

**Revelation 6: 1 - "The 4 Major Views of the book of Revelation" -
Part 5 - "Preterism, Concluded" , Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on February 11th, 2007 in the Afternoon Worship Service,
Sermon # 46 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness".**

One of the real problems with trying to give an overview of the major views of the book of Revelation is that I have found that some of you who are younger in the faith have not been able to get a lot out of what I am saying, because you are unfamiliar with these views. To compound matters, I am not preaching these sermons in a textual way so much as I am delivering them in a topical way. I urge you to bear with me. It is good for us to learn the things that we are learning here, about these views, so that we will understand more about the important things that we should pray for, and about, in relation to Christ's kingdom; and also what we are to expect when Christ returns. Christians differ about these things and so it is good that we try to understand them and come to terms with them. I believe that it is important to have definite views about these things, not in order to win arguments, but to increase evangelism and to promote the truth of the Bible and holy living. The study of prophecy in the book of Revelation, and elsewhere in the Bible is important to our faith in God and to our obedience to His Word, or else the Lord would not have given it to us. We live by faith in the great things that God has done for us in Christ, and we continue to grow in that faith by looking for God to do works of grace in our hearts so that we would keep his commandments. We also should be looking for Him to do great things in the hearts of people among all the nations of the earth. One of the ways that this comes about is when we hope in the promises of God's word in relation to what He has said that He intends to bring about. We do this, not only for ourselves, individually, but also in regard to the establishment of truth and holy living among many peoples and among many nations, in all the world. Our obedience is to keep His Word, and to live in such a way that we are faithful witnesses to Him. Every Christian who is doing this is contributing to furthering Christ's kingdom and His glory. What we want to see in our own lives, we want to see abounding to more and more people. There is, I believe, much to look forward to, in the history of Christ's Church. Much has already taken place, but there is a glorious future for Christ's Church upon the earth. I have this hope because of my view of prophecy, and I hope in time, that it will rub off on you, so that you will be praying and that you will be living in light of Christ's second coming and the great advances of His Church which I believe will come before it.

But we have been studying Preterism this last week, and people who hold this view of prophecy believe that many of the prophecies of the Book of Revelation have been fulfilled already in the context of the time in which Christ and His apostles, "that generation", lived. I gave you their reasons for that last week and I will not go back through them. I hope that you will remember that for Christians who are Preterists, that the time-reference element of the book of Revelation and Matthew 24 are all important. They believe that the Day of the Lord is something that was "coming shortly", it was "very near" and it was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. We have seen that Full Preterists believe that the book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John before 70 A.D. and not in 96-98 A.D. They believe the book of Revelation is showing us visions of what was to take place in that 40 year period of time from 30-70 A.D. They believe that the Antichrist is Nero. They believe also Christ's second coming took place at the same time as His coming to judgment upon Jerusalem. They believe that His coming was secret and invisible and not open and public. The Partial Preterist does not believe that Christ came back literally and physically, in 70 A.D., but rather, that He is to be looked for at some time in the future. They also believe in a future resurrection from the dead at that time. It is this aspect of the Preterist view that I want to focus on this afternoon; the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus, and the resurrection of the dead. I want to speak to you first of the danger of the Full Preterist view concerning this subject, and second, the viability of the Partial Preterist view of this subject.

1st - The Danger of the Full Preterist view of the Resurrection of the Dead and Christ's Second Coming.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15. I will read to you verses 50 - 58. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet." "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" "O Death, where is your sting?" "O Hades where is your victory?" "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

It is very important, yes it is even essential, when we are trying to interpret the Scripture, that we learn not to try to force the Scriptures to say something

that we want it to say in order to fit it into a system of interpretation that we would like to see established. It is therefore, very important that we try hard to understand the difference between what is literal physical and literal spiritual and to "rightly divide" the Word of Truth. And the way that we can divide it rightly is by finding where the phrase has been used before in the Scripture. When we read the phrase, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," we should reference it back to John 11 in our minds, where Jesus was about to raise his friend Lazarus from the dead. It says in John 11: 11, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." "Then His disciples said, Lord, If he sleeps he will get well." "However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking to them about taking rest in sleep." "Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead.'" It was not Lazarus' soul that was asleep. It was Lazarus's body that Jesus was referring to, which had been "laid to rest." Jesus was going to go "wake him up," by raising him from the dead, a bodily resurrection. However, when we hear the words of J. Stuart Russell on this passage, we hear him, and other Full Preterists, saying that what is being referred to in this passage is a spiritual resurrection. The resurrection for them, according to this passage has already taken place. This is what he says. "To whom does the apostle refer when he says, 'We shall all sleep,' etc. " "Is it to some hypothetical persons living in some distant age of time, or is it of the Corinthians and himself that he is thinking?" "Why should he think of the distant future when it is certain that he considered the Parousia (that is Christ's second coming) to be imminent?" When you hear Russell's words you might be objecting to them saying, "How could all this take place without notice or record?" "First, as regards the resurrection of the dead, it is to be considered how little we know of its conditions and characteristics." "Must it come with observation? "Must it be cognizable by material organs?" "It is raised a spiritual body," he says quoting 1 Corinthians 15: 44. "Is a spiritual body one which can be seen, touched, handled?" "We are not certain that the eye can see the spiritual, or the hand grasp the immaterial." "On the contrary, the presumption and the probability are that they cannot." "All this resurrection of the dead and the transmutation of the living take place in the region of the spiritual, in to which earthly spectators and reporters do not enter, and could see nothing if they did."

