

1. Review: Resurrection And Glory

- We looked at prophecies concerning Jesus’ betrayal and crucifixion, mostly from Zechariah, who had much revelation about Messiah.
- Peter pointed to Jesus in his sermon in Acts chapter 2, on the Day of Pentecost, using Psalm 16.
- Psalm 110, the most frequently quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament, tells us how Jesus would be raised to the Father’s right hand.
- We talked about Jesus’ descent into Sheol and His present-day ministry.

2. Opening Thoughts & Vocabulary for the Second Coming

3 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?” 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. (Matt. 24:3-6)

The Second Coming of Christ is the great event that history is racing towards:

“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Rev. 11:15b)

Why is Jesus returning?

- To end injustice.
- To set up His own just kingdom: *“Thy Kingdom come; Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.”*
- That God’s Will might be perfectly carried out here.
- To end control of the world by Satan, and its government by Man.
- To fulfill all His promises to His people.

There is more Scripture about the Second Coming of Jesus than His first!

The study of biblical prophecy (*eschatology* – “last things”) has its own specialized vocabulary. Some knowledge of terms will be very helpful to your studies.

3. Viewpoints of Prophecy and Christ’s Return

Two ways of dealing with prophetic literature: **literal**, and **allegorical**, or symbolic.

- When we are reading Scripture, the safest course of action is to take the literal sense when the literal sense makes the most sense.
- Scripture helps us at times by telling us that something is a symbol.

How do we know that the return of Christ and other events prophesied in the Bible are literal?

1. Because so many prophecies of Christ's First Coming were literal, there’s no reason to suggest that the Second Coming prophecies will only be symbolic.
2. The Scriptures want us to recognize that the events surrounding Jesus’ return are **not** merely symbols.

... *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1:11)

Bible prophecy is more than just an allegory about the victory of God!

4. The elements of timing in prophetic Scripture

We can also analyze prophecy with reference to how and when it is to be fulfilled. Among those who take prophecy literally, there are three main viewpoints:

4A. Preterism

Preterism teaches that prophecy has been fulfilled or mostly fulfilled.

- It claims that prophecies of the Second Coming were fulfilled in 70 AD.
- Preterists believe that when Jesus spoke about his Second Coming, He was speaking only of spiritual events.
- They believe that we are now awaiting a general judgment.

4B. Historicism

Historicists believe that the Book of Revelation is an outline of history.

- They see in Revelation the growth of the Early Church, the rise of Islam, etc.
- The 1260 days of great tribulation they view as being 1260 years, and many arguments developed over when those years started.

4C. Futurism.

“Futurists” believe that most events in the Book of Revelation and other prophetic passages have yet to occur.

- Futurists would place most of Revelation and other end times prophecies inside a still-future 70th Week of Daniel, which is to last seven years.
- In sum: Preterism says it's over with; Historicism says it's in process; and in Futurism these things have yet to come to pass.

5. Views Concerning the Millennium

The “Millennium” is the 1,000-year reign of Christ at His Coming:

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4)

Different views of the Millennium include:

