

## ESCHATOLOGY OVERVIEW

### **PERSONAL TESTIMONY (December, 2023)**

Since my college days when I was introduced to the Scofield Reference Bible my position on eschatology has been the widely popular **Pre-Trib Premillennial view**. That was reinforced through my theological training at Grace Seminary (under **Dr. John Whitcomb** and others) as well as my respect for commentaries of **John MacArthur** and fellow dispensationalists.

There were always some areas that sparked some uncertainty or caused me to have some questions:

- The secret Rapture has so many weird aspects with believers disappearing and then the rest of the world continuing to live for another 7 years ...
- The parallels between **Matt. 24** and **1 Thess. 4** seemed striking
- The argument of Paul in **II Thess. 2** to try to calm the believers who feared that they were experiencing the Day of the Lord and had somehow missed the Rapture did not seem to fit the Pre-Trib view since he was pointing them to the sign of the unveiling of the AntiChrist and the climactic event of the abomination of desolation (associated with the mid-point of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week)
- The final teaching of Christ to His disciples in the Olivet Discourse right before He was set to depart from them pointed them to signs that would mark His return

But the emphasis on the **imminent return of Christ** (that no prophecied events had to intervene before His return to gather believers to Himself) as well as the escape from the suffering of the Great Tribulation proved convincingly attractive. The NT exhortations to “*watch*” and “*be prepared*” in light of the “*nearness*” of the “*soon*” return of Christ seemed to fit well with a “Christ-can-come-at-any-moment” expectancy.

I reached the milestone of 70 years old with only the **Book of Revelation** remaining to be studied and distributed via my website – [www.bibleoutlines.com](http://www.bibleoutlines.com). At this point I felt compelled to pause and study eschatology more in depth before launching into my commentary on this book. I was greatly impacted by an article written by my friend **Van Parunak** that explained his conversion from the Pre-Trib position to a Pre-Wrath position.

<https://www.cyber-chapel.org/rapture.pdf>

I followed this up with a more in-depth study of some of the proponents of this view. I reviewed an old ten cassette *Parousia Conference on End Time Events* taught by **Roger Best**, **Charles Cooper** and **Marvin Rosenthal** from many decades ago (had to unearth a cassette player to access those tapes). I then listened to a number of Youtube.com seminars taught by more recent scholars and Bible teachers who hold the Pre-Wrath position (**David Rosenthal**, **Dr. Dan Hayden**, **Alan Kurschner**, etc.). There is a two hour overview presentation that I found particularly helpful in exposing the weaknesses of the Pre-Trib position:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwXoMNpOhosmyux?4<uwjyguwtgqjr\\_x3tr\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwXoMNpOhosmyux?4<uwjyguwtgqjr_x3tr_4)

The most comprehensive presentation of the Pre-Wrath position is **Marvion Rosenthal's** *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*. I highly commend this groundbreaking systematic treatise. It corrected my understanding of a large number of biblical texts.

The end result of my recent studies is that I have switched my position from the Pre-Trib to the **Pre-Wrath perspective** towards Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. I am in the process of going back through my online commentaries to revise those areas that are impacted by this change. I will then tackle the **Book of Revelation** from my new orientation. This paper serves as a very general introduction to some of the overall themes relating to eschatology.

## **IMPORTANCE OF ESCHATOLOGY**

Because of its controversial nature, the subject of eschatology (study of end times) has been avoided in many Christian evangelical circles. We find the subject complex. It is frustrating that there are so many different views and so little agreement. We fail to make the practical connection to how eschatology motivates holy living here and now.

Just as the Jews of Jesus' day focused almost exclusively on the role of Messiah prophesied for His Second Coming (and the establishment of His kingdom on earth) and missed the truths about the Suffering Servant who must be crucified at His First Coming, so church goers today are often ignorant of much of the prophetic record regarding Christ's future return in glory.

But there can be no doubt that eschatology dominates a large portion of Scripture. The OT prophets had a telescoping view where often they were not precise in distinguishing between the two comings of Christ. But they were consumed with focusing on God's future program for the nation of Israel that would culminate in the establishment of Christ's kingdom of justice and righteousness on the earth where He would rule from the throne of David in the City of Jerusalem. Christ was careful to prepare His disciples for His return and to anticipate end time realities. The apostles picked up the teachings of Christ and continued to indoctrinate the first century church on matters of eschatology.

So we avoid this topic to our own detriment. Although it is sad to see some of the negative relationship impacts of changing positions as God guides His servants into new understanding of His Word. I feel that the objective lens of many biblical commentators is constrained by blinders due to professional or organizational structures that demand the confession of certain eschatological positions. On the contrary, the advantage of my more independent status is that I feel free to follow the truth wherever the Scriptures might lead me without any fear of financial or professional repercussions. (That is not to minimize the painful relational repercussions.)

