

Appendix 2 – The Book of Revelation  
Eschatology: Views and Word Definitions

(The Greek word *eschatos* means, "final", dealing with "last things") The Premillennial, Pre-tribulation view:

1. All believers are "raptured" before the Great Tribulation (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and Revelation 4:1).
2. The Rapture and the Second Coming are two separate events.
3. The Tribulation and Millennium are literal seven-year and thousand-year periods, respectively.
4. Israel and the Church are separate entities.

The Premillennial, Post-tribulation view:

1. All believers are raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation.
2. The Rapture and the Second Coming are the same event.
3. The Tribulation and Millennium are literal seven-year and thousand-year periods, respectively.
4. Israel and the Church are separate entities.

The Amillennial view:

1. The Great Tribulation and the Millennium are not literal seven-year and thousand-year periods, but are symbolic terms for the age-long struggle of evil against Christ's rule.
2. Israel and the Church compose one people of God.
3. The Church is the kingdom on earth.
4. There is no seven-year Tribulation on the earth.
5. All things are spiritualized (this view has persisted longer than any other).

The Premillennial, Pre-tribulation, partial Rapture:

1. Only those believers who are ready will be raptured before the Great Tribulation.
2. All believers who are not ready will be martyred to verify their faith.

3. The Rapture and Second Coming are separate events.
4. The Tribulation and Millennium are literal seven-year and thousand-year periods.
5. Israel and the Church are separate entities.

The Premillennial, Mid-tribulation Rapture:

1. All believers are raptured after forty-two months (1,260 days) of the seven-year Great Tribulation.
2. The Rapture and the Second Coming are two separate events.
3. The Tribulation and Millennium are literal seven-year and thousand-year periods.
4. Israel and the Church are separate entities.

The Premillennial, Pre-wrath Rapture:

1. All believers are raptured after the Great Tribulation, but before the day of God's wrath (Revelation 6:17).
2. The Rapture and the Second Coming are two separate events.
3. The Tribulation and Millennium are literal seven-year and thousand-year periods.

There are four other views of the Rapture, which receive less attention because they are, in many ways, similar to the major views shown above.

1. The Dispensational View - This view states that the seven years of tribulation are also the time of God's wrath. The Church is raptured, ending the Church Age. People with this view interpret the Book of Revelation in chronological order.
2. The Mid-tribulation View - This view is similar to the Dispensational View, the major difference being that the Church experiences the first half of the seven years of the Tribulation. The Great Tribulation is a time of God's wrath, but the Church is raptured in the middle of it, thus ending the Church Age. This view also interprets the Book of Revelation in chronological order.
3. The Historical View - In the Historical View, the Tribulation is a time of God's judgment. The seven years of the Tribulation represent a time of intense persecution of God's people, and the time of God's wrath comes at the end of this persecution.

In this view, God intervenes on behalf of His people and removes them from the persecution, pouring out His full wrath upon the wicked. Historical Premillennialists interpret the events of the Book of Revelation as contemporaneous, not chronological.

4. Marvin Rosenthal's Pre-wrath Rapture - This view is close to the Historical View, focusing on the actual timing of God's wrath (when it will happen and how long it will last). In this view, both Old and New Testament prophecies converge in the day of God's wrath.

### The Tribulation/Great Tribulation

The biblical definition of "Tribulation" conveys the ideas of pressure, stress, tension, affliction, distress, anguish, persecution, and trouble. This word is not synonymous with "wrath." The Greek word for tribulation is *thlipsis* or *thlipsis*, and it describes the pains of a woman giving birth (John 16:21, 33). Jesus used this term to illustrate the fact that we will face tribulation for our faith. He ends His discourse to the disciples with these words: "In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The Tribulation period is a time of trouble. In Stephen's discourse (Acts 7:2-53), he describes the famine as a time of great tribulation. In Matthew 24:21, Jesus used the same words, "great tribulation," in referring to a time of trouble. The tribulation in the Book of Revelation is a seven-year period synonymous with Daniel's prophecy of the seventieth week. This period is evenly divided into two sections of time, namely the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation.

### Secondary views of the Millennium

Augustine, a fourth-century theologian, introduced Amillennialism as an interpretation of the biblical reference to the millennium. He used Origen's method of allegorical interpolation to define a spiritual kingdom as being symbolic of the new creation. In other words, there is no thousand-year "kingdom age." Augustine argued that the kingdom ruled by Christ is in the hearts of faithful men, not a physical kingdom on earth.

In 432 A.D., the Council of Ephesus endorsed Amillennialism as the official dogma of the Church. Unfortunately, Amillennialism is anti-Semitic, because it excludes the Jews from spiritual Israel. The Protestant Reformation did not re-examine doctrines of eschatology until the seventeenth century, thus making Amillennialism the longest-lived doctrine in the Church.

The doctrine of Postmillennialism is of recent origin, postulated first by Daniel Whitby, a seventeenth-century Unitarian minister. His theory was that Christianity serves to purify mankind through Christ-like humanism, which will bring in the Kingdom Age. This view of eschatology was popular in many Protestant churches

until World War II. Evangelical Protestant churches that held to this view also attempted to reform the culture of the nations where they carried the Gospel.

