

Celestial Grace Temple

About Eschatology

Eschatology is a Christian term that means the study of the end of history from a religious perspective. Probably more obscure theological text has been written on this topic than on any other belief in Christendom.

The Bible contains many prophecies about the future. The Christian Scriptures (New Testament) in particular talks extensively about the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. This is usually called his "second coming," or "parousia."

The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 24, is devoted to this topic, as is much of the book of Revelation, and First Thessalonians 4:16-18. A *literal* interpretation of the Bible shows that four important events are predicted:

The **Millennium**: Revelation describes an important interval lasting for 1000 years when Christ rules. This is a golden era; a time of universal peace. The concept was first proposed by the ancient Persian religion of [Zoroastrianism](#).

The **Tribulation**: This is a 7 year interval when a world religious-political leader called the Antichrist takes power.

Armageddon is a terrible war provoked by the Antichrist. Most people on earth will die. God's anger, hatred, and wrath are poured out over mankind and the earth at this time. A series of violent events are predicted in Daniel 9, Matthew 24, and Revelation 4-19.

The **Rapture**: First Thessalonians 4:16-18 describes a [miraculous event](#) when Christ will descend from the heavens towards the Earth. Many conservative Protestants believe that faithful "*born again*" Christians who have previously died will be resurrected, rise from their graves, and ascend to meet Jesus in the sky.

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Immediately afterwards, "*born again*" Christians who had not died will also ascend into the air. They will abandon cars, airplanes, factory jobs, homes, families, friends etc. Since the vast majority of humans are not "*born again*," most people will remain behind on earth. [More details on the rapture.](#)

Unfortunately, this and various other Biblical passages predicting the future are ambiguous. The events themselves are open to many interpretations.

There is no clear indication of either their timing or sequence. Some Christians believe that "millennium" does not mean a time interval of exactly 1,000 years. Rather it refers to a long interval of time.

Some Christians interpret events mentioned in the Christian Scriptures as descriptions of real happenings in our future; others interpret them symbolically and/or as events that have already occurred millennia ago.

This leaves the passages open to many conflicting beliefs about the end times. A lot of intra-denominational and inter-denominational strife has resulted from disagreements about end time prophecy. For example, the Roman Catholic Church and most mainline and liberal denominations do not have expectation that a Rapture will occur in the way anticipated by many fundamentalist and other evangelical faith groups.

***End times* beliefs among Protestants:**

Various Protestant denominations and para-church organizations promote one of six main systems of prophecy concerning the "*end times*"

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Historical Premillennialism: This belief was held by a large percentage of Christians "*during the first three centuries of the Christian era, and is found in the works of Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Methodius, Commodianus, and Lactantius.*" The Antichrist first appears on earth and the seven year Tribulation begins. Next comes the Rapture.

Christ and his Church return to earth to rule for a Millennium. The faithful will spend eternity in the New Jerusalem. It is a gigantic cubical structure, some 1,380 miles in height, width and depth, which will have descended to Earth.

New Jerusalem is a.k.a. Celestial city, City of God, Heavenly Jerusalem, Holy city, Shining City on a Hill, Tabernacle of God, Zion, etc. The forces of evil will have been conquered. The faithful will live during this thousand years of peace in Jerusalem, while occupying spiritual bodies. After this period, all people are judged.

Christianity became the official religion of Rome in the fourth century CE. Premillennialism was declared a heresy at the Council of Ephesus (431). Amillennialism soon became the prevailing doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and premillennialism was suppressed.

Dispensational Premillennialism: (a.k.a. **Dispensationalism**) Premillennialism, declared a heresy in ancient times, was reintroduced circa 1830. Most people credit John N. Darby with its resurrection. He was a minister of the *Church of Ireland*, a denomination in the Anglican communion, and the founder of the *Plymouth Brethren*.

However, author Dave MacPherson claims that British pastor Edward Irving was the actual person responsible, and that a conspiracy was organized to give Darby the credit. ¹⁴ Premillennialism received general acceptance by most Fundamentalists and other Evangelical Christians after the publishing of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909.

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As in *Historic Premillennialism*, the Tribulation is believed to precede the second coming of Christ, and the subsequent establishment of the millennial kingdom -- a thousand-year golden age on Earth. The *Final Judgment* follows the millennium. But, theologians are divided over the timing of the Rapture.

Many Premillennialists search world events and signs in the heavens for some indication of the Tribulation, which they anticipate will arrive at any time.

