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INCONSISTANT IDEALISM

Preterist Idealism defined

A review of the Preterist Idealism of Todd Dennis

By Donald J. Perry

All Work That Happens In Time Is Irrelevant, It Never Happened:

Todd Dennis Writes: *“After having been a futurist, a partial preterist, and then a full preterist, I came to the realization that attempting to limit the redemptive and prophetic acts of God to a single moment in time is the cause of most confusion regarding eschatology. Why would we expect the Lord to perform His acts of power and glory just once — be it at a moment in time in the past or the future?”* [1.]

What is history? In order to interpret this thought the first question we need to ask is, what are the redemptive and prophetic acts of God, redemptive history? We can find a trustworthy definition from a reformed institution at <http://www.redemptivehistory.org/>

Redemptive history refers to the increasing manifestation of God's plan of salvation through His acts of redemption. The historical narratives of the Old and New Testaments are a glorious unfolding of God's redemptive purposes. Each one of God's past redemptive acts is part of the development of His plan to restore lost sinners into communion and relationship with Him. Immediately after man sinned and became subject to all misery and condemnation, God began to reveal to man His thoughts of peace and reconciliation. The first promise made with Adam and Eve contained the essence and substance of the entire plan of salvation, even though it was only in its elementary form. God's gracious redemptive plan was increasingly revealed with the progression of time. The Old Testament promises, types, and messianic prophecies all pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah in whom God's purposes of redemption would be ultimately fulfilled. These means shadowed forth, to the Old Testament saints, the one and only way of salvation through the substitutionary death of the Lamb of God. With the eyes of faith they rejoiced to see the promised Messiah, and in Him they obtained the blessings of justification and the forgiveness of sins. Redemptive history climaxes with the shedding of the blood of the Son of God on the cross. His precious blood was the necessary price for redeeming sinners from the state of condemnation and death. The Christological focus of redemptive history does not end with Christ's first coming, however, but it also includes the manifestations of His grace and mercy in this present age, and it anticipates His second advent when He will make a final restoration of all things unto Himself.

Greater Weight Than History: The redemptive and prophetic acts of God are defined by Scripture in a progressive and historical manner. What Todd Dennis is inferring is that the historical revelation of the Cross, its implications, is that they are mere manifestations of timeless facts which are the reason for history. This is an idea which I do not believe is either expressed by the Scriptures nor possible. What must of necessity happen in history also must of necessity not be possible outside of history----Todd Dennis is trying to define something that cannot exist. The fact that God is willing and able does not mean that He already did it yet. This view is unscriptural in that the Bible says that Christ had to come

and suffer and die. And even if this Idealism was the case, which I do not believe that it is, this kind of an idea is not something we should be toying with. It is outside the God given revelation given for us to follow.

Can Soteriology be broken into Historical and Nonhistorical components. The next question we need to answer is, does an idealistic approach concerning eschatology as defined by Todd Dennis, must it of necessity include the cross of Christ, the life and death of our Saviour? Todd Dennis has already surrendered this, but is it necessary? I think it would be safe to say that when we say that the second coming stands outside of time, that it does not have to do with accomplishment we set up a precedent which history unitality has no bearing on. In other words, if we define our reality as well as the future as timeless truth that cannot then therefore be created nor fulfilled, then it must follow that the past will be the same. Therefore, this idea has to encompass the whole of all Redemption And Prophetic Acts of God.

Sin And The Nature of God: By default then, the work of Christ is irrelevant as accomplishing anything, it is merely a manifestation of something always existing. This means that all the redemptive and prophetic acts of God were fulfilled before time and not in time. Christ merely expressed what had always been one with the nature of God.

This view is unscriptural in that the Bible says that Christ had to be separated from the Father. This act is not something that should define the Godhead, as it would if the Cross always existed. It was a onetime act allowed by God understood in time. Such a doctrine is a disastrous Godhead doctrine. This would mean that there is ongoing tension in the Godhead, rather than a separation in the Godhead from the God-Man Christ Jesus on the cross. This would mean that God, not man, changed the nature of God where God became sin by the hand of God.

Furthermore, and in the same way there must be separation for the last day, where God and the Christian is forever separated from sin.

The Difficulty: To make these things work outside of the historical time framework presents great complexities that can not be so easily resolved. What Todd Dennis has found that works well for his form of Eschatology is a complete disaster when it comes to Soteriology.