An example of courage and integrity in this area would be the life and teaching ministry of **Marvin Rosenthal** who made the same switch from Pre-Trib to Pre-Wrath even though it cost him his ministry position with **Friends of Israel** (he ended up establishing **Zion's Hope**):

“his deep study of Scripture brought him to the realisation that all he'd believed and taught about the end times up that point was wrong. His biblical convictions forced him to abandon his previous views – along with his job and position – becoming a pariah amongst the evangelical stream from which his views diverged. But true scholarship means diligently seeking the truth – following it wherever it leads, whatever the cost.”  
– **Dan Button** -- <https://gtstheology.org/a-tribute-to-marv-rosenthal/>

[I commend to you the **funeral tribute** on Youtube.com to **Marv Rosenthal** delivered by his son and others referenced at the bottom of the above website.]

**Michael Vlach** gives 7 reasons we should take eschatology seriously:

1. Eschatology is a major part of the Christian storyline
2. We are called to preach and heed the whole counsel of God
3. People are interested in the future
4. Eschatology is a motivation for believers
5. Eschatology has a purifying effect on the believer
6. Eschatology gives perspective to the troubles and trials of this age
7. Eschatology warns the unbeliever of coming judgment

<https://blog.tms.edu/7-reasons-your-church-should-take-eschatology-seriously>

**Daniel Lim** gives 10 reasons why we must study eschatology:

1. Expanding Literacy for This Vital Subject
2. Understanding the Primary Reasons for Christ's Return
3. Vision for Maturity
4. Motivation to Be Witnesses to All Nations
5. Blessings in Obeying the Prophetic Scripture
6. Understanding Our Resurrection and Hope for Eternal Glory
7. Motivation for Unceasing Prayers on the Earth
8. Living in Holiness Daily
9. The Priority of the Final Mission
10. Revelation of Jesus in His Person and His Works

<https://www.ihopkc.org/resources/blog/ten-reasons-study-biblical-eschatology/>

## **ESSENTIAL PRESUPPOSITIONS**

Don't lose sight of the fundamental dogmas of eschatology that are agreed upon throughout historic orthodox Christianity:

- Jesus Christ will return at the end of the age in bodily form
- God will consummate His program for history and for this world which He created
- God will resurrect all believers who have died and will give them glorified bodies
- God will gather all living believers unto Himself and transform their bodies to live with Him forever
- God will judge the wicked
- There will be a literal heaven and a literal hell

Remember how the prophecies relating to the First Coming of Christ were **fulfilled in explicit detail**. Our expectation should be that God will keep His promises related to the Second Coming by the same type of detailed fulfilment.

Maintain the same literal (or normal) type of **hermeneutical approach** with which we treat all of Scripture. This still allows for the use of symbols and for the genre of apocalyptic literature.

Keep in mind a couple of important features of biblical prophecy:

- Remember the important principle of **telescoping prophecy** – two future events viewed as one; or what seems to be a single event turns out to have multiple phases
- Also one partial, near-term historical reference like a foreshadowing... with complete fulfillment in the last days

- As with other types of biblical revelation, you must interpret the unclear in light of the clear passages.
- Expect the church's understanding of end times prophecy to deepen and become more accurate as the end of the age draws near (**Dan. 12:4**).

Gear your expectations to understand this overview as just a **Quick Primer**. We can't cover all of the details here. This will be a very high level summary.

Don't lose sight of the **Practical Implications** for holy living and watchfulness and worldwide evangelism.

Be **fair-minded** about the problem passages for your view and gracious towards others of differing views. Nobody has all the answers in this area and we must approach the topic with graciousness, tolerance and humility.

### **DISTINCTION BETWEEN NATIONAL ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH**

Essence of Dispensationalism – Some scholars point to the Pre-Trib Rapture position as the distinguishing benchmark for Dispensationalism. I would disagree. The distinction between Israel and the church is more fundamental. God has some unique aspects to His overall program in dealing with such differing groups; OT saints are not members of the church and NT Gentile believers are not members of national Israel; the church has not **replaced Israel** so that God is finished fulfilling His promises to the nation; that is why the current existence of the nation Israel is so significant (even though it is not yet the regathered and converted nation that is prophesied in the OT) – God will still keep all of His promises; that is why we talk about a literal hermeneutic or normal system of interpreting the Bible rather than one of allegory or symbolism; such a literal system includes the proper use of symbolism (like Jesus saying “*I am the door*”) and typology as in any other literature – but does not sacrifice the intended historical application of God's promises.

