

A Look at Eschatology - Why Study The End Times?
Eschatology – a definition - “study of the last days or end times”

Many people don't want to be bothered with issues pertaining to eschatology. Often times when Christian people are asked what their view on the end times, they might actually joke that they are “Pan-millennial,” in other words, “everything will ‘pan’ out in the end.” Eschatology is important. We need to take the study of eschatology seriously. We take the study of eschatology seriously because it is in God's Word. Scripture is FILLED with references to the end times. The study of eschatology is also vitally important because we are bombarded with a seemingly endless flow of unbiblical teaching on the subject. We need to know the truth in order to have a sense of assurance and hope. In addition, we study eschatology because it is the longing of our hearts to be with the Lord. Remember what the Apostle Paul said, “for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” There's something deep within the heart of every person who loves Jesus to be WITH Jesus. That has to do with eschatology. Another reason why studying eschatology is important is that it makes a difference in how we live as disciples. What we believe will influence how we act, or at least it should. It is true that all of the details of eschatology may not be considered part of the “essentials of the faith,” (what I call the “non-negotiables”) but how we approach eschatology can indeed make things messy when it comes to making solid conclusions on more essential areas of our faith. And one more reason for studying eschatology is that it builds faith and hope and diminishes fear and anxiety. Coming to an understanding of the end times helps us see something we need to always keep at the forefront of our hearts - Christ will return and all things will be set right, created anew, with Jesus at the center of our eternity with God and each other!

A Look at Eschatology - An Overview of Each of the Four Main Views in Christianity

There are four main views of eschatology (as there are many subdivisions, far too many to address for our brief purposes), and before we look at some of the differences between these primary views, it is vitally important that we understand what beliefs all Christians have on issues related to the subject of eschatology (some might say these distinguish a sense of orthodoxy):

1. We “confess” eschatological truths” as a foundational aspect of our shared faith.
 - As we say in the Apostle's Creed: we believe in the resurrection of Jesus and that He will come again to judge the living and the dead. “We believe in the resurrection of the Body and life everlasting.”
 - As we say in the Nicene Creed: “He (Jesus) will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen”
 - As we say in the Athanasian Creed – “(Jesus) suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the living and the dead. At His coming all people will rise again with their bodies and give an account concerning their own deeds. And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those who have done evil into eternal fire.
2. Scriptures attest to the fact that there will be a resurrection of all people from all time.
3. Third, there will be a judgment of all people from all time.
4. Every view of eschatology that we will be looking at holds these beliefs.

View #1 - Dispensational Premillennialism

Compared to the other three primary eschatological views, DISPENSATIONALISM is historically a recent doctrinal stance. The details and summation of this view were first introduced by John Nelson Darby, a disillusioned Anglican priest who became a leader in the Plymouth Brethren group in England around 1830. Dispensationalism really hit its stride when it was popularized by the well-known Scofield Reference Bible, and it is currently the most adhered to eschatological position in the United States. Dispensationalism's main principle is that the history of humanity is divided up into different periods (or dispensations), and God deals with humanity on the basis of some particular principle for each dispensation. It should be said that not all dispensationalists agree on how many dispensations there are. Note – there is MORE information on Dispensationalism as well as a chart comparing eschatological perspectives below.

CHARACTERISTIC BELIEFS:

- The promises in Scripture made to Abraham and David are unconditional promises and are in no way promises made to, or fulfilled by, the Church.
- God has completely separate plans for the Church and Israel.
- The church is barely, if even at all, seen in the OT (Marcionism – teaching of OT incompatible with Jesus/NT, Supersessionism (revelation of Jesus/NT replaces OT covenant) prophetic works.
- Jesus Christ came to offer a literal, earthly kingdom to Israel and the Jews.
- However, the Jews rejected this offer from God and are guilty of having Jesus crucified.
- Jesus Christ will come again to “rapture” the Church and to establish the earthly kingdom that was promised to Israel.
- The second coming happens in two stages:
 1. First the “rapture” happens, when Christ comes “for” the saints, and they are caught up to meet Him in the air (Ibid.).
 2. Second, Jesus’ returns to earth and when He does, He comes “with” His saints, also referred to as “The Appearing.”
- In between these two events they place Daniel’s 70th week – the seven years known as the Tribulation.
- There are at least three resurrections within this view: believers before the millennium (at the rapture), unbelievers after the millennium, and of the “tribulation saints” (those who become believers during the tribulation).

