

BASIC BIBLE DOCTRINE

Lesson 9

THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)

Eschatology is the study of end time prophecy. Prophecies in the Bible are very fascinating as they give us a glimpse of what is certain to happen in the future. Approximately one third of the Bible is devoted to last time events so it is important to have an understanding of key concepts relating to the end times.

In the early years of the church eschatology was not a major issue. The church was young and more significant issues were being hammered out like the person of Christ and the doctrine of salvation. In fact, it took over four centuries, at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 450, for the church to produce a somewhat definitive statement on the person of Christ. The established Roman Catholic Church had a corner on the Scriptures since the printing press was not yet invented and so personal study of the Scriptures was almost non-existent and strongly discouraged by the Roman Catholic Church.

During the Middle Ages tradition reigned and theology was set aside. People didn't have personal copies of the Bible to read so most believed whatever the Roman Catholic Church told them to believe. But in 1456 the printing press was invented and through the diligent efforts of certain reformers like Martin Luther, the Scriptures became available to the common man. Yet even after the Reformers helped place the Bible into the hands of the common man, prophecy was purposefully neglected. The Roman Catholic doctrines of end times were left unchallenged as the Reformers were fighting to restore the Biblical teachings of the gospel and salvation. The doctrines of the church, the authority of the Bible, man, sin, and salvation were the hot topics of the day so the doctrine of last things was left unrefined.

It wasn't until the 1800's that the end time events started to receive attention. Different systems arose and ever since then there has been much disagreement about what the Bible teaches. Today there are several major approaches to what the Bible teaches on end times events. Even within the major approaches there is much disagreement over details. Keep this in mind. In this study we will seek to ask, answer, and define some of the key terms and questions related to eschatology or end time events. We will survey the various views, and certain key texts to discover what they teach about end time events and how knowing the future can be applied to our daily lives.

I. KEY QUESTIONS

- A. What would you say are some of the reasons why we should study prophecy?

- B. Often when you talk to people about prophecy, they speak negatively about it or don't want to discuss it. What are some of the reasons people have for avoiding the study of prophecy?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

C. Scriptural Reasons for Studying Prophecy

1. Isa. 46:8-11 “Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’; Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.
2. Mt. 4:4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’ ”
3. Rom. 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
4. I Thess. 4:18 (after speaking about the rapture of the church) Therefore comfort one another with these words.
5. II Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
6. I John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.³ And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
7. Rev. 1:3; 22:7 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.⁷ “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”
 - a. When you read through the Scriptures above what do they tell you about the purpose and value of studying prophecy?

D. Why is there so much disagreement concerning prophecy?

1. **Tradition** - Some people are more interested in maintaining their denomination’s view or creed or tradition rather than teaching what they discover from the study of the Scriptures. Their primary concern is to uphold their theological heritage, even if it means ignoring and/or taking difficult interpretations of the Bible.
2. **Theological Systems** - Some people are locked into a theological system which becomes a grid by which they strain all Scripture. As with those trying to conform to tradition, these believe it is most important to hold to a certain theological system. In the final analysis, their theological system carries more weight than the Scriptures.

3. **Differing Hermeneutics (Bible study principles)** - Most people would say they use a literal historical grammatical approach to interpretation but some see more metaphor and allegory in prophecy than others. A non-literal system of interpretation leads to very subjective and wide ranging variety of interpretations. A more literal approach leads to more consistent interpretations. Hence different systems have different presuppositions about prophecy before they begin to study and this affects how they interpret prophecy.

II. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

A. **Apocalypse** - From the Greek word *apokalupsis*, *apo* = "from" and *kalupsis* = "to uncover or unveil." It signifies a revealing and is used for the revealing of Christ at His second coming. "Apocalyptic" is a term used to describe something dealing with the 2nd coming of Christ. Prophetic texts are usually labeled "apocalyptic" if they employ symbolic, metaphorical, and/or allegorical type language.

1. I Pet. 1:7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation [*apokalupsis*] of Jesus Christ;
2. Rev. 1:1 The Revelation [*apokalupsis*] of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

B. **Eternal State** - The eternal state is the last phase of God's program for mankind after He judges the living and the dead, judges Satan and his angels, and recreates the heaven and the earth. Believers will live with Christ in the "eternal state" for ever.

Rev. 21:10-22:5 *The new Jerusalem is described and some of the blessings of living with God, seeing Jesus, and living free from sin and the curse. We will serve Christ and be illumined by the glory of God forever.*

C. **Millennium** - The term "millennium" *chilioi* means 1000 years and the term "millennial" means having to do with the 1000 year reign of Christ. Rev. 20 mentions the thousand year reign of Christ six times. It is the time when Jesus rules as an earthly reign over all the earth before the eternal state begins.

