

# ESCHATALOGICAL OPTIONS

A Study of the Major Theological Views Concerning End-Time Events

Taught by Dave James

Gatlinburg, Tennessee

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# Eschatological Options

## INTRODUCTION: Terms and Definitions

### 1A. Eschatology

*The study of “the last things,” or future events (from the Greek ἔσχατος..., “last”).<sup>1</sup>*

### 2A. Apocalyptic

*Type of biblical literature that emphasizes the lifting of the veil between heaven and earth and the revelation of God and his plan for the world. Apocalyptic writings are marked by distinctive literary features, particularly prediction of future events and accounts of visionary experiences or journeys to heaven, often involving vivid symbolism.<sup>2</sup>*

### 3A. Mystery

*A definition of a scriptural mystery: something unknown in times past but revealed in the NT.<sup>3</sup>*

### 4A. Daniel’s 70 weeks

### 5A. Day of the Lord

*Expression used by OT prophets (as early as the eighth-century B.C. prophet Amos) to signify a time in which God actively intervenes in history, primarily for judgment. Thus “the day of the Lord” is also called “the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zep 2:2 KJV).*

*Sometimes “the day of the Lord” is used in the OT to speak of a past judgment (Lam 2:22). More often an impending future judgment is in view (Jl 2:1–11). Ultimately, though, the term refers to climactic future judgment of the world (Jl 3:14–21; Mal 4:5).*

*The final day of the Lord is characterized in the Bible as a day of gloom, darkness, and judgment. Associated with God’s judgment is language depicting changes in nature, especially a darkening of the sun, moon, and stars (Is 13:10; Jl 2:31; 3:15; Mt 24:29; Rv 6:12). Nations will be judged for their rebellion against God’s anointed people and king (Jl 3:19; cf. Ps 2). Israel is counseled not to be eager for that day, because it will also include judgment on the chosen nation (Am 5:18–20). But the prophets promise that a believing “remnant” will be saved by looking to the Messiah they once rejected (Jl 2:32; Zec 12:10).*

*Following the judgment, the future day of the Lord will be a time of prosperity, restoration, and blessing for Israel (Jl 3:18–21).<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 1241.

<sup>2</sup>“apocalyptic,” Elwell, *Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology*, Logos 4 edition.

<sup>3</sup>Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: King James Version* (Expanded ed.), Logos 4 edition, p. 1721.

<sup>4</sup>Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Logos 4 edition, p. 588.

## 6A. Dispensational Theology

*Dispensational Theology can be defined very simply as a system of theology which attempts to develop the Bible's philosophy of history on the basis of the sovereign rule of God. It represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by several dispensations of God's rule.*<sup>5</sup>

### 1B. Traditional ("normative"<sup>6</sup>) dispensationalism

The *sine qua non* of dispensationalism:<sup>7</sup>

*A dispensationalist keeps Israel and the church distinct.*

*This distinction between Israel and the church is born out of a system of hermeneutics that is usually called literal interpretation.*

*A third aspect of the sine qua non of dispensationalism is...the underlying purpose of God in the world. The covenant theologian, in practice, believes this purpose to be salvation (although covenant theologians strongly emphasize the glory of God in their theology), and **the dispensationalist says the purpose is broader than that; namely, the glory of God.** Progressives have a Christological center, apparently to undergird their emphasis on the Davidic covenant and on Christ as the already reigning Davidic ruler in heaven.*

### 2B. Hyper / ultra-dispensationalism

*...ultradispensationalism may be defined, or certainly characterized rather definitively, as the school of interpretation that places more than one dispensation between Pentecost and the end of the church age.*<sup>8</sup>

### 3B. Progressive Dispensationalism

*Progressive dispensationalism (1) teaches that Christ is already reigning in heaven on the throne of David, thus merging the church with a present phase of the already inaugurated Davidic covenant and kingdom; (2) this is based on a complementary hermeneutic that allows the New Testament to introduce changes and additions to Old Testament revelation; and (3) the overall purpose of God is Christological, holistic redemption being the focus and goal of history.*<sup>9</sup>

## 7A. Covenant Theology

*Covenant Theology can be defined very simply as a system of theology which attempts to develop the Bible's philosophy of history on the basis of two or three covenants. It represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by two or three covenants.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Showers, *There really is a difference!*, Logos 4 edition, ch. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, Logos 4 edition, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>10</sup>Showers, *There really is a difference!*, Logos 4 edition, ch. 2.

## A note concerning “Replacement Theology” (from the “Heidelblog”)

*Recently I had a question asking whether “covenant theology” is so-called “replacement theology.” Those dispensational critics of Reformed covenant theology who accuse it of teaching that the New Covenant church has “replaced” Israel do not understand historic Reformed covenant theology. They are imputing to Reformed theology a way of thinking about redemptive history that has more in common with dispensationalism than it does with Reformed theology.*

*First, the very category of “replacement” is foreign to Reformed theology because it assumes a dispensational, Israeleo-centric way of thinking. It assumes that the temporary, national people was, in fact, intended to be the permanent arrangement.<sup>11</sup>*

## 8A. New Covenant Theology

### 9A. Eschatological views concerning the millennial reign of Christ

#### 1B. Premillennialism

##### 1C. Pretribulational (Dispensational) Premillennialism

The view that Christ will return to the earth in two phases, the first when he will meet believers in the air BEFORE a seven-year period of great tribulation, the second to the earth AFTER the tribulation, which will mark the beginning of his millennial kingdom that he will rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem.

##### 2C. Historic (Covenant) Premillennialism

*The view that Christ will return to the earth after a period of great tribulation and then establish a millennial kingdom. At this time believers who have died will be raised from the dead and believers who are alive will receive glorified resurrection bodies, and both will reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years.<sup>12</sup>*

#### 2B. Amillennialism

*The view that there will be no literal thousand-year bodily reign of Christ on earth prior to the final judgment and the eternal state; on this view, scriptural references to the millennium in Revelation 20 actually describe the present church age.<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup>R. Scott Clark, “Covenant theology is not reformed theology,” The Heidelblog, September 14, 2008, accessed August 24, 2010, <http://heidelblog.wordpress.com/2008/09/14/covenant-theology-is-not-replacement-theology/>

<sup>12</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 1243.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1235.

### 3B. Postmillennialism

*The view that Christ will return to the earth after the millenium. In this view, the millennium is an age of peace and righteousness on the earth, brought about by the progress of the gospel and the growth of the church.<sup>14</sup>*

## 10A. Eschatological views of the Rapture, Tribulation and Christ's return

### 1B. Futurist View

#### 1C. Pre-tribulation view

#### 2C. Mid-tribulation / Pre-wrath views

#### 3C. Post-tribulation view

#### 4C. Partial-rapture view

### 2B. Preterist views

#### 1C. Full Preterism (hyper-preterism)

#### 2C. Partial Preterism

### 3B. Historicist view

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 1251.

11A. Views Concerning Last Things<sup>15</sup>

VIEWS CONCERNING LAST THINGS				
Categories	Amillennialism	Postmillennialism	Historic Premillennialism	Dispensational Premillennialism
Second Coming of Christ	Single event; no distinction between rapture and second coming; Introduces eternal state.	Single event; no distinction between rapture and second coming; Christ returns after Millennium.	Rapture and second coming simultaneous; Christ returns to reign on earth.	Second coming in two phases: rapture for church; second coming to earth 7 years later.
Resurrection	General resurrection of believers and unbelievers at second coming of Christ.	General resurrection of believers and unbelievers at second coming of Christ.	Resurrection of believers at beginning of Millennium. Resurrection of unbelievers at end of Millennium.	Distinction in resurrections: 1. Church at rapture. 2. Old Testament/Tribulation saints at second coming. 3. Unbelievers at end of Millennium.
Judgments	General judgment of all people.	General judgment of all people.	Judgment at second coming. Judgment at end of Tribulation.	Distinction in judgment: 1. Believers works at rapture; 2. Jews/Gentiles at end of Tribulation. 3. Unbelievers at end of Millennium.
Tribulation	Tribulation is experienced in the present age.	Tribulation is experienced in this present age.	Post-trib view: church goes through the future Tribulation.	Pre-trib view: church is raptured prior to Tribulation.
Millennium	No literal Millennium on earth after second coming. Kingdom present in church age.	Present age blends into Millennium because of progress of gospel.	Millennium is both present and future. Christ is reigning in heaven. Millennium is not necessarily 1,000 years.	At second coming Christ inaugurates literal 1,000-year Millennium on earth.
Israel and the Church	Church is the new Israel. No distinction between Israel and church	Church is the new Israel. No distinction between Israel and church	Some distinction between Israel and church. Future for Israel but church is spiritual Israel.	Complete distinction between Israel and church. Distinct program for each.
Adherents	L. Berkhof O.T. Allis G.C. Berkhouwer	Charles Hodge B.B. Warfield W.G.T. Shedd A.H. Strong	G.E. Ladd A. Reese M.J. Erickson	L.S. Chafer J.D. Pentecost C.C. Ryrie J.F. Walvoord

<sup>15</sup>Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology, Logos 4 edition*, p. 383.

## DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY

### 1A. “Dispensational Theology”

*Dispensational Theology can be defined very simply as a system of theology which attempts to develop the Bible’s philosophy of history on the basis of the sovereign rule of God. It represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by several dispensations of God’s rule.<sup>16</sup>*

### 2A. Defining “dispensation” - οἰκονομέω / οἰκονόμος / οἰκονομία

#### 1B. General meaning / usage in the New Testament

##### 1C. Ephesians 1:10: οἰκονομία

##### 1D. Translated as “dispensation” (KJV, NKJV)

*that in the **dispensation** of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.*

##### 2D. Translated as “administration” (NAS)

*with a view to an **administration** suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him*

##### 2C. Luke 16:1-2

*He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a **steward** (οἰκονόμος) and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your **stewardship** (οἰκονομέω), for you can no longer **be steward** (οἰκονομέω).’*

##### 3C. Verb: οἰκονομέω

(1x - Luke 16:2)

##### 4C. Noun: οἰκονόμος

(10x - Luke 12:42; 16:1, 16: 3, 16:8; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 4:1, 2; Gal.4:2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10)

##### 5C. Noun: οἰκονομία

(9x - Luke 16:2, 16:3, 16:4, 1 Cor. 9:17; **Eph. 1:10**; 3:2; 3:9; Col. 1:25; 1Tim. 1:4)

##### 6C. Summary: Features / characteristics / concepts

1D. A contractual / covenantal arrangement (which includes...)

2D. Terms / obligations / expectations

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<sup>16</sup>Showers, *There really is a difference!* Logos 4 edition, ch. 4.

- 3D. Responsibilities / accountability
- 4D. Consequences associated with commendation / condemnation

2B. Technical meaning with respect to God's program

1C. Ryrie:

*"A dispensation is distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose."*<sup>17</sup>

2C. Walvoord:

*"A dispensation is a divinely revealed system of morals, values, promises, and rules that God imposes on a particular generation."*<sup>18</sup>

3C. A unique (usually covenantal) arrangement in God's governance of mankind marked by...

- 1D. New revelation for the present and future dispensations
  - 1E. Concerning man's responsibilities
  - 2E. Concerning God's promises of blessing and judgment
- 2D. Man being held accountable for faithfulness to his responsibilities
- 3D. God fulfilling his promises of blessing and/or judgment

3A. Brief history of dispensationalism

- 1B. Prior to 19<sup>th</sup> century
  
  
- 2B. 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>17</sup>Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, Logos 4 edition, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup>Walvoord, *The Final Drama: 14 Keys to Understanding the Prophetic Scriptures*, Kindle edition, location 531.

- 3B. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present
  
- 4A. Distinctives of dispensationalism
  - 1B. The view and interpretation of the Bible
    - 1C. Inspiration, inerrancy, authority of the Bible
  
    - 2C. Hermeneutic: Literal (normal-reading), grammatical, historical
  
  - 2B. The distinction between church and Israel
  
  - 3B. The distinction between the church and the kingdom of God
  
  - 4B. The fact and timing of the literal, earthly, millennial reign of Christ
  
  - 5B. The God-centeredness of history

5A. Dispensations as recognized in Covenant Theology (per Charles Hodge)

*Although the covenant of grace has always been the same, the dispensations of that covenant have changed. The first dispensation extended from Adam to Abraham...The second dispensation extended from Abraham to Moses...The third dispensation of this covenant was from Moses to Christ...The gospel dispensation is called new in reference to the Mosaic economy, which was old, and about to vanish away.<sup>19</sup>*

6A. The dispensations

- 1B. Innocency
  - 1C. Genesis 1:28 - 3:6
  - 2C. Before 4000 B.C.
  
- 2B. Conscience
  - 1C. Genesis 3:7 - 8:14
  - 2C. Before 4000 B.C.

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<sup>19</sup>Hodge, *Vol. 2: Systematic theology*, Logos 4 edition, pp. 373-76.

- 3B. Government
  - 1C. Genesis 8:15 - 11:32
  - 2C. Before 2300 B.C.
  
- 4B. Promise / Patriarchs
  - 1C. Genesis 12 - Exodus 18
  - 2C. 2200 - 1445 B.C.
  
- 5B. Law / Moses
  - 1C. Exodus 19 - Acts 1
  - 2C. 1445 B.C. - 30 A.D. (or 32 or 33?)
  
- 6B. Church / Christ / Spirit
  - 1C. Acts 2 - Revelation 3
  - 2C. 30 A.D. - Present moment+
  
- 7B. Day of the Lord
  - 1C. Revelation 3 - Revelation 20
  - 2C. Present moment+ - Today + 1007 years
  
- 7A. Basic tenets of Progressive Dispensationalism<sup>20</sup>
  - 1B. The kingdom of God as the unifying theme of history
  
  - 2B. Four dispensations
    - 1C. Patriarchal
    - 2C. Mosaic
    - 3C. Ecclesial
    - 4C. Zionic
  
  - 5C. "Already / not yet" Davidic reign
  
  - 6C. "Already / not yet" nature of the New Covenant
  
  - 7C. Revision of the Israel / church distinction

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<sup>20</sup>Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, Logos 4 edition, p. 193.

8C. Complementary hermeneutics

9C. A holistic plan of redemption

8A. Common arguments against dispensationalism

1B. Supposed claims by dispensationalists concerning the post-apostolic era

2B. "A new theological innovation"

3B. The lineage of dispensationalism (the "genetic fallacy")

4B. Great theologians of history have held to a post-trib rapture

5B. "Different ways of salvation"

6B. Destruction of the Bible's unity

7B. The "escapism" of the Pre-Trib Rapture "theory" (emphasis mine)

*If you think God would never let his people today go through trials, look at the Christians in China, much more dedicated to God than many of us in the United States, who can't believe that a church in the United States could actually have the honor of possessing a complete Bible. Many of their churches only have a few pages, which are carefully passed around among the believers so they can all have a turn to read God's Word.*

*Someone made an extremely good point once about God's judgment on Israel in the Old Testament. When God allowed Israel to go into captivity in Babylon for their wickedness, the Godly people like Daniel and his friends went, too.*

***When God judges a nation, He does not always deliver His people from the consequences.***<sup>21</sup>

*Sometimes, in a way, the pretribulation position seems a little arrogant to me. It's almost like saying, "Yes, I realize that Christians have endured much persecution and martyrdom in the past, and in some places are doing so now. And I realize that those poor believers who come to Christ during the tribulation will suffer horribly. **But we soft, pampered Christians will get to escape all the tough times.**" To me, it sounds a little dangerous--not to mention unbiblical.*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Deborah, "Why I Believe in the Mid-Tribulation / Pre-wrath Rapture," unpublished paper, 10/6/2010, <http://www2.dmci.net/~milknhoney/drbrapture.html>, accessed on 9/5/2010.

<sup>22</sup>Steve Hall, "Posttribulationism," July 1998, <http://www.aboundingjoy.com/posttrib-fs.html>, accessed on 9/5/2010.

## COVENANT THEOLOGY

### 1A. “Covenant Theology”

*Covenant Theology can be defined very simply as a system of theology which attempts to develop the Bible’s philosophy of history on the basis of two or three covenants. It represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by two or three covenants.*<sup>23</sup>

### 2A. The theological covenants

#### 1B. Covenant of Works

*Some have questioned whether it is appropriate to speak of a covenant of works that God had with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The actual word covenant is not used in the Genesis narratives. However, the essential parts of the covenant are all there—a clear definition of the parties involved, a legally binding set of provisions that stipulates the conditions of their relationship, the promise of blessings for obedience, and the condition for obtaining those blessings. Moreover, Hosea 6:7, in referring to the sins of Israel, says, “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant” (RSV mg.; so NIV, NASB).*<sup>24</sup>

#### 2B. Covenant of Redemption

*Theologians speak of another kind of covenant, a covenant that is not between God and man, but is among the members of the Trinity. This covenant they call the “covenant of redemption.” It is an agreement among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which the Son agreed to become a man, be our representative, obey the demands of the covenant of works on our behalf, and pay the penalty for sin, which we deserved.*<sup>25</sup>

#### 3B. Covenant of Grace

*When man failed to obtain the blessing offered in the covenant of works, it was necessary for God to establish another means, one by which man could be saved. The rest of Scripture after the story of the fall in Genesis 3 is the story of God working out in history the amazing plan of redemption whereby sinful people could come into fellowship with himself. Once again, God clearly defines the provisions of a covenant that would specify the relationship between himself and those whom he would redeem.*<sup>26</sup>

#### 4B. Two-covenant view (Shedd)

*Though this distinction is favored by the scriptural statements, it does not follow that there are two separate and independent covenants antithetic to the covenant of works. The covenant of grace and that of redemption are two modes or phases of the one evangelical covenant of mercy.*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Showers, *There really is a difference!*, Logos 4 edition, ch. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 516.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 518.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 519.