View #2 - Historic Premillennialism

CHARACTERISTIC BELIEFS:

- A belief in a literal 1000 year “kingdom” of Christ’s reign on earth.
- Old Testament prophecy clearly has portions foreseeing the Church, which is in direct opposition to dispensationalism.
- The reason for the first coming of Christ was to die for the sins of humanity and not to set up an earthly kingdom for the Jews, also in opposition to dispensationalism.
- The Second Coming of Christ will be just a single event, which is in opposition to the two stages of His coming that dispensationalism speaks of (coming for the saints and the coming with the saints).
- Christ’s return will happen before the millennium, which is in agreement with dispensationalism.

- The Church will have to go through the tribulation period (Mt. 24:3-22), which is in direct opposition to dispensationalism.
- There will be two resurrections – those who are Christ-followers before the millennium, and those who have rejected Christ after the millennium. Another distinction from dispensationalism.

View #3 - Amillennialism

CHARACTERISTIC BELIEFS:

- The New Testament church is the true, spiritual “Israel” of God (Gal.6:16).
- Satan was bound, or limited, to a large degree during the earthly ministry of Jesus, keeping him restrained as the gospel was being preached to the world (Mt. 12:29; Lk. 10:18, 19).
- The Kingdom of God is a reality that is in operation today due to the fact Christ was, and is, victorious and is ruling His “subjects” by His Word and by the Spirit of God (Lk. 17:20, 21).
- The Kingdom of God is redemptive and spiritual in nature and not political nor literally physical (Jn. 18:36).
- The millennium (1000 years) is a symbolic number of completeness or wholeness. It denotes the time between the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1 and the second coming of Jesus as well as describing the current “reign” of those believers who have died and are with Christ in heaven awaiting the “restored” Kingdom of God in the New Heaven and New earth. This also is related to the “first resurrection” found in Rev. 20:4-6,
- The millennium is the time frame between the two comings of Christ.
- In opposition to the postmillennial view, amillennialists do not believe that the Scripture predicts some sort of golden age eutopia in the world before Christ returns.
- Both good and evil forces will progressively mature (Mt. 13:24-30, 37-43, 47-50), which agrees with premillennialism.
- Some amillennialists believe there will be a time of severe apostasy that will occur right before the return of Christ (Rev. 20:7, 8).
- Some amillennialists do believe the above-mentioned apostasy will be led by “the Antichrist,” but the majority of amillennialists, pointing out that the word “antichrist” is not even mentioned in Revelation, believe that the “Beast” of Revelation was actually a contemporary of the apostle John (Rev. 13:11-18).
- Even though the kingdom of God is viewed as a current reality, amillennialists also look forward to a “future, glorious, kingdom that is perfected for eternity at the return of Christ.”
- When Christ returns, He will resurrect everyone at the same time (Jn. 5:25-30).
- The general judgment and rewards will follow the resurrection mentioned above.
- Christ will restore God’s original design for creation in a new heaven and new earth which will endure for eternity, often referred to as the eternal kingdom.

View #4 - Postmillennialism

CHARACTERISTIC BELIEFS:

- The New Testament church is the true, spiritual Israel of God (Gal.6:16), which agrees with amillennialism.
- The Kingdom of God is in operation today, which is in agreement with amillennialism.
- The Kingdom of God is redemptive and spiritual in nature and not political and literally physical (Jn. 18:36), agreeing with amillennialism.
- A gradual victory of authentic Christianity through the Holy Spirit will take place before the return of Christ, which is in opposition to amillennialism.

- The millennial period will close at the time of Christ's second coming, which is in agreement with amillennialism.
- When Christ returns He will resurrect everyone at the same time (Jn. 5:25-30), agreeing with amillennialism.
- The general judgment and rewards will follow the resurrection mentioned above, also agreeing with amillennialism.
- Christ will create a new heaven and new earth in perfect condition which will endure for eternity, often referred to as the eternal kingdom, another agreement with amillennialism.