Many things can be similar without two things being identical; look at the qualifications for elder and for deacon – many similarities – but not the same office; Then look at different words for elder, pastor, bishop – yet all refer to the same person – So you have to look at both **points of similarity** and **points of distinction**; You have to make a complete study – don't just pick up on a couple of verses that stress continuity and then jump to the conclusion that the church has replaced Israel.

With respect to Israel and the church — you have **continuity** of the people of God – but a **distinction** between national Israel and the Church; saved Gentile believers in the church age can be called *children of Abraham* (**Rom. 4:11**) and *children of faith* in a spiritual sense... speaking of spiritual Israel... but not in the national sense.

#### Supporting arguments:

- Israel IS defined as a nation and treated as such by God in the OT – with specific promises made to the nation that still will find fulfillment in the future.
- formation of the church at Pentecost – it did not exist until then; Christ spoke of the church as future – “*I will build my church*”
- *Mystery* nature of the church in terms of OT revelation

- Christ presented as the Head of the Church and the Church as His Body
- Strange: OT believers not part of the body of Christ??? Isn't there one body of Christ?? But the Church is pictured as the Bride of Christ with the marriage feast celebrated
- We enter the Church Universal by being baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body; the Holy Spirit now indwells all church believers permanently – not true in the OT economy
- Specific passages that distinguish the church from natural Israel and from spiritual Israel

Practical implications of Replacement Theology (saying that Israel is now the church)

- View of OT prophecy is vastly different
- Opens the door to infant baptism vs believer baptism
- Issue of covenant theology
- Different view of the OT law; observance of the Sabbath, etc.
- Undermining the promises of God

**Ezekiel 36:22ff:** The NT says there is no distinction now between man and woman... between Jew and Gentile in the church – in terms of equal sharing in the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant... this doesn't mean that God no longer sees a distinction between men and women; this doesn't mean that there is no future for the nation of Israel in God's program... Expansion of the New Covenant promises to include Gentile believers in the church does not mean the cancellation of those earlier commitments to the Jewish nation.

Yet – there is **continuity** in the program of God – the church is much more than a parenthesis – not just an afterthought because of the rejection of the kingdom by the Jews at the time of Christ; but actually part of God's overall program for the ages.

Progressive Dispensationalism – **Darrell Bock** – vs classical dispensationalism – Since we see the spiritual promises of the New Covenant being fulfilled in part in the church today – we see more of a unified view of eternal salvation. God will save humankind in its ethnic and national plurality. But, He will bless it with the same salvation given to all without distinction; the same, not only in justification and regeneration, but also in sanctification by the indwelling Holy Spirit. These blessings will come to all without distinction through Jesus Christ, the King of Israel and of all the nations of redeemed humanity. This perspective maintains the distinctiveness of Israel and the church but stresses continuity (despite differing dispensations) rather than discontinuity.

But people will point to some text that shows the common link that we are all the people of God and proclaim, "See, we have refuted the basis for dispensationalism!" Example:

**Mathison:** "The promises made to literal, physical Israelites were fulfilled by a literal, physical Israelite, Jesus the Messiah. He is the Seed of Abraham. What dispensationalism fails to grasp is that through union with Christ, all who are His by faith have become members of His body. Therefore, all who are in Him by faith, whether Old Testament believers or New Testament believers, are coheirs of the promises and the covenants. The covenantal promises do not require a future fulfillment by national Israel in order for God's Word to be true."

Yet in refutation of this, the Bible promises that at some point in the future, at the end of the Tribulation period all of national Israel that is on the earth at that time will turn in repentance and faith and embrace their Messiah. This would have no meaning if the reference was to all of spiritual Israel.

**Ezek 37:28** – contrasts the nation of Israel with all of the other nations – cannot be a reference to spiritual Israel

Message of **book of Hosea** – Israel as a nation will be unfaithful, but the Lord will restore her and fulfill all of the unconditional promises of the various covenants

Some biblical scholars conjecture that the failure of Israel to keep their covenant relationship justifies replacement theology. But the OT Scriptures are clear that no amount of rebellion or apostasy will nullify God's plans for fulfilling His covenant promises to the nation.

**Leviticus 26:44-45** *Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. 45 But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.*

**Deuteronomy 30:1-5** *So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 "And the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.*

**Isaiah 46:8-13** *Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. 9 "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; 11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it. 12 "Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, Who are far from righteousness. 13 "I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; And My salvation will not delay. And I will grant salvation in Zion, And My glory for Israel.*

**Jeremiah 31:35-37** *Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: 36 "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever." 37 Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.*

**Hosea 3:4-5** *For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols. 5 Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.*

Application: Appreciate the beauty and privilege of God’s Election: **Rom. 11:5, 17, 25-29**

## VIEW OF THE MILLENNIUM KINGDOM

The first question to be answered must be your view of the millennial kingdom.