Rev. 20:1-7 And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and **bound him for a thousand years**,³ and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until **the thousand years were completed**; after these things he must be released for a short time. ⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for **a thousand years**.⁵ The

rest of the dead did not come to life until **the thousand years were completed**. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for **a thousand years**. 7 And when **the thousand years are completed**, Satan will be released from his prison.

- D. **Hermeneutics** - Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. Hermeneutics is the field of study which attempts to define the most accurate methods and techniques for studying the scriptures. Different hermeneutical systems determine how prophecy is to be interpreted.
1. **The literal, historical, grammatical, approach to interpretation.** By **literal** we mean according to the plain meaning of the words, but not ignoring literary devices such as metaphors, idioms, parables, figures of speech, etc. **By historical** we mean according to the historical context of the text. **By grammatical** we mean according to the meaning of the words and their syntax (the sentence structure of a passage). This approach seeks to take the Scriptures literally unless there is some reason in the context not to. Those who are more literal in their approach tend to be Premillennial i.e., they believe in a literal thousand year reign of Christ.
 2. **Allegorical/metaphorical approach:** The allegorical/metaphorical approach was popularized in the early church by people like Clement of Alexandria 155-215 and Origen 185-254. The **allegorical approach** seeks to discover the hidden meaning or more spiritual meaning beneath the plain meaning of the text. This method of interpretation is not commonly used today except when dealing with prophecy. Those who see the majority of prophecy as metaphor or allegory tend to be Amillennial (reject a literal reign of Christ on earth) or Postmillennial (believe in a spiritual reign of Christ of an unspecified amount of time ushering in the kingdom of Christ). According to Webster **a metaphor is**, "A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them." So a metaphor uses a literal meaning to illustrate a non-literal meaning. If a text is metaphorical, it always is metaphorical of something else. It is not a metaphor if there is no secondary meaning.
- E. **Tribulation (Seven Year Period Preceding the Second Coming of Christ)**
1. **Duration of the tribulation:** The duration of the tribulation is 7 years. During the tribulation the antichrist will gain power after 3 ½ years of the tribulation has passed. The second half of the tribulation is often referred to as the Great Tribulation.
 - a. Dan. 9:24-27 "Seventy weeks have been decreed . . . 26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, . . . 27 "And he will

make a firm covenant with the many for **one week**, but in the **middle of the week** he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

- b. Rev. 12:4-6 And his tail *swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. 5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.6 And the woman fled into the wilderness where she *had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

2. **Nature of the tribulation:** It is a time of unprecedented global wrath from God. It is compared to the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:26-32). There will be world wide supernatural judgement of an unmatched magnitude.

- a. Dan. 12:1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.
- b. Matt. 24:15-21 "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; ¹⁷ let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; ¹⁸ and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak.¹⁹ "But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days!²⁰ "But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; ²¹ for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.
- c. Rev. 6:16-17 and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

3. **The "antichrist" or "man of sin" in the tribulation:** The antichrist is the world ruler who comes to power in the first part of the tribulation then commits the abomination of desolation (desecrating the temple) after 3 ½ years. He persecutes the believers and claims to be God. He gains his power and influence from Satan.

- a. Dan 7:24-25 ²⁴ 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.²⁵ 'And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

- b. II Thess. 2:1-4 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,² that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

- c. I John 2:18, 22; 4:2-3 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. 22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

- d. The verses below tell us pertinent information about the Antichrist, his names, titles, description, actions, etc.

Verse	Survey of Texts Mentioning the Antichrist or “beast”
Rev. 11:7	Antichrist is described as the beast that wages war with the saints.
Rev. 13:1-18	Antichrist of “beast” is a man who receives his power from Satan, utters blasphemies, has great power and authority, demands to be worshiped, reigns for 42 months or 3 ½ years, persecutes the saints, rules the world, he receives a fatal wound but is healed, performs great signs and wonders making fire come down from heaven, deceives men, he creates a speaking image of himself, kills those who do not worship his image, causes all to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead and if they don’t they cannot buy or sell, and the number of the beast is that of a man, and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.
Rev. 14:9	Those who worship the beast receive a mark on their forehead or hand
Rev. 14:11	Those who worship the beast suffer hell
Rev. 15:2	The saints will refuse to worship the beast or receive his mark
Rev. 16:2	Those who worship the beast are judged by a plague from God
Rev. 16:10	Those who worship the beast gnaw their tongues because of the pain of God’s judgment
Rev. 16:13	The antichrist will be aligned with Satan and the false prophet and they will possibly be possessed by demons/Satan and three unclean spirits like frogs will proceed from them.
Rev. 17:3-17	The beast has blasphemous names and is in league with the immoral woman who represents the apostate church. The beast uses the apostate church for a time to gain control and influence but then turns against her after gaining power. Both the beast and the harlot wage war against Christ and the saints.

