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UPHOLDING OUR FUTURE  
**HOPE**  
AN APOSTOLIC RESPONSE TO PRETERISM

COMPILED BY G. JORGE MEDINA

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DAVID K. BERNARD • WILLIAM CHALFANT • PHILLIP A. DUGAS • J. R. ENSEY  
KEN GURLEY • JOHN T. LARABELL • DAVID S. NORRIS • STEVE PIXLER



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# Upholding Our Future Hope

An Apostolic Response to Preterism

Compiled by G. Jorge Medina

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# What Is Preterism Anyway?

David K. Bernard

## **Preterism**

Preterism is an interpretation of end-time prophecy. According to this view, most, if not all, passages of Scripture that conservative Christians generally regard as end-time prophecies, including the Book of Revelation, were fulfilled as of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This event is identified as “the day of the Lord.”

For instance, preterists typically believe that Revelation 1-19 was fulfilled by A.D. 70 and that most of Revelation 20-22 (the Millennium and the New Jerusalem) describes the current existence of the New Testament church.

Historically, preterism has been embraced primarily by some mainline Protestants, particularly those who are postmillennialists or amillennialists. In recent years, it has gained some acceptance in conservative evangelical circles, including Baptists, through the writings of R. C. Sproul, John Bray, and others.

These adherents typically link their view of end-time

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prophecy with a denial of the present reality of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial sign of speaking in tongues and of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. For example, Joel 2:28-32, as quoted in Acts 2:17-21, speaks of the outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days followed by signs in heaven and earth and “the great and terrible day of the Lord.” Since preterists believe that “the great and terrible day of the Lord” took place in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem, they typically restrict the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit to the apostolic church before that time.

### **Partial Preterism**

In recent years, a form of preterism has entered the ranks of Pentecostals. These teachers claim that most prophecies of the end times have been fulfilled, yet they still believe in the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit and in a literal, future coming of Christ. Therefore, as some have acknowledged, their view can be called “partial preterism,” as opposed to “full preterism,” which asserts that all end-time prophecies have been fulfilled and denies a literal, future coming of Christ.

Here are some typical examples of the interpretation of Scripture by preterists (full or partial). In Matthew 24:30, Jesus predicted that in the future people would see “the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” According to some preterist teachers, the “clouds” refer to the clouds of dust stirred up by the Roman armies as they marched against Jerusalem, and thus the coming of the Lord refers to that event. In John 14:2-3, Jesus promised, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have

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told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Some preterist teachers explain that the “mansions” are “rooms” that Jesus has prepared in the hearts of people. Thus, this passage has been fulfilled in the New Testament church. Moreover, the passages that refer to the second “coming” (*parousia*) of Christ actually refer to the spiritual “presence” of Christ. Thus the church has already experienced His coming.

Partial preterists imply that the Millennium is either past or present, but typically they have not been definitive, because the Articles of Faith of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) require belief in a literal Millennium. However, they believe that the specified time of one thousand years is symbolic and that the UPCI should not have an official position on the Millennium. Moreover, it appears that, according to their interpretation, the eternal destiny of the church is to remain on the renovated earth.

Partial preterists acknowledge that at some point in time the church will see Jesus on the earth in His glorified humanity. Ultimately, there will be the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, eternal reward for the righteous, and eternal judgment for the unrighteous. However, they do not find any prophetic indication of when this could take place; it could be a thousand years away.

As a necessary part of their belief system, partial preterists reject all aspects of dispensationalism and any role for the nation of Israel in God’s future plan. They regard the church today as “spiritual Israel.”

Some Pentecostal teachers of preterism have stated