A. Amillennialism: the belief that there is no literal millennium.

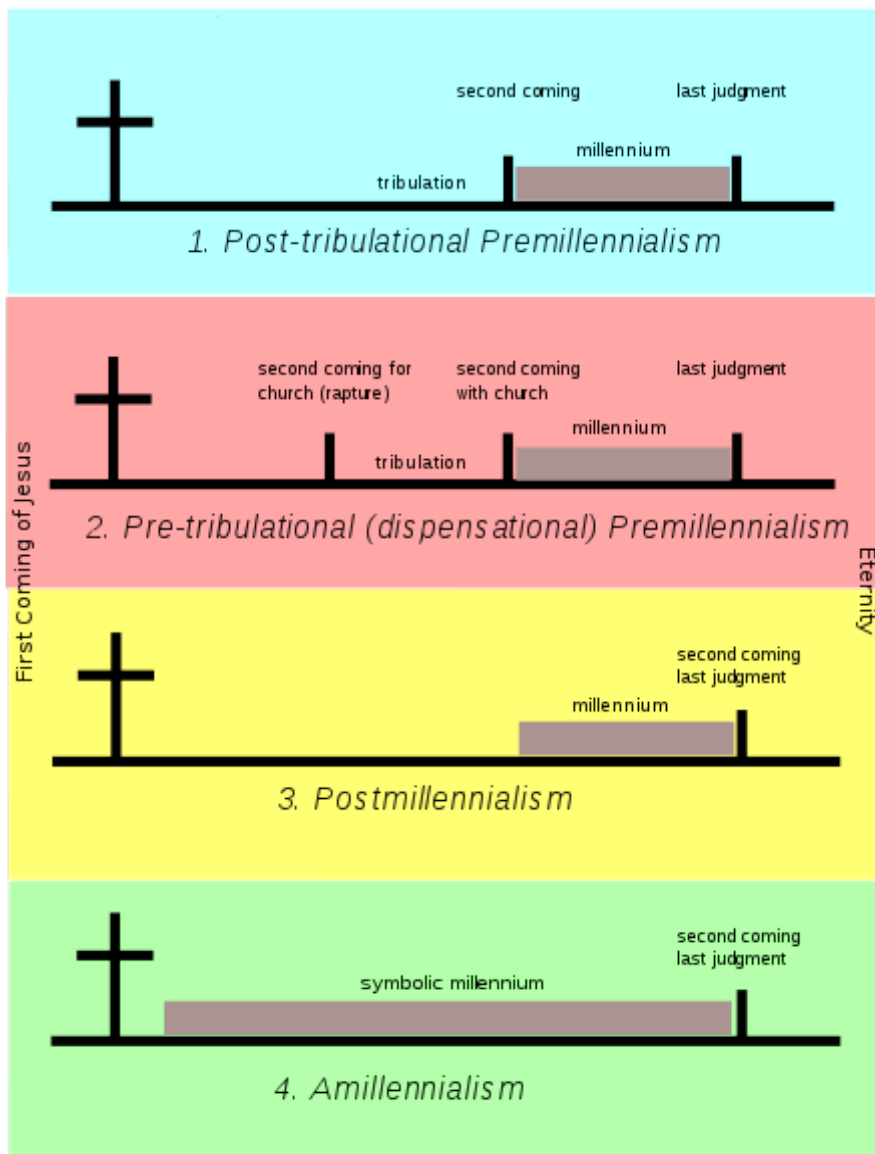
- This belief emphasizes that we are in the kingdom of God already.
- Satan is considered to be already bound in the abyss.
- This view tends to equate the church and the Kingdom of God very closely.
- Would likely not believe in a literal kingdom ruled from Jerusalem, etc.

B. Postmillennialism: holds that the Church will act as a healthy influence on the world, resulting in a millennial age, following which Christ will come.

C. Premillennialism: reads literally the promises of a future earthly reign of Christ in Jerusalem, and preeminence for national Israel.

- This system pictures Christ as returning physically at the end of the 70th Week of Daniel, delivering Israel from the Antichrist.

Comparison of Christian millennial teachings



6. Viewpoints on the Rapture

The Rapture is the doctrine that, at or before Christ's return, Christians then living will not experience death but will receive bodies of the resurrection, like Christ's.

13 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. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 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. 17 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. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Paul elaborates on this "mystery" in 1 Corinthians 15: *50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 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. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

- The different rapture viewpoints agree that God removes or at least preserves His people from His Divine wrath at the end of the age.
- Where people differ about the Rapture is about its timing with respect to 70th Week of Daniel.
- Will it happen at the **beginning** of the 70th Week, at its **conclusion**, or at some point **in between**?
- To seek to answer this question, people analyze God's dealings with Israel and debate which end-times events make up God's wrath.

A. Pretribulation Rapture Viewpoint

States that Christ will come for His Church at the **beginning** of the 70th Week, returning with the Church at its conclusion. This viewpoint sees the entire seven years of the 70th Week as being God's wrath.

B. Midtribulation Rapture Viewpoint

Says the Rapture will happen at the midpoint of the 70th Week, at the same time as the Abomination of Desolation, when Antichrist defiles the Temple.

C. Posttribulation Rapture Viewpoint

Asserts that Christ raptures the Church at the conclusion of the 70th Week of Daniel. In this scenario the Church suffers at the hands of Antichrist.