<sup>27</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic theology* (3rd ed.), Logos 4 edition, p. 679.

- 5B. Evaluation of the covenantal scheme
  - 1C. In general: **Implicit** “theological covenants” vs. **explicit** “biblical covenants”
  - 2C. Evaluation of the Covenant of Works
  - 3C. Evaluation of the Covenant of Redemption
  - 4C. Evaluation of the Covenant of Grace
- 3A. Major issues dividing dispensational and covenant theology
  - 1B. Hermeneutics
    - 1C. *OT informs NT interpretation vs. NT interprets OT*
    - 2C. *Literal vs. Spiritual / theological interpretation of OT prophecies and promises*
  - 2B. Israel and the Church: *“Peoples of God” vs. “One people of God”*
  - 3B. The Kingdom of God: *Exclusively future vs. “Already / Not Yet”*
  - 4B. The (millennial) reign of Christ: *Future, from Jerusalem vs. Present, from heaven*

## POSTMILLENNIALISM

### 1A. “Postmillennialism”

*Postmillennialism expects the proclaiming of the Spirit-blessed gospel of Jesus Christ to win the vast majority of human beings to salvation in the present age. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ’s return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of people and of nations. After an extensive era of such conditions the Lord will return visibly, bodily, and in great glory, ending history with the general resurrection and the great judgment of all humankind.<sup>28</sup>*

### 2A. Modern postmillennialists

*Prominent generic postmillennial writers include: Jonathon Edwards...William Carey...Charles Hodge...William G.T. Shedd...Augustus Strong...B.B. Warfield...J.Gresham Machen...Loraine Boettner. Contemporary defenders include Norman Shepherd...Iain Murray...J. Ligon Duncan, Henry Morris III, and Willard Ramsey.<sup>29</sup>*

### 3A. Theonomic postmillennialism (Christian Reconstructionism)

#### 1B. Defining Reconstructionism

*The theonomic postmillennialist sees the gradual return to biblical norms of civil justice as a consequence of widespread gospel success through preaching, evangelism, missions and Christian education. The judicial-political outlook of Reconstructionism includes the application of those justice-defining directives contained in the Old Testament legislation when properly interpreted, adapted to new covenant conditions, and relevantly applied.<sup>30</sup>*

#### 2B. Reconstructionists

*Published advocates of theonomic postmillennialism include: Greg L. Bahnsen...Gary North...Rousas J. Ruchdooney, Kenneth L. Gentry...Gary DeMar.<sup>31</sup>*

### 4A. Foundations for postmillennialism

#### 1B. Theological foundations<sup>32</sup>

##### 1C. God’s creational purpose

##### 2C. God’s sovereign power

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<sup>28</sup> Gentry, *Three Views of the Millennium and Beyond*, Kindle edition, location 73.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, locations 130-45.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, locations 164-82.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, locations 172-87

- 3C. God's blessed provision
  
- 2B. "The Redemptive-Historical Flow of Postmillennialism"<sup>33</sup> (The biblical foundation)
  - 1C. Creation and the Edenic Covenant
  
  - 2C. Abrahamic Covenant
  
  - 3C. New Covenant
  
- 5A. Scriptural support for postmillennialism
  - 1B. Salvation of the nations: Psalm 2:8; Psalm 22:7, Isaiah 2:2-4
  
  - 2B. Restoration of world conditions: Isaiah 11:6-9
  
  - 3B. Kingdom parables: Matthew 13
  
  - 4B. Power of the gospel: Romans 1:16
  
  - 5B. The victory of Christ over sin and Satan: John 12
  
  - 6B. Multitudes of the redeemed from the nations: Revelation 7:9-10

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., locations 226-40.

- 6A. The Millennium<sup>34</sup>
  - 1B. Nature of the Millennium
  
  - 2B. Progress of the gospel
  
  - 3B. Progress in the world
  
- 7A. Future events according to postmillennialism<sup>35</sup>
  - 1B. Second Coming of Christ
  
  - 2B. Resurrection of the dead
  
  - 3B. Final Judgment
  
  - 4B. Eternal state

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<sup>34</sup>Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 384.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 385-86.

## AMILLENNIALISM

### 1A. “Amillennialism”

*Amillennialism is the view of last things that holds there will be no Millennium before the end of the world. Until the end there will be a parallel development of both good and evil, God’s kingdom and Satan’s. After the second coming of Christ at the end of the world there will be a general resurrection and general judgment of all people.<sup>36</sup>*

### 2A. Summary of the amillennial view

*The Old Testament does not teach a future millennial kingdom of Christ. Uniformly the Old Testament prophets speak of the Messiah’s everlasting kingdom and its everlasting blessings. With regard to the New Testament revelation concerning the future, however, we must say even more than that. Not only does the New Testament not teach a future millennial kingdom, in what it teaches us about Christ’s second coming, the New Testament rules out an earthly millennial kingdom following Christ’s return, because the New Testament reveals clearly that the following events are all concurrent; that is, all will occur together in one cluster of end-time events, one grand dramatic finale of redemptive history: the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of believers (and the “change” of living believers, 1 Cor. 15:51), the resurrection of the unjust, judgment for all, the end, the new heaven and new earth, and the inauguration of the final kingdom of God, the blessed eternal state of the redeemed.<sup>37</sup>*

### 3A. Doctrinal characteristics of amillennialism<sup>38</sup>

#### 1B. Concerning the Bible

#### 2B. Concerning the Millennium

#### 3B. Concerning the covenants

#### 4B. Concerning the church

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<sup>36</sup>Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 516.

<sup>37</sup>Strimple, “Amillennialism,” in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, Kindle edition, location 1465.

<sup>38</sup>Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, pp. 516-17.

- 4A. Hermeneutics of amillennialism<sup>39</sup>  
(cf. "Illustration of hermeneutical / exegetical differences between dispensational and historic premillennialism" under "Historic Premillennialism" in these notes)
- 1B. Both the literal and figurative methods of interpretation have their proper places and their necessary limitations
- 2B. Some of the limitations on literal interpretation include:
- 1C. The presence of figures of speech that cannot be interpreted literally allows us freedom to interpret in other ways
- 2C. The fact that the main theme of the Bible is spiritual gives validity to figurative or spiritual interpretation
- 3C. The fact that the Old Testament is preliminary and preparatory to the New Testament causes us to expect that the New Testament will interpret the literal Old Testament prophecies in a figurative manner
- 4C. Of the options to interpret a passage literally or figuratively, whichever gives the true meaning of the passage is the correct method
- 5C. The only way prophecy can be understood literally is when its literal meaning is clear and obvious. Almost all prophecy is filled with figurative and parabolic language, which must be interpreted accordingly. Therefore, most prophecy will be interpreted nonliterally.
- 6C. To interpret and understand a prophecy correctly and fully, its fulfillment must also be known.
- 7C. Prophecy is indefinite, enigmatical, even deceptive, filled with symbols, imprecise, and subject to various interpretations.

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<sup>39</sup> This section is based on Ryrie's summary of the hermeneutics of Amillennialism as set forth by Oswald Allis in *Prophecy and the Church: Ryrie, Basic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, pp. 517-18.