All Work That Happens In Time Is Always Ongoing:

Todd Dennis Writes: *"Why would we expect the Lord to perform His acts of power and glory just once — be it at a moment in time in the past or the future?"* [1.]

Because Dennis has the work of God outside of time, this likewise means that the work of God is always ongoing. That Christ, that God the Father and the Son are always dealing with sin in the same way as what happened on the cross. But this is not the case, rather this was a onetime event in time never to be repeated. Christ died for sin once. 1 Peter 3:18 *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"*. Hebrews 10:11-12 *"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: ¹²But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;"*

All Redemption Happens In The Nature Of Christ:

Todd Dennis Writes: *"It seems to me that all prophecy ultimately finds its accomplishment in Jesus Christ Himself, as Scripture states (Gal. 3:16, II Cor. 1:20, Col. 2:9, etc.)"* [Col. 2:9 *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."*] [1.]

In context this can mean that in Christ, He is being separated from the Godhead for all accomplishments in regard to an ongoing payment, suffering, and ongoing death for sin. If this is the case in the context of the above points, then the Father and the Son have always been separated. Christ has always been suffering from the foundation of the world rightly because *"the redemptive ... acts of God [are not limited] to a single moment in time"*. This would give a false reading to Revelation 13:8 *"... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*. A right understand can be seen in 1 Peter 1:20 *"Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world"*.

The Focal Point of the Day of Salvation:

Todd Dennis Writes: *“The work of our Lord Jesus – translating His people from darkness to Light, and from old to new — happens internally and personally for each, as opposed to externally and historically for a single generation of people. Even the cross must be received, and each follower must bear it in their own day. TODAY is the day of salvation, and TODAY if you will harden not your heart, etc. An example of the mistaken external/historical realignment of eschatology can be found in commentaries on Matthew 16:27-28, which is a passage nearly all preterist systems apply to AD70. [For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.]”*

Hypocrisy: Although Todd Dennis’ Idealistic position appears to stand independent of time based redemption on corporate level, he admits here that it has been unsuccessful in removing time related redemption on the personal level. Today is the day of salvation marks a day in the historical life of the believer. When Preterist-Idealism yields to history on a personal level it deflates its idealistic time arguments elsewhere. Time cannot both be both irrelevant and at the same time be of vital purpose without one argument working against the other. No man can serve two masters. Either time has no relevance and there is no day of salvation, no day of atonement, no day of the Parousia or there is a day of salvation, there is a day of atonement, and there is a day of the Parousia. One cannot pick and choose different aspects of the historical salvation plan and argue that some of them are historical and at the same time argue that others are timeless.

Individualistic Salvation: Although the day of individual salvation happens on every day, that does not make it possible for it to be a timeless truth. Neither is it possible to make corporate verses and ideas concerning the Parousia refer to the individual. In other words, it is not possible to say that the corporate representations of the Parousia merely depict inward manifestations of the same. Undeniably there is a reality of truth here. Yet individual salvation nor the day of one’s demise does not stand before of the corporate plan for the historical work of God that has been factually set before the church. The individual is not the focal point in Scripture, and to make this so is to step outside of Scripture.

Judgment Day: The Bible says that on judgment day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, Acts 17:31 *“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*. 2 Peter 3 has the historical picture of how God literally destroyed the earth once with the flood, referring to what is meant to apply to the complete destruction of the physical world by example:

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: 3Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a

new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Not Every Day: This physical destruction refers also to the OT sacrificial system which became an Antichrist sacrificial system, from which no man could be saved after one historical point in time. Today I believe these selfsame verses refer to another Antichrist system which at one time future shall persecute the Christian world for preaching the Gospel. And at which time Christ shall return as similarly He did in AD 70 with the destruction of the Antichrist. Peter is explaining an already but not yet motif that has been fulfilled up to a point already but has yet to be fulfilled in a time to come.

Apologetics for the Already But Not Yet: Nevertheless, I do not accept the view that the warnings are only for one generation, but that rather we are to prepare ourselves after the example of how we have seen God act in history and in the understanding that we need to likewise be prepared as were those who were ready when the Bride Groom arrived on this spiritual level when they had to flee to the Shepard outside the gates of Jerusalem. In the already but not yet, it does not have to be spiritual next time, it shall be physical. I do not believe that it is possible to argue against this Idealistic position Scripturally coherently therefore we should yield to it.