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**Alan Bandy** writing for *The Gospel Coalition* provides a good summary of the different views: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/views-of-the-millennium/>

### Definition

The Millennium refers to the period of 1,000 year reign of Christ mentioned in **Revelation 20:3**. The exact timing and nature of what is meant by the Millennium is debated between three viewpoints: Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism.

### Summary

The Millennium refers to the period of 1,000 year reign of Christ mentioned in **Revelation 20:1-4**. This passage is notoriously difficult to interpret and has been the source of debate among three eschatological schools of thought: Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism. The different eschatologies associated with the Millennium relate to the timing of the return of Christ regarding the 1,000 years and what is the precise nature of the Millennium. Amillennialists do not expect a future literal 1,000, but rather view it as Christ’s reign with his saints during the time between his two comings. Postmillennialists believe Christ returns *after* the millennium as a golden age when the majority of the world has converted to Christianity. Premillennialists believe Christ returns *before* the millennium preceded by a period of intense tribulation. This article examines some of the details and characteristics of these three views of the Millennium.

### Introduction

Eschatology is the field of Christian theology which concerns the **study of last things**. It is the study of Christ’s future return, the resurrection, the rapture, the final judgment, the eternal blessedness of the redeemed with Christ, and the eternal punishment of the damned apart from his presence. Upon these rudimentary points, there is considerable agreement, yet with regard to the particulars, there has been a wide diversity of thought among Christians from the very earliest centuries of the Church. The various eschatologies promoted by theologians throughout history can be organized into three general systems: *amillennialism*, *postmillennialism*, and *premillennialism*. Each term is distinguished by a prefix attached to the word “*millennium*,” which is a compound of two Latin terms, *mille* (thousand), and *annus* (year). The reason for this nomenclature is because, over time, each view began to be known by its interpretation of **Revelation 20:1-10**, particularly the timing of the return of Christ with reference to the period of 1,000 years mentioned therein. Therefore, *amillennialists* expect *no* millennium (The prefix –a means, “no”), *postmillennialists* believe Christ returns *after* the millennium (the prefix –post, means “after”), and *premillennialists* believe Christ returns *before* the millennium (the prefix –pre, means “before”).

### Amillennialism

Although amillennialists *expect* no millennial kingdom, this does not mean amillennialists deny a millennium entirely, as the terminology may seem to imply.

**Anthony Hoekema** provides a concise amillennial interpretation of **Revelation 20**:

“Amillennialists interpret the millennium ... as describing the present reign of the souls of deceased believers with Christ in heaven. They understand the binding of Satan ... as being in effect during the entire period between the first and second comings of Christ, though ending shortly before Christ’s return. They teach that Christ will return after this heavenly reign.”

Amillennialists believe we are *presently* living in the millennial kingdom, which is characterized by the simultaneous experiences of gospel victory and suffering for the gospel. This obviously indicates amillennialists interpret “*one thousand*” figuratively. The gospel is victorious because Satan is bound, rendering him incapable of preventing the spread of the gospel; yet he is not utterly powerless from persecuting the Church. Just before the end, Satan will again be permitted to deceive the nations and persecution will increase dramatically. Christians are awaiting the visible, bodily return of Christ, which brings an end to all their suffering. The second coming occurs concurrently with the general resurrection and a public rapture of the Church, who immediately returns to earth with Christ. Christ then judges the world, and finally ushers in the eternal state.

Important to the amillennialist understanding is the tension of “*already/not yet.*”

Christians presently live in the inaugurated kingdom, as Christ reigns from heaven; yet, they await the kingdom’s full realization, when Christ will reign on Earth eternally. The inaugurated kingdom endures tribulation and suffering, but also victory as the Gospel spreads; in the consummate kingdom, the new heavens and new earth, there will be eternal rest. Another key point of this view, is the understanding of Old Testament prophecy, especially as interpreted by the New Testament. **Kim Riddlebarger** writes, “Amillennialists hold that the promises made to Israel, David, and Abraham in the Old Testament are fulfilled by Jesus Christ and his church during this present age.” Since these promises have been fulfilled, no future fulfillment is required. Amillennialists point to passages which teach that the consummation of history occurs at the second coming, with only the eternal state following. Amillennialists base their interpretation of **Revelation 20** as recapitulating or re-present the events described in **Revelation 19**, rather than following it in chronological succession.

### Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism holds to the view Christ will return after the millennium. As with amillennialism the terminology falls short. In a strictly chronological sense, the amillennialists and the postmillennialists agree that Christ returns after the millennium. In fact, amillennialists were known as postmillennialists until the twentieth century.

Postmillennialists generally agree with the amillennial interpretation of **Revelation 20**.

