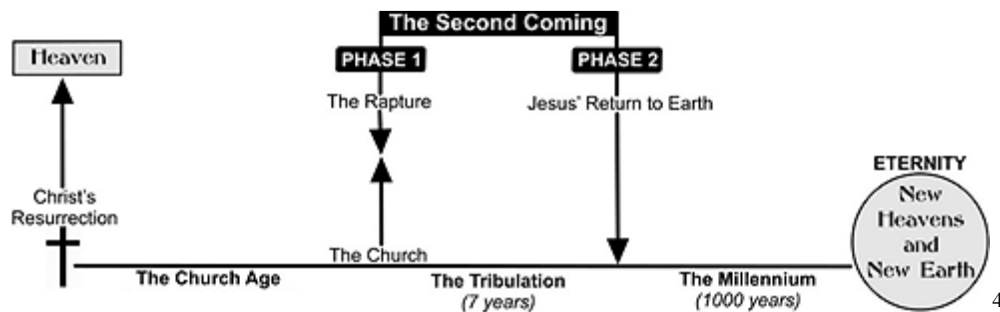


THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

Godly Bible teachers differ considerably in their views of future, last-day events as prophesied in Scripture. This is understandable. And discussion of such differences can be spiritually healthy for us, especially when such differences are discussed with more light than heat. What follows is a brief, very general explanation of various views of last-day events in the light of Scripture.¹

Scripture affirms: 1) the Pretribulation Rapture of the Church and 2) the Premillennial Glorious Appearing² of Christ to set up His 1000-year Kingdom reign on earth. The Rapture and Glorious Appearing are two distinct events separated by the seven-year tribulation³ period. These two events are often considered as two distinct phases of the Second Coming by those who teach the Premillennial Rapture of the Church.



PHASE 1: THE RAPTURE IN RELATION TO THE TRIBULATION

The Rapture will occur when Christ comes **for** His Bride, the Church. At this time, all members⁵ of the body of Christ, both living and resurrected dead, will “be caught up ... together to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Our mortal bodies “will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:51-53), and we will be taken to Heaven. This momentous event will take place **before** the seven-year tribulation period begins on earth.

A dispensational, literal interpretation of Scripture teaches a **PRETRIBULATION** view⁶ of the Rapture of the Church. During the Tribulation God will pour out His terrible wrath in judgment on the world of the ungodly⁷. This will be the “time of Jacob’s trouble” or the “the day of the Lord” when Israel will also suffer its greatest persecution. Believers today continue to suffer severe trials and persecution (Jn. 6:33; 2 Tim. 3:12), even to death. But the Church will not

¹ This paper is based on a dispensational, literal interpretation of Scripture that follows a futuristic rather than a preteristic, historical, or idealistic hermeneutic in understanding such passages.

² Many Bible teachers refer to Christ’s return to establish His Millennial Kingdom as the “Second Coming.” This paper refers to that event as the Glorious Appearing. This is a separate event from the Rapture of the Church which is also known as the Blessed Hope. See Titus 2:13.

³ Some refer to this 7-year period as the “Great” Tribulation. But, in light of Dan. 9:27 and Matt. 24:15-21, most of us would probably refer only to the last half as the “Great” Tribulation which begins with the “abomination of desolation.”

⁴ <http://www.fountainoflifetm.com>

⁵ A dispensational, literal interpretation of Scripture does not allow for the minority view of a “partial rapture” in which only “spiritual” believers are to be raptured.

⁶ For 50 different itemized arguments supporting this view see John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, (Findley, OH: Dunham Publishing Co., 1957), 191-99.

⁷ Rev. 6-18 (There is no mention here of the Church).

be here to suffer through the horrible events of the Tribulation because Jesus has already “delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10) by bearing God’s wrath upon Himself and for us. The Holy Spirit, or “Restrainer” (2 Thess. 2:6-7), will no longer be on earth restraining evil through His indwelling presence in each believer. However, He will, no doubt, be active in a ministry more like He had prior to Pentecost. Our Lord’s coming for the Church is imminent.