Many missionary crusades prior to World War II were also re-culturation movements. Postmillennialism became a driving force, energizing churches to send missionaries to the "uttermost parts of the earth," with the objective of establishing Christ-like humanism (an oxymoron) in every nation. Postmillennialists were convinced that World War I was, indeed, the "war to end all wars." Unfortunately, the peace they hoped for deteriorated into another war, which helped to diminish the belief in Postmillennialism. After World War II, Postmillennialism became even more liberalized, to the point that most groups that formerly espoused it have all but turned their backs on it. The main reason for this is that Postmillennialism violates too many valid rules of hermeneutics and textual criticism.

Miscellaneous views, definitions and information

1. Preterism - Preterism is the Christian eschatological view that interprets prophecies of the Bible, especially Daniel and Revelation, as events which have already happened in the first century A.D. Preterism holds that Ancient Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian church, beginning at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The term preterism comes from the Latin *praeter*, Adherents of preterism are commonly known as *preterists*.
2. The Historical View - The belief that John was describing the major events that would take place during the history of the Church. Therefore, we can see these events as we look back in history.
3. The Spiritualized View - The belief that everything in the Book of Revelation should be taken figuratively or metaphorically and that John talked about spiritual conflict, not actual physical conflict.
4. The Futurist View - The belief that the Book of Revelation contains prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled, particularly the events from chapter 4 onward. This view is accepted by most Premillennialists.
5. Idealist Eschatology - This is the view that the final conflict between good and evil will be a "cosmic" one, fought in the heavenlies between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Idealist eschatology avoids symbolism and the idea of future fulfillment of historic events.
6. Dogma - Dogma is a doctrine or a body of doctrines relating to matters like morality and faith that are set forth in an authoritative manner by a church. Dogma is also defined as an authoritative principle, belief, or statement of ideas or opinion, especially one considered to be absolutely true. Most churches (denominational or otherwise) have a certain dogma by which they operate and which they teach. Many (if not most) Protestant churches hold to the same dogma when it comes to the absolutes of the faith - the deity of Christ; His virgin birth; the efficacy of His death, burial and resurrection; the role of the Holy Spirit; the sinfulness of man and his need for redemption; the fatherhood of God; etc. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are examples of formalized statements of church beliefs (dogma). In some instances, churches (either individually or denominationally) have supplemented basic dogma with their own

interpretation of various passages of Scripture. In some instances, such traditional beliefs have taken on the authority of dogma, leading many Christians and non-Christians to wonder who is right and who is not.

7. The Niagara Bible Conference - The Niagara Bible Conference was held annually from 1876 to 1897, in different resort locations around the United States. The driving force behind the meeting was James H. Brookes, a Presbyterian minister from St. Louis. Most of the speakers were dispensationalists, and many evangelical Protestants were introduced to dispensationalist teaching, including the doctrines of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, missions and prophecy. Most of the leading dispensationalists of the late 19th and early 20th century attended the conference regularly, including William E. Blackstone, Charles Erdman, James H. Brookes, William Moorehead, Adoniram J. Gordon, Amzi Dixon, C.I. Scofield, and James Hudson Taylor (who founded the China Inland Mission). In 1878, the Conference produced the document that came to be known as the "Niagara Creed." This fourteen-point statement of faith was one of the first to explicitly proclaim faith in the premillennial return of Jesus Christ to earth. The Niagara Creed does not explicitly affirm dispensationalism, but it refers to several key dispensationalist beliefs, including the reality of the millennium, the restoration of Israel, and the distinction between the judgment of the saved and the damned. The timing of the Rapture has been continually debated ever since.

8. In 311 A.D., Emperor Constantine secured the city of Rome after defeating his rival, Maxentius. On the way to Rome for the victory celebration, he saw a vision of the cross and the words, *In hoc signo vinces* (In this sign conquer). Later, in 324, Constantine convened, and took part in, the Council of Nicea, from which the Nicene Creed was developed, and which saw the birth of the Roman Catholic Church. In 326, he issued his "Universal Edict of Toleration," giving official sanction to the Christian religion.

9. "Eschatology" is the doctrine of last things (from the Greek *eschatos*, meaning "final").

10. "Millennium" refers to the doctrine of the Millennium, or the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. The word is a combination of the Latin words *mille* (thousand) and *annus* (year).

11. "Tribulation" is the biblical term referring to Daniel's seventieth week of severe trouble (John 16:21, 33).

12. The terms "only begotten" and "first begotten" are both used in referring to Jesus. The first is found in John 3:16 and refers to Christ's incarnation. The second is found in Revelation 1:5 and refers to His resurrection.

13. The Book of Revelation is not the unfolding story of the Apostle John. Rather, it reveals the future of the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. NOTE: It is never appropriate to refer to the "Book of Revelations."

14. The only two churches not condemned in John's vision were those of Smyrna and Philadelphia. The church of Philadelphia loved Jesus and will remain true to Him. Therefore, it was given an "open door" to heaven and "will be kept from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world" (Revelation 3:10). In addition, the scriptures seem to indicate that the churches of Philadelphia and Laodicea will continue into the Tribulation.

15. The churches of Revelation present a picture of the churches of the Church Dispensation.

a. Ephesus - The apostolic and missionary church

- b. Smyrna - The persecuted church
- c. Pergamos - The church with favor with the state
- d. Thyatira - The church of the papacy
- e. Sardis - The reformation church
- f. Philadelphia - The church of the latter-day outpouring
- g. Laodicea - The indifferent church of the last days