I consider this an incorrect way to interpret the Scripture. It violates the principle that I gave you before I read it. Paul is not talking about a spiritual resurrection here. He is talking about the body being raised from the dead. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The body must die, yes, but it will be raised again from it's sleep in the day of the resurrection, which will be an event which will be seen and heard by every man. "Every eye will see

the Lord Jesus Christ." Every ear will hear the last trumpet. It will not be secret. It has not, and will not be done in the spiritual realm. It will be done on this present earth. "This corruptible must put on incorruption." It is the body that suffers corruption when it dies. And when it is raised, it is raised a "spiritual body." That is, it is raised in power, with the glory of Christ impressed upon every part of it! Philippians 3: 20 and 21 say, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." Surely this did not happen in 70 A.D. And it could not be done secretly! All of the bodies of the saints that died, were not transformed like this when they died. The body lies in the grave, or it becomes corrupt, or it disintegrates into millions of particles of dust, but God shall put that same body back together again in the resurrection, with the added blessing of that body being glorified to be like Christ's in power and glory. Job says in Job 19: 25, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." This resurrection most certainly has not yet come to pass. When the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead it was that same body that he lived in, that was raised and came forth from the tomb.

I consider this to be a dangerous doctrine because it undermines the truth of the power and glory of Christ's personal visible resurrection and the power and glory of Christ's personal visible coming. The words "spiritual resurrection" should not be applied to the bodily resurrection of the dead. And the words "secret" and "private" should not be used in reference to Christ's second coming. But the Full Preterist believes that the Rapture, the 2nd Coming, and the Resurrection from the dead have already taken place. We simply cannot have seen them take place, it is said. But listen to the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 2: 15 and following. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." "But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness." "And their message will spread like cancer." "Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some." Now why would this overthrow the faith of some? It would overthrow their faith because one of the cardinal doctrines of the gospel is the resurrection of the dead. You see that in 1 Corinthians 15: 3. "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." This verse

should be linked then to what is said by Paul in verse 12. "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead." "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen." "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty." You see, the belief in the resurrection of the dead is here linked to Christ's own resurrection. If He is raised from the dead, then we also shall be raised from the dead. There are a number of errors that come in when the doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead is not believed. Listen to Matthew Poole. "That there shall be no resurrection is a very pleasing doctrine to men that have lived sensual lives; those whose lives have been nothing but eating and drinking, do very unwillingly think of dying, but seeing they cannot avoid that, they would gladly think that there should be no resurrection." That is one aspect of what is left out, but let's think of the positive side that is left out. "Our faith is vain." Our faith is vain because Christ rose from the dead, bodily and physically, to show that He had dealt with our sins on the cross, and when Christ arose God attested this fact with power by raising Him from the dead. It is the gospel itself and its power to save, transform, and overcome sin that is put into question by saying that the resurrection is spiritual and is already past. But the true Christian faith as preached in the gospel saves the whole man from sin. He is raised from the dead spiritually in the New Birth. But he is also raised from the dead physically at Christ's second coming. He is then glorified and body and soul brought back together in one glorious everlastingly powerful way. He is made like Christ. So this doctrine that the resurrection has already taken place in 70 A.D. and it being a spiritual resurrection undermines the power and glory of the true gospel. If you spiritualize too much you lose the foundations of the whole gospel, to save and to overcome the effects of sin in terms of physical death. Christ did not, and will not do that.

Then 2ndly and very briefly - The Viability of the Partial Preterist view of this subject.

The Partial Preterist view does not do violence to the Biblical doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead. Some Partial Preterists may hold Amillennial or Postmillennial views along with their Preterist convictions. Those who hold this view, although they see Jesus Christ coming to judgment against the nation of Israel in 70 A.D., and they believe that much of the book of Revelation and most of Matthew 24 have been fulfilled at that time, still look to see the future coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in personal, visible, bodily glory. They do not see Christ's spiritual "coming" in judgment in the past as being a fulfillment of His 2nd coming promised in many passages, to be yet in the future. 1 Thessalonians 3: 11- 13 is a good example of this. "Now may our God and Father Himself, and

our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you." "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." You see, we will be there with Him when He comes. And we will judge the world with Him. That will be the time of the resurrection and the last judgment. There is a vast difference between these two kinds of Preterists. Perhaps Edward Stevens, who is a Full Preterist, is right when he says, "Preterist means past in fulfillment." "Only those who take a past fulfillment of all the eschatological events (e.g. the return of Christ, resurrection, the judgment) can rightly be called "Preterist." Those who believe the major eschatological events (i.e. Second Coming, Resurrection, Judgment) are still future are really just another kind of futurist." "So Partial Preterists," he says, "should more properly be labeled Amillennial or Postmillennial historicists or futurists." "Only someone who puts all of the eschatological events in the past can rightly be called Preterist in the true sense of the term. Perhaps this is true. Next time we will speak of Premillennialism.