Most of those who accept a **POSTTRIBULATION** view⁸ do not believe in a rapture distinct from the Glorious Appearing to establish His Millennial Kingdom. They see the Rapture and Glorious Appearing as one event. The Church, the Jewish nation and the Gentiles will experience God’s wrath during the full seven-year tribulation period prior to the return of Christ to usher in the Kingdom age.

Others hold to a **MIDTRIBULATION** view believing the Rapture will take place in the middle of the Great Tribulation. One view is the Pre-Wrath Rapture⁹ which supposedly takes place sometime after the first half of the seven-year tribulation period.

PHASE 2: THE GLORIOUS APPEARING IN RELATION TO THE MILLENNIUM

After the seven-year tribulation period of judgment (Mt. 24:29-30), our Lord’s coming will be **with** His Bride to set up His Kingdom on the earth (Col. 3:4; Jude 14). In other words, His coming will be **premillennial**. This will be a “revelation” event when **all** eyes shall see Him (Rev. 1:7).

Scripture affirms the dispensational **PREMILLENNIAL**¹⁰ view of our Lord’s Glorious Appearing **before** His 1000-year or Millennial Kingdom is set up (Rev. 20:1-7). At this time Christ will come to punish His enemies and to establish and rule over His literal and glorious global Kingdom on earth with Jerusalem as His capital. Israel will come to the forefront as the chief nation, (the head and not the tail)¹¹, regathered in the land promised in the Abrahamic Covenant.¹² Satan will be bound until the end. Earthly conditions will be more like they were before Adam’s fall.¹³ This kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom.

Many Bible scholars embrace an **AMILLENNIAL**¹⁴ view that there will be no literal, millennial kingdom on earth. According to this view, Christ is now fulfilling His kingly office as He rules from Heaven in the hearts of believers on earth. Prophecies of Christ’s earthly kingdom are interpreted figuratively/spiritually, not literally. They are being realized by the Church. Satan is

⁸ At least four distinct post-trib views (classic, semi-classic, futuristic, and dispensational) have been identified. The latter, a minority view, accepts a Rapture distinct from the Glorious Appearing, but with no tribulation period between them. See John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation: A Biblical and Historical Study of Posttribulationism*, 1976, 21-69.

⁹ Marvin J. Rosenthal, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990.

¹⁰ Premillennialism was the view of the early Church. There are some differences between dispensational premillennialism and historic or covenant premillennialism which are not delineated in this paper. The former has been the position of J. N. Darby, C.I. Scofield, L. S. Chafer, J. Walvoord, H. Ironside, C. Ryrie, and others. The latter has been held by G. E. Ladd, J. B. Payne, A. Reese, and others.

¹¹ Deut. 28:13. Christ will also fulfill prophecies related to the Davidic Kingdom (2 Sam. 7:16; Is. 9:6,7; Lk. 1:32,33; Acts 2:30).

¹² Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18-21; 17:1-8,19; 1 Chr. 16:15-18; Ps. 105:8-11. This Covenant was unconditional and unilateral.

¹³ Isa. 11:6-9; 65:18-25; Eze. 34:25-29; Dan. 7:13-14; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:1-7.

¹⁴ This view was held by L. Berkhof, O. T. Allis, G. C. Berkhouwer, A. Kuyper, L. Morris, and W. Hendriksen. From the 5th to the 17th century amillennialism prevailed — largely through the influence of the allegorical hermeneutics of Origen and Augustine.

completely bound for those who have died, and potentially bound for Christians who are yet living on earth. When Christ returns, the climax of everything will take place, including a general resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous and the general judgment, followed by the eternal state. God has no distinct future program for Israel¹⁵ as well as for the Church.