Verse	Survey of Texts Mentioning the Antichrist or “beast”
Rev. 19:19-20	The beast, empowered by Satan, tries to make war with the saints and Israel and this is the Battle of Armageddon. The beast and the false prophets army are defeated and are thrown into the lake of fire preceding the thousand year reign of Christ.
Rev. 20:4	All the saints martyred by the antichrist will be resurrected and reign with Christ in his Kingdom.
Rev. 20:10	The antichrist and the false prophet and all those who worship him are cast into the lake of fire.

- e. After looking at all the verses above what is the difference between the “spirit of the antichrist,” the “antichrists” that have come (I Jn. 2:18; 4:1-3), and the antichrist who is to come?
- f. Should believers today be looking for the antichrist? Why or why not?

F. **Day of the Lord** - This is a very complicated subject. In some respects there have been certain prototypical (preview) "day of the Lords" which have been fulfilled in Israel's history. But the Scriptures speak of an ultimate and specific "Day of the Lord" which is still future. The Day of the Lord is an eruption of God into the world of men to judge the wicked and save the righteous

1. Ezek. 30:3 “For the day is near, Even the day of the Lord is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations.
2. Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14 Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty. . . 1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near, . . .11 And the Lord utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it? . . .31 “The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.
3. I Cor. 5:5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
4. I Thess. 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.
5. II Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

- a. According to the texts above, how would you describe the “Day of the Lord?”

G. **The Kingdom** The kingdom of God is one of the most all encompassing themes of the Bible. It is clearly one of the major integration points of all Scripture. In order to have a kingdom you must have a king, a dominion, and subjects. In some respects we can experience the kingdom of God here and now and in other respects we must wait until the future. Below is a microscopic treatment of the Kingdom.

1. **Kingdom is now present**

- a. Mt. 12:28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
- b. Lk. 17:20-21 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

2. **Kingdom is yet future**

- a. Acts 1:6 And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”
- b. I Cor. 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
- c. II Tim. 4:18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

3. **We entered the kingdom when saved**

- a. I Thess. 2:12 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
- b. II Pet. 1:10-11 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

4. **We enter the kingdom in the age to come**

a. Matt. 5:19-20 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

b. Matt. 7:13, 21-22 "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. . . 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

(1) When a person receives Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior (e.g. Jn. 1:12 and Rom. 10:8-10) in what ways does that make him a kingdom saint?

H. **Imminence of Christ's Second Coming** - The doctrine of imminence says Christ can come back at any moment to save the righteous and judge the wicked. Paul and Peter described "the Day" as coming "like a thief." Jesus used this sort of imagery in the parables of Matt. 25 and Luke 20 with the parables of the talents, the wicked vine-growers, ten virgins; sheep and goats. These parables teach us the importance of doing His will now, so that when He comes again we will be ready and waiting for His return.

1. I Cor. 1:7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Tit. 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

3. II Pet. 3:12-14 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.

a. What do the above Scriptures teach you about the timing of the second coming of Jesus Christ?

I. **"The Last Days"** - The last days (or times) encompass the entire church age from Pentecost in the first century A.D. to the Great White Throne judgement after the thousand year reign of Christ.

1. II Tim. 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

2. Heb. 1:1-2 God. . . in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

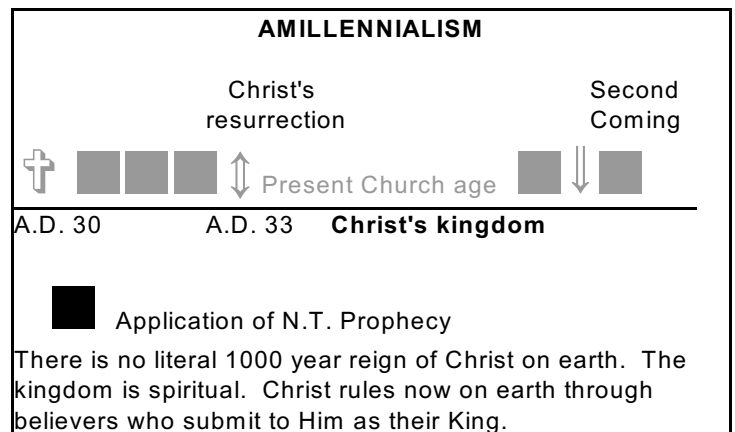
3. James 5:3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!
4. I Pet. 1:5, 20 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. . . 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.
 - a. According to the texts above, what do you learn about the last days and times?