## 3B. Ladd's (an historic premillennialist) comment on amillennial hermeneutics

*the present writer is ready to agree with the amillennialist that there is only one place to find a hermeneutic: in the New Testament.*"<sup>40</sup>

5A. Biblical support for amillennialism<sup>41</sup>

## 1B. Interpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant

## 2B. Interpretation of Ephesians 3:5

## 3B. Daniel's Seventy Weeks

## 4B. "This generation" (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32)

## 6A. Amillennial interpretation of key millennial texts

1B. Romans 11<sup>42</sup> (emphasis mine)

*Both premillennialists and postmillennialists have appealed to this passage as providing significant support for their positions. George Ladd, for example, insists that "there are two passages in the New Testament which cannot be avoided," passage that clearly point to a premillennial perspective, one of which is Romans 11:26. John Murray, on the other hand, has often been views as a "one-text" postmillennialist on the basis of his interpretation of the phrase "life from the dead" in Romans 11:15 as a figurative expression that speaks of "an unprecedented quickening for the world in the expansion and success of the gospel," resulting from "the reception of Israel again into the favour and blessing of God."*

***It should be emphasized, however, that the conclusion that Paul in Romans 11 predicts a future mass conversion of ethnic Israel prior to Christ's return does not, by itself, prove the correctness of any particular millennial position. More recently, Stanley Grenz has insisted that "the apostle clearly anticipates a future conversion of Israel on a grand scale, an event that would usher in a glorious day for the entire world." But Grenz notes that such a hope does not "require an earthly millennial reign of Christ, for the conversion of Israel could just as easily prepare for the inauguration of the eternal state as for an earthly golden age."***

<sup>40</sup>Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God*, 138, qtd in Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Logos 4 Edition, p. 223.

<sup>41</sup>(1B-3B) from Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 519.

<sup>42</sup>Strimple, "Amillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, Kindle edition, locations 1667-1983.

*Grenz's contention that in Romans 11 the apostle "clearly" predicts a future national conversion of Israel is debatable, as we will see. But what is undeniably clear is that in this entire section of the letter in which Paul especially focuses on the question of the place of the Jews in God's salvation plan (chs. 9-11), he says not a word about a return of the Jews to the Promised Land or about a millennial kingdom in which Christ will reign from his throne in Jerusalem—nor is there any clear reference to a "golden age" prior to Christ's return in which this world will be largely Christianized. **The amillennialist can "relax" as he or she studies this passage, knowing that millennial positions are not at stake.***

*As Palmer Robinson has written: "Hardening...until" too frequently has been understood as marking the beginning of a new state of things with regard to Israel. It hardly has been considered that "hardening...until" more naturally should be interpreted as eschatologically terminating in its significance. **The phrase implies not a new beginning after a termination point in time, but instead the continuation of a prevailing circumstance for Israel until the end of time.***<sup>43</sup>

*What the apostle Paul teaches in Romans 11:25 is that hardening on the part of ethnic Israel will continue right up until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.*

## 2B. Revelation 20<sup>44</sup> (emphasis mine)

*In presenting now a brief interpretation of Revelation 20:1-10, a seven-point outline may be helpful. **(1) Note that there is nothing in this passage to give any hint that it is to be connected with those Old Testament prophecies that speak of a coming era of national glory for Israel** (see the first section of this essay). Those passages talk about the inheritance of earthly Canaan and glory for earthly Jerusalem. There is nothing about that in Revelation 20. Rather, **it talks about a thousand-year kingdom, whereas the Old Testament prophecies talk about an everlasting kingdom.** At first glance, therefore, it might appear that the present passage and those Old Testament prophecies are not speaking of the same subject. At the very least, there is nothing in the Revelation passage itself to clearly link them.*

*(2) The order in which the visions appear in the book of Revelation is not necessarily the order of fulfillment. It seems that the end of chapter 19 brings us right down to the end of the age, the second coming of Christ, the great final battle, judgment on the beast and false prophet. It does not follow that chapter 20 necessarily speaks of what will happen next. **Its visions may take us back to the first coming of Christ and the beginning of the present gospel age.***

*(4) How are to interpret the symbol of Satan being "bound"? Chapter 12 has already spoken of a certain restraint on the dragon, Satan, after Christ's ascension. Satan is not able to accomplish his purpose. He wants to destroy the woman and her offspring, but he cannot do it. He is restrained by God. **Does chapter 20 have in view another phase of Satan's being restrained, something independent of what had been described in chapter 12? Or is this an example of the kind of restatement in somewhat different terms and different symbols that is characteristic of Revelation?** Perhaps 20:1-3 is speaking of another aspect of that restraint placed on Satan as a consequence of Christ's redemptive work and triumphant exaltation.*

*At the cross Satan is bound—but not absolutely. Revelation 20:2-3 does not say that Satan is bound, period. He is bound in one respect, namely, "to keep him from deceiving the nations [the Gentiles] anymore." The age of salvation for the Gentiles has arrived.*

<sup>43</sup> Robinson, "Is There a Distinctive Future for Ethnic Israel in Romans 11?" 220, qtd by Strimple in *Three Views of the Millennium and Beyond*, Kindle edition locations 1820-36.

<sup>44</sup> Strimple, "Amillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, Kindle edition, locations 1807-82.

## DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

### 1A. “Premillennialism”

*Premillennialism is the view that holds that the second coming of Christ will occur prior to the Millennium, which will see the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on this earth for a literal one thousand years. It also understands that there will be several occasions when resurrections and judgments will take place. Eternity will begin after the thousand years are concluded. Within premillennialism there are those who hold differing views as to the time of the Rapture.<sup>45</sup>*

### 2A. Dispensational Premillennialism vs. Historic (Covenant) Premillennialism

### 3A. Doctrinal characteristics of premillennialism

#### 1B. Concerning the Bible

#### 2B. Concerning the Millennium

##### 1C. The nature of the millennium

##### 2C. The length of the millennium

#### 3B. Concerning the covenants

#### 4B. Concerning the church

View	OT	NT	Millennium
amillennialism	Israel = Church	Israel = Church	Present / spiritual: Israel = Church
covenant premillennialism	Israel ≠ Church	Israel = Church	Literal: Israel ≠ Church
dispensational premillennialism	Israel ≠ Church	Israel ≠ Church	Literal: Israel ≠ Church

<sup>45</sup>Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 522.

## 4A. Hermeneutics of Premillennialism

## 1B. Dispensational Premillennialism

1C. Literal / grammatical-historical / normal / plain interpretation<sup>46</sup>

2C. Symbols, figures of speech, types

3C. The hermeneutical spiral

2B. Historic (Covenant) Premillennialism: *see next major section*

## 5A. Major issues related to the covenants

1B. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:2-6; 22:15-18)

1C. Israel's permanent existence as a nation

2C. Israel's permanent ownership of the land

3C. Conditional or unconditional?

2B. The Land Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10) (typically called the "Palestinian Covenant")

1C. Israel's failure and judgment (30:1-2)

2C. Israel's return from captivity (3:3)

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<sup>46</sup>Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, Logos 4 edition, p. 91.



## 5C. Fulfillment

## 1D. Israel

## 2D. The church

6A. Daniel's 70 weeks (based on Renald Shower's commentary on Daniel)<sup>47</sup>**Daniel 9:25-27**

<sup>25</sup> *"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.*

<sup>26</sup> *"And **after the sixty-two weeks** Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.*

<sup>27</sup> ***Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;** But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."*

## 1B. The starting point: The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem

*At first glance this statement poses a problem, for Medo Persian kings issued several different decrees permitting the rebuilding of various parts of Jerusalem. The first decree was issued by Cyrus in 538 or 537 BC; the second was by Darius in 519 BC; the third was by Artaxerxes in 458 BC; and the fourth was by Artaxerxes in 445 BC. The major issue, then, is this: to which of these decrees was Gabriel referring in Daniel 9:25?*

*The only decree that passes [the two] tests is the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in 445 bc. Therefore, the starting point of the 490 years of the prophecy in Daniel 9 was March, 445 bc (Neh. 2:1-8).*

2B. 69<sup>th</sup> week

*When during the lifetime of Jesus, the Messiah, did the 483 years end? When computing the data provided by Gabriel, one must keep in mind that in ancient times a year was reckoned to consist of 360 days.*

*Beginning with that date, the 173,880 days end on April 6, 32 ad. Thus, the 483 years ended on April 6, 32 ad.*

*Sir Robert Anderson concluded that April 6, 32 ad, was the day on which Jesus officially presented Himself as Messiah to Israel through His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey.*

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<sup>47</sup> Showers, *The Most High God*, Logos 4 edition, section 9.3: "God's Reaction to Daniel's Prayer."