So, you are curious...what does Robin Believe?

Since all of the main views of eschatology are just that, views, it is understandable that some people see "holes" in each of the systems discussed. Each system can leave one with some unanswered questions. With that being said, I still believe we need theological systems. I am a strong advocate of the development of Systematic Theology. Theological systems (like the Lutheran Confessions) help us organize biblical truth. In a time like ours where Christians tend to lift single verses out of context in order to justify dubious behaviors, doctrines, or convictions, I think we are in dire need of theological systems. These systems keep us from viewing a single text outside of the totality of Scripture. I also believe that we need to be gracious and understanding of the fact that every sincere believer in Christ and "lover" of scripture desires to be faithful in their interpretation of the Bible. In other words, those Christians who believe differently than "we" do are not our enemies...they are brothers and sisters in faith with whom we share a vast majority in common in our love for Jesus, passion for His kingdom and a desire for faithfulness to the call of the Gospel.

It is true, just because I admitted above that it is none of the four systems/views of eschatology completely satisfy every imaginable question on the issue, that does not mean that the arguments for each position are as convincing (or even as faithful to sound Biblical exegesis and hermeneutics) as all the others. My opinion of premillennialism, historic and especially dispensationalism, is not very high. I can honestly state that I believe dispensationalism, pre-tribulational rapturism, and premillennialism are the weakest of the eschatological positions theologically and are "found wanting" for the robust Biblical interpreter. Pre-millennialism makes the kingdom of God out to be a literal, geographical, earthly and national kingdom when the vast majority of Scripture describes the kingdom of God as being a spiritual and universal kingdom. Premillennialism also separates the resurrection of believers from that of the unbelievers by a time frame of 1,000 years when the Scripture talks about the resurrection of both to be in a single breath (Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15). In addition, the use of 1,000 in these passages is clearly seen as symbolic. Pre-millennialism also dissects the last judgment from the second coming of Christ, but these events cannot be separated as we clearly see when we look at Matthew 16:27 and 25:31-32. My disagreement with post-millennialism is primarily due to just one reason. There is an extreme lack of biblical evidence to support the position that the vast majority of humanity will become believers of Christ. If anything, the Bible teaches the gate is "narrow." The only real issue I have with being an "amillennialist" (that which I mentioned above was a "Lutheran" theological position) is related to an attitude that can accompany some who hold to this view. Whereas post-millennialism is unrealistically optimistic, amillennialism can induce in some an overly pessimistic view about the condition of the world and the success of the spread of the gospel...in other words, it can pull the "guts" out of our passion and desire to join Jesus in His mission to bring hope to the world through sharing the Gospel. Another reason the possibility exists for pessimism is because of the overemphasis on the "other-worldly" nature of the kingdom of God. Although the kingdom of God is indeed predominantly spiritual in nature, it does have some aspects meant for "this-worldly" application as well – specifically, the preaching and successful sharing of the Gospel, the "taste" of the eternal kingdom we receive in sharing sacramentally in the means of grace, the power of spiritual community that is kingdom oriented, as well as the reality of the transformed life that is the result of the work of sanctification of the Spirit. Each dynamic "actualizes" the present reality of God's Kingdom

that Jesus Himself prayed we would experience (as we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth...").

Lutheran Christians (generally speaking) are "Amillennial" in eschatology (also known as "Non-millennialism"). Our "tribe" believes that there is no literal millennium but rather that the millennium is a symbolic/metaphorical term used to describe the period between Christ's first and second comings.

There are implications to that from a Discipleship perspective. YES, Jesus is coming and YES, we have some encouragement from Jesus Himself to not fear, embrace truth as well as "watch and be ready" (Luke 12:35ff). Yet, in the meantime, we have some "work" to do – we are to be about the calling of Jesus to His people to "go and make disciples" (Mat. 28:18ff) and trust Him for the outcome of human history. The issue at stake here is to join God in HIS mission and trust that God has "HIS-story" well in hand. We are not to look for Jesus' coming presence but to live in Jesus' presence today (through His Holy Spirit).