III. DIFFERENT MILLENNIAL SYSTEMS

Millennium means “1000 years.” There are three primary views of the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. One view believes that there will be no literal reign of Christ on earth. Another view believes that Christians will slowly win over the earth through believers in evangelism and social activism and when the earth becomes a utopian state then Christ will return to receive His kingdom. Finally there is the view that says that Christ will come before the millennium to set up His kingdom on earth which will last 1000 years. Each view is discussed and diagramed below.

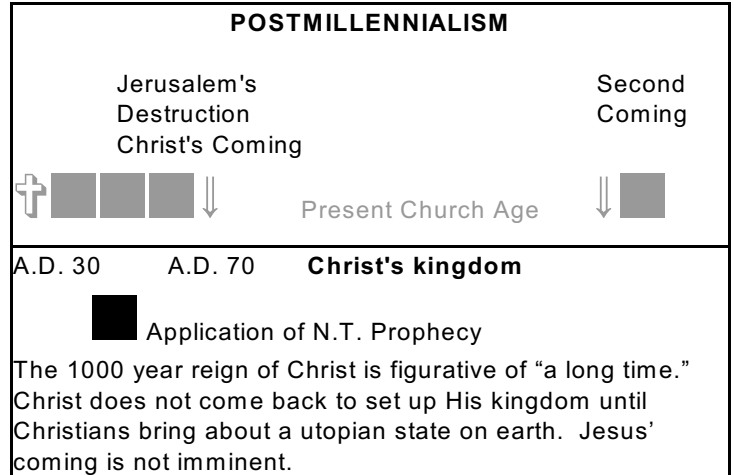
a. AMILLENNIAL VIEW

Amillennial means “no millennium.” The Amillennial system of prophecy believes that Christ's kingdom extends from His resurrection until the final judgement at the end of the age. The Bema judgement, the Sheep & Goats judgement, and Great White Throne judgement and the rapture are thought to all happen at the end of the age when Christ returns. The 1000 years of Revelation ch. 20 is not a literal 1000 years but represents the undefined length of time between Christ's resurrection and return. Amillennialists believe that Christ is now reigning from heaven through believers on earth. Satan is presently bound, figuratively speaking, by the preaching of the gospel and can no longer deceive the nations. After the second coming the eternal state will ensue. Major distinctives of Amillennialism is that most prophecies are either seen as having been fulfilled or currently being fulfilled in the Church. Like Premillennialists, Amillennialists believe that Christ can come back any moment to set up the eternal state.



b. POSTMILLENNIAL VIEW

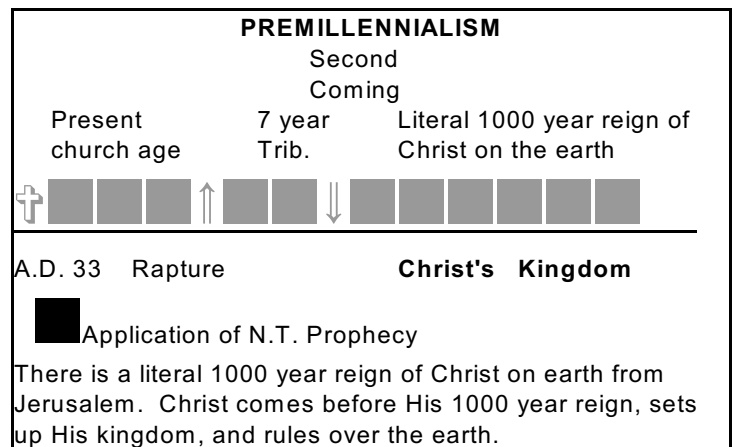
Postmillennial means “after the 1000 years.” The postmillennial system of prophecy believes that Christ began His spiritual kingdom in A.D. 70 after the tribulation when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. They believe Satan is presently bound and that believers will eventually turn the world around for Christ. The believers victory on earth is understood as Christ's spiritual reign. The 1000 year reign of Christ is not literal but is an



undefined period of time when the Church is the major influence on earth. After the Church's victory Christ will come to judge the living and the dead, the rapture will occur, and the eternal state will ensue. Major distinctives of Postmillennialism are that the reign of Christ occurs before His physical return, the rejection of the imminence of Christ's return, the denial of the literal fulfillment of the majority of prophecy, the belief that the bulk of Revelation and other second coming prophecies in the New Testament have already been fulfilled, and an evolutionary type perspective that believes things will get better and better with time as the church prevails on earth.

