

Eschatology, Session 5: The Evidence for Partial Preterism; 7/23/2025

-Preview of study and calendar.

Session 5: Partial Preterism; 7/23/25

-Most of what is considered future things was already fulfilled in 70AD with the destruction of the temple and associated siege and aftermath.

*lay out evidence for the historical case from Josephus and others

-The exception is the bodily return of Christ and final judgement (the next thing on the eschatological calendar other than the continuing and expanding reign of Christ among the nations [postmill]).

Session 6: The Case for the Early Dating of Revelation; 7/30/25

-Evidence

-Purpose: Divorce of Israel

Session 7: Millennial Issues Part 1 (Rev 20); 8/6/25

-Premillennial (dispensationalism) and Historic

*all tribulation and rapture issues/questions are a subset of this

*Late Great Planet Earth and other nonsense

*Israel and American Politics

Session 8: Millennial Issues Part 2; 8/13/25

-Amillennial: now/not yet

-Postmillennial: hope of the nations

Session 9: Final Things; 8/20/25

-The Resurrection of the Dead

-The Great White Throne Judgement

-The Judgement Seat of Christ

-The New Heavens and New Earth

TODAY:

Review:

What are the key passages dealing with what Jesus said about His coming?

When did Jesus say his coming would happen?

What type of language did Jesus use to describe his coming?

How do you know this is to be taken literarily not literally?

What is partial Preterism?

Note: Indebtedness to The Last Days According to Jesus by RC Sproul.

Extrabiblical Evidence for Partial Preterism

Partial preterism posits that many biblical prophecies, including those in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21), Daniel, and Revelation, were **fulfilled** in the first century, particularly during the Jewish-Roman War (66–73 CE) and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The following extrabiblical evidence, organized by prophetic topic, draws from historical accounts that corroborate these events, supporting the partial preterist view that prophecies were **fulfilled** within a generation of Jesus' ministry (c. 30–70 CE).

Introduction to Source Materials

- **Flavius Josephus' *The Jewish War* (c. 75 AD):** Josephus (c. 37–100 AD), a Jewish priest and historian, initially fought against Rome in the Jewish revolt but later defected, becoming a Roman citizen under the Flavian emperors. His work *The Jewish War* provides a detailed, eyewitness-based account of the revolt, the siege of Jerusalem, and the temple's destruction. As a primary source, it offers unparalleled insight into the historical events partial preterists tie to biblical prophecies, though his Roman allegiance raises questions of bias.
- **Tacitus' *Histories* and *Annals* (c. 100–110 AD):** Tacitus, a Roman senator and historian, wrote *Histories*, covering Roman events from 69–96 AD, and *Annals*, detailing earlier imperial history, including Nero's reign. His accounts of the Jewish revolt and Nero's persecution of Christians provide a Roman perspective,

independent of Jewish or Christian sources, lending credibility to the historical context of prophetic fulfillments.

- **Suetonius' *The Twelve Caesars* (c. 121 AD):** Suetonius, a Roman biographer, documented the lives of Roman emperors, including Nero and Titus. His biographies offer anecdotal details, such as Nero's anti-Christian actions and the Nero Redivivus myth, relevant to Revelation's imagery. While less detailed than Tacitus, Suetonius provides supplementary evidence of Roman activities during the period.
- **Cassius Dio's *Roman History* (c. 200–229 AD):** Cassius Dio, a later Roman historian, wrote a comprehensive history of Rome, including the Jewish revolt and Nero's reign. Though written later, his work draws on earlier records and provides additional confirmation of the war's scale and Nero's character, supporting partial preterist interpretations.
- **Early Christian Writings:** Early church writers, such as Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263–339 AD, *Ecclesiastical History*) and **John** Chrysostom (c. 347–407 AD, *Homilies on Matthew*), offer Christian perspectives on first-century events. Eusebius records traditions about Christians fleeing Jerusalem, while Chrysostom interprets the Olivet Discourse as partly fulfilled in 70 AD. The *Sibylline Oracles* (c. 2nd–3rd century AD), a Jewish-Christian text, also references Nero in apocalyptic terms. These sources reflect early Christian interpretations.
- **Archaeological Evidence:** Roman coins from Nero's reign, bearing his image, provide material evidence for the "**mark of the Beast**" in Revelation. These artifacts, widely documented in numismatic studies, contextualize the economic systems of the time.

