

# Truth Matters! 9

## Are We Depending Upon God Or Today's Spiritual Culture? (Pt. 2)

When we first published the preceding *Truth Matters! 8* article, some responded asking for specific details concerning the two positions mentioned therein. What follows is how we responded to their inquiries. These two positions are not minority positions today. They actually represent two of the more popular end-time positions within Christianity today. The Preterist position includes advocates who believe in a neo-Post-millennial or an Amillennial *return* of Jesus Christ, while Pre-Tribulational position adherents typically commit to a Premillennial return of Jesus Christ—which Revelation chapters 19 (His return to battle the kings and armies of the earth) and 20 (His 1,000-year reign on earth) clearly teach. Both positions, though, have some serious difficulties, biblically speaking.

The Preterit position (in general) believes many of the “end-time” passages have already occurred in the first century, A.D. (Some believe all of the end-time passages have been fulfilled, including the passages that foretell the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus. These adherents are often called “full-preterists”) As a result, a denial of clear Biblical Truth occurs. For examples, 1. Matthew 24:14, 27 has to be given a non-literal understanding. “The end” is not the “end of the age” (note the context: the second coming and the end of the age – Matt. 24:3) but the end of the Jewish or Old Covenant era; 2. “the coming of the Son of Man” is not the future return of Jesus Christ but instead was fulfilled in the coming of Titus the Roman general (occurring in 70 A.D.). This position is false and one that contributes to ill-preparedness. It is not a closet position held by only a few, but one that is accepted by many today. Allow me to tell a recent story of a preterist encounter.

I've had the privilege of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ at Gresham High School. One of the past presentations included information demonstrating Christianity to be a historical faith (as opposed to a religious myth). In my sharing about fulfilled prophecy, one of the seniors asked for a list of New Testament prophetic passages that are beginning to be fulfilled today. As I was sharing that list, Sherrie raised her hand and said, “Wait a minute, these passages were fulfilled in the first century.” She went on about how her youth pastor had this theory about the true state of things today, one that strongly emphasized the preterist position concerning these passages having already been fulfilled. Since I didn't want to have an *in-house* debate in front of the many non-Christians in the class, I asked Sherrie to see me after class. She did, and did we ever get into an interesting conversation. She really believes that none of the end-time passages are applicable to today because they have already been fulfilled. Honestly, she even made reference to Titus's sacking of Jerusalem as the fulfillment of the Second Coming of Jesus

Christ. I encouraged her to read Acts 1 where the angels describe a very different Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I encouraged her to make a distinction between textual interpretations and observations. It's what the text explicitly teaches that is the crucial matter.

All the above to say this: There are many who hold this false teaching today. As a result, they do not look to the Word of God for information about the days immediately preceding our Lord Jesus' return. Instead, many are joining with the global spiritual movement that demands the putting aside of religious differences for the purpose of securing global peace. Once again, this is playing into the hand of the future antichrist.

The Pre-Tribulational Rapture position is a radically different position that affirms the Truth concerning these passages being future while at the same time being applicable to us today due to all that is beginning to unfold, culturally. **But** there's one HUGE problem with this position (not to mention others). The main tenet of the position is not biblical. Let me tell you a true story of my encounter with one of the most authoritative Pre-Tribulational defenders today.

Years ago I wrote a letter to major Pre-Tribulationalists simply asking for one passage that clearly taught the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church before the emergence of antichrist. Dr. Ice of the Pre-Trib. Research Center was the only one to respond. His response? **He wrote that he could not give me a single passage explicitly teaching the Pre-Tribulational Rapture!** Dr. Ice also stated that I could not give one passage in support of my position. I responded that I could give him three passages, did so, and strongly encouraged him to respond. To date, he has never done so—brought response. (For some details about this exchange, please see our field director's D.Min. dissertation entitled *Contemporary Biblical Instruction for the Early 21st Century: A Ten-Year Plan for Endurance Ministries* [pp. 165-174] where the correspondence is quoted in its entirety.)

Why tell this story? Because Truth Matters – God's Truths, not the *truths* of theological systems that have no explicit biblical support! We dare not repeat history and return to the trap that the religious leaders of Jesus' day were in—they taught their theological opinions. Our Lord Jesus offered such a contrast when He taught the Word of God (Matthew 7:29). He even rebuked those who elevated the teachings of men above the authority of the Word of God. And I believe He continues to do so today. Here it is, right from His Words (Matthew 15:1-9; NKJV), Words that retain application authority for today:

Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, "Why do Your disciples transgress **the traditions of the elders**? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress **the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'**; and, 'He who

curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* a gift to God”—then he need not honor his father or mother.’ **Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, **teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**’”**

(bold and underlined portions are my emphasis, but they are our Lord’s Words)

The context continues, but the point is clear. Today we find so many examples of the same thing. Religious systems are upheld as higher authority than the Word of God. Though I won’t go into detail, it happened once again, not so long ago in an Adult Bible Fellowship class at another one of our local Portland churches. **It’s so wrong.**

Do we faithfully allow Scripture to speak, as opposed to simply accepting a position that does not have clear biblical support? God has been so generous to us by giving us His Word. Yet, we choose, and that we do, we choose instead to accept doctrines contrary to His revealed Word. Let’s not be those who find ourselves in this group that dishonors God by teaching as doctrines the commandments of men, especially if His Word speaks to the contrary.

I have been bold in this article and in the one immediately preceding, but not motivated by a spirit of pride. By His grace, we all can enjoy the Truth and in It (not in our opinions of what we think the text means), humbly communicate His Truth in love. May God allow His people to hear the proclamation of His contemporary prophets who simply call for His people to go back to His Word. May we listen to the message of old (Jeremiah’s message was contrary to the *peace and safety* prophets of his day—prophets that God called false prophets) that is repeated in the New Testament. May we turn away from those who speak today’s cultural spirituality and call for compromise of the Word of God. May we remain in His Truth and in so doing find freedom indeed. John 8:31, 32.

If we neglect the biblical Truths our precious Father has graciously given for the purpose of equipping us to better discern the many false teachings that are being propagated today, will we not potentially be contributing to our very own deception through the making of a conscious decision to cast aside one crucial means He has provided to help us avoid becoming deceived? Please see [www.endmin.com](http://www.endmin.com) for crucial passages for living or simply read through the "First Things First" pages on this site.

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