The two agree the millennium is figurative, not a literal one thousand year period, and that it “is a time in which the gospel is preached throughout the world” as Satan is currently bound. They also agree on the general course of events in the end times: When Jesus comes, then, the general physical resurrection of the righteous and the wicked

occurs, followed by the final judgment, and culminating with the new heavens and new earth.

What distinguishes postmillennialism from amillennialism is not the timing of the second coming in relation to the millennium but the **nature of the millennium**. Whereas amillennialism expects the Church to experience both victory and suffering simultaneously until the second coming, postmillennialism maintains a gradual end to much of the Church's suffering before Christ returns. They expect a golden age of righteousness on earth, the millennium, in which the church experiences increasing prosperity and great influence on the culture. This golden age is what the postmillennialist understands as the millennium. **Loraine Boettner** defines postmillennialism:

“Postmillennialism is that view of the 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 in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the millennium.”

**Gentry** explains, “Postmillennialism expects that eventually the vast majority of men living will be saved.” This will lead to “a time in history prior to Christ's return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of men and of nations.” This increased percentage of the population who become believers who seek to live according to God's will, which naturally leads to greater and greater degrees of peace and justice within their respective communities. It is important to note that this prosperity is a result of a large percentage of the population of the world living according to God's word.

Postmillennialists usually point to The Great Commission, arguing that it “will be entirely successful.” They also point to the messianic Psalms, especially **Psalms 2**, particularly **verses 7-9**, “... *I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.*” In addition, they draw attention to the parables of **Matthew 13**, which seem to indicate the prodigious growth of the church.

### Premillennialism

There are two premillennial systems: Historic and Dispensational Premillennialism:

**Historic premillennialism** is labeled such because it more or less resembles the premillennialism held during ancient times known as *chiliasm*. **Dispensational premillennialism** derives its name from the theology developed by **John Nelson Darby** in the nineteenth century that divides biblical history into a series of ages or dispensations. Both forms of premillennialism follow a chronological and more literal reading of **Revelation 20:1-6** as subsequent to the return of Christ and final battle in **Revelation 19:11-21**.

**George Ladd** defines Premillennialism as, “the doctrine stating that after the Second Coming of Christ, [Christ] will reign for a thousand years over the earth before the final consummation of God's redemptive purpose in the new heavens and the new earth of the Age to Come.” According to Historic Premillennialists, the present age will continue

until a brief period of tribulation, after which “Christ will return to earth to establish a millennial kingdom.” At the second coming there will be a resurrection of believers and a public rapture. These resurrected believers reign with Christ, who will, “be physically present on the earth in his resurrected body, and will reign as King over the entire earth.”

During this period, Satan is “bound and cast into the bottomless pit so that he will have no influence on the earth during the millennium.” After the millennium, Satan is released for a brief time, during which he leads astray a portion of the world’s population in rebellion to Christ. Christ destroys this rebellion, judges the world, then ushers in the eternal state. This interpretation assumes, in contrast to the amillennialist and postmillennialist, that the events described in **Revelation 19** and **20** are chronologically successive.

Although **Revelation 20** is the only passage to specify a period of 1,000 years, and thus the various positions (a-, pre-, and post-) as “millennial,” this is not the critical question that separates premillennialism from the other two. The critical question is whether this age will issue immediately into the final / eternal state (“the golden age”), or whether a further, intermediary stage of the eschatological kingdom (a “silver” age) lies between. Premillennialists argue that in addition to **Revelation 20** passages such as **Isaiah 11** and **65-66**, **Zechariah 14**, and **1 Corinthians 15:20-28** also indicate such an intermediary stage, while amillennialists and postmillennialists will refer these passages either to the church age or the final state.

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A good starting point would seem to be the repeated reference to a specific 1,000 year duration of the millennial kingdom in **Rev. 20**. Spiritualizing this number does not seem like a good approach. The sequential chronological unfolding of events in the final chapters of Revelation also makes more sense than viewing **Chapter 20** as some type of parallel timeframe with **chapter 19**.

The nature of the millennial kingdom must be informed by the background of the OT promises to the nation of Israel. There is no justification for spiritualizing these promises and claiming that the church now is the target for fulfillment. Certainly Paul’s argument in **Romans 9-11** demonstrates that although Israel has been set aside in this age in a partial and temporary sense, God still will fulfill His promises to national Israel.

So I would conclude that a **Premillennial approach** is the correct one to take.

