



– A PRIMER ON LAST THINGS –



LESSON 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Study

- Lesson 1: Introduction
- Lesson 2: Theological Systems of Viewing the End Times
Overview of End Time Events
- Lesson 3: The Millennium
- Lesson 4: What is the Rapture & Tribulation?

Some Dangers in Studying the End Times

- > Ignoring more important biblical matters
- > Speculation and date setting
 - :: Jesus said no one knows

Matthew 24:36-39 (NIV)

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

:: If he wanted us to know he would have been clearer

- > Distraction with details while not really preparing for the Lord's Return

The Benefits of Studying the End Times

- > It is in the Bible
- > It is a source of comfort and hope

1 Thessalonians 4:18 (NIV)

Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Titus 2:13 (NAS)

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

> It is a stimulus of preparation and action

1 John 2b-3 (NIV)

But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."

End Times Terms

> *eschaton* – Greek word meaning “last”

> Eschatology – the study of “last things” or the future

> Prophecy – *foretelling* is predicting the future, *forttelling* is speaking God’s truth

> Greek Terms for the Lord’s Return

:: *apocalypse* (1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7) – the revelation or revealing of Christ

:: *parousia* (2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Thess. 3:13) – the arrival or coming of Christ

:: *epiphany* (Tit. 2:13; 1 Tim. 6:14) – the manifestation or appearing of Christ

Major Passages

> Daniel 7-12

> Revelation

> Matthew 24-25/Mark 13/Luke 21

> 1 Cor. 15:35-57/2 Cor. 5:1-10/1 Thess. 4:13-5:11/2 Thes. 2:1-12

Major Events

> Rapture, Tribulation, Second Coming, Millennium, Judgment Seat of Christ, Eternal State, Great White Throne Judgment, Armageddon, Battle of Gog and Magog, etc.

Rules for Interpreting Prophecy

> Interpret literally, but understand that prophetic literature often uses symbolism

> Compare Scripture with Scripture, and use what is clear to explain what is unclear

> Recognize double reference or dual fulfillment of prophecy (already, not yet)

Example: 2 Sam. 7:12-14 cf. Heb 1:5

A Final Issue: Are we living in the last days?

> The NT writers understood that from Christ’s death and resurrection forward it was the last days (Rom. 13:11-12; Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Jam. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 Pet. 4:7)

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV)

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...

Acts 2:16-17 (NIV)

No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

Romans 13:12 (NIV)

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

1 John 2:18 (NIV)

Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.

LESSON 2 – The Millennium

What is the Millennium?

- > Millennium – a coming future of blessing, peace, and prosperity, marked by Jesus' rule as King over all (Isaiah 9:7; Rev 20)
- > Two main issues in determining your view of the Millennium
 - :: Literal or symbolic interpretation of Revelation
 - :: Promises to be fulfilled for ethnic Israel in future or fulfilled spiritually in the church?

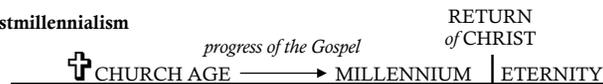
Millennial Views

Amillennialism



- :: Revelation is to be interpreted symbolically, not chronologically
- :: No future for ethnic Israel, thus no need for a literal 1,000 year millennium
- :: No separate Rapture of the church
- :: No literal, 7 year Tribulation
- :: Satan is bound in the present church age
- :: Somewhat positive/optimistic view of the last days
- :: Christ rules on the throne from heaven
- :: General resurrection & judgment at the Return of Christ
- :: Second most popular millennial view
- :: Held by many Reformed and Presbyterian churches

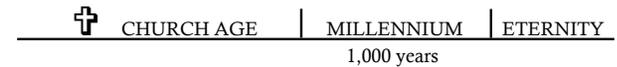
Postmillennialism



- :: A major revival through the progress of the Gospel results in the salvation of a majority of the world, thus ushering in the Millennium
- :: Revelation is to be interpreted symbolically, not chronologically
- :: No future for ethnic Israel, thus no need for a literal 1,000 year millennium
- :: No separate Rapture of the church
- :: No literal, 7 year Tribulation
- :: Very positive/optimistic view of the last days
- :: Christ rules on the throne from heaven
- :: General resurrection & judgment at the Return of Christ
- :: A minority view, declined greatly due to the pessimism from the World Wars

Premillennialism

RETURN
of CHRIST



- :: Revelation is to be interpreted literally & chronologically
- :: A literal 1,000 year millennium
- :: Some premillennialists hold to a literal 7 year Tribulation and a separate Rapture of the church before the Tribulation. Others (called *historic Premillennialism*) do not hold to a rapture before the tribulation
- :: Satan is not bound in the present church age
- :: Fairly negative view of the last days (apostasy, things get worse, etc.)
- :: Separate resurrections & judgments for the righteous and wicked

	Amillennialism	Postmillennialism	Premillennialism
When will Jesus return to earth?	Anytime.	After a period of the gospel spreading and many conversions.	Before the Millennium in order to usher it in.
Do the Rapture and Second Coming occur at the same time?	Yes.	Yes.	For many they are separate events. For some they are the same event.
Is there a literal Tribulation?	Tribulation happens when Christians are persecuted.	Tribulation is the conflict between good & evil since Jesus' death & res.	Yes. 7 years.
Is there a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ?	No. It is the reign of Christ in believer's hearts.	No. It is a period of peace when the Gospel reaches all people.	Yes. After the Tribulation for 1,000 years.
When was this view developed?	400 A.D. Popularized and refined during the Reformation.	300 A.D. Not very popular today.	Popular Premill. – late 19 th Century. Historic Premill. – earliest view of the church.

