

Revelation According to Partial Preterism

Partial preterism views the Book of Revelation primarily as a historically grounded prophecy. It teaches that chapters 1–19 were fulfilled in the first century, specifically during the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, it maintains that the final chapters await a literal, future Second Coming and physical resurrection.

The Core Premise: "Shortly Come to Pass"

Partial preterists emphasize the time-indicator statements in Revelation (e.g., "for the time is at hand" in Rev 1:3). They conclude that John wrote the book before the A.D. 70 destruction of the Temple to comfort early Christians who were facing severe persecution from both the Roman Empire and apostate Judaism.

Key Interpretations

- **The Beast:** Most partial preterists identify the first beast of Revelation 13 (and the Whore of Babylon in chapter 17) as the Roman Empire, often specifically pointing to Emperor Nero or the pagan imperial system.
- **The Mark of the Beast:** Rather than a futuristic microchip or global tracking system, the "mark" is frequently interpreted as the use of Roman coinage bearing the Emperor's image, which was necessary to participate in the local economy.
- **The Fall of Babylon:** This represents the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem. The harlot "drunk with the blood of the saints" is viewed as apostate Jerusalem, which rejected Jesus and aligned with Rome to persecute the early Church.
- **The Millennium (Ch. 20):** This is understood as the present church age, where Christ spiritually reigns. The "first resurrection" is interpreted as the spiritual rebirth of believers or the reign of martyrs in heaven, rather than a literal 1,000-year earthly kingdom.

The "Not Yet" Aspect

Unlike *full preterism*—which believes all prophecy (including the Second Coming) was fulfilled in A.D. 70—partial preterism maintains an "already but not yet" framework. It asserts that the final chapters of Revelation (chapters 20:11 through 22:5) look forward to a literal, future reality, including:

- The bodily, visible Second Coming of Christ
- The final bodily resurrection and Judgment Day
- The creation of the physical new heavens and new earth

Recommended Study Resources

If you are looking to dive deeper into this theological framework, consider these standard commentaries and foundational works:

- ***The Divorce of Israel: A Redemptive-Historical Interpretation of Revelation* by Kenneth L. Gentry Jr.** – A comprehensive two-volume academic defense of the partial preterist perspective.
- ***The Days of Vengeance* by David Chilton** – One of the most famous and widely read commentaries outlining this eschatological view.

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- ***Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* edited by Steve Gregg** – Provides a great comparative overview of partial preterism alongside futurist, historicist, and idealist approaches.

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Summary of the Book of Revelation from a Partial Preterist View

The partial preterist interpretation of the Book of Revelation teaches that most of the prophecies in Revelation were fulfilled in the first century, especially in the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the collapse of the old covenant system. However, partial preterists still believe in a future bodily return of Christ, the final resurrection, and the final judgment.

Main Theme

Partial preterists see Revelation primarily as a prophecy about:

- The judgment of apostate Israel
- The end of the Old Covenant age
- Christ's vindication of His church
- The victory of Jesus over His enemies

The book is understood as being highly symbolic and rooted in Old Testament prophetic imagery.

Chapter-by-Chapter Overview

Revelation 1

John receives a vision of the risen Christ while exiled on Patmos. Jesus declares that the events revealed “must shortly take place” and that “the time is near.” Partial preterists emphasize these time statements as evidence the prophecies were imminent for John’s original audience.

Revelation 2–3

The seven churches of Asia receive messages from Christ. These were real first-century churches facing persecution, compromise, and false teaching. The warnings and promises were directly relevant to their immediate circumstances.

Revelation 4–5

John sees God’s heavenly throne room. Christ, the slain Lamb, is declared worthy to open the sealed scroll. Partial preterists often interpret the scroll as a covenantal judgment document against Jerusalem and unbelieving Israel.