### **NATURE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD**

This is an important point of distinction for the Pre-Trib vs. Pre-Wrath views. The Day of the Lord references a specific eschatological period of time at the end of this age where God pours out His wrath. Pre-tribbers claim that the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week constitutes the Day of the Lord and is characterized by God’s wrath. The Pre-Wrath view would limit the Day of the Lord to the outpouring of God’s wrath after the Great Tribulation so its duration is some shorter portion of the latter part of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. There is no question that the OT references describe a time of God’s outpouring of wrath. The first five seals of Revelation in the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week (including the saints martyred by the persecution orchestrated by the Anti-Christ) and even the

Great Tribulation (just after the mid-point of the week) would not be included in the period of divine wrath.

**Marvin Rosenthal:** “Noted Bible scholar **F. F. Bruce** called the Day of the Lord ‘the day when Yahweh (the Lord) was expected to vindicate himself.’ **Colin Brown** defined the Day of the Lord this way: ‘It designates God’s decisive intervention in history for judgment.’

The Day of the Lord should be viewed in contrast to Man’s Day. **Wuest** correctly defined Man’s Day as ‘that time starting with Adam’s fall until the second advent when unsaved man has liberty under the permissive will of God to do as he pleases.’ It is only after the cup of man’s iniquity is full, his rebellion complete, his attempt at self-deification through the Antichrist manifest, that the Day of the Lord will commence.”

#### A. OT Characterization of the Day of the Lord

The consistent picture from the OT prophets is a time of the outpouring of God’s wrath and terrible judgment; a time of darkness and gloom; a time of devastation and destruction.

**Isaiah 13:9-10** *Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light.*

**Ezekiel 30:1-2** *The word of the LORD came again to me saying, 2 "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Wail, 'Alas for the day!' 3 "For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations.*

**Joel 1:15** *Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.*

**Joel 2:1-3** *Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, 2 A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations. 3 A fire consumes before them, And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them. (cf. 2:10-11, 30-31; 3:14-16)*

**Amos 5:20** *Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?*

**Zephaniah 1:14-18** *Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of trumpet and battle cry, Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. 17 And I will bring distress on men, So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD;*

*And their blood will be poured out like dust, And their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD's wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth. (cf. 14:1-4)*

If the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week is not characterized by God's wrath and divine judgment, then the Day of the Lord must be of shorter duration. In fact the first three and a half years up to the mid-point are defined as the beginning of birth pangs – leading up to the Great Tribulation where the Anti-Christ (empowered by Satan) will unleash severe persecution against believers before God delivers them from His wrath. For believers are not appointed to experience God's wrath.

**Marvin Rosenthal:** “There is no blessing associated with the Day of the Lord in the texts that describe it. Pretribulationist **Richard Mahue** said: ‘The prominent theme of the Day of the Lord prophecies is God's judgment for sin. It is present in every Day of the Lord passage. The blessings of Christ's Millennial reign are *subsequent to* and *as a result of* the Day of the Lord, but *they are not part of it.*’”

### B. Starting Point for the Day of the Lord

The traditional Pre-Trib view marks the beginning of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week as the starting point for the Day of the Lord – and then defines the entire seven year period as the Day of the Lord.

But Paul gives a couple of key precursors that must happen before the beginning of the Day of the Lord (**2 Thess. 2**):

- the apostasy (of Jews in the first part of the 70<sup>th</sup> week) must first come
- the man of lawlessness must be revealed = AntiChrist
- the abomination of desolation must first occur (clearly at the mid-point according to **Dan. 9**)

In addition, Elijah must first return – **Malachi 4:5**.

**Marvin Rosenthal:** Jewish theology is replete with teaching that Elijah must appear to herald the coming of the Messiah. That same theology is brought over into the New Testament. After a group of Jewish leaders were told by John the Baptist that he was “*not the Christ*” (**John 1:20**), their follow-up question to John was, “*Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not*” (**John 1:21**). They clearly understood that the prophet Elijah was to announce the coming of the Christ.

In the **Olivet Discourse** in **Matthew 24**, Jesus is dealing directly with the question from His disciples: “*what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?*” He gives a clear chronology that identifies at least the following sequential events:

- **vs. 8** -- the beginning of birth pangs (corresponding to the first four seals in the book of Revelation) – **Van Parunak** believes that “the seals begin before the great tribulation, and in fact before Daniel's seventieth week, since they extend before the fall of Jerusalem. The church has already participated in the experiences described in the first five seals.” But I think that the events surrounding the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. were a foretaste of the ultimate end time unfolding of the first four seals. In similar fashion you see the desecration in the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. as a foretaste of the ultimate abomination of desolation. And you see the messages to the 7 churches in **Rev. 2-3** addressed to actual first century assemblies that would ultimately be fulfilled in end time churches. This follows the pattern of