All of the theories that have been proposed about the timing of the Rapture appear to contradict some passages in the Bible. Current beliefs include:

Pre-Tribulation Rapture: (or "pre-trib") The Rapture happens just before the Tribulation, so that believers will not have to experience any of its disruption and pain. The main difficulties with pre-trib are contained in the Olivet Prophecy of Jesus.

In Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus describes the terrible destruction and loss of life of the tribulation period. The disaster is believed to be so intense that no human (Christian or non-Christian alike) would remain alive, except that God shortens the duration of the disaster for the sake of the believers. Jesus then continues by describing his return towards earth immediately after the terrible devastation.

From this passage, it seems clear that the rapture will follow the Tribulation. The supporters of the "pre-trib" position suggest that Jesus will have a total of three comings: the first during the first century CE; the second at the start of the tribulation, and a third at the end of the tribulation.

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Post-tribulation Rapture: (or "post-trib") The faithful experience the full horrors of the entire Tribulation and are raptured only at the end of the 7 years. The main problem with this theory is that there are many Bible passages which state that Christ's return will be at a time that cannot be predicted.

But the Tribulation period starts with the arrival of the Antichrist and an interval of peace. Precisely 42 months later, a sudden shift occurs, a peace treaty is broken, and devastation begins.

These would be well defined dates that would allow an accurate prediction of the end of the Tribulation. There are other weaknesses to this theory.

Mid-Tribulation Rapture: (or "mid-trib") The Rapture happens half-way through the seven year tribulation -- that is: 42 months into the Tribulation.

Up to that time, the Antichrist brings peace to the world. After 42 months, events take a sudden turn for the worse. Some supporters of the "mid-trib" position suggest that there will be many mini-raptures.

Pre-wrath Rapture: This is a new theory, promoted by Marvin Rosenthal, former director of Friends of Israel, and others. Their view teaches that the church must experience most of the Tribulation, and then be raptured towards the end of the Tribulation period.

Partial Rapture: This theory teaches that the faithful born-again believers are raptured just before the Tribulation. Newly born again believers are raptured during or at the end of the Tribulation.

The latter three theories contain some of the weaknesses of pre-trib and post-trib.

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All of the Premillennialist beliefs teach that the Tribulation is followed by 1000 years of peace when all live under the authority of Christ. Afterwards, in a brief, final battle, Satan is permanently conquered.

Dispensational Premillennialism contains an internal conflict. Its advocates generally believe "*that the moral conditions of the world and the church are destined get increasingly worse. When they get almost unbearably bad, the Lord Jesus will return in the clouds to 'rapture' the living saints up to heaven.*"

However, they tend to be very outspoken and active in their opposition to many behaviors that they consider to be extremely sinful: [abortion access](#), [equal rights for homosexuals](#), [same-sex marriage](#), pre-marital sex, adultery, sex education in schools, access to [physician assisted suicide](#), the use of [embryonic stem cells](#) in healing, etc. By their opposition to these "[hot" religiously controversial topics](#)", they are slowing down their adoption, thus delaying Jesus' return to earth, the rapture and the 1,000 year millennium.

Amillennialism: (Also sometimes referred to as **nonmillennialism**, **nunc-millennialism**, or **realized millennialism**). Amillennialists believe that the millennium is not an actual physical realm on Earth. They do not believe that it will last 1,000 years.

Rather it began at the time of Pentecost (circa 30 CE) and is currently active in the world today through the presence of the heavenly reign of Christ, the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the activities of Christian faith groups. Both good and evil will continue in the world during this time.

Lawlessness, a falling away from the Church and persecution of Christians will increase in magnitude. Finally, the current *Church Age* will end suddenly at Christ's second coming. A type of Rapture will happen when Christ returns: believers will rise to meet Jesus in the sky. All will then shortly thereafter return to Earth.

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The Day of Judgment will then occur. Events described in *The Olivet Discourse* (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21) and in most of the book of Revelation are seen as occurrences which have already happened, or which are symbolic in nature and not to be taken literally.

The Antichrist is looked upon figuratively and not as a real person. This belief was held by many leaders of the early Christian church during the first and second centuries [CE](#).

Simultaneously, other leaders -- perhaps the majority -- taught a version of premillennialism that is very different from today's dispensational premillennialism. St. Augustine (354 - 430 CE), often called the "Father of Amillennialism" was largely responsible for the establishment of amillennialism as the formal church belief.

It remained the generally accepted system throughout Christianity until after the Reformation in the 16th century. Many Christian denominations -- including the Anglican Communion, Disciples of Christ, Lutheran, Orthodox, Reformed, Roman Catholic, and some Baptists continue to teach Amillennialism.