We also believe grace and presence of Jesus will NEVER be removed from this world and that "tribulation and blessing" will continue to be the present experience of followers of Jesus in this world. Neither is confined exclusively to one period of history or another. Most amillennialists anticipate something like this:

The forces of good and evil will continue to be a reality – forces existing side by side in the human experience.

There will continue to be tribulation and apostasy throughout history until Jesus comes to restore God's original intention ("vision" or design) in the New Heaven and New Earth promised at the end of Revelation). I must add that I have known some Lutheran Eschatology Theologians we do expect that tribulation will intensify and be concentrated immediately before the return of Christ.

Christ will return, whereupon the resurrection of the dead, believers and unbelievers alike, will take place.

The great judgement will follow.

The new heavens and the new earth will appear, to last forever...that is our Christian hope!

As far as 'the rapture' is concerned – the rapture is a very important aspect of "dispensational theology" as well as something that has been propagated in contemporary culture (going back to the Hal Lindsey book, Left Behind series, Larry Norman's song "Wish We'd all been ready", etc.). There is a cultural fascination with the idea of a 'rapture.' Lutheran eschatology, generally speaking, does not adhere to a two stage return of Christ. Christ's second coming will not consist of two separate events as stated in dispensationalism.

And now a word from MY Pastor - a return to some of the words of my pastor, Glen Schlecht, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Loveland, CO.

I went back to the "Questions, Questions, Questions" sermon series that Pastor Glen did in the fall of 2021. It was 11/14/21 – I remember that sermon:

"There is no rapture – the rapture, though popularized in Christian sub-culture, is based upon bad theology and a misreading of the Bible."

I would add – that seeing a “rapture” in the Bible is to take a decisive DEDUCTIVE turn in Biblical interpretation – in other words, start with dispensationalism and read the Bible with through that “lens” (something like confirmation bias).

Pastor Glen said, *“There is no two appearances of Jesus that are separated by 1000 years or followed by 1000 years where people have a second chance to come to faith (that is one of the key elements of dispensationalism). Jesus is coming back ONCE MORE! That is it.”*

He went on to say, *“Revelation was never intended to be read literally.”* It is a genre of material in the Bible called “apocalyptic literature” – that which is filled with numerology and symbolism.

Then Pastor Glen did some brief Revelation teaching, *“Revelation was written to seven churches.”* The number seven in apocalyptic literature is a number of completeness/wholeness and perfection. In other words, Revelation was written to seven specific churches in the first century but was also written to churches of all time and place including us. It was written to all churches and all times.

“Revelation is in the Word of God to bring a word of encouragement...that we can have real hope in midst of persecution.”

He went on to talk about “Battlegrounds and battlefields” in this world that we all experience as the massive clash between God and evil in the spiritual realm play out in physical world. The depictions of evil in Revelation are REAL because evil is real and continues to play out in the world today in ways that impact all of our lives.

Pastor Glen, *“Revelation was never intended to be a puzzle that we are meant to figure out.”*

When asked about the second coming in the gospels (Mark 13, Mat. 24, Acts 1:7 among others), Jesus said, “no one knows.” What Jesus did say about 2nd coming, the end times is that they started with the cross/resurrection. We don’t know the WHEN of the second coming but we know the WHO AND HOW. Jesus will come and all will see Him. When Jesus was asked the question, “When will these things take place?” did Jesus give them a date? Timeline? Did He say, “wait until John writes Revelation?” No. But in the sermon on 11/14, Pastor Glen highlighted what Jesus did say:

1. Don’t be fooled – don’t be deceived – EMBRACE TRUTH – immerse yourself in the Word of God. Nurture a heart that anticipates and listens for Jesus’ voice.
2. Don’t be alarmed – don’t be surprised when world goes berserk (sin, brokenness, evil) – don’t be scared or fearful. contrary to progressive myth of modernity – utopianism
3. Watch and be ready – embrace the LIVING HOPE we have in Christ.