## 3B. The interval

*the seventieth seven of years did not follow immediately after the first sixty nine sevens of years. There has been a gap of time between the end of the first 483 years (32 AD) and the beginning of the last seven years of the 490 prophesied years. Gabriel already referred to two significant events that took place during that gap of time the death of Messiah in 32 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD*

4B. 70<sup>th</sup> week

*he activities of the coming prince or Antichrist during the last seven (seventieth seven) of the 490 years (Dan. 9:27). Gabriel dealt with the first sixty nine sevens of years (483 years) through verse twenty six. But in verse twenty seven he dealt with significant events that would transpire during the seventieth seven of years (the last seven years prior to Christ's second coming—the seven years to which many theologians have assigned the designation The Tribulation Period).*

7A. Future events according to Dispensational Premillennialism<sup>48</sup>

## 1B. Rapture

2B. Tribulation Period - "Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week"

## 1C. "The covenant with many"

## 2C. The series of judgments

## 3C. "Abomination of Desolation"

## 4C. Armageddon

## 3B. Judgment Seat of Christ

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<sup>48</sup>Based on Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, Logos 4 edition, pp. 389-394

4B. Marriage of the Lamb

5B. Second Coming of Christ

6B. Binding of Satan

7B. Resurrections of the dead

8B. Millennium

9B. Release of Satan

10B. Final Judgment

11B. Eternal state

## HISTORIC (COVENANT) PREMILLENNIALISM

### 1A. "Historic Premillennialism"

*The view that Christ will return to the earth after a period of great tribulation and then establish a millennial kingdom. At this time believers who have died will be raised from the dead and believers who are alive will receive glorified resurrection bodies, and both will reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years.<sup>49</sup>*

### 2A. Note concerning the historic premillennial view of the Bible and hermeneutics: George Eldon Ladd

*Ryrie correctly identified myself as a nondispensationalist because I do not keep Israel and the church distinct throughout God's program; but I trust that my evangelical stance is not thereby suspect. In the study of the millennium I am prepared to accept whatever anyone can establish as biblical teaching; and if I do not accept dispensational distinctives, it is because I feel compelled by the inspired Word of God not to do so. Let this be clear: the Bible and the Bible alone is our one authority.<sup>50</sup>*

### 3A. Illustration of hermeneutical / exegetical differences between dispensational and historic premillennialism

#### 1B. Foundational philosophy of interpretation: The NT interprets the OT

*The fact is that the New Testament frequently interprets Old Testament prophecies in a way not suggested by the Old Testament context.<sup>51</sup>*

#### 2B. Matthew 2:15<sup>52</sup> (Emphasis mine)

*Let us take first a very simple illustration. Matthew 2:15 quotes from Hosea 11: 1 to prove from Scripture that Jesus must come from Egypt. This, however, is not what the prophecy means in the Old Testament. Hosea says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." In Hosea this is not a prophecy at all but a historical affirmation that God had called Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus. **However, Matthew recognizes Jesus to be God's greater son and deliberately turns a historical statement into a prophecy.** This is a principle which runs throughout biblical prophecy. The Old Testament is reinterpreted in light of the Christ event.*

<sup>49</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology, Logos 4 edition*, p. 1243.

<sup>50</sup> Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, Kindle edition, locations 113-27.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., locations 128-42.

3B. Isaiah 53<sup>53</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Let us look at a more significant illustration. The New Testament and the Christian church see a prophecy of the sufferings of the Messiah in Isaiah 53. **Matthew applies this prophecy to Jesus (Mt. 8:17) although he does not refer to the sufferings to be endured by the servant.** However, Philip interprets the sufferings of the servant to the Ethiopian eunuch as referring to Jesus (Acts 8:30-35).

How can anyone avoid recognizing that Isaiah 53 is a prophecy of the sufferings Jesus experienced?

*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Is. 53:5-6)*

**It is of course true that this is a prophecy of Jesus' sufferings but only as it is interpreted after the event.** Here is another illustration of the New Testament interpreting the Old Testament in light of the Christ event. The simple fact is, in its Old Testament setting, Isaiah 53 is not a prophecy of the Messiah. Messiah means "anointed" and designates the victorious, anointed Davidic king. This is seen clearly in Isaiah 11.

*He shall no judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. (Is. 11:3-4)*

Here is an utterly different picture. The Messiah is to rule; he is to crush evil; he is to slay the wicked. How can such a victorious ruler be at the same time the meek and lowly one who pours out his soul in death (Is. 53:12)? This is why, in spite of Isaiah 53, Jesus' disciples could not grasp the fact that he must suffer and die. Messiah is to conquer and rule, not be conquered and crushed. **The Old Testament does not make it clear that before Messiah is to come as conqueror and ruler, he must first appear as the humble suffering servant.**

A second fact is of equal importance. The suffering one is never called Messiah or son of David. He is an unnamed individual. Furthermore, in its context, the suffering one is the servant of the Lord who is sometimes identified with Israel. Isaiah 52:13-"Behold, my servant shall prosper"; Isaiah 50:10- "Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant?"; Isaiah 49:3-"You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified"; Isaiah 49:5-"And now the LORD says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him"; Isaiah 45:3-"It is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen."

**In these references the servant is both Israel and one who redeems Israel.** There is an interplay between these two concepts. But in neither case is the servant called the Messiah or the Davidic ruling king. Little wonder that it has been customary for Jewish exegetes to see in the servant not the conquering, delivering Messianic king, but the afflicted, suffering people of Israel. **Isaiah 53 is not, in its own historical setting, a prophecy of Messiah. It becomes such only when it is interpreted in light of the Christ event.**

**This clearly establishes the principle that the "literal hermeneutic" does not work. For literally, Isaiah 53 is not a prophecy of Messiah but of an unnamed servant of the Lord. Old Testament prophecies must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament to find their deeper meaning.**

This principle must be carried further. I do not see how it is possible to avoid the conclusion that **the New Testament applies Old Testament prophecies to the New Testament church and in so doing identifies the church as spiritual Israel.** I have come to this conclusion not because I read it in books or found it in some theological system, but from my own inductive study of the inspired Word of God.

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., locations 129-66.

4B. Romans 11<sup>54</sup> (emphasis mine)

*A most vivid illustration of this principle is found in Romans 9 where Paul is talking about "us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles" (Rom. 9:24). In other words Paul is talking about the church in Rome which included some Jews but which was largely Gentile. To prove that it was God's purpose to call such a people into being, Paul quotes two passages from Hosea:*

*As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'my beloved.'" "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'*

*They will be called 'sons of the living God.'" (Rom. 9:25-26) **In Hosea both of the passages refer to literal, national Israel. Because of her rebelliousness, Israel is no longer the people of God.** "And the LORD said, 'Call his name Not my people, for you are not my people and I am not your God'" (Hos. 1:9). Israel has been rejected by the Lord for her unbelief. Yet Hosea sees a day of future repentance when a disobedient people will become obedient. He sees a large remnant, like the sand of the sea. "And in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it shall be said to them, 'Sons of the living God'" (Hos. 1:10). **This refers to a future conversion of the Jews.** The same is true of the second prophecy: "And I will have pity on Not pitied, and I will say to Not my people, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'Thou art my God'" (Hos. 2:23). **This again sees a future salvation of literal Israel when the people, whom God has rejected, will once again become the people of God.***

**Paul deliberately takes these two prophecies about the future salvation of Israel and applies them to the church. The church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, has become the people of God. The prophecies of Hosea are fulfilled in the Christian church. If this is a "spiritualizing hermeneutic," so be it. But let no one say that it is liberalism. It is clearly what the New Testament does to the Old Testament prophecies.**

*This is what leads Paul to say, "For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal" (Rom. 2:28-29). **Now it is possible that in this verse Paul is speaking only of Jews,** saying that a true Jew is not one who is only circumcised outwardly but who is also circumcised in the heart. He may not in these verses have Gentiles in view. **But he clearly refers to the largely gentile church when he says to the Philippians,** "For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:3).*

**Paul avoids calling the church Israel, unless it be in Galatians 6:16, but this is a much disputed verse. It is true, however, that he applies prophecies to the church which in their Old Testament setting belong to literal Israel; he calls the church the sons, the seeds of Abraham. He calls believers the true circumcision. It is difficult therefore to avoid the conclusion that Paul sees the church as spiritual Israel.**

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., locations 151-84.

