

Prophecy Study Part 2

POPULAR INTERPRETATIONS OF THE END TIMES

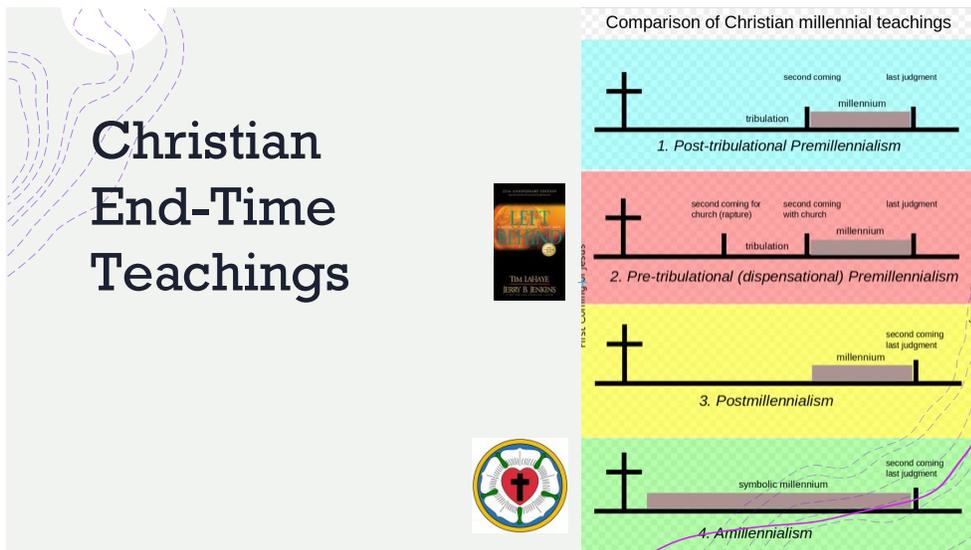
Why So Much Interest?

- We live in unsettling times
- Predictions of future events offer an anchor.

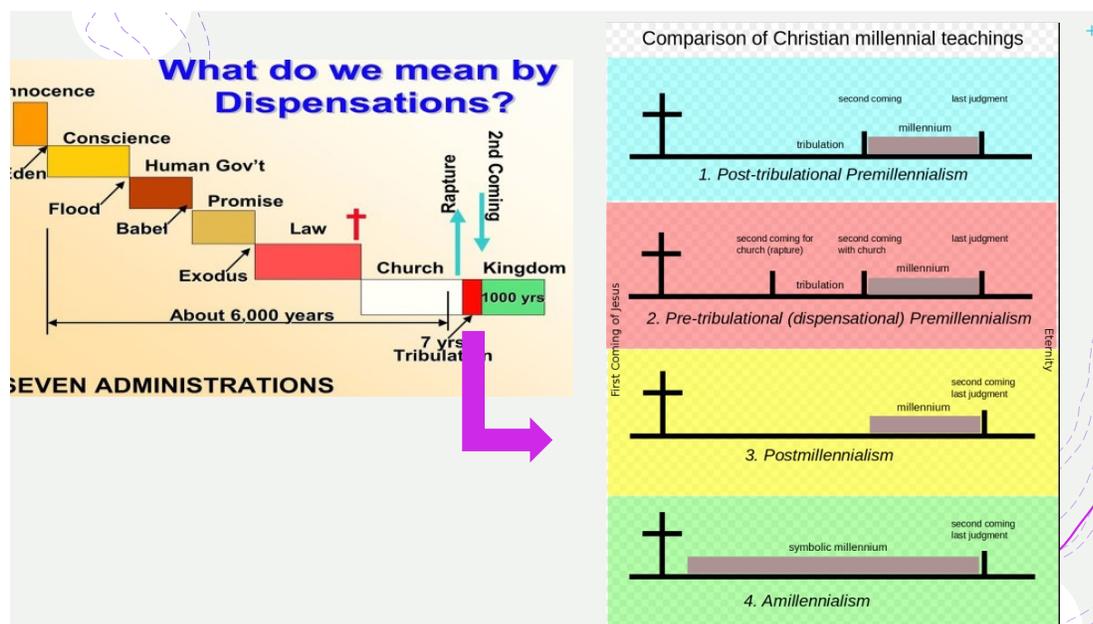
During increasing chaos, millions of people are looking to these sources for answers