Prophetic Topics and Extrabiblical Evidence

1. Destruction of the **Temple (Matthew 24:2)**

Jesus predicted, "Not one stone will be left upon another" (Matthew 24:2), which partial preterists see as fulfilled in the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.

- **Josephus' *The Jewish War*:** Describes the Roman siege under Titus, with the temple burned and stones dismantled to recover melted gold, leaving it in ruins (*The Jewish War*, Book 6, Chapters 4–6).
- **Tacitus' *Histories*:** Confirms the temple's destruction, emphasizing its cultural significance and the war's devastation (*Histories*, Book 5, Chapters 8–13).
- **Suetonius' *The Twelve Caesars*:** Notes Titus' conquest of Jerusalem, including the temple's ruin (*Life of Titus*, Chapter 5).
- **Cassius Dio's *Roman History*:** Details the temple's fall and the siege's impact (*Roman History*, Book 65, Chapter 6).

- **Connection:** These sources collectively **confirm** the temple’s complete destruction within a generation, aligning with Jesus’ prophecy.

2. Great **Tribulation** (Matthew 24:21)

Matthew 24:21 predicts a “great tribulation” tied to the suffering during the Jewish-Roman War.

- **Josephus’ *The Jewish War*:** Chronicles extreme suffering during Jerusalem’s siege, including famine, cannibalism (e.g., a mother eating her child, Book 6, Chapter 3), and over a **million** deaths or enslavements (Book 6, Chapter 9).
- **Tacitus’ *Histories*:** Describes the war’s brutality and high casualties (*Histories*, Book 5, Chapters 11–13).
- **Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*:** Notes the immense loss of life and city’s devastation (*Roman History*, Book 65, Chapter 6).
- **Connection:** The unprecedented horrors documented by these historians support the “great tribulation” as **fulfilled** in 70 AD.

3. **Flight** to the Mountains (Luke 21:20–21)

Jesus instructed followers to “flee to the mountains” when Jerusalem was surrounded, seen as fulfilled by Christians escaping the siege.

- **Josephus’ *The Jewish War*:** Records Jews fleeing Jerusalem before the siege intensified (*The Jewish War*, Book 2, Chapter 14), providing context for Christian flight.
- **Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*:** States Christians fled to Pella in Transjordan, following a prophetic warning (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 5).
- **Connection:** Eusebius’ account, supported by Josephus’ broader context, suggests Christians **acted** on Jesus’ warning, escaping destruction.

4. **False** Prophets (Matthew 24:24)

Jesus warned of false messiahs and prophets performing signs, fulfilled by deceptive leaders during the war.

- **Josephus’ *The Jewish War*:** Documents false leaders like Simon bar Giora and John of Gischala, who misled Jews with promises of deliverance (Book 4, Chapter 9; Book 6, Chapter 5).
- **Connection:** This account aligns with Jesus’ prediction of false prophets.

5. **Judgment**-Coming of Christ (Matthew 24:30)

Partial preterists interpret the “Son of Man coming on the clouds” as symbolic of divine judgment in 70 AD.

- **Josephus’ *The Jewish War***: Reports celestial phenomena, like a sword-shaped star over Jerusalem (Book 6, Chapter 5), seen as judgment imagery.
- **Tacitus’ *Histories***: Mentions omens like a comet (*Histories*, Book 5, Chapter 13), supporting symbolic cosmic signs.
- **Suetonius’ *The Twelve Caesars***: Notes prodigies during the war (*Life of Vespasian*, Chapter 5).
- **Connection**: These phenomena **align** with the apocalyptic imagery of Matthew 24:29–30 as fulfilled in 70 AD.