5B. Jeremiah 31<sup>55</sup> (emphasis mine)

**Another very important passage applies a prophecy given to Israel to the Christian church. In Jeremiah 31 the prophet foresees a day when God will make a new covenant with rebellious Israel.** *This new covenant will be characterized by a new work of God in the hearts of his people. "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.... For they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:33-34).*

**The book of Hebrews applies this to the new covenant made in the blood of Christ.** *Hebrews 8 contrasts the new order introduced by Christ with the passing order of the Old Testament. Christ serves in the "true tent," not in the old, for the old is but "a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary" (Heb. 8:5). Therefore Christ is the mediator of a new and better covenant, which rests on better promises (Heb. 8:6). "For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second" (Heb. 8:7). These words make it clear that Hebrews is contrasting the old covenant which was defective with a second which has been established by Jesus. "For he finds fault with them . . ." (Heb. 8:8), that is, God finds fault with Israel under the old order because they constantly broke the terms of the covenant. Therefore, a new covenant is necessary; and in describing this new covenant made by Christ, Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34. **It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that this quotation refers to the new covenant with the people of God-the Christian church-the new covenant which has been made possible because of the sacrifice of Christ.***

*Then, referring to the Old Testament cult, Hebrews concludes, "In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). It is impossible to tell whether the temple in Jerusalem was still standing (it was destroyed in the Jewish War, A.D. 66-70), for the exact date of Hebrews is in doubt. **But one thing is clear: Hebrews announces that the old order of the temple with its sacrifices is passe.***

*One of the central tenets of dispensational millennialism, based on its literal hermeneutic of the Old Testament prophecies, is that in the millennium, the Jewish temple will be rebuilt and the entire sacrificial system reinstated, according to the prophecies of Ezekiel 40-48. However, there will be a difference between the millennial sacrifices and the Old Testament sacrifices. The millennial sacrifices will be a memorial to the sacrificial death of Jesus. "Those who consider the millennial sacrifices as a ritual which will be literally observed in the millennium invest the sacrifices with the central meaning of a memorial looking back to the one offering of Christ." **Any idea of a restoration of the Old Testament sacrificial systems, whether memorial or otherwise, stands in direct opposition to Hebrews 8:13, which unambiguously affirms that the Old Testament cult is both obsolete and about to pass away.***

----- personal parenthetical note -----

But note what Hebrews 8:13-14 actually says:

*In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

*Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.*

----- personal parenthetical note -----

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., locations 174-206.

*Therefore Hebrews 8:8-13 refutes dispensational theology at two points: It applies a prophecy to the Christian church which in its Old Testament setting referred to Israel, and it affirms that the new covenant in Christ has displaced the Old Testament cult which is therefore doomed to pass away.*

*The main point in the preceding section is that many Old Testament passages which applied in their historical setting to literal Israel have in the New Testament been applied to the church. What does all this have to do with the question of the millennium? Just this: The Old Testament did not clearly foresee how its own prophecies were to be fulfilled. They were fulfilled in ways quite unforeseen by the Old Testament itself and unexpected by the Jews. With regard to the first coming of Christ, the Old Testament is interpreted by the New Testament.*

*Here is the basic watershed between a dispensational and a nondispensational theology. Dispensationalism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then fits the New Testament into it. A nondispensational eschatology forms its theology from the explicit teaching of the New Testament. It confesses that it cannot be sure how the Old Testament prophecies of the end are to be fulfilled, for (a) the first coming of Christ was accomplished in terms not foreseen by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, and (b) there are unavoidable indications that the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Christian church.*

***The alert reader will say, "This sounds like amillennialism." And so it does.** I suspect that the amillennial writer will heartily agree with all that has been said thus far. However, there are two passages in the New Testament which cannot be avoided. One is Romans 11:26: "And so all Israel will be saved." It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this means literal Israel.*

#### 4A. Future events according to Historic Premillennialism<sup>56</sup>

1B. Tribulation period

2B. Second Coming of Christ

3B. Millennium

4B. Final judgment

5B. Eternal state

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<sup>56</sup>Based on Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, Logos 4 edition, pp. 386-88.

## PRETERISM

### 1A. “Preterism”

*Preterism is the view that descriptions in Revelation pertain not to yet-future times but to events that have occurred in the past. Recently R. C. Sproul has adopted a kind of preterism—one that Greg Bahnsen held before his death, namely, that most of Jesus’ predictions about His future coming referred to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the events leading up to it. The position interprets the occurrence of “soon” in Revelation 1:1 in light of Matthew 24:34, where Jesus promised, “This generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” It accepts Jesus’ teaching of an imminent return, but also stipulates a time limit within which the predicted events must occur, a limit reached about forty years after Jesus spoke those words.<sup>57</sup>*

### 2A. “Præter” = Latin for “past” or “beyond” (i.e., *beyond* the end times)

### 3A. Full / vs. Partial / Moderate

*Moderate preterism, though it sees the coming of Christ predicted in the Olivet Discourse as having been already fulfilled, still believes in a future consummation of Christ and his kingdom, based on other New Testament texts (which we will explore later). Radical preterism, on the other hand, sees virtually the entire New Testament eschatology as having been realized already.<sup>58</sup>*

### 4A. Full preterism (radical / hyper-preterism): All prophecies already fulfilled<sup>59</sup>

***If we believe Jesus and Paul, we must believe that the first-century Christians experienced everything they were promised. Some preterists maintain there was no literal rapture; all this is simply “cloud imagery” commonly associated with visitations from God in the Old Testament. They claim that the living Christians simply lived out their normal life spans, and then, entered heaven. This scenario implies the failure of every promise listed above:***

- 1. The living Christians did not actually see Christ;*
- 2. Their bodies were not transformed;*
- 3. They were absent for their own wedding, i.e., the bridegroom returned, but failed to pick up his bride.*

*At Christ’s ascension, he rose into a literal cloud and disappeared into the spirit realm. He was predicted to return “in just the same way” (Acts 1:11). This requires literally seeing Jesus in literal clouds.*

<sup>57</sup> Thomas, *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 157, Logos 4 edition, p. 454.

<sup>58</sup> Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, Kindle edition, locations 980-82.

<sup>59</sup> Fenimore, “Was there a first century rapture,” revised: 2009 June 29, accessed 8/29/2010 at <http://www.preterism.info/rapture.htm>

*Futurist author, Charles E. Hill, calls the first-century-rapture belief “bizarre” (Charles E. Hill, “Eschatology in the Wake of Jerusalem’s Fall” in When Shall These Things Be? [Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004], 92). Of course, it is bizarre; the Bible is filled with bizarre events; like the creation of Adam from dirt, the parting of the Red Sea, Elisha’s floating axe head, and Christ’s resurrection, just to name a few. How is the rapture any different? People of faith believe these things, bizarre or not.*

**Some have protested, “But there’s no proof a rapture took place.” That depends on what one considers proof.** For some, the fact Jesus, the apostles, and scripture predicted events to take place in the first century is proof enough they occurred. There are certainly valid and somewhat puzzling questions regarding the circumstances surrounding the rapture; however, they should not affect our acceptance of its occurrence.

**Conclusion** (teacher’s note: The following is what full preterists claim happened in A.D. 70)

**Christ returned out of literal clouds, and the living Christians with glorified bodies rose into the air to meet him and the previously resurrected saints. Then, they all proceeded to heaven for the wedding feast.**

**Objection:** Why is there nothing in the historical record regarding people disappearing? Surely, someone would have written about this.

**Answer:** There are at least three reasons why there is no record of Christians disappearing:

(note: only one is quoted here)

1. Although the church had spread across the Roman Empire, chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation indicate Jesus was not pleased with a significant number of his people. To the church at Sardis he said, “Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you” (Rev. 3:3). **The warnings contained in these chapters indicate the number of people raptured may have been smaller than we might have thought. Many who assumed they were good Christians on solid ground were likely unaware they had totally missed the event.** In the second century, we find Christians still predicting a return of Christ even though the deadline for the event had long passed. We find no evidence any Christian writers considered the second coming to have already taken place. This is a major problem for preterists who suggest the truly converted Christians lived beyond a.d. 70. **The complete absence of early commentary on fulfilled eschatological events is explained only by the literal-rapture view.**

## 5A. Partial (moderate) preterism

*We may distinguish between two distinct forms of preterism, which I call radical preterism and moderate preterism. Radical preterism sees all future prophecies of the New Testament as having already taken place, while moderate preterism still looks to the future for crucial events to occur. The purpose of this book is to evaluate moderate preterism and its view of eschatology.<sup>60</sup>*

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<sup>60</sup>Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, Kindle edition, locations 323-331.

## 6A. Partial preterism support: Time-frame references (James Stewart Russell, R.C. Sproul)

## 1B. The “plain grammatical meaning” (Sproul, quoting Russell)

*The plain grammatical meaning of these statements has been fully discussed in these pages. No violence can extort from them any other sense than the obvious and unambiguous one, viz. that our Lord’s second coming would take place within the limits of the existing generation.<sup>61</sup>*

## 2B. Matthew 10:23 (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> *When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

## 3B. Matthew 16:28 (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup> *Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”*

## 4B. Matthew 24:34 (NKJV)

<sup>34</sup> *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*

## 1C. Significance for preterist position:

1D. Key passage (for all positions) - Olivet Discourse: Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21

2D. Key verse: Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32

3D. Context: The disciples’ question (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:4;

<sup>3</sup> *Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”*

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<sup>61</sup>Russell, *The Parousia, A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord’s Second Coming*, pp. 539-40, qtd by Sproul in *The Last Days According to Jesus*, Kindle edition, locations 332-41.