In Closing

One author I read years ago has a pretty good statement that I think sums up eschatological debates best, *“Debates over eschatology will probably continue until the Lord returns and we have the advantage of hindsight rather than the disadvantage of foresight. The divisions that exist within the Christian community are understandable, considering that both the subject matter and the literary genre of future prophecy are exceedingly difficult. This does not mean that we may push the Bible aside or neglect its eschatological sections. On the contrary the interpretive difficulties . . . call us to a greater diligence and persistence in seeking their solution”* (R.C. Sproul).

I might add, we need to keep in mind that the universal Church has never forced a single one of the millennial positions into one of her articles of confession or creeds. The overwhelming, and appropriate, position has been to embrace all as Christians as long as they can confess the visible return of Jesus

Christ (along with other criteria pertinent to orthodoxy). So even though we may hold our own eschatological positions definitively and defend them vigorously, we need to remember to live by the credo attributed to St. Augustine, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty [freedom, grace]; in all things, charity [love]."

More on Dispensationalism (or Pre/Mid/PostTribulational Millennialism) – Some of the nuances in definitions

Dispensationalism is a nineteenth-century (Plymouth Brethren and John Darby, 1909 published a bible version to support theology) development based on a **futurist biblical hermeneutic/interpretation of the bible** that sees a series of chronologically successive "dispensations" or periods in history in which God relates to human beings in different ways under different Biblical covenants.

The theology of dispensationalism consists of a distinctive eschatological "end times" perspective, as all dispensationalists hold to premillennialism and most hold to a pretribulation rapture. Dispensationalists believe that the nation of Israel (not necessarily the same as the state of Israel) is distinct from the Christian Church and that God has yet to fulfill His promises to national Israel. These promises include the land promises, which in the future world to come result in a millennial kingdom and Third Temple where Christ, upon His return, will rule the world from Jerusalem for a thousand years. Dispensationalists interpret the Book of Revelation as predicting future events (futurism), rather than predicting events that have taken place throughout history (historicism) or noting events that are predominantly associated to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (preterism).

Some dispensationalism definitions:

- Rapture – a "secret" return of Jesus to the earth where He will "remove" believers/the Church from the earth. What happens after that is anyone's guess...really! The **rapture** is a reference to the "being caught up" referred to in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, when the "dead in Christ" and "we who are alive and remain" will be caught up in the clouds to meet "the Lord".
- Tribulation – a "7-year" (that is a specific Revelation number) period of time that is known for disasters, human suffering and martyrdom. The Tribulation (according to some) is a relatively short period of time where anyone who chose not to follow God before the Rapture and is left behind (according to Pre-Tribulation doctrine, not Mid- or Post-Tribulation teaching) will experience worldwide hardships, disasters, famine, war, pain, and suffering, which will wipe out more than 75% of all life on the earth before the Second Coming takes place. According to Dispensationalists, the Tribulation is thought to occur before the Second Coming of Jesus. Another version holds that it will last seven years in all, being the last of Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks. This is seen as creating a break of indeterminate length in the timeline, with one week remaining to be fulfilled. This seven-year week may be further divided into two periods of 3.5 years each, from the two 3.5-year periods in Daniel's prophecy where the last seven years are divided into two 3.5-year periods, (Daniel 9:27) The time period for these beliefs is also based on other passages: in the book of Daniel, "time, times, and half a time", interpreted as "a year, two years, and half a year," and the Book of Revelation, "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" and "forty and two months" (the prophetic month averaging 30 days, hence $1260/30 = 42$ months or 3.5 years). The 1290 days of Daniel 12:11, (rather than the 1260 days of Revelation 11:3), is thought to be the result of either a simple intercalary leap month adjustment, or due to further calculations related to the prophecy, or due to an intermediate stage of time that is to prepare the world for the beginning of the millennial reign.