Postmillennialism: (Also known as "**Christian Reconstruction**", "**Kingdom Now Theology**" and "**Dominion Theology.**")

This belief arose during the early 19th century CE. According to author Loraine Boettner, Postmillennialism involves *"that view of last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace, commonly called the millennium."*

The theory is based on the perception of a gradual movement towards social perfection. They predicted that a massive religious revival, spiritual awakening and purification would occur.

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The entire human race would be converted to Christianity, including the Jews. A millennium of peace and righteousness follows. After the millennium, Jesus returns to earth, resurrects the dead believers, and conducts the last judgment.

The Rapture and Tribulation are largely ignored. This belief is being actively promoted today by the Chalcedon Foundation and other groups within the [Christian Reconstruction](#) movement whose goal is to convert the U.S. government and those of other countries to a theocracy -- a Christian version of Iran, with the loss of essentially all personal freedoms.

Preterism is a belief that the events prophesized in the New Testament have already happened. The great war of Armageddon in the book of Revelation occurred in the late 60's and early 70's CE when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, many Jews were killed and the rest were driven from Palestine.

When Jesus talked about the end of the world, he did not mean that the physical world would be no more. He taught that the old worldview held by various contemporary Jewish groups was coming to an end, to be replaced by a new concept, the Kingdom of God. Thus, all of the major elements in the book of Revelation (Tribulation, Armageddon, Rapture, etc.) actually took place in the first century CE.

No Millennialism: Most skeptics and liberal Christian theologians largely interpret the contents of the books of Daniel and Revelation as having no meaningful prophetic information for our future.

Many regard Revelation as being composed of visions, hallucinations or nightmares of the author, of little meaning for Christians today. Some believe that the purpose of the book of Revelation was to stiffen resolve in the early Christian movement so that members could withstand persecution by the Roman Empire.

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Thus, its purpose was to predict persecutions and other events that were to happen to the early Christian church. They also reject the apparent prophecies in the [Book of Daniel](#). They believe that Daniel was written early in the 2nd century [BCE](#), long after most of the events had actually happened. It was history recorded, not their future prophesized.

End times beliefs among Roman Catholics:

Roman Catholics generally follow the teachings of Augustine and the Protestant reformers, and accept Amillennialism. However, they do not generally use the term.

They anticipate Jesus coming to Earth and gathering the Church together. But they generally do not use the term "*rapture*" either. According to *Catholic Answers*, "*The Church has rejected the premillennial position, sometimes called 'millenarianism' (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church 676). In the 1940s the Holy Office judged that premillennialism 'cannot safely be taught,' though the Church has not dogmatically defined this issue.*"

One source is receiving a lot of attention recently. St. Malachy (1094-1148 [CE](#)) was the bishop of Armagh in what is now Northern Ireland. He wrote a book titled "Prophecies of the Popes." It describes a vision that he allegedly received concerning the 112 popes who would follow his contemporary -- Pope Celestine II -- who died in 1144.

The book stored in the Vatican archives, from where it was rediscovered and published in 1595 CE. Some believe that the book describes the present pope -- Pope Francis -- as the last pope before the destruction of Rome, the end of the Church, and the return of Jesus Christ to Earth.

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An Amazon book description of a modern-day book "Petrus Romanus: The Final Pope Is Here," states:

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"According to the prophecy, the next pope (following Benedict XVI) is to be the final pontiff, Petrus Romanus or Peter the Roman. The idea by some Catholics that the next pope on St. Malachy's list heralds the beginning of "great apostasy" followed by "great tribulation" sets the stage for the imminent unfolding of apocalyptic events, something many non-Catholics would agree with.

This would give rise to a false prophet, who according to the book of Revelation leads the world's religious communities into embracing a political leader known as Antichrist.

In recent history, several Catholic priests--some deceased now--have been surprisingly outspoken on what they have seen as this inevitable danger rising from within the ranks of Catholicism as a result of secret satanic "Illuminati-Masonic" influences.

These priests claim secret knowledge of an multinational power elite and occult hierarchy operating behind supernatural and global political machinations.

Among this secret society are sinister false Catholic infiltrators who understand that, as the Roman Catholic Church represents one-sixth of the world's population and over half of all Christians.

It is indispensable for controlling future global elements in matters of church and state and the fulfillment of a diabolical plan they call "Alta Vendita," which is set to assume control of the papacy and to help the False Prophet deceive the world's faithful (including Catholics) into worshipping Antichrist.

Unfortunately for the conspiracy theorists who promote these beliefs, the 112th pope has just been elected, and his name is not Petrus Romanus. It is Pope Francis.

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May the grace of God be with you always --- Amen.

Pastor Andy Anderson

Celestial Grace Ministry