Adapted from Rose Publishing Pamphlet, Four Views of the End Times.

Historic Premillennialism vs. Dispensational Premillennialism

> Historic Premillennialism

- :: Post-tribulational Rapture (Christians are not raptured before the Tribulation)
- :: The rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4:13-18) & Jesus's Second Coming are one event that occurs at the same time
- :: The Church is spiritual Israel
- :: The Millennium is not as much about Israel as it is the Church
- :: This was the view of the early Christian church

> Dispensational Premillennialism

- :: Pre-tribulational, Mid-tribulational, or Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church
- :: The majority hold to a Pre-tribulational Rapture (the rapture of the church is the next event to take place, before the Tribulation and Millennium)
- :: The Millennium is the time of Covenant fulfillment for ethnic Israel, which all Christians also get to enjoy with Christ reigning as king
- :: This is the newest view of the End Times, developed in the late 19th century and into the 20th century, popularized most recently by the *Left Behind* series

LESSON 3 – THE RAPTURE AND TRIBULATION

What is the Rapture and Tribulation?

- > The Rapture – the event in which Christ's true church is caught up to Him in the clouds (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:16-17)

:: *Harapzo* – snatch away or caught up

:: The word Rapture is never actually used in Scripture

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NIV)
For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

:: When does this Rapture happen?

:: Is the Rapture of the Church distinct from Christ's Second Coming?

- > The Tribulation – a period of unprecedented judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth (Rev. 6-18)

:: The pouring out of God's wrath against sin & wickedness

:: Premillennialism believes the Tribulation is literal and lasts 7 years

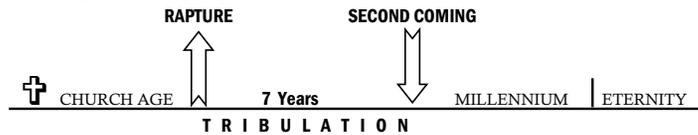
:: Amillennialism & Postmillennialism does not believe in a literal Tribulation

:: The Tribulation is Daniel's 70th week (Dan. 9:24-27)

:: Will Christians be involved in the Tribulation?

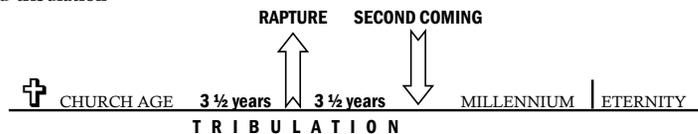
Rapture Views

Pre-tribulation



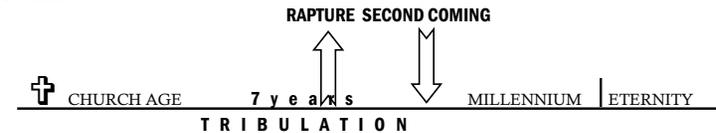
- :: The church must be removed in order for God to deal with Israel
- :: The purpose of the tribulation: Israel & wrath (1 Thess. 1:10, 5:9; Rev. 3:10)
- :: 1 Thess. 5:9 says that “*God has not destined us for wrath but for obtaining salvation.*”
- :: The imminence of the Rapture (can happen at any time)
- :: The absence of the church from Revelation 4-18
- :: The “restrainer” must be removed before the Antichrist is revealed (2 Thess. 2:1-8)
 - > The restrainer must either be the church or the Holy Spirit
 - > The restrainer is removed in the Rapture so that sin will run its course

Mid-tribulation



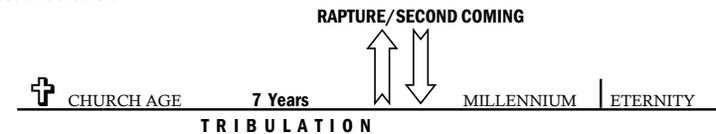
- :: Daniel 7:25 (ESV)
He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time (interpreted to mean 3 1/2 years).
- :: The second half (3 1/2 years) is the time of God’s wrath & therefore the church will be taken out before God’s wrath takes place

Pre-wrath



- :: Tribulation is from Satan, and then cut short by God’s “day of the Lord” wrath, when He delivers His church from the Tribulation and judges the earth for the remainder of time
- :: This happens between the 6 and 7 seal of Revelation (Rev 6-8)

Post-tribulation



- :: The Tribulation could be literal or non-literal
- :: The church will go through the Tribulation, but will be sheltered in some sense by God’s protection
- :: The church is present in the Tribulation to be witnesses for Christ
- :: We shouldn’t think the church should be exempt from persecution in the Tribulation since most Christians throughout church history have suffered violent persecution
- :: Matt. 24:29-31 (ESV) *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*
- :: No clear Scripture text that distinguishes the Second Coming as two events
- :: Most Post-tribulation positions do not see the Millennium as God’s dealing with Israel, just as the Tribulation is not solely about Israel

A Final Challenge

1 John 2:28-3:3 (NIV)

And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

- > *3 Crucial Questions about the Last Days* by Daniel J. Lewis
- > *Revelation for You* by Tim Chester.
- > *How Will the World End?* By Jeramie Rinne
- > *The Millennial Maze* by Stanley Grenz
- > *Four Views of the End Times* by Rose Publishing
- > *Three Views on the Rapture* edited by Gleason L. Archer Jr.
- > *The Bible and the Future* by Anthony A. Hockema (Amillennial Theologian)
- > *The Bible and Future Events* by Leon J. Wood (Dispensational Theologian)
- > *The New Millennium Manual* by Robert G. Clouse, Robert N. Hosack, Richard V. Pierard
- > *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem (chapters 54-57)