6. **Nero** and the Number 666 (Revelation 13:18)

Partial preterists identify the “Beast” of Revelation, whose number is 666, as Emperor Nero, based on gematria and historical actions. Gematria (from the Greek word *geometria*) refers to a process by which numerical values are ascribed to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

- **Gematria Evidence**: “Neron Kaiser” in Hebrew gematria equals 666 (N=50, R=200, W=6, N=50, Q=100, S=60, R=200). Some manuscripts use 616, matching “Nero Kaiser” without the final “n.”
- **Tacitus’ *Annals***: Details Nero’s persecution of Christians after the 64 AD Great Fire, with tortures like crucifixion (*Annals*, Book 15, Chapter 44), aligning with the Beast’s war on the saints (Revelation 13:7).
- **Suetonius’ *The Twelve Caesars***: Describes Nero’s anti-Christian actions (*Life of Nero*, Chapter 16) and the Nero Redivivus myth, where he was believed to return after his 68 AD suicide (*Life of Nero*, Chapter 57), linked to Revelation 13:3’s “mortal wound that was healed.”
- **Cassius Dio’s *Roman History***: Portrays Nero’s divine pretensions and persecution (*Roman History*, Book 62), supporting the Beast’s blasphemous character.
- **Josephus’ *The Jewish War***: Notes Nero’s role in starting the war by appointing Vespasian (*The Jewish War*, Book 3, Chapter 1), tying him to Revelation’s context.
- **Sibylline Oracles**: References Nero as a destructive figure (Book 5, lines 28–34), reinforcing the 666 link.
- **Archaeological Evidence**: Nero’s coins, bearing his image, support the “mark of the Beast” (Revelation 13:16–17) as a symbol of economic loyalty.
- **Connection**: Nero’s persecution, gematria match, and survival myth strongly support his identification as the **Beast**.

7. **Babylon** the Great (Revelation 17–18)

Partial preterists debate whether “Babylon” is Jerusalem or Rome, with evidence for both.

- **Jerusalem as Babylon:**
 - **Josephus’ *The Jewish War*:** Describes Jerusalem’s corruption, factional violence, and religious hypocrisy (Book 4), aligning with Babylon as an apostate city.
 - **Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*:** Links Jerusalem’s fall to divine judgment (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 5).
- **Rome as Babylon:**
 - **Tacitus’ *Histories and Annals*:** Highlight Rome’s persecution and dominance (*Annals*, Book 15, Chapter 44).
 - **Suetonius’ *The Twelve Caesars*:** Notes Rome’s power under Nero (*Life of Nero*, Chapter 39).
- **Connection:** Josephus supports Jerusalem as Babylon, while Tacitus and Suetonius support Rome, fitting first-century fulfillment.

Early Christian Interpretations

Early church history suggests some prophecies were seen as fulfilled in 70 CE.

- **Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*:** Connects Jerusalem’s fall to divine **judgment** and notes Christians’ flight to Pella (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 5).
- **John Chrysostom’s *Homily LXXVI*:** Interprets parts of the Olivet Discourse as fulfilled in 70 CE.
- **Connection:** These writings **support** partial preterism’s historical focus.

Challenges and Limitations

- **Dating of Revelation:** Partial preterism assumes an early date (c. 65–68 CE) for Revelation, based on internal evidence (e.g., Revelation 11:1). Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, Book 5, Chapter 30, c. 180 CE) suggests a later date (c. 95 CE), implying future fulfillments.
- **Symbolic vs. Literal:** Critics argue partial preterists inconsistently interpret prophecies literally (e.g., temple’s fall) or symbolically (e.g., cosmic signs).
- **Limited First-Century Testimony:** Early Christians like Ignatius and Polycarp expected a future return of Christ, not a 70 CE fulfillment.

Conclusion

Extrabiblical evidence from Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Cassius Dio, early Christian writings, and archaeological artifacts supports partial preterism’s claim that prophecies

like the temple's destruction, great tribulation, and Nero as the Beast (666) were fulfilled in the first century. The evidence is compelling but debated due to Revelation's dating and interpretive challenges. For further study, see Josephus' *The Jewish War* or Kenneth Gentry's *Before Jerusalem Fell*.

The only thing left to happen is the bodily return of Christ and final judgement (other than the continuing and expanding reign of Christ among the nations [postmill]).