## 2C. “All these things”<sup>62</sup>

*If it is agreed that “all these things” described in the discourse took place in the first century, then some crucial questions remain: (1) How can it be said that they in fact did take place? And (2) if they did take place, what about the Christian’s hope for a future return of Jesus?*

*To take every text “literally” in this sense is not to interpret it according to the genre in which it is written, but to interpret it in a plain indicative sense. When the Olivet Discourse is subjected to such a wooden literalism, the crisis of parousia-delay is created. **The cataclysmic events surrounding the parousia as predicted in the Olivet Discourse obviously did not occur “literally” in A.D. 70. Some elements of the discourse did take place “literally,” but others obviously did not.***

*This problem of literal fulfillment leaves us with three basic solutions to interpreting the Olivet Discourse:*

- 1. We can interpret the entire discourse literally. In this case we must conclude that some elements of Jesus’ prophecy failed to come to pass, as advocates of “consistent eschatology” maintain.*
- 2. We can interpret the events surrounding the predicted parousia literally and interpret the time-frame references figuratively. This method is employed chiefly by those who do not restrict the phrase “this generation will not pass away ...” to the life span of Jesus’ contemporaries.*
- 3. We can interpret the time-frame references literally and the events surrounding the parousia figuratively. In this view, all of Jesus’ prophecies in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during the period between the discourse itself and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.*

*The third option is followed by preterists. **The strength of the preterist position is found precisely in this hermeneutical method.** When faced with the option of interpreting the time-frame references literally or interpreting the description of the parousia literally, the preterist chooses the former. **The preterist’s choice is governed by a larger hermeneutical principle, namely the principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture (analogia fide).** As Russell has shown, there is much biblical precedent for interpreting figuratively references to astronomical upheavals in biblical prophecies of catastrophic events. On the other hand, the time-frame references are not clothed in such imagery, but are expressed in straightforward, ordinary language.*

## 3C. Meaning of “this generation”

### 1D. Gary Demar

*... the use of “this generation” throughout the Gospels makes it clear that it means the generation to whom Jesus was speaking. It never means “race,” as some claim, or some future generation. The adjective this points to the contemporary nature of the generation. If some future generation had been in view, Jesus could have chosen the adjective that: “That [future] generation which begins with the budding of the fig tree [Israel regathered to the land of her fathers] will not pass away until all these things take place.”<sup>63</sup>*

<sup>62</sup> Sproul, *Last Days According to Jesus, The*, Kindle edition, locations 925-60.

<sup>63</sup> Demar, *Last Days Madness*, pp. 33-34, qtd by Sproul in *The Last Days According to Jesus*, Kindle edition, locations 800-14.

## 2D. A.J. Mattill, Jr.

... *“Of the thirty-eight appearances of genea apart from Luke 21:32/ Matthew 24:34/Mark 13:30 all have the temporal meaning, primarily that of ‘contemporaries.’”*<sup>64</sup> ...

## 7A. Response

## 1B. “All these things” (Matthre 24:6-29)

## 1C. The first series of sign events

- 1D. Wars and rumors of wars (24:6)
- 2D. Nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom (24:7)
- 3D. Famines, pestilences, earthquakes (24:7)
- 4D. Worldwide hatred and persecution of believers (24:9)
- 5D. Worldwide personal strife and hatred (24:10)
- 6D. Deception by false prophets (with words and deeds?) (24:11)
- 7D. Widespread lawlessness will destroy love (24:12)
- 8D. The gospel of the kingdom preached in all the world (24:14)

## 2C. The “abomination of desolation” (24:15) (The turning point from bad to worse)

## 3C. The second series of sign events

- 1D. Intense persecution of Jews; Jews’ flight to the mountains (24:16-20)
- 2D. Great tribulation as has never been seen (24:21)
- 3D. Deception by false christs and prophets through great signs and wonders (24:23-24)
- 4D. Widespread death (24:28)
- 5D. Cataclysmic events in the heavens and on the earth (24:29)

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<sup>64</sup>Mattill, *Luke and the Last Things: A Perspective for Understanding Lukan Thought*, p. 100, qtd by Sproul in *The Last Days According to Jesus*, Kindle edition, locations 800-14.

## 4C. The Parousia

- 1D. "The sign of the Son of Man" (24:30)
- 2D. "All the tribes of the earth shall mourn" (24:30)
- 3D. "The Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:30)
- 4D. All will see coming of the Son of Man (24:30)
- 5D. "He will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet" (24:31)
- 6D. The angels will "gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (24:31)

## 2B. Meaning of "this generation"

- 1C. "Sign of the times": The parable of the fig tree (24:32-33)

## 2C. Matthew 24:34–35

<sup>34</sup> *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*

***What then may "this generation" mean?***<sup>65</sup> (Larry DeBruyn)

*Though reputable scholars take "this generation" to refer to "people alive at the same time," neither the lexical meaning for "generation" or the phrase "this generation" demand it. The various meanings of "generation" may in fact interface to provide a dynamic rather than static meaning. When pressed, only the second lexical meaning (i.e., that generation exclusively means people alive at the same time) denies an imminent and future fulfillment for the whole of Jesus' prophetic sermon. I believe the fault of preterists and some futurists lies in choosing a strict and static chronological meaning for "this generation."*

*In contrast, it may be better to understand "this generation" as a pejorative designation employed by Jesus to indicate the Jewish resistance against him as God's Messiah and Prophet. This resistance by the majority of Jews will continue until the Parousia-End arrives. For the duration of the inter-advent age, Israel shall persist in being "a disobedient and obstinate people" (Rom. 10:21). Jews shall continue to be rebellious to and unresponsive toward God's prophet "until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:25). Taken as such, "this generation" has reference to a persistent type of rebellious people, not to a particular time that a people lived. This agrees with the context in which Jesus employs the term.*

## 3B. Joel 2:28-31 and Acts 2:17-21; Revelation 4-19

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<sup>65</sup> DeBruyn, "'This Generation' and the Parousia-End," unpublished paper, p. 11.

## PRE-TRIB RAPTURE VIEW

### 1A. Pre-tribulation Rapture view

*Pretribulationism teaches that the Rapture of the church (both dead and living saints) will occur before the seven-year Tribulation period, that is, before the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24–27. It is necessary to say “before the seven-year Tribulation period” because some who hold to midtribulation Rapture state that the Rapture is pretribulation, because they understand the Tribulation to refer only to the last three and one-half years of the seven-year period.<sup>66</sup>*

### 2A. The Rapture of the Church: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

<sup>13</sup> *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.<sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

<sup>15</sup> *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 by no means precede those who are asleep.<sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.<sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.<sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

### 3A. Sequence of Events

1B. **Rapture** = imminent 1<sup>st</sup> phase of 2<sup>nd</sup> coming = “Our Blessed Hope” (in the clouds)

2B. Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week = Tribulation = “wrath of God” = Day of the Lord judgments

3B. Tribulation / Great Tribulation / Judgments: Different views by dispensationalists

1C. Relationship of the judgments

1D. Sequential: 7 Trumpets subsumed under the 7<sup>th</sup> seal and the 7 Bowls subsumed under the 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet

2D. Parallel (Recapitulation view)

2C. Tribulation / Great Tribulation

1D. Walvoord<sup>67</sup>

1E. Revelation only discusses second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week

2E. All judgments = “Great Tribulation”

<sup>66</sup>Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 562.

<sup>67</sup>Walvoord, “Revelation,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Logos 4 edition p. 947.

## 2D. LaHaye

1E. Tribulation = First 3 ½ years of 70<sup>th</sup> week2E. “Great Tribulation” = Second half of 70<sup>th</sup> week, begins with Vial Judgments<sup>68</sup>

## 3D. Others

1E. Tribulation = First 3 ½ years of 70<sup>th</sup> week2E. “Great Tribulation” = Second 3 ½ years, begins with 6<sup>th</sup> seal

1F. “Wrath of the Lamb” (Revelation 6:16-17)

2F. “Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:14)

4B. Midpoint of Daniel’s 70th week: “Abomination of Desolation”

5B. “Glorious Appearing” = 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of 2<sup>nd</sup> coming (to the Mt. of Olives)

6B. Millennium = Literal 1000 year reign of Christ = Day of the Lord blessings

## 4A. Support for this view

1B. Preservation from the wrath of the Day of the Lord judgments

**Revelation 3:10**

<sup>10</sup> *Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

ὅτι ἐπήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου, καὶ γὰρ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ τῆς μελλούσης ἔρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης πειράσαι τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

**Louw-Nida: 13.32** τηρέω

*to cause a state to continue— ‘to cause to continue, to retain, to keep.’*

καὶ τοῦτο κέκρικεν ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ καρδίᾳ, τηρεῖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον ‘and has already decided in his mind to keep his girl unmarried’ 1 Cor 7:37. In 1 Cor 7:37 the reference to ‘girl’ may be either a man’s daughter or a man’s fiancée. Because of the ambiguity of this statement in 1 Cor 7:37 and in view of the cultural complications involved, especially because of differences of customs in different parts of the world, it is important that translators add a note at this point explaining the difference of interpretation and some of the cultural implications.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> LaHaye, *The Rapture*, p. 64.