Martyrdom Eschatology:

Todd Dennis writes: *“So why would we not consider “martyr eschatology” as the major focal point of verse 28’s declaration that some would not “taste death until they see” their redemption? After all, scripture says “it is appointed unto men once to die and AFTER THAT the judgment” — the very judgment talked about in v. 27! Matthew 16:27-28:*

“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” Matthew 16:27-28 is the Gospel version of 1 Cor. 15:50-54 and 1 Thess. 4:16.

Martyrdom Separated From The Church: Martyrdom is a picture of meeting Christ in the context of becoming like Him. Nevertheless, in the Parousia there is more being spoken of then the individual, individual martyrdom is within the context of a historical push to bring heaven to earth and crush Satan’s head, that the gates of hell not prevail against the church.

Dennis Idealism proposes that verse 28 refers to individual martyrdoms. However, Christ’s coming kingdom has to do with the establishment of the church. Therefore, what the *“major focal point”* of Matthew 16:17-28 is, is that Christ’s coming in His kingdom has to do with **a corporate identification of the steadfast establishment of the Church** in the face of persecution and martyrdom through Pentecost. This is where the church becomes like Christ in spirit, but not simply in physical martyrdoms. The later is not necessary to prove the former. Israel now takes on a new identity in the church at the coming of the Lord, and this makes sense in the fulfilment of an already but not yet motif. Dennis continues:

2: Now, most systems assume a singular coming of Christ for a (very small) collective group of people alive at a particular apocalyptic generation; however, I believe that scripture teaches that EVERY EYE shall see Him, not just those alive at a particular moment in time. ... 1: This is precisely what Jesus is promising his hearers in Matthew 16:27-28! For evidence to support the idea that individuals would behold the kingdom in power and glory, take a look at Stephen’s martyrdom in Acts 7: ... For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? Now, what is it about this context that would lead a person to think of a single, impersonal event 40 years in the future? It just isn’t there. Instead, the similarities between the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 7 and the earlier reception of the promise in Matthew 16 — as seen in Luke 9:27 — are plainly revealed by their common author. ... John 14:3 “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Is this not precisely what has happened to Stephen? ... EVERYONE of his saints will experience the same blessed delight in the fullness of their times.”

Problems with the Individual Parousia:

Untypical Experiencedly: This theory for the Parousia works only from a confined viewpoint. If we look at the death experiences of Christians who have died and come back again to life, they don't have similarities with Stephens experience

Untypical Biblically: There is no record other than Acts 7 which has this kind of account for the Lord appearing in martyrdom.

Not the Second Coming: Furthermore, Mark 10:7 says *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;"* Jesus is not coming or going anywhere, He is standing at the right hand of the Father, this is not our Parousia where the Bridegroom comes and takes the Bride.

Unfamiliar Parousia: If this was the Parousia, then why did not Paul outline the Parousia as Christ standing to meet us when we die? Instead what we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* We meet the Lord descending from heaven with a shout not standing in heaven next to the Father.

At the Resurrection: Furthermore, this account is for all the living at that time who will meet all the dead gone before at that moment in time. For Todd Dennis, Christ raises the dead only every time a believer dies.

At the End of the World: There is nothing in the context of Acts 7 that suggests that Steven would find Matthew 16:27-28 fulfilled. Matthew 16:17-28 reads *"There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."* Here Steven is getting hit with rocks. This is not His Kingdom of God. Christ's Parousia is witnessed rather by the very opposite effect, where our enemies are getting hit in the head with stones, Revelation 16:21 *"And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great."* The Parousia is where Christ makes a place for His church in the world, where what is the church and what is the world is forever separated by two types. This coming is emphasized by all that we find in the Book of Revelation being fulfilled establishing the New Heavens and Earth. The church becomes clearly and rightly identifiable as the New Heavens and Earth wherein Christ dwells. At the end of the ages the Bible tells of a literal coming similar to the flood of Noah or the last day of Sodom and Gomorrah where there is no future place for the wicked.

Physical Demise: Todd Dennis says concerning his view, that it applies to all, every eye shall see Him. That this is not the case with typical Futurism. I would argue that rather all await the Lord's coming and changing everything, not just one's own life. Not only does the Parousia apply to all at the resurrection at their death (1 Thess. 4:16) it also applies to all the living at the same time! Our physical demise, which is prior to the Parousia, only enables us to take part of the Parousia in the future, and not that we already have experienced it in the past.

Notes:

[1.] 6/8/2019 https://www.preteristarchive.com/2008_dennis_matthew-16-is-not-a-preterist-time-indicator-pointing-to-ad70/