



ESCHATOLOGY UPSIDE WRONG

Dr. Stephen R. Phinney

What's the difference between Christian & Indwelt Christian eschatology?

Now, that is a good question.

With all of the trending current events, statistics tell us the masses are taking a second look at eschatology – the end times. According to a recent end times survey conducted by LifeWay, nearly **nine of ten pastors** recognize that many current events match the ones Jesus Christ said would unfold right before his Second Coming to Earth. That might sound exciting, BUT it begs the question – *"Which of the four end times positions do these pastors hold?"* You wouldn't think it would make that big of a difference, but it does.

When LifeWay conducted their recent survey, 97% of 1,000 American pastors from evangelical and historically black churches believe that Jesus Christ will physically return to Earth for his Second Coming. Furthermore, 83% of pastors see events such as false prophets appearing, wars, increasing immorality, anti-Semitism, earthquakes, and other natural disasters as ushering in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. To my disappointment, not one question was asked of these pastors regarding their position. If they believed Jesus would come before the 7-year reign of the antichrist, authentic Christians would be saved of the horrid events ensued by Satan. If they believed in mid-rapture, indwelt Christians would have to go through the first 3 ½ years of Satans rule. Now the worse position. If the pastor believed in post-tribulation rapture, believers would be faced with Satan releasing his wrath onto the world.

While these statistics are encouraging, the surveyors should have focused on the *ushering in the Great Tribulation*. The talking-point of Jesus's return is elementary. Whereas the issue as to when Satan steps into his 7-year reign is not only relevant, it offers a direct impact on current events.

Since the church culture avoids contemplating the permissible acts of Satan, the global church will maintain its focus on *fixing the fix God has fixed on the Earth*.

ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology, in a nutshell, is the study of God concerning the death, judgment, and the final destiny of the soul and humankind. Within this framework, it concerns itself with the last events of earthbound history, the predestined finality of Satan on Earth, and the ultimate destiny of Satan, his trio (Satan, False Prophet & the Beast), and humanity – past, present & future. This ideology is commonly referred to as the "end of the world" or "end times."

The word arises from the Greek *ἔσχατος* **eschatos** meaning "last" and **-logy** meaning "*the study of,*" and first appeared in English around 1844. Before this timestamp, it is referenced by the world as the study of the book of Revelation, the final things spoken by Jesus Christ.

Special Note: The religions that adhere to this *ology* are Buddhist, Christians, Hindus, Islamic, Jewish, Taoist, and the Zoroastrians. Each is supporting the end of ordinary reality and to the reunion with the Divine – all believing their religion treats eschatology as to future events prophesied by their sacred texts. Of course, this leads us to the most critical question, "*Who is their "Divine?"*"

Eschatologies vary as to their degree of optimism or pessimism about the future. In some eschatologies, conditions are better for some and worse for others, e.g., "heaven and hell." They also vary as to time frames hinging on their quadrant view. Out of the seven religious groups, orthodox Christians are referenced as the "doomsday cult." These indwelt, or orthodox, Christians carry this label due to their passion for keeping Hell intact. Many "churches" today have entirely removed the ideology of Hell. Since it is trendy to remove the destination of Hell, it covertly removes Satan from the end times equation. It is in this stupidity we find the reason why most surveys do not focus on the prophecies related to the Great Tribulation, Satan, or the destructive promises of punishment God laid out in His prophecies.

No matter how you view eschatology, the world IS experiencing the "birth-pangs" of the coming of our Lord's permissive, well placed, Great Tribulation, as well as His Second Coming. Let's carefully review the four primary positions. Only one of these positions hold to the concept of "rapture," taking up of the authentic Bride of Christ.

HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM

Historic premillennialism is the belief that the Second Coming of Christ will precede the millennium (thousand-year reign of Christ), and the church has replaced the nation of Israel as God's covenant people. Some refer to this position as "covenant premillennialism," historic premillennialism treats the millennium of Christ as a literal future event. Most holding to this position believe that "Christians" will remain on the Earth during the great tribulation of Satan. The tribulation will purify the churches by rooting out false believers. This position does not include the believer's rapture.

AMILLENNIALISM

Amillennialism is the belief that the millennium rule of Christ symbolizes Christ's reign in the lives of His people from the beginning of the church until His Second Coming. They tout Rev. 19:11-21 portrays Christ's triumph over Satan through His death and resurrection. This triumph restrained the power of Satan on the Earth. They go on to state that the "first resurrection" symbolizes either the eternal life experienced by persons when they become "Christian." A-mills do not necessarily support the indwelt experience. They believe when Christ returns, He will immediately defeat the powers of evil, resurrect the saved and the unsaved, judge them, and deliver them to their eternal destinies. This position does not include the believer's rapture.