Dispensationalists have differing views about what will happen to Christians during the Tribulation:

- Pre-tribulationists believe that all Christians (dead and alive) will be taken bodily up to Heaven (called the Rapture) before the Tribulation begins. According to this belief, every true Christian that has ever existed throughout the course of the entire Christian era will be instantaneously transformed into a perfect resurrected body, and will thus escape the trials of the Tribulation. Those who become Christians after the rapture will live through (or perish during) the Tribulation. After the Tribulation, Christ will return to establish His Millennial Kingdom.
- Prewrath Tribulationists believe the Rapture will occur during the tribulation, halfway through or after, but before the seven bowls of the wrath of God.
- Seventh Trumpet Tribulationists believe the rapture will occur during the tribulation, halfway through or after, but before the seven bowls of the wrath of God. Specifically, at the sound of the Seventh Trumpet (Rev. 11:15, 1 Cori. 15:52).
- Mid-tribulationists believe that the Rapture will occur halfway through the Tribulation, but before the worst part of it occurs. The seven year period is divided into halves - the "beginning of sorrows" and the "great tribulation".
- Post-tribulationists believe that Christians will not be taken up into Heaven, but will be received or gathered by Christ into the Kingdom of God on earth at the end of the Tribulation. "Immediately after the tribulation ... then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man [Jesus] ... and he shall gather his elect" (Matthew 24:29–31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-27). Post-tribulationists argue that the seventh trumpet mentioned in Revelation is also the last trumpet mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52, and that there is a strong correlation between the events mentioned in Isaiah 27:13, Matthew 24:29-31, and 1 Thessalonians 4:16- thus creating a strong parallel, proving that the rapture occurs *after* the tribulation. Therefore, Post-tribulationists see the rapture happening during the seventh trumpet, which would only mean that the rapture could never happen before the tribulation- according to this view. The idea of a post-tribulation rapture can also be read into 2 Peter 3:10-13 where Christ's return is equated with the "elements being melted" and "the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up."

In pre-tribulationism and mid-tribulationism, the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ are separate events, while in post-tribulationism the two events are identical or simultaneous. Another feature of the pre- and mid-tribulation beliefs is the idea that after the Rapture, Christ will return for a third time (when also counting the first coming) to set up his kingdom on the earth.

Millennialism – (from millennium, Latin for "thousand years"), or **chiliasm** in Greek, is a belief that there will be a Golden Age or Paradise on earth in which "Christ will reign" for 1000 years prior to the final judgment and future eternal state. This belief is derived primarily from the Book of Revelation 20:1-6.

Among Christians who hold this belief, this is not the "end of the world", but rather the age just prior to the end of the world when the present heavens and earth will be gone (Rev. 21:1). Some believe that between the millennium proper and the end of the world there will be a brief period in which a final battle with Satan will take place. After this follows the Last Judgment.

Various types of millennialism exist:

- Premillennialism sees Christ's second coming as PRECEEDING the millennium, thereby separating the [second coming](#) from the [final judgment](#). In this view, "Christ's reign" will be physical.

- Postmillennialism sees Christ's second coming as AFTER to the millennium and consequent with the final judgment. In this view "Christ's reign" (during the millennium) will be spiritual in and through the [church](#).
- Amillennialism basically denies a future literal 1000 year Kingdom and sees the church age metaphorically described in Rev. 20:1-6. In this view, "Christ's reign" is current in and through the church.

Various views of the Rapture:

I. The Partial Rapture View

The Partial Rapture View, which states that only those faithful believers who are “watching” and “waiting” for the Lord’s return will be taken in the rapture. The rapture is seen as a reward for being faithful to Christ. As believers are purged during the tribulation, they are raptured in groups, as described in Rev 7:9–14; 11:2; 12:5 and 16:15. Proponents of this view turn to passages emphasizing waiting and watching, as in Mt 24:40–51, 25:1–13; Lk 20:34–36, 21:36; 1 Cor 9:27; Phil 3:10–12; 1 Thess 5:6-10; 2 Tim 4:8; Tit 2:13; Heb 9:24–28 and Rev 3:3–10, 12:1–6.

II. The Mid-tribulational Rapture View

The Mid-tribulational Rapture View argues that the rapture will occur at the midpoint of the seven years of tribulation. Because only the last half of Daniel’s 70th Week is tribulation, proponents of this view believe they are really espousing a pre-tribulational rapture of the church. Like the pre-tribulationists, mid-tribulationists distinguish between the rapture and second coming and insist on a removal of the church to heaven prior to the time of the wrath of God.