c. PREMILLENNIAL VIEW (View of Calvary Bible Church)

The Premillennial system believes that most New Testament prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. A more literal approach to prophecy leads to the conclusion that there is still a future for the ethnic nation Israel, distinct from the church. Premillennialists believe we are now in the church age in which God is primarily offering the kingdom to the Gentiles. At the end of the church age the saints, both dead and alive, will be raptured (see next section). After



the rapture a seven year period of tribulation will ensue when God will focus His attention on Israel bringing many to faith in their previously rejected Messiah and judging the wicked on earth. The tribulation period will close when Christ physically returns to earth to set up His kingdom. Satan will be bound as Christ reigns for a 1000 years. During the thousand year reign of Christ the raptured saints will rule and reign

with Him over those who were saved during the tribulation and lived to see Christ's return. During the millennial reign of Christ the curse will be partially lifted, and men will live extended lives like before the flood. At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be loosed, deceiving the nations, bringing God's final judgment. The earth and the heavens will be recreated, and the eternal state will begin. Like Amillennialism, Christ's coming for His church is imminent.

IV. THE RAPTURE

Rapture - The word "*rapture*" does not appear in the Bible. The term "*caught up*" (I Thess. 4:13-18) is from a Greek word *harpodzo* the word we get the English word "harpoon" from. A harpoon is used to catch fish and this is the basic meaning of the word, "*to seize, to snatch up, or to grasp.*" A good illustration of someone being caught up before God's wrath is Enoch (cf. Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5) who *walked with God and was not for the Lord took him*. In like manner Christians will be "taken up" i.e., raptured, like Enoch, before the seven year tribulation period.

- a. I Cor. 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will 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 imperishable, and we will be changed.

- b. I Thess. 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- c. **Many get confused when reading their Bibles and are not sure if they are reading about the rapture or the second coming. In the chart below notice the differences between the rapture and the second coming.**

Rapture	Second Coming
The rapture is a "mystery" revealed for the first time in the New Testament . I Cor. 15:51	The Second Coming was a previously known Old Testament truth.
All saints both alive and dead are resurrected.	Resurrected saints return with Christ. (see note below)
Saints are gathered to the Lord by rapture and caught up to be with the Lord in the air.	Saints are gathered by angels, and brought to Christ on earth.
There are no signs to observe.	There are many signs to observe.

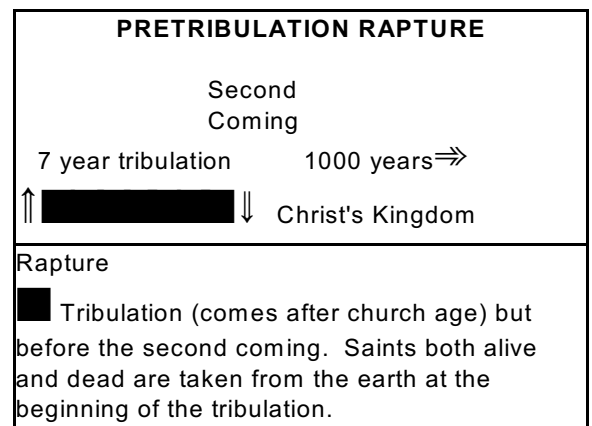
Rapture	Second Coming
Key Texts on the Rapture: John 5:25-29; I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:13-18	Key Texts on the Second coming: Zech. 14:4-5; Matt. 24:30-31; 25:31-32; Luke 17:26-30; Acts 1:11-12; Jude 14,15; Rev. 19:11-21
Note on the Rapture	
<p>The Scriptures teach that angels will accompany Christ at His return (Matt. 24:30-31; Matt. 13:24-30, 37-43; etc.). Yet, Zechariah 14:5 and Revelation 19:14 are key texts which seem to indicate that the "Holy Ones" who are clothed in fine linen and accompany Christ when He returns to earth are saints. The word "saint" means "holy one." When a study of the title "holy ones" is conducted in both the Old Testament and New Testament, it usually refers to believers. It is true that angels are seen in fine linen (Rev. 15:6), but the near context of Rev. 19:1,5,8, esp. vs. 14 seems to indicate that the great multitude clothed in fine linen are Saints already with Christ at His return. This is a key argument in favor of the premillennial view of the end of the age and the rapture happening before the second coming of Christ.</p>	