<sup>69</sup> Louw-Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*. electronic ed. of the 2nd edition, Logos 4 edition, 13.32.

**Louw-Nida: 89.121** ἐκ ἐκτός

markers of dissociation in the sense of being ‘independent from’ someone or something—‘from, free from, apart from, independent of.’

ἐκ· ἵνα τηρήσης αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ‘in order that you may keep them separate from the evil one’ Jn 17:15; ἐλεύθερος γὰρ ὢν ἐκ πάντων ‘for I am free from all’ 1 Cor 9:19. In 1 Cor 9:19 it may be valuable to relate the first part of the verse to what immediately follows, for example, ‘for I am not a slave of anyone, but I make myself a slave to everyone’ or ‘though I am not anyone’s slave, I serve everyone.’

ἐκτός· πᾶν ἀμάρτημα ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτός τοῦ σώματος ἐστὶν ‘every sin which a person does is independent of the body’ 1 Cor 6:18.<sup>70</sup>

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### 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

<sup>1</sup> But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. <sup>2</sup>For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord** so comes as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

**Περὶ δὲ τῆν χρόνων καὶ τῆν καιρῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρειάν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι, 2 αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται.**

<sup>9</sup> **For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

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### 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

<sup>9</sup> For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and **to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.**

### Romans 5:9-10

<sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from wrath** through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

### Ephesians 5:5-7

<sup>5</sup> For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for **because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.** <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them.

### Revelation 6:15-17

<sup>15</sup> And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,<sup>16</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and **hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!** <sup>17</sup> For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

**Revelation 11:18; 14:9; 15:1; 15:7; 16:1; 16:19; 19:15**

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 89.121.

## 2B. The interval in Daniel's 70 weeks

**Daniel 9:25-27**

<sup>25</sup> "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

<sup>26</sup> "And **after the sixty-two weeks** Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

<sup>27</sup> **Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;** But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."

## 3B. Absence of the church in Revelation 4-18

## 5A. Debated / Frequently misunderstood passages

## 1B. Olivet Discourse - "one will be taken, the other left" (Matthew 24-25)

**Matthew 24:40-43**

<sup>40</sup> Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup> Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

## 2B. "That day will not come" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-11)

**2 Thessalonians 2:6-9**

<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; **for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**

<sup>5</sup> Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? <sup>6</sup> And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. <sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **He who now restrains** will do so until He is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup> And then **the lawless one** will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. <sup>9</sup> The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

(commentary by Robert Thomas)<sup>71</sup>

*Second, a feature in verse 3 to be noted is the suppressed apodosis that must be supplied with the conditional clause begun by ἔάν. Clearly the apodosis to be supplied comes from the end of verse 2. Translations that have missed the sense of the end of verse 2 supply the wrong apodosis: “that day shall not come” (KJV), “it will not be” (ASV), “it will not come” (NASB), “that day will not come” (NIV, RSV), “that Day will not come” (NKJV). But even the three versions that render verse 2 correctly supply the wrong apodosis: “that day cannot come” (Weymouth), “that day will not come” (NRSV), “it will not be” (Darby). Some versions indicate the absence of an explicit apodosis, but others do not.*

*To be faithful to the context, the understood apodosis should be “the Day of the Lord is not present.” Complying with the context in this manner yields grammatical criteria for labeling the last half of verse 3 as a present general condition. Most clauses with ἔάν and the subjunctive in the New Testament are more probable future conditions, but when the verb of the apodosis has the force of a present indicative, that makes it a present general condition. Such a construction often expresses a maxim, a generic condition in the present time. It expresses a principle or a proverb. In such cases the protasis makes an assumption in the present time, and the apodosis gives a conclusion in the form of a general rule. **Therefore the sense of Paul’s statement in verse 3 is as follows: “If the apostasy does not come first and the man of lawlessness is not revealed, the Day of the Lord is not present. That is a principle you can count on.”***

### 3B. The “last trump” issue (1 Corinthians 15:52 & 1 Thessalonians 4:16 ; Revelation 11:15)

#### 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

<sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

<sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

#### Revelation 11:15

<sup>15</sup> **Then the seventh angel sounded:** And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”

### “Trumpet” and the Day of the Lord:

#### Isaiah 27:13

**13 So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown;** They will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, And they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, And shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

#### Joel 2:1

**Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the Lord is coming, For it is at hand:**

#### Zechariah 1:14

**The great day of the Lord is near;** It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. **15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.**

<sup>71</sup>Thomas, *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 157, Logos 4 edition, p. 465.

## MID-TRIB, PRE-WRATH, POST-TRIB RAPTURE VIEWS

### 1A. Mid-Trib Rapture view

*The midtribulation Rapture view holds that the Rapture of the church will occur at the midpoint of the seven years of Tribulation; that is, after three and one half years have elapsed. In this view, only the last half of Daniel's seventieth week is Tribulation. That is why midtribulationism is sometimes described as a form of pretribulationism, since it teaches that the Rapture occurs before the tribulations of the last half of the seven years.<sup>72</sup>*

### 2A. Pre-Wrath Rapture view

*The Pre-Wrath Rapture view holds that the Rapture of the church will occur sometime after the midpoint of the seven years of tribulation, after the time of Great Tribulation and on the day of the beginning of the Day of the Lord, which is said to begin with the opening of the seventh seal in Revelation 8:1.*

### 3A. Post-Trib Rapture view

*Posttribulationism teaches that the Rapture and the Second Coming are facets of a single event that will occur at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns. The church will be on earth during the Tribulation to experience the events of that period.<sup>73</sup>*

### 4A. Agreement between all four views (Pre-, Mid, Pre-wrath, Post-)

1B. Church will be preserved from God's wrath

2B. Rapture will occur prior to the Day of the Lord

3B. Second Coming of Christ

1C. At the end of the Tribulation

2C. Prior to the literal 1000-year reign of Christ

### 5A. Differences between the three views: Main issue = Timing of the Day of the Lord

1B. Mid-Trib Rapture view

1C. First 3 ½ years of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week = "wrath of Satan / wrath of man"

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<sup>72</sup>Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Logos 4 edition, p. 579.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 582.

- 2C. **Rapture** = 1<sup>st</sup> phase of 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming @ Mid-point of the 70<sup>th</sup> week @ the 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet (last trumpet of 1 Cor. 15)
- 1D. Buswell: *Connected with the ascension of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:11-15)*<sup>74</sup>
- 2D. Archer: *Connected with the Son of Man reaping the harvest (Revelation 14:14)*<sup>75</sup>
- 3C. Second 3 ½ years of 70<sup>th</sup> week = Tribulation = “Great Tribulation” = “wrath of God”
- 4C. “Glorious Appearing” = 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming
- 5C. Millennium ≠ Day of the Lord
- 2B. Pre-Wrath Rapture view<sup>76</sup>
- 1C. First 3 ½ years of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week = Tribulation = “Beginning of sorrows” (through 4<sup>th</sup> Seal)
- 2C. Midpoint of the 70<sup>th</sup> week = “Abomination of Desolation”
- 3C. Second 3 ½ years of 70<sup>th</sup> week = “Great Tribulation” beginning with 5<sup>th</sup> Seal
- 4C. Church endures everything except the Day of the Lord
- 5C. **“Pre-wrath” Rapture** = 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming
- 6C. 7<sup>th</sup> Seal = Day of the Lord = “Wrath of God” (about mid-point of last 3 ½ years)
- 7C. “Glorious Appearing” = 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming = Terminal point of the Day of the Lord

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<sup>74</sup>Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2:397, qtd by Archer in *The Rapture*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>75</sup>Archer, “Mid-Seventieth Week Rapture” in *The Rapture: Pre,- Mid,- or Post-Tribulation*, pp. 142-144.

<sup>76</sup>Based on Rosenthal, *Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*.

- 8C. Millennium  $\neq$  Day of the Lord
  
- 3B. Post-Trib Rapture view
  - 1C. Tribulation = entire 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel
  
  - 2C. Church endures all judgments
  
  - 3C. **Rapture** = 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming = “Blessed Hope” & “Glorious Appearing” @ end of the Tribulation
  
  - 4C. Millennium

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