Each believes the great tribulation represents calamities and persecutions that have occurred throughout church history – advocating no 7-year reign of Satan. Sadly, they believe any

reference to Israel in Revelation are symbolic references to the people of God – promoting that Israel does not need to be protected.

POSTMILLENNIALISM

Postmillennialism is the belief that the Second Coming of Christ will occur after the millennium (thousand-year reign of the judgment of Christ). The millennial reign described in Rev. 20:1-6 represents an extended period when, through the preaching of the Gospel, most of the world will submit to Jesus Christ. During this time, Satan will have no power over the earth, and evil regimes will collapse. A period of great tribulation may precede the millennium. They religiously believe that during the millennium, Christ will rule the earth through His Spirit and His Church; He will not, however, be physically present on the earth. Somehow, they believe the judgment will occur at the end of the millennium. This position does not include the believer's rapture.

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

Dispensational premillennialism is the belief that the Second Coming of Christ will precede the millennial reign and judgment, and God will still give the nation of Israel the land described in Genesis 15:18. In fact, outside God's objective of punishing Satan and his followers, these believers hold to the ideology of giving Israel back their land IS the reason for the end times.

Dispensational premillennialism treats the millennium as a literal, future event. Most of those who adhere to these beliefs are pre-tribulationist; they understand Rev. 4:1, 2 to refer to "the rapture," which occurs moments before the Great Tribulation is ignited. The rapture is the belief that Christ removes authentic Bridal members, real-deal Christians, from the earth before the Great Tribulation begins. Within this group, some dispensationalists, known as mid-tribulationists, believe the rapture will occur halfway through the Tribulation. They have a clear understanding that the first 3 ½ years is "peace, peace," but the second half is the period Satan turns on his people and tortures each with his wrath. This horrid abuse is what provokes Christ Second Coming, thus, the reason for His return. Once He returns, Satan and his demons are bound in chains, and temporarily held in the "pit" during the thousand-year reign. After the thousand-year judgment period is over, Jesus releases him from the pit for one more war – the battle of Armageddon. After Christ wins that war, Jesus sends Satan, his demons, followers (unsaved) to the "lake of fire." He then takes the old earth, while burning & "tosses it into outer darkness."

Now with the closure of the earth and the evil upon it, Jesus gathers His Bride, who are housed in the New Jerusalem, which hovers over old Jerusalem during the thousand years and then takes them to the "New Earth." End of story.

The dispensational view is the predominant view of most orthodox indwelt Christians. Through the ages, these believers have added and deleted from the basic model. Although, most have kept the flow intact – God's work with Israel (OT), God's work with the Church (NT), the believer's rapture, the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming, the millennial reign of Christ (Judgement), and eternity (New Earth).

It needs to be further noted that the fake, Christ-followers group, and their churches, bounce between the Amillennialist and the Postmillennialist positions.

The bottom line is “believers” tend to pick positions that grant them the most significant amount of comfort. As I have studied the culture of the church today, I found that most pick and choose the best scenarios from each quadrant to form their idolatrized end-times view.

There is a direct relationship between fear and theology, minimally choosing a theology that helps them deflect their fears over the end times. When a fear-bound believer is fronted with events such as false prophets appearing, wars, increasing immorality, anti-Semitism, earthquakes, health pandemics, and other natural disasters – they quickly put their focus on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. While all authentic Christians should keep their focus on Christ, remember this, Jesus, Himself, “*does not know the day or hour of His return.*” What we can embrace is His carefully constructed warnings of “*the things to come.*” Our goal should never be to lie a little to help people feel better. Our goal should be to tell the masses the Truth, even if it hurts. He didn’t suggest we advance His message to the Seven Churches, He mandated it.

I am glad this pandemic has caused a surge of interest in the book of Revelation. It might have been God’s reason for allowing it to happen. If the masses don’t listen to the upward calling hidden within the linings of this pandemic, maybe the next round will accomplish such a blessing.

Here are the pre-established facts. Jesus warned us of the things to come. He didn’t hold back any consequences from those who refused to listen – and He won’t hold back from those with deaf ears today. Yes, He is coming. Yes, He is preparing the world for the Great Tribulation. Yes, He will separate the “goats from the sheep,” the authentic from the “Christ-followers.” Yes, He will rapture His Bride. Yes, He will allow Satan to rule for seven short years. Yes, He will return and put Satan, his demons, and the refuters of Christ in a place of torment. Yes, He will judge all those who refused the message and invitation of Christ. And finally, yes, He will take those who remained faithful to the end to the New Earth as an eternal resting place.