Through these sources many people believe they have discovered answers, as well as comfort, strength and inspiration for Christian living. They are offered the assurance that God is at work in the world, judgment is coming, and Christ will return soon. We must ask ourselves some questions about end time prophecies:

- Are these popular views accurate?
- Are they Biblical?
- Do they align with what we believe as Lutherans?



The doctrinal foundation for Left Behind and other similar writings is **Premillennial Dispensationalism**, A theology that divides history into seven dispensations with the final era being a 1000-year earthly reign of Christ. The first person to propose this end time scenario in the 19th Century (1830s) was John Nelson Darby. Accompanied by minister Cyrus Scofield, and his Schofield Reference Bible. Prior to Darby's influence, most Christians understood the Second Coming as an event that would happen simultaneously with the final resurrection and the end of the age.



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Basis for Dispensationalism

- The Old Testament promises the Jewish people an earthly kingdom ruled by the Messiah.
- When Christ came, He offered this kingdom to the Jews.
- Jews rejected Him and the kingdom.
- This kingdom was postponed until the future.
- Christ introduced the "mystery form" of the kingdom (Parables of Matthew 13) and established the church.
- This Church Age is a "parenthesis" of God's program
- The Church Age will end at the "rapture" when all believers will go to heaven to celebrate with Christ "the marriage feast of the Lamb" for seven years.
- Then God's promised purpose for Israel resumes.

Dispensationalists believe that we are reconciled to God by grace alone through the work of Christ in history, BUT...

- The manifestation of God's glory, not salvation, is the main theme and broad purpose of His activity in human history in each of the dispensations.
- This makes Christ's Sacrifice on the cross incomplete

Main Points of Dispensationalism

- Literal Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy
- Rapture-Church Removed from end time suffering
- Israel-special group as per Old Testament
- Millennium-literal 1000- year reign of Christ on Earth

The Literal Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy.

- God will establish an earthly kingdom in Israel
- Judgements described in Revelation 6-16 will literally happen in succession
- A political figure known as the antichrist will rule on Earth
- Christ will Rule on Earth from Jerusalem for 1000 years
- Jews will remain separate as God's Chosen People

Rapture

- The term "rapture" comes from the expression "caught up" in 1Thess 4:17
- Before 1830 no evidence that Christians believed in a multi-stage or "secret" return of Christ
- Christians believed that Jesus would come again visibly at some undisclosed time to judge—once and for all—the living and the dead.
- Goes against what we say in the Nicene Creed
- The Rapture view can promote a "wait and see" attitude.

Israel

- Dispensationalists believe that God has forever promised the land of Israel to the Jews.
- Many believe the establishment of the Nation of Israel in May of 1948 to be THE sign of the beginning of the last generation
- The land NEVER belonged to Israel-God GAVE it to them to use
- Jesus did not specifically refer to Israel in His teachings-he did speak of the land, but in terms of the entire Earth
- Earth is the New Heaven and the New Earth-not specifically Israel

Millennium

- Most teachings on End Time Prophecy focus on a "1000 year" period described in Revelation 20:1-6
- Dispensational belief is 1000-year literal reign of Christ on Earth
- Dispensationalists use the Revelation passage of the millennial time as the crux of their interpretation of end times-
- This interpretation requires a literal interpretation of Revelation
- Often viewed through the lens of current events
- Jesus does not teach of a physical Earthly Kingdom
- In apocalyptic literature numbers are symbolic and represent completeness, not a video of future events!
- The 1000 years represents the entire time needed for the church to complete its mission before Christ returns