- both near and far (or ultimate) fulfillment of end time prophecy.
- **vs. 15** -- the abomination of desolation (at the mid-point of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel)
  - **vs. 21** – a time specifically identified as the “*great tribulation*” which will be *cut short for the sake of the elect (vs. 22)* – so this time period does not extend to the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week; the 5<sup>th</sup> seal pictures the martyrdom of many saints associated with this time period
  - **vs. 29** – Cosmic Disturbances – this corresponds to the 6<sup>th</sup> seal of **Rev. 6** which is immediately followed by the Rapture of the Church and the beginning of the Day of the Lord (the 7<sup>th</sup> seal – which contains the 7 trumpet and bowl judgments) – **Joel 2:31**
  - **vs. 30** – immediately followed by the glorious return of Christ to gather up believers and begin the judgment of the Day of the Lord (as pictured in the parables that follow)

The language of **1 Thessalonians 4** so closely parallels this **Matthew 24** account that Jesus cannot be talking about two different comings separated by seven years. Note the parallels:

- Both passages describe the return of Christ
- Christ returns with “*clouds*”
- The purpose is the gathering of believers
- You see angelic presence
- You hear the sound of a trumpet

This is not a silent rapture but the glorious return of Christ who “*will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God.*”

Look at the **close parallels** between **Matt. 24** and the seals in **Rev. 6-7**:

<b>Matthew 24</b>	<b>Parallels</b>	<b>Revelation 6-7</b>
4-5	The Antichrist / False christs	First Seal (6:1-2)
6-7	Wars	Second Seal (6:3-4)
7	Famine	Third Seal (6:5-6)
9, 21-22	Martyrdom (Great Tribulation)	Fourth Seal (6:7-8)
9, 21-22	Result of Martyrdom (Great Tribulation)	Fifth Seal (6:9-11)
29	Celestial Disturbances	Sixth Seal (6:12-17)
30-31	Raptured Saints	Interlude (7:9-17)
14, 30, 37-41	Day of the Lord's Wrath	Seventh Seal (Trumpets, Bowls)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwXoMNPoHos>

There can be no **time gap** between the Rapture and the beginning of the Day of the Lord. They are consistently presented as continuous events incorporated into the Lord's Parousia. Nobody can precisely know the day and the hour of the Lord's return and of the beginning of the Day of

the Lord. But believers should be able to identify the general season in accordance with the signs given by Christ in His Olivet Discourse.

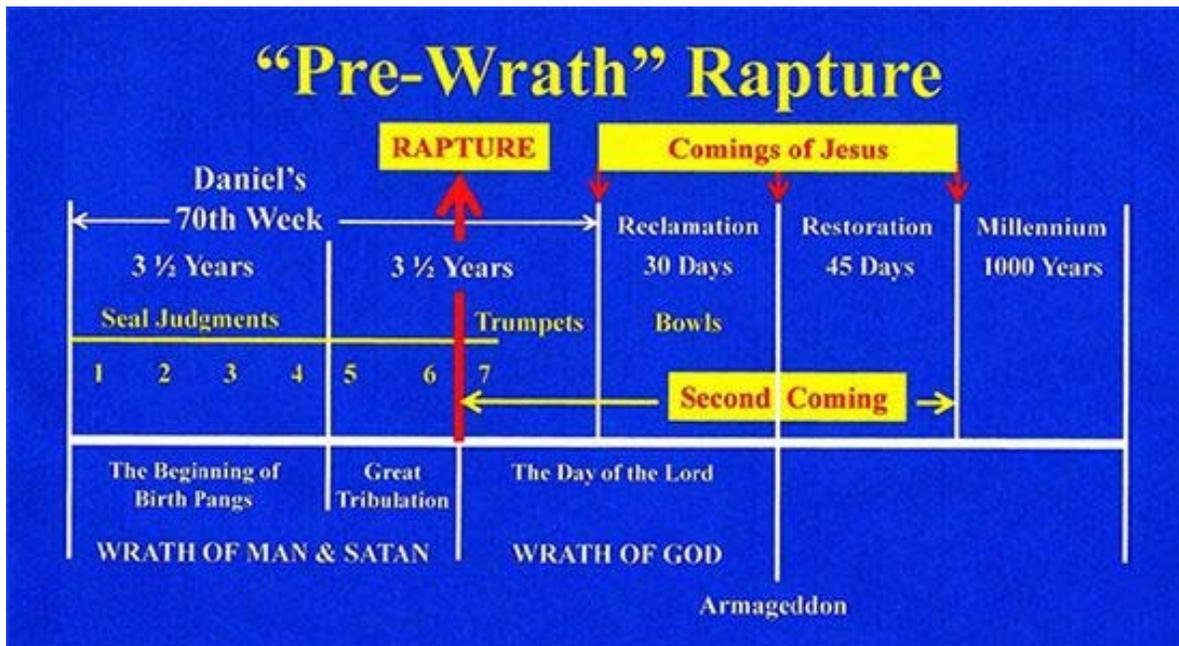
C. Ending Point for the Day of the Lord

This identification coincides with the conclusion of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. Although there remains some speculation regarding the additional 30 day period (for the mourning of Israel) and then another 45 day period of transition leading into the Millennial Kingdom. This is not so much a matter of dispute between the different end time positions.

