that a large number of those who adhere to preterism are liberal theologians. These are theologians who generally tend to allegorize the narratives of the Tanach such as the Creation account or Noahadic Flood. Likewise with apocalyptic Scriptures, they also allegorize their meanings. Sometimes this is based in an inability on the part of the expositor to deal with the harsh realities of Divine judgment. Likewise, some of it is reactionary to the more literal schools of prophetic interpretation, and some of the abuse that exists among them. Preterist eschatology, in no uncertain terms, fully adheres to replacement theology where the Church now supersedes Israel. Israel as God’s covenant nation no longer exists in a preterist framework, having experienced its “end-times,” as God is now only working through the Church.

Messianic Apologetics does not adhere to preterist eschatology in any way, and the vast majority in the Messianic community likewise do not believe in it. Our rejection of preterist eschatology is based in the problems that arise when asserting that “the end-times” have taken place, without the physical return of Yeshua the Messiah. Preterist eschatology asks us to consider the Church existing on Earth being the manifestation of God’s Kingdom in the world. Unfortunately for preterists, the Scriptures do not reflect this, instead presenting us both/and aspects of the Kingdom. While elements of God’s Kingdom can be captured on Earth among His people, we still await the complete manifestation of the Kingdom at the Lord’s appearing.

Perhaps more than anything else, Messianics should reject preterism because many preterists do not see a Scriptural basis for the existence of the State of Israel. In America, many preterists only support Israel because Israel is an ally of the United States, but not for any Biblically-based reason. Preterists would argue that any microchip implant system that could be implemented to identify people could never be “the mark of the beast.” Preterist theology, more than anything else, is a denial of those who cannot handle the judgment of God on today’s sinful world.

The only way the Messianic community can avoid the problems with preterist eschatology is to continue to develop its own post-tribulational, pre-millennial eschatology. This theology should be firmly based in the premise that we still await the completion of the Seventieth Week of Israel, that “the Church” has not replaced Israel, that God’s promises to Israel are still valid, and that all Believers—as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel—will experience what Israel experiences in the Last Days. These are the things that we should be discussing in our distinct Messianic examinations of the end-times.