D. Prewrath Rapture Viewpoint

Prewrath says the Church does suffer at the hands of Antichrist but is raptured at some unknown time after the Great Tribulation begins (in other words, the Church is raptured at some point after the middle of the 70th Week).

More specifically, the prewrath view says the Rapture happens after the Sixth Seal of Revelation is opened.

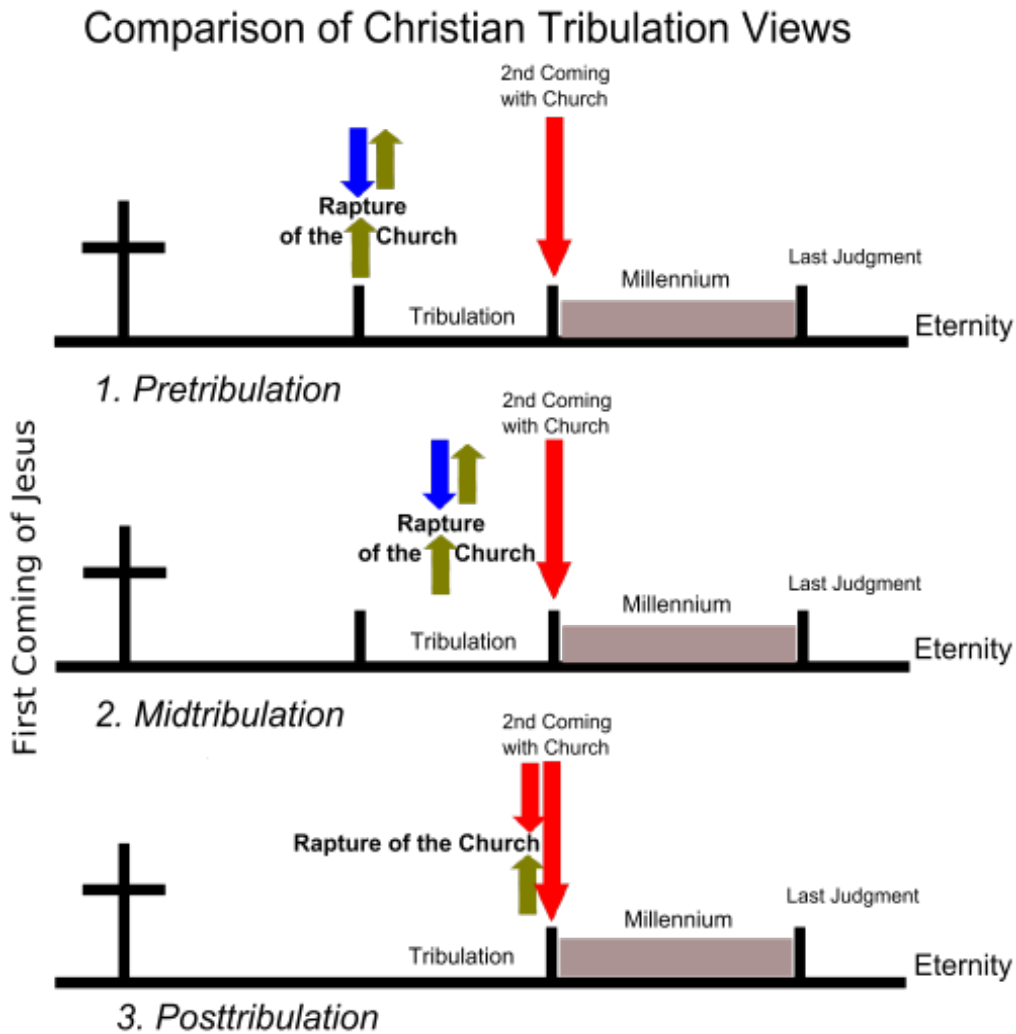


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Prewrath Rapture Position

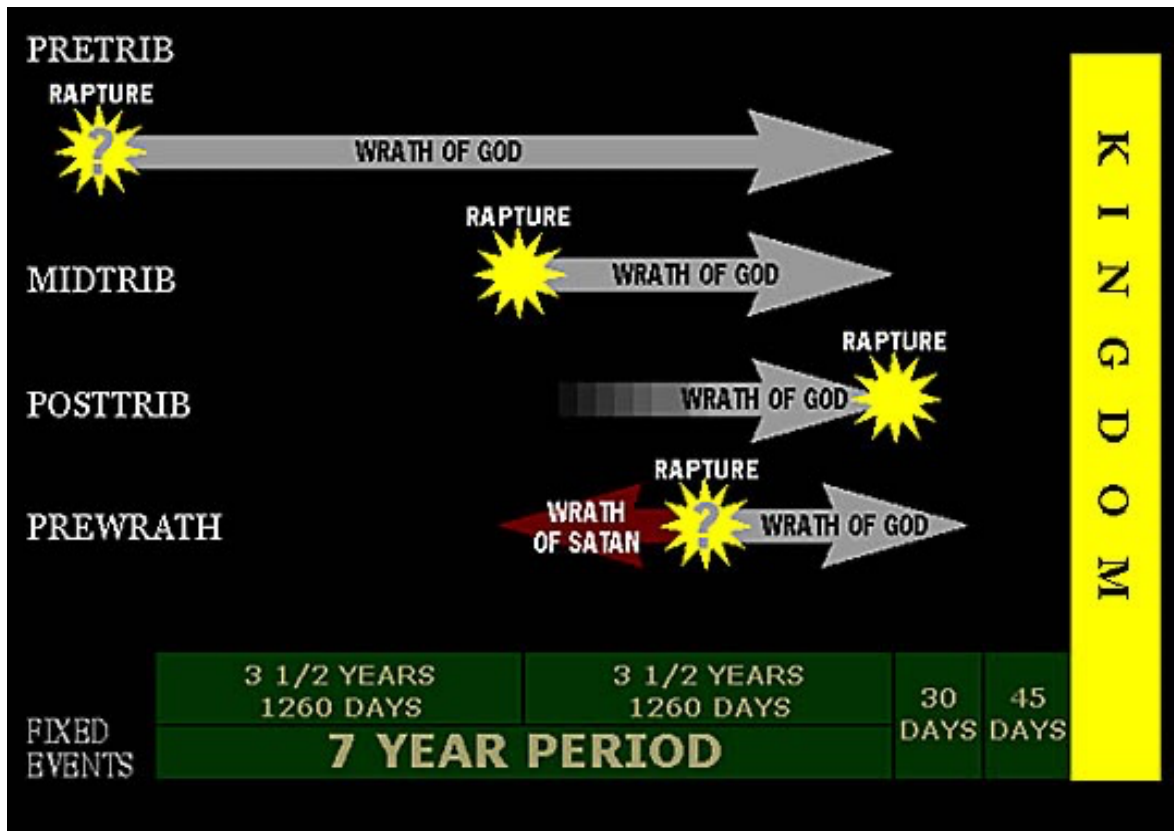


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7. The Day of the Lord

“The Day of the Lord” is an expression often used by the prophets to describe the time of God’s wrath. Many believe that the Rapture happens when the Day of the Lord begins; in other words, the Rapture “kicks off” the Day of the Lord.

- Pretribulationism sees the Day of the Lord as being the entire seven years of the 70th Week, whereas prewrath sees it as a brief time interval that begins some time after the Great Tribulation begins.
- In the prewrath system, the persecution of the Great Tribulation is cut short by the Rapture and the Day of the Lord judgments.

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 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. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. (1 Thess. 5:1-4)

8. Characters in the end time drama (premillennial viewpoint)

Antichrist: a literal figure, a dictator who is the main opponent of God's People during the 70th Week of Daniel. He persecutes the saints for 42 months and is destroyed by the personal appearing of Jesus Christ in glory.

False Prophet: seemingly more religious than political. He performs miraculous signs and induces people to follow the Antichrist and worship the Devil.

The Two Witnesses: two men who oppose the Antichrist and his system. They give testimony to the true God during the persecution.

The Restrainer: Paul identified in 2 Thessalonians 2 a person or entity which he does not specifically name, but who is somehow restraining or preventing the appearance and manifestation of the Antichrist in power.

Near the end of the age (most likely at or around the middle of the 70th Week), this person or entity will be removed, will do something, or will stop doing something which will allow or cause the Antichrist to be manifested in power.

6 And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. (2 Thess. 2:6-8, ESV)

People have made a variety of suggestions as to who the Restrainer might be, and this is one of the most difficult of all New Testament passages to interpret.

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