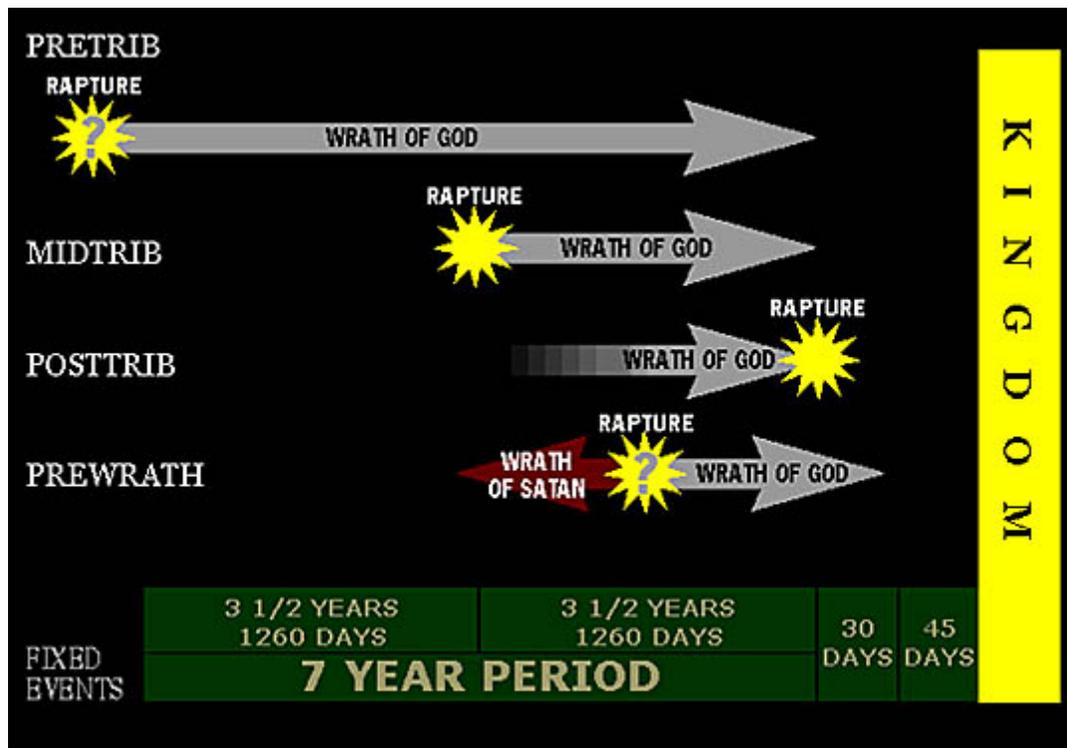
**TIMING OF THE RAPTURE**

The Pre-Trib timeline places the Rapture at the beginning of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. The argument is that the church must first be removed because Daniel’s prophecy focuses on God’s program for the nation of Israel. This allows for the imminence view that Christ could come at any moment – even though Paul’s argument in **2 Thessalonians** seems to demand that both the apostasy and the revealing of the Anti-Christ in conjunction with the abomination of desolation (clearly at the mid-point of the week) must come first.

The Pre-Wrath position allows for the various precursors to take place before the Rapture. The initial seal events occur during the early part of the 70<sup>th</sup> week with the Great Tribulation starting right after the abomination of desolation at the mid-point. The opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal launches the Day of the Lord judgments of the trumpets and the bowls where the wrath of God is poured out. After the Battle of Armageddon, Christ establishes His 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom on earth where He rules in righteousness and peace.



Sola Scriptura:



### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The main issue for opponents of the Pre-Wrath view is the desire to hold on to the imminence view that Christ could come at any moment. How could you describe the prospect of believers experiencing the Great Tribulation as consistent with “*the blessed hope*” of anticipating Christ’s return? But we have already shown that there are a number of precursors that mitigate against the imminence position. The NT consistently teaches that believers must be prepared to endure persecution in this world. The Great Tribulation just differs in degree and intensity, not in nature. In fact the Pre-Trib position sets forth a false hope that deceives believers and will leave them unprepared for the severe persecution ahead.

In embracing **the blessed hope** unfolded by the biblical revelation of end time events, those who hold to the Pre-Wrath position enthusiastically confess along with the Apostle John in his closing words of the **Book of Revelation**:

*“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’  
Amen, Come Lord Jesus.  
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”*