Revelation 6

The opening of the seals begins judgments:

- War
- Famine

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- Pestilence
- Death
- Persecution

These are commonly linked to conditions leading up to the Jewish-Roman War (A.D. 66–70). The “wrath of the Lamb” is viewed as covenant judgment.

Revelation 7

The 144,000 symbolize the faithful remnant of Israel preserved through coming judgment. The great multitude represents redeemed believers from all nations entering Christ’s kingdom.

Revelation 8–9

The trumpet judgments intensify. Partial preterists connect these catastrophes to the Roman invasion of Judea and the horrors described by Flavius Josephus during the siege of Jerusalem.

Revelation 10

The little scroll symbolizes prophetic revelation concerning imminent judgment. John is recommissioned to prophesy.

Revelation 11

The measuring of the temple is especially important in partial preterism:

- The temple is often understood as the literal second temple still standing before A.D. 70.
- The two witnesses symbolize prophetic testimony against Israel.
- The “great city where also our Lord was crucified” is identified as Jerusalem.

The destruction associated with this chapter is viewed as the fall of Jerusalem.

Revelation 12

The woman represents faithful covenant Israel bringing forth the Messiah. The dragon is Satan working through earthly powers like Rome and apostate Judaism. Christ’s victory guarantees Satan’s ultimate defeat.

Revelation 13

The beast from the sea is commonly identified with the Roman Empire or specifically Emperor Nero. Many partial preterists connect the number 666 to Nero Caesar through Hebrew gematria. 666

The second beast (false prophet) is often viewed as false religious leadership in Israel that cooperated with Rome.

Revelation 14

This chapter contrasts the faithful followers of Christ with those under judgment. The harvest imagery symbolizes covenant judgment upon Israel.

Revelation 15–16

The bowl judgments represent the completion of God’s wrath against apostate Jerusalem and the old covenant order.

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Revelation 17

“Babylon the Great” is interpreted by many partial preterists as Jerusalem rather than Rome because:

- She is guilty of the blood of prophets
- She is connected with covenant unfaithfulness
- Jesus said Jerusalem killed the prophets

Others within partial preterism see Babylon as Rome, though still in a first-century fulfillment context.

Revelation 18

Babylon falls dramatically. Partial preterists commonly associate this with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the collapse of the temple-centered Jewish system.

Revelation 19

Christ is portrayed as victorious King and Judge. The imagery is often seen as symbolic of His coming in judgment against Jerusalem rather than His final second coming.

Revelation 20

Views differ among partial preterists:

- Many are amillennial and see the millennium as Christ’s present reign from heaven.
- Satan’s binding refers to restriction of his power to deceive the nations as before Christ’s victory.

Most partial preterists still place the final resurrection and judgment in the future.

Revelation 21–22

The New Jerusalem symbolizes the fullness of God’s redeemed people in the new covenant age. The imagery reflects restored fellowship between God and His people through Christ. Many partial preterists see these chapters as partially inaugurated now spiritually, while awaiting ultimate consummation in the future eternal state.

Key Distinctives of Partial Preterism

1. “Coming” Language Often Refers to Judgment

Partial preterists argue that Christ’s “coming” in many passages refers to covenantal judgment, similar to Old Testament language where God “came” against nations without physically appearing.

2. A.D. 70 Is Central

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple fulfills many prophecies:

- Matthew 24
- Much of Revelation
- End of the old covenant age

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3. The Beast Is First-Century

Most identify the beast with Nero or Rome rather than a future global antichrist system.

4. The Kingdom Exists Now

Christ presently reigns from heaven, and His kingdom is expanding through the gospel.

5. Some Events Are Still Future

Unlike full preterism, partial preterism still teaches:

- Future bodily return of Christ
- Final resurrection
- Final judgment
- New heavens and new earth in their fullest sense

Common Partial Preterist Teachers

Some well-known voices associated with partial preterist or related interpretations include:

- R. C. Sproul
- Kenneth Gentry
- Gary DeMar
- David Chilton
- N. T. Wright (partially aligned on some themes)