Adherents to the mid-tribulational view rely on two so-called “proofs.” First, adherents will point to both Daniel and the book of Revelation and the last half of the 70th Week of Daniel as being a time of tribulation and terror, with the Antichrist ruling over the world from Jerusalem and the severest judgments poured out upon the earth (cf. Dan 7:25; 9:27; 12:7, 11; Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5). Second, some significant event at the midpoint of the 70th Week has drastic consequences for this planet. It is surmised that this event is the rapture, that the blowing of the seventh trumpet in Rev 10:7 and 11:15 relates to the “last trump” of 1 Corinthians 15:52, and that the removal of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 is a symbolic description of the rapture. The earlier judgments in the book of Revelation, including the seal judgments and six trumpet judgments, are not seen as God’s wrath but as the wrath of man. This view teaches that the believer must endure the wrath of man but is exempt from the wrath of God.

III. The Pre-Wrath Rapture View

The Pre-Wrath Rapture View is a relatively recent view. It is a variation of the mid-tribulational position and has similarities to the post-tribulational position.

The basic thesis of this view is that the church will be removed from the earth by the rapture just before the fourth quarter of the 70th Week of Daniel. This view proposes first that the tribulation involves three distinct periods: the beginning of sorrows, lasting 3 1/2 years; the Great Tribulation, lasting 21 months; and the Day of the Lord, spanning the final 21 months. The church, therefore, would need to go through three-fourths of the tribulation. Second, this view teaches that believers will endure the time of man’s wrath and Satan’s wrath but will be delivered before the Day of the Lord, the time of God’s wrath, which begins with the opening of the seventh seal (Rev 8:1). And, third, this view holds that the church must endure the Antichrist (who is the resurrected Hitler) and the Great Tribulation, but after 64 months into the 70th Week will be raptured.

IV. The Post-Tribulational View

The fourth view is the Post-Tribulational view, which teaches that the rapture and the second coming are aspects of a single event occurring at the end of the Tribulation period. Christ returns to the clouds, the church meets him in the air, and together they return to the earth.

The Post-Tribulational view claims three additional proofs, the first of which says that, since identical terms are used for the rapture and second coming, this single event must refer to the coming of Christ after the tribulation. The terms *parousia*, usually translated “coming,” *apokalupsis*, translated “revelation,” and *epiphaneia*, translated “appearing,” must relate to the same event. Second, this view objects to the recent origin of the pre-tribulational rapture view. J. N. Darby formulated the pre-tribulational position in the 1830’s, at least partially based on Margaret MacDonald’s revelations. Since the view is recent, the post-tribulational view claims that it must be wrong. Third, because the church is promised persecution and tribulation this view claims that it is impossible to say that believers will be raptured prior to the tribulation. Rather, the view claims that believers will be protected and preserved in the tribulation.

V. The Pre-tribulational Rapture

The fifth and final view is the Pre-Tribulational Rapture View, which espouses the return of Christ to the atmosphere to resurrect the dead church age believers and to translate the living saints before the 70th week of Daniel. In accordance with Scripture, this view teaches that the rapture is the next event on God’s prophetic calendar. No prophecy needs to be fulfilled before it occurs. The rapture is therefore the imminent or any-moment return of Christ for His own.

This view points to two applicable Scripture passages containing predictions concerning the Rapture. First, Christ’s return is promised in John 14:1–6. The night before His crucifixion, Christ made the first disclosure of the rapture to His disciples. He promised to return for His own and take them to the Father’s House. In the post-tribulational scheme of things, believers would meet the Lord in the air at the end of the tribulation and then immediately return with Him to earth. Christ would thus have uttered a falsehood in John 14. Second, His return is pictured in I Thessalonians 4:13–18. The Apostle Paul graphically portrays a series of events surrounding the return of Christ: the resurrection of the dead, the rapture of the living, the reunion with the Lord and our loved ones in the air, and finally the blessed reassurance, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess 4:17b–18). In the immediate context Paul assures believers that God has not appointed them unto the wrath of the tribulation but unto salvation (1 Thess 5:9, cf. 1:10; Rom 5:9).

Comparison of Christian millennial teachings