A minority, but growing number, of conservative scholars accept a **POSTMILLENNIAL** view¹⁶ that Christ's return will be after the Millennium. They believe that the kingdom of God is now being extended and/or established in the world through the preaching of the Gospel by the Church. Christ's throne is now in Heaven where He is ruling in the hearts of believers. They have an "optimistic" view of the victorious Church in history.¹⁷ Through its positive influence, world conditions will continue to improve. The world will gradually be Christianized. Most people will follow Christ. Righteousness and morality will gain the upper hand. Peace among men will prevail. And after this long period of peace, not always thought to be a literal 1000 years, Christ will return. There is no distinction between the Rapture and His return, between the Church and Israel. The Church is thought to be "the new Israel" of the new covenant. Advocates of Dominion Theology¹⁸ have stimulated more recent interest in Postmillennialism.

In conclusion, a dispensational literal interpretation of Scripture teaches a Pretribulation Rapture of the Church as Christ comes for His saints in the air and a Premillennial Glorious Appearing as Christ comes with His saints to the earth. The doctrine of our "blessed hope" promotes holy living, evangelism, and world missions.¹⁹

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

BOOKS:

- Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries Press, 1983).
- Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism, Revised and Expanded*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995). This book is Ryrie's updated version of his *Dispensationalism Today*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965).
- Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953).
- Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About the Rapture*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981).

¹⁵ Rom. 9-11 has to do with Israel, not the Church. As a nation Israel remains in unbelief, having rejected their Messiah. However, when "the full number of the Gentiles has come in... all Israel will be saved" 11:25-27. That promise has not been fulfilled along with numerous other OT and NT prophecies concerning Israel's future. We take these prophecies literally.

¹⁶ This view developed in the 19th century and was held by C. Hodge, B. B. Warfield, G. T. Shedd, and A. H. Strong.

¹⁷ In this they differ from amillennialists who are "pessimistic" about the Church in history.

¹⁸ Also referred to as "Theonomy" or "Reconstructionism." See the paper on "The Christian Reconstruction Movement."

¹⁹ 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2,3; 2 Pet. 3:10-14; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Tim. 4:1-8; Tit. 2:10-14; 1 Thess. 2:19,20; 4:18; 5:1-11; Col. 3:1-5.

- Ed Hindson and Mark Hitchcock, *Can We Still Believe in the Rapture?*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2017)
- Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept From The Hour*, (Toronto: Evangelical Publishers, 1964).
- J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, (Grand Rapids: Michigan, Zondervan Publishing Co., 1958).
- J. F. Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1982).
- John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation: A Biblical and Historical Study of Posttribulationism*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing Co., 1977).
- John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom, A Basic Text in Premillennial Theology*, (Findley, OH: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959).
- John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing Co., 1957).
- Mal Couch, Gen. Ed., *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Pubs., 1996).
- Renald E. Showers, *Maranatha, Our Lord, Come! A Definitive Study of the Rapture of the Church*, (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1995).
- Renald E. Showers, *There Really is a Difference, A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology*, (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1990).
- Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy, *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy*, (Eugene OR: Harvest House Pubs., 1997).

ARTICLES:

- Don Stewart, [The Pre-Trib Rapture Defended -- God Has Not Appointed Us To Wrath](#)
- Don Stewart, [The Rapture -- An Introduction to the Blessed Hope of the Church](#)
- Dr. John Walvoord, [50 Reasons For a Pretribulation Rapture](#)
- Paul D. Feinberg, [Dispensationalism and the Rapture -- A Theological Analysis](#)
- Thomas Ice, [A Brief History of Early Premillennialism](#)
- Thomas Ice, [A Brief History of the Rapture](#)
- Thomas Ice, [Myths of the Origin of Pretribulationism Part I](#)
- Thomas Ice, [Myths of the Origin of Pretribulationism Part II](#)
- Thomas Ice, [The Rapture in Pseudo-Ephraem](#)
- Thomas Ice, [The Unscriptural Theologies of Amillennialism and Postmillennialism](#)
- Thomas Ice, [What Is Postmillennialism](#)
- Thomas Ice, [Why I Believe The Bible Teaches Rapture Before Tribulation](#)

OTHER:

- More good material can be found at the [Pre-Trib Research Center](#).
- A wealth of information on this subject is available in past issues of the Dallas Theological Seminary Quarterly Journal, *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Also available at [galaxie.com](#) for an annual subscription fee.