V. DIFFERENT PREMILLENNIAL VIEWS OF THE RAPTURE

As mentioned earlier, even within major theological systems of the end times there are differing views. One of the disagreements Premillennialists have is in relation to the timing of the Rapture. Will it happen before, in the middle, towards the end, or after the tribulation? There are three prominent views of the rapture within the premillennial system. Each view is described in its relation to the 7 year tribulation period i.e., pretribulation rapture, midtribulation rapture (pre-wrath view included here), and posttribulation rapture.

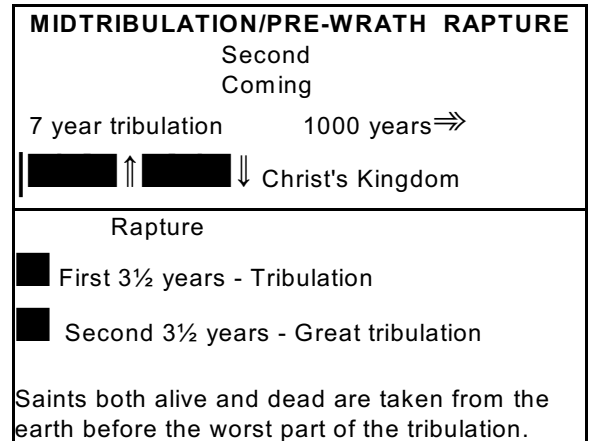
a. Premillennial Pretribulation Rapture (View of Calvary Bible Church)

The **premillennial pretribulation** view believes that at the beginning of the tribulation i.e., Daniel's 70th week, the believers, both alive and dead, will be caught up together in the air to be with the Lord forever. After the rapture a seven year period of tribulation will ensue. The man of sin, i.e. the antichrist, will rise to power, there will be supernatural catastrophes on earth designed to bring Israel to repentance. Many will be saved during the tribulation. At the close of the seven years, Christ comes back to earth with the raptured saints to set up His earthly kingdom.



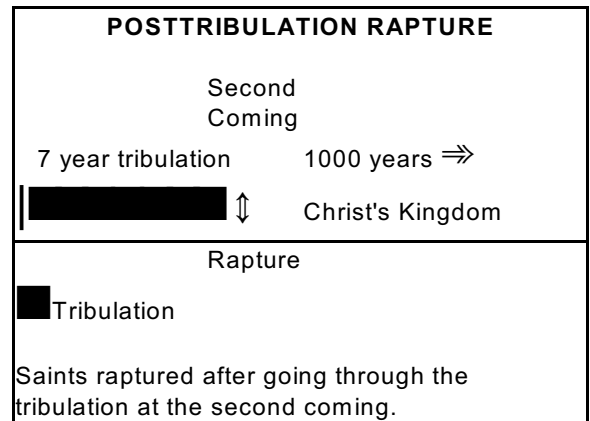
b. Premillennial Midtribulational/Pre-wrath Rapture

The **premillennial midtribulational** view believes that somewhere in the midst of Daniel's 70th week the church will be caught up to be with the Lord in the air before the most intense portion of God's judgement. They see the last 3 1/2 years of the 7 year time period as the Great tribulation which Christians will be delivered from. After the tribulation, Christ will come back to set up his kingdom on earth. A more recent modification of the midtribulational view is called the "Pre-wrath" view. The Pre-wrath view condenses God's wrath into the very end of the seven year tribulation period. It sees the believers going through most of the tribulation but escaping the worst part right at the end.



c. Premillennial Posttribulational Rapture

The **premillennial posttribulational** view believes the rapture will occur at the end of the 7 year tribulation period. The church will be supernaturally preserved through the entire tribulation period like Israel was preserved from the plagues of Egypt. The saints will be raptured as Christ descends from heaven to set up His earthly kingdom. This view sees the rapture as concurrent with the second coming. The major problem with this view is that there are no believers to enter the kingdom of Christ as mortals.



III. LIVING IN LIGHT OF YOUR FUTURE HOPE

- A. Prophecy should encourage and give you hope for the future.
- B. Prophecy should motivate you to live for the Lord today knowing He could come back at any moment.
- C. Prophecy should make you zealous to share your faith with the lost, knowing